



*Good News*  
**Bible Reading Program**

A free educational service provided by the United Church of God, *an International Association*

**— October 2002 —**

DATE	READING TOPIC	SCRIPTURES
1 Oct	Jephthah and his vow	Judges 11
2 Oct	The war between Ephraim and Gilead	Judges 12
3 Oct	The birth of Samson	Judges 13
4 Oct	Samson's marriage	Judges 14
5 Oct	Foxes and firebrands and the jawbone of an ass	Judges 15
6 Oct	Samson and Delilah; Death of Samson with the Philistines	Judges 16
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8 Oct	Dan adopts Micah's error and takes Laish	Judges 18
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12 Oct	Elimelech's family moves to Moab; Ruth returns with Naomi	Ruth 1
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28 Oct	Saul's rash curse; Continuing wars	1 Samuel 14:24-52; 1 Chronicles 5:10, 18-22
29 Oct	War with Amalek: Agag spared; God rejects Saul as king	1 Samuel 15
30 Oct	David anointed king; Distressing spirit troubles Saul	1 Samuel 16
31 Oct	Israel faces Goliath	1 Samuel 17:1-30

## Highlights to Think About from This Month's Reading

### Jephthah's Vow (Judges 11)

**October 1**

We come now to one of the most difficult passages in the book of Judges—the story of Jephthah. The story is more important than one would at first suspect, for the critics have seized upon it as evidence that God is self-contradictory, bloodthirsty and devoid of any sense of equity and justice. Similarly, those who adhere to the belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture have found the story to be a stone of stumbling, especially since the book of Hebrews includes Jephthah *by name* in its famous catalog of the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11).

If the common understanding of the story is correct, we surely have a very odd series of facts to explain. Jephthah demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the history of his people, a history he could only have learned from the books of Moses (see Judges 11:12-28). Yet, if this is so, how do we explain his apparent ignorance of the blaring prohibition against child sacrifice contained in the books of Moses? (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2; Deuteronomy 12:31-32; 18:10-12)

Again, immediately after sending the ambassadors to Ammon “the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah” (verse 29). But if this is so, how could a person led by the Holy Spirit be so absolutely callous as to sacrifice his own child? In fact, Jephthah's vow is made *immediately* after receiving the Spirit (verse 30)—how is that to be explained? Moreover, if the common understanding of the story is correct, God gave Jephthah the victory over Ammon knowing full well that Jephthah would sacrifice his child, and yet He never said a word—not in person, not in a dream, not by a prophet.

And further, how could a man who was so scrupulous to keep his vow (verse 35) be so unscrupulous as to murder his innocent child in flagrant disobedience to God's law? Additionally, when his daughter learned of her father's vow, she *encouraged* him to keep the vow and asked only to be able to go and mourn her virginity for two months, at the end of which time she *voluntarily* returned so that her father could carry out his vow. Jephthah's daughter exhibits no terror, no pleading for her life—even the friends with whom she mourned her virginity allowed her to return! How is that to be explained?

And why didn't Jephthah avail himself of the laws for redeeming things vowed (Leviticus 27)—he said, “I *cannot* go back”—when such an option would have been open to him?

And finally, if the common understanding of Jephthah's vow is correct, where is that marvelous and self-evident *faith* that caused the writer of Hebrews, probably the apostle Paul, to unhesitatingly include him in his catalog of the heroes of faith?

The confusion can be cleared up by carefully examining Jephthah's vow. Let us notice it in the New King James Version: “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering” (verses 30-31). First, notice that it is a conditional vow (if...then). Second, the phrase “whatever comes out to meet me” is actually “the one who comes forth to meet me” in Hebrew, an apparent reference to a person. *The Nelson Study Bible* concurs: “The phrase *to meet me* seems to refer more appropriately to a human than to an animal” (note on 11:31).

How then are we to understand Jephthah's vow? The Hebrew of verse 31 is the source of the difficulty—or rather, the *translation* of the Hebrew text is the source of the difficulty. The next phrase could just as well be translated, “...shall surely be the LORD's, **OR** I will offer it a burnt-offering.” *The Nelson Study Bible* notes, “The conjunction in Jephthah's pivotal statement in v. 31, that whatever or whoever came out of the door ‘shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering’ could be translated *or*. Thus, if a person came out first, he would dedicate that person to the Lord, or if an animal came out first, he would offer the animal as a burnt sacrifice” (note on Judges 11:39). This explanation, however, has left out the possibility of an unclean animal, such as a dog, coming out. Presumably, a clean animal in this scenario would be sacrificed while an unclean animal would be dedicated like a person. But there is a possibility that this translation is not *entirely* correct either, as it leaves out the possibility of nothing or no one coming out to meet Jephthah. This brings us to the next apparent problem in translation.

The clause “or I will offer it up as a burnt offering” could also be rendered, “or I will offer Him a burnt offering.” If that is correct, then we are left with Jephthah imagining a person coming out to meet him and stating, in a perhaps corrected rendering of verse 31, “The one who comes forth to

meet me I will consecrate to the LORD, or [if no one comes out] I will offer Him [i.e., the Lord] a burnt offering.” This changes the complexion of the difficulty entirely.

What emerges from a clear understanding of the Hebrew is significant. First, let’s note that Jephthah was making a conditional vow with God. *If* God would give Jephthah the victory and bring him safely home, *then* Jephthah would either dedicate a person of his household to God or he would offer a burnt-offering to God if no one came out. Once God performed His part of the vow, Jephthah was bound to fulfill his part.

Second, and most important however, Jephthah left the choice in *God’s* hands! Jephthah could not control who would come out of the doors of his house to greet him (or whether anyone would), just as Abraham’s servant had no control over who would give him drink (see Genesis 24:12-14). The vow contained a choice to be made by God: either accept a consecrated person or a burnt offering. Therefore, Jephthah was perhaps, to a degree, acting on *faith*, allowing God to choose how Jephthah would fulfill his part of the covenant.

Yet it still appears that the vow was rash and unwise. Jephthah had apparently not thought this through well enough. He was shocked and deeply grieved that his daughter was the one who came out to meet him, stating that this had brought him very low (verse 35). He was clearly expecting it to be someone else—probably a household servant. No doubt, he learned a powerful lesson that day.

Thankfully, as the evidence seems to support, Jephthah did not sacrifice his daughter—he devoted her to the service of God, much as did Hannah devote Samuel to the service of God. As such, Jephthah’s daughter would remain a virgin as she served at the tabernacle as part of a special class of dedicated women (compare Exodus 38:8; 1 Samuel 2:22; Luke 2:36-37). It appears that they acted as door porters, singers, musicians and workers in cloth (most valuable and needed when the tabernacle stood, as it did in Jephthah’s day). This dedication meant that Jephthah would have no grandchildren—for his daughter was his only child—and thus no heir.

As we know, the Israelites viewed barrenness as a stigma, and for the family line to end was considered virtually a curse from God. Now becomes very clear the grief of Jephthah (for he would have no inheritor) and of his daughter (for she would have no children) and of her friends (for their friend would never become “a mother in Israel,” and possibly mother of the promised Messiah) and of the people of Israel (for their hero would not leave them descendants and his name would “perish out of Israel”)! It is interesting to note the contrast between Jephthah and the judges immediately before and after him. They both had 30 sons (Judges 10:3-4; 12:8-9), while Jephthah had just this one and only daughter.

As a final observation, we must note verse 39 again. The sacred historian records that Jephthah “carried out his vow with her which he had vowed” and then adds, “she knew no man.” It is not recorded that Jephthah *sacrificed* her—that is apparently a conclusion based upon an incomplete understanding of the above scriptures. Some will argue that this last clause just magnifies the tragedy of her death—that she died young without ever marrying. But if, indeed, Jephthah’s daughter was sacrificed in gruesome and flagrant disobedience to God, this added statement about knowing no man would seem to be superfluous and inane; it only appears to make sense if she continued in a state of celibacy after Jephthah fulfilled his vow.

The writer of Hebrews, then, is vindicated for including Jephthah in the heroes of faith. Though Jephthah was evidently rash and unwise in making his vow to start with, he nevertheless obeyed God’s command to pay one’s vows to Him (Deuteronomy 23:21-23), even when it was to his own hurt (compare Psalm 15:4). In that sense, Jephthah’s fulfilling of his vow may be seen as a real act of faith! He was willing to give up his only hope of grandchildren and perpetuation of the family line, enduring a social stigma, in order to obey God. Why? Because he looked forward to the promises that he had seen and embraced (Hebrews 11:13), which would be bestowed in that country of God (verse 14) when he would be raised in that better resurrection (verse 35)! Truly, then, Judges 11 reveals Jephthah to be, in the end, a courageous man of integrity, faith and vision!

## **The War Between Ephraim and Gilead (Judges 12)**

**October 2**

The Gileadites were a clan within Manasseh, dwelling east of the Jordan and north of the Dead Sea. They appear to have been very independent of their tribe, and this independence irked the men of Ephraim, who generally headed the House of Joseph. Hence their accusation that the Gileadites were fugitives among Ephraim and Manasseh (verse 4).

Now that the war with Ammon was over, the men of Ephraim suddenly showed courage. They accused Jephthah of deliberately failing to summon them to the battle as a means of humiliating the leading tribe in Joseph, and they intended to wage war against him. Led by Jephthah, the Gileadites

steadfastly held their ground, taking the strategic byways and heights. They recognized Ephraimite infiltrators by their distinctive accent (showing that even in a small geographical region like Israel there were sharp delineations between—and sometimes bitter divisions among—the Israelite tribes and clans). However, the battle went entirely in favor of Jephthah and the Gileadites, and Gilead remained independent of their larger tribal units.

Jephthah judged only six years. After him a long series of judges followed: Ibzan of Bethlehem, seven years; Elon the Zebulonite, ten years; Abdon the Pirathonite (Ephraimite), eight years. Thus Israel enjoyed a total of 31 years of peace.

### **The Birth of Samson (Judges 13)**

**October 3**

At this point in the Judges narrative you may have noticed something interesting about Israel's periods of liberty—they approach about 40 years, or one generation. It seems that Israel would remain faithful to God only when a generation of Israelites experienced oppression. But the next generation would speedily go into idolatry, only to be oppressed. How true this remains! One generation seldom learns from the errors of its predecessor, and every generation feels it must “push the boundaries” set by the previous generation.

After about a generation of peace, Israel again sinned, so God delivered them into the hands of the Philistines, who dwelt on the lowland coasts of Israel's southwest. For 40 years the Philistines had oppressed Israel. Now God raised up a deliverer, Samson of the tribe of Dan.

Samson was the son of Manoah, whose wife had been barren. Throughout the Scriptures we see that God sometimes caused barren women to bear the one through whom He would work. This was done as a sign of God's involvement with the child from the start, and that any glory of accomplishment was to go to God. And it brought added respect to the chosen servant, which could help him accomplish the task God gave him to do. Manoah's wife was visited by the Angel of the Lord—whom they later understood to be God Himself, i.e., the preincarnate Christ, which this may have been (verse 22; compare Genesis 16:10-13). This divine messenger told her that she would conceive a child and instructed her to avoid all wine, products of the vine and unclean foods, for her son would be a Nazirite from birth, consecrated to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Manoah recognized the seriousness of the news and asked God how to raise the child. Manoah and his wife instinctively knew that if they were to raise a son who would do the works of God they would need divine assistance in their parenting. This is certainly the case of Christian parents today, because we live in a world that is largely lacking in godly values. Those who have children today need to ask God for wisdom in the process of rearing children. They also need to actively pursue knowledge of proper child rearing.

Again the Angel appeared and reiterated the need to avoid wine, products of the vine and anything unclean. Manoah and his wife then offered God a burnt offering and a grain offering. And as the offerings were consumed upon the altar, the Angel of the Lord ascended to heaven, whereupon they came to the conclusion regarding the Messenger's identity.

A major theme of this chapter is consecration to holiness. The child was to be a Nazirite from birth for the entirety of his life. The Nazirite (Numbers 6) was consecrated to God for a stipulated period, during which he was forbidden to cut his hair, to partake of wine or any other grape products, or to defile himself. Wine is often used as a symbol of spiritual stupefaction, and so the lesson is that separation to God requires absolute avoidance of anything that will dull one's spiritual senses. The dietary laws, moreover, are also explicitly connected with the requirement of holiness (Deuteronomy 14:1-3). Thus, the lesson is that the raising of holy children is only possible through holy parents doing all they reasonably can to remove sources of spiritual defilement from their children. Of course, even this will not guarantee the child's persistence in holiness—as it certainly did not in the case of Samson.

Surprisingly, however, for those readers interested in biblical typology, the story of Samson appears to offer, to a limited degree, a type of Christ. Samson, whose name means “Like the Sun,” was Israel's deliverer and strong man. Christ, the “Sun of Righteousness” (Malachi 4:2), a “sun and shield” (Psalm 84:11), is Israel's Deliverer and Strong Man (compare Luke 11:21-22). Samson had miraculous physical strength; Christ had miraculous spiritual strength. Samson's conception was announced by a spirit messenger from God, as was Christ's. Both Manoah's wife and Mary conceived as a result of divine intervention. Samson was separated to God from conception and for the entirety of His life, as was Christ (though Christ was not a Nazirite as some argue). Moreover, as the story will unfold, Samson's greatest victory came at the hour of his death, as did Christ's. There are marked differences between them, of course. The type breaks down when we see Samson unwilling to submit

to God for so much of his life, unlike Christ who obeyed His Father perfectly. Still, there are some parallels. And Samson's name was, in the end, recorded in the Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11:32).

### **Samson's Marriage (Judges 14)**

**October 4**

Samson's life as a deliverer for Israel stands in sharp contrast to the other deliverers God raised up for Israel. Despite such promising beginnings, Samson showed himself susceptible to being foolishly enticed by the world. God did not want the Israelites intermarrying with pagan gentiles, but Samson took a Philistine woman as his first wife. Also, Samson, as a Nazirite, should have avoided any uncleanness, but he took the honey from the carcass of the lion, which would have rendered the honey unclean (compare Leviticus 11:24-38). In short, Samson was a hardheaded man, but God would use that as a means of provoking the Philistines and delivering Israel.

The marriage of Samson, and the trickery that attended it, also shows that Samson was easily manipulated by the object of his desire. Neither his first, unnamed, wife, nor the woman Delilah would prove to be loving, faithful wives—but, rather, willing tools in the hands of the Philistine oppressors. Moreover, Samson seemed to be generally blind to their deceptions.

These kind of strange personal characteristics in a deliverer of Israel seem to be contradictory to the purposes of God. But in the case of Samson, God intended to use just such a man to seek an occasion against the Philistines (14:4). God can use the most unlikely of instruments to accomplish His purposes, even the very weaknesses and sins of men. If this is so with the weaknesses of God's servants, how much more when His servants purge themselves of sin and weakness and become truly holy and spiritually strong! Let us all strive to be just such excellent tools in the hands of our awesome God.

### **Foxes and Firebrands and the Jawbone of an Ass (Judges 15)**

**October 5**

The shenanigans at Samson's marriage, and the giving of his wife to another, provoked him into taking vengeance on the Philistine oppressors. He wrought havoc on their harvest. To do this, he trapped foxes—or jackals, as the Hebrew can also be translated (which seems more likely as jackals, unlike the more solitary foxes, traveled in packs, making it easier to catch them in greater numbers). He then tied torches—"firebrands" as the King James Version has it—between the tails of pairs of these jackals or foxes before releasing them into fields of grain, vineyards and olive groves. One can imagine the panic-stricken animals, unable to run in a straight line, zigzagging all over the fields, setting them on fire wherever they ran, thus burning whole crops. Samson became a wanted man, and it was his own people who turned him over to the Philistines.

Another element in the Christlike symbolism of Samson's life: Samson is turned over to the Philistine oppressors by Israelites of the tribe of Judah; Christ is turned over to the Roman oppressors by Israelites of the tribe of Judah.

Samson then slew a thousand Philistine men with the jawbone of a donkey. His utterance in verse 16 after slaying the Philistines is poetic, as the New King James Version indicates. However, the translation into English does not do justice to the Hebrew play on words. The Moffatt Translation is perhaps better: "With the jawbone of an ass I have piled them in a mass." At least Samson realizes that the strength and power he had to perform this incredible feat came from God. "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant," he acknowledges (verse 18). He even calls on God to further deliver Him from thirst, which God does.

All this is building to a grand climax as God continues to seek an occasion to deal with the Philistines.

### **Samson: God's Flawed Tool (Judges 16)**

**October 6**

God had been seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines (Judges 14:4). In itself, that is an interesting turn of phrase, for it implies that God works out His plans within the willing activities of men. God could have directly caused a thing to come to pass, but the Scripture says he *sought* an occasion. God often works in human events in this manner, interweaving His plans with those of men, bringing His will to pass by using the circumstances and individuals at hand. Thus, God works within the flow of history to accomplish certain ends without violating man's free will and often without producing an obvious trail of "miraculous" happenings. This does not, of course, mean that there is *no* evidence of miracles in history. The incredible strength of Samson alone would have been clearly miraculous to the people of his day—he carried massive city gates uphill for 40 miles! (16:3)

The free will God allowed the Philistines is extended to all men—even those God specially uses. To break the Philistine tyranny over Israel, God would use a man, Samson, who had remarkable strengths coupled with regrettable weaknesses. God would accomplish His purpose and Samson would

be the tool, whether he acted according to his better attributes or allowed his weaknesses to triumph. Regrettably, Samson would allow his weaknesses to get the better of him.

Contrary to scriptural principles, Samson had married a Philistine woman who was eventually given to another man. He could have chosen any Israelite woman, but Samson allowed his impulsive desire rather than his faith-guided intellect to control his behavior. He was lustful and arrogant. A little leaven leavens the whole lump, and so Samson descended even further into sin because he was unwilling to control his desire and submit to God—he went in to a Philistine harlot. Samson was now fully set to follow his lust, and this God would use to finally free Israel.

When Samson fell for another Philistine woman, Delilah, the Philistine lords persuaded her to discover the secret of his strength. After several failed attempts to capture him—attempts that Samson *knew* involved Delilah—he was finally captured. It is remarkable that in spite of knowing what Delilah was up to, Samson actually told her the truth. Maybe he did not really believe the truth himself, which might be hinted at in verse 20. Perhaps he had grown a bit cocky as to the source of his strength. If so, that was about to end. Overpowered and blinded by the Philistines, he was afterward forced to grind wheat. Some commentators suggest that he ground wheat as the women did, using a grinding stone and plate. Others suggest that he was harnessed to a grinding stone as a beast of burden, although this was apparently not typical until centuries later. In either case, the point was the same: to humiliate Israel's strongman.

When Samson was brought before the Philistine lords in their temple of Dagon some time later, his call to God was sincere. However, his stated motive—revenge for the blindness inflicted upon him (16:28)—was surely not the only motivation he had for seeking God. There is evidence to support Samson's repentance in that the New Testament lists him as a hero of faith who, out of weakness, was made strong (Hebrews 11:32-34). Indeed, is it not directly stated that he, along with the others mentioned, died assured of the promises of God's Kingdom and will be "made perfect" with Christians of this age? (compare verses 39-40) Moreover, Judges 16:22 is quite telling in relating what happened during Samson's servitude. It states, "However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven." Just what significance does this have? After all, we know that Samson's hair was not "magical." It was *God* who gave him his miraculous strength—the hair simply representing the Nazirite vow of consecration to God, which, in Samson's case, was supposed to be lifelong. Perhaps verse 22, then, is telling us that while blind and humiliated in servitude to pagans, Samson finally "saw the light" and reconsecrated himself to God. Viewed this way, the final scene in his life is but the culmination of that rededication.

This final scene is well known—Samson brings down the temple by toppling two pillars, which killed him and all the Philistine lords within. Until recently critics had thought this unlikely, a dramatic myth. How could a whole temple be destroyed by toppling two huge stone pillars? Just this past decade, however, a Philistine temple was fully excavated, revealing that the structure of the temple rested entirely upon two central pillars barely six feet apart. Given the weight distribution on those pillars, it would have been entirely possible for the biblical story to have ended precisely as recorded.

Why is not more made of Samson's repentance if it happened at this time? Because that is not the point of the narrative. The entire book of Judges concerns God's repeated deliverance of His people, regardless of the inclinations of those to whom He gave the task. *The Nelson Study Bible* notes: "Samson's life is ultimately a story about God's faithfulness in spite of human weakness. God's hand can be seen throughout the story—in Samson's empowerment by God's Spirit and in God's professed desire to subdue the Philistines (14:4). It also can be seen in this last contest between the true God and the Philistine god Dagon. When the Philistines captured Samson, they attributed this to their god and celebrated his victory (16:23, 24). We know, however, that it was God who had allowed it (v. 20), and that it was God who gained the ultimate triumph against Dagon and the Philistine rulers (vv. 27, 30)" (note on 16:23-31).

### History Out of Sequence (Judges 17)

October 7

The last five chapters of Judges are interesting as a group for, in addition to making no mention of particular judges, they appear to be incidental notices of Israelite history that do not follow the general theme or time line of the rest of the book of Judges. Indeed, *The Nelson Study Bible* notes: "The book of Judges closes with two appendixes, the first in chs. 17–18 and the second in chs. 19–21. They seem to be unrelated to the material preceding them and to each other. For instance, these chapters do not describe the cyclical pattern of sin, servitude, [supplication] and salvation seen in the earlier chapters of Judges. While chs. 2–16 describe foreign threats to Israel, these last

chapters show an internal breakdown of Israel's worship and unity. Furthermore, the events in these chapters appear to have taken place early in the period of the judges" (note on 17:1–21:25). That these chapters are out of chronological sequence with the rest of the book is attested to by several facts.

First, 18:1-3 inform us that the Danites had not received their inheritance in the land—"the tribe of the Danites was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them." This could be interpreted in two ways: either it had not "fallen to them" by lot, or it had not "fallen to them" by conquest. Joshua 19:47 informs us that when Dan received its territorial allotment the Danites found the land too small for their numbers, and hence they undertook the conquest of Laish. The settlement of Dan's territory must have taken some time, and so the conquest of Laish must be put either late in Joshua's time or very early in the period of Judges.

Second, 18:30 identifies the priest who officiated at the shrine in Dan (formerly, Laish) as "Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh." The Hebrew text of this phrase is remarkable for the fact that the name Manasseh is spelled with a small superscripted nun (letter N), as M<sup>N</sup>SH. The Masoretes—scribes who compiled the Hebrew text into its present form—were scrupulous not to disturb the position of the individual letters of the text, even to the point of developing a vowel system of "points" which fitted above and below the letters, but never between the letters. Thus, this small superscripted nun is a clue that it was not part of the original text. If the nun is removed the name becomes MSH or *Moshe*, i.e., Moses. Now we know that Moses had a son named Gershom (Exodus 2:22). Therefore, many scholars believe that the nun was a scribal insert into the text to direct the reader of the text to read "Manasseh" rather than "Moses," thereby sparing Moses the dishonor of having Israel's first apostate and idolatrous priest in his lineage. Jonathan would be the *grandson* of Moses. If this is correct, then the transactions mentioned in connection with Micah and the Danite conquest of Laish must have occurred late in the period of Joshua, or early in the period of Judges, the likely lifespan of Jonathan.

Third, Joshua 20:1 and verses 27-28 inform us that when Israel was roused to action against the Benjamites they assembled before the Lord where Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was still serving. Phinehas was thus the *grandson* of Aaron, and hence of the same generation of Jonathan, who seems to have been the *grandson* of Aaron's brother Moses. Phinehas was old enough to slay the fornicating Israelite (Numbers 25) and would have survived into the period of Joshua and perhaps the early part of the period of Judges, and hence would put the war against the Benjamites in the period of Joshua or early in the period of Judges.

Fourth, the war against the Benjamites was so devastating to Benjamin that it was feared the tribe would vanish in Israel (21:1-3). Only 600 Benjamite men are said to have survived (20:47), all the other Benjamites—men and women—being put to death (20:48) so that these 600 men could find no Benjamite wives. Yet at the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam, the Benjamites were considered a full tribe (although the smallest, see 1 Samuel 9:21) and contributed in some significant way to the fighting force of 180,000 men at Rehoboam's command. If the story of the war against Benjamin is correctly placed in the chronology of the book of Judges, that would mean that in a period of 120 years (the time from Saul to Rehoboam) the Benjamites recovered their numbers. This is extremely unlikely. It is far more reasonable to believe that these events happened late in the period of Joshua or, more reasonable still, early in the period of Judges, in conjunction with the evidence above, and that Benjamin therefore had about 400 years to recover their position and numbers.

The same is true for the story of the Danite conquest of Laish, as it probably happened within a short time of the war against Benjamin. That would mean that the history of these transactions has not been placed in chronological sequence within the book of Judges.

This, however, should not be viewed as a mistake. Much of the Bible is not in chronological sequence. Likewise, these accounts were appended to Judges intentionally and purposefully, and it is instructive to search out why. As the study Bible note quoted earlier goes on to state: "There is a certain logic to placing them at the end of the book. For one, the structure highlights the theme of the disintegration of Israel. The last chapters emphasize that 'every one did what was right in his own eyes' (17:6; 21:25). The general tone of these last chapters is satirical and understated. The many violations of Mosaic law receive only minimal comments. However, a muted note of disdain for Israel's wanton behavior is evident in places."

**Micah's Household Shrine (Judges 17)****Oct. 7 Cont'd**

Micah was an Ephraimite. This man built what appears to have been a personal shrine to God in his house. The context leads us to believe that neither Micah nor his mother *intended* open rebellion against God. Micah's mother invoked the name of God in blessing her son ("May you be blessed by the LORD, my son," verse 2) and she had originally dedicated the silver to God (verse 3). Also, the name Micah itself meant "Who Is Like the Eternal?"

As for Micah, notice the "shrine" he had in his house. The Hebrew phrase that the New King James Version renders as "shrine" (verse 5) is *beth Elohim*. While the original King James translates this "house of gods," it should perhaps more properly be rendered "house of God." Thus, it may have been some kind of miniature representation of God's tabernacle. Micah also had, as is mentioned in verse 5, an ephod, a garment worn during worship and probably in imitation of the ephods of the tabernacle priests. And then, mentioned in the same verse, were his *teraphim* (translated "household idols"), small figures either representing gods or some devices associated with a god—in this case perhaps even a miniature Ark of the Covenant. He was pleased to hire the Levite as his priest, at least showing he had some sort of respect for the God who had appointed the Levites to certain religious service. Furthermore, he sought instruction from the priest ("father" being a term for one who teaches and provides counsel). And Micah believed that the LORD (the same LORD invoked by his mother) would bless him for these measures (verse 13).

While certainly not wholly in line with God's instructions, neither was this *meant* to be wholesale apostasy. It was the worship of God united to idolatry—the sin of *syncretism*, blending pagan practices into their own religion, which the Almighty had expressly forbidden (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32) but which the Israelites often fell into. Moreover, it was doing what *seemed* right rather than following God's explicit commands—a recipe for disaster as this is the path that leads to death (see Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Though not *intended* to be apostasy and rebellion against God, it was apostasy and rebellion nevertheless. Sincerely attempting to please God is no excuse for breaking His direct commands. We must all remember this in our own worship of God.

**Dan Adopts Micah's Error and Takes Laish (Judges 18)****October 8**

When the Danite force moved north from Judah through Ephraim on their way to conquer Laish, they moved through the highlands of Ephraim, probably because the lowlands were still occupied by Canaanites. To aid them in their battle, the Danites decided to take the shrine of Micah and the Levite with them, probably in imitation of the Israelite practice of having a priest head their fighting forces (compare Deuteronomy 20). We are told that Laish was "far from the Zidonians, and they had no ties with anyone" (18:7). Thus, they appear to have lived an isolated life, having neither trading nor diplomatic relations with outsiders. In such a condition, without allies, Laish fell to Dan.

After the conquest of Laish, the men of Dan set up Micah's idolatrous figures and consecrated Jonathan, who may very well have been the grandson of Moses (see earlier highlight on Judges 17, "History Out of Sequence"), as their priest, and his sons as their priesthood. The northern Danites retained this idolatrous worship until the time of the captivity of northern Israel around 722 B.C. Moreover, all Israel knew about it, but did nothing to stop it, as required by the law God had given (see Deuteronomy 13:12ff.).

**Prelude to the War Against Benjamin (Judges 19)****October 9**

The disastrous war against the Benjamites began with a single incident, the brutal gang rape of a Levite's concubine. As horrible as this incident was, we still might wonder how it was able to spark such a major war.

There are two major relevant factors involved in what happened, one cultural and the other historical. The cultural factor involves proper treatment of a guest. Life in the Middle East has always been difficult, and to cope with the arduous conditions of nomadic life an elaborate system of social customs was developed. One social custom required every person to kindly entertain a guest, to provide comfort, lodging and food for a brief period to any stranger who happened upon one's camp, even if that stranger was a member of an enemy tribe in a time of peace. If the due benevolence was not shown, it was deemed an act of hostility and impiety before God. If the offence was serious enough, clan or tribal wars could be ignited.

A second factor was the persistent memory of what God had done to Sodom and Gomorrah—not only from the Pentateuch but even, no doubt, from regional stories passed down through generations. The filthy, abominable behavior of the inhabitants of these cities and others around them was a major factor in the cry that went up to God against them. The destruction against Sodom and her

neighbors was so complete that even today their exact whereabouts remain unknown. By comparing the behavior of the Gibeahite “sons of Belial” (19:22) and the old man (19:23) with the conduct of the men of Sodom (Genesis 19:4-5) and Lot (verses 6-8), one should be able to see a very clear parallel.

Factoring the understanding of these elements into the story, one can see why an incident of this nature could ignite such a war. The Levite was a representative of God, to whom the Gibeahites were extremely inhospitable and showed open and flagrant impiety. Knowing the social requirements to care for the traveler, the natural conclusion was that such an affront would be repaid with vengeance by the One the Levite served—God. Therefore action needed to be taken.

Of course, the Levite does not appear very God-oriented, surrendering his concubine to be abused as he did and being so cold and uncaring toward her the next morning before he knew she was actually dead. The Ephraimite’s offer to surrender up his own daughter does not paint him any better. We see here the low status that women had in that society. Truly, this story is utterly horrendous all the way around. It illustrates how low things had sunk—to the depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah. The prophet Hosea later cited this episode as one of the most corrupt events in Israel’s history (Hosea 9:9; 10:9).

### **The War Against Benjamin (Judges 20)**

**October 10**

The grisly evidence of the crime of the Gibeahites produced shock in the nation of Israel. A council was held at Mizpah, the Levite giving his testimony as to what had happened. All Israel resolved to take action against the Gibeahites.

A delegation was sent to the Gibeahites demanding the surrender of the “sons of Belial” (a term denoting wicked, worthless, perverse individuals). But when the Gibeahite elders showed themselves to be implacable, the situation became ominous. Indeed, all Benjamin rallied to the aid of Gibeah. The Benjamites fielded an army of 26,000 men against 400,000 soldiers out of the remaining tribes.

That the men of Benjamin would determine to fight the other 11 tribes appears remarkably senseless, even though they were known for their courage and military prowess. Genesis 49:27 hints at this and 1 Chronicles 8:40 and 12:2 provide examples. Judges 20:16 states that their army included 700 men who possessed devastating power by use of the sling (the same weapon with which David later slew Goliath). It was an effective weapon: “The sling, which was employed with a left-handed motion, must not be confused with a modern schoolboy’s catapult; it was a formidable weapon of war used in the Assyrian, Egyptian and Babylonian armies as well as in Israel.... It has been estimated that stones weighing up to one pound could be projected with uncanny accuracy at speeds up to 90 m.p.h.!” (*Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, note on verses 15-16).

With the clash between the two armies looming, the Israelites obtained counsel from God on the matter and, after initial reverses, completely routed the Benjamites.

We do not really know the reason that God initially allowed the Israelites to suffer 40,000 casualties with virtually no Benjamite casualties before giving the Israelites any help. There may have been tactical reasons for the lopsided nature of the first engagement. The *Tyndale* commentary on Judges offers this observation: “The hilly terrain in the vicinity of Gibeah favored a defensive force rather than an attacking force, especially if the former was in a strong position, as was likely in this case, since the Benjamites were familiar with their tribal portion. In such a situation superior numbers were of limited value, since they could not be effectively deployed, and a determined group of men armed with slings could inflict heavy casualties on an attacking force.... [And] in the battle which ensued the psychological advantage lay with the Benjamites. They would fight desperately because they were fighting for their lives, whereas the opposing force, while convinced of the rightness of their cause, may have had little heart to engage in a civil war” (note on verses 19-25). If this analysis is correct, it is an interesting parallel to the American Civil War, in cases where southern armies overwhelmed numerically superior armies of the north.

Perhaps more importantly, God may not have been especially happy with the other tribes (that their hearts were not really right is evident in what happened in the aftermath of the war). We do see that they were driven to fasting and sacrificing before God, something quite rare in this period. Perhaps God wanted them to see the need for this. In any case, the Israelites finally succeeded using a tactic similar to that used at Ai. All but 600 Benjamite men were slaughtered in the fighting. The 600 men fled to a stronghold and maintained themselves there for four months.

But during that four months, the Israelites did something just as unthinkable as the crime that sparked the war in the first place—they went through Benjamin’s territory and slaughtered the entire tribe, women and children, young and old. This was an unjustified atrocity, though the Israelites may

have considered it just retribution because the Benjamite cities they butchered had sent forces to aid the wicked men of Gibeah. In any case, it was an instance of anger and revenge taking precedence over self-control. When the slaughter was complete, only the 600 men in the stronghold survived.

### **Wives for the Benjamites (Judges 21)**

**October 11**

The slaughter of all the Benjamites except the 600 men holed up in Rimmon only worsened the situation—now an Israelite tribe was about to become extinct. The 600 men had no wives, for they had all been slain in the carnage that followed the war, and all Israel had bound themselves with an oath that they would not give their daughters to any Benjamite man. What could be done?

While searching for an answer, the men of Israel determined that no men had come up to the war from Jabesh Gilead. Recalling that they had sworn to slaughter any who did not come up to the war against Benjamin (verse 5), the answer seemed obvious—send a company of soldiers down to Jabesh Gilead, slaughter all the men there, and their wives, but preserve alive the virgins for the 600 men of Benjamin. And so one rash action followed another and the trail of blood continued. With the slaughter of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, 400 virgins were procured. But that was not enough.

In the strange twists of logic common in that day, again the answer seemed obvious: since all Israel was bound with an oath not to *give* their daughters to the Benjamite men, let the Benjamite men *take* the daughters! And so the Benjamite men were allowed to raid a group of women dancing in religious celebration and to carry away whomever they chose as wives. The fathers of the women were prevailed upon not to attempt to retrieve their daughters. And in this way, all oaths were kept and a tribe in Israel was preserved.

This kind of bizarre, torturous logic with regard to oaths might seem foolish to many of us today. Indeed, it all seems rather disingenuous, as they sought out loopholes to skirt the clear intent of their oaths. But the keeping of one oath, even if it was at the cost of some strange behavior, was another one of those social customs and expected morality that was common to all Middle Eastern society. Indeed, the keeping of oaths is commanded by God. But God expects those who give their word to follow through on the *intent*—not just the letter. Often a considerable degree of wordplay and shades of meaning were employed to extract one from a difficult circumstance (as the story of Hushai, 2 Samuel 15–17, will show), but in the end everyone was deemed to have kept his word. Of course, none of this is to say that strange reasoning of this sort never happens today. Similar “logic” is often applied in our day when people try to avoid blatant lies while nevertheless attempting to completely mislead people.

So what should the Israelites have done instead? Following through on the intent of their oaths would have put them in an untenable position from their vantage point. Of course, that was the problem. They were looking at things from their own vantage point. What they should have been more concerned about was God’s will. Thus, they should first have repented for making foolish vows to begin with. Then they should have returned to Phinehas and inquired of God about what to do. If they were truly seeking the Lord, He would have given them an answer. And God’s direct commands always override any vow. Indeed, if a father could void his daughter’s vows and a husband could void his wife’s vows, God could certainly void the vows of Israel, who was His daughter by creation and wife by covenant. Furthermore, no vow is binding if it obligates one to violate commands God has already given. The real solution in such situations is, as already stated, humble repentance—something sorely lacking in the period of the judges, when “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

### **Introduction to Ruth (Ruth 1)**

**October 12**

The book of Ruth chronologically overlaps the book of Judges. And, although not stated in the biblical text, Talmudic tradition names the same author for both—the prophet Samuel. But unlike the book of Judges, Ruth is not part of the second major division of the Old Testament, known as the Prophets. Instead, it actually belongs among the third division, the Writings (known in Greek as the Hagiographa, meaning “Sacred Writings,” and sometimes referred to as the “Psalms,” as the book of Psalms is the first book of the Writings in order of arrangement and makes up the largest portion of this section). The Bible Reading Program will cover some material from the Writings in the course of our reading of the Prophets when that material has a clear timeliness and helps to further elucidate the historical material in the Prophets. Ruth does just that, giving more details about the period of the judges and providing an important link in the family of Judah, from which the kings of Israel will eventually spring.

“The story is set in the difficult days of the Judges, which were marred by appalling spiritual, moral, and social decline. Yet, as the story unfolds, we discover that within the corrupt society there

were still true believers: simple folk who tried honestly to love and serve God, and to live generously with their neighbors. The unveiling of Ruth, of her mother-in-law Naomi, and of her husband-to-be, Boaz, reminds us that true sacred history is not learned so much in the annals of heroes and kings, as in the daily lives of godly women and men. The Book of Ruth should be required reading for any who study the era of the Judges, for it brings much-needed balance to our impression of that age of spiritual disarray” (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader’s Companion*, 1991, introductory notes on Ruth).

This heartwarming and encouraging book provides an example of the variety of instruction God has laid out in His Word. The entire book is a self-contained short story about a few central characters, similar in that regard to Esther. There is no direct instruction from God—no commands, no correction from a prophet, no expounding of God’s law. There are, however, great themes and lessons in the book—one being that God blesses those who seek to obey Him, sometimes in very unexpected ways. This is the experience of the main character Ruth, after whom the book is named—making this book one of only two in the entire Bible named after women, the other being Esther. Remarkably, Ruth is not an Israelite but a foreigner, a Moabitess. Yet she will not remain so but will be grafted into Israel—and not just grafted in but honored by God with an important position in the lineage of David and his descendant the Messiah. Whether the book’s author actually is Samuel or someone else, there is a clear sense of respect for a foreign-born woman wanting to submit herself in obedience to God and follow His way of life, and in doing so to have such a major impact on Israel’s future.

Ruth is one of the five books of the Writings known to the Jews as the Megilloth—the other four being the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations and Esther. While the word *megilloth* simply means “rolls” or “scrolls,” this term is used specifically of the *festival scrolls*—that is, the books of the Writings read in the synagogues at feast times. One of the major threads running through the book of Ruth is that of harvest, specifically the smaller spring harvest—first of barley and then of wheat (see Ruth 1:22). For this reason Ruth is traditionally read in Jewish synagogues during the Feast of Harvest or Firstfruits (Pentecost)—which occurs during this agricultural period in May or June.

Interestingly, Jewish tradition says the first Pentecost for Israel was when God gave the law at Mount Sinai and Israel accepted it, thereby truly becoming His people. Ruth is the story of a woman who accepted the laws of God and thereby became part of God’s people. It should be noted that the “harvest” of Israel as God’s people typified the spiritual harvest of *spiritual* Israel, the New Testament Church of God—the members of which are God’s “firstfruits” in this age, as there will be a greater harvest of mankind when Christ returns. The story of Ruth helps to illustrate the fact that all people will one day be given the opportunity to follow God—and that, even today, gentiles are grafted in among God’s firstfruits to be part of His early harvest. Paul (Romans 11:24-25) and Peter (Acts 10:9-15) later showed that God intended all along for the gentiles to be grafted into Israel (Isaiah 56:3-7; Leviticus 19:33).

It was also at Pentecost that the nation of Israel entered into its covenant marriage with God. And this was symbolic of the marriage relationship Jesus Christ was to have with spiritual Israel, the Church. Clearly, love and marriage—as representative of God’s relationship with His people—is also a theme of the book of Ruth. Boaz, picturing Christ, marries Ruth, who represents the Church. He is the husbandman who protects, provides for and cares for his bride.

Finally, another overarching theme of the book is clearly that of the kinsman-redeemer. “The Hebrew word for kinsman (*goel*) appears thirteen times in Ruth and basically means ‘one who redeems’” (*The New Open Bible*, 1990, introductory notes on Ruth). The need for redemption is made clear early in the story—and its accomplishment through buying back land, levirate marriage and the perpetuation of the family is the grand conclusion. The book thus “provides a clear picture of the kinsman-redeemer, an individual who through relationship is able to intervene on a family member’s behalf. In this role Boaz prefigures Jesus Christ, who became a real human being so that He might be our kinsman, and qualify as [that is, meet the conditions of becoming] our Redeemer” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, introductory notes on Ruth). What a wonderful picture!

It should be noted that the exact time of the story of Ruth within the period of the judges is not clear. Genealogies of Judah’s family, as recorded at the end of the book and in other passages (see Ruth 4:18-21; Matthew 1), show the following progression: Salmon by Rahab (the Jericho prostitute of Joshua 6 fame) begets Boaz; Boaz and Ruth have a child named Obed; and Obed begets Jesse, the father of David. Yet there were around 360 years between the time that Salmon and Rahab met and the birth of David, and it seems unlikely that there were only three generations between them. Thus,

it appears that generations may have been skipped in the genealogy—between Salmon and Boaz or between Obed and Jesse or both.

### **“Your People Shall Be My People, and Your God My God” (Ruth 1) Oct. 12 Cont’d**

As the story opens, we are introduced to the family of Elimelech. We later learn that he is a close relative of one of the story’s main characters, Boaz—perhaps a cousin or uncle (a brother seems unlikely as that would probably be stated). As the genealogies show, Boaz was from an important family line of Judah, descended as he was from the tribal leader in Mosaic times. So Elimelech would also have been of that important family.

But famine drives Elimelech to relocate his family southeast to the land of Moab. While his action may have been borne out of a lack of faith in God to provide for them in Israel (abandoning their inheritance in the Promised Land and his responsibility to serve as a leader in Judah), it is also possible that he simply believed this was the right way to provide for his family in such a situation, perhaps taking cues from the patriarchs, who moved to Egypt in time of famine. (Moab may have seemed even more justifiable as it was closer to home and the Moabites were descendants of Abraham’s nephew Lot.) In any event, the times must have been quite hard on the family already. For while Elimelech’s name meant “God Is My King” and his wife Naomi’s meant “My Delight” or “Pleasant,” they named their sons Mahlon (meaning “Sickly”) and Chilion (meaning “Pining,” “Failing” or “Wasting Away”). It is not clear whether these names were given at birth or later (similar to Naomi later renaming herself Mara, verse 20). But it is clear that conditions must have been pretty bad.

Apparently Elimelech dies not too long after settling in Moab. His sons are wed to local Moabite women—Mahlon to Ruth and Chilion to Orpah (compare verse 4; 4:10). This was not forbidden in the law God gave Israel, as intermarriage with Canaanites was (see Deuteronomy 7:3), though there were prohibitions related to the offspring of intermarriage with Moabites (which we will address at the end of the book). But these particular marriages produce no children. That may be because the marriages were rather short-lived (depending on when the weddings took place). The sons, it turns out, were named appropriately, as they both died early deaths 10 years after their father.

With her husband and two sons dead, and thus no men to provide for the family needs, Naomi realizes that her prospects in Moab were bleak. Seeing herself as a further burden to her daughters-in-law, and hearing that agricultural conditions in Israel had improved (Ruth 1:6), she determines to return to her homeland and entreats Ruth and Orpah to return to their families and remarry. They, however, want to go with her. But she knows the hardships each of them would face in Israel, not only as widows, but especially as foreigners—they would be impoverished *and* outsiders. And she could be of no help. As an elderly widow, there was no hope of her being married again and having additional sons to give them in marriage (verses 11-13)—this according to the custom of levirate marriage that God gave Israel, wherein a man was to marry his childless dead brother’s widow in order to continue his brother’s lineage (see Deuteronomy 25:5).

Orpah then departs—going “back to her people and to her gods” (Ruth 1:15). The wording here is interesting. It implies that these Moabite women had actually *left* their pagan gods when they married Mahlon and Chilion. But this was simply the rule of the day, as a wife in ancient Middle Eastern society was supposed to adopt the religion of her husband. The real test was now. Orpah’s name meant “Neck,” perhaps fitting for one who turned her head to look back—and then actually *went* back to her former paganism. Indeed, it is likely that she had made no true commitment to God in the first place. Apparently neither of them had—or Naomi would probably not have lightly told them to depart from it.

But Ruth was different than Orpah. It is interesting that her name may be a Moabite modification of the Hebrew word *reuit*, meaning friendship, association or companion. Ruth certainly was motivated by true friendship for Naomi. She was a faithful companion who would not leave her dear friend even when it meant personal difficulty. Since there was no one else to care for her mother-in-law, she would stand in the gap and do what she could. This was remarkable character and devotion. But there was apparently more to it than strong friendship. At the end of her courageous and loyal commitment of verses 16-17 (the focal point of the entire narrative), she invoked the Lord as one who sincerely believed in Him. She had before been part of a dark and evil pagan society. But light had dawned through her association with the family of Elimelech. She had no doubt heard all about Israel and its God. And though the way might be hard, she wanted to be as much a part of it as she could. She would embrace what it meant to be an Israelite in covenant with the true God. The remainder of the story concerns how this remarkable choice is rewarded in a remarkable way.

We might expect Naomi to be overwhelmed and ecstatic at this decision. But her reaction seems to simply be one of resignation to the fact of Ruth coming with her (verse 18). This is terribly sad. Perhaps she was not convinced of Ruth's commitment—or perhaps she was just too fixated on concern over how this could possibly work out well for Ruth, especially considering her own predicament. As can be expected to some extent, Naomi has let the events of her life since coming to the land of Moab weigh heavily on her. And going home made it even worse. As excited as those in Bethlehem were to see her when she and Ruth arrived there, Naomi asks them to call her Mara, which means “Bitter.” What had made her house in Israel a home was the presence of her loved ones, who were now gone. “For Naomi, who had left Bethlehem with a husband and two sons, the return brutally drove home the extent of her loss” (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on 1:19-21).

Moreover, she views her circumstances as God's judgment on her (perhaps indicating some faithlessness in the initial decision to resettle in Moab). But she has now returned. “The theme of *return* is prominent in this chapter. The word is even used of Ruth—an unusual word for the narrator to use since there is no indication that Ruth had ever been to Israel” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 22). Perhaps what is important here is the symbolism. The Hebrew word for return is the expression used throughout the Old Testament for repentance—rejecting our former ways and turning our lives around to go the way God originally told mankind to go. Ultimately, returning to God always brings great reward.

### Bringing in the Sheaves (Ruth 2)

October 13

After all of the calamity of chapter 1, Naomi and Ruth begin to settle back into Israel. Without husbands to help provide for them, Naomi and Ruth utilize the legal provisions God gave to Israel for the poor and widows (see Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19). Ruth seeks permission from Naomi to gather grain in the fields being harvested. Her “reference to whoever is kind enough to let her glean (the meaning of ‘in whose eyes I find favor’) reminds us that not everyone followed the Law!” (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verses 2:2-3). With Naomi's blessing, Ruth “happens” upon the field of Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's deceased husband Elimelech (Ruth 2:1, 3). She, of course, didn't intend this, not even knowing about Boaz or any connection with him. But it wasn't random chance. God was behind it, as Naomi later recognizes (verse 20).

Interestingly, “about a mile east of Bethlehem is a field, called ‘Field of Boaz,’ where, tradition says, Ruth gleaned. Adjoining is the ‘Shepherd's Field,’ where, tradition says, the angels announced the birth of Jesus. According to these traditions, the scene of Ruth's romance with Boaz, which led to the formation of the family that was to produce Christ, was chosen of God, 1100 [or more] years later, as the place for the heavenly announcement of Christ's arrival” (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, note on chapter 2).

In this field Ruth labored. Indeed, her harvesting would have been hard work—using a sickle to glean the corners of the field and picking through the field for any grain the harvesters had dropped. Ruth caught the attention of the servants because of her hard work, staying in the field from morning through the heat of the day—not even stopping long to rest “in the house” (verse 7), which was probably a tent or canopy to provide some shade in the field. Ruth has thus established a good reputation for herself. “In a small community the story of Ruth and Naomi would be common knowledge, the focus of much conversation (cf. v. 11). Now events showed Ruth hardworking (v. 7), respectful (v. 10), modest, and grateful (v. 13). The reputation we earn opens—or closes—the door of opportunity” (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verses 6, 10-11, 13). Indeed, Ruth's having sown seeds of good character was allowing her to “reap a harvest” of great reward (compare Galatians 6:7).

Boaz fulfills the instruction God had given Israel to not treat strangers or foreigners differently under the law, and even instructs Ruth to stay and glean in his fields for her protection. This and Naomi's words at the end of the chapter show that safety was a concern for a lone woman during this period. “Again we sense that Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz live in an oasis of peace in a turbulent, sinful society” (note on Ruth 2:9, 22). Ruth was apparently in danger of being molested while she worked in the fields. Among Boaz's many kindnesses, he personally warned his workers that Ruth was not to be touched.

In verse 12, “Boaz blesses Ruth, in a statement which may be taken as a prayer.... Boaz believes that Ruth deserves the best for her piety and choice of Israel's God, and is convinced that a just God will see that she is well rewarded. Boaz, who utters this prayer, is the means by which it is answered” (note on verse 12). Boaz goes so far as to provide food for Ruth while she works, instructs his

workers not to rebuke and shame her if she works among the already harvested sheaves and even tells them to purposely drop some of the harvest for her to gather.

It is interesting to note that Boaz did not just give her the grain. He “exhibited the highest form of charity by giving in secret so as not to shame the recipient” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 17). Perhaps there is even a spiritual lesson in what happened. While God undoubtedly led Ruth to Boaz’s field, and may have even laid it upon Boaz to be so generous to her, Ruth herself had to put forth the necessary work to reap the blessings. Thus, despite the fact that it was a gift, she still had to work. And work she did all day long, gathering an ephah of barley (verse 17). As an ephah equates to about 65 percent of a modern bushel and a bushel of barley weighs about 48 pounds, Ruth gathered about 31 pounds of barley.

This was far more than typical gleaning could bring in, and Naomi immediately recognizes that someone must have helped Ruth out (verse 19). When Ruth tells her about Boaz, Naomi is overjoyed—realizing that he, as a close relative of Elimelech, could redeem the family name and inheritance. And surely, she reasoned, this development was from God (verse 20). So God had not abandoned her after all. He had accepted Ruth and would take care of the both of them. After utter despair, Naomi now trusted God to see them through.

Ruth continues gleaning through the barley and then the wheat harvest (verse 23).

### A Midnight Encounter (Ruth 3)

October 14

The word “security” in verse 1 is correctly rendered “rest” in the King James Version. It is describing the “rest” found in marriage (see 1:9), that is, “settling down”—typical of the “rest” of God’s coming Kingdom (see Hebrews 3–4), wherein the glorified Church will be married to Jesus Christ (compare Ephesians 5:22-23; Revelation 19:7).

Naomi remarks again on the fact that Boaz is a close relative—a kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 1:2). “The Hebrew word refers to a relative who acted as a protector or guarantor of the family rights. He could be called upon to perform a number of duties (1) to buy back property that the family had sold; (2) to provide an heir for a deceased brother by marrying that brother’s wife and producing a child with her [evidently “brother” being understood as a more encompassing family relation than just a literal brother]; (3) to buy back a family member who had been sold into slavery due to poverty; and (4) to avenge a relative who had been murdered by killing the murderer. The Scripture calls God the Redeemer or the ‘close relative’ of Israel (Is. 60:16), and Jesus the Redeemer of all believers (1 Pet. 1:18, 19)” (“Wordfocus: Close Relative,” *Nelson Study Bible*, p. 446).

Indeed, as briefly mentioned earlier, “the concept of the kinsman-redeemer or *goel* (3:9, ‘close relative’) is an important portrayal of the work of Christ. The *goel* must (1) be related by blood to those he redeems [and Christ came in human flesh] (Deut. 25:5, 7-10; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14, 15); (2) be able to pay the price of redemption [as Christ was able through His blood] (2:1; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19); (3) be willing to redeem [as Christ was willing] (3:11; Matt. 20:28; John 10:15, 18; Heb. 10:7); (4) be free himself [from whatever caused the need for redemption, i.e., the redeemer cannot redeem Himself] (Christ was free from the curse of sin). The word *goel*...[thus] presents a clear picture of the mediating work of Christ” (*New Open Bible*, introductory notes on Ruth). It is also of interest that a Christian needs to agree to God’s way in order to receive the blessing. A Christian needs to *want* salvation. Ruth wanted Boaz to marry her and she agreed to the system.

Naomi decides it’s finally time to act. The end of harvest always meant celebration and feasting in ancient societies. Perhaps she thought Boaz would be most receptive to any appeals or proposals at such a happy occasion. She tells Ruth to wash, put on perfume and dress in nice clothes and then sends her down to the festivities, but not to approach him during them (Ruth 3:3). Rather, Naomi instructs Ruth to follow Boaz and, after he fell asleep, uncover his feet and lie down at them (verse 4). This seems rather strange to us today, but it appears to have been more common and understood in the culture of the time. Today some view it as a sexual advance, accusing Ruth (and Naomi for suggesting it) of immorality. But that is rather unlikely, as we will see.

Boaz goes to sleep out in the open (verse 7). With most of the harvest at the threshing floor, it was not uncommon for the owner or a trusted servant to sleep near the pile of grain to guard against theft. He wakes at midnight, startled to find Ruth at his feet. She says to him, “Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid: for thou art a near kinsman” (verse 9, KJV). First of all, we should notice that this is a humble petition, as she calls herself his handmaiden—his servant. This may explain her presence at his feet, the position of a lowly petitioner. Furthermore, in the NIV the expression “thy

skirt” is rendered “the corner of your garment.” Some see this as a reference to a cloak or outer robe that was being used as a blanket (see C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*).

“Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet—a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master’s bed. Resting, as the Orientals [i.e., Middle Easterners] do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman, putting the extremity of this cover over her” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary*, note on verse 9).

In the plural the Hebrew term translated “skirt” is usually understood to mean *wings*, and thus some translations, such as the New King James Version, translate it here as “wing.” God used this terminology in describing His taking of Israel as His wife: “Behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine” (Ezekiel 16:8, KJV). In the New King James Version, the key phrase here is translated “so I spread My wing over you.” Clearly, Ruth’s intent was a proposal of marriage—that she come under the wing or cloak of a husband’s protection, namely Boaz’s.

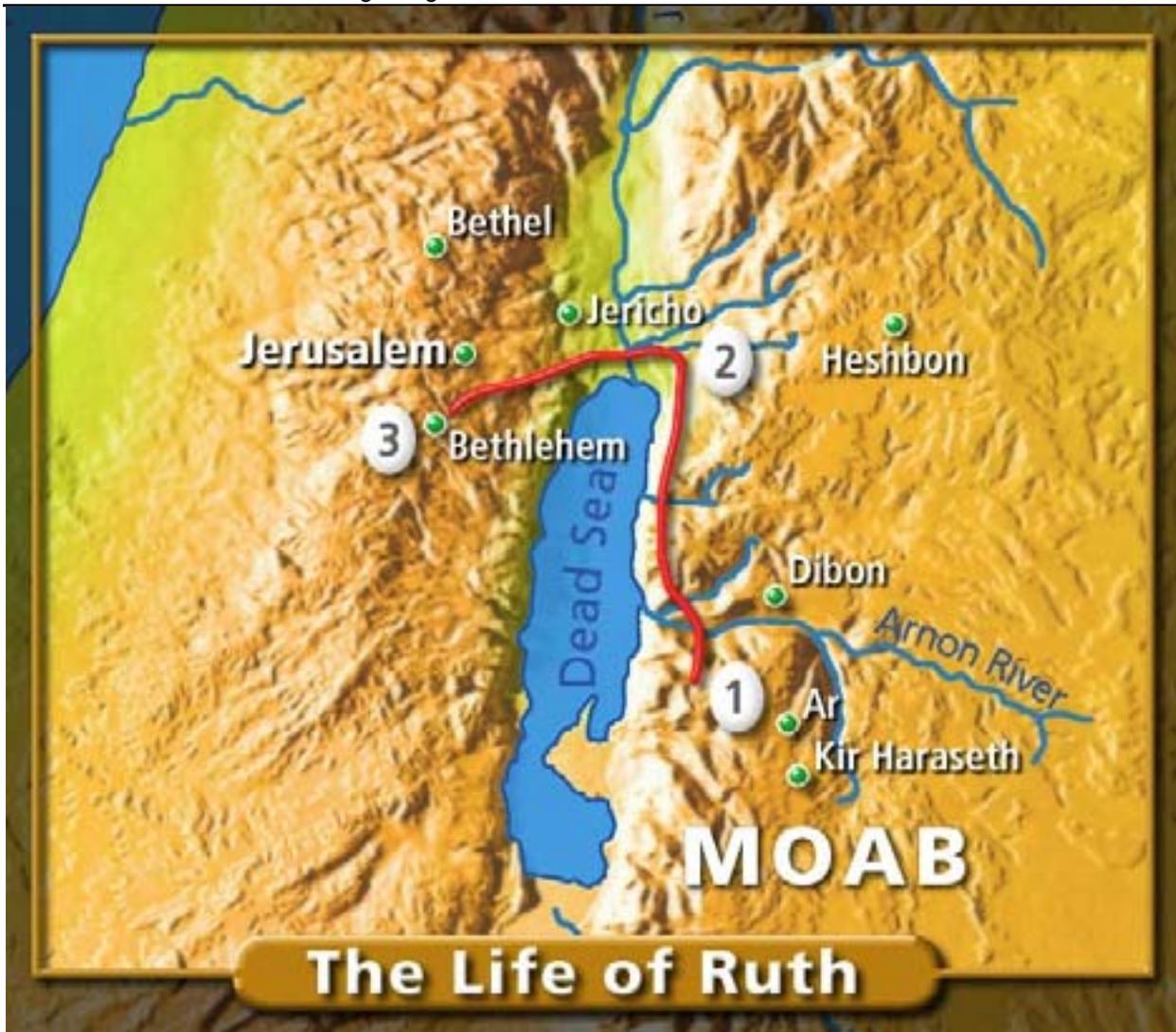
What is also rather significant in this regard is that Boaz had earlier spoken to her of “the LORD God of Israel, *under whose wings you have come for refuge*” (Ruth 2:12)—here using the plural form of the same Hebrew word. Yet he had not sent her on her way to be protected by God somewhere else. Rather, to a great degree, he took on the duty of providing and caring for her himself.

Since this true story illustrates the relationship between Christ and the Church, there might seem to be a breakdown in the typology. Jesus said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you...” (John 15:16). This is after God the Father selects those who are to be part of the bride for His Son (John 6:44). But consider that Ruth did not initiate the relationship. Boaz had already taken a keen interest in her and had shown obvious favor toward her. Indeed, it is likely that he very much wanted to be her husband. But we see that he is an older man who expected Ruth to marry someone much younger. The wise Naomi recognized Boaz’s feelings for what they were. She may have known that Boaz was a conservative man who lacked romantic assertiveness. Naomi decided it was time for Ruth to show some initiative as a response to Boaz’s interest. Likewise, after being called by God we are to exercise initiative in seeking Him. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8).

Boaz is deeply touched. And he is immensely impressed with Ruth’s great “kindness” (verse 10)—the Hebrew word here, *hesed*, meaning “loyal love” or “covenant faithfulness.” Not only had she stuck by Naomi, but now she was seeking to fulfill the obligation of preserving the lineage and inheritance of her deceased husband, which would restore the family line of Elimelech and ensure that Naomi was well provided for.

Boaz’s response really helps us to see that no sexual impropriety was occurring. If Ruth had been doing something immoral, his first words would surely not be to bless her in God’s name for her faithfulness and moral virtue (verses 10-11). His telling her to sleep there until morning (verse 13) was most likely to ensure her protection. It would not have been safe for her to walk back to town in the middle of the night, when she might have been accosted—just before dawn would be safer, when no one was awake. It is true that, in verse 14, Boaz does not want anyone to know she’d been there. But that doesn’t mean anything wrong had transpired. Perhaps he just didn’t want the encounter to be misconstrued and Ruth’s reputation brought into question. Or maybe he just didn’t want his intent of marriage to become public until he was able to sort out the situation with the other relative he mentions. For Boaz, we find out, was not the nearest kin (verse 12).

In the morning, Boaz sends Ruth home with a gift of grain—6 unspecified measures (verse 15). The New King James has ephahs but that would be around 187 pounds, pretty difficult for her to carry in her shawl. Perhaps Boaz just used a scoop and dumped six full scoops into her shawl. This gift may have been a pledge of his intentions to marry her if possible. At the end of the chapter, Naomi tells Ruth to, in modern parlance, “sit tight and wait and see.” Naomi is confident that Boaz, who has repeatedly demonstrated uprightness and compassion toward them, will have the matter resolved before the day is over (see verse 18).



- The Life of Ruth**
1. Naomi, Ruth and Orpah outlive their husbands in Moab
  2. Naomi and Ruth return, Orpah stays behind
  3. Naomi and Ruth resettle in Bethlehem, where Ruth meets Boaz and remarries.

### Redemption and Marriage (Ruth 4)

**October 15**

Because Boaz was not the nearest kinsman, he had to give the choice to the nearer kinsman of whether to redeem Naomi's land and marry Ruth or not. This was a serious choice because it was not just about inheriting land or marrying a widow, it was about continuing a family line. Several interesting things take place in this story. Verse 2 speaks of Boaz going before 10 elders of the city. According to the *Interpreters One Volume Commentary*, this incident provided a precedent for the later view that 10 men formed a quorum.

In addressing his relative before the quorum, Boaz informs him that with the land comes the obligation to marry Ruth (verse 5). But why would this be? And why does the land have to be bought from Naomi? Isn't the whole problem that someone else now possessed the land?

First of all, we should understand that when land was sold in Israel, it was more like a lease or rental agreement since all land reverted to the original owner at the Jubilee, every 50th year. The original owner and his family still possessed title to the land. Elimelech sold his land in time of hardship. That land was redeemable by Elimelech's family through paying the "balance of the lease" to the current occupant. Title would have passed to Elimelech's sons and on down to the nearest of kin. Widows, however, were not listed in the line of inheritance (see Numbers 27:8-11). The nearest kinsman would thus seem to automatically become the new owner of the property. So why would he need to purchase it from the widow?

Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament* explains: "The question arises, what right had Naomi to sell her husband's land as her own property?... The true explanation is no doubt

the following: The law relating to the inheritance of the landed property of Israelites who died childless did not determine the time when such a possession should pass to the relatives of the deceased, whether immediately after the death of the owner, or not until after the death of the widow who was left behind.

“No doubt the latter was the rule established by custom, so that the widow remained in possession of the property as long as she lived; and for that length of time she had the right to sell the property in case of need, since the sale of a field was not an actual transfer of title but simply the sale of the yearly produce until the year of jubilee.

“The field of the deceased Elimelech would, strictly speaking, have belonged to his sons, and after their death to Mahlon’s widow (Ruth), since Chilion’s widow had remained behind in her own country Moab. But as Elimelech had not only emigrated with his wife and children and died abroad, but his sons had also been with him in the foreign land, and had married and died there, the landed property of their father had not descended to them, but had remained the property of Naomi, Elimelech’s widow, in which Ruth, as the widow of Mahlon, also had a share.

“Now, in case a widow sold the field of her deceased husband for the time that it was in her possession, on account of poverty, and a relation of her husband redeemed it, it was evidently his duty not only to care for the maintenance of the impoverished widow, but if she were still young, to marry her, and to let the first son born of such a marriage enter into the family of the deceased husband of his wife, so as to inherit the redeemed property, and perpetuate the name and possession of the deceased in Israel.

“Upon this right, which was founded upon traditional custom, Boaz based this condition, which he set before the nearer redeemer, that if he redeemed the field of Naomi he must also take Ruth, with the obligation to marry her, and through this marriage to set up the name of the deceased upon his inheritance.”

In verse 6, the near kinsman realizes that in buying the land he would be eventually giving it to heirs of Elimelech, thereby losing not only the land but also the money used to buy the land and provide for Ruth and Naomi. This he sees as ruining his own inheritance. Perhaps he already has children from a previous marriage who, he feels, would be left insufficiently provided for in such a circumstance.

Whatever the case, he defers the right of redemption to Boaz in verse 7 and gives Boaz his shoe as a witness to make it official (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10). This “custom itself, which existed among the Indians and the ancient Germans, arose from the fact that fixed property was taken possession of by treading upon the soil, and hence taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership” (Keil and Delitzsh).

Deuteronomy 25 required spitting in the face of one who refused to fulfill the obligation of being the redeemer. That appears to be left out here—perhaps indicating some mitigating circumstances in favor of the relative, such as the children he was already providing for. Or perhaps the spitting is simply not recorded. Some believe the fact that the near relative’s name is not mentioned in the story connotes a blotting out of his name for refusing his obligation.

Boaz declares his intention to marry Ruth and all is approved. A blessing is even pronounced, invoking the example of Tamar, a former levirate marriage from whom most of the tribe of Judah had descended (Ruth 4:12).

The story comes to a close with Boaz marrying Ruth, and it seems that God blessed them right away with children (verse 13). Interestingly, the concluding scenes are of Naomi. The women of the community recognize that in the face of all of the difficulty Naomi had experienced, the conclusion of the matter was far better than anything that could have been anticipated. Ruth became “better to you than seven sons” (verse 15). Oddly, it is neighbor women who name the son born to Boaz and Ruth—they name him Obed, which means “Serving.” Perhaps they played a major part in helping Ruth through her pregnancy, enough so that their input was solicited and accepted.

The book finishes with a review of the genealogy that is very interesting because the genealogy has changed, with Boaz taking the place of Elimelech. Instead of losing everything, as his relative feared, Boaz gained a preeminent place in the history of Israel. In direct descent from Obed is Jesse, the father of David, from whom descended Jesus Christ.

We might wonder how, a few generations later, the descendant of a Moabitess becomes the king of Israel, when Deuteronomy 23:3 prohibited the descendants of Moabites from entering the congregation of the Lord for ten generations. “The Jewish Midrash implies that this prohibition related only to the women who wed Moabite males” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on Ruth 1:4). We cannot, of course, know for certain. There is, it should be noted, a problem with Moabite wives

in Ezra and Nehemiah's time—but these women are pagan, not courageous women of faith who committed their lives to the true God. Ruth, on the other hand, well illustrates what the apostle Peter later said in Acts 10:34-35: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." Let that be a lesson to all of us.

**Supplementary Reading:** "Ruth: An Example of Love and Devotion," *The Good News*, May–June 1996, pp. 28-31.

### **Introduction to Samuel, Kings and Chronicles (1 Samuel 1)**

**October 16**

After Judges, the next books of the Prophets section of the Hebrew Bible are Samuel and Kings. We will read Samuel and Kings and the rest of the Prophets in harmony with most of Chronicles and with certain other Old Testament writings, such as some of the Psalms. Though Chronicles also belongs to the Writings—in fact, concludes that section—most of it overlaps Samuel and Kings in great detail. Therefore, a harmony of these books will give us a more complete picture of what happened during this period of time. (The genealogies at the beginning of Chronicles will be read with the Writings section.)

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book in the Hebrew canon. Samuel certainly wrote parts of the book bearing his name. In 1 Chronicles 29:29 he is mentioned as an author. However, he is dead after 1 Samuel 24 (his death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25:1). According to Jewish tradition, Nathan and Gad were the other authors. *The Nelson Study Bible* points out in its introduction to 1 Samuel that "another editor at a later date could have taken the memoirs of Samuel, Nathan, Gad, and others and woven them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit into the wonderfully unified book we have today." It further points out in its introduction to 2 Samuel: "Indeed, some notes may have been added even after the division of the monarchy in 930 B.C. (1 Sam. 27:6). In the absence of any reference to the fall of Samaria, the capital of the northern Kingdom, it is reasonable to assume that the books were complete by 722 B.C. The majority of composition of the Books of Samuel may have been done during David and Solomon's reigns (c. 1010-930 B.C.), with only a small number of notations coming from later periods."

Then we come to 1 and 2 Kings, which were also originally one book, a compilation of a nearly 400-year period. Though its authorship is contested by some scholars today, Jewish tradition maintains that the prophet Jeremiah wrote 1 and 2 Kings. The author was at least a contemporary of Jeremiah. Other records would have to have been available to the author—among them "the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (1 Kings 14:29), "the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (verse 19), "the Chronicles of King David" (1 Chronicles 27:24), "the Chronicles of Samuel the seer" (29:29).

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were also one book originally. *Nelson's* introduction states: "The overall consistency of style in the book indicates that although several contributors might have worked on it at various stages, one editor shaped the final product. Jewish tradition identifies the editor as Ezra... [a view that] can be accepted if it is remembered that Ezra was a compiler. He used sources and documents that account for the stylistic differences between the Book of Ezra and Chronicles.... The chronicler made use of the books of Samuel and Kings for about half the narrative." Thus our decision to read the accounts contained within them in harmony.

As the book of 1 Samuel opens, Eli the priest is judging Israel (1 Samuel 4:18). As we shall see, his judgeship has some problems. God has determined to use a transitional figure as a prophet-judge in Eli's place, who will also be used to anoint the first two kings of Israel as the nation moves into the period of the monarchy.



**The Life of Samuel** 1. Hannah prays for a son at Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:10-17) 2. Samuel is born at Ramah (1 Samuel 1:20) 3. God calls Samuel while he serves with Eli at Shiloh (1 Samuel 3:2-21) 4. As a judge, Samuel travels regularly between Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah (1 Samuel 7:16) 5. Samuel proclaims Saul king in Zuph (1 Samuel 9:5-27; 10:1) 6. Samuel confronts Saul and slays Agag (1 Samuel 15:1-35) 7. Samuel anoints David king in Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:1-13) 8. Samuel dies and is buried in his hometown of Ramah (1 Samuel 25:1).

**The Birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1)****Oct. 16 Cont'd**

Verse 1 refers to Elkanah, the father of Samuel, as an Ephraimite (Ephrathite in the KJV), and further adds that he dwelt in the mountains of Ephraim. He is from the town of Ramah, introduced here by its full name Ramathaim-Zophim (see verse 19). Ramathaim is rendered in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament as Arimathaim, which would seem to make it synonymous with the New Testament Arimathea—the home of *Joseph* of Arimathea, who gave his tomb to be Jesus Christ's burial place. In Joshua 18:25, a Ramah is listed as a town in the territory of Benjamin, located about 5 miles north of Jerusalem and about 4 miles south of the Benjamite border with Ephraim. This is probably the same town, in the mountainous area that mostly belonged to Ephraim. Also, cities sometimes overlapped with another tribe's rural territory and Ephraim may have claimed it at this time (compare Joshua 16:8-9). However, Elkanah was clearly a Levite, as his genealogy in 1 Chronicles 6:33-38 points out. Levites had no territory of their own, and Elkanah is apparently being identified here by his place of residence, rather than by his ancestral tribe.

Note also in this genealogy that Samuel was a direct descendant of Korah—the same Korah who died along with his companions and his companions' immediate families for their presumptuous attempt to expropriate priestly duties (see Numbers 16:10). Korah, first cousin to Moses and Aaron (see Exodus 6:18-21), was probably about the same age as Moses, and his sons were likely well along in years with families of their own at the time of the rebellion. Apparently Korah's sons did not participate in their father's sin, for it is clear they did not die with him (see Numbers 26:9-11). It seems ironic that his descendant Samuel apparently ended up exercising certain priestly duties in his obedience and faithfulness to God—some of the duties Korah died trying to usurp.

Elkanah journeys to the tabernacle at Shiloh yearly to worship and sacrifice (1 Samuel 1:3, 7, 21; 2:19). This was undoubtedly referring to Passover, as this was the only time the people were required to bring a sacrifice. At one of these visits, Hannah, who was barren, prays for a son. Part of her vow was that “no razor shall come upon his head” (1 Samuel 1:11), indicating that Samuel would be a Nazirite from birth (compare Numbers 6:2-6), as Samson was (see Judges 13:5).

**Eli and His Sons (1 Samuel 2)****October 17**

Eli's sons are incorrigible. They do not administer their priestly responsibilities in the manner commanded in the law. They commit other sins as well (verse 22), and cause the Israelites to sin (verse 24). The people even begin to despise God's offerings—to hate coming to Shiloh for the Passover or for a voluntary sacrifice (verse 17). God sends a prophet to Eli to pronounce judgment on him for allowing these sons to continue to serve as priests. The judgment is severe, and involves the eventual end of Eli's descendants serving as priests.

In verse 35, God says: “I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever.” Samuel was not that replacement, as he was not of the priestly line and his sons did not continue in his role. Eli's descendants retained the high priesthood for a few more generations until Solomon sent Abiathar, a descendant of Eli, into forced retirement (1 Kings 2:26-27). Then Zadok took over any duties Abiathar had (1 Kings 2:35), and, from that point on, the high priest was reckoned through the line of Zadok. It is evident from the prophecy of Ezekiel that the Zadokite priesthood was faithful to God, and the time will come when all earthly priests will be descendants of Zadok, not just Aaron (see Ezekiel 43:19; 44:15ff; 48:11).

Although Hannah brought her son a new robe every year at the Passover (verse 19), it is probable that she saw him more often than that since her hometown of Ramah was only 15 miles south of the tabernacle in Shiloh. Nevertheless, she was undoubtedly kept very busy taking care of Samuel's five younger brothers and sisters (verse 21).

**The Lord Calls Samuel (1 Samuel 3)****October 18**

While still a child, God speaks directly to Samuel. In his first message, God reiterates His prophecy regarding Eli. And through subsequent messages and their fulfillment, it becomes clear to all Israel that Samuel has been called to be a prophet (verses 19-21), and God is once again making his will known through a servant of His (see verse 1). “The term *prophet* means ‘spokesman’ and refers to one who speaks for another (see Ex. 7:1, 2)” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 3:20).

**The Philistines Capture the Ark (1 Samuel 4)****October 19**

The Israelites had developed a superstitious approach to God, the tabernacle and the ark. They thought that if they brought the ark into battle, they would automatically have God's help. Instead,

God teaches them a lesson about thinking this way. The ark is captured, the Israelites are defeated and the sons of Eli are killed as God had prophesied would happen.

When the bad news reaches Shiloh, it results in the deaths of Eli and Phinehas' wife during her grief-induced labor. Although it is not stated here, apparently in connection with the death of the priests and the removal of the ark, Shiloh was abandoned soon after as the place of worship, as we read in Psalm 78:56-69. Samuel, who takes over all duties as judge, is never mentioned in connection with Shiloh again, taking up residence instead in the hometown of his family at Ramah (compare 1 Samuel 7:17).

Shiloh's abandonment is further described in Jeremiah 7:12-15 and 26:4-9, where God uses its example to demonstrate that the presence of the temple and the ark was no guarantee of protection from Israel's enemies. The Israelites would receive God's protection only insofar as their ways pleased Him.

### **The Ark in Philistia (1 Samuel 5:1–7:1)**

**October 20**

The plague many of the Philistines suffer and die from produces “tumors,” the Hebrew word for which “literally means ‘swellings’ and may refer to any kind of tumor, swelling, or boil” (*Nelson*, note on 5:6). When the ark is sent back, the people include an “offering” consisting of five golden sculptures of these “tumors.” But they also for some unstated reason include five golden rats. It would appear that rats had some sort of involvement with whatever the plague was. It is interesting to note that bubonic plague, the black death of the Middle Ages, is characterized by the formation of buboes, i.e. inflammatory swellings of the lymph glands, especially in the groin area—and that the plague was spread by the fleas of rodents, particularly rats. This, then, may have been what the Philistines were suffering from.

When the Philistines decide the ark is most likely the cause of their problems, and agree to send it back, they devise a test to try to determine for sure whether the God of Israel is behind all of this. They find two cows that have never pulled a cart and that have recently given birth, and they take their calves from them. If the cows are willing to be harnessed to a cart for the first time and cooperate together to pull it without balking, without any guidance, and in the correct direction away from their own calves, then, the Philistines reason, God would have to be involved. The lords of the Philistines follow the cart in astonishment as the cows pull the ark directly back to the land of Israel.

For some reason, the ark is never returned to the tabernacle. It remains in the house of Abinadab for 70 years or more until David brings it to Jerusalem when he pitches a new tent for it (1 Chronicles 15:1; 16:1). Meanwhile, the tabernacle and altar of burnt offering somehow find their way to Gibeon (16:37-40).

### **Israel Asks for a King (1 Samuel 7:2–8:22)**

**October 21**

After some 20 years, the Israelites begin to seek God again, and relief from the Philistines. Samuel gathers them together at Mizpah, about two miles north of his home in Ramah. Here Samuel leads them in pouring out water to God, evidently symbolic of pouring out one's heart in repentance (compare Lamentations 2:19; Psalm 62:8). The gathering incites the Philistines to attack, but the Israelites are in a particularly God-oriented frame of mind following Samuel's preaching, and God grants them a great victory.

But as Samuel gets older, Israel's faith begins to waver again. Samuel's sons are not righteous. (It is interesting to note, however, that Samuel's grandson, Joel's son Heman, becomes one of the chief musicians in David's time, see 1 Chronicles 6:32-33; 15:16-19). The people (or at least the elders, verse 4) worry about what will happen to them when Samuel dies, and decide that what they really need is a human king like those ruling and leading the nations around them. God had anticipated this years earlier (see Deuteronomy 17:14-20). But He has Samuel describe to them the problems inherent in having a human king, which they either don't believe or think they can endure.

The problem is that Israel *already had a King*—ever since the time of Moses and the Exodus, around 1445 B.C., when Israel became a true nation. The King at that time and for the next nearly 400 years was the Rock of Israel, the Eternal God Himself—in fact, the preincarnate Word, Jesus Christ (compare Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Corinthians 10:4; John 1:1-3, 14; 17:5). Though ruling through His chosen “judges”—from Moses and Joshua all the way to Samuel—God in the person of Christ sat on the throne of Israel (compare Judges 8:22-23). Indeed, Samuel later tells the Israelites that the period of the judges was the time “when the LORD your God was your King” (1 Samuel 12:12). And it is the reason that when the Israelites told Samuel around 1050 BC that they wanted a human king like the nations around them, the Lord told him, “They have not rejected you, but they

have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). So God then gives them a physical monarch.

It is interesting to note, as we will see in the next few chapters, that unlike other ancient rulers, the king of Israel was not to be an absolute despot. God will have Samuel anoint Saul “commander” (9:16; 10:1) or “captain” (KJV) over His people. This Hebrew term *nagiyd* used here could be rendered in English as viceroy or governor-general—the stand-in for the *real* monarch. In fact, the very act of anointing a ruler in the ancient world implied a vassal relationship. It is later explained that Israel’s king “sat on the throne of the LORD,” reigning as king *for* Him (1 Chronicles 29:23; 2 Chronicles 9:6-8).

Also quite different than in other realms was the fact that the king was not also priest over the national religion. Furthermore, in other countries, kings made law and were thus above it. But in Israel, God’s prophet will explain “the rights and duties of the kingship” (1 Samuel 10:25, NRSV). The ruler was *subject* to the law (see Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Essentially, the Almighty set up a constitutional limited monarchy—in which He would send a prophet as His representative to the king to give him his “report card.”

### **Saul Chosen as King (1 Samuel 9:1-26)**

**October 22**

God had long before prophesied a line of kings from Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:15-16). This line was to come through their grandson Jacob (35:9-11). And God had Jacob prophesy that this kingly line would come through his son Judah (Genesis 49:10; see 1 Chronicles 5:1-2). But though God personally chooses the king for Israel, He does not yet select a descendant of Judah. Instead, Saul, Israel’s first king, is from Benjamin.

God knew that Saul was the type of person the people were looking for, apparently the tallest man in the nation, and good looking (verse 2). Through circumstances, God arranges for Saul to visit Samuel in Ramah (verse 16).

Samuel was not an Aaronic priest, and yet, as we saw in our previous reading (see 7:9-10), he appears to have himself offered sacrifices—although in one case it is clear that he was simply officiating at the sacrifice, blessing it and the people (1 Samuel 9:12-14). These sacrifices were done in various locations. However, there is no record that Samuel offered sacrifices specifically at the tabernacle altar of burnt offering, wherever that was currently located. Normally, all sacrifices were to be brought to “the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His habitation” (Deuteronomy 12:5). But with the apparent abandonment of Shiloh, and the loss of the ark, perhaps there was no obvious place where God was “dwelling” at this time. In any case, Samuel’s offering of sacrifices at a variety of locations throughout the land—including the altar he had built near his home in Ramah (see 1 Samuel 7:17)—is presented in the Bible as acceptable and proper. Perhaps he had special instructions from God—we know for certain that he did in 1 Samuel 16:2.

### **Saul Anointed King (1 Samuel 9:27–10:27)**

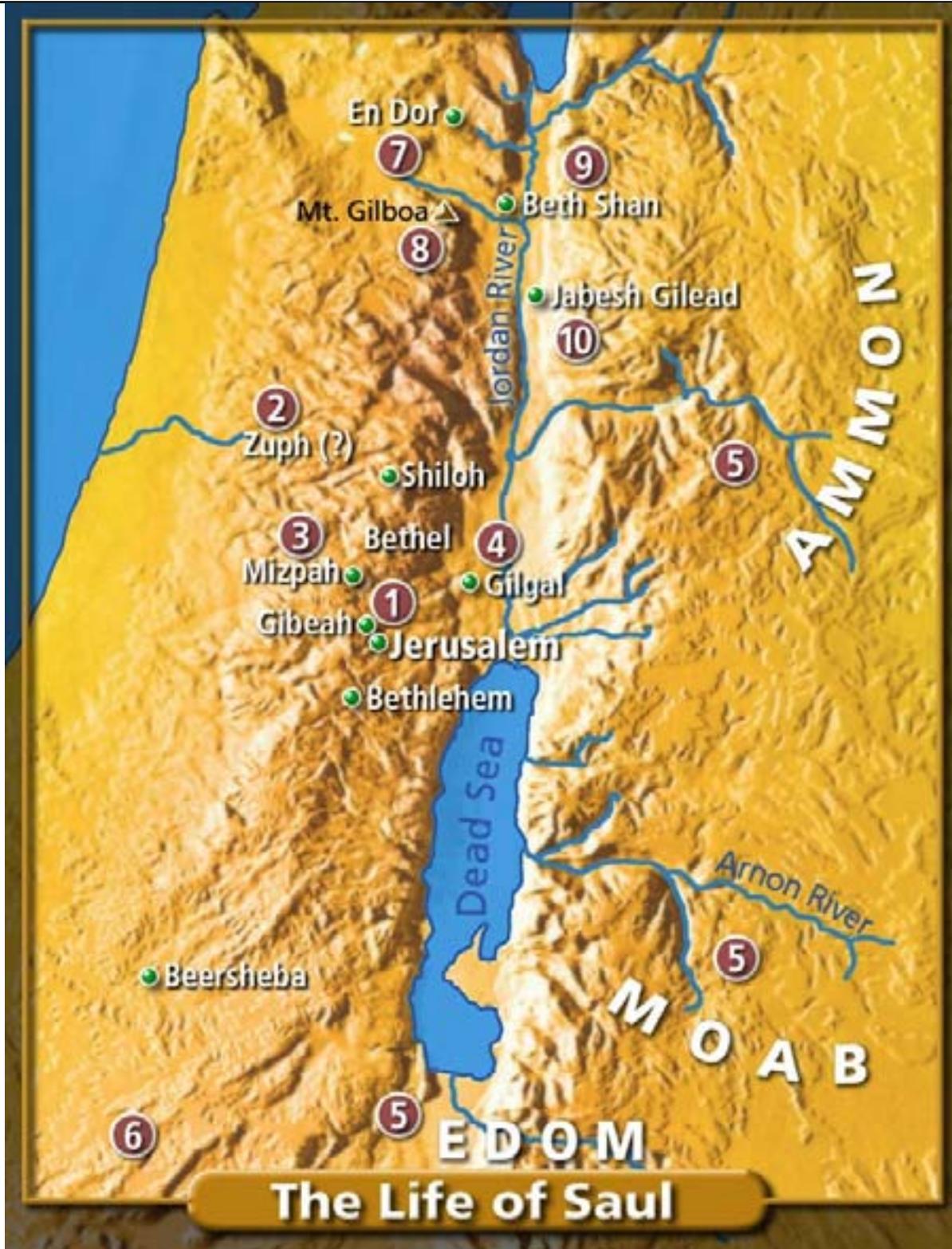
**October 23**

Saul’s initial anointing is done in secret, after his servant is asked to make himself scarce (9:27-10:1). Saul is then given several signs to encourage him and prove God is behind this.

Among the instructions is one involving a visit to Gilgal, and the command to wait there a week for Samuel to arrive for a sacrifice. This is one of the tests Saul will not pass (see 13:8-14).

The “group of prophets” mentioned in 1 Samuel 10 (verses 5, 10) points to the emergence of an institution that accompanied the emergence of the Israelite monarchy. In 1 and 2 Kings, what is evidently a continuation of the same group is called the “sons of the prophets.” In its entry on them, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* says they are “members of a prophetic guild, or order, first appearing in the time of Saul and Samuel in the service of Yahweh.... The sons of the prophets appear again prominently in the ninth century B.C. in association with Elisha.... The guilds of professional prophets continue to appear variously indicated [in Scripture] (I Kings 18:4, 19; 22:6; II Kings 23:2; Jer. 26:7-8, 11) until the fall of Jerusalem in the early sixth century B.C.”

Saul chooses not to tell his family about being anointed as king. Then, when Samuel calls the nation together at Mizpah to announce to them the king God had appointed at the insistence of the elders, Saul, in a moment of either humility or outright fear of his new responsibility, hides himself. God lets them know where to find him, he is accepted by most of the people, and he returns to his home with a bodyguard, not quite sure what he is to do now.



**The Life of Saul** 1. Saul's hometown (and later capital) was Gibeah (1 Samuel 10:26) 2. Samuel proclaims Saul king in Zuph (1 Samuel 9:5-27; 10:1) 3. Samuel anoints Saul king at Mizpah (1 Samuel 10:17-25) 4. Saul disobeys and offers sacrifices at Gilgal (1 Samuel 13:7-14) 5. Saul successfully fights Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites (1 Samuel 14:47) 6. Saul defeats Amalekites but disobeys and spares Agag (1 Samuel 15:1-35) 7. Saul consults a medium at Endor (1 Samuel 28:3-25) 8. Saul defeated, commits suicide at Mt. Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:1-4) 9. Saul's body desecrated at Beth Shan (1 Samuel 31:8-10) 10. Saul's body buried at Jabesh Gilead (1 Samuel 31:11-13).

**Saul Defends Jabesh Gilead (1 Samuel 11)****October 24**

Jabesh Gilead, located east of the Jordan in Manasseh's territory, had nearly been destroyed by the Israelites following the war with Benjamin in order to obtain wives for the few remaining Benjamites (see Judges 21). Now Jabesh Gilead is threatened by the Ammonites, one of the two nations descended from Lot, and sends to the rest of Israel for help.

When the messengers come to the Benjamite city of Gibeah, the very city which had committed the grievous sin that precipitated the war against Benjamin years earlier, and which happens to be the home of Saul, the residents seem particularly distressed. As two thirds of the wives provided for the remnant of Benjamin had come from Jabesh Gilead, it is probable that many of Gibeah's inhabitants had ancestors who came from there. Saul himself may have traced his roots to that city.

In any case, the Ammonite threat against Jabesh Gilead unites the Israelites in a common cause under Saul, who conscripts 330,000 troops under penalty of the loss of livestock. Their victory under Saul and Samuel assures Saul's acceptance by the nation as king, and on the way back home, they stop at Gilgal (the location of Joshua's first encampment after crossing the Jordan) to reaffirm his kingship.

**Samuel's Address to the People (1 Samuel 12)****October 25**

Samuel reiterates to the people that asking for a human king was not a good thing. To reinforce his statements, he calls on God to bring about an unseasonal and sudden thunderstorm. In great fear, the people realize that God was not pleased with their demands, and they ask Samuel to intercede for them. Samuel makes it clear that whether they are ruled by a human king or not, the important thing is to obey God. A human king would not save them from God's anger if they behaved wickedly. Faithfully obeying God would bring blessings, and failure to do so would destroy the nation and its physical ruler.

Samuel's statement that he will continue to pray for Israel demonstrates his spiritual character. If he had been a man given to pettiness, he might have held a grudge against Israel for their request to have a king. But he did not. Indeed, Samuel recognizes failure to constantly pray for others as a sin against God (verse 23). We should remember this as we go about our daily lives.

**War With the Philistines (1 Samuel 13)****October 26**

Saul creates a small standing army. The thousand under his son Jonathan's leadership (a bold and courageous fellow, as we will see further in the next chapter) attacks a garrison of the occupying Philistine forces. This incites the Philistines to gather against Israel to put down the rebellion, and Saul assembles his worried forces at Gilgal, while others in the threatened region hide themselves in the caves and thickets. As Samuel had instructed (10:8), Saul waits seven days for Samuel to arrive to make the offerings. But Samuel does not arrive right on time. Perhaps his slight delay was a test for Saul. Whatever the case, Saul becomes impatient and, just before Samuel arrives, he presumptuously makes the offering himself. This sin of not following God's explicit instructions is enough to lose the kingdom for Saul's descendants (verse 14). But greater offenses follow.

It is interesting to consider that verse 13 says Saul's dynasty would have continued forever if he had followed God's commands—when God had earlier prophesied that the kingly line to the Messiah would come from Judah and not from Benjamin (Genesis 49:10; see 1 Chronicles 5:1-2). Yet, this would actually have been a rather simple matter. Probably, God would have had Saul's lineage merge with the Judahite lineage through intermarriage. Indeed, Saul's daughter will later marry David. But there will be no children from their marriage.

An insight into the dominance of the Philistines over the Israelites at this time is shown by the fact that no smiths were allowed to work in the land. As a result, only Saul and his son Jonathan had swords.

**Jonathan's Bold Attack (1 Samuel 14:1-23)****October 27**

Saul's son Jonathan recruits his armor-bearer for a courageous attack on a group of Philistines. He has faith that God can back them up, and asks God to reveal through specifically requested circumstances whether He will, in fact, do so. The two men kill 20 Philistines, sending panic throughout the Philistine ranks, which is aggravated by an earthquake. The rest of Saul's army discovers that Jonathan is missing, and that the Philistines are in disarray and retreat, and begins to pursue them. They are joined by Hebrews who were already in the Philistine camp, probably as mercenaries or volunteers trying to get in good with the occupational forces (not unlike what David pretended to do in 1 Samuel 27), and by others who were hiding in the caves and rocks nearby (verses 21-22; 13:6).

Eli's great-grandson Ahijah is mentioned here wearing the priestly ephod (verse 3). It is not clear from this passage whether Ahijah himself was a priest in *Shiloh* at the time, indicating the city was still functioning in some religious capacity, or whether, as seems more likely, this is just referring back to Eli as having been the priest in Shiloh. Ahijah was probably serving as priest elsewhere.

In verse 18, Saul tells Ahijah to bring to him the ark of God, which is still in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim. However, the account here does not state that it was actually brought at this time. In fact, Saul's request is interrupted and the fighting soon ends with Israel victorious, the request for the ark now apparently moot. (This appears to be another example of Saul's impatience—not waiting to receive the instructions he sought from God before heading off to battle, verse 19.) Furthermore, when David later has the ark brought to Jerusalem, it is brought from Abinadab's house—there being no mention anywhere in Scripture that it had ever been moved from there.

Before leaving this account, it will no doubt come as news to many that Jonathan's strategy was actually employed within the last century. Werner Keller writes in *The Bible As History*: "One example, unique in its way, shows how accurate the Bible can be even in the smallest details and how reliable its dates and information. We owe to Major Vivian Gilbert, a British army officer, this description of a truly remarkable occurrence. Writing in his reminiscences he says, 'In the First World War a brigade major in Allenby's army in Palestine was on one occasion searching his Bible with the light of a candle, looking for a certain name. His brigade had received orders to take a village that stood on a rocky prominence on the other side of a deep valley. It was called Michmash and the name seemed somehow familiar.

"Eventually he found it in I Sam. 13 and read there: 'And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.' It then went on to tell how Jonathan and his armour-bearer crossed over during the night 'to the Philistines' garrison' on the other side, and how they passed two sharp rocks: 'there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez and the name of the other Seneh' (I Sam. 14<sup>4</sup>). They clambered up the cliff and overpowered the garrison, 'within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough.' The main body of the enemy awakened by the *mêlée* thought they were surrounded by Saul's troops and 'melted away and they went on beating down one another' (I Sam. 14<sup>14-16</sup>). Thereupon Saul attacked with his whole force and beat the enemy. 'So the Lord saved Israel that day.'

"The brigade major reflected that there must still be this narrow passage through the rocks, between the two spurs, and at the end of it the 'half acre of land.' He woke the commander and they read the passage through together once more. Patrols were sent out. They found the pass, which was thinly held by the Turks, and which led past two jagged rocks—obviously Bozez and Seneh. Up on top, beside Michmash, they could see by the light of the moon a small flat field. The brigadier altered his plan of attack. Instead of deploying the whole brigade he sent one company through the pass under cover of darkness. The few Turks whom they met were overpowered without a sound, the cliffs were scaled, and shortly before daybreak the company had taken up a position on 'the half acre of land.' The Turks woke up and took to their heels in disorder since they thought that they were being surrounded by Allenby's army. They were all killed or taken prisoner.

"And so,' concludes Major Gilbert, 'after thousands of years British troops successfully copied the tactics of Saul and Jonathan'" (1981, pp. 182-183). What a surprising confirmation of Scripture! In the face of this and other proofs of the Bible, let us not doubt the reliability of God's Word.

### **Saul's Oath (1 Samuel 14:24-52; 1 Chronicles 5:10, 18-22)**

**October 28**

Once again Saul's rash behavior becomes an issue. He has made his troops swear that they will not eat anything until the battle is over. This weakens the troops, Jonathan inadvertently breaks the oath, and eventually, in their hunger, the troops ravenously devour the spoil without properly bleeding the animals. When Saul finally attempts to seek God's counsel again, at Ahijah's suggestion (verse 36), God does not answer. Saul concludes that somebody must have sinned in the previous battle (as at Jericho/Ai) and asks God to reveal the culprit by lot. He is surprised to learn it was his own son—whom he then immediately condemns to death.

We can see here the "new Saul," an arrogant, defiant, heartless and self-willed man—quite a long way from the man who hid rather than be proclaimed king. Saul's actions illustrate how bizarre and corrupt his thinking had become. He himself had disobeyed God and yet when his own son disobeys one of his own foolish commands, he decides that his son should die. Saul is prohibited from carrying

out his intent because the people insist that this is going too far, and they refuse to let Jonathan be killed. After all, Jonathan had not even heard Saul's oath.

Saul continues to expand the kingdom against the nations around them. The accompanying passage from Chronicles highlights some of the additional wars being fought, during this time of Israelite strength and expansion, by the tribes east of the Jordan.

### **The War With Amalek (1 Samuel 15)**

**October 29**

God had given instructions through Moses that the attack on Israel by Amalek during the first weeks of their journey from Egypt (see Exodus 17:8-16) should be avenged (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Israel has finally grown strong enough to do this, and Samuel instructs Saul to carry out the mission. The destruction is to be complete, including the animals.

The Kenites had a generally peaceful relationship with Israel. Moses' father-in-law is called a Kenite (Judges 1:16). Jael, who killed Sisera in the days of Deborah the judge (Judges 4:11, 17-22), was married to a Kenite. And apparently there had been other favorable encounters with Israel, prompting Saul to encourage them to escape before the fighting starts (1 Samuel 15:6).

Saul carries out a successful attack on the Amalekites. But he is "unwilling to utterly destroy them," leaving alive their king and the best of the livestock (verse 9). Interestingly, Saul maintains that he has obeyed God (verse 20). He does blame the people for keeping the livestock. Yet this was in his power. He could have ordered the livestock destroyed. But it evidently made sense to him to preserve the livestock for sacrificing to God. And the statement that this was Saul's reason was apparently not a lie—as lying is not what Samuel criticizes him for (though Saul's apparent self-deception that he had obeyed God in the matter *would* fall under the category of lying).

Samuel's answer in verses 22-23 is an important one for us today. Obedience supersedes any attempt to honor God. And He cannot be honored with disobedience. If God has forbidden something, we cannot honor Him with that thing. Yet people try to do this all the time in the world around us. For instance, God says not to use pagan worship methods in an attempt to honor Him (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32). But people use holidays that originated in paganism, like Christmas and Easter, in an attempt to do just that. Some people even think this is obedience to God. But it isn't. No matter how sincere, this is actually dishonoring God because it is disobeying Him. When people knowingly do this, it is rebellion and, as Samuel told Saul, is on par with witchcraft and idolatry. If you want to truly honor God, then do what He says—*obey* Him. (To learn more about the pagan origins of Christmas and Easter, request or download our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*)

Although God had already stated that Saul's dynasty would not continue (1 Samuel 13:13-14), this latest act of rebellion causes Saul himself to be rejected as king. God will anoint someone else instead. Samuel refuses to have anything more to do with Saul, but Saul persuades Samuel to honor him one more time before the elders. Samuel finishes the execution God had ordered Saul to fulfill. And then he returns home, never to go to see Saul again—although Saul will later come to see *him* one last time in pursuing David (see 19:18-24).

### **David Anointed and Saul Rejected (1 Samuel 16)**

**October 30**

The search for a new king begins appropriately enough in Bethlehem, meaning "House of Bread," for out of David's lineage would spring the Messiah, the true bread from heaven (16:1-4; Micah 5:2; John 6:58). Bethlehem had been the town of Ruth and Boaz. Indeed, Jesse and his family were their direct descendants.

Young David was a man after God's own heart, who, unlike Saul, would perform all of God's will (Acts 13:22; Psalm 40:8). The fact that God sought those who would serve Him with all their heart was well known (12:20; 13:14; Deuteronomy 6:5). We would do well to emulate this desired quality in our own lives by studying David's relationship with God.

The name David means "Beloved." His name is mentioned more than a thousand times in the Scriptures. David as shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11) was a picture of Jesus Christ. First of all, Jesus is the *Good* Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep (John 10:11; Psalm 22). Secondly, Jesus is the *Great* Shepherd who rules from heaven interceding with the Father for us (Hebrews 13:20; Psalm 23). And finally, Jesus is the *Chief* Shepherd who brings the Kingdom of God, rewarding His own (1 Peter 5:4; Isaiah 40:11; Psalm 80:1).

David was anointed, i.e. set apart for a special purpose, by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13). Actually, this was the first of three anointings of David revealed in the Scriptures. You can read of the second anointing that takes place on the occasion of David assuming the kingship of Judah in 2 Samuel 2:4. And he is later anointed king of all Israel in 2 Samuel 5:3.

Saul, on the other hand, is rejected by God. The departure of God's Spirit leaves him in a terrible spiritual, mental and emotional state. God's Holy Spirit helps people to maintain sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). And to start with, Saul was a man who exhibited weakness in his character, such as needing the approval of men (1 Samuel 15:30). The removal of God's Spirit only made things worse.

Amazingly, David a talented shepherd boy, had already achieved notoriety at a young age, not only for his musical ability, but also for his fighting skills (verse 18). He was a levelheaded, handsome young man with a pleasing personality—a natural to be chosen to perform in the court of the king. Saul immediately took to David with a real affection, making him his armor-bearer. David's performance of soothing music on the harp was able to settle and refresh the disturbed state of Saul's mind.

### **The Philistine Champion (1 Samuel 17:1-30)**

**October 31**

In chapter 17 we will read about David's great courage and faith in facing Goliath, the giant. The Philistines were forever taunting their neighbors the Israelites. The Philistines were in a superior position to the Israelites in trade and technology. One way the Philistines tried to keep the Israelites subservient was by their monopoly on instruments of iron. While the iron age had come to the Philistines, the Israelites were only able to manufacture implements made of the softer bronze. The ability to forge iron weapons gave the Philistines a decided military advantage over the Israelites.

On top of that, here comes Goliath of Gath, a one-man army who, at 9 feet 9 inches, would dwarf even the tallest of today's professional basketball players! It is interesting that Goliath is mentioned as being from Gath. When the Israelites first came to the Promised Land, they encountered giants throughout it: "There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight" (Numbers 13:33). Most of them, however, were wiped out by Joshua: "And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities" (Joshua 11:21). But notice the next verse: "None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod" (verse 22). So this unusual lineage remained in these three Philistine cities only—and Goliath, 400 years later, was from Gath. Moreover, he was, we will later find out, not the only giant from that area (see 2 Samuel 21:15-22; 1 Chronicles 20:4-8).

The Hebrew expression translated "champion" in verse 4 literally means "a man who is a go-between." Goliath offered a one-on-one, man-to-man, winner-take-all challenge to the Israelites. There were no takers. Though Saul was head and shoulders above his own people, he was certainly no match for Goliath. This presented seemingly impossible odds that virtually checkmated the king of Israel.

Three of David's oldest brothers were among the fighting men on the battlefield. Young David's responsibilities included keeping the sheep back home with an occasional trip to the front lines to bring supplies to his brothers and their leaders. Every day, morning and evening, for nearly six weeks, Goliath would come out and defy Israel to accept his challenge (verse 16). It frightened the wits out of the Israelite soldiers.

Then, one day, David happened to be there to hear Goliath's challenge. What really got to David was the blasphemous reproach brought on the armies of the living God (verse 26). The word "uncircumcised" was a clear indication that the Philistines were not in a covenant relationship with the living God as the Israelites were. Goliath was the enemy of God's people. David immediately recognized that it was wrong to allow this situation to continue.

David believed it was necessary to intervene at this momentous time. It was not a matter of pride or vainglory on his part. His motives were selfless, yet he had to endure the criticisms of his brothers (verse 28).

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