



# ***LEADER GUIDE***

**I Samuel**

*Fall 2023*

## COLLEGE CONNECTION FALL 2023



Greetings Small Group Hosts & Co-Leaders!!

Welcome to a new semester of Small Group ministry together! This semester is going to be an amazing journey together as we study a pivotal OT book in 1 Samuel. This book is going to introduce us to three central figures in Israel's tumultuous history – Samuel the prophet and last of the Judges; Saul the first (and one of the worst) kings in Israel's history; and David, the shepherd-boy turned warrior-king. These three portraits of leadership will teach us many valuable lessons along the way that will benefit both students and volunteers alike.

As I've spoken with students these last few weeks, and mentioned that we are diving into this unique OT book, I have had really enthusiastic responses so far! I am encouraged to see the level of interest I've encountered in these conversations. Perhaps some of this interest is because of the critical storylines in the book, but perhaps some of it is because we tend to give less attention to OT books and storylines, so it's less familiar, yet intriguing. I tend to think it is probably both. Possibly this is the case for us as leaders as well? To that end, we will spend the next few months studying this essential piece of the Bible's storyline to better understand God's work in human history, why OT Israel is so important for NT believers today, and how this book prepared the way for the Messiah to come.

This study was originally written by David Beaty, the pastor at River Oaks Community Church in Clemmons, NC. He graciously gave us permission to adapt it to fit the needs of our students here at ABF. The primary adaptations are in the areas of layout, discussion questions, and application that are specific to young adults. The sections labeled "Exploring God's Word" are largely original with a few small changes. Many thanks to Pastor David and River Oaks for their wonderful work and willingness to share this with our group.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to each of you who host and/or co-lead one of our small groups! This ministry would absolutely not have the impact it does without your energy, effort, and love for the Lord and the students He has given us. You are an invaluable resource to this church and to the Kingdom of Christ! It is a joy to hear stories of how God is using you to bless college students week in and week out.

In this packet you will find various resources and scheduling helps to hopefully answer your questions about the semester ahead. If you have any questions, as always, please feel free to reach out and I'll do all I can to assist you.

Blessings on your group!

Josh Hayes

College pastor, Alliance Bible Fellowship

## Studying 1 Samuel

### CC – Fall 2023

Welcome to Fall 2023 and our study of the book of 1 Samuel! It's going to be an exciting semester of discovery and discussion in God's Word together. In this training, we will cover a number of important points that will prepare our students to engage in in-depth Bible study. It is also our hope that the following information will prove helpful to you as a group leader as well. On that note – thank you so much for your faithful investment in the lives of our students and in Christ's Kingdom work. Let's dive in!

#### Why study 1 Samuel?

In my mind, 1 Samuel is one of the most critical books in the entire OT! I'm not sure you can really rank them, but if you think about the major movements in the OT from a big-picture storyline, 1 Samuel's a really big deal!

- This book concludes that dark period in Israel's history referred to as the time of the Judges. It was during this time that Israel was faithlessly abandoning God's Word and His covenant in order to follow the gods of the surrounding peoples. The last sentence of Judges (21:25) is a sad commentary on this time period – “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Sounds like the western half of the world in the 21st century!!)
- Samuel is the last in the line of judges who ruled over Israel. Just a few chapters into this book, Samuel anoints the first king in Israel's tumultuous history, Saul of Gibeah. This transition from a theocratic government under God as king to a monarchy with a human king is a major transition to note!
- We also have the introduction of a young shepherd boy named David, who would later succeed Saul as King, and for whom the Davidic covenant would be named (2 Sam. 7). The Davidic covenant is unmistakably pointing forward to the Messiah who would come from David's family lineage.
- This same David would write over 70 psalms (at least 73)!!
- This book has much to teach us about the critical nature of leadership! In 1 Sam., we find three well-known leaders (Samuel, Saul, David) whose lives are chronicled and characterized by differing positions (prophet, king, warrior/poet), decisions, and styles of leadership.
- We see the providential, guiding hand of God at work in the midst of many good and bad decisions made by the various characters in the plot.
- Many of the most famous stories in the Bible are found in 1 Samuel!

#### What is the GOAL of this study?

You can study *any* book of the Bible from various angles and glean certain takeaways based on your particular reason for studying. Our specific goal for this study is to learn about godly leadership by studying the portraits of three different kinds of leaders in this book (Samuel, Saul, and David).

## Book Overview<sup>1</sup>

There are many good book overviews out there to consult. A few I'd recommend include:

- The Message of the OT (Mark Dever); The Bible from 30,000 Feet (Skip Heitzig); MacArthur Study Bible or MacArthur Bible Commentary; Wiersbe Bible Commentary (good outline and simple summaries)

## Outline<sup>2</sup>

1. Failure of the priesthood (1 Sam. 1-7)
  - a. Birth of Samuel (1-2)
  - b. Failure of Eli (2)
  - c. Call of Samuel (3)
  - d. Rescue of the Ark of the Cov. (4-6)
  - e. New spiritual beginning for Israel (7)
2. Failure of the Priesthood (1 Sam. 8-15)
  - a. Israel requests a king (8)
  - b. Saul is made king (9-10)
  - c. Saul's first victories (11)
  - d. Israel renews the covenant (12)
  - e. Saul loses the throne (13-15)
3. Training of a new king (1 Sam. 16-31)
  - a. David is anointed (16)
  - b. David serves Saul (16)
  - c. David kills Goliath (17)
  - d. Saul becomes jealous (18-19)
  - e. David & Jonathan's friendship (20)
  - f. David driven into exile (21-30)
  - g. Saul's defeat & death (28, 31)

## Helpful Timeline of Important Dates *[all dates are B.C.!!]*

- 1105 – Birth of Samuel
- 1080 – Birth of Saul
- 1050 – Saul anointed king
- 1040 – Birth of David
- 1025 – David anointed king
- 1010 – Death of Saul
- 1010-1003 – David reigns in Hebron

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<sup>1</sup> Large portions of this book overview are drawn from John MacArthur's Bible Book Introduction, [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/macarthur\\_john/bible-introductions/1samuel-intro.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/macarthur_john/bible-introductions/1samuel-intro.cfm). The information in this document has been adapted and/or truncated for the purposes of Alliance College Connection small group ministry.

<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe Bible Commentary, OT, 493.

- 1003-970 – David moves the capital to Jerusalem; reigns over all Israel

### Title

1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book in the earliest Hebrew manuscript, but later divided into two books (likely because the Greek alphabet contains vowels, whereas Hebrew does not. This lengthened the book substantially, not allowing it to fit onto 1 scroll any longer!<sup>3</sup>). Our English translations followed the Greek version of the OT (Septuagint/LXX) retaining the two-book division.

### Author

Short answer: UNKNOWN. *However...*

- Jewish tradition ascribed authorship to Samuel himself – OR to Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (all prophets, based on 1 Chr. 29:29). But Samuel cannot be the writer because his death is recorded in 1 Sam. 25:1, meaning he could not have written the last 6(ish) chapters.
- It is thought that Samuel gathered the information and communicated it to Nathan and/or Gad who wrote it down.
- It is very likely that multiple authors composed the book over a span of years.
- An interesting feature — The human author speaks for the Lord and gives the divine interpretation of the events narrated.

### Date

Short answer: UNKNOWN. *However...*

- We know that the author wrote *after* the division of the kingdom between Israel and Judah in 931 B.C., because of the many references to Israel and Judah as distinct kingdoms (1 Sam. 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam. 5:5; 11:11; 12:8; 19:42–43; 24:1, 9).
- However, since Samuel has a different literary style than Kings, it was most likely penned before the Exile during the period of the divided kingdom (ca. 931–722 B.C.)

### Background and Setting

- Most of the events in 1 and 2 Samuel took place in and around the central highlands (aka *the hill country*) in the land of Israel. **MAP**. This area forms a central spine on the map that ranges in elevation from 1,500-3,300 ft. above sea level. GEOGRAPHICALLY VERY SIGNIFICANT.
- Major cities include: Shiloh, the residence of Eli and the Tabernacle; Ramah, the hometown of Samuel; Gibeah, the headquarters of Saul; Bethlehem, the birthplace of David; Hebron, David’s capital when he ruled over Judah; and Jerusalem, the ultimate “city of David.”
- During the 135 years covered by 1-2 Samuel, Israel was transformed from a loosely knit group of tribes under “judges” to a united nation under the reign of a centralized monarchy. They look primarily at Samuel (1105–1030 B.C.), Saul who reigned 1052–1011 B.C., and David who was born ca. 1040 B.C.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Bergen, 1 & 2 Samuel Comm., NAC, vol. 7., p. 18.

- During the years narrated in 1 and 2 Samuel, the great empires of the ancient world were in a state of weakness. Neither Egypt nor the Mesopotamian powers, Babylon and Assyria, were threats to Israel at that time. The two nations most hostile to the Israelites were the Philistines to the West and the Ammonites to the East. The major contingent of the Philistines had migrated from the Aegean Islands and Asia Minor in the 12th century B.C. After being denied access to Egypt, they settled among other preexisting Philistines along the Mediterranean coast of Palestine. The Philistines controlled the use of iron, which gave them a decided military and economic advantage over Israel. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:38) who lived on the Transjordan Plateau.

## Purpose

In the English translations, 1 Samuel is considered 1 of 12 historical books in the OT. (In the Hebrew Scriptures it was listed among the former prophets). In seeking to understand the purpose of the book and how we should approach it, we must remember that this book's main purpose is to convey history. (\*\*See page entitled 'Principles for Interpreting OT Narrative.').

- This is a BIG DEAL! Several typical interpretive errors come into play for the 21st c. Western Christian here...
  1. Immediately forget the unfolding storyline and original writer/audience, and try to make direct application of a historical event to my personal life.
  2. Allegorize every detail (i.e., speculate on what each of the 5 smooth stones in 1 Sam. 17 represented).
  3. Forget that Jesus had not come onto the scene yet as a human being. The events of 1 Samuel are preparing his family lineage, but we can't look for Him under every rock and root! Let the storyline unfold (i.e., *Progressive Revelation!*).
  4. Try to chop a sweeping story up into tiny bits (it's not an epistle!)

## Historical and Theological Themes<sup>4</sup>

Numerous historical & theological themes are present in 1 Samuel...

1. The Davidic Covenant. "...Jesus' identity was first established...in terms of his relationship to David (Matt 1:1); he is...ultimate Son of David. Only as the son of David could Jesus be the Messiah. Thus for Paul, an essential part of the *kerygma* was the proclamation of Jesus as the descendant of David (2 Tim 2:8). Peter affirmed that "all the prophets from Samuel on" foretold the coming of Jesus (Acts 3:24) and revealed "that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43). Consistent with this position, Paul understood the books of Samuel to foretell the salvation of the Gentiles (Rom 15:9; cf. 2 Sam 22:50; see also Acts 26:22–23). Samuel was thus understood in the New Testament as a harmonious and—because of its presentation of the life of David—particularly significant witness to Jesus."<sup>5</sup>
2. The sovereignty of God over all of life (ex: the birth of Samuel in response to barren Hannah's prayer)

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<sup>4</sup> Themes 1-6 are from MacArthur's Bible book Introductions found at blueletterbible.org

<sup>5</sup> Bergen., 55.

3. Presence of God – it is clearly stated that the Lord was with Samuel and David and that He left Saul. The concern over the Ark of God was a concern for His presence with His people (Bergen, 44).
4. The work of the Holy Spirit to empower people for divinely appointed tasks (ex: came upon both Saul and David after their anointing as king; The power of the Spirit brought forth prophecy (1 Sam. 10:6) and victory in battle (1 Sam. 11:6).
5. Wholehearted obedience. Blessing and judgment are dependent on obedience. (“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22).... “Do not turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.... Be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart.... Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away” (1 Sam 12:20b, 24a, 25)... It was the sinful acts of Hophni, Phinehas, and Eli (cf. 1 Sam 2:17, 29) that eventuated their judgment and death, just as it was Samuel’s pious and obedient service (cf. 1 Sam 2:26; 3:18) that caused him to rise to the status of an esteemed national leader (cf. 1 Sam 3:20). It was Saul’s repeated sins (cf. 1 Sam 13:8–13; 15:9, 23–24; 28:7–16) that led to his disqualification as dynastic founder and king, as well as his death. It was the actions issuing from David’s obedient heart (cf. 1 Sam 13:14) that led the Lord to give him “victory wherever he went” (2 Sam 8:14), just as it was David’s disobedience (cf. 2 Sam 11:2–17; 12:9) that brought about the curses that devastated his family.”<sup>6</sup>
6. Personal and national effects of sin. The sins of Eli and his sons resulted in their deaths. The lack of reverence for the ark of the covenant led to the death of a number of Israelites (1 Sam. 6:19). Saul’s disobedience resulted in the Lord’s judgment, and he was rejected as king over Israel (1 Sam. 13, 15, 20–23). Although David was forgiven for his sin of adultery and murder after his confession (2 Sam. 12:13), he still suffered the devastating consequences of his sin (2 Sam. 12:14).
7. Land – The Torah is clear that retaining their land was dependent upon faithful obedience to God’s covenant; in the same way, they would lose control of their land due to covenant unfaithfulness. We see these results attending Saul and David’s reigns (Bergen, 44).

## Literary Motif

A significant literary motif traceable throughout the Torah is that of the shepherd as a noble leader: righteous men and great patriarchs in the Torah were consistently portrayed as shepherds (Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses). The opening image of Saul is that of an incompetent shepherd who cannot even find large animals who stray from the family home—ones that later return home without Saul’s assistance—the audience is prepared to evaluate Saul as an unrighteous and tragic character in the history of Israel. On the other hand, the expectation that David will be a righteous and great man is produced through the initial depiction of David as a shepherd who faithfully abides with the sheep when all others have abandoned him.<sup>7</sup>

## 1 Samuel as Christian Scripture...

“The Prophetic word regarding the life, work, and significance of Jesus. In the New Testament Jesus’ identity was first established and developed in terms of his relationship to

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<sup>6</sup> Bergen, 45.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 52.

David (Matt 1:1); he was both genealogically and functionally the ultimate Son of David. Only as the son of David could Jesus be the Messiah. Thus for Paul, an essential part of the *kerygma* was the proclamation of Jesus as the descendant of David (2 Tim 2:8). Peter affirmed that “all the prophets from Samuel on” foretold the coming of Jesus (Acts 3:24) and revealed “that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43). Consistent with this position, Paul understood the books of Samuel to foretell the salvation of the Gentiles (Rom 15:9; cf. 2 Sam 22:50; see also Acts 26:22–23). Samuel was thus understood in the New Testament to function [as a significant witness to Jesus, because of its presentation of the life of David].”<sup>8</sup>

## Interpretive Challenges

\*\*Without a doubt, 1 Samuel is filled with a number of challenging passages that require help to understand, much less explain! To that end, we have attached a copy of FAQ’s from the book *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. Feel free to share this information with your group as you come to the difficult texts in our study. **See attached documents.**

The books of Samuel contain a number of interpretive issues that have been widely discussed:<sup>9</sup>

1. Does Samuel have mixed feelings about the establishment of a human king in Israel? While 1 Sam. 9–11 presents a positive view of the kingship, 1 Sam. 8 and 12 are strongly anti-monarchical. It is preferable, however, to see the book as presenting a balanced perspective of the human kingship. While the desire of Israel for a king was acceptable (Deut. 17:15), their reason for wanting a king showed a lack of faith in the Lord.
2. How did the Holy Spirit minister before Pentecost? The ministry of the Holy Spirit in 1 Samuel was not describing salvation in the NT sense, but an empowering by the Lord for His service (see also Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).
3. What was the identity of the “distressing spirit from the Lord?” Is it a personal being, i.e., a demon, or a spirit of discontent created by God in the heart? Traditionally, it has been viewed as a demon.

## **\*\*What do we do with 1 Sam. 15:11, which states that God regretted making Saul king?** (A response by John Piper on [desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org))

“Some have argued, as I said, that, since God repents or regrets making him king, therefore, if he had it to do over again, he wouldn’t because he couldn’t see what was coming. Else, why would he repent or regret if he knew in advance the consequence of his decision and chose to do it anyway?

Now, I don’t think that is a compelling argument against God’s foreknowledge — his complete, exhaustive foreknowledge — of what was going to come of Saul and for several reasons. I will just mention a couple. One has to do with the complexity of God’s emotional life. And the other has to do with the context in 1 Samuel 15 where I think the writer explicitly does something to keep us from drawing a wrong conclusion about God’s foreknowledge.

“*God’s way of repenting is unique to God.*”

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<sup>8</sup> Bergen, 55.

<sup>9</sup> #’s 1-3 come from MacArthur’s Bible Book Overview.



So, the first problem with that view is that it assumes God could not or would not lament over a state of affairs that he himself chose to bring about. But that assumption, I think, is not true to experience and not true to the Bible. And more importantly, God's heart is capable of complex combinations of emotions infinitely more remarkable than ours. He may well be capable of lamenting over something he chose to bring about. And God may be capable of looking back on the very act of bringing something about and lamenting that act in one regard, while affirming it as best in another regard. Here is an example. See if this helps...

If I spank my son for blatant disobedience and he runs away from home because I spanked him, I may feel some remorse over the spanking — not in the sense that I disapprove of what I did, but in the sense that I feel some sorrow that the spanking was necessary and part of a wise way of dealing with my son in this situation, and great sorrow that he ran away. If I had to do it over again, I would still spank him. It was the right thing to do, even knowing that one consequence would be alienation for a season. I approve the spanking from one angle, and at the same time, I regret the spanking from another angle. If such a combination of emotions is possible for me in my finite decisions, it is not hard for me to imagine that God's infinite mind — the infinite complexity of God's emotional life — would be capable of something similar or even more complex. God is able to feel sorrow for an act in view of foreknown evil and yet go ahead and do it for wise reasons.”

But most important is the context of 1 Samuel 15, not just my effort to imagine God's emotional life.

- Verse 11: “I regret” — or repent — “that I have made Saul king.” Then, as if to clarify and protect us from misusing verse 11, he says in verse 29 — so, this would be 18 verses later — “The Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret [or repent], for he is not a man, that he should have regret [or repent].” Now, the point of the verse seems to be that, even though there is a sense in which God does repent — it says so in verse 11: he did — there is another sense in which he does not repent in verse 29. It's the same word in Hebrew. He does repent. No, he doesn't repent.
- And the difference would naturally be that God's repentance happens in spite of perfect foreknowledge — and that is what it means to be God — while most human repentance happens because we lack foreknowledge. God's way of repenting is unique to God. God is not man that he should repent, the writer says, meaning God is not man that he should repent as a man repents in his ignorance of the future.<sup>10</sup>

**\*\*What do we do with 1 Sam. 28:8-14, where the medium contrives to make the deceased Samuel appear to speak with Saul?** (Bergen, p. 266-267).

“Questions naturally arise at this point: Did the medium actually make contact with a living spirit-being, and if so, was it really the prophet Samuel? While this matter is not likely to be settled to everyone's satisfaction, the following observations can be made. First, the plain statement of the Hebrew text is that she did in fact see Samuel. Second, the medium reacted to Samuel's appearance as though it was a genuine—and terrifying—experience: she “cried out at the top of her voice.” Her strong reaction also suggests that Samuel's appearance was unexpected; perhaps this was the first time she had ever actually succeeded in contacting the

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<sup>10</sup> John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-does-god-regret-and-repent-in-the-bible>.

dead. Third, the speeches attributed to Samuel contained allusions to a prior interchange between the two, allusions that would have been appropriate only for the real Samuel to have made. Fourth, Samuel's role and message as a prophet, so much a part of his ministry in life, was unchanged in his encounter with Saul here.

Indeed, a straightforward reading of the biblical account suggests the possibility that mediums may possess the capacity to contact dead persons and establish lines of communication between the living and the dead. This view is not explicitly rejected elsewhere in Scripture; the Torah prohibits necromancy not because it is a hoax but because it promotes reliance on supernatural guidance from some source other than the Lord.

An alternative reading of this passage suggests that it was not the skill of the medium but rather a unique act of God that brought Saul into contact with Samuel. The medium did not possess the capacity to disturb a dead saint; but God, as "a sign of his grace," permitted Saul to have one last encounter with the prophet who had played such a determinative role in the king's career."<sup>11</sup>

## **1 Samuel's Place in Salvation History**

The time period of the Judges shows the major problems in Israel's leadership and among the people as a whole. The books of Samuel show God's continued care for His people -- giving them a king (David) to be their champion, representative, and example.

Saul, by his disobedience, proved to be an unsuitable king. David, on the other hand, would be God's choice leader to begin an enduring dynasty, from which the ultimate Ruler, Jesus Christ, would come.

Jesus would be the one to lead Israel in bringing blessing to all nations through His life, death, and resurrection. This book is the starting point for the formation of the Davidic dynasty, through which the Messiah would one day come.

## **A Word on Progressive Revelation**

We must remember that the Bible is a book telling one unified story of God's redemptive work in human history. But God did not reveal His plan all at once! Instead He took thousands of years to reveal it! [[ Just like you allow the first half of a movie to set up the plot in the second half, we must view the biblical storyline in this same way ]].

At the time in which 1 Samuel was written, Jesus had not arrived on the scene in the flesh. It would still be some 1000+ years before His birth, death, and resurrection. Therefore, we must interpret OT narrative in its own time/context, letting the story unfold in the way God intended it. The idea that God has progressively revealed Himself and His will over periods of time means that 1 Samuel plays a role in preparing for the coming Messiah. We call this concept 'progressive revelation.'

Implications...<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bergen, 266-267.

<sup>12</sup> Michael J. Vlach, *Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths* (Los Angeles, CA: Theological Studies Press, 2017), 31.

1. The OT is not complete – it prophesies the Messiah, but we don't find Him there
2. The OT is not less true than the NT – (first half of the movie is not less true than the last)
3. Aspects of the OT passed away, but not all of it (i.e., Mosaic covenant regulations, YES! Noahic/Davidic/New Covenants, NO!)
4. The OT is the starting point for understanding the storyline of Scripture and making sense of the NT, too! (*what the OT conceals, the NT reveals*)
5. The NT does not override, cancel, or reinterpret the original authorial intent of OT writers.

**When studying any passage of Scripture, three questions are key:**

1. What do I see? [Observation]
2. What does it mean? [or did it mean to orig. audience – Interpretation]
3. What do I/we need to do? [application]

**Remember – the focus of these groups is Discovery & Discussion!!**

You don't have to have all the answers – the goal is to foster environments/attitudes of discovery & discussion.

**Let's all assume the attitude/posture of a LEARNER – *not* a KNOWER!**

**Meeting in Living Rooms for a Purpose**

Recommended Resource List:

- ESV Study Bible
- The Message of the OT - Mark Dever
- Wiersbe OT Commentary [free PDF available online]
- 1 & 2 Samuel, Christ-Centered Expos. series – Thomas & Greear
- 1 & 2 Samuel, Tyndale OT Commentaries – Joyce Baldwin
- 1 & 2 Samuel, New American Commentary, vol. 7 – Robert D. Bergen

Maps & Explanations of Sites

William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas* (Skyland Publishing, 2016), pp. 65-71.

## Teaching Outline — Fall 2023

### Book of 1 Samuel

August 20

*Ministry Overview Message*

*“Get to know you” activity together?*

August 27

*Book Intro — 1 Samuel*

September 3 (*Labor Day wknd.*)

1 Samuel 1-2:11 (week 1)

September 10

1 Samuel 2-4 (week 2)

September 17

1 Samuel 7:1-17 (week 3)

**September 24**

**\*\*Fall Retreat — NO CC!**

October 1

1 Samuel 14 (week 5)

October 8

1 Samuel 15 (week 6)

**October 15**

**\*\*ASU Fall Break — NO CC!**

October 22

1 Samuel 17 (week 7)

October 29

1 Samuel 18-19, 28 (week 8)

November 5

1 Samuel 19 (week 9)

November 12

1 Samuel 21-22:5 (week 10)

<b>November 19</b>	<b>**Thanksgiving Meal – OCC collection Sun. <i>No CC!!</i></b>
November 26	1 Samuel 25 (week 12)
December 3	<b>**Christmas Party + 1 Samuel 30-31 (week 13) **Words Gifts</b>
<b>**LDOC – Dec. 5 **Reading Day – Dec. 6 **Exams – Dec. 7-8, 11-13</b>	

## Small Group Outline — Fall 2023

### Book of 1 Samuel

Aug. 28-31

Cover week 1 — 1 Samuel 1-2:11

Sept. 4-7

Cover week 2 — 1 Samuel 2-4

Sept. 11-14

Cover week 3 — 1 Samuel 7:1-17

Sept. 18-21

Cover week 4 — 1 Samuel 8-13

Sept. 25-28

Cover week 5 — 1 Samuel 14

Oct. 2-5

Cover week 6 — 1 Samuel 15

Oct. 9-12

Cover week 7 — 1 Samuel 17

**Oct. 16-19**

**\*\*Open week — No study this week  
(Fall Break week)**

Oct. 23-26

Cover week 8 — 1 Samuel 18-19, 28

Oct. 30 - Nov. 2

Cover week 9 — 1 Samuel 19

Nov. 6-9

Cover week 10 — 1 Samuel 21-22:5

Nov. 13-16

Cover week 11 - 1 Samuel 24, 26

**Nov. 20-23**

**\*\*No small groups — Thanksgiving week**

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Nov. 27-30

Cover week 12 – 1 Samuel 25

**Dec. 4-7**

**\*\*No small groups – week of finals**

\*\*LDOC – Dec. 5

\*\*Reading Day – Dec. 6

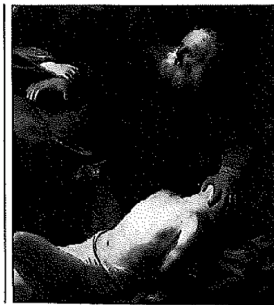
\*\*Exams – Dec. 7-8, 11-13

*of  
the*  
**HARD SAYINGS  
BIBLE**

Kaiser, Davids,  
Bruce, Brauch



**HARD  
SAYINGS**  
*of the*  
**BIBLE**



**Walter C. Kaiser Jr.  
Peter H. Davids  
F. F. Bruce  
Manfred T. Brauch**



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# 1 SAMUEL

## **1:1 Was Samuel a Levite or an Ephraimite?**

*See comment on 1 CHRONICLES 6:16.*

## **1:11 Was Hannah Right to Bargain with God?**

Is the desperate prayer of Hannah for a son a legitimate way to approach God, or is it a bad example of trying to bargain with God?

Hannah's prayer has no more the ill sense of bargaining with God than many of our prayers. While it is true that we can abuse the privilege that we have of direct access to the throne of God to make our requests known, it is God who will judge the propriety and motivation of each prayer, not any mortal.

What is surprising is to notice the same directness of access and the simplicity with which this woman, who is part of the fellowship of the many barren women in the Bible, makes her request known to God. There is no demanding or threatening here. Her prayer is not formal, contrived or ritualistic. It is as direct as any might wish it

to be. If only God would look, if only he would remember her and if only he would give her a son, she vowed that she would not grow proud, forgetful or ungrateful; on the contrary, she would give this son (she never considered that it might be a girl) back to God.

God was not obligated to answer her. But the fact that he did indicates that he judged her motives to be right and her request appropriate.

## **2:25 Did God Prevent Eli's Sons from Repenting?**

In what way was it God's will to put Eli's sons to death? Does this mean that God actually intervened in some way to make sure that Hophni and Phinehas never repented and were therefore condemned to die? How free were the wills of these two priestly sons of the high priest, Eli, in this regard?

The Lord can both reverse the fortunes of the poor and rich (1 Sam 2:6) and confirm the hardness of heart of the rebellious and reprobate (1 Sam 2:25).

The hapless Eli, now in his advanced

years, had more than he could contend with in his two strong-willed sons. To their earlier callous treatment of the Israelites who came bringing offerings to the house of God (1 Sam 2:13-16) the men now added sexual promiscuity (1 Sam 2:22; compare Ex 38:8). Such ritual prostitution, as practiced among their Canaanite neighbors, was strictly forbidden in Israel (Num 25:1-5; Deut 23:17; Amos 2:7-8).

Eli finally challenged the riotous and autocratic conduct of his two sons, but the rebuke fell on deaf ears: the men were determined to do what they were determined to do (1 Sam 2:25). What followed, then, was another instance of divine judicial hardening. Just as the Pharaoh of Israel's oppression in Egypt defiantly refused any invitations to repent, even though God mercifully sent him one plague after another as a sign to that same effect, so God had finally decided in this case that he would end Eli's sons' lives: the decision was irrevocable.

Was this unfair or sudden? Hardly. God must have been calling these men to change for many years, but they, like Pharaoh, squandered these times of mercy and opportunities for change until time was no longer available. Moreover, the double jeopardy rule was in vogue here, for those who serve in the ministry of the things of God are doubly accountable, both for themselves and for those who look up to them for teaching and example (Jas 3:1). They had thereby sinned against the Lord. If the case seems to draw more judgment more swiftly, then let the fact that these men were under the double jeopardy rule be factored in and the appropriateness of the action will be more than vindicated. *See also comment on EXODUS 9:12.*

### **6:19 Death for Just Looking into the Ark?**

*See comment on 2 SAMUEL 6:6-7.*

### **8—12 Did God Want Israel to Have a King?**

What makes this section a hard saying is not the fact that it contains what some have unfairly labeled the ramblings of a disappointed prophet. Instead, it is the fact that up until very recent times, most nonevangelical Old Testament scholars strongly believed that they detected an ambivalent attitude toward kingship in the narratives of 1 Samuel 8—12, in light of the covenantal tone of 1 Samuel 11:14—12:25.

It has been fairly common to find 1 Samuel 8—12 characterized as a collection of independent story units or tradition complexes, some being promonarchical and others antimonarchical. This division was supposedly evidenced in different attitudes and responses to the idea of a monarchy and kingship in Israel. Generally an antimonarchical orientation was attributed to 1 Samuel 8:1-21, 10:17-27 and 12:1-25, while a promonarchical stance was seen in 1 Samuel 9:1—10:16 and 11:1-15. Endorsing this analysis of the material would leave us with a dilemma: how could Scripture both approve and reprove the concept of a monarchy?

A second problem in the debate surrounding 1 Samuel 8—12 is the sequencing of events presented in the book. It has been widely alleged that the present sequence is an artificial device imposed by a late editor as a result of the growth of tradition.

Finally, many scholars have said that the antimonarchical sections show indications of editorial revisions arising from Deuteronomistic influence; this argument is based on a late dating of Deuteronomy in the postexilic period of the fifth or fourth century B.C.

Each of these three allegations must be answered. There is no doubt that a tension of sorts does exist in the narratives of 1 Samuel 8—12. The prospect of

establishing a kingship in Israel elicited numerous reservations, and these are fairly aired in 1 Samuel 8:1-21, 10:17-27 and 12:1-25.

Yet it cannot be forgotten that kingship was also within the direct plan and permission of God. God had divulged that part of his plan as far back as the days of Moses (Deut 17:14-20). Accordingly, when Samuel presented Saul to the people, it was as the one whom the Lord had chosen (1 Sam 10:24). Saul's appointment was the outcome of the twice-repeated guidance that Samuel received: "Listen to all that the people are saying" (1 Sam 8:7, 22). In fact, 1 Samuel 12:13 specifically says, "See, the LORD has set a king over you."

But here is the important point. These five chapters of 1 Samuel cannot be neatly divided into two contrasting sets of narratives; the ambivalence is present even within the units that have been labeled as corresponding to one side or the other! The problem, in fact, is to explain this ambivalence at all. What is the cause for this love-hate attitude toward kingship in Israel?

My answer is the same as Robert Vannoy's.<sup>1</sup> It is the covenantal relationship expressed in 1 Samuel 11:14—12:25 that explains this ambivalence. The issue, then, is not the presence of kingship so much as it is the *kind* of kingship and the *reasons* for wanting a monarchy.

There is no question but that the presence of a king in Israel was fully compatible with Yahweh's covenant with Israel. What hurt Samuel and the Lord was the people's improper motive for requesting a king in the first place: they wanted to "be like all the other nations" (8:20) and have a king to lead them when they went out to fight. This was tantamount to breaking the covenant and rejecting Yahweh as their Sovereign (8:7; 10:19). To act in this manner was to forget God's provision for them in the past.

Hadn't he protected them and gone before them in battle many times?

Since the people were so unfaithful in their motivation for desiring a king, it was necessary to warn them about "the manner of the king" (literal translation of *mišpaṭ hammelek*—8:11). If what the people wanted was a contemporary form of monarchy, then they had better get used to all the abuses and problems of kingship as well as its splendor.

Five serious problems with the contemporary forms of kingship are cited in 1 Samuel 8:11-18. That these issues were real can be attested by roughly contemporaneous documents from Alalakh and Ugarit.<sup>2</sup> The problems they would experience would include a military draft, the servitude of the populace, widespread royal confiscation of private property, taxation and loss of personal liberty.

This delineation of "the manner of the king" served to define the function of kings in the ancient Near East. But over against this was the gathering that took place at Mizpah (1 Sam 10:17-27). Here Samuel described "the manner of the kingdom" (literal translation of *mišpaṭ hamm'luḳāh*—10:25). In so doing Samuel began to resolve the tension between Israel's improper reasons for desiring a king, their misconceptions of the king's role and function, and Yahweh's purpose in saying that he also desired Israel to have a king. Samuel's definition of "the manner of the kingdom" clearly distinguished Israelite kingship from the kingship that was practiced in the surrounding nations of that day.

In Israel, the king's role was to be compatible with Yahweh's sovereignty over the nation and also with all the laws, prescriptions and obligations of the covenant given to the people under Moses' leadership. Thus "the manner of the kingdom" was to be normative for the nation of Israel rather than "the manner of the king."

The issue of the sequencing of the narratives is less difficult. Given the tensions of the time—the various attitudes toward kingship and the legitimacy of establishing it—one can easily see how the text does reflect the back-and-forth unfolding of the process at various geographic locations and on different days. Each phase of the negotiations dramatized the seesaw nature of this battle between those holding out for the sovereignty of Yahweh and those wanting a more visible and contemporaneous model of kingship.

The most critical problem in connection with the sequencing of the events is the relationship between 1 Samuel 11:14-15 and 1 Samuel 10:17-27, particularly in connection with the statement in 1 Samuel 11:14, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there *reaffirm* the kingship.”

This phrase constitutes the most compelling evidence for the argument that several accounts have been put together in these chapters. The simplest, and best, explanation for the meaning of this debated phrase, however, is that the reference is not to Saul, but to a renewal of allegiance to Yahweh and his covenant. It is a call for the renewal ceremony that is described in greater detail in 1 Samuel 12. This explanation makes the most sense and makes possible the best harmonization of the parallel accounts of Saul’s accession to the throne in 1 Samuel 10:17-27 and 11:15.

The third and final objection concerns the alleged Deuteronomistic influence on the so-called antimonarchical sections. Bear in mind that those who raise this objection also date Deuteronomy to the fifth or fourth century B.C. rather than attributing it to Moses as it properly should be.

Their argument runs into several problems of its own. Long ago Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) noted its basic flaw: for all of Deuteronomy’s alleged

antimonarchical views, it had put forth a positive “law of the king” (Deut 17:14-20) long before any of the Israelites thought of having a king! Furthermore, the pictures of David, Hezekiah and Josiah in 1 and 2 Kings (other books often alleged to be Deuteronomistic in viewpoint and influence) were likewise pro-monarchical.

There is no doubt that Deuteronomy had a profound influence on the events described in 1 Samuel 8—12, but none of them can be shown to have resulted from a late editorializing based on an exilic or postexilic revisionist view of how kingship had come about in Israel.

Thus we conclude that none of these three problems can be used as evidence for a lack of unity, coherence or singularity of viewpoint. Most important of all, the covenantal perspective of 1 Samuel 11:14—12:25 provides the best basis for the unity and historical trustworthiness of these accounts as they are known today.

<sup>1</sup>Robert Vannoy, *Covenant Renewal at Gilgal* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publishing, 1978), p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>I. Mendelson, “Samuel’s Denunciation of Kingship in Light of Akkadian Documents from Ugarit,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 143 (1956): 17.

### 13:13-14 Would God Have Established Saul’s Kingdom?

How was it possible for Samuel to say that Saul’s house could have had perpetuity over Israel when Genesis 49:10 had promised it to the tribe of Judah (not Benjamin, from which Saul hailed) long before Saul’s reign or downfall? Of course, the Lord had planned to place a king over Israel, as Deuteronomy 17:14 had clearly taught. But if the family that was to wield the scepter was from Judah, how could God—in retrospect, to Saul’s disappointment—say that Saul could indeed have been that king?

The solution to this problem is not to be found in Samuel's vacillating attitudes toward Saul, for it is clear that Saul was also God's choice from the very beginning (1 Sam 9:16; 10:1, 24; 12:13).

The Lord had allowed the choice of the people to fall on one whose external attributes made an immediate positive impression on people. Saul's was strictly an earthly kingdom, with all the pagantry and showmanship that impress mortals.

Unfortunately, Saul was not disposed to rule in humble submission to the laws, ordinances and commandments that came from above. As one final evidence of his attitude, he had refused to wait for the appointment he had made with Samuel. As he went ahead and took over the duties of a priest, in violation of his kingly position, God decided that he would not keep his appointment with him as king.

The type of kingship Samuel had instituted under the direction of God was distinctive. It was a theocracy; the Israelite monarchy was to function under the authority and sovereignty of Yahweh himself. When this covenantal context was violated, the whole "manner of the kingdom" (1 Sam 10:25) was undermined.

While this explanation may suffice for what happened in the "short haul," how shall we address the issue of God's having promised the kingship to the family of Judah, rather than to the Benjamite family of Kish? Would God have actually given Saul's family a portion or all of the nation, had Saul listened and kept the commandments of God? Or did the writer, and hence God also, regard the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin as one? In that case, perhaps what had been promised to Judah could have gone to Saul just as easily as to David.

There is evidence from Scripture itself that the tribes of Benjamin and Judah

were regarded as one tribe: 1 Kings 11:36 says, "I will give one tribe to [Solomon's] son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem." If these two could later be regarded as "one," no objection can be made to doing so earlier.

Ultimately, this is one of those questions that are impossible to resolve fully, since we are asking for information that belongs to the mind of God. However, it seems important that we be able to offer several possible solutions.

Another possible solution is that it may well have been that God fully intended that Judah, and eventually the house of David, would rule over Israel and Judah. But it is also possible that Saul's family would have been given the northern ten tribes of Israel after the division of the kingdom, which God in his omniscience of course could anticipate. That would resolve the question just as easily.

The best suggestion, however, is that God had agreed to appoint Saul king in deference to the people's deep wishes. Though the Lord had consented, this was not his directive will; he merely permitted it to happen. Eventually, what the Lord knew all along was proved true: Saul had a character flaw that precipitated his demise. Nevertheless, it is possible to describe Saul in terms of what he could have been, barring that flaw, in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Israelites.

A combination of these last two views is possible—that in his permissive will God would have given Saul the northern ten tribes in perpetuity without denying to the house of Judah the two southern tribes, according to his promise in Genesis 49:10. An interesting confirmation of this possibility can be seen in 1 Kings 11:38, where King Jeroboam is promised an enduring dynasty, in a parallel to the promise God had made to King David.

Since the promise to Jeroboam in no way replaced the long-standing promise to the tribe of Judah and the house of David, it is similar to God's "might-have-been" to Saul. God offered the ten northern tribes to Jeroboam just as he had offered them to Saul.

One final possibility is that Saul was given a genuine, though hypothetical, promise of a perpetual dynasty over (northern) Israel. However, the Lord surely knew that Saul would not measure up to the challenge set before him. God had chosen Saul because he wanted him to serve as a negative example in contrast to David, whose behavior was so different. This, then, set the stage for the introduction of the legitimate kingship as God had always intended it. *See also comment on 1 SAMUEL 8—12.*

### 15:11 Does God Change His Mind?

*See comment on GENESIS 6:6; 1 SAMUEL 15:29.*

### 15:18 Completely Destroy Them!

A chief objection to the view that the God of the Old Testament is a God of love and mercy is the divine command to exterminate all the men, women and children belonging to the seven or eight Canaanite nations. How could God approve of blanket destruction, of the genocide of an entire group of people?

Attempts to tone down the command or to mitigate its stark reality fail from the start. God's instructions are too clear, and too many texts speak of consigning whole populations to destruction: Exodus 23:32-33; 34:11-16; and Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18.

In most of these situations, a distinctive Old Testament concept known as *herem* is present. It means "curse," "that which stood under the ban" or "that which was dedicated to destruction." The root idea of this term was "separa-

tion"; however, this situation was not the positive concept of sanctification in which someone or something was set aside for the service and glory of God. This was the opposite side of the same coin: to set aside or separate for destruction.

God dedicated these things or persons to destruction because they violently and steadfastly impeded or opposed his work over a long period of time. This "dedication to destruction" was not used frequently in the Old Testament. It was reserved for the spoils of southern Canaan (Num 21:2-3), Jericho (Josh 6:21), Ai (Josh 8:26), Makedah (Josh 10:28) and Hazor (Josh 11:11).

In a most amazing prediction, Abraham was told that his descendants would be exiled and mistreated for four hundred years (in round numbers for 430 years) before God would lead them out of that country. The reason for so long a delay, Genesis 15:13-16 explains, was that "the sin of the Amorites [the Canaanites] has not yet reached its full measure." Thus, God waited for centuries while the Amalekites and those other Canaanite groups slowly filled up their own cups of condemnation by their sinful behavior. God never acted precipitously against them; his grace and mercy waited to see if they would repent and turn from their headlong plummet into self-destruction.

Not that the conquering Israelites were without sin. Deuteronomy 9:5 makes that clear to the Israelites: "It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations."

These nations were cut off to prevent the corruption of Israel and the rest of the world (Deut 20:16-18). When a nation starts burning children as a gift to the gods (Lev 18:21) and practices sod-

omy, bestiality and all sorts of loathsome vices (Lev 18:25, 27-30), the day of God's grace and mercy has begun to run out.

Just as surgeons do not hesitate to amputate a gangrenous limb, even if they cannot help cutting off some healthy flesh, so God must do the same. This is not doing evil that good may come; it is removing the cancer that could infect all of society and eventually destroy the remaining good.

God could have used pestilence, hurricanes, famine, diseases or anything else he wanted. In this case he chose to use Israel to reveal his power, but the charge of cruelty against God is no more deserved in this case than it is in the general order of things in the world where all of these same calamities happen.

In the providential acts of life, it is understood that individuals share in the life of their families and nations. As a result we as individuals participate both in our families' and nations' rewards and in their punishments. Naturally this will involve some so-called innocent people; however, even that argument involves us in a claim to omniscience which we do not possess. If the women and children had been spared in those profane Canaanite nations, how long would it have been before a fresh crop of adults would emerge just like their pagan predecessors?

Why was God so opposed to the Amalekites? When the Israelites were struggling through the desert toward Canaan, the Amalekites picked off the weak, sick and elderly at the end of the line of marchers and brutally murdered these stragglers. Warned Moses, "Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they

had no fear of God" (Deut 25:17-18).

Some commentators note that the Amalekites were not merely plundering or disputing who owned what territories; they were attacking God's chosen people to discredit the living God. Some trace the Amalekites' adamant hostility all through the Old Testament, including the most savage butchery of all in Haman's proclamation that all Jews throughout the Persian Empire could be massacred on a certain day (Esther 3:8-11). Many make a case that Haman was an Amalekite. His actions then would ultimately reveal this nation's deep hatred for God, manifested toward the people through whom God had chosen to bless the whole world.

In Numbers 25:16-18 and 31:1-18 Israel was also told to conduct a war of extermination against all in Midian, with the exception of the prepubescent girls, because the Midianites had led them into idolatry and immorality. It was not contact with foreigners per se that was the problem, but the threat to Israel's relationship with the Lord. The divine command, therefore, was to break Midian's strength by killing all the male children and also the women who had slept with a man and who could still become mothers.

The texts of Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 7:1-2 and Psalm 106:34 are further examples of the principle of *herem*, dedicating the residents of Canaan to total destruction as an involuntary offering to God.

See also comment on NUMBERS 25:7-13; 2 KINGS 6:21-23.

### 15:22 Does the Lord Delight in Sacrifices?

Though some texts call for burnt offerings or daily offerings to God (for example, Ex 29:18, 36; Lev 1-7), others appear to disparage any sacrifices, just as 1 Samuel 15:22 seems to do. How do we

reconcile this seeming contradiction?

God derives very little satisfaction from the external act of sacrificing. In fact, he complains, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens. . . . If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it" (Ps 50:9, 12).

Indeed, David learned this same lesson the hard way. After his sin with Bathsheba and the rebuke of Nathan the prophet, David confessed, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps 51:17). After the priority of the heart attitude had been corrected, it was possible for David to say, "Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar" (Ps 51:19).

Samuel's harangue seconds the message of the writing prophets: Perfunctory acts of worship and ritual, apart from diligent obedience, were basically worthless both to God and to the individual.

This is why the prophet Isaiah rebuked his nation for their empty ritualism. What good, he lamented, were all the sacrifices, New Moon festivals, sabbaths, convocations and filing into the temple of God? So worthless was all this feverish activity that God said he was fed up with it all (Is 1:11-15). What was needed, instead, was a whole new heart attitude as the proper preparation for meeting God. Warned Isaiah, "'Wash and make yourselves clean. . . . Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool'" (Is 1:16, 18). Then real sacrifices could be offered to God.

Jeremiah records the same complaint: "Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please me" (Jer 6:20). So deceptive was the nation's

trust in this hollow worship that Jeremiah later announced that God had wanted more than sacrifices when he brought Israel out of Egypt (Jer 7:22). He had wanted the people to trust him. It was always tempting to substitute attendance at God's house, heartless worship or possessing God's Word for active response to that Word (Jer 7:9-15, 21-26; 8:8-12).

No less definitive were the messages of Hosea (Hos 6:6) and Micah (Mic 6:6-8). The temptation to externalize religion and to use it only in emergency situations was altogether too familiar.

Samuel's rebuke belongs to the same class of complaints. It was couched in poetry, as some of those listed above were, and it also had a proverbial form. The moral truth it conveys must be understood comparatively. Often a proverb was stated in terms that call for setting priorities. Accordingly one must read an implied "this first and then that." These "better" wisdom sayings, of course, directly point to such a priority. What does not follow is that what is denied, or not called "better," is thereby rejected by God. Arguing on those grounds would ignore the statement's proverbial structure.

God does approve of sacrificing, but he does not wish to have it at the expense of full obedience to his Word or as a substitute for a personal relationship of love and trust. Sacrifices, however, were under the Old Testament economy. Animal sacrifices are no longer necessary today, because Christ was our sacrifice, once for all (Heb 10:1-18). Nevertheless, the principle remains the same: What is the use of performing outward acts of religion if that religious activity is not grounded in an obedient heart of faith? True religious affection for God begins with the heart and not in acts of worship or the accompanying vestments and ritual!

See also comment on PSALM 51:16-17, 19.



### 15:29 God Does Not Change His Mind?

Here in 1 Samuel 15 we have a clear statement about God's truthfulness and unchanging character. But elsewhere in the Old Testament we read of God repenting or changing his mind. Does God change his mind? If so, does that discredit his truthfulness or his unchanging character? If not, what do these other Old Testament texts mean?

It can be affirmed from the start that God's essence and character, his resolute determination to punish sin and to reward virtue, are unchanging (see Mal 3:6). These are absolute and unconditional affirmations that Scripture everywhere teaches. But this does not mean that all his promises and warnings are unconditional. Many turn on either an expressed or an implied condition.

The classic example of this conditional teaching is Jeremiah 18:7-10: "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it."

This principle clearly states the condition underlying most of God's promises and threats, even when it is not made explicit, as in the case of Jonah. Therefore, whenever God does not fulfill a promise or execute a threat that he has made, the explanation is obvious: in all of these cases, the change has not come in God, but in the individual or nation.

Of course some of God's promises are unconditional for they rest solely on his mercy and grace. These would be: his covenant with the seasons after Noah's flood (Gen 8:22); his promise of salva-

tion in the oft-repeated covenant to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David; his promise of the new covenant; and his promise of the new heaven and the new earth.

So what, then, was the nature of the change in God that 1 Samuel 15:11 refers to when he says, "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions"? If God is unchangeable, why did he "repent" or "grieve over" the fact that he had made Saul king?

God is not a frozen automaton who cannot respond to persons; he is a living person who can and does react to others as much, and more genuinely, than we do to each other. Thus the same word *repent* is used for two different concepts both in this passage and elsewhere in the Bible. One shows God's responsiveness to individuals and the other shows his steadfastness to himself and to his thoughts and designs.

Thus the text affirms that God changed his actions toward Saul in order to remain true to his own character or essence. Repentance in God is not, as it is in us, an evidence of indecisiveness. It is rather a change in his method of responding to another person based on some change in the other individual. The change, then, was in Saul. The problem was with Saul's partial obedience, his wayward heart and covetousness.

To assert that God is unchanging does not mean he cannot experience regret, grief and repentance. If unchangeableness meant transcendent detachment from people and events, God would pay an awful price for immutability. Instead, God enters into a relationship with mortal beings that demonstrates his willingness to respond to each person's action within the ethical sphere of their obedience to his will.

When our sin or repentance changes our relationship with God, his changing responses to us no more affect his essential happiness or blessedness than Christ's deity affected his ability to genuinely suffer on the cross for our sin.

See also comment on GENESIS 6:6; JONAH 4:1-2.

### 16:1-3 Does God Authorize Deception?

On the face of it, God appears to be telling Samuel to lie or, at the very least, to be deceptive. Is this an indication that under certain circumstances God approves of lying in order to accomplish some higher good?

It is always wrong to tell a lie. Never does the Scripture give us grounds for telling either a lie or a half-truth. The reason for this is because God is true and his nature is truth itself. Anything less than this is a denial of him as God.

But what about the divine advice given to Samuel in this text when he objects to anointing David when Saul was already so jealous that he would kill the prophet Samuel should he be so presumptuous as to anoint someone else in his place? Is God's advice a mere "pre-text" as some commentators conclude? Or is it tacit approval for persons in a tight spot to lie?

The most important word in this connection is the word *how*. Samuel did not question whether he should go or even if he should anoint the one God had in mind; he just wanted to know how such a feat could be carried out. The divine answer was that he was to take a sacrifice and that would serve as a legitimate answer to Saul, or any other inquirer, as to what he was doing in those parts, so obviously out of his regular circuit of places to minister. He was there to offer a sacrifice. Should Saul have encountered Samuel and asked him what he was doing in those parts at that time,

Samuel could correctly answer, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD."

Some will complain that this is a half-truth. And isn't a half-truth the same as speaking or acting out a lie? It is at this point where the discussion of John Murray<sup>1</sup> is so helpful. Murray observed that Saul had forfeited his right to know *all* the truth, but that did not mean that Samuel, or anyone else for that matter, ever had, or has, the right to tell a lie. Everything that Samuel spoke had to be the truth. But Samuel was under no moral obligation in this situation to come forth with everything that he knew. Only when there are those who have a right to know and we deliberately withhold part or all of the information does it qualify as a lie or does the half-truth become the living or telling of a lie.

We use this principle in life when a young child prematurely asks us for the facts of life or a sick or elderly person inquires of a medical doctor what is wrong with them and if they will get well. The answer in all these cases is to answer truthfully without elaborating on those details which the person is not ready for by reason of their age or the possible impact it might have on their desire to rally and get well.

Some may complain that this seems to be saying that we cannot deceive anyone in our *words*, but that we have the right to deceive them through our *actions*. This is not what I am saying. It was God's right to give Samuel a second mission, the offering of a sacrifice, which was not a deception, but a routine act he performed. Saul did not have the right to know all the other actions Samuel would perform while carrying out that mission—God does not "deceive" us when he does not choose to disclose all that he knows!

The only exceptions to this rule against deception are to be found in war zones or in playing sports. For example,

nations that engage in war count on the fact that some of the movements of the enemy will be carried out to deliberately mislead and throw their opposition off balance. Likewise, if I go into a football huddle and the team captain says, "Now, Kaiser, I want you to run a fake pattern around right end pretending you have the ball," I do not object by saying, "Oh, no you don't; give me the ball or nothing. I'm an evangelical and I have a reputation for honesty to protect." It is part of the sport that there will be accepted types of dissimulation that take place.

Truth is always required in every other situation. Only when someone feels that right to know everything may I withhold information; but under no circumstances may I speak an untruth. Thus when the Nazis of the Third Reich in Germany during World War II were asking if someone was hiding Jews, the correct procedure would have been to say as little as possible, all of which had to be true, while carefully hiding those Jews as best as one could.

See also comment on EXODUS 1:15-21; 3:18; JOSHUA 2:4-6.

<sup>1</sup>John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 189-41.

### 16:10-11 Did Jesse Have Seven or Eight Sons?

See comment on 1 CHRONICLES 2:13-15.

### 16:14 An Evil Spirit from the Lord?

Just as the prophet Samuel anointed David as the next king, King Saul became bereft of the Spirit of God and fell into ugly bouts of melancholia, which were attributed to an evil spirit sent from the Lord.

The Spirit of God had overwhelmed Saul when he had assumed the role of king over the land (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6).

Exactly what the Spirit's presence with Saul entailed is not explained, but it seems to have included the gift of government, the gift of wisdom and prudence in civil matters, and a spirit of fortitude and courage. These gifts can be extrapolated from the evidence that after Saul was anointed king, he immediately shed his previous shyness and reticence to be in the public eye. It is obvious that Saul did not have a natural aptitude for governing, for if he had, why did he hide among the baggage when he knew already what the outcome would be? But when the Spirit of God came upon him in connection with the threatened mutilation of the citizens of Jabesh Gilead (1 Sam 11), and Saul sent out word that all able-bodied men were to report immediately for battle, the citizens of Israel were so startled that this had come from the likes of Saul that they showed up in force. God had suddenly gifted him with the "Spirit of God" (1 Sam 11:6), and Saul was a great leader for twenty years (1 Sam 14:47-48).

But all of this was lost as suddenly as it had been gained—the Spirit had removed his gift of government.

But what was the evil spirit mentioned here and in 1 Samuel 18:10 and 19:9? The ancient historian Josephus explained it as follows: "But as for Saul, some strange and demonical disorders came upon him, and brought upon him such suffocations as were ready to choke him" (*Antiquities* 6.8.2). Keil and Delitzsch likewise attributed Saul's problem to demon possession. They specified that this

was not merely an inward feeling of depression at the rejection announced to him, . . . but a higher evil power, which took possession of him, and not only deprived him of his peace of mind, but stirred up the feelings, ideas, imagination, and thoughts of his soul to such an extent that at

times it drove him even into madness. This demon is called "an evil spirit [coming] from Jehovah" because Jehovah sent it as a punishment.<sup>1</sup>

A second suggestion is that this evil spirit was a messenger, by analogy with the situation in 1 Kings 22:20-23. This unspecified messenger did his work by the permission of God.

A third suggestion is that this evil spirit was a "spirit of discontent" created in Saul's heart by God because of his continued disobedience.

Whatever the malady was, and whatever its source, one of the temporary cures for its torments was music. David's harp-playing would soothe Saul's frenzied condition, so that he would once again gain control of his emotions and actions (1 Sam 16:14-23).

All this happened by the permission of God rather than as a result of his directive will, for God cannot be the author of anything evil. But the exact source of Saul's torment cannot be determined with any degree of certitude. The Lord may well have used a messenger, or even just an annoying sense of disquietude and discontent. Yet if Saul really was a believer—and I think there are enough evidences to affirm that he was—then it is difficult to see how he could have been possessed by a demon. Whether believers can be possessed by demons, however, is still being debated by theologians.

<sup>1</sup>Johann Karl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1950), p. 170.

### 17:12-14 Did Jesse Have Seven or Eight Sons?

See comment on 1 CHRONICLES 2:13-15.

### 17:49 Who Killed Goliath?

In 1 Samuel 17 and 21:9 it is claimed that David is the one who killed Goliath;

however, in 2 Samuel 21:19 it says that Elhanan killed him. Both cannot be right, can they? And who was Lahmi, mentioned in 1 Chronicles 20:5?

While some have tried to resolve the contradiction by suggesting that Elhanan may be a throne name for David, a reference to David, under any name, in a summary of exploits by David's mighty men appears most peculiar.

The bottom line on this whole dispute is that David is the one who slew Goliath and Elhanan slew the brother of Goliath, as it says in 1 Chronicles 20:5. The problem, then, is with the 2 Samuel 21:19 text. Fortunately, however, we can trace what the original wording for that text was through the correctly preserved text in 1 Chronicles 20:5.

The copyist of the 2 Samuel 21:19 text made three mistakes: (1) He read the direct object sign that comes just before the name of the giant that Elhanan killed, namely Lahmi, as if it were the word "Beth," thereby getting "the Bethlehemite," when the "Beth" was put with "Lahmi." (2) He also misread the word for "brother" (Hebrew *āh*) as the direct object sign (Hebrew *et*) before Goliath, thereby making Goliath the one who was killed, since he was now the direct object of the verb, instead, as it should have been, "the brother of Goliath." (3) He misplaced the word "Oregim," meaning "weavers," so that it yielded "Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim," a most improbable reading for anyone: "Elhanan the son of the forests of weavers." The word for "weavers" should come as it does in 1 Chronicles 20:5 about the spear being "a beam/shaft like a weaver's rod."<sup>1</sup>

Elhanan gets the credit for killing Lahmi, the brother of Goliath; but David remains the hero who killed Goliath.

<sup>1</sup>See J. Barton Payne, "1 Chronicles," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, ed. Frank E. Garbelein (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 403-4.

Cleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 178-79.

### 17:55-58 Why Did Saul Ask David's Identity?

Saul's questions about the identity of David in 1 Samuel 17 create a rather difficult problem in light of 1 Samuel 16, especially 1 Samuel 16:14-23. It would appear from chapter 16 that by the time of David's slaying of Goliath Saul had already been introduced to David and knew him quite well.

The traditional way of resolving this dilemma in nonevangelical circles is to suppose that these two accounts stem from independent traditions. Thus the confusion over whether David's debut at court preceded his conquest of the Philistine is unnecessary, since the stories come from different sources and do not intend to reflect what really happened so much as teach a truth. However, this resolution of the matter is not attractive to most who take the claims of the Bible more straightforwardly. The difficulty continues: how could Saul—and Abner too—be ignorant about this lad who had been Saul's armor-bearer and musician?

Some have blamed Saul's diseased and failing mental state. On this view, the evil spirit from God had brought on a type of mental malady that affected his memory. Persons suffering from certain types of mania or insanity often forget the closest of their friends.

Others have argued that the hustle and bustle of court life, with its multiplicity of servants and attendants, meant that Saul could have easily forgotten David, especially if the time was long between David's service through music and his slaying of Goliath. Yet a long period of time does not appear to have separated these events. Furthermore, David was a regular member of Saul's retinue (1 Sam 16:21).

A third option is to suggest that Saul was not asking for David's identity, which he knew well enough. Instead he was attempting to learn what his father's social position and worth were, for he was concerned what type of stock his future son-in-law might come from. (Remember, whoever was successful in killing Goliath would win the hand of Saul's daughter, according to the terms of Saul's challenge.) While this might explain Saul's motives, does it explain Abner's lack of knowledge? Or must we posit that he also knew who David was but had no idea what his social status and lineage were? Possibly!

The most plausible explanation, and the one favored by most older commentators, is that the four events in the history of Saul and David in 1 Samuel 16—18 are not given in chronological order. Instead, they are transposed by a figure of speech known as *hysterologia*, in which something is put last that according to the usual order should be put first. For example, the Genesis 10 account of the dispersion of the nations comes before the cause of it—the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

The fact that the order has been rearranged for special purposes in 1 Samuel 16—18 can be seen from the fact that the Vaticanus manuscript of the Septuagint deletes twenty-nine verses in all (1 Sam 17:12-31 and 17:55—18:5).

E. W. Bullinger suggested that the text was rearranged in order to bring together certain facts, especially those about the Spirit of God.<sup>1</sup> Thus in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 David is anointed and the Spirit of God comes upon him. Then, in order to contrast this impartation of the Spirit of God with the removal of the Spirit from Saul, 1 Samuel 16:14-23 is brought forward from later history. In the straightforward order of events, Bullinger suggests, it should follow 18:9.

First Samuel 17:1—18:9 records an event earlier in the life of David, which is introduced here in a parenthetical way as an illustration of 1 Samuel 14:52. This section is just an instance of what 14:52 claims.

The whole section, therefore, has this construction:

- |   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| A | 16:1-13   | David anointed. The Spirit comes on him.                                 |
| B | 16:14-23  | Saul rejected. The Spirit departs from him. An evil spirit torments him. |
| A | 17:1—18:9 | David. An earlier incident in his life.                                  |
| B | 18:10-30  | Saul. The Spirit departs and an evil spirit troubles him.                |

Thus the narration alternates between David and Saul, creating a didactic contrast between the Spirit of God and the evil spirit that tormented Saul. The focus is on the spiritual state of the two men, not the historical order of events.

All too frequently, the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings are given the label "Historical Books" rather than the more correct label "Earlier Prophets." They aim at teaching lessons from the prophetic eye of inspiration rather than simply providing a chronicle of how events occurred in time and history.

That these texts appear in topical, rather than chronological, order is the best explanation, especially when we note how the theology of the text is embedded in it.

See also comment on GENESIS 11:1-9; 1 SAMUEL 8—12.

<sup>1</sup>E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech* (1898; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1968), pp. 706-7.

### 18:10; 19:9 An Evil Spirit from the Lord?

See comment on 1 SAMUEL 16:14.

### 19:13 David's House Has an Idol?

What is an idol doing in the house of David, a monotheist and the one through whom the line of Christ is to come? Where did his wife Michal lay her hands on such an item, no matter what good intentions she had of protecting her husband from her jealous father?

Michal's ruse gave David time to flee from the soldiers who were sent to capture David, but that is not the point. Michal's dummy is described as being one of the *terāpîm*, "idols" or "household gods." The word is always found in the plural form, and the idols were sometimes small enough to be tucked away in a camel's saddle (Gen 31:19, 34-35), but here the idol seems to be man-sized, since Michal used it to simulate David's presence in bed.

The fact that household gods or idols were part of Michal's belongings, if not David's as well, probably reflects a pagan inclination or ignorant use of the surrounding culture. It would appear that the narrator made a deliberate connection between Michal and Rachel, who hid the teraphim in her camel saddle in Genesis 31. Each woman deceived her father in the use of the teraphim and thereby demonstrated more love and attachment to her husband than to her father. If our estimate of Rachel was that the teraphim may not have been symbols of the person who held the will, that is, the rights to the inheritance, but were idols that would later have to be gotten rid of (Gen 35), then Michal, and David by implication, would be guilty of the same sin and in need of repentance and God's forgiveness.

See also comment on GENESIS 31:34.

### 19:19-24 How Did Saul Prophesy?

Seeking a naturalistic explanation for

the phenomenon of prophecy in the Old Testament, some have theorized that such powers derived from ecstatic experiences in which the prophet wandered outside his own consciousness during a period of artistic creation. One of the passages used to sustain such a thesis is 1 Samuel 19:19-24.

Quite apart from the issue of ecstasy in prophecy are two other matters. Could a king also be a prophet? And did the king really strip off all his clothes as a result of this powerful experience of prophesying?

The story told here is clear enough. In a jealous rage over David's popularity and success, Saul was bent on capturing David. No doubt rumors were now spreading that Samuel had anointed David as king in place of the then-reigning Saul.

Saul sent three different groups of messengers to apprehend David, who had fled from Saul to join Samuel at his prophetic school at Ramah. All three groups encountered Samuel's band of prophets prophesying. And each of the groups of messengers began to prophesy as well.

At last Saul had had enough and decided to go in search of David himself. While he was still on the way, however, the "Spirit of God" came on him; so he too prophesied. Later, after coming to where the others were, he removed some of his clothing and lay in an apparent stupor the rest of that day and the following night.

Each of the three problems raised by this text deserves some response based on the meaning of certain words used in this context and other similar contexts.

It has been claimed that the Greeks thought artistic genius was always accompanied by a degree of madness; thus, those who prophesied must have similarly experienced "ecstasy"—a word literally meaning "to stand apart from or

outside oneself." Furthermore, it was argued that the behavior of the Canaanite prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel was just like that of earlier Israelite prophets.

But the verb *to prophesy*, as used in this context, does not mean "to act violently" or "to be mad." The Old Testament makes a clear distinction between the prophets of Canaan and those under the inspiration of God.

Only three Old Testament passages have been used as evidence that prophesying entailed a temporary madness and standing apart from oneself. These three passages, however, record the estimates of others rather than God's estimates of prophets and the source of their inspiration. In 2 Kings 9:11, a young prophet sent by Elisha to anoint Jehu as king is called a "madman" (*m<sup>c</sup>šugā*) by the soldiers who are sitting in Jehu's barracks. Their label is hardly a statement from God or a source of normative teaching. The Bible simply records that that is what these men thought of prophets—an attitude not altogether dissimilar from that held today by some about the clergy. A second text, Jeremiah 29:26, quotes a certain She-maiah, then captive in Babylon, from a letter where he too opines: "Every man that is mad [*m<sup>c</sup>šugā*] makes himself a prophet" (my translation). In the final text, Hosea 9:7, Hosea characterizes a point in Israel's thinking by saying, "The prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac [*m<sup>c</sup>šugā*]."

None of these three texts demonstrates that the verb *to prophesy* legitimately carries the connotation of madness. Instead, they simply show that many associated prophecy with madness in an attempt to stigmatize the work of real prophets. It was the ancient equivalent of the Elmer Gantry image of Christian ministers today!

As for Saul's being "naked" all day

and night, the term used might just as well refer to his being partially disrobed. It seems to be used with the latter meaning in Job 22:6, 24:7, Isaiah 58:7 and probably Isaiah 20:2-3, where Isaiah is said to have walked "stripped and barefoot for three years." Saul probably stripped off his outer garment, leaving only the long tunic beneath. The figure of speech involved here is synecdoche, in which the whole stands for a part. Thus, *naked* or *stripped* is used to mean "scantily clad" or "poorly clothed."

In an attempt to shore up the failing theory of ecstasy, some have pointed to 1 Samuel 19:24 as evidence that Saul was "beside himself"—again, the etymology of our word *ecstasy*. However, this will not work since the verb in verse 24 simply means "to put off" a garment (by opening it and unfolding it; the verb's other meaning is "to expand, to spread out, to extend"). There is no evidence that it means "to stand beside oneself" or anything like that.

What about the apparent stupor? Did Saul momentarily lose his sanity? While the three groups of messengers experienced a strong influence of the Spirit of God, it was Saul, we may rightfully conclude, who fell under the strongest work of the Spirit.

The Spirit fell more powerfully on Saul than on the messengers because Saul had more stubbornly resisted the will of God. In this manner, God graciously warned Saul that he was kicking against the very will of God, not just against a shepherd-boy rival. The overwhelming influence that came on Saul was to convince him that his struggle was with God and not with David. His action in sending the three groups to capture David had been in defiance of God himself, so he had to be graphically warned. As a result, the king also, but unexpectedly, prophesied. So surprised were all around them that a proverb

subsequently arose to characterize events that ran against ordinary expectations: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam 19:24). Kings normally did not expect to receive the gift of prophecy. But here God did the extraordinary in order to move a recalcitrant king's heart to see the error of his ways.

The noun *prophecy* and verb *to prophesy* appear more than three hundred times in the Old Testament. Often outbursts of exuberant praise or of deep grief were connected with prophesying. But there seems to be no evidence for ecstasy as wild, uncontrollable enthusiasm that forced the individual to go temporarily mad or insane. And if we dilute the meaning of *ecstasy* so as to take away the negative implications—like those attached to the Greek's theory that artists only drew, composed or wrote when temporarily overcome with madness—the term becomes so bland that it loses its significance. In that case we all might qualify to join the band of the prophets. Certainly nothing in this text suggests the dancing, raving and loss of consciousness sometimes seen in contemporary extrabiblical phenomena. See also comment on "When the Prophets Say, 'The Word of the LORD Came to Me,' What Do They Mean?" and DANIEL 12:8-10.

### 24:5 Why Was David Upset That He Had Cut Saul's Clothing?

Why was David so upset with himself for merely cutting off a corner of King Saul's robe? This does not sound as if it is any big deal.

David had a high regard for the fact that Saul was God's anointed person holding the office of king. Saul's anointing signified the election of God. Therefore, David vowed that he would do nothing to intervene to vindicate himself or to remove Saul from that office



unless God did so.

The best explanation of David's sudden pang of conscience was that he viewed the violation of Saul's robe as equivalent to violating Saul's very person. Since David held that the office that Saul occupied was something sacrosanct and from the Lord, even this small token—taken as evidence that even though they had occupied the same cave together he had not tried to take Saul's life—was itself blameworthy.

### 28:7-8, 14-16 What Did the Witch of Endor Do?

The problems raised by the account of Saul's encounter with the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28 are legion! To begin with, spiritism, witches, mediums and necromancers (those who communicate with the dead) are not approved in Scripture. In fact, a number of stern passages warn against any involvement with or practice of these satanic arts. For example, Deuteronomy 18:9-12 includes these practices in a list of nine abominations that stand in opposition to revelation from God through his prophets. Exodus 22:18 denies sorceresses the right to live. Leviticus 19:26, 31 and 20:6, 27 likewise sternly caution against consulting a medium, a sorceress or anyone who practices divination. Those cultivating these arts were to be put to death—the community was not to tolerate them, for what they did was so heinous that it was the very antithesis of the revelation that came from God (see Jer 27:9-10).

But there are other issues as well. Did the witch of Endor really have supernatural powers from Satan, which enabled her to bring Samuel up from the dead? Or was Samuel's appearance not literal, merely the product of psychological impressions? Perhaps it was a demon or Satan himself that impersonated Samuel. Or perhaps the whole thing was a trick played on Saul. Which is the cor-

rect view? And how does such a view fit in with the rest of biblical revelation?

The most prevalent view among orthodox commentators is that there was a genuine appearance of Samuel brought about by God himself. The main piece of evidence favoring this interpretation is 1 Chronicles 10:13-14: "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD." The Septuagint reading of this text adds: "Saul asked counsel of her that had a familiar spirit to inquire of her, and Samuel made answer to him." Moreover, the medium must not have been accustomed to having her necromancies work, for when she saw Samuel, she cried out in a scream that let Saul know that something new and different was happening. That night her so-called arts were working beyond her usual expectations.

Then, too, the fact that Saul bowed in obeisance indicates that this probably was a real appearance of Samuel. What seems to have convinced Saul was the witch's description of Samuel's appearance. She reported that Samuel was wearing the characteristic "robe" (*m<sup>e</sup>il*). That was the very robe Saul had seized and ripped as Samuel declared that the kingdom had been ripped out of his hand (1 Sam 15:27-28).

Is Samuel's statement to Saul in 1 Samuel 28:15 proof that the witch had brought Samuel back from the dead? The message delivered by this shade or apparition sounds as if it could well have been from Samuel and from God. Therefore, it is entirely possible that this was a real apparition of Samuel. As to whether Samuel appeared physically, in a body, we conclude that the text does not suggest that he did, nor does Christian theology accord with such a view. But there can be little doubt that there

was an appearance of Samuel's spirit or ghost. The witch herself, in her startled condition, claimed that what she saw was a "god" (*lōhîm*, 1 Sam 28:13) coming up out of the earth. The most probable interpretation of this term *lōhîm* is the "spirit" of a deceased person. This implies an authentic appearance of the dead, but one that did not result from her witchcraft. Instead, it was God's final means of bringing a word to a king who insisted on going his own way.

Those who have argued for a psychological impression face two objections. The first is the woman's shriek of horror in 1 Samuel 28:12. She would not have screamed if the spirit had been merely Saul's hallucination, produced by psychological excitement. The second objection is that the text implies that both the woman and Saul talked with Samuel. Even more convincing is the fact that what Samuel is purported to have said turned out to be true!

As for the demon impersonation theory, some of the same objections apply. The text represents this as a real happening, not an impersonation. Of course Satan does appear as "an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14), but there is no reason to suppose that this is what is going on here.

Our conclusion is that God allowed Samuel's spirit to appear to give Saul one more warning about the evil of his ways.

One of the reasons believers are warned to stay away from spiritists, mediums and necromancers is that some do have powers supplied to them from the netherworld. Whether the witch accomplished her feat by the power of Satan or under the mighty hand of God we may never know in this life. Of course, all that happens must be allowed or directed by God. Thus the question is finally whether it was his directive or per-

missive will that brought up Samuel. If it were the latter, did the witch apply for satanic powers, or was she a total fraud who was taught a lesson about the overwhelming power of God through this experience? It is difficult to make a firm choice between these two possibilities.

### 31:4 How Did Saul Die?

Who is telling the truth? The narrator of 1 Samuel 31 or the Amalekite of 2 Samuel 1:6-10? Or to put the question in another way: Did Saul commit suicide, or was he killed by this Amalekite, as he claimed, at Saul's own request?

Although there have been attempts at harmonizing the two accounts, the effort always seems to fall short of being convincing. For example, as early as the first Christian century, Josephus tried to make the accounts fit each other. Josephus claimed (*Antiquities* 6, 370-72 [xiv.7]) that after Saul's armor-bearer refused to kill Saul, Saul tried to fall on his own sword, but he was too weak to do so. Saul turned and saw this Amalekite, who, upon the king's request, complied and killed him, having found the king leaning on his sword. Afterward the Amalekite took the king's crown and armband and fled, whereupon Saul's armor-bearer killed himself.

While everything seems to fit in this harmonization, there is one fact that is out of line: the armor-bearer. The armor-bearer was sufficiently convinced of Saul's death to follow his example (1 Sam 31:5). Thus, Josephus's greatest mistake was in trusting the Amalekite. Also, it is most improbable that the Amalekite found Saul leaning on his sword, an unlikely sequel of a botched attempt at suicide.

It is my conclusion that Saul did commit suicide, a violation of the law of God, and that the Amalekite was lying in order to obtain favor with the new administration.



## 1. BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF SAMUEL, 1 Samuel 1-3

The period of the Judges – when “there was no king in Israel” (Judg. 21:25) – came to a close in the days of Samuel. Samuel anointed Israel’s first two kings, overseeing the transition of the administration of Israel’s theocracy from tribal confederation to monarchy. His parents traveled back and forth from their home in Ramah to Shiloh along the Road of the Patriarchs (*brown arrow*; 1 Sam. 1:1, 3, 19). After Samuel’s remarkable birth he was dedicated to the Lord’s service in the Tabernacle at Shiloh. His mother Hannah expressed praise for the anticipated reversal of world affairs to be realized under the rule of the Lord’s anointed (Messiah) King. It was in Shiloh where the word of the Lord first came to Samuel.

## 2. THE BATTLE OF APHEK, 1 Samuel 4

Eli was the high priest in the Tabernacle at Shiloh. His sons were “worthless men; they did not know the LORD” (1 Sam. 2:12). They robbed sacrifices and practiced Canaanite cult immorality “with women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting” (1 Sam. 2:22). As an unnamed man of God made clear, the devastating loss in the battle at Aphek was in part a judgment on the house of Eli. Eli’s two sons were to die on the same day (1 Sam. 27-36).

The Philistines used Aphek as a springboard for territorial expansion (*black arrow* from PHILISTINES). By taking this strategic choke-point along the International Coastal Highway, the Philistines were in a position both to strike east into Israel’s heartland and to expand north along the Sharon Plain and into the Jezreel Valley (cf. Map 5-2).

The Israelite effort to halt the Philistines at Aphek was a catastrophic failure. Israel camped on higher ground in the hills at Ebenezer (*blue arrows* and *box*) and thought they could manipulate Yahweh to carry out their plans. But their actions and thoughts were far away from the God of the Ark of the Covenant. Honoring the Covenant was necessary for the blessings of the Covenant. Unfaithfulness to the Covenant would bring discipline by God. So the Israelites should not have presumed upon the Lord’s help. Thousands perished in battle, including the two sons of Eli. The Ark of the Covenant was captured. God’s presence, Israel’s glory, what set Israel apart from all the other nations on earth, departed. Upon hearing the news in Shiloh, Eli the priest died. [Archaeological evidence shows a destruction of Shiloh at about this time. Shiloh’s devastation became legendary. Hundreds of years later the prophet Jeremiah spoke for the Lord to those who trusted in the temple:]

\* *Go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel...therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh (Jer. 7:12-14; cf. Ps. 78:60, Jer. 26:6, 9).*

Shiloh and eventually Jerusalem were destroyed along with misperceptions of who God is. But Israel’s God lives.

## 3. THE ARK OF THE COVENANT IN PHILISTIA AND RETURN VIA BETH-SHEMESH, 1 Samuel 6:1-7:3

The Philistines brought the captured Ark of the Covenant to the temple of their god Dagon in Ashdod (*orange arrows*; 1 Sam. 5). The Philistines thought the capture of the Ark proved the superiority of their gods. However, Dagon was humbled and executed in his own house. And then Yahweh moved as a warrior through the Philistine cities of Ashdod, Gath and

Philistines put the Ark in a cart and let two milk cows pull it away. From Ekron, the cows pulled the Ark along the road in the Sorek Valley to the Israelite city of Beth-shemesh. The proximity of Beth-shemesh to Ekron (i.e., of Israelite culture to Philistine) is noted in the text, as the Philistine lords were able to travel back and forth between the two cities in less than one day (1 Sam. 6:16).

It was during the wheat harvest, springtime, when the Ark of the Covenant arrived in Beth-shemesh. Some people at Beth-shemesh were struck (with sickness or died?) for mistreatment of the Ark. The best texts of 1 Sam. 6:19 read “70 men, and 50 thousand men”, which appears to refer to a sum total of all people who were struck during the Ark’s dishonoring, both Israelites and Philistines. “So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, ‘The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up with you’” (1 Sam. 6:21). Beth-shemesh is in the foothills (Shephelah) of Judah, 800 feet (243 m.) above sea level. Eleven miles east in the Hill Country sits Kiriath-jearim at 2500 feet (756 m.). The men of Kiriath-jearim came down 1700 feet in elevation to take up the Ark. They would have used a Hill Country ridge route to do so, perhaps the same Kiriath-jearim ridge used by a portion of the modern highway from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The seven months (1 Sam. 6:1) that the Ark of the Covenant was in Philistia were a soul-searching time for Israel, since the very object that symbolized Yahweh’s presence was removed from Israel. News of the Philistine difficulties with the Ark and its return to Judah must have restored hope. Every idol is shattered in the presence of the Almighty. The young Samuel no doubt learned from it all.

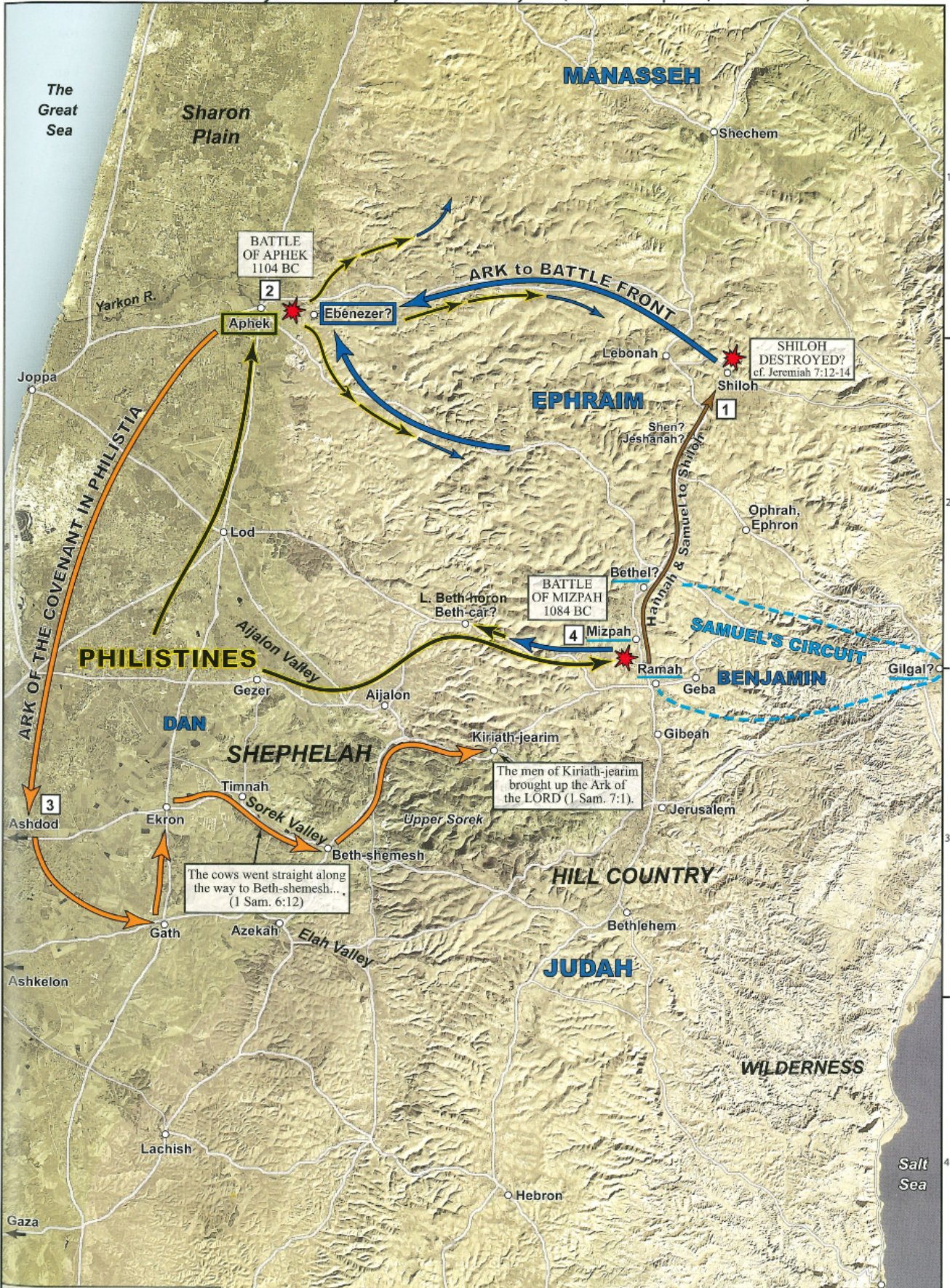
## 4. REPENTANCE & VICTORY over PHILISTINES at MIZPAH (1084 BC), 1 Samuel 7:1-14

After the Ark of the Covenant had been in Kiriath-jearim for 20 years, Samuel initiated religious and political reforms that resulted in a nation-wide repentance. Samuel recognized that the external Philistine oppression was the result of an internal spiritual problem: “So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashteroth and served the LORD alone” (1 Sam. 7:3-4). A significant initial battle occurred in Central Benjamin at Mizpah (*black arrows* and *blue pursuit arrows*). “Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car” (1 Sam. 7:11). We associate Beth-car with Lower Beth-horon, showing that the Philistines fled west down the Beth-horon Ridge. Also of uncertain location are “Shen” and “Ebenezer” (“stone of help;” 1 Sam. 7:12). Samuel’s Ebenezer appears to be a different location from the place where the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam. 4:1). However, Samuel deliberately used the same name, as if to say, “When you went after other gods and acted as you liked, and when you thought you could use Yahweh to do your own bidding, you lost big time. That was no Stone of Help. But now, when we have directed our hearts toward Yahweh, to serve Him only, we have gained a powerful victory. This is our Stone of Help (Ebenezer).” Biblically, success is defined in right personal and national relationship to Almighty God.

The victory at Mizpah was the beginning of a general reprieve from Philistine oppression in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:13-14). The people acknowledged that these victories were not man’s but the Lord’s (7:3, 8, 10).

## 5. SAMUEL’S CIRCUIT, 1 Samuel 7:14-17

The dashed blue line and blue underlines at Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah and Ramah indicate Samuel’s leadership focused in the



## 1. SAUL CHOSEN KING AT RAMAH AND MIZPAH, 1 Samuel 10

Israel's desire for a king was rejection of God who became their King by covenant at Sinai. While the Sinai Covenant itself had provision for a human king (Deut. 17:14-20; Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:7), he was to be a king that ruled in theocratic relation under God. The scriptures warn of over-centralized human power removed from divine subjection. Israel's desire wasn't for a king to rule under God, but for a king like other nations. As the Lord told Samuel: "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them" (1 Sam. 8:7-18).

Searching for his father's donkeys in Central Benjamin, Saul came to **Ramah** where Samuel privately anointed him as king (1 Sam. 9:1-10:16). Samuel's instructions to Saul show that the tomb of the matriarch Rachel is in the territory of **Benjamin**, not at the traditional location near Bethlehem of Judah (1 Sam. 10:2). Fulfillment of the minute details of Samuel's predictions should have convinced Saul for the rest of his life that "the Lord is sovereign and trustworthy".

In **Mizpah**, Samuel presided over a public declaration of Saul's kingship (1 Sam. 10:17-27). The selection of Saul is all the more notable since he was from Benjamin, whose territory sat *between* that of the leading tribes of Judah and Ephraim (1 Sam. 10:21).

## 2. SAUL'S VICTORY AGAINST AMMON AT JABESH-GILEAD, 1 Samuel 11

The Ammonite king Nahash oppressed **Jabesh-gilead**. As a Benjaminite, Saul had near kin in Jabesh-gilead (Judg. 21:11-13). The Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul (1 Sam. 11:6) with the same enabling power that Israel's victorious judges had experienced (Judg. 6:34, 11:29, 15:14). Saul mobilized Israel at **Bezek** and was able to defeat the Ammonites quickly (*blue arrows*). The victory certified Saul as king.

## 3. THE LORD'S KINGSHIP RENEWED AT GILGAL, 1 Samuel 11:12-14

Saul acknowledged that "today the LORD has accomplished deliverance in Israel." Samuel gathered Israel at **Gilgal** to renew their covenant with King Yahweh, albeit now with new human leadership — a king — incorporated. The prophetic office would continue to remind the king that he served "under God."

## 4. BATTLE OF GEBA-MICHMASH, THE PASS, 1 Samuel 13:1-14:31

The Philistines, planning to extinguish the emerging Israelite monarchy, assembled a huge army at **Michmash**. The size of the Philistine force and their ease of arrival in the Hill Country show just how grim the situation was. Things had drastically changed since the Lord's victory by the hand of Saul at Jabesh-gilead. Was it idolatry that brought Israel again to these dire straits? Or Saul's own attitude to the nature of the kingdom under God? Some Israelites hid in caves and cisterns, others fled to Transjordan. Saul grew impatient waiting for Samuel at **Gilgal** and took over the priestly role. He was condemned for his presumption and distrust. A moment after his blunder, Samuel arrived and told Saul, "Now your kingdom shall not endure." This was the beginning of the end for Saul. Government without God would not endure.

Samuel and Saul returned to the Hill Country to **Gibeah** and **Geba** with a small army of 600 men. The Philistines sent out forces in three directions from **Michmash** (*black arrows, yellow trim*). One unit went north toward **Ophrah**, another west to the **Beth-horon** Ridge, and a third east toward **Gilgal** in the **Valley of Zeboim**. Finally, an additional Philistine garrison "went out to the **Pass of Michmash**" (1 Sam. 13:23). The **Pass**

While Saul was in Gibeah (1 Sam. 14:2, 16), his son Jonathan went out from **Geba** to confront the Philistines on the other side of the Pass. The narrative is geographically specific:

*At the Passes where Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistine garrison, there was a cliff on one side and a cliff on the other side. The name of one cliff was Bozez, the name of the other was Seneh. One cliff stood on the north in front of Michmash. The other stood on the south in front of Geba (1 Sam. 14:4-5; author's translation).*

These are eyewitness details. The writer of 1 Samuel knew the geographical particulars of the Pass. Some 300 years later the prophet Isaiah showed his knowledge of this area, too (Isa. 10:28-29). In both cases, the geographical specificity of the text is evidence of historicity (see photo of the cliffs on Map 6-2).

Jonathan did not attack the main Philistine garrison guarding the Pass. Instead he negotiated the difficult cliffs of Bozez and Seneh and attacked the Philistine eastern flank. That was enough to get the ball rolling. An earthquake, divinely timed, added to the Philistine's confusion. Israel "struck the Philistines that day from **Michmash** to **Aijalon**" (1 Sam. 14:31). Their flight is marked out on the Beth-horon Ridge Route.

## 5. SUMMARY OF VICTORIES, 1 Samuel 14:47-48

Saul defeated Moab, Ammon, Edom and Zobah (Aramea), as well as the Philistines and Amalek. That Saul "seized" the kingship (1 Sam. 14:47) shows that success and power were going to his head. Though he began as a ruler who acknowledged God's sovereignty (1 Sam. 11:13), he soon began to think the kingdom was his own.

## 6. BATTLE AGAINST AMALEK AND DISOBEDIENCE, 1 Samuel 15

Saul battled against the **Amalekites**. To impress Judah, he set up a victory monument at **Carmel** (Map 5-3). However, when Saul arrived in **Gilgal** after his victory, Samuel told him that the kingdom would be taken away from him because of incomplete obedience:

*To obey is better than sacrifice...Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king (1 Sam. 15:22, 23, 26).*

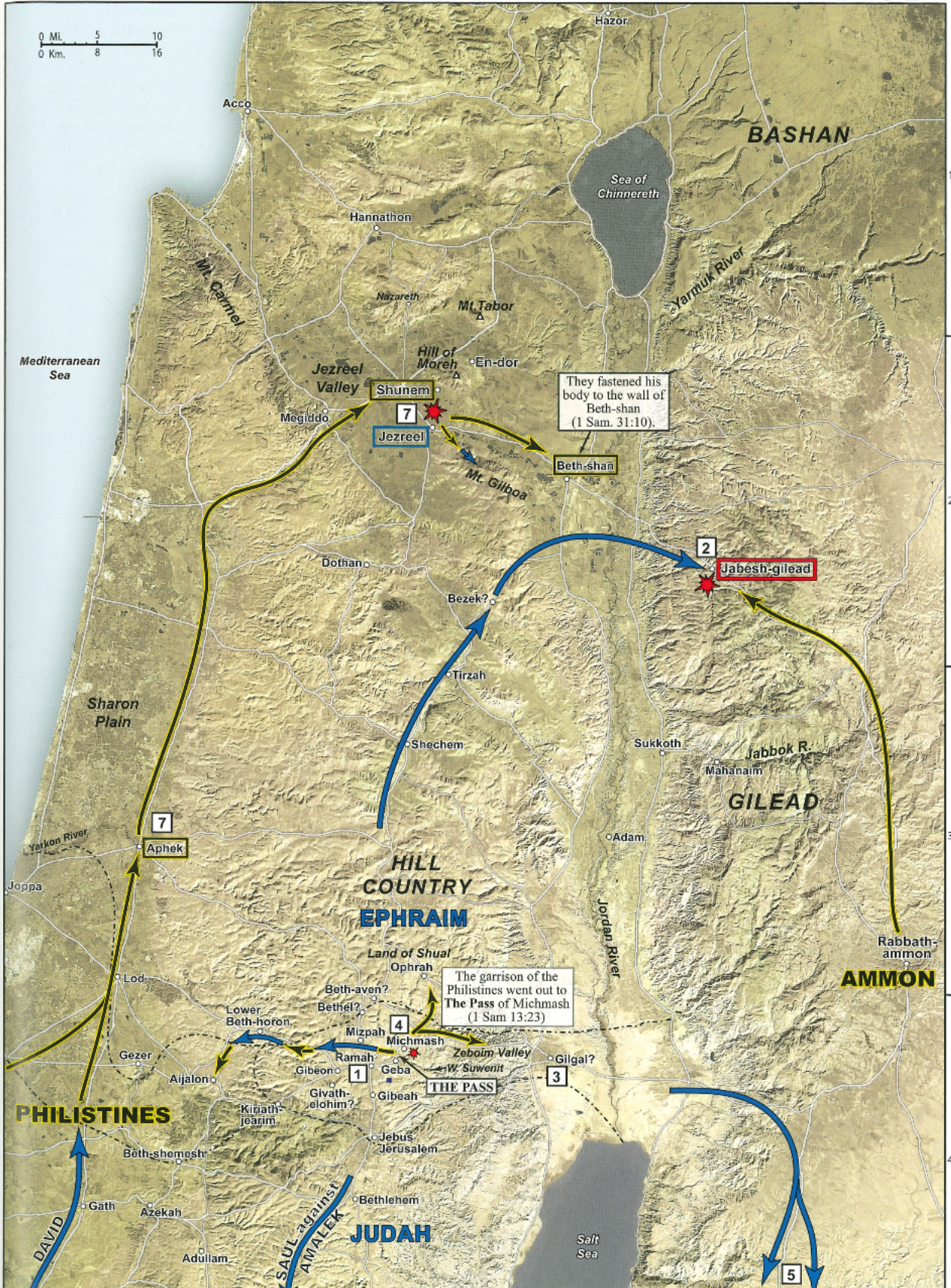
Shortly thereafter, Samuel anointed David king in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16). Much of the rest of Saul's life was spent in pursuit of David and in wars against the Philistines.

## 7. SAUL'S DEATH, 1 Samuel 31

From **Aphik** on the Sharon Plain, the Philistines pushed into the **Jezreel Valley** and camped at the foot of the **Hill of Moreh** at **Shunem** (*black arrows*). To halt this expansion, Saul camped on **Mt. Gilboa** and at the city of **Jezreel** (*blue box*; 1 Sam. 28:4, 29:1). The stakes were high. Philistine victory in the Jezreel Valley meant control of major routes through Saul's kingdom and a wedge between northern and southern Israelite tribes.

Desperate for direction, Saul slipped around the Philistine camp and the Hill of Moreh to get to a witch at **En Dor**. Here Samuel informed Saul that all was happening under the LORD's sovereignty. The LORD was taking the kingdom away from Saul and giving it to David (not to the Philistines!).

Saul was wounded the next day and retreated to **Mt. Gilboa**. His armor bearer would not kill him, so Saul fell on his own sword. The Philistines found his body and the bodies of his three sons. They cut off Saul's head and sent it as a trophy throughout Philistia. The bodies of Saul and his sons were displayed on the walls of **Beth-shan**. Men from **Jabesh-gilead**



#### DAVID DEFEATS GOLIATH, 1 Samuel 17

The **Shephelah** is the buffer zone between the Philistine Coastal Plain and the Hill Country of Judah. It is logical that David's fight against Goliath occurred in the Shephelah. The Philistines spread out along the west and south sides of the **Elah Valley** in the towns of **Azekah**, **Ephes-dammim** and **Socoh** (*black arrows*, cf. Map 1-11 for close-up). A Philistine victory would allow access to Hill Country ridge routes toward Bethlehem and Hebron. With this divide-and-conquer strategy, the Philistines could cut Judah off from Saul's Benjamin-based monarchy. Judah's support for Saul hinged on Saul's success in this battle.

Saul must have established camps in the Hill Country, and as much as he dared, on the hill along the northern side of the Elah Valley. David, with supplies for his brothers, traveled from **Bethlehem** down the **Hushah Ridge Route** to the **Elah Valley**, some 15 miles and the better part of a day's journey (*blue arrow*). With a stone from the Elah Brook, he overcame Goliath, probably near **Socoh**. David's victory coming as it does immediately after his anointing by Samuel (1 Sam. 16) was evidence that David was the chosen-by-God rightful king of Israel. The victory shows the nations that Israel's God is God alone, and that His kingdom is not established by the sword.

The Israelites chased the Philistines to the cities of **Ekron** and **Gath**. Archaeological excavations at both sites have uncovered Philistine cities. Of special interest from recent excavations at Gath (Tel es-Safi) is a Philistine inscription that the archaeologist believes contains the name Goliath. The inscription dates to around 900 BC, over 100 years after the biblical Goliath lived, but corroborates the cultural reality of the biblical account.

#### DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM SAUL

Instead of performing the duties of king, Saul, consumed with jealousy and fear, pursued David (1 Sam. 18:6-9). The *boxed numbers* show David's flight from Saul. Events and human testimonies (e.g., Samuel, Jonathan, Abigail, even Saul) in the narrative emphasize that David, although a fugitive and rejected by many, is the rightful king chosen by God. His experience at this time parallels that of Jesus, the Son of David who would "suffer these things and then to enter into His glory" (Luke 24:26). The many geographical details given are evidence of the historical reality of the events.

##### 1. **Gibeah: 1 Samuel 18:10-19:17**

Hampered by an evil spirit in Gibeah, Saul schizophrenically wavered between vows of death and life toward David.

##### 2. **Ramah: 1 Samuel 19:18-24**

Saul's efforts to pursue David at Samuel's residence in Ramah were frustrated by the Spirit of God in a rather unusual fashion.

##### 3. **Gibeah: 1 Samuel 20**

Back in fields near Gibeah, David and Jonathan made their covenant of friendship.

##### 4. **Nob: 1 Samuel 21:1-9**

David entered the Tabernacle at **Nob** on the Mt. of Olives, ate the bread of the presence (cf. Matt. 12:3-4), and took Goliath's sword. David's fascination with the sword seems misplaced.

##### 5. **Gath: 1 Samuel 21:10-15, Psalm 56 & 34**

David's plan to take refuge in Philistine territory did not work. He was seized by the Philistines and "feared greatly" for his life, pretending he was crazy in order to escape. **Psalm 56** was written "when the Philistines captured him in **Gath**" (from title of Ps. 56). The Psalm centers on trust in God and His Word

##### 6. **Adullam: 1 Samuel 22:1-2**

David escaped from Gath to the caves of Adullam, situated in the seam between the Hill Country and the Shephelah. It is *in-between* territory both geographically and politically. Today it sits in a no-man's land between Jewish and Arab populations. In this frontier territory, David found refuge from Saul on the one side and from the Philistines on the other. Psalms 34 and 57 were probably composed here.

##### 7. **Moab: 1 Samuel 22:3-4**

David found refuge for his parents in Moab, the original home of his great-grandmother Ruth. From Bethlehem, David would have descended on a ridge route toward the Dead Sea and En Gedi, then perhaps crossing into Moab via the Lisan Peninsula.

##### 8. **The Stronghold: 1 Samuel 22:4-5**

From Moab David came to the Stronghold (Metsudah). This may be the desert fortress today known as Masada, a 2000 by 650 foot rock plateau that rises 1000 feet above the desert terrain. Rocks like Masada were the inspiration for themes in **Psalms 18, 31, 61, 62** and **63**: "The LORD is my *rock* and my *fortress* (metsudah) and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my *stronghold*" (Ps. 18:2).

##### 9. **Forest of Hereth: 1 Samuel 22:5-23**

At the advice of Gad the prophet, David left the Stronghold and came to the Forest of Hereth (unknown location). At this time, Saul presumed that the high priest Ahimelech had conspired with David, so he killed Ahimelech and 85 other priests and destroyed the city of **Nob**. Abiathar, the son of the high priest, escaped to David.

##### 10. **Keilah: 1 Samuel 23:1-14**

At Keilah in the Shephelah, the Philistines were robbing grain from threshing floors. David asked the Lord if he should intervene. Until this time David had not functioned independently in defense of Israel. We can assume that Saul's destruction of Nob and its priests influenced David's decision. David helped Keilah, and while he was there Abiathar the priest joined him "with an ephod in his hand" (the high priests vest which contained the Urim and Thummim?). But the Judahites of Keilah still felt loyal to Saul. David sought the Lord for direction and moved to the Wilderness of Ziph southeast of Hebron.

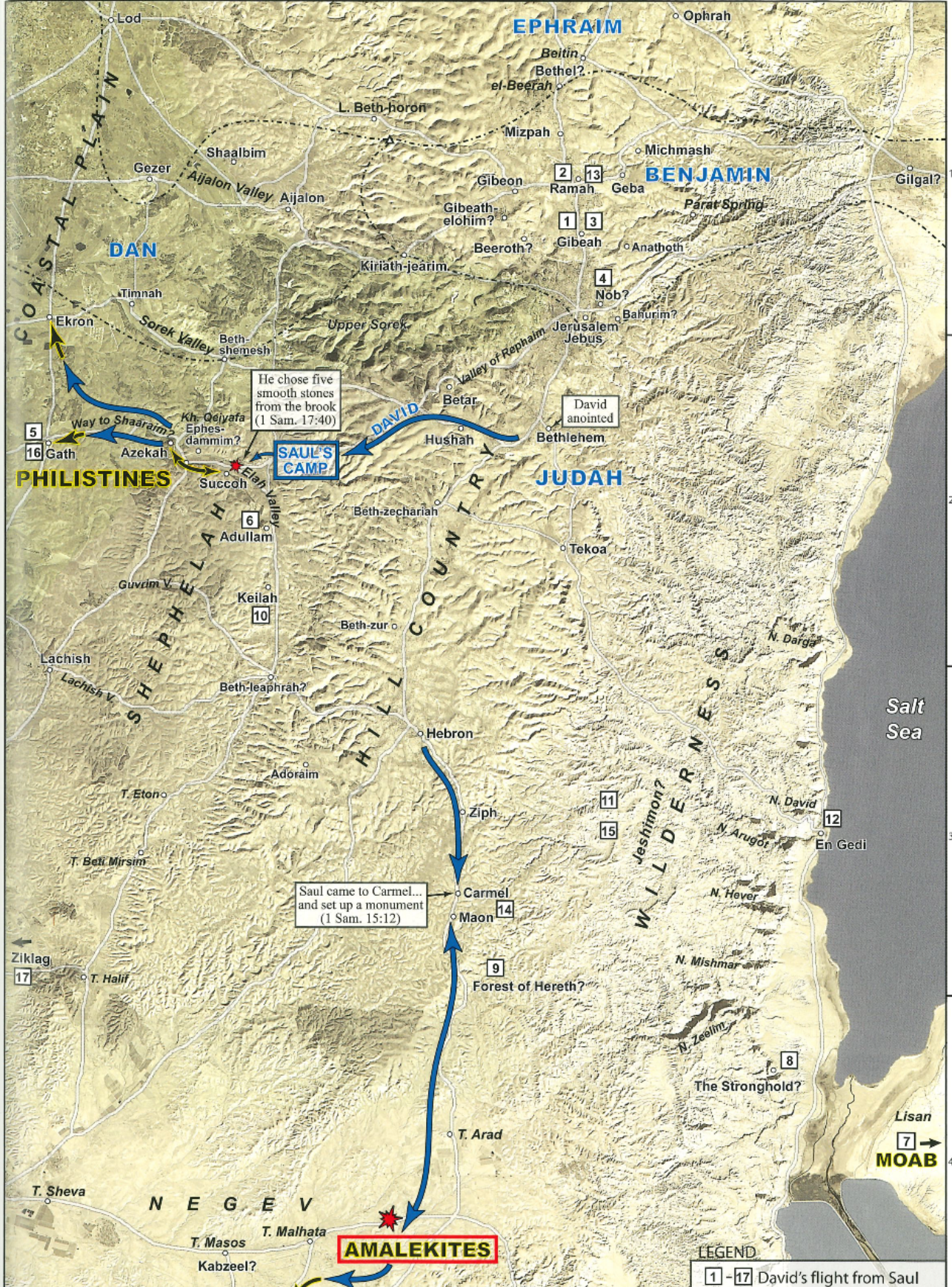
##### 11. **Wilderness of Ziph: 1 Samuel 23:14-29, Psalm 54**

Jonathan encouraged David in the Wilderness of Ziph. Jeshimon ("barren waste") probably refers to the eastern part of the Judean Wilderness where it slopes down steeply to the Dead Sea. The Ziphites (of Judah!), either from respect or fear of Saul (they did not fear God, Ps. 54), informed Saul of David's whereabouts. The geography of the region – ridges and mountains formed by deep-cutting canyons – fits the description. David and his men were on one side of a ridge while Saul and his army were on the other side. At the last moment Saul called off the pursuit in order to deal with a Philistine raid on a different front. The ridge was named "Rock of Division" since it had kept Saul's separated from David.

##### 12. **En Gedi: 1 Samuel 23:29-25:1**

The only real oasis along the western shore of the Dead Sea is **En Gedi** ("spring of the young goat"). Both man and animal can find refreshment at a number of fresh water springs and waterfalls in the canyons of the En Gedi region. Saul came with 3000 soldiers to look for David by the Rocks of the





He chose five smooth stones from the brook (1 Sam. 17:40)

SAUL'S CAMP

Saul came to Carmel... and set up a monument (1 Sam. 15:12)

AMALEKITES

LEGEND  
1-17 David's flight from Saul

(Continued from previous page, Map 5-3)

Inadvertently, Saul entered into the very cave in which David and his men were hiding! The episode contrasts the paranoia of Saul with the patient humility of David.

### 13. Ramah: 1 Samuel 25:1

Apparently there was enough of a timeout in Saul's hatred to allow David to attend Samuel's funeral in Ramah. But David knew Saul's animosity would return. He went to the Wilderness of Paran, a different Paran from the wilderness of the same name much further south (Gen. 21:21; Num. 10:12). It may be the desert area around the Parat Spring just east of Gibeah and Anatoth, or perhaps an unknown location near Maon.

### 14. Maon and Carmel, 1 Samuel 25

Saul's victory monument in Carmel was a reminder of his efforts on behalf of the people of Judah. Nabal was another Judahite who, either from fear, gratitude or selfishness, gave allegiance to Saul and not to God. Nabal was rich, and good at business, but was a fool – his name can mean "fool". He couldn't perceive God's selection in David. Nabal's wife, Abigail, was entirely different. This sagacious and humble woman recognized God's choice in David (1 Sam. 25:30, 33, 41). She preserved her husband's life (at least temporarily), and also kept David from alienating a population just a few miles from where he was eventually crowned king.

### 15. Wilderness of Ziph, 1 Samuel 26, Psalm 54

David moved to the same place he had hidden before in the Wilderness of Ziph, "on the hill of Hachilah" (1 Sam. 23:19, 26:1). Previously the Rock of Division and a Philistine incursion had frustrated Saul's pursuit; this time David was able to enter the camp of sleeping Saul.

### 16. Gath, 1 Samuel 27:1-5

Knowing that Saul would never give up the pursuit, David went again to Gath. "Politics makes strange bedfellows," and "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." The game had changed from both David's and the Philistines' perspectives since the last time David had been in Gath. This time David had 600 armed men and a reputation as Saul's enemy.

### 17. Ziklag, 1 Samuel 27:5-12

Achish of Gath assigned David the city of Ziklag on the southern frontier of Philistia

## MAP 5-4 DAVID at ZIKLAG

The events marked on this map conform to the character of life in the Hill Country, Coastal Plain (Philistia), Negev and Wilderness. Tribal raids in and out of the semi-arid, yet settled, agricultural Negev were par for the course. Note on the map how agriculture diminishes in the Western Negev south of Ziklag and Gerar and disappears entirely south of the Brook Besor.

### 1. David at Ziklag, 1 Samuel 27

After years of flight from Saul in Judah, David found refuge, of all places, with Achish, the king of Gath. Achish considered David a useful ally in his own fight against Saul, and even assigned David the city of Ziklag. For 16 months Achish believed that David's raids on nomads south of the Negev were raids on the families of the tribes of Judah.

### 2. Philistines Mobilize at Aphek, 1 Samuel 29

The Philistines mobilized their forces at Aphek on the Sharon Plain in preparation for their battle with Saul further north (cf. Map 5-2). Achish insisted on David's loyalty, but other Philistine lords were not convinced. David took a three-day journey back to Ziklag.

### 3. Amalekite Raid of Ziklag, 1 Samuel 30

David and his men found Ziklag burned and their families taken captive by the Amalekites. Morale sank to the point of mutiny against David. The narrative suggests that David had not been seeking the Lord when he went to Achish in Gath. But now David returns to God. He didn't follow natural inclination for revenge but sought the Lord before pursuing the Amalekites. At the very time that Saul was consulting a witch for direction, David turned to God's sanctioned priest and ephod (30:7). Saul lost his life and sons. David would regain his family.

After another day's journey to the Brook Besor, 200 men stayed with the baggage while others continued the pursuit. After gaining information about the enemy camp, David and 400 men defeated the Amalekites, retrieved their families, and returned to Ziklag with much spoil. Those who stayed with the baggage received the same portion as those who went to battle. Gifts were sent to the elders in the towns of Judah where support for David was growing.

### News of Saul's Death, 2 Samuel 1

Three days after returning to Ziklag, an Amalekite came to David and gave him news of Saul's death on Mt. Gilboa (cf. Map 5-2). The Amalekite thought to please David, lied and claimed to have played a role in Saul's death. David had the Amalekite killed. Instead of rejoicing over the death of Saul and his sons, David composed a dirge in their honor and instructed that it be taught in Judah: "Your beauty, oh Israel, is slain upon the high places. How have the mighty fallen!"

### 4. David King at Hebron, 2 Samuel 2-4

David was made king of Judah in the Hill Country at Hebron. He ruled over Judah from Hebron for 7.5 years (then over all Israel and Judah from Jerusalem for 33 years; 2 Sam. 2:11, 5:4-5). The years of David's reign in Hebron were marked by civil war with the house of Saul. Saul's son Ish-Bosheth was made king at Mahanaim in Transjordan with the support of Abner, Saul's former chief-of-staff. One standoff between David's and Abner's troops turned into a deadly wrestling match at "the pool of Gibeon." This pool may be the one exposed in archaeological excavations at Gibeon (el-Jib). Abner realized that "David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually," so he initiated efforts to align the northern kingdom of Israel with David. But Joab, David's chief-of-staff, jealous to keep his own position, murdered Abner in Hebron. David did all he could to distance himself from Joab's deed.



