

## Saul's Kingship Established (c. 1050 BC)

### 1 Samuel 11

#### Saul Defeats the Ammonites

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

2 But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "The only way I will make a treaty with you is if you let me gouge out the right eye of every one of you and in so doing humiliate all Israel!"

3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Leave us alone for seven days so that we can send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. If there is no one who can deliver us, we will come out voluntarily to you."

4 When the messengers went to Gibeah (where Saul lived) and informed the people of these matters, all the people wept loudly.

5 Now Saul was walking behind the oxen as he came from the field. Saul asked, "What has happened to the people? Why are they weeping?" So they told him about the men of Jabesh.

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

7 He took a pair of oxen and cut them up. Then he sent the pieces throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, who said, "Whoever does not go out after Saul and after Samuel should expect this to be done to his oxen!" Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they went out as one army.

8 When Saul counted them at Bezek, the Israelites were 300,000 strong and the men of Judah numbered 30,000.

9 They said to the messengers who had come, "Here's what you should say to the men of Jabesh Gilead: 'Tomorrow deliverance will come to you when the sun is fully up.'" When the messengers went and told the men of Jabesh Gilead, they were happy.

10 The men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you and you can do with us whatever you wish."

11 The next day Saul placed the people in three groups. They went to the Ammonite camp during the morning watch and struck them down until the hottest part of the day. The survivors scattered; no two of them remained together.

#### Samuel and the People Reaffirm Saul's Kingship

12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who were the ones asking, 'Will Saul reign over us?' Hand over those men so we may execute them!"

13 But Saul said, "No one will be killed on this day. For today the LORD has given Israel a victory!"

14 Samuel said to the people, "Come on! Let's go to Gilgal and renew the kingship there."

15 So all the people went to Gilgal, where they established Saul as king in the LORD's presence. They offered up peace offerings there in the LORD's presence. Saul and all the Israelites were very happy.

## Samuel's Farewell Speech (c. 1050 BC)

### 1 Samuel 12

#### Samuel Affirms His Integrity

1 Samuel said to all Israel, "I have done everything you requested. I have given you a king.

2 Now look! This king walks before you. As for me, I am old and gray, though my sons are here with you. I have walked before you from the time of my youth till the present day.

3 Here I am. Bring a charge against me before the LORD and before his chosen king. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I wronged? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I taken a bribe so that I would overlook something? Tell me, and I will return it to you!"

4 They replied, "You have not wronged us or oppressed us. You have not taken anything from the hand of anyone."

5 He said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and his chosen king is witness this day, that you have not found any reason to accuse me." They said, "He is witness!"

#### Samuel Warns Israel Not to Forget God

6 Samuel said to the people, "The LORD is the one who chose Moses and Aaron and who brought your ancestors up from the land of Egypt.

7 Now take your positions, so I may confront you before the LORD regarding all the LORD's just actions toward you and your ancestors.

8 When Jacob entered Egypt, your ancestors cried out to the LORD. The LORD sent Moses and Aaron, and they led your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

9 "But they forgot the LORD their God, so he gave them into the hand of Sisera, the general in command of Hazor's army, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

10 Then they cried out to the LORD and admitted, 'We have sinned, for we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the images of Ashtoreth. Now deliver us from the hand of our enemies so that we may serve you.'

11 So the LORD sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah, and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hand of the enemies all around you, and you were able to live securely.

- 12 “When you saw that King Nahash of the Ammonites was advancing against you, you said to me, ‘No! A king will rule over us’—even though the LORD your God is your king!
- 13 Now look! Here is the king you have chosen—the one that you asked for! Look, the LORD has given you a king!
- 14 If you fear the LORD, serving him and obeying him and not rebelling against what he says, and if both you and the king who rules over you follow the LORD your God, all will be well.
- 15 But if you don’t obey the LORD and rebel against what the LORD says, the hand of the LORD will be against both you and your king.

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

- 16 “So now, take your positions and watch this great thing that the LORD is about to do in your sight.
- 17 Is this not the time of the wheat harvest? I will call on the LORD so that he makes it thunder and rain. Realize and see what a great sin you have committed before the LORD by asking for a king for yourselves.”
- 18 So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD made it thunder and rain that day. All the people were very afraid of both the LORD and Samuel.
- 19 All the people said to Samuel, “Pray to the LORD your God on behalf of us—your servants—so we won’t die, for we have added to all our sins by asking for a king.”
- 20 Then Samuel said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. You have indeed sinned. However, don’t turn aside from the LORD. Serve the LORD with all your heart.
- 21 You should not turn aside after empty things that can’t profit and can’t deliver, since they are empty.
- 22 The LORD will not abandon his people because he wants to uphold his great reputation. The LORD was pleased to make you his own people.
- 23 As far as I am concerned, far be it from me to sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you! I will instruct you in the way that is good and upright.
- 24 However, fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. Just look at the great things he has done for you!
- 25 But if you continue to do evil, 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; he ruled over Israel for *forty* years. [cf. [Acts 13:21](#)]
- 2 Saul selected for himself three thousand men from Israel. Two thousand of these were with Saul at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel; the remaining thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. He sent all the rest of the people back home.
- 3 Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost that was at Geba and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul alerted all the land saying, “Let the Hebrews pay attention!”
- 4 All Israel heard this message, “Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel is repulsive to the Philistines!” So the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.

#### **The Philistines Prepare to Retaliate**

- 5 For the battle with Israel the Philistines had amassed 3,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and an army as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven.
- 6 The men of Israel realized they had a problem because their army was hard pressed. So the army hid in caves, thickets, cliffs, strongholds, and cisterns.
- 7 Some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan River to the land of Gad and Gilead. But Saul stayed at Gilgal; the entire army that was with him was terrified.

#### **Saul’s Unlawful Sacrifice**

- 8 He waited for seven days, the time period indicated by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the army began to abandon Saul.
- 9 So Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” Then he offered a burnt offering.
- 10 Just when he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel appeared on the scene. Saul went out to meet him and to greet him.
- 11 But Samuel said, “What have you done?” Saul replied, “When I saw that the army had started to abandon me and that you didn’t come at the appointed time and that the Philistines had assembled at Micmash,
- 12 I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down on me at Gilgal and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.’ So I felt obligated to offer the burnt offering.”
- 13 Then Samuel said to Saul, “You have made a foolish choice! You have not obeyed the commandment that the LORD your God gave you. Had you done that, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever!

14 But now your kingdom will not continue! The LORD has sought out for himself a man who is loyal to him and the LORD has appointed him to be leader over his people, for you have not obeyed what the LORD commanded you.”

15a Then Samuel set out and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin.

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### **Chronological Notes**

#### 1) Saul’s Reign.<sup>1</sup>

- 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 c. 1050 – c. 1010 is therefore most likely.

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