

Scenes and themes in 1 Samuel 11-15

11.1-11	<p>Nahash the Ammonite threatens to “disgrace” the people of Jabesh-gilead by gouging out each person’s right eye. During a seven-day respite, messengers come to “Gibeah of Saul” to report the matter and “all the people wept aloud.” Saul, coming in from leading his oxen, receives “the spirit of God” and cuts up the oxen to muster volunteer soldiers to “come out after Saul and Samuel.” 370,000 soldiers are mustered and Saul leads them successfully to victory over the Ammonites.</p>
11.12-13	<p>“The people” go to Samuel to demand the lives of those who resisted Saul’s reign. Saul, not Samuel, answers them by refusing the request and claiming it was YHWH who “has brought deliverance to Israel.”</p>
11.14-12.25	<p>Samuel calls the people to Gilgal to “renew the monarchy” and “there they made Saul king before YHWH in Gilgal.” Samuel then gives a long speech justifying himself and offering a rhetorically manipulative summary of YHWH’s history with the people. He calls upon YHWH to destroy the wheat crop with a thunderstorm to show his divinely approved authority. In terror, the people submit to Samuel and acknowledge their sins in demanding a king.</p>
13.1-4	<p>Saul’s reign begins by his choosing 3000 soldiers to take on the Philistines, keeping 2000 and giving 1000 to Jonathan, who is not named as Saul’s son. Jonathan defeats the Philistine garrison at Geba and Saul blows the shofar to have “the people” join him at Gilgal.</p>
13.5-10	<p>The Philistines regroup and the Israelites find themselves “in a tight spot” and hide where they can. Saul, still at Gilgal, awaits Samuel (per Samuel’s instructions at 10.8), but when Samuel doesn’t show after the seven days, Saul offers burnt offerings and at that moment, Samuel arrives.</p>
13.11-15	<p>Samuel confronts Saul and charges him with not keeping “the commandment of YHWH your God which he commanded you,” and announces that, as a result, YHWH is taking the kingdom away and giving it to a man “after his own heart.”</p>
13.16-23	<p>Preparations are made for battle with the Philistines, who control access to metalworking, and thus, swords and spears.</p>
14.1-15	<p>Jonathan, now revealed to be son of Saul, and his armor-bearer lead a successful ambush against the Philistines, leading to panic in the enemy camp.</p>
14.16-23	<p>Saul rallies his own troops, calling upon Ahijah, Eli’s great-grandson, to carry the ark [or “ephod,” LXX], and after a chaotic battle with the Philistines, “YHWH gave Israel the victory that day.”</p>
14.24-46	<p>Saul lays an oath on his troops not to eat “before it is evening and I have been avenged on my enemies.” Jonathan, not having heard the oath, tastes some honey and his eyes brighten. When he is told about the oath, he replies, “My father has troubled the land.”</p> <p>After battling the Philistines, the troops swoop upon the spoil, which is reported to Saul as “sinning against YHWH by eating with the blood.” Saul orders them to kill and eat oxen and then builds an altar to YHWH.</p>

	<p>Saul attempts to seek YHWH's approval for going after the Philistines, but YHWH is silent. He orders a search to find who has broken his oath, and promises that even if it is his son, Jonathan, he must die. After the lot falls on Jonathan, he confesses that he ate honey and is ready to die. But the people take Jonathan's side against the king. Saul gives up the battle against the Philistines.</p>
14.47-52	<p>A summary of Saul's military victories, praising him for rescuing Israel. We hear of his children, wife and father. It is clearly praising for his military success.</p>
15.1-35	<p>Samuel comes to Saul and claims YHWH has ordered the king to attack the Amaleites for what they did during the journey from Egypt, refusing hospitality to the escaped slaves. Samuel tells him, in words that will be parsed like a legal provision: "utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."</p> <p>Saul leads the battle and defeats the Amalekites, taking their King Agag alive and "the best of the sheep and of the cattle and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was valuable, and would not utterly destroy them". Then YHWH tells Samuel: "I regret that I made Saul king for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands." Samuel angrily cries out to YHWH all night, then rises and comes to Saul. He is told that Saul has "set up a monument to himself" and is now in Gilgal.</p> <p>Samuel confronts him on not carrying out the commands. Saul first defends that he has carried out the commands, then seeks to put the blame on the people. Samuel tells him that "rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of YHWH, he has also rejected you from being king." Saul admits he has sinned and begs mercy, but Samuel offers none, claiming that "the Glory of Israel will not recant or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind." Samuel relents and returns to Saul, while hacking King Agag to pieces. Samuel returns to Ramah and Saul to Gibeah. The chapter ends with this portentous word: "Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel."</p>