

Saul's Kingship Established (c. 1050 BC)

1 Samuel 11

Saul Defeats the Ammonites

1 Now Nahash the Ammonite came up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we will serve you."

2 But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "I will make *it* with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel."

3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you."

4 Then the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and spoke these words in the hearing of the people, and all the people lifted up their voices and wept.

5 Now behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen, and he said, "What is *the matter* with the people that they weep?" So they related to him the words of the men of Jabesh.

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

7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out as one man.

8 He numbered them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000.

9 They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh-gilead, 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you will have deliverance.'" So the messengers went and told the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.

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

11 The next morning Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp at the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

Samuel and the People Reaffirm Saul's Kingship

12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is he that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death."

13 But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished deliverance in Israel."

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

15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Samuel's Farewell Speech (c. 1050 BC)

1 Samuel 12

Samuel Affirms His Integrity

1 Then Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me and I have appointed a king over you.

2 Now, here is the king walking before you, but I am old and gray, and behold my sons are with you. And I have walked before you from my youth even to this day.

3 Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore *it* to you."

4 They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand."

5 He said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day that you have found nothing in my hand." And they said, "*He is* witness."

Samuel Warns Israel Not to Forget the LORD

6 Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.

7 So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers.

8 When Jacob went into Egypt and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

9 But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

10 They cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned because we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth; but now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You.'

11 Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around,

so that you lived in security.

12 When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, ‘No, but a king shall reign over us,’ although the LORD your God *was* your king.

13 Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you.

14 If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God.

15 If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, *as it was* against your fathers.

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

16 Even now, take your stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes.

17 Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king.”

18 So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

19 Then all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins *this* evil by asking for ourselves a king.”

20 Samuel said to the people, “Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.

21 You must not turn aside, for *then you would go* after futile things which can not profit or deliver, because they are futile.

22 For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.

23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way.

24 Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

25 But if you still do wickedly, 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 when he began to reign, and he reigned *forty* two years over Israel. [cf. [Acts 13:21](#)]

2 Now Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel, of which 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while 1,000 were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent away the rest of the people, each to his tent.

3 Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of *it*. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.”

4 All Israel heard the news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. The people were then summoned to Saul at Gilgal.

The Philistines Prepare to Retaliate

5 Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits.

7 Also *some of* the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he *was* still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

Saul’s Unlawful Sacrifice

8 Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him.

9 So Saul said, “Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering.

10 As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him *and* to greet him.

11 But Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,

12 therefore I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.”

13 Samuel said to Saul, “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

14 “But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has

appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.”

15a Then Samuel arose 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 Chron 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 Chron 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.