

# Saul's Coronation and First Battle: Samuel 10:17 – 11:14

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In this study we will discuss one of the most momentous decisions in Israel's early history and get the first inkling of what it will mean. I've included some notes that I hope will make these few verses more alive for you.

I see it in two sections:

- I. The deconstruction of the theocracy.
  - a. the calling of the people
  - b. a history of ways Yahweh cared for and "ruled" them.
  - c. a formal acknowledgement of Israel's decision. Note: this is my definition of God's notion of judgement.
  - d. The use of "the lot" to show God was still involved in the working of the people and this Their choice was Saul for the people of this time. This was a very public action that differed from the anointing.
  - e. Introducing the king.
  - f. God finding the "ruler"...among the baggage
  - g. Samuel writing a clear new contract.
- II. Saul's first act...
  - a. Nahash goes against Jabesh Gilead; a village that has recently undergone a massacre "to provide wives for Benjamin" because they had refused to participate in a massacre. Judges 21:8-15. They now find themselves desperately needing help from ....a Benjamite.
  - b. In an action reminiscent of the Levite who cut up his wife and sent her to Israel to call war against Benjamin, Saul cut up his oxen and sent the pieces around to call Israel to war.
  - c. He threatens those who do not come.
  - d. The Army routs Nahash
  - e. Saul saves the lives of people who did not want him as king.
  - f. He is established as king by acclaim.

- g. Peace offerings given, “Saul and all the Israelites were very happy.

## Principles Involved

- a. *God is love.*
- b. Choice is an absolute mandate.
- c. Judgements are only acknowledgment of choices we have made.
- d. *Dominion was given as an object lesson of the way Heavenly beings use power: protect, nurture, build life skills, serve the vulnerable.*
- e. *There is a conflict with God and the serpent as to who is focused on our best good.*
- f. God meets us where we are and offers skills and supports to bring us home.

## Policy Shifts

- a. Leadership change from theocracy and judges to address issues among the tribes to a monarchy.
- b. The role of a checks and balances prophet is put into place to give voice to God’s priorities. Note: Other prophets were doing other things during the time of the monarchy.

## Names and Histories

Mizpah – *Hebrew: A watchtower used for military defense.* The place and memorial where Jacob and Laban made their peace as he escaped with his family. Neither could pass the stone if they were on the way to the other’s home to do evil.

The Lord God - *Yahweh* - The personal name of God. The one who has a individual and corporate covenant with Israel

God - *Hebrew Elohim* – the plural of majesty; plural in form, singular in action.

Nahash – Hebrew – *The viper (copper or bronze)*. The root of this word is the serpent; by extension the mythological creature of chaos opposed to God.

Ammonite – Descendants of Lot’s younger daughter. Deuteronomy 23:3,4. *No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord till the 10<sup>th</sup> generation of their descendants for they did not meet you with food and water as you came from Egypt and furthermore, they hired Balaam.* Their god was Milcom.

Jabesh-Gilead - Judges 21: 8-14 – Read this story if you want to understand what it must have taken for this group to ask for help....from a Benjamite.

## **Literary Devices**

Irony – I Samuel 10:24 – *Indeed, there is no one like him among all the people.*

Heartbreaking Irony – Yahweh, the personal God of the theocratic covenant, is the God, honoring Israel’s right to choose and overseeing Israel’s decision to have a king.

Story Arc – Saul’s coronation as end of theocracy; beginning of monarchy.

Parallel Story Structure –

- a. The Massacre of Jabesh to help the Benjamites: The rescue of Jabesh by a Benjamite
- b. Body parts of wife/concubine sent around as call to war: Body parts of oxen sent around as call to war.
- c. In choosing to go to war against Israel, Nahash (the Serpent) represents the battle of the “mythological creature of chaos against the ruler of the universe.

Object lessons: Mizpah was the dividing line between two people; in this story it becomes the witness/dividing line between two times in Israel’s history.

Compare and Contrast: Jabesh Gilead/victim and rescued.

Story telling – as teacher.

## Notes:

1. In the thinking of this place and time, battles took place on two levels. The actions of earth were seen to represent the battles between the deities in the heavens. The people who won a battle were seen as representative of the deity they worshipped, and their victory or loss was seen as a victory or loss in the heavenly realm.
2. Because Hebrew is a concrete language that uses places, stories, people, histories, and objects to represent concepts or lessons.
3. For instance: As the stories and policies of Exodus and Leviticus were the formal institution of Israel's theocracy... 1 Samuel 17-24 was the formal deconstruction of the theocracy and the beginning of the time of some prophets have the job of checks and balances or the monarchy.

## Questions:

1. How do you think God felt about the deconstruction of the theocracy?
2. What do you think it was like for Samuel to be part of the deconstruction of the theocracy?
3. Why did Samuel go over the ways God had protected Israel as he begins the formal transition?
4. What do you think is the meaning of the phrase "Now, take your positions before the Lord, by your tribes and by your clans"?. In what other events or services had this happened in Israel?
5. Why the use of the lot?
6. What do you make of 10:22...*The Lord says he has hidden himself among the baggage?*
7. What do you make of the phrase, *And Samuel talked to the people about how a kingship would work. He wrote it down on a scroll and set it before the Lord.*

8. From a psychological perspective of history what do you make of these battles between the descendants of siblings and cousins?
9. Tell me what you think might be the layers of feeling experienced by Jabesh Gilead when threatened by Nahash.
10. Do not think for a second that these people did not see the parallels between what the Levite did and what Saul did with the oxen bits. What do you think might have been their reaction?
11. Do you think Saul's anger was the only possible reaction when *the Spirit of God rushed* upon him?
12. In the warrior census, why do you think Judah was separated out from the other 11 tribes?
13. Why do you think Samuel brought the people *to Gilgal to renew the kingship there*?
14. What are your thoughts on the change in Saul between 10:22 and 11:7?

Since I like using components of 3, 7, and 12, I will stop with the questions here. I am getting this to Steve fairly quickly because I want you to have time to look at the questions and see which are important to you, that you might want to discuss. As is usual with me, I thought this was going to be a fairly straightforward story...but no. Since we are dealing with Hebrew minds and thinking I should have known there would be layers...and layers.

I am looking forward to seeing you, and hearing your thoughts, this Sabbath.

I wish for you unexpected blessings.

Catherine