

Saul's Kingship Established (c. 1050 BC)

1 Samuel 11

Saul Defeats the Ammonites

1 Now Nahash the Ammonite went up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead. All the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us and we will serve you."

2 But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this *condition* I will make a treaty with you, by gouging out the right eye of each of you, so that I can make it a disgrace for all Israel."

3 So the elders of Jabesh said to him, "Leave us alone for seven days so that we may send messengers in all the territory of Israel, and if there *is* no deliverer for us, then we will come out to you."

4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported these things to the people. Then all the people lifted up their voices and wept.

5 Just then, Saul was coming from the field behind the cattle. Saul said, "What *is the matter* with the people, that they *are* weeping?" So they recounted to him the words of the men of Jabesh.

6 Then the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and he became very angry.

7 So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them into pieces and sent *them* throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, "Whoever *is* not going out after Saul and after Samuel, so will it be done to his oxen." Then the fear of Yahweh fell on the people and they went out as one man.

8 He mustered them at Bezek; the Israelites *were* three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah *were* thirty thousand.

9 They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus you will say to the men of Jabesh Gilead: 'Tomorrow deliverance for you will come when the sun is hot.'" When the messengers went and told the men of Jabesh, they rejoiced.

10 The men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you and you may do to us whatever seems good to you."

11 And the next day Saul placed the people *in* three divisions. Then they came into the middle of the camp at the early morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. It happened that the remainder were scattered so that no two among them remained together.

Samuel and the People Reaffirm Saul's Kingship

12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who *is* the one who asked, 'Will Saul reign over us?' Give the men to us that we may kill them."

13 But Saul said, "No one will be put to death on this day, because today Yahweh has provided deliverance in Israel."

14 Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingship there."

15 So all the people went to Gilgal and they made Saul king there before Yahweh in Gilgal. They sacrificed fellowship offerings there before Yahweh. Then Saul rejoiced there greatly *along with* all the men of Israel.

Samuel's Farewell Speech (c. 1050 BC)

1 Samuel 12

Samuel Affirms His Integrity

1 Then Samuel said to all Israel, "Look, I have listened to your voice regarding all that you have said to me, so I have set a king over you.

2 And so then here *is* the king walking about before you. Now I am old and gray, but my sons (look at them!) *are* with you; and I have walked about before you from my youth until this day.

3 Here I am! Testify against me before Yahweh and before his anointed one! Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I exploited? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe, that I may shut my eyes regarding him?-then I will restore it to you."

4 Then they said, "You have not exploited us or oppressed us, and you have not taken anything from the hand of anyone."

5 So he said to them, "Yahweh *is* witness against you, and his anointed one *is* witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." Then they said, "*He is* witness."

Samuel Warns Israel Not to Forget the LORD

6 Then Samuel said to the people, "Yahweh *is* witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron, and who brought your ancestors up from the land of Egypt.

7 So then take your stand, so that I may judge you before Yahweh with *regard to* all the *deeds of* justice of Yahweh that he performed with both you and your ancestors.

8 "When Jacob came to Egypt, your ancestors cried out to Yahweh, so he sent Moses and Aaron, and they brought your ancestors out from Egypt and settled them in this place.

9 But they forgot Yahweh their God, so he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the hosts of Hazor, and into the hand of *the* Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

10 So they cried out to Yahweh and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken Yahweh and have served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hand of our enemies and we will serve you!'

11 So Yahweh sent Jerub-Baal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel. Then he delivered you from the hand of your enemies all around, and you lived *in security*.

12 “And when you saw that Nahash, the king of *the* Ammonites, was coming against you, you said to me, ‘No! A king shall reign over us,’ although Yahweh your God *is* your king.

13 So then look! *Here is* the king you have chosen, for whom you have asked! Look, Yahweh has placed a king over you!

14 If you will fear Yahweh, and serve him, and listen to his voice, and not be rebellious against what Yahweh says, and both you and the king who rules over you will *follow* after Yahweh your God, *all will be well*.

15 But, if you do not listen to the voice of Yahweh, and you rebel against what Yahweh says, then the hand of Yahweh will be against you *as it was* against your ancestors.

Yahweh’s Sign Confirming the People’s Wickedness in Seeking a King

16 So then take your stand again and see this great thing that Yahweh *is going to do* before your eyes.

17 *Is* the wheat harvest not today? I will call out to Yahweh so that he still sends thunder and rain, so that you will know and will see that your wickedness *is* great that you have done in the eyes of Yahweh by asking for a king for yourselves.”

18 So Samuel called out to Yahweh, and Yahweh brought thunder and rain that *same* day, so all the people feared Yahweh and Samuel greatly.

19 Then all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to Yahweh your God so that we will not die, because we have added to all our sins by requesting a king for ourselves.”

20 And Samuel said to the people, “Do not fear! You have done all this evil; only do not turn aside from following Yahweh. But you must serve Yahweh with all your heart.

21 And do not turn aside after the triviality, which have no value and cannot deliver, for they are triviality.

22 For Yahweh will not forsake his people for the sake of his great name, because Yahweh has decided to make you his *own* people.

23 Also, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you! I will instruct you in the good and righteous way.

24 Only fear Yahweh and serve him faithfully with all of your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.

25 But if you continue to do wickedness, both you and your king will be swept away.”

Saul’s First Sin (c. 1050 – c. 1022 BC)

1 Samuel 13:1–15a

Saul and Jonathan Strike the First Blow Against the Philistines

1 Saul *was thirty* years old at the beginning of his reign, and he reigned *forty-two* years over Israel. [cf. [Acts 13:21](#)]

2 He chose for himself three thousand from Israel. Two thousand *of these* were with Saul at Micmash in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. He sent away the rest of the people, each to his tent.

3 Jonathan defeated the garrison of *the* Philistines that *was* at Geba, and *the* Philistines heard *about it*. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear!”

4 And all Israel did hear, saying, “Saul has defeated the garrison of *the* Philistines; and also, Israel has become a stench among *the* Philistines!” So the people were called out after Saul at Gilgal.

The Philistines Prepare to Retaliate

5 And the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and an army as numerous as sand which *is* on the seashore. And they came up and encamped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that *it was* too difficult for them, because the army was hard pressed, the people hid themselves in the caves, in the thorn bushes, in the cliffs, in the vaults and in the wells.

7 *Some* of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. But Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the army followed him trembling.

Saul’s Unlawful Sacrifice

8 He waited seven days according to the appointed time Samuel determined, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the army started to slip away from him.

9 So Saul said, “Bring here to me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.” Then he offered up the burnt offering.

10 Just as he finished offering the burnt sacrifice, Samuel was coming. So Saul went out to meet him *and* to bless him.

11 But Samuel said, “What have you done?” Saul said, “Because I saw that the army was scattering from me and you did not come at the appointed time and *that the* Philistines had gathered at Micmash,

12 therefore I said, ‘Now *the* Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not yet implored the face of Yahweh.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.”

13 Then Samuel said to Saul, “You have behaved foolishly! You have not kept the command of Yahweh your God which he commanded you. For then, Yahweh would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

14 But now, your kingdom will not endure. Yahweh has sought for himself a man according to his *own* heart, and Yahweh has appointed him as leader over his people, because you have not kept what Yahweh commanded you.”

15a Then Samuel got up and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin.

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Chronological Notes

1) Saul's Reign.¹

- A) At precisely the place that one might expect the usual formula summarizing a king's reign—1 Samuel 13:1—there is a textual corruption: “Saul was ... years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel two years.” Besides the lacuna concerning his age, it is impossible to squeeze all the events of Saul's reign into two short years. Two solutions are commonly offered: (1) “Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years” (thus the NIV); and (2) “Saul was thirty years old when he became king. When he had reigned for two years ...” The former has in its favor that it follows the pattern of the usual formula (cf. 2 Sam 5:4) and essentially agrees with Paul's round figure of forty years.
- B) Against this reconstruction, however, is the fact that both “thirty” and “forty-two” must be supplied, the former from a few late manuscripts of the Septuagint and the latter by conjecture. “Thirty” appears to be incorrect, since Jonathan, Saul's son, was a leader of men at the very beginning of Saul's reign (1 Sam 13:2–3) and could hardly have been the son of a thirty-year-old man. “Forty-two,” it is usually argued, is necessary in order to account for Paul's datum and to explain the unusual plural, rather than dual, form of the “two” in the Hebrew text. Paul's information, however, could well be the result of the deductive process we are about to pursue, and the plural form of “two” is not without grammatical support elsewhere. The best reading, then, would appear to be, “Saul was [forty] years old when he began to reign. When he had reigned for two years ...” “Forty” is a reasonable suggestion, given that Saul had an adult son at the time.
- C) In support of Paul's statement that Saul ruled for forty years is the fact that Ish-Bosheth, the son of Saul who succeeded him as king, was forty when he began to reign (2 Sam 2:10) and yet was not born until after Saul ascended Israel's throne. This is clear from a comparison of the list of Saul's sons in the earliest years of his reign (1 Sam 14:47–51) and the list of all his sons (1 Chr 8:33; 9:39). The former names Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malki-shua, and the latter Jonathan, Malki-shua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal. Esh-Baal is identical to Ish-Bosheth, and Abinadab is presumably another name for Ishvi (see 1 Chr 10:2). When Saul was slain by the Philistines, his three sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki-shua died with him (1 Sam 31:2). Since Ish-bosheth survived, he obviously was not Abinadab as some scholars maintain.
- D) Another factor of importance is the apparent interregnum between Saul and Ish-Bosheth, during which time Abner maintained control (2 Sam 2:8–11). For reasons not specified, Ish-Bosheth did not immediately follow Saul, as is clear from the fact that he reigned only two years before he was assassinated. In the year of Ish-Bosheth's death, David seized power over Saul's kingdom, and yet he had already been reigning in Hebron for more than seven years (1:1; 2:4; 5:1–5). This means that Abner held the power in the north for about five years before he appointed Ish-Bosheth as king. Ish-Bosheth, forty years old at the time, was therefore born thirty-five years before Saul's death, or around 1046. This further explains why his name does not appear in the list of Saul's children during the earliest part of his reign.
- E) In any case, if Ish-Bosheth was thirty-five at the time of Saul's death and yet was not born until after the commencement of Saul's reign, Saul must have been king for more than thirty-five years, a figure compatible with Paul's “forty.” A date of 1051–1011 is therefore most likely.

¹ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, Second Edition, (Baker Publishing, 2008), 209–212.