

STUDY NOTES: THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Introduction to the Period of the United Kingdom

Approximate Chronology

According to *Jensen's Old Testament Survey* and Edwin Thiele (as quoted in *The Birth of a Nation*), the approximate dates for this period of study would be as follows:

- Reign of Saul: 1043 – 1011 B.C.
- Reign of David: 1011 – 971 B.C.
- Reign of Solomon: 971- 931 B.C.

Background Notes

After Israel conquered the Promised Land under Joshua, the people settled the land but did not drive out all of the inhabitants. They became a snare to the people, as God promised, and the influence of idolatry crept in among the people. For about 400 years God brought oppressors against Israel when they became wicked. The people would cry out to God for deliverance and he would send them a judge to deliver them from the oppressor. During this period of the Judges, the people generally became less spiritual instead of more spiritual. This period is summed up in Judges 2:11-23.

At the end of this period, while Samuel is the judge, the people ask for a king “to be like the nations around them.” Samuel is displeased but presents their request to God. God tells Samuel to grant their request and assures him that they are rejecting God, not Samuel. God tells Samuel to warn the people of the behavior of kings and how they will affect their lives. The people are insistent, despite these warnings, that they want a king.

Political Background

Egypt, a great power for much of the Old Testament, was going through a period of decline during the time of the United Kingdom. There was much political and spiritual turmoil and confusion as the priests of the god Amun were gaining more power. Mention of interactions with Egypt do not start until the reign of Solomon, when he marries Pharaoh's daughter.

The greatest enemy that Israel faces during this time is the Philistines. They are believed to be part of the “Sea People” that inhabited the coastal plain. They were adept at iron works and were mighty warriors. At one point, there are no weapons in Israel because the Philistines had total control of the iron production and sharpening tools. The Philistines were ruled by five lords of the chief cities: Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, Gaza, and Ekron.

Since Israel did not drive out the inhabitants of Canaan, enemies such as the Ammonites, Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians surrounded them on all sides. The Syrians became a source of trouble during the Divided Kingdom, although there was some confrontation with David during his reign.

Great empires such as the Assyrians and the Egyptians experienced internal problems and decline, preparing the way for David's great kingdom to expand.

1 Samuel 9:1 - 10:27: Saul is Anointed King

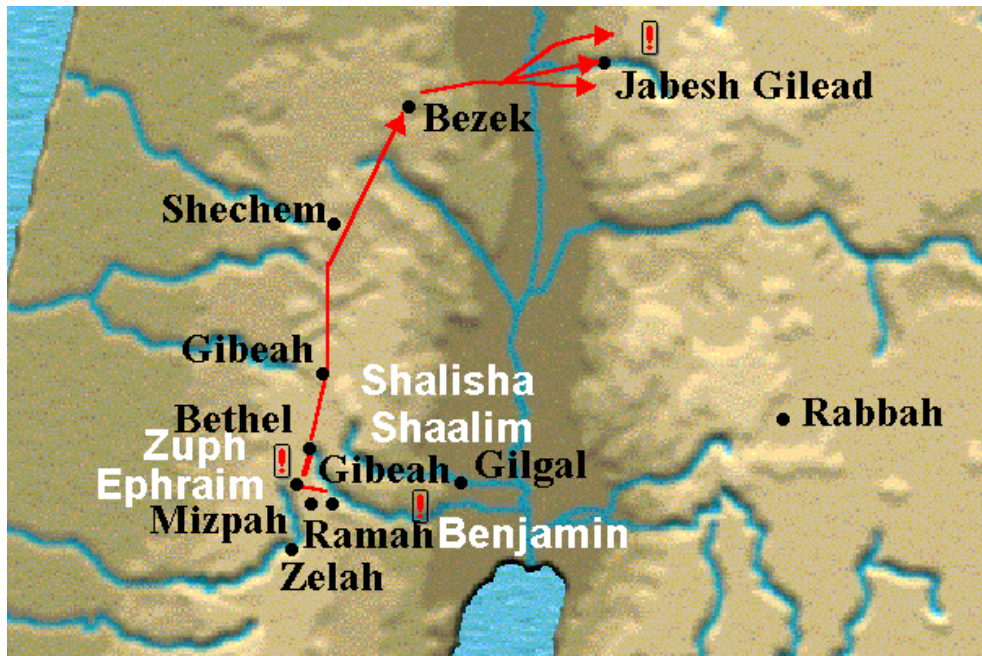


Figure 1: Map of the Beginning of Saul's Reign

Outline of Story

- I. Introduction to Saul, 9:1-2.
 - A. Son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin.
 - B. Most handsome among the children of Israel.
 - C. Stood head and shoulders above the people.
- II. Saul is sent to look for his father's lost donkeys, 9:3-5.
 - A. Saul and his father's servant traveled throughout the land of Ephraim, Shalisha, Shaalim, and through the land of the Benjamites but could not find the donkeys.
 - B. Saul figured that his father would be worried about them instead of the donkeys since a long period of time had passed.
- III. Saul meets Samuel, 1 Samuel 9:6-25.
 - A. Saul's servant tells him of a prophet in a nearby city.
 1. Saul is concerned because they have nothing to give but the servant has one fourth of a shekel of silver that they can give.
 2. They ask some young women where the seer, or prophet, is and they tell him that he is in the nearby city preparing to go up for the feast day.
 - B. Samuel had been told by God that Saul would be coming and He alerts Samuel to Saul's arrival. Saul doesn't recognize Samuel when they meet.
 - C. Samuel perplexes Saul.
 1. He greets him as the "desire of Israel" to which Saul responds that he is from the smallest family of the smallest tribe of Israel.
 2. Samuel invites Saul and his servant to a feast and seats them at places of honor and gives Saul a select portion of food.
 - D. Samuel spoke to Saul that evening after the feast.

IV. Saul is anointed king, 9:26-10:1

- A. The servant is sent ahead of Samuel and Saul.
- B. On the outskirts of the city Samuel anoints Saul as commander of Israel.

V. Samuel foretold signs that will accompany Saul's return, 10:2-13.

- A. He would find two men at Rachel's tomb in Zelzah of Benjamin who would tell him that the donkeys were found and that his father is worried about him.
- B. At the terebinth tree of Tabor, three men going to Bethel with three young goats, three loaves of bread, and a skin of wine, would give him two loaves of bread.
- C. When he came to the hill of God, where the Philistine garrison is, a group of prophets would be coming down the hill and the spirit of God would come upon him and he would do as he should.
- D. He would then go to Gilgal and wait for Samuel who would come to make a sacrifice and show him what he must do.
- E. Saul left Samuel and the things prophesied came to pass.
 - 1. God gave Saul a different heart when he left Samuel.
 - 2. The people asked "Is Saul also among the prophets?" when they saw him prophesying with the prophets.
- F. Saul's uncle asks what Samuel had to say but Saul kept the matter of the kingdom to himself, 10:14-16.

VI. Saul is proclaimed king, 10:17-27.

- A. Samuel calls the people to Mizpah.
- B. Samuel reminds the people that God brought them out of Egypt and delivered them from the hands of their enemies but they rejected him in asking for a king.
- C. Samuel had the tribes and the families pass by and Benjamin and the house of Kish were chosen. Saul was chosen of the family of Kish but they could not find him because he was hiding among the baggage.
- D. The Lord shows his hiding place and the people ran to bring him. Samuel declares that the Lord has chosen him and the people cry, "Long live the king!"
- E. Samuel explained the behavior of kings as God instructed him to do and wrote it in a book.
- F. A group of valiant men went with Saul to Gilgal.
- G. Some of the people would not accept his rule and brought him no presents but Saul did nothing about it at the time.

Notes

From the beginning we can observe humility in the life of Saul. He does not let the kingly appointment go to his head immediately. This will change during the reign of Saul as he becomes more arrogant.

God made Saul a changed man and gave him His Spirit. This was needful for the first king since no one knew how to create or run the kingdom of God's people. Saul was leaving his father's animals to rule an entire nation. Only through God's help would he succeed.

Although Saul was proclaimed king, he did not yet have the unity of the people under his command. God would provide an occasion for Saul to unite the people.

1 Samuel 11:1-12:25: Israel Unites Under Saul

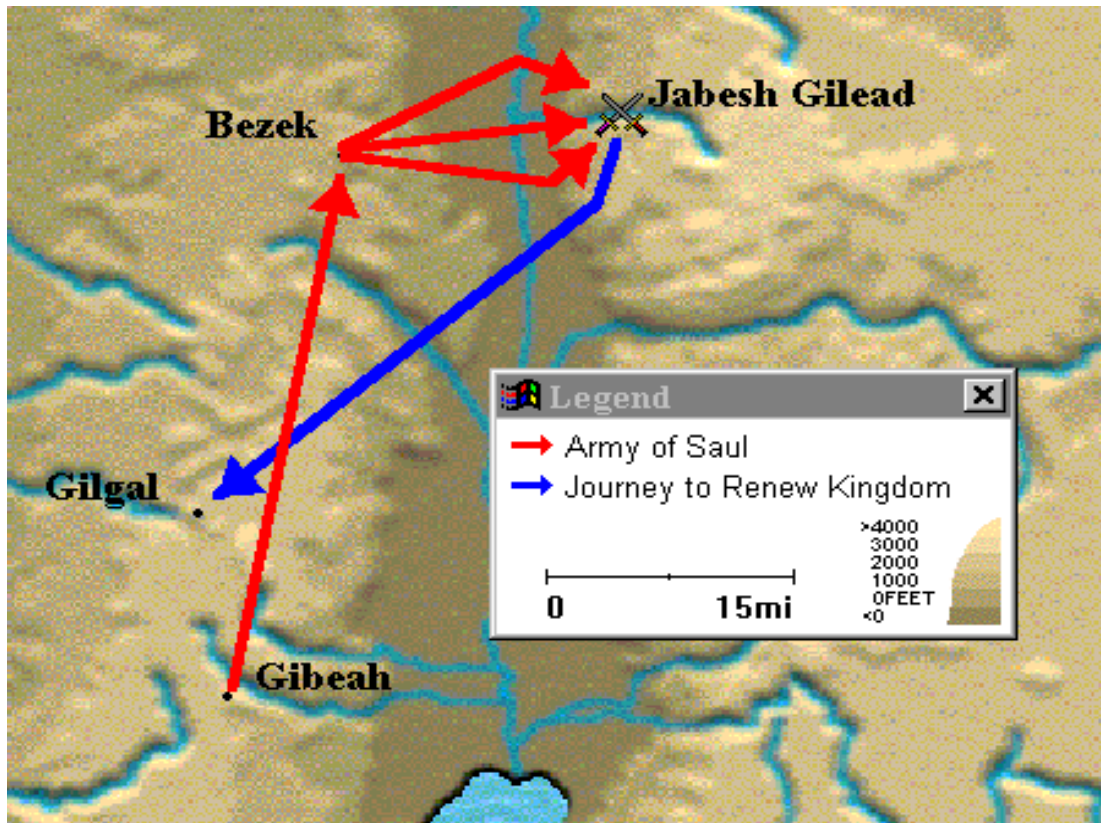


Figure 2: The Battle of Jabesh Gilead

Outline of Story

- I. Nahash the Ammonite comes against Jabesh Gilead, 1 Samuel 11:1-11.
 - A. Apparently, there were previous problems with Nahash, 12:12.
 - B. The people of Jabesh Gilead are ready to give up but Nahash demands that the men of the city put their right eyes out.
 1. This would prevent them from accurately aiming weapons such as arrows.
 2. This would also bring shame on Israel.
 - C. The people ask for time to see if any in Israel would save them.
 1. Nahash seems confident that no one will come against him and grants the request.
 2. The men of Jabesh Gilead send messengers to all of Israel.
 - D. The news comes to the people of Gibeah
 1. The people are already upset when Saul returns from following the herd.
 2. Saul cuts up the yoke of oxen and sends parts of it throughout Israel with the warning that the same thing will happen to the animals of those who do not follow Saul into Battle.
 - E. The army of Israel gathers in Bezek.
 1. There are 300,000 of the men of Israel and 30,000 of the men of Judah.
 2. Saul sends messengers to Jabesh Gilead to give them hope.

- F. The army divided into three companies and came upon the camp of the Ammonites on the morning watch.
- G. Israel completely defeats the Ammonites so that no two are left to scatter together.
- II. The people decide to formally proclaim Saul as the king, 1 Samuel 11:12-12:25.
 - A. Some people want to kill those who would not follow Saul initially.
 - B. Saul decrees that no one of Israel would be killed on this day of victory.
 - C. Samuel urges the people to return to Gilgal to renew the kingdom.
 - D. Samuel address the Israelites at Gilgal.
 - 1. Samuel acknowledges that he listened to the people and gave them a king.
 - 2. Samuel testifies to his proper rule and innocence.
 - a. He had taken no bribe nor defrauded anyone.
 - b. The people agree with Samuel's assessment.
 - 3. God gave them the leaders of Israel but was their true leader.
 - a. The Lord gave them Moses and Aaron to lead them from bondage.
 - b. The people forgot the Lord and they were sold into oppression.
 - c. The Lord then gave them deliverers (Judges) to give them safety.
 - d. The people insisted on a king when Nahash began to oppress them.
 - 4. The people insisted that they have a king.
 - a. God had been their king since their beginning as a nation!
 - b. God gave them a king that they had chosen (in their hearts is implied).
 - c. However, God would allow the king to continue if they remained faithful.
 - 5. Conditional requirement for God's continuing care:
 - a. Fear the Lord.
 - b. Serve the Lord.
 - c. Obey the voice of the Lord.
 - d. Do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord.
 - e. If they disobey, the Lord would be against them.
 - f. Samuel confirmed this with a sign: the thunder and rain during the time of the wheat harvest.
 - (a) This was very uncharacteristic for this time of year.
 - (b) Note that this was something that God alone could do, not the king.
 - 6. Samuel rebuked the people for asking for a king.
 - a. The people repent and ask God to forgive them.
 - b. Samuel tells them that they have been forgiven but urges them to be faithful to God with all their heart.
 - c. Samuel said that he would continue to pray for the people.
 - 7. Samuel gives the people a final admonition:
 - a. Fear the Lord.
 - b. Serve the Lord in truth.
 - c. Serve the Lord with all your heart.
 - d. Consider what great things the Lord has done for them.
 - e. If they do not, they would be swept away with their king.

Notes

Apparently, since Saul does not yet have the consensus of the people to rule over him, he returns to his duties at his father's house. He is still following the herd.

The incursion by Nahash provides a way for Saul to prove himself as the king and unify the people under him. Saul recognizes the victory is of the Lord, something that he will seem to forget in future victories. After this victory, the people readily accept him. By this cause and effect they seem to be attributing their success to Saul, not to the Lord, although not by direct statement.

As the kingdom is renewed and Saul is accepted as king, Samuel addresses the nation. He tells them that throughout the history of Israel, God has selected their leaders. As the people became wicked and forgot God, God brought punishment but also raised deliverers when they repented. However, when Nahash came up, the people wanted to have a leader, even though God was still their king, as He had been for over 400 years!

Apparently Nahash had been harassing the people before he came against Jabesh Gilead.

They were given a conditional covenant for continued protection under the king. If they feared the Lord and served Him, they would be protected. If they rebelled, they would be punished as were their fathers. Samuel gave a sign to prove his message.

The people confessed their wickedness in asking for a king. We must note that the prophesy in Genesis 49:10 and the law regarding kings in Deuteronomy 17:14f anticipate the coming of a king. Yet God apparently had a timetable for bringing in the king and the people were insistent to do it now. God allowed it but it must be remembered that at this time He did it in anger, Hosea 13:11.

Twice in chapter 12 Samuel exhorts the people to faithfulness both in their service and within their hearts. God does not desire the mere outward show but also the heart. They were also to remember the great things that God had done for them. They would fail in this in the future as they had in the past. God commanded Israel to not forget His great works performed for them and to love Him as He loved the nation.

These same exhortations should be heeded by us today. We should love the Lord with our whole heart, serve and obey Him, and do not rebel against His authority. We should ever remember what he has done for us. We must be mindful of the great things that God has done since the creation of the world. He has worked many wonders and has brought salvation for all men. When we forget what God has done and the greatness of the salvation given to us, we become unthankful and arrogant.

1 Samuel 13:1-13:23: Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice

- I. Israel and the Philistines prepare for battle, 1 Samuel 13:1-7.
 - A. Saul kept a standing army of 3,000 men but sent the rest of Israel home.
 - B. Jonathan attacked a garrison of the Philistines and aroused their anger.
 - C. The Philistines gathered an army to fight against Israel.
 - 1. They had 30,000 chariots.
 - a. Many commentators believe that the number may actually be about 3,000 or 300 since such a large number would have a hard time fitting into that area and it would be an unusually large chariot force.
 - b. Either way, it was still a substantial force.
 - 2. They had 6,000 horsemen and infantry without number.
 - 3. It seems as if the Philistines are making a greater effort to overwhelm Israel and quell their strength under the new king.
 - D. The people of Israel who were called together hid in caves and in the forest; some even fled across the Jordan.
 - E. The remainder of the people followed Saul trembling as he stayed in Gilgal waiting for Samuel.
- II. Saul's foolish sacrifice, 1 Samuel 13:8-14.
 - A. Saul had waited for seven days as Samuel instructed but Samuel had not come yet and the people were scattering.
 - B. Saul requested the burnt offering and peace offerings be brought to him and he offered the burnt offering.
 - C. Saul went out to greet Samuel when he arrived.
 - 1. Saul does not seem ashamed when Samuel arrives. Saul will react the same way when he disobeys God's command to destroy the Amalekites.
 - 2. Samuel questions Saul about his foolish action.
 - D. Saul begins to blame others for his mistake.
 - 1. He blames the people who were scattering.
 - 2. He indirectly blames Samuel for not coming within the days appointed (although it seems from the text that he did come on the seventh day).
 - 3. He felt compelled since the Philistines were coming upon him.
 - E. Samuel rebukes Saul for not keeping the commandment of the Lord.
 - 1. As a result, God would not establish Saul's house over Israel.
 - 2. The Lord would choose a man after His heart to rule the people.
 - 3. Saul's reaction is not recorded for us.
- III. Preparation for the battle with the Philistines, 1 Samuel 13:15-23.
 - A. Saul only had 600 men with him after Samuel left.
 - B. The Philistines sent raiders out in three companies to surround Saul's army.
 - C. There was not blacksmith among the Israelites.
 - 1. This may have been a treaty between Israel and the Philistines to keep Israel from making weapons.
 - 2. The Israelites would have to go to the Philistines to have farm implements sharpened and fixed.
 - D. Israel only had weapons for Saul and Jonathan.

Notes

The first verse of chapter 13 is somewhat confusing. It may have originally said “when Saul was x years old he reigned two years...” The Syriac says, “When Saul reigned one or two years...”

In this chapter and in some future accounts we find Jonathan taking the battle to the enemy. He is faithful to God (as we will see in more detail in the next lesson) and trusts in God’s ability to bring victory for his people. This attack seemed premature since Israel is not ready for the retaliation of the Philistines. The Philistines, perhaps sensing the change in Israel since the king was appointed, and perhaps knowing of the Ammonite defeat, bring a huge force to bring Israel under subjection.

Although Jonathan had just won a victory over the Philistines, the people of Israel are fearful of the Philistine incursion and flee to caves, thickets, and even across the Jordan. The Philistines will make note of this when Jonathan attacks them in 14:11.

Although we do not know why Samuel delayed, he apparently did not delay beyond the appointed time. Saul acted prematurely and Samuel rebuked him. Saul begins by blaming his scattering army and Samuel himself. He will also blame others when he disobeys God’s command to kill the Amelekites later. Saul said that he feared an attack by the Philistines would come before the sacrifice would be made. Although he tries to justify this, he doesn’t seem to realize that if he were disobeying God, God would not fight for him so he would be defeated!

The Israelite army is not equipped for the battle with the Philistines. The Philistines, perhaps through a treaty or intimidation, were able to forbid Israel to have a blacksmith to make iron weapons. This was the beginning of the Iron Age and the Philistines were especially proficient in smelting iron and making iron weapons. This gave them a great advantage in their battles. They were able to exert control to the point that Israel had to rely on the Philistines to sharpen iron farm implements. Although Israel had smaller numbers and few weapons, they seemed to forget that God was on their side.

1 Samuel 14:1-14:52: Victory over the Philistines



- I. Jonathan strikes first against the Philistines, 1 Samuel 14:1-14.
 - A. Jonathan and his armor bearer attack a Philistine garrison close to Gibeah without Saul's knowledge.
 - B. Jonathan looks for a sign: If the Philistines call them up to fight, then he believes that God will deliver them into their hand.
 - C. The Philistines do call Jonathan up and he and the armor bearer slay 20 men within a half of an acre of land.
- II. The army with Saul is roused to battle, 1 Samuel 14:15-23.
 - A. There was a great trembling in the camp of the Philistines after Jonathan's attack.
 - B. Saul numbered the army since many were leaving him; Jonathan was missing.
 - C. Saul called for the ark of the covenant to inquire of God, but since the noise in the camp of the Philistines continued, Saul gathered the army instead and found the Philistines fighting against themselves.
 - D. Some Hebrews in the Philistine army, either as mercenaries or slaves, fought against the Philistines, as did those who deserted Saul's army who were hiding.
 - E. The Lord gave Israel a great victory and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.
- III. Saul makes a foolish oath, 1 Samuel 14:24-46.
 - A. Saul made everyone promise not to eat that day until Saul had vengeance on his enemies.
 - B. The people did not eat but Jonathan, who was not there when the oath was made, did eat some honey.
 - C. The people rushed on the spoils of the Philistines and were eating the animals with the blood, which was forbidden under the Old Law, Leviticus 19:26.
 - D. Saul built his first altar to stop the people from eating the animals with the blood.
 - E. Saul inquired of God if they could pursue the Philistines but God did not answer; a sign that God was displeased.
 - F. It was determined that Jonathan had not kept the oath placed on the people and, despite starting the battle that brought victory, Saul would have killed Jonathan if the people had not intervened.
- IV. Saul battles against the enemies around the land, 1 Samuel 14:47-52

Notes

Jonathan bravely decides to take the battle to the Philistines. He and his father are the only ones with a sword or spear. Jonathan is convinced that even one man can fight against the enemies of God and prevail. The armor bearer also has faith and follows Jonathan into the battle. Note especially verse 6.

Jonathan travels through a great valley that essentially becomes a path between Philistia and Israel. If the Philistines were successful in taking the land now held by Saul they would have a strong foothold for attacking the rest of the land.

Jonathan looks for a sign for success: If the Philistines call them up then he believes that God has given them into his hand. The Philistines literally say, "Come up and we will teach you a lesson." They make fun of Jonathan and the army of Israel which, in parts, were deserting Saul and hiding in caves and in the mountains.

Saul initially called for the ark of the covenant to inquire from God about the battle. Apparently he considers the continuing noise to be a sign itself and orders the ark returned. Saul finds that the Philistines are fighting among themselves.

It is unclear whether the Hebrews with the Philistines in verse 21 are mercenaries or were slaves from a prior Philistine victory that were forced to fight.

The arrogance of Saul begins to show in verse 24: "...before *I* have taken vengeance on *my* enemies." Not taking vengeance on the enemies of God, but his enemies. The arrogance is also seen in the foolish oath that he makes.

Jonathan realizes the foolishness of Saul's oath and shows that the food renewed his strength. He reasons that if they ate they would have more energy and God could give them a greater slaughter among the Philistines. The oath causes the people to be very hungry after pursuing the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon (around 20 miles) so that they run upon the spoils of the war and eat the animals with the blood which was a violation of the Old Law, Leviticus 19:26. Note that verse 35 tells us that this is the first time that Saul builds an altar.

Saul is incensed that his son would not obey the oath and is willing to kill him, even though Jonathan began the events that led to Israel's victory. The people defend Jonathan for "he worked with God." What a contrast: Jonathan worked with God and brought victory, Saul worked with himself and caused much trouble. It was God's power but Jonathan had to make some effort. As a result of Saul's foolish oath, he cannot fight against the Philistines again in this battle else he would face defeat.

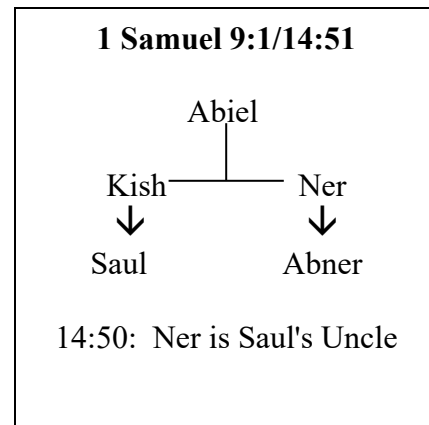
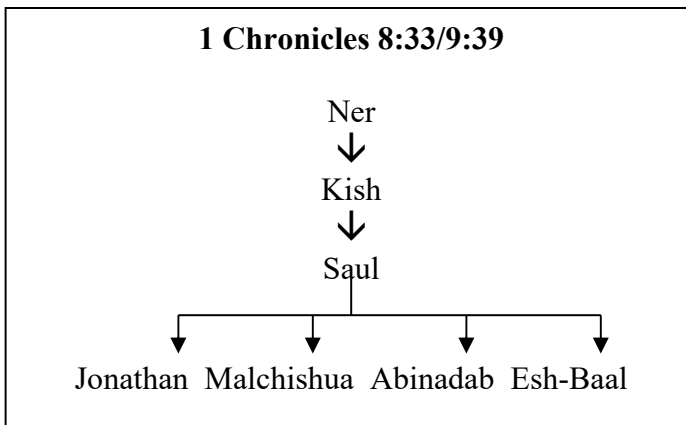
On a map you can see that the nations that Saul fights against are on all sides. David, when he becomes king, will further expand the territory of Israel.

Saul begins to fulfill the warning of Samuel by taking men of valor and constricting them into his army. Compare v.52 with 1 Samuel 8:11



Saul's Battles of 1 Samuel 14:47-48

Saul's Lineage



The Behavior of Kings

1 Samuel 8:11-22

- **Take your sons and appoint them for his chariots, horsemen, and infantry.**
- **Take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.**
- **Take the best of your fields, vineyards, olive groves, and a tenth of your grain for his servants.**
- **Take your menservants and maidservants and your finest young men and donkeys for his work.**
- **He will take a tenth of your sheep.**
- **You will be his servants.**

“And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.”

Selected Bibliography

The Birth of a Kingdom, John J. Davis. Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, Michigan.
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