

CHARACTERIZATION OF SAUL

I SAMUEL (Chs.9-31)

Characterization of Saul

(I Sam Ch.9-31)

1050 –1010 B.C.

KING SAUL



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Name: The name Saul means, “asked of JHWH”. It also can mean “the one asking importunately or insistently” or “the Beggar”.

Genealogy: He was the son of Kish, a Benjaminite. Book of Samuel names his grandfather as Abiel (I Sam 9:1), whereas in the book of Chronicles he is Ner (I Chr 9:36).

Home: Saul had his home at Gibeah (I Sam 10:26) which is also called Gabath Saul (hill of Saul) or Gibeah of Saul (I Sam 11:4) or Gibeah of Benjamin (I Sam 13:2) identified by the Archaeologists with the Tell el-Ful, which is 5 KM north of Jerusalem.

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Context of his Ascending to Kingship: The old age of Samuel, the leader - Judge – prophet, and the corrupt deeds of the sons of Samuel warranted another leader to the Israelites. The people expected that leader to be a warrior since they had to face a powerful enemy in the Philistines who had the monopoly over iron.

His Qualification: Saul had several qualifications: he was exceptionally tall and handsome (I Sam 9:2); he was charismatic and the Spirit of JHWH took control of him time to time (I Sam 11:6); he also had occasional ecstatic religious experiences like the prophets (I Sam 10: 10).

Election as King: There are three accounts of the Saul becoming the king reported. 1) The first one found in I Sam 9:1-10:16 tells of Samuel anointing Saul at *Ramah* (cf. I Sam 8:4). 2) The second account tells of Samuel presiding over the election of Saul as the king of Israel at *Mizpah* (I Sam Ch. 8; 10:17-27; Ch. 12). 3) Saul made as king of Israel at *Gilgal* (I Sam Ch. 12).

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***Pursuing the Enemies* - He defeated the *Ammonites* in his first battle in Transjordan (I Sam Ch.11). The second battle was against the *Philistines* (I Sam Ch.13-14). The *Philistines* knew to use the Iron weapons. The Israelites knew only heavy bronze weapons. The Israelites were equipped with ploughshares and mattocks (I Sam 13:19-22). Saul with the help of his son Jonathan and his kinsman Abner let the fight in the front. Then Saul pursued the *Amalekites* under *Agag* (I Sam Ch. 15).**

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Offending the Religious Perspective of Samuel – Saul offended the religious perspective of Samuel twice in his reign. First, he took it upon himself to offer sacrifice in the absence of Samuel before the battle of Michmash (I Sam 13:8-14). Samuel could not tolerate the usurpation the spiritual leadership by Saul. He cursed Saul telling that his kingdom will be transferred by JHWH to a man after his own heart (I Sam 13:13-14). Second, He preached the *Herem* by sparing Agag king of Amalekites and some choice booty taken from the Amalekites. He again cursed Saul telling that JHWH has torn his kingdom and has given to a neighbour of Saul (I Sam 15:2-3, 8-28). Achan during the time of Joshua perished for a similar deed (Josh 7:10-26).

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Pursuing David - Samuel designated David as Saul's successor and anointed him privately at Bethlehem (I Sam 16:1-13). David was later introduced to Saul and became a court minstrel (I Sam 16:14-22). Soon he saw in David a rival and an inevitable successor. He felt envious of David.

Saul's attempt on David's life

- 1) Saul threw the spear twice to pin David to the wall. But he failed. Evil spirit was upon Saul (I Sam 18:10-11; 19:9-10).**
- 2) Saul demanded hundred foreskins of Philistines as marriage gift in order to get marry Michal, the daughter of Saul (I Sam 18:25-27).**
- 3) He planned to kill David with the help of his son, Jonathan or his servants (I Sam 19:1).**

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Reasons for Saul's Jealousy over David (I Sam 18:1-19:17)

- 1) David went out and was successful whenever Saul sent him for battle (I Sam 18:5,14)**
- 2) As David's returned from killing the Philistine, Goliath, the women came out of all the towns of Israel singing & dancing, The women sang "Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands" Saul was very angry because of such praise from the women of Israel (I Sam 18:6-9).**

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Reasons for Saul's Jealousy over David (I Sam 18:1-19:17)

- 3) Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him, but He has departed from Saul (I Sam 18:12,28-29).**
- 4) All Israel and Judah Loved David (I Sam 18:16).**
- 5) The fear of Saul over his son, Jonathan, who was the right heir to the throne next to him having a special love and devotion to David his rival (I Sam 19:1; Ch. 20).**

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Death of Saul (I Sam Ch. 28-31)

Philistines planned for a war against Israel. Saul invited a woman medium to help him by giving advice in the face of a war with Philistine. Saul instructed the woman to bring Samuel. Samuel told Saul clearly that the kingdom of Saul would be taken away from him and to be given in the hands of David, since Saul did not obey the voice of the Lord.

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Death of Saul (I Sam Ch. 28-31)

In the war against the Philistines they overtook Saul and his sons. All the three sons of Saul, Abinadab, Jonathan & Malchishua were killed. Later Saul was wounded in the war and he requested his armour bearer to kill him for which the aide refused. Saul took his sword and fell upon it. The death of Saul took place at mount Gilboa. The Philistines fastened the body of Saul without his head on the wall at Bethshan. They took his armour to the temple of Astarte. The men of Israel took the bodies of Saul & his sons to Jabesh Gilead and buried them there.

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Analysis of the Reign of Saul:

1) Chronicler says “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance, and did not seek guidance from the Lord” (I Chr 10:13). Samuel rejecting Saul has let him confined to unlawful religious practices (I Sam 28:3). He was unable to relate himself with JHWH.

2) The Ark of the Covenant, which represented the Presence of God, was completely neglected by Saul. Because of his bitter hatred towards David he exterminated Priest Abimelech and others.

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Analysis of the Reign of Saul:

3) His jealousy of David not only robbed of his valuable time for the construction of a new nation, but also ruined the brotherhood of the kingdom. The nation got divided between Saul and David.

4) He even lost his rational in the last days of his reign. His early psychic potentialities for ecstatic prophecy and action turned into melancholia, if not paroxysmal mania which music alone could alleviate (I Sam 16:14-16).

5) He made no attempt to unite the tribes, except in battle. His only officer seems to have been Abner, his commander in Chief. His fortress at Gibeah remained his capital and there he lived a life far removed from that of an oriental despot.

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Analysis of the Reign of Saul:

6) David in spite of his enmity towards Saul was able to appreciate him and respect him as the king of Israel. He spoke of his honourable and noble qualities, especially his prowess in war and generosity in peace (I Sam 1:19-27).

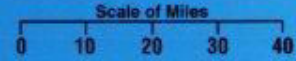
7) Saul was an able and courageous soldier and inspiring leader in the battle. He was a fighter to the last (I Sam Ch. 31).

8) He could have come to power when he was thirty years old and could have ruled for twenty two to thirty two years.



Kingdom of Saul (1050-1020 B.C.)

ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF KING SAUL



Mediterranean Sea

