

Lesson 8: The Unified Kingdom (Part I)

Israel was less disturbed by outside powers during the time of the Unified Kingdom than during the period of the Judges. This means that Israel's first three kings were unaffected by large powers.

- After 1240 BC, the Hittites were in conflict with the migration of the Sea Peoples that brought an end to their nation.
 - o The Hittite capital, Boghazkoi, was completely destroyed.
- Egypt did not interfere while Saul, David, and Solomon ruled. After Rameses III (c.1195-1164), no Egyptian king crossed the border of Israel until the time of Rehoboam, Solomon's son.
 - o Pharaoh Shishak, who founded Egypt's 22nd Dynasty, did so in Rehoboam's fifth year as recorded in [1 Kings 14:25-26](#).
- Assyria would not threaten Israel for almost 100 years after the division of Israel.
 - o Assyria threatened Israel for the first time under Shalmaneser III (859-824).
 - o Prior to the Israel monarchy, there had been only one extension of Assyrian power into the west. Tiglath-pileser I (1116-1078) had brought his army as far as the Mediterranean, still far north of Israel, but he could not maintain control.

SAMUEL

Another great individual was active in Israel during the time of the Judge Samson.

- This was Samuel, whose date is determined by the fact that he had sons old enough to act as judges in Beersheba ([1 Sam. 8:1-2](#)) before Saul became king in 1050 BC.
- Samuel's birth can be placed around 1100 BC, which would be before the Ammonite and Philistine oppressions, and the birth of Samson.

Samuel (fig. 1) is also called a judge ([1 Sam. 7:15-17](#)), but he was more than that. He was a prophet ([1 Sam. 3:20](#)), and even acted as a priest ([1 Sam. 9:12-13; 13:8-13](#)). The prophet Jeremiah places Samuel at the same level as Moses.

Jer 15:1 Then the LORD said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! **Jeremiah 15:1 (NIV)**

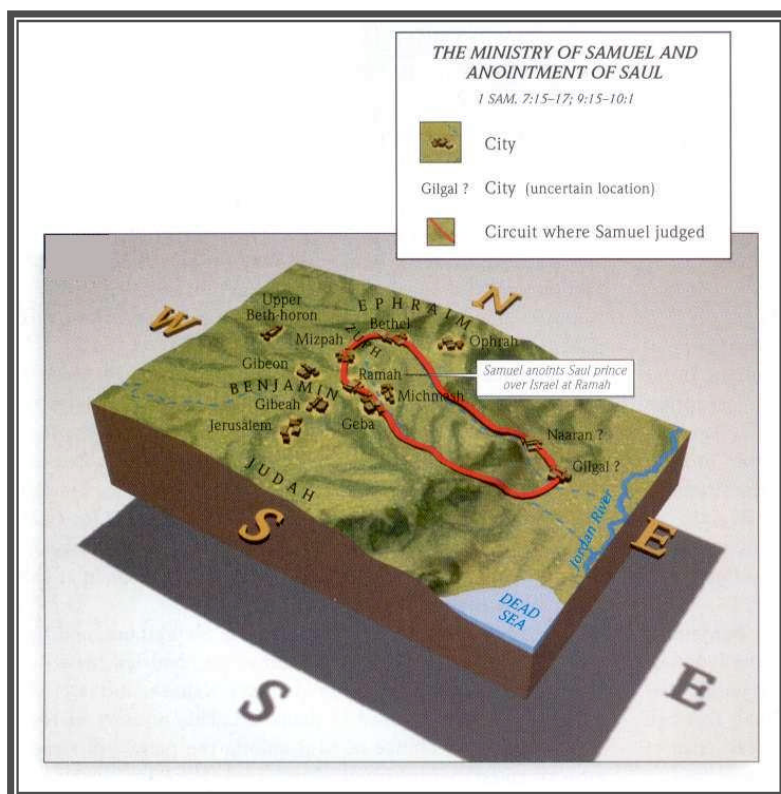


Fig. 1 Ministry of Samuel

Samuel is well known for correcting Israel's religious malpractice, restoring national morale and identity, promoting a return to faith in God, and establishing the new Israelite monarchy.

Battle of Aphek (1 Samuel 4)

After 20 years of Philistine oppression Israel attempted to end it by a direct military engagement.

- The encounter was at Aphek in the Sharon plain.
- Israel was defeated and lost 4,000 men.
- Eli's sons (Hophni and Phinehas) wrongly thought that the presence of the ark at the battle front would help in the conflict and took the ark from Shiloh, contrary to God's will, and brought it the 23 miles to camp.
 - o God did not bring favor with such disobedience, and again defeat was experienced. This time 30,000 of Israel fell, including Hophni and Phinehas; and the Ark was captured.
 - o When news of the catastrophe reached Shiloh, Eli fell from his seat backward and died of a broken neck.

Excavations show that the Philistines moved into Israelite territory, as far as Shiloh, which they destroyed.

- Shiloh was excavated by Danish archaeologists in 1926-29 and 1932 (fig. 2).
- The city was destroyed by the Philistines during the 11th century. This corresponds exactly with the Biblical account.

The Man Samuel (1 Samuel 7)

After Eli's death Samuel found himself in the position of Israel's leader.

- Samuel had achieved a reputation as a prophet of God among the people (1 Sam. 3:20) and could expect to be looked to for leadership.

It is evident from the Bible that Samuel's efforts were productive because 20 years later Israel had become a vigorous nation who brought defeat on their oppressors (1 Sam. 7:3-14).

The People Request a King (1 Samuel 7:15-8:22)

The people had seen how nearly they had come to disaster under the present governmental system, and now that the situation was improved, wanted a change.

- The Philistines or another enemy might come again. They wanted a king with an organized army "*such as all the other nations have*" (1 Sam. 8:4-6).
- God told Samuel to comply with the people's request.
- God instructed Samuel to warn them that, along with the king they requested, they would receive heavy burdens in taxation.



Fig. 2 Shiloh Excavation

SAUL

ANOINTING OF SAUL (1 Samuel 9-12)

Not long after God revealed to Samuel that the tribes would have a king, He identified who that person would be: Saul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin.

- Saul (fig. 3) was tall and of striking appearance, being “*without equal*” in Israel (1 Sam. 9:2).
- Samuel told Saul of three confirmatory signs that he would be king.
 - o He would meet two men who would tell him that the donkey’s Saul lost had been found and that his father was now concerned about him.
 - o He would then come upon three men, having goats, bread, and wine, who would give him two loaves of bread.
 - o He would then encounter a group of prophets playing instruments as they praised God. He should join with this group in giving praise himself, at which time he would experience the “Spirit of the Lord” come upon him.
- These events occurred just as Samuel had predicted.



Fig. 3 King Saul

With Israel’s first king chosen, Samuel needed to identify him to the people.

- Samuel did so at Mizpah, the site of the victory over the Philistines, an event still fresh in Israel’s memory.
- Samuel summoned representatives of all the tribes to meet with him there. He did not tell them who God had already chosen but proceeded to make inquiry, probably by the Urim and Thummim, as though no prior information had been given.
- Saul was now summoned, seen to be kingly in stature, and accepted with shouts of approval by those assembled.

It is one thing to be approved by representatives, but another to be accepted by the people at large.

- The people had to give their voluntary acceptance, and Saul was still quite unknown to them. There was a need that Saul have public exposure before acceptance could be expected.
- There was also no capital, palace, staff, or governmental machinery in place.
- Saul needed an opportunity to prove himself so that he would be accepted, before the unification of the tribes and the establishment of the government could be accomplished.
- Such an opportunity arose soon. The Ammonites, under King Nahash, now attacked the city of Jabesh-gilead across the Jordan (1 Sam. 11:1-15).
 - o The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead sent for help from all the tribes.
 - o Their appeal came to Saul’s attention and he immediately saw it as both a responsibility for him and the opportunity he needed.
 - He butchered a yoke of oxen and sent pieces to all the tribes. Messengers taking them declared that all who did not respond to Jabesh-gilead’s call by joining Saul would have their own oxen treated in similar fashion.
 - The response was excellent. A total of 30,000 presented themselves from Judah, and 300,000 from the other tribes.
 - From this group Saul formed three armies, which he led against the Ammonites, winning a decisive victory.

- The result was as Saul desired. The Israelites now accepted him as king. The formal ceremony was conducted at Gilgal, with Samuel leading the proceedings.
- Saul was crowned as Israel's first king. The date was c. 1050 BC, Saul would rule for 40 years ([Acts 13:21](#)) from 1050 – 1010.

THE RULE OF SAUL

The government Saul established would be simple.

- There would have been no time for Saul to plan, and the people would not want an elaborate government.
- It would not be easy to impose controls, when the people had never had them.
- Though Samuel had warned that taxes would come, it was apparent that time and education would be necessary before the people would accept them.

The capital Saul established was at Gibeah, identified as Tell el-Ful, located at the northern outskirts of present-day Jerusalem.

- The site was excavated by W.F. Albright and was the royal residence of Saul ([1 Sam. 11:4; 15:34; 22:6](#)).
- The site revealed 12 levels of history. Including an Israelite town referred to in [Judg 19, 20](#) where it was destroyed by fire.
- Saul's stronghold was erected in 1015 BC. The outer citadel walls, 170 by 155 feet, were 8 to 10 feet thick. The citadel is composed of two stories with a stone staircase. The casemented walls and separately bonded towers are unique to this period.
- Among the objects found were grinding stones, spinning wheels, cooking pots, burnished ware, and a gaming board. Storage bins for oil, wine, and grain, still holding their contents when excavated, were also found in the royal palace.
- The palace itself was of simple design. Excavation has revealed that it was more of a fortress than a residence ([fig. 4](#)).
- The remains of this fortress were destroyed in the 1960's by King Hussein of Jordan who began building a palace on the site.

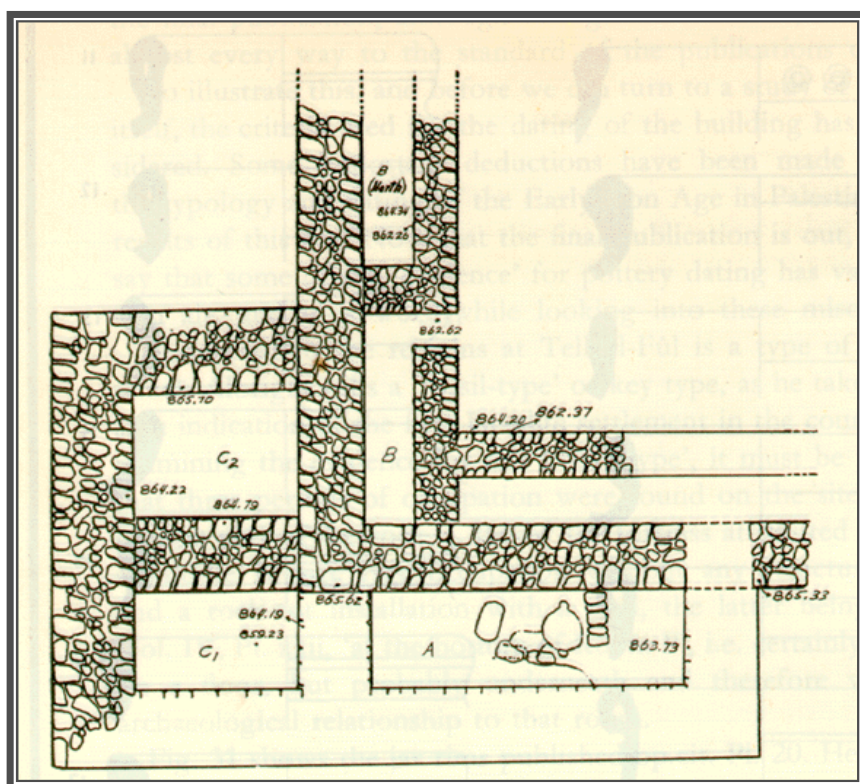


Fig. 4 Palace at Tell el-Ful

God's First Rejection of Saul (1 Samuel 13-14)

The first rejection of Saul came after renewed conflict with the Philistines, which occurred at Michmash. The Philistines had been quiet since their defeat at Mizpah, but now only two years after Saul's inauguration they again entered the land and encamped at Michmash, just four miles northeast of Gibeah, the capital of Israel.

- Michmash is present day Mukhmas (fig. 5), on the northern ridge of Wadi Suweinit, east of Bethel on the way to Jericho.
- The Arab village of Mukhmas preserves the name of the biblical city of Michmash. The town sits next to "the pass" mentioned twice in the Bible.
- Michmash was settled throughout the period of the monarchy, as it was mentioned in the account of Saul and Jonathan and later in a prophecy of Isaiah.

The Philistines had come to avenge a victory by Jonathan over one of their garrisons stationed at Geba (1 Sam. 13:2-3). Their forces included 3,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and foot soldiers.

- Saul assembled a force at Gilgal and waited for Samuel to come and offer sacrifice prior to the battle.
- It was at this point that Saul committed the sin that prompted the first rejection by God.
- Having waited seven days Saul became impatient and assumed the priestly office, which in turn demonstrated that he had a proud, self-sufficient, rebellious heart.
- God still gave Saul victory in the battle, mainly through his son Jonathan.
 - o Accompanied only by his armor bearer, Jonathan crossed from Geba on the south of Wadi Suweinit (fig. 6) to Michmash on the north, descending and climbing steep ridges en route, where he attacked and defeated an entire Philistine garrison (1 Sam. 14: 1-14).
 - o Geba is identified with Modern Jeba, located opposite Michmash.
 - o Southwest of Michmash is the modern Arab village of Jaba, which is the biblical site of Geba. Because of the present day occupation the site has not been excavated.
 - o The hill country is deeply cut by



Fig. 5 Michmash, Present day Mukhmas



Fig. 6 Wadi Suweinit

deep canyons (wadis). These restrict traffic to the ridges above the wadis, making passage difficult. One exception to this is the pass in the Wadi Suweinit - a broad place in the canyon where passage is easy.

- The pass is mentioned in connection with Jonathan's attack on the Philistines (1 Sam 14).
- Saul almost defeated his own cause in the course of the victory.
 - He foolishly imposed a restriction on the men of his army, forbidding any to eat food for one day (1 Sam. 14:24-46).
 - Saul apparently hoped to give more incentive and time to pursue the enemy, but what happened was he deprived his men of badly needed nourishment for the chase.
 - Further, Saul nearly took the life of his son because of the order. Jonathan, who had not heard the command, did eat; and Saul, believing his word must be maintained even at the cost of his son, would have killed him but for the pleas of the people.

God's Second Rejection of Saul (1 Samuel 15)

The second instance of disobedience came with Saul's battle with the Amalekites about 20 years later.

- During the intervening years, Saul's military was active. He fought the countries of Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Zobah, besides the continuing struggle with the Philistines.
- Then came the Amalekite battle. Samuel gave Saul specific instruction regarding it. Saul was to initiate this encounter as a retaliatory measure for the hit and run raids on Israel by Amalek years before, during the wilderness journey (Exod. 17:8-14), and to completely destroy the people and all their livestock.
- Saul carried out the task and obeyed in slaying all the people and their animals. He disobeyed, however, in sparing King Agag and some of the finest sheep and oxen.
 - When Samuel asked the reason, Saul explained that the animals were for sacrifice. Samuel replied that God desired obedience more than sacrifice. Samuel rebuked Saul and told him for a second time that God had rejected him as the head of Israel.
 - Samuel then killed King Agag with his own hands (fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Samuel Kills King Agag

Saul failed in the sight of God. He would not obey God's commands. God had not given His people a king to act according to his own will, but to be God's intermediary. Saul, having started well, was affected by his role as chief, and forgot that God was the supreme Head. It may be assumed, too, that these two crucial occasions were not the only instances of disobedience on his part, but rather were representative of many others and of a general rebellious attitude.

SAUL AND DAVID (1 Samuel 16-20)

With Saul rejected God instructed Samuel regarding procedures in locating the next king.

- Samuel was to go to Bethlehem and anoint there a son of Jesse. Samuel went to Bethlehem and had Jesse bring his sons before him. Seven were brought, but each was refused by God. David, the eighth and youngest, had been left to care for the family's sheep. Samuel insisted that he be brought, and God indicated him to be the one.
- As the father and brothers watched, Samuel then anointed David, who was probably about fifteen years old, as Israel's second king.

Depression came upon Saul, prompted by God's rejection.

- A person was sought as court musician, whose music might soothe Saul during his depression. In God's providence, the one chosen was David, who was skilled with the harp.
- Saul became jealous. David, who was at first a favorite of the king, soon experienced this jealousy as the people came to give him higher praise than the king. Saul became angry, to the point of insanity, and twice tried to strike David with his spear.
- Saul was also paranoid, thinking himself to be persecuted by all around him. At one time this tendency led to the slaughter of 85 innocent priests (1 Sam. 22:7-19).
- Such a man could not command the respect of his people. Actions so abnormal and frequent would have become widely known, with people losing confidence.

DAVID'S RISE TO PROMINENCE

Under God's blessing David's prominence quickly rose in the land with the following opportunities.

- The first was being made court musician to Saul.
- David must have displayed military ability for Saul as well, for he was also made a royal armor bearer (1 Sam. 16:21).
- The next opportunity was David's victory over the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 Sam. 17:1-58).
 - o The Philistines had attempted to enter Israel through the Elah Valley, a natural approach into the mountains of Judah. They assembled for battle between Shochoh and Azekah.
 - This places the battle about four miles south of Beth-shemesh or 17 miles southwest of Jerusalem in modern Wadi es-Sant.
 - o Saul led his army to meet them, while David for some reason was at home. For 40 days Goliath, a

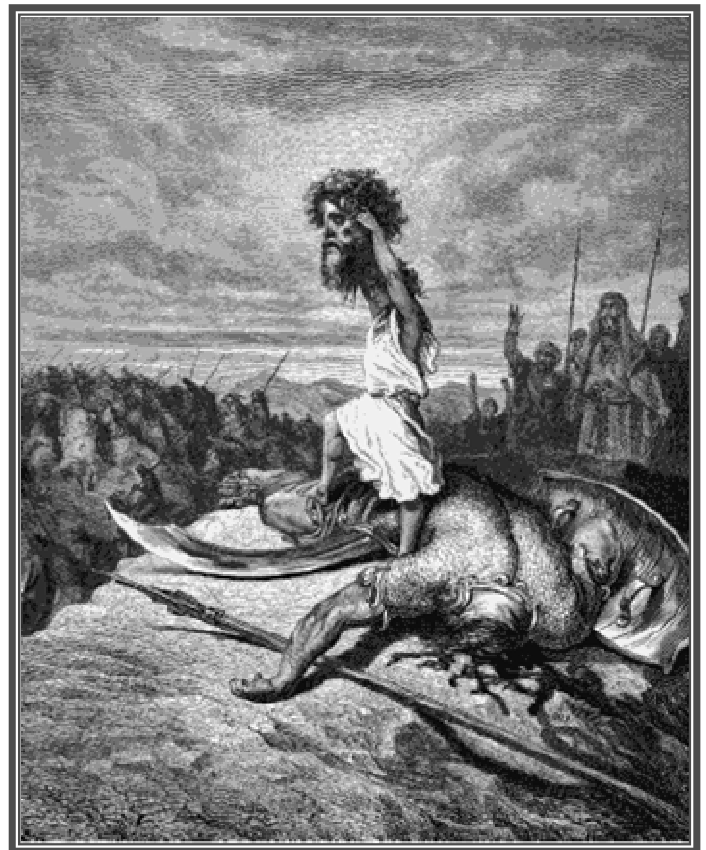


Fig. 8 David and Goliath

Philistine over nine feet tall, dared any Israelite to meet him in personal combat to decide the whole contest. No one would accept the challenge.

- o David came to the camp at the end of the 40 days on a mission for his father, to inquire about the welfare of three of his brothers who were soldiers. When he realized the situation, he volunteered to meet the giant. Saul at first doubted the wisdom of this but seeing David's faith let him go.
- o David refused normal armor and took only weapons to which he was accustomed, a sling and five suitable stones. Goliath met him, covered with armor from head to foot with a shield-bearer before him. When Goliath first saw David approaching, he disdained him, thinking himself humiliated by such an unlikely opponent. David, however, came not in his own strength, but in the name of the God of Israel.
- o One stone was all that David needed. It struck Goliath in the one vulnerable place, his forehead, and he fell to the ground dead. David quickly ran to him and, using Goliath's own sword cut off his head (fig. 8). A victory was won for Saul and Israel.
- o News of such an achievement spread rapidly among the people. Soon David found himself known and honored (1 Sam. 18:1-7). The people sang his praises, and Saul himself now rewarded him by making him commander of the army.

- About this time, Jonathan, Saul's eldest son, developed a deep friendship with David. The mutual respect and love between the two lasted for the remainder of their lives. As army commander, David continued to achieve outstanding success, adding to his growing reputation throughout the land.

SAUL'S JEALOUSY

Soon David was being given higher honor than Saul, and Saul's emotional weakness showed itself by intense jealousy, where he attempted to kill David.

- The first attempts were direct. Saul tried twice to kill David with his spear (1 Sam. 18:8-11). These attempts came as David continued to play the harp for the king.
- Second, as a seeming reward for David's service, Saul promised him Michal, his daughter, as wife. But he

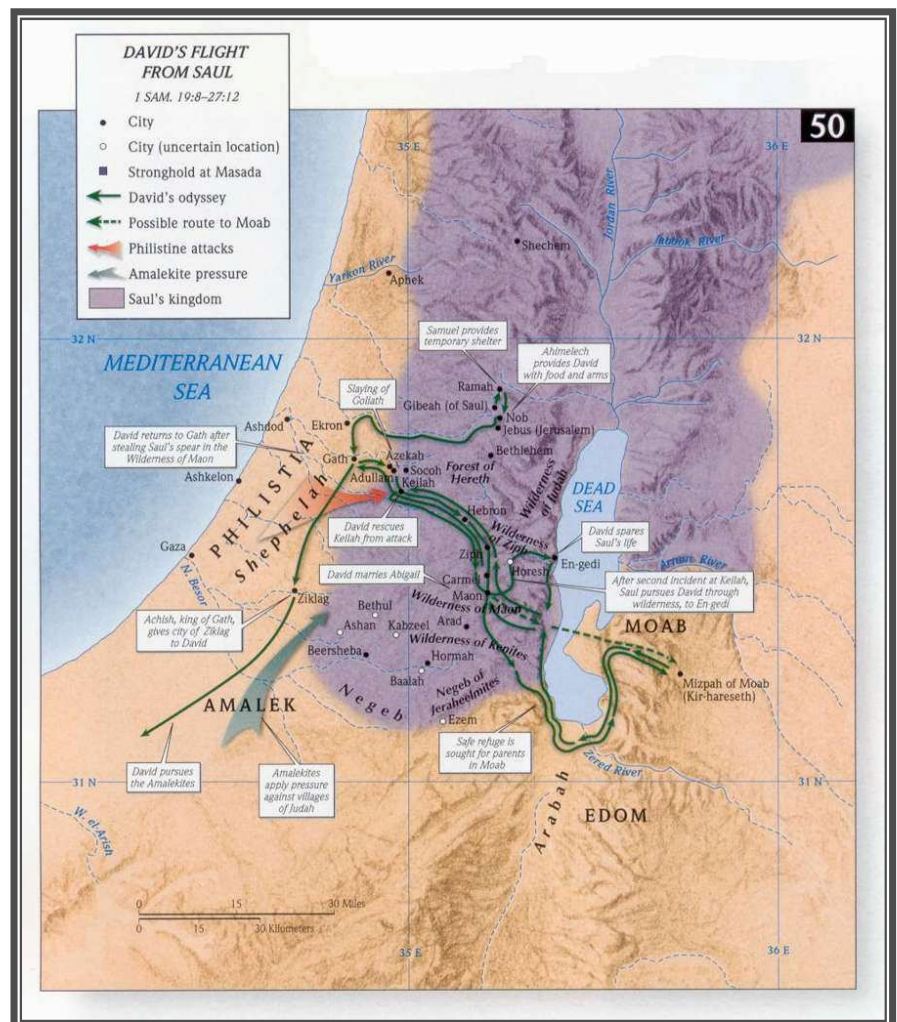


Fig. 9 David's Flight From Saul

asked David to supply a hundred Philistine foreskins as dowry, hoping that David would be killed in acquiring them. David, however, delivered two hundred safely (1 Sam. 18:20-27).

- Saul next attempted to work through his servants, commanding that they take David's life, but Jonathan intervened to have the order changed (1 Sam. 19:1-7).
- Next, another victory by David over the Philistines prompted a further direct attack by Saul to strike David with the spear, but once more David avoided the king's effort.
- Saul quickly ordered servants to follow David to his home and kill him, but Michal worked against her father by letting David down from an outside window (1 Sam. 19:8-17).

David fled from the palace and came to Samuel at Ramah about two miles north of Gibeah.

- Saul sent three different companies of men there to seize David so that Saul could have him executed. When all three failed, Saul himself went.
- When Saul found David in the company of Samuel he did not apprehend him but fell into despair and lay all night in a deep stupor (1 Sam. 19:18-24).

These repeated attempts to take David's life made David realize that living any longer at the palace was too hazardous.

- Though Saul had been shamed at Ramah, there was good reason to believe that he would soon forget and try again.
- After a feast that David did not attend Jonathan, regretfully but faithfully, brought word to David. Both agreed that David would have to leave the palace area, and they parted with great emotion. David began the life of a fugitive (fig. 9).

SAUL'S LAST YEARS

The greater part of Saul's reign had elapsed by this time. David's fugitive experiences lasted four or five years at the most. What years did remain for Saul were spent in frustration and wasted effort.

- At one time Saul cruelly took the lives of 85 defenseless priests in retaliation for an imagined act of disloyalty (1 Sam. 22:6-19).

When David fled from Saul, Israel lost her ablest military leader. The Philistines had been kept in check as long as David led Israel's forces against them, but Saul had no one of equal ability to replace him. After David's departure, nothing is heard from the Philistines for a time, but their thrusts into the land gradually became more pronounced, as revealed by two particular incidents.

- One occurred when fugitive David went to the town of Keilah, located well within the hill country of Judah southwest of Bethlehem, to assist in withstanding a Philistine attack there. On this occasion, Saul did not attempt to defend territory, belonging to him (1 Sam. 23:1-5).
 - o Identified as Khirbet Qila, six miles east of modern Beit Guvrin, 18 miles southwest of Jerusalem, three miles south of Adullam.
 - o One of the Amarna tablets (fig. 10) originates from Keilah and reads as follows:

*"To the king, my Lord, my God and Sun, thus speaks
Shuwardata, your servant, the dust under your feet. At*

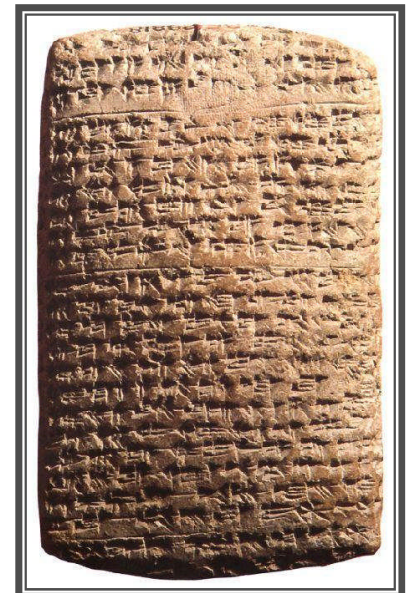


Fig. 10 Amarna Tablet

the feet of my Lord, the king, my God and Sun, I have prostrated myself seven times seven times . The king, my Lord, has sent me to do battle with Keilah. After the fighting there is peace. My city has been preserved for me. Why has Abdu-Heba asked of the people of Keilah to accept silver and stand behind him? The king, my Lord, ought to know, that Abdu-Heba [ruler of Jerusalem] has conquered my city. Moreover, may the king, my Lord, examine me. If I have taken one man, one ox or one ass from him, then he is in the right. Moreover, Labayu [ruler of Shechem] who conquered our cities has died and Abdu-Heba is a second Labayu taking our cities. May the king judge his servant according to his deeds. He will do nothing until the king conveys his will to his servant.”

- The other was an instance when Saul did quickly pull back from pursuit of David on being informed of a Philistine inroad into the country, and apparently he did make a defense (1 Sam. 23:27-28). The particular place of Philistine penetration this time is not indicated.

The decisive and final battle for Saul with the Philistines came at Mount Gilboa (1 Sam. 28:1-25; 31:1-13).

- The Philistines first gathered at Aphek, the site of their important victory over Israel 65 years earlier. They marched in force through the Esdraelon Valley and encamped at Shunem near Mount Gilboa. Saul moved to meet them and took up quarters in that mountain.
 - o Identified with modern Solem in the territory of Issachar at the eastern foot of “Little Hermon” (hill of Moreh, Judg. 7:1).
- Fearing the coming battle, Saul sought information on its outcome from God, but was not answered “by dreams, or Urim or prophets” (1 Sam. 28:6).
 - o Saul longed to consult Samuel, who was now dead (1 Sam. 25:1), and in desperation broke God’s law (Lev. 20:27) by visiting a witch who lived at Endor (1 Sam. 28:7-25).
 - o Through what was apparently a resulting supernatural appearance of Samuel, at which the witch herself was terrified, Saul was warned of defeat.
- The battle took place, and the prediction came true (1 Sam. 31:1-13). Israel was defeated, and Saul’s three sons (Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchi-shua) were killed.
- Saul was wounded and not wanting to be captured alive fell on his own sword (fig. 11).
- The Philistines found the four bodies of the royal family and hung them for public viewing on the wall in the nearby city of Bethshan.



Fig. 11 King Saul Falls on his Sword

DAVID AS FUGITIVE

When David left Gibeah he went first to Nob, where Ahimelech served as high priest at the tabernacle.

- Here David received some of the sacred bread for food, Goliath's sword for a weapon, and an indication through Ahimelech of God's will ([1 Sam. 1:3-9; 22:10-15](#)).

With a few personal servants, David went to the Philistine city of Gath to attempt a foreign alliance. However, he was recognized by the servants of King Achish, and had to escape quickly.

David then returned to Israel and took up residence in a cave near Adullam, where he began gathering a force of men. Since he was within 10 miles of his home in Bethlehem, he was near enough for his father and brothers to visit him.

- Identified with modern Tell esh-Sheikh Madhkur, Adullam is about nine miles east of Gath, halfway between Gath and Bethlehem.
- This place proved to be the perfect place for David to hide in his flight from Saul.
- [1 Samuel 22](#) says that David hid in the "cave of Adullam." Today there are many caves at the site. It is not clear which one or ones David used, as many have been used and modified in the years since.
- Somehow David was able to make known his need for volunteers. 400 responded, men described as in distress, in debt, and discontented ([1 Sam. 22: 1-2; 1 Chron. 12:8-15](#)).



Fig. 12 Cave at Adullam

With the band assembled, David again tried foreign alliance, this time moving east to Moab. He took his parents with him now, fearing reprisals against them by Saul. For some reason, however, Gad, a prophet who had joined David's band, soon counseled him to leave this country; and David moved once more back to Judah, this time to an area called "the forest of Hereth," unknown today.

At Hereth, Abiathar son of Ahimelech, fleeing from Saul, came to David ([1 Sam. 22:20-23](#)). The time was soon after Saul's slaughter of the 85 priests of Nob, from which Abiathar had escaped.

- Abiathar was high priest now, since his father had just been killed. He brought the priestly ephod with him, including the Urim and Thummim for divine inquiry.
- It was not long before David had opportunity to put this divine means of inquiry to use. He learned that the Philistines were preying on the inhabitants of Keilah, and desiring to make friends wherever possible and wanting to help these people, he sought God's will as to giving them assistance ([1 Sam. 23:1-13](#)). The answer to the inquiry was affirmative, and David came to the relief of Keilah and helped defeat the Philistines. In spite of the help given further inquiry revealed that the people of Keilah would now turn him over to Saul if he remained, so he left.

At this point David moved southward, to the region of Ziph and Maon below Hebron.

- Ziph, identified with modern Tell Zif, is three and one-half miles southeast of Keilah.
- Maon, identified with Khirbet Ma'in, is five miles south of Ziph.
- Here Saul made his first attempt to seize David, for the Ziphites had informed him of David's presence.
- Saul was unsuccessful and had to return to Gibeah fight Philistines (1 Sam. 23:14-28).

David then moved east to En-gedi on the shore of the Dead Sea (fig. 13 & 14) where Saul again pursued him after the Philistine encounter (1 Sam. 24: 1- 22).

- En-gedi is still called by the same name, after a fresh flowing spring. It is 16 miles straight east from Ziph. En Gedi is the largest oasis along the western shore of the Dead Sea.
- The springs and year-round temperate climate provide the perfect conditions for agriculture.
- Solomon compared his lover to "*a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi,*" an indication of the beauty and fertility of the site (Song 1:14).
- Josephus praised En Gedi for its palm trees and balsam.



Fig. 13 En-gedi Oasis

En Gedi means literally "*the spring of the kid (goat).*" Evidence exists that young ibex have always lived near the springs of En Gedi. One time when David was fleeing from King Saul, the pursuers searched the "*Crags of the Ibex*" in the vicinity of En Gedi.

- It was here that David spared Saul's life for the first time. Saul had entered a cave where David was hiding, and David could have killed him, but instead he merely cut off part of Saul's clothing for evidence of his proximity.
- When Saul learned of David's gracious sparing of his life Saul repented and asked for David's continued mercy.

David next moved back again to the region of Maon. Now he sought food for his men from a wealthy landholder named Nabal, who lived near his camp (1 Sam. 25:2-42).

- David believed that he had a right to ask for assistance, since his men had been giving protection to Nabal's flocks (1 Sam. 25:7, 14-17).
- Nabal would not provide the food so David prepared to punish him.



Fig. 14 En-gedi Spring

- Nabal's wife, Abigail, intervened to supply the needed food. Nabal died ten days later. David then took Abigail as his own wife.

Not long after, the Ziphites once more tried to gain Saul's favor by telling him of David's hiding place (1 Sam. 26: 1- 25).

- Saul came, and for a second time David spared his life when he could have killed him.
- David, accompanied by Abishai, went to where Saul slept under the guard of Abner and the army, and took away Saul's own spear and jug of water.
- Once again, Saul repented and promised not to pursue David any longer.

Following the second instance of sparing Saul's life, David went once more to the foreign area of the Philistines, for he feared that he could not always escape these attempts by Saul.

- David again offered his services to Achish, king of Gath.
- Achish accepted David this time, no doubt persuaded that David was a refugee from Saul, and also by the 600 men David now led, a military unit that Achish could use.
- Achish gave David the city of Ziklag (fig. 15), south in Philistine territory, as a base of operations.
 - o Ziklag was listed as one of the 29 towns in Negev and was assigned to the tribe of Simeon (Josh 15:31; 19:5). The Philistines now apparently controlled it during King Saul's rule.
 - o Ziklag is identified with Tell Sera. The site is situated midway between Beersheba and Gaza. About five acres at the summit, the tell is horseshoe shaped with steep slopes on all sides except on the west side.
- Pretending to serve Achish as a good mercenary, David attacked southern tribes that had been perennial enemies of Israel, particularly the Geshurites, Gezrites, and Amalekites. David let Achish believe that he was distressing southern Judah, thus maintaining standing with him while he distributed booty among cities of southern Judah (1 Sam. 30:26-31) to keep their favor toward the day when he would need support in becoming their king.
- After 16 months of this activity (1 Sam. 27: 7), the final Philistine battle with Saul drew near, and David found himself in difficulty. David apparently had committed himself to Achish to a degree where he could not remain uninvolved without endangering his own position. He must have been relieved when other Philistines objected to his presence and was thus sent home to Ziklag.

Catastrophe met David on his return to Ziklag. The Amalekites, perhaps in retaliation for David's earlier raids, had attacked the town and taken his wives and the wives of all his men, besides much booty.

- David's men now came near mutiny. It may be that they had earlier disagreed with David regarding the whole Philistine idea, and so blamed him here for this.
- David was quick to act. He set out in pursuit of the captors. Learning the location of the Amalekites from a captured Egyptian, who had been left behind because of illness, David stormed the camp and



Fig. 15 Ziklag – Tell Sera

recovered both wives and booty. This alleviated the wounded feelings of the men, and peace was restored.

- The booty he took exceeded what had been lost, and there was even enough to distribute elsewhere. He did so in 13 listed Judean towns, where he had received friendly assistance in recent months, and whose friendship he wished to maintain in view of his coming kingship (1 Sam. 30:26-31).

It was on the third day after returning from this pursuit that he received word of Israel's tragic defeat at Mount Gilboa and the death of Saul and his sons.

- The news was brought by one who had escaped the slaughter and who now thought he might obtain favor from Israel's next king by claiming to have killed the prior one. He said that Saul, realizing that the battle was lost and that the enemy was pressing hard upon him, had called to the young man and asked that he kill him, which the young man (who was an Amalekite) said he had done. He carried Saul's crown and bracelet as evidence to support his story.
- This was convincing to David, who had no reason to doubt his testimony, and he responded by weeping and fasting until the evening of that day. Then he returned to see the young man once again, not to honor him, but to order his death for having put his hand on the anointed of God.
- David's mourning came from his heart, but was obviously aware that this news sounded the note for him to return to Israel.
- David would have no part in bringing about Saul's death, but at the same time it was what he had been waiting for since the day of his own anointing. The way was now clear for him to return home and receive the kingship.

TEL DAN STONE

Since 1966 Israeli archaeologist, Avraham Biran, has excavated Tel Dan in the north of Israel at the foot of Mount Hermon. On July 21, 1993, while work crews were preparing the site for visitors, a broken fragment of basalt stone was uncovered in secondary use in a wall. It turned out to be a stone erected to pay tribute to a Syrian king, and a record of his victories over Israel.

- The stone mentions King David's dynasty, "the House of David" (fig. 16)
- According to the Bible, the city of Dan was the northern most city of Israel and was named after Dan, the father of one of Israel's twelve tribes. A description of how the city was first taken is found in Joshua 19:47:

JOS 19:47 The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them; for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem, Dan after the name of Dan their father.

Joshua 19:47 (NASB)



Fig. 16 "House of David" Inscription

Evidently, the tribe of Dan must have lost control of the city, and later on had to retake it, because the bible records in Judges 18:27-29:

JDG 18:27 Then they took what Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the edge of the sword; and they burned the city with fire.

JDG 18:28 And there was no one to deliver *them*, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob. And they rebuilt the city and lived in it.

JDG 18:29 They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish.

Judges 18:27-29 (NASB)

In 1994, two more fragments from the inscription were found at Tel-Dan. The following is a translation of the text that was found written in the early Aramaic language, similar to script found on pottery dating back to the ninth century B.C. In this translation, the letters found in brackets represents a suggested reconstruction of what the words may have been.

1. ... my father went forward ... he made battle at
2. ... and he died, he went to ... king of [Is-]
3. rael of old was in my fathers land...Hadad appointed me king.
4. And Hadad went before me ... I embarked from seven.....
5. of my kingdom... And I killedkin[gs] [cha-]
6. riots and horsemen numbering two thousand...[He (or I) killed Jeho]ram (Joram) son of [Ahab].
7. the king of Israel. [He (or I)] killed [Ahaz]iahu son of [Jehoram kin-]
8. g of the House of David. And I turned
9. their country into...
10. other [...Jehu ru-]
11. led over Is[rael]
12. siege upon...

Although the text doesn't mention the name of the king who wrote the inscription, a little bit of detective work points to King Hazael of Syria.

- First of all, since the inscription was found at Dan, the city had to be under Syrian control at the time it was written. According to **1 Kings 15:20** Ben-Hadad was the Syrian king to take control of the city.

1KI 15:20 So Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah and all Chinneroth, besides all the land of Naphtali.

1 Kings 15:20 (NASB)

- King Hazael (841-806 BC) is mentioned in **1 Kings 19:15**.
1KI 19:15 The LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram;

1 Kings 19:15 (NASB)

- o King of Aram (Syria); succeeded Ben-Hadad II.
- o Ivory inlay fragment found at Arslan Tash bears the name Hazael (fig. 17).
- o Inscription on statue mentions Barhadad, son of Hazael

- So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent his armies against the cities of Israel. He attacked Dan.
- Line 3 & 4 of the inscription mentions the name of Hadad.
 - o It is possible that Hadad may refer to the Syrian king Ben-Hadad.
 - o It is also possible that the name Hadad may refer to a pagan god that was worshiped by the Syrians.



Fig. 17 Hazael Inscription

- Line 4 states that “*Hadad went before me.*”
 - o Hazael may be giving credit to his god Hadad for victories against Israel.
 - o This is interesting because in [1 Kings 19:15](#), God tells Elijah to send Elisha to anoint Hazael as King over Syria, as punishment for Israel’s sins. Since Hazael worshiped Hadad, he probably thought his pagan god was giving him victory over Israel.

[1KI 19:15](#) The LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram;

[1 Kings 19:15 \(NASB\)](#)
 - o Hazael may also be referring to Ben-Hadad, who was king before him.

The historian Josephus records how Hazael came to power in the following paragraph:

“God began to put fear into the Syrian army. The Syrians began hearing things, which were not real, the sounds of a great army of chariots and horses. The soldiers informed Ben-Hadad that Jehoram (Joram, king of Israel) must have sent for the king of Egypt, his ally. Ben-Hadad also heard the sounds of chariots echoing in his ears and he and his army fled from battle...Ben-Hadad fled to Damascus. He became sick after learning God had caused the defeat of his army and not the enemy...The prophet Elisha came and spoke to Hazael...Then Elisha began to weep, and Hazael asked him why? Elisha told him, I weep for Israel my people, and for the suffering they will endure at your hands. For you will destroy their best men and their strongest towns...Hazael asked ‘By who’s authority will I be able to do these things?’ Elisha answered ‘God has declared that you will be king of Syria.’ The next day Hazael spread a thick wet cloth over the king’s face suffocating him. Hazael then came to power.”

Lines 6,7,10 & 11 refer to Jehu (841-814), and states that he killed Joram (Jehoram) (852-841) son of Ahab, king of Israel, and Ahaziah (841) son of Jehoram (Joram) (853-841), king of the House of David, during a time when Hazael was attacking Israel. This is also reflected in [2 Kings 9:14-27](#), in which the following events took place:

[2KI 9:14](#) So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. Now Joram with all Israel was defending Ramoth-gilead against Hazael king of Aram,

[2KI 9:15](#) but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to be healed of the wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him when he fought with Hazael king of Aram. So Jehu said, “If this is your mind, *then* let no one escape or leave the city to go tell it in Jezreel.”

[2KI 9:16](#) Then Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram was lying there. Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram.

[2KI 9:17](#) Now the watchman was standing on the tower in Jezreel and he saw the company of Jehu as he came, and said, “I see a company.” And Joram said, “Take a horseman and send him to meet them and let him say, ‘Is it peace?’ “

[2KI 9:18](#) So a horseman went to meet him and said, “Thus says the king, ‘Is it peace?’ “ And Jehu said, “ What have you to do with peace? Turn behind me.” And the watchman reported, “The messenger came to them, but he did not return.”

[2KI 9:19](#) Then he sent out a second horseman, who came to them and said, “Thus says the king, ‘Is it peace?’ “ And Jehu answered, “What have you to do with peace? Turn behind me.”

[2KI 9:20](#) The watchman reported, “He came even to them, and he did not return; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously.”

[2KI 9:21](#) Then Joram said, “ Get ready.” And they made his chariot ready. Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu and found him in the property of Naboth the Jezreelite.

[2KI 9:22](#) When Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?” And he answered, “What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?”

[2KI 9:23](#) So Joram reined about and fled and said to Ahaziah, “*There is treachery, O Ahaziah!*”

[2KI 9:24](#) And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and shot Joram between his arms; and the arrow went through his heart and he sank in his chariot.

[2KI 9:25](#) Then *Jehu* said to Bidkar his officer, “Take *him* up and cast him into the property of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite, for I remember when you and I were riding together after Ahab his father, that the LORD laid this oracle against him:

^{2KI 9:26} ‘Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,’ says the LORD, ‘and I will repay you in this property,’ says the LORD. Now then, take and cast him into the property, according to the word of the LORD.”
^{2KI 9:27} When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw *this*, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu pursued him and said, “Shoot him too, in the chariot.” So *they shot him* at the ascent of Gur, which is at Ibleam. But he fled to Megiddo and died there.

Some translations of Line 6 and 7 say “I,” instead of “He,” meaning Hazael says he killed these two kings (Ahaziah and Joram), not Jehu.

- Even though this was not true, Hazael, according to [2 Kings 9:15](#), did wound king Joram in battle. Since Joram died shortly afterwards, Hazael probably thought it was from his battle wounds. And since Ahaziah died at the same time, Hazael probably assumed he was also at the battle and died from his injuries.

Lines 7 & 8 of the Tel Dan stone states that Israel was a divided kingdom, because it mentions the “*King of Israel*” and the king of the “*House of David*.” This is exactly how the bible describes Israel as being divided after the death of King Solomon.

The discovery provides an archaeological connection to the biblical references to the ruling dynasty established by King David approximately two centuries before the events that are mentioned in the inscription.

- It is the first mention of King David outside of the Bible, as well as some of his descendants. The discovery is of particular importance in the face of those scholars who were either skeptical or denied the historical existence of King David.

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The United Monarchy

ISRAEL, JUDAH Hebrew kingdoms
 ASHER, etc. Israelite tribes
 SYRIA, etc. Non-Israelite peoples
 Places fortified by Solomon
 Solomon's administrative districts (1 Kgs. 4, 7-19)

0 10 20 Miles
 0 10 20 Kilometres

