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# Israel and Judah: 1. Saul and David

by David W. Sielaff, August 2014

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for August 2014](#)

## Israel and Judah: 1

### Saul and David

The experiences written in the Old Testament are written for you (and for all of us), as the apostle Paul says. **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning [instruction], [why?] that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”** (Romans 15:4, KJV). All the Old Testament writings are for us today. Therefore, it is useful for us to study the complete word of God, including the historical books. Prophecy cannot be fully comprehended until the history of Israel and Judah is better understood. This article begins a multi-part study of that history.

**“All scripture [not some, but all] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [1] for doctrine, [2] for reproof, [3] for correction, [4] for instruction in righteousness: [Why?] That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”**

• 2 Timothy 3:16–17, KJV

God has a purpose for everything He does. Note the two purposes put forth in these two passages above as to why study of the Old Testament is so important:

- **“... that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”** (Romans 15:4). Hope of what? We are not to despair of our present situation because God our Father will give to us an escape or a way out, or a sequel from the trials we encounter in life. Read Ephesians 1:18–19.<sup>a</sup>
- **“... That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”** (2 Timothy 3:16–17). As a believer, the good works you do have no contribution whatever to our salvation,

<sup>a</sup> Ephesians 1:18–19 (KJV):

**“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know [not merely guess]**

- **what is the hope of his calling, and**
- **what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And**
- **what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,”**

but good works have much to do with your reward after your resurrection.<sup>b</sup> Read 1 Corinthians 3:7–15 where the relationship of a believer’s works and rewards are described. The Old Testament teaches and helps furnish you **“unto all good works.”** It is all part of the **“whole counsel of God.”**

### **All Scripture Is Important for You**

Yes, even the Old Testament histories have important teaching for you. Therefore, I intend to produce a series of articles regarding the triumphs and failures of the important individuals in the histories of the united kingdom, and eventually the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The series will have a general title: “Israel and Judah,” found at the top of the “icons,” such as the one on the title page of this article.

This series of articles follow naturally from Dr. Martin’s basic teaching on the prophetic books of the Old Testament.<sup>c</sup> I begin from the time of the death of King Saul down to the final destruction and elimination of the independent Kingdom of Judah, when Jerusalem is destroyed and the people exiled to Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. This information was all **“written for our learning”** (Romans 15:4).

Whenever other important information needs to be presented (or just for a break) I will interrupt the sequence of articles to present articles on these subjects, including more of Dr. Ernest Martin’s research. I do not know how much material I will cover in any particular article. My goal is to make the historical texts as clear as possible so in turn their details will make the prophecies more understandable along other Old Testament writings. References to Dr. Martin’s works will be extensive because they are so informative.

Where two accounts cover the same material, the texts will be placed side-by-side so the entire story is presented in a highly readable and interesting format. The basic texts are the “book” of Samuel-Kings (our English books of First and Second Samuel and First and Second Kings, which are one scroll in the Hebrew canon) compared with the book of Chronicles (our First and Second Chronicles). Other texts from the Psalms, the Major and Minor Prophets, as well as extensive non-biblical historical material will be referred to when appropriate.

The English text I use is the *Concordant Version of the Old Testament* ([Concordant Publishing Concern](#), Almont, MI 48003) — hereafter designated as *CLV*. I have known of their work for decades (as did Dr. Martin for more decades before me). The Concordant Publishing Concern has been gracious, giving permission for ASK to use their text. Their translation of Samuel-Kings was published in 2001 and the translation of Chronicles was published in 2004. This text is highly consistent and regular in its English translation from the Hebrew.

In the *CLV*, as much as idioms and figures of speech allow, the Concordant method uses one English word to serve as a close translation for one Hebrew term. Then the context of the verses that use that term molds the translation of each English usage, just as the context molds each term in the Hebrew original. This reduces the likelihood of having more than one, or several, different English terms for a single Hebrew term.

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<sup>b</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17–19 (KJV):

**“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; That**

- **what is the hope of his calling, and**
- **they do good, that**
- **they be rich in good works,**
- **ready to distribute,**
- **willing to communicate [share, be generous];**

[why?] **Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal [eonian] life.”**

<sup>c</sup> These Prophetic books should be read and studied in the correct manuscript order presented in the [“Diagram: the Symmetry of the Bible.”](#) Then go to these webpages: [“Prophecy Articles Index”](#) (current-year articles) and then [“Prophecy Articles Archive”](#) (past years’ articles). Search within these pages for the prophetic book you want to learn about and study. You can also look up prophetic topics you are interested in at the [“A Topical Index to the Writings on the A.S.K. Web Site”](#) — a very useful tool.

Such a systemic approach reduces the likelihood for unwanted meaning being “inserted” into a word, which might create an unintended translation for a biblical passage. It also greatly reduces theological input into translations. The result of such a systemic translation is a very useful biblical study tool, in this case for this project. This concordant regularity of the translation minimizes my need to clarify the English text, although I do so on occasion when the English would be obscure to most readers. When the *CLV* uses the Septuagint Greek translation of a term or phrase (for which they have reasons), again, at times I will present my own judgment on certain translated terms. I put my judgments [in brackets].

### **Structural Approach**

I chose to use the basic format and structure from James Newsome’s edited work, which I highly recommend, *A Synoptic Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, with Related Passages from Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezra* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).<sup>d</sup> However, because I am using the Concordant Literal Version my line divisions are different and internal structure is different from Newsome’s.

Also useful will be the standard older work by William Crockett, *A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles: The Books of the Kings of Judah and Israel* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), free in PDF format.<sup>e</sup> Most harmonies of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles use Chronicles as the basic format and source to structure the texts. I think Newsome’s idea is superior. He uses Samuel-Kings as the basic structure and Chronicles comments on that basic history, changes, and improves it. Where Chronicles does not comment on the Samuel-Kings text, the Chronicler has nothing to add, comment upon, or change. By “change,” I mean alterations such as editions, adding information, explanations, clarifications, and updates for his audience already familiar with Samuel-Kings. Chronicles was written after the Samuel-Kings text.

Contrary to what many scholars believe, but in line with what most traditional Jewish scholars believe, Chronicles was written by Ezra the priest, as Dr. Martin presents in his book, *Restoring the Original Bible: the Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures*.<sup>f</sup> One purpose for the Book of Chronicles was to give information regarding the canonizations of the Old Testament by Ezra the priest. Chronicles deals with three major historical periods that needed additional comment: the times of David and Solomon, the times of King Hezekiah, and the times of King Josiah. It also validates Samuel-Kings.

In addition, Ezra focused on issues of true worship and the fixing of proper rituals to be observed in the Temple. Furthermore, as Dr. Martin writes regarding the purpose for which Chronicles was written:

**“Chronicles gives us a full genealogical listing of the priests, Levites, and the House of David, and showing who were the legitimate ancestors of Israel and to demonstrate that Jerusalem was to be reckoned the center of all true worship.**

**The whole emphasis in the Book of Chronicles, which makes it so different from the parallel Book of Kingdoms,<sup>g</sup> is upon Jerusalem as the center of God’s divine government on earth. It also shows how the proper authorities (the ordained priests and secular rulers as proved by the genealogical lists) were associated with the Temple at Jerusalem, and not in any other area of the world. According to Ezra in the Book of Chronicles, it was at Jerusalem that the standard of all religious teaching was to be centered.**

**This is why Chronicles gives a great amount of detail to:**

- **the history of the Ark (1 Chronicles chapters 13–16),**

<sup>d</sup> Originally published in paperback by Baker Books, 1990.

<sup>e</sup> An interesting free version, with the text mostly in paragraph form is *Samuel, Kings and Chronicles: A Harmony*, arranged by Randolph W. Armstrong, 2004. It uses the Revised Standard Version. While interesting, I prefer to view the differences set out for my comparison in a particular format which I will use. A chronological Bible is also sometimes very helpful. There are several available in different languages. They also have their place in biblical study.

<sup>f</sup> Portland, OR: ASK Publications, 1994/2004. This book is available [FREE online](#).

<sup>g</sup> The Book of Kingdoms are the books in our current Bible of First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, and Second Kings.

- the preparations for building the Temple,
- the assignments of the priests and Levites in the Temple, and
- the genealogical lists of proper individuals and families who were necessary to perform the duties in the Temple and to govern Israelite society.

... The making of the Jewish scriptures was at Jerusalem, and the canonizations were done at times when it was necessary to revitalize the Temple services. This was also the case with the final canonization. Ezra resided at Jerusalem and Temple services were once again being authorized. By writing Chronicles, he was demonstrating that Jerusalem was always the place to which Jews needed to look as the source of God's truth."

• *Martin, Restoring, "Chapter 12, The Old Testament Periods of Canonization"*

Chronicles often gives information not contained in Samuel-Kings. However, Samuel-Kings is more chronological. It does not have extensive genealogies, which have a necessary and important purpose. Also, Samuel-Kings deals with the northern kingdom of Israel called Samaria which split from Judah after King Solomon's death. Chronicles relates to Samaria only as it relates to Judah. Therefore, I place Samuel-Kings in the left column as my standard text, with Chronicles or other texts in columns to the right. When Chronicles has text Samuel-Kings does not have, I present it. All relevant historical texts will be included.

### *Where to Begin?*

As indicated above, I begin this multi-part task with the death of King Saul of Israel, the same as James Newsome did in his book *Synoptic Harmony*. Before Saul's death, little information is cross-listed between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, although there is some correspondence between some of the genealogies in Genesis and Chronicles. Newsome in his *Synoptic Harmony* used the Revised Standard Version, which has different word choices for translation than the CLV, which has an enhanced regularity. Another aspect of Newsome's work is that he presents only the text. Only rarely does he give a short note. I intend to bring in my own commentary, particularly later when the historical texts interrelate with the extensive library of prophetic books.

I will insert maps where necessary. The basic topographical map of Israel that I use is public domain from Wikipedia. I add the information to the map where necessary to enhance the text. I will use or create charts and tables in the explanatory sections after the text presentations. Remember also that Hebrew has no chapter divisions, no versification, no paragraphing, and no punctuation, although some textual indications are obvious, particularly in Hebrew poetry. Therefore, a translator or a commentator has free rein to explain the text as best he or she can.

The first section of the historical harmony has a back story beginning at Genesis and going to 1 Samuel 30:31, to the last judge of Israel, Samuel the Seer (so called in 1 Samuel 9:19; 1 Chronicles 9:22; 26:28, and 29:29) when the people demanded a king. God consented and chose Saul to be king with the acclamation of the people (1 Samuel 11:15–12:1).<sup>h</sup> Saul went on to have great victories against Israel's enemies:

**"So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them."**

• *1 Samuel 14:47*

### *Saul's Long Decline to Death*

Saul's disobedience caused him to forfeit God's anointing and the kingship of Israel (1 Samuel 15:1–

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<sup>h</sup> Abimelech, the son of the judge Gideon, proclaimed himself to be king of the tribes of Israel. He was supported by some of the people, but not by God. Read about his short story in my February 2004 Commentary, "[The First King in Israel.](#)"

31). Samuel was then told by God to anoint David to be the future king. Upon hearing this news, Saul tried to kill his rival David, who threatened Saul's dynastic legacy, with Prince Jonathan as Saul's intended heir. David had many adventures escaping Saul, but he refused to harm **"God's anointed"** in return (1 Samuel 24:6, 10, 26:9, 11, 16, 23). David gathered a force of fighters, sometimes supported by the people of Judah. Saul pursued him.

David and his warriors sought the protection of a Philistine overlord at Gath, to whom David pledged loyalty (1 Samuel chapter 27). David was given the small city of Ziklag in southern Judah, living there for a year and four months with his men and their families, including two of David's wives. He attacked enemies of the Philistines successfully (enemies who were also Judah's enemies). After a series of tactical ruses, David and his men went out and "seemed" to attack Judah and Israel, but in fact, David and his men attacked Philistine assets. His Philistine overlord praised him:

**"Now Achish put his faith in David, saying, 'He has made himself a stink, yea a stink among his people in Israel, and so he has become mine as a servant for the eon.'"**

• 1 Samuel 27:12, CLV

So ends chapter 27. Chapter 28 begins a new subject:

**"It was in those days that the Philistines convened their fighting forces for enlistment to make war against Israel. And Achish said to David, 'You realize, yea realize that with me you shall march forth into the army camp, you and your men.'"**

• 1 Samuel 28:1, CLV

This put David in a difficult situation. He and his men were called on by his Philistine overlord Achish to join the Philistine army to war against King Saul, David's close friend Prince Jonathan, and the entire Israelite army.<sup>1</sup> It was providential that God provided David with a way to avoid that dangerous situation.

In the north King Saul no longer received any response from his petitions to God:

**"When the Philistines convened, they came and encamped at Shunem, while Saul convened all the men of Israel; and they encamped on Mount Gilboa. When Saul saw the army camp of the Philistines, he was fearful, and his heart trembled exceedingly. Saul inquired of Yahweh, but Yahweh did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets."**

• 1 Samuel 28:4–6, CLV

Saul had condemned to death anyone who sought out a medium to deal with spirits. Now Saul himself went to a medium to speak with a spirit Saul thought was the dead Samuel. It was not.<sup>2</sup> Saul's encounter with the witch (witnessed by the servants with Saul, 1 Samuel 28:7–28) did not go well. Saul's death was prophesied by the spirit. He knew he was doomed. Interestingly, Endor is almost 8–10 miles from where the Israelite camp was and he traveled there at night just before the battle while the enemy was near.

Saul understood his military position was hopeless. The Philistines had an apparent numerical advantage and the battle was to be fought in the valley. In other battles, Israel prevailed over the Philistines because they fought on the high ground of the hills. When the Philistines attacked, this time the battlefield was on the plain. The large Philistine contingents of chariots and cavalry made their army particularly effective that day (2 Samuel 1:6), and the Israelite army vulnerable to highly maneuverable troops.

<sup>1</sup> See the excellent analysis by Boyd Seevers, *Warfare in the Old Testament: the Organization, Weapons, and Tactics of Near Eastern Armies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), p. 152, in "Chapter 5, "Philistia; Israel's Neighbor and Enemy":

**"The Philistines had now settled on a bold strategy of establishing themselves in the Great Valley. Taking the Valley would not only give them excellent farmland, it would also further weaken Israel by separating majority of Israelites in the central hill country from their countrymen who lived in the hills of Galilee farther north. However, the Valley was a long way from the Philistine heartland, and they risked overextending themselves. They hoped to force Saul and his meager militia out of the hills to defend their holdings in the Great Valley."**

<sup>2</sup> In my article "[The Exact Time of Christ's Return](#)" I discuss Saul's encounter with the witch of Endor.

Why did the army of Israel not meet the Philistines on the high ground as in other battles when they were victorious? <sup>k</sup> Military author Mordechai Gichon believes that King Saul was outmaneuvered strategically. They gathered at the small city of Aphek inland from the Mediterranean coast (see the map below). From there the Philistines could have gone directly east as they did before in other campaigns (and lost)

### *Reading the Text*

**Editor's Note:** Pay attention to several features in the multi-columned biblical text:

- (1) Verse numbers are designated by numbers highlighted by superscript, bold, and italics, such as: <sup>***16***</sup>.
- (2) *Underlined and italicized words* indicate added or significantly different words from the text in the other column.
- (3) Footnotes are designated by superscript, lower case, and italic letters, (not numbers) such as: <sup>*b*</sup>.
- (4) Words understood to be quotations are set in **bold, dark red**, and in quote marks. This is for clarity and emphasis.

While this first passage section below does not have as many important differences as later side-by-side texts, there are still some interesting distinctions. Keep in mind that both texts are true for the times in which they were written. Chronicles was written later than Samuel-Kings. Both books were compiled from written sources, some of which were court records from royal archives.

Keep one thing in mind as you read these passages about the Philistines: God placed them on the south-eastern Mediterranean coast. Jeremiah tells us they are survivors, a remnant:

**“Because of the day that is coming to devastate all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every surviving helper, For Yahweh is devastating the Philistines, the remnant of the island of Caphtor.”**

• **Jeremiah 47:4, CLV**

The island of Caphtor is today called Crete. The prophet Amos not only said the Philistines came from Caphtor (modern Crete), but adds that God brought them there, just as He brought the Israelites out from Egypt and into the Promised Land where they encountered the Philistines:

**“Are you not like the sons of the Cushites to Me, sons of Israel? averring is Yahweh;  
Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt?  
And the Philistines from Caphtor?  
And Syria from Kir?”**

• **Amos 9:7, CLV**

YHWH brought the Philistines to the Mediterranean shore, just as Israel was brought from Egypt. They had a right to be there. As we note, God has moved several peoples to different places, just as he says in Acts 17:26.

Who the Philistine people are is the subject of Dr. Ernest Martin's article, "[The Prophesied State of Palestine](#)." It contains a great deal of information that may be a surprise to you. These people may have gone to Cyprus before ending up on the Mediterranean coast.

Begin the historical side-by-side harmony on the next page:

<sup>k</sup> Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Mechanichsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997), p. 94.

## TEXT: *The Fall of the House of King Saul*

### 1 Samuel 31:1–10

<sup>1</sup> *When* the Philistines *fought against* Israel,

the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

<sup>2</sup> The Philistines followed hard after Saul and after his sons, and the Philistines smote Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

<sup>3</sup> Then the fighting was heavy around Saul; the shooters, *the men* with the bow, found him; and he was wounded very severely by the shooters.

<sup>4</sup> So Saul said to his gear-bearer, **“Draw your sword and stab me with it, lest these uncircumcised come and stab me and abuse me.”**

Yet his gear-bearer did not comply, for he was very fearful. Then Saul took the sword and fell upon it. <sup>5</sup> When his gear-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell upon his sword and died *with him*.

<sup>6</sup> Thus Saul died, and his three sons *and his gear-bearer*, on that day, *even all his men*<sup>1</sup>—they died together.

<sup>7</sup> When the men of Israel who were *across the vale and who were across the Jordan* saw that *the men of* Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities and fled. So the Philistines came and dwelt in them. <sup>8</sup> It was on the morrow when the Philistines came to strip those slain, that they found Saul and his three sons, fallen on Mount Gilboa.

<sup>9</sup> *They cut* off his head, *stripped him of* his gear, and sent messengers to the land of the Philistines round about to bear the tidings to *the house of* their fetishes<sup>m</sup> and to their people.

<sup>10</sup> They placed his gear in the house of *Ashtaroth* and fastened *his body to the wall of Beth-shan*.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to his personal bodyguard.

<sup>m</sup> A fetish is an object of supposed magical power possessing the spirit of a pagan god. It is commonly translated “idols.” The CLV is more precise and distinguishes between the different Hebrew terms fetishes and idols.

### 1 Chronicles 10:1–10

<sup>1</sup> *As for* the Philistines, *they made war on* Israel. *And*

the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

<sup>2</sup> The Philistines followed hard after Saul and after his sons, and the Philistines smote Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

<sup>3</sup> Then the fighting was heavy around Saul; the shooters with the bow found him; and he was wounded very severely by the shooters.

<sup>4</sup> So Saul said to his gear-bearer, **“Draw your sword and stab me with it, lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me.”**

Yet his gear-bearer did not comply, for he was very fearful. Then Saul took the sword and fell upon it. <sup>5</sup> When his gear-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell upon the sword and died.

<sup>6</sup> Thus Saul died, and his three sons, on that day, *and all his house*—they died together.

<sup>7</sup> When all the men of Israel who were *in* the vale saw that Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities and fled. So the Philistines came and dwelt in them. <sup>8</sup> It was on the morrow when the Philistines came to strip those slain that they found Saul and his sons, fallen on Mount Gilboa.

<sup>9</sup> *They stripped him and carried* off his head and his gear and sent messengers to the land of the Philistines round about to bear the tidings to

their fetishes and to their people.

<sup>10</sup> They placed his gear in the house of *their elohim* and fastened *his skull in the house of Dagon*.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>n</sup> 1 Samuel 31:10 speaks about Saul’s body, 1 Chronicles 10:10 talks about his head. Also, the Chronicler changed *Ashtaroth* to the generic term for “god” or “gods” to *elohim*. *Beth-Shan* is a town. *House of Dagon*, refers to a temple. Two locations are indicated, two different body parts are indicated.

## Historical Notes

The battle in which King Saul and his sons were killed, and the army of Israel badly defeated, took place in the valley probably below the foothills of Mount Gilboa, in the eastern part of the valley of Jezreel (later known as Har Megiddo or Armageddon). After the initial route of the Israelite army, Saul and his retainers went up the hillside to fight on, but then Saul was wounded by an arrow from an archer. Saul knew his wound was deadly, but he did not want to be captured or linger in death.

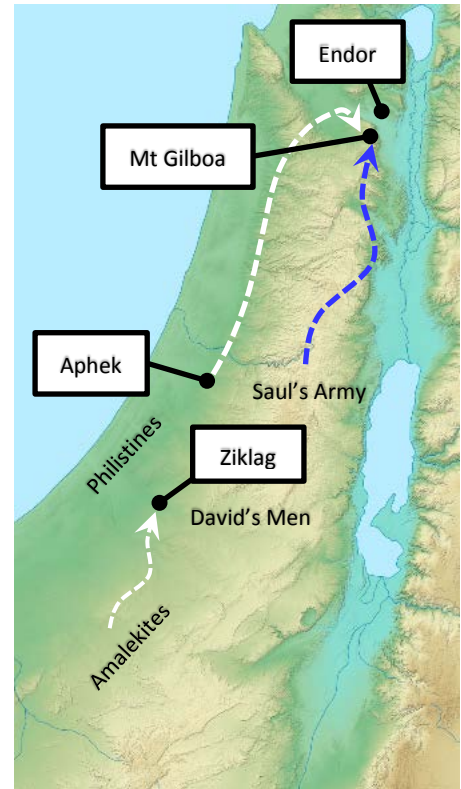
Saul's death was an apparent catastrophe for the tribes of Israel. He had ruled 40 years (Acts 13:21) and he was a trained heroic warrior, as was his heir Jonathan. The Philistines lived in the coastal cities on or near the Eastern Mediterranean seacoast. They gained the upper hand militarily by a strategy of seizing the inland hill country cutting the northern portion of Israel's Promised Land from the southern half. They gained control of both the inland trade route from the east to the south. They already controlled the land trade route to and from Egypt with their cities along the coast. Their strategy succeeded very well, or so it seemed. The Bible texts say the Philistines intended to stay and live in the newly conquered lands, perhaps as residential colonies (1 Samuel 31:7 and 1 Chronicles 10:1–7).

Note the items of Saul distributed by the Philistines:

- Saul's armor ("his gear") was placed in the temple of Ashtaroth,<sup>o</sup> the temple of their *elohim*. Although it is not indicated, these were likely taken back to the cities of Philistia.
- Saul's body was fastened to the wall at Beth Shan (sometimes translated Beth-Shean).<sup>p</sup> Saul's body probably hung by ropes from the wall.
- Saul's skull was fastened in the house of Dagon, possibly on a spear or on a peg on the wall.

The Philistine victory and Saul's suicide literally "cut off the head" of their once charismatic military opponent and his army. They also eliminated important members of his family who could have succeeded Saul to the throne.<sup>q</sup> This Philistine victory effectively "decapitated" much of the leadership of Israel. The Philistines must have hoped and even expected the Israelites would break up into their separate tribes and forget a unified government.

The next section has no parallel in Chronicles:



<sup>o</sup> David did similarly with Goliath's equipment and head (1 Samuel 17:54, 21:9). See my Commentary "[Goliath's Head](#)."

<sup>p</sup> The Canaanite population of Beth-shan and the other cities and towns in the Jezreel Valley were not driven out by the Israelites (Joshua 17:11; Judges 1:27). They were potential and likely allies of the Philistines. See Herzog and Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, p. 93. Many examples of likely Philistine chariots are shown in Egyptian battles with the so-called "Peoples of the Sea." These people are generally thought to be Philistines.

<sup>q</sup> Jonathan was also a mighty warrior whose military exploits are told in 1 Samuel chapters 13 and 14. Here is the narrative of the Concordant Literal Version of 1 Samuel 14:13–15:

**"And Jonathan crawled up on his hands and on his feet, with his gear-bearer behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan when he smote them; and his gear-bearer was putting them to death behind him. This was the first smiting when Jonathan and his gear-bearer smote about twenty men within about half the plowing line in an acre of field. Then a trembling occurred in the Philistine camp, in the field and among their whole force; the detachment and the raiding contingent, they also trembled. The earth was disturbed, and it became a trembling from Elohim [an earthquake occurred]."**



***TEXT: David Learns about King Saul's Death***

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**2 Samuel 1:1–18, CLV**

<sup>1</sup> It came to be after the death of Saul when David himself had returned from smiting Amalek, that David dwelt two days at Ziklag. <sup>2</sup> Now it was on the third day, and here a man was coming from the army camp, from Saul, with his clothes torn and dust from the ground on his head. And so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth and prostrated himself.

<sup>3</sup> David said to him, **“From where do you come?”**

He replied to him, **“I have escaped from the army camp of Israel.”**

<sup>4</sup> Then David asked him, **“What is the matter? Tell me now.”** He replied, **“The people fled from the battle. Moreover, many of the people had fallen and died. Also Saul and his son Jonathan, they are dead.”**

<sup>5</sup> Now David asked the lad who told him this, **“How do you know that Saul is dead, and his son Jonathan too?”**

<sup>6</sup> The lad who told him this replied, **“I happened, yea happened to be on Mount Gilboa when Saul was leaning on his spear, and there the charioteers and the commanders of cavalry<sup>r</sup> followed hard after him. <sup>7</sup> When he faced around behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’ <sup>8</sup> Then he asked me, ‘Who are you? I replied to him, I am an Amalekite.’ <sup>9</sup> And he said to me, ‘Please stand over me and put me to death, for the shroud of anguish has taken hold of me because all my soul is still in me.’ <sup>10</sup> So I stood over him and put him to death, for I knew that he would not remain alive after his fall. Then I took the insignia that was on his head and the armband that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord.”**

<sup>11</sup> David took fast hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. <sup>12</sup> They wailed and lamented and fasted until evening over Saul and over his son Jonathan, over the people of Yahweh and over the house of Israel because they had fallen by the sword.

<sup>13</sup> David asked the lad who told him this, **“From where are you?”** He replied, **“I am the son of a man who was a sojourner, an Amalekite.”** <sup>14</sup> Then David said to him, **“How did you not fear to stretch out your hand to wreck the anointed of Yahweh?”**

<sup>15</sup> So David called one of the young attendants and said, **“Come close, come upon him!”** So he smote him, and he died. <sup>16</sup> David said to him, **“Your blood be on your head! For your own mouth has asserted against you, saying, I myself put to death the anointed of Yahweh.”**

<sup>17</sup> Then David intoned this dirge over Saul and over his son Jonathan, <sup>18</sup> saying, **“to teach the sons of Judah in verity.”**<sup>s</sup> Behold, it is written in the Scroll of the Upright [Jasher].<sup>t</sup> [end text]

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I was shocked when I first read this passage. It seemed that David murdered this young man for no cause. Then I learned more about Israel's encounters with Amalek. The Amalekites were the first enemy to attack Israel after the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 17:8–16). Moses prophesied, **“For a hand is against the throne of Yah; Yahweh has a war with Amalek from generation to generation!”** (Exodus 8:15–16, CLV, also Deuteronomy 25:17–19). Numbers 13:29 (Hebrew) says the Amalekites dwelt in the south, in the Negev.

King Saul gained a great victory over the Amalekites (1 Samuel chapter 15), but he disobeyed YHWH and did not follow Samuel's instructions to kill all the Amalekites. He kept alive Agag, the King of the Amalekites. God did not tolerate this and other acts of acts of disobedience by Saul.

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<sup>r</sup> The Philistines were known to have powerful contingents of chariots and cavalry which are only effective in valleys, particularly for chasing down remnants of an army in flight.

<sup>s</sup> “Verity” means truth, in accord with reality. The Hebrew word is “bow.”

<sup>t</sup> “Upright” is a literal rendering of “Jasher.” This refers to the scroll or the Book of Jasher, an Old Testament apocryphal book. While a supposed “Book of Jasher” exists, this text and lament of King David is not in it. This questions the popular notion of the so-called Book of Jasher. However, we have David's lament here in 2 Samuel chapter 1. Jasher is also mentioned in Joshua 10:13.

**“The word of Yahweh came to Samuel, saying, ‘I regret that I caused Saul to reign as king, for he has turned away from following Me and has not carried out My commands.’ Now Samuel grew angry, and he cried out to Yahweh all that night.”**

• **1 Samuel 15:10–11, CLV**

Samuel was in agony about God’s decision. He seems to have personally liked Saul. The next day Samuel met Saul and King Agag. Being angry, Samuel killed Agag himself. In a memorable and powerful passage:

**“But Samuel said, ‘Does Yahweh have as much delight in ascent offerings and sacrifices As in hearkening to the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to hearken is better than sacrifice, To pay attention than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, Insubordination, like the lawlessness of teraphim.’<sup>u</sup> Because you rejected the command of Yahweh, He has also rejected you from being king over Israel.”**

• **1 Samuel 15:22–23, CLV**

The Chronicler tells us the ultimate reasons for the rejection of Saul is as follows:

### ***TEXT: The Chronicler’s Reason for King Saul’s Death***

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#### **1 Chronicles 10:13–14, CLV**

<sup>13</sup> Thus Saul died for his offense with which he had offended Yahweh concerning the word of Yahweh that he had not kept and also for asking of a medium to make inquiry; <sup>14</sup> and he did not seek after Yahweh. Consequently He put him to death and turned the kingship over to David son of Jesse. [end text]

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While the Philistines were in the north fighting the Israelites, the Amalekites attacked the Philistine areas and then David’s city of Ziklag in southern Judah. David and his warriors were returning from being dismissed by the Philistines as potential turncoats (1 Samuel 29:11). When David returned to Ziklag, the city had been burned down and the women and children kidnapped (1 Samuel chapter 30).

**“So David rose early, he and his men, to go in the morning and return to the land of the Philistines, while the Philistines went up to fight Israel [the battle of Mt. Gilboa]. It was on the third day that David and his men came to Ziklag.**

**As for the Amalakite, they had ransacked the Negeb and Ziklag. They had smitten Ziklag and burned it with fire. They had taken captive the women and all who were in it, from the smallest unto the greatest. They had not put anyone to death; rather they had driven them along and had gone their way.”**

• **1 Samuel 29:11–30:2, CLV**

Besides David’s grief for his own wives, his men nearly stoned David for leaving their loved ones undefended. After seeking God’s advice, David and his men sought and found the Amalekites who did this deed. After a long fight, David and his men were victorious. All Amalekites were killed except for 400 who escaped on camels. **“Then David rescued all that Amalek had taken. Even his two wives David rescued”** (1 Samuel 30:18). They also captured the Amalekites plunder stolen in raids of other communities. The Amalekite actions seemed similar to what David and his men did to the Philistines and Amalekites, but David killed all his victims (1 Samuel 27:7–12).

After David’s encounter with the Amalekites in 1 Samuel chapter 30, the texts tell in 1 Samuel chapter 31 and 1 Chronicles chapter 10 about the death of Saul. Then comes 2 Samuel 1:1–18, when, three days after David returned to Ziklag with his men and their families, David is told by the Amalekite young man about Saul’s death. The young man credited himself for killing the injured Saul. The boy took the insignia

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<sup>u</sup> Teraphim are small human-shaped objects or idols used for personal worship. Saul’s insubordination was like idol worship.

from his head and the armband from his arm, and brought them to David as proof that Saul was dead (2 Samuel 1:10). David in anger had him killed. Reread that passage, and it will be more understandable.

We cannot know whether the young man was lying regarding him personally killing King Saul. If so, his story could fit into the narrative of Saul's suicide. Perhaps Saul did not die immediately after he fell on his sword. We can only know what he reports to us, not the truth of it. Apparently David believed him.

Lastly, a textual problem. Second Samuel 1:17–18 introduces a dirge-lament. The translation “**in verity**” (verse 17) is disputed, but the Hebrew is clear. It means “bow” (used later in verse 22). This may designate the title of the lament as “The Song of the Bow,” because Jonathan used the bow (1 Samuel 20:36–37), gave David his personal bow (1 Samuel 18:4), and a bow hastened the deaths of Saul and probably Jonathan.

Read David's song lamenting Saul and Jonathan's deaths. The emotions originate from deep within David and flow in poetic form, and perhaps originally set to music:

**TEXT: *David's Lament about Saul's Death***

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**2 Samuel 1:19–27, CLV**

- <sup>19</sup> Your stateliness, O Israel,  
     Was wounded to death on your high-places;  
     How **the masters of war** have fallen!
- <sup>20</sup> Do not tell it in Gath,  
     Do not bear the tidings in the streets of Ashkelon,  
     Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,  
     Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised be joyous.
- <sup>21</sup> O hills of Gilboa, Let there be no night mist,  
     Let there be no rain on you,  
     And no fields of heave offerings,  
     For there the shield of **the masters of war** was loathed,  
     The shield of Saul, no longer anointed with oil.
- <sup>22</sup> From the blood of those wounded to death,  
     From the fat of **the masters of war**,  
     Jonathan's bow, it was not turned away back;  
     And Saul's sword, it did not return empty.
- <sup>23</sup> Saul and Jonathan,  
     beloved and pleasant in their lives,  
     In their death they were not parted.  
     They were fleeter than vultures;  
     They were more masterful than lions.
- <sup>24</sup> Daughters of Israel, lament over Saul,  
     Who clothed you in scarlet, with fineries,  
     Who set up ornaments of gold upon your clothing.
- <sup>25</sup> How **the masters of war** have fallen  
     in the midst of the battle!  
     O Jonathan, wounded to death on your high-places!
- <sup>26</sup> Distressed am I over you, my brother Jonathan.  
     You have been very pleasant to me.  
     Your love was marvelous for me,  
     More than the love from women.
- <sup>27</sup> How **the masters of war** have fallen!  
     The weapons of war have perished!

[end text]

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The first thing noticeable in this lament, this dirge-lamentation song of David, is that it is not included in the Book of Psalms. It is only in Second Samuel. There are five mentions of Saul in the Davidic psalms, and all of them deal with God rescuing David at various times from the hands of Saul who was trying to kill him (Psalm 18:1, 52:1, 54:1, 57:1, and 59:1).

It begins with David confirming that Saul died on the high places of Mt. Gilboa (verses 19, 21). This was a major emotional loss for David. The king of his youth had died, even with all his faults, David praised his fallen ruler. At the end he mentions his good friend Jonathan also died, which added to David's deep sense of loss. It also provided effective propaganda to unify the tribes (Herzog and Gichon, *Battles*, p. 94).

The structure of this lament psalm is **"How the masters of war have fallen!"** (verses 19, 25, 27). The phrase **"masters of war"** occurs in two other verses, 21 and 22. This shows how great a loss Israel has suffered in David's understanding. A "master of war" has proficiency in all combat weapons. David knows the Philistine women will widely sing and celebrate this triumph (verse 20), regardless of how hard the **"masters of war"** have fought. Their shields are battered (verse 21) as Saul and Jonathan died together, having **"fallen in the midst of the battle"** (verse 25):

**"The Philistines followed hard after Saul and after his sons, and the Philistines smote Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul."**

• 1 Samuel 31:2

The Philistines singled out Saul and his sons in the combat. The three sons were killed, perhaps near the same time. Watching, Saul was wounded with an arrow and withdrew in despair, knowing he would die.

Much has been said about David loving Jonathan **"Your love was marvelous for me, more than the love from women"** (verse 26, and vice versa). The expression is similar in other translations. The word "love" is the same word used for God's love of Israel, and not a sexual love as some have tried to show. Other expressions are stated and acted upon in 1 Samuel 18:1–4, 19:2, 20:17, 41, and 23:16. What most people fail to consider is that the "love" they had for each other is the same word as God's "love" for his people. Where the Greek Septuagint corresponds to the Hebrew text, the base word is *agape*, again referring to divine love.

With Saul dead, David queries of YHWH and is crowned king of Judah.

## **TEXT: David Crowned King of Judah, Saul Buried**

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### **2 Samuel 2:1–7, CLV**

<sup>1</sup> It was afterward that David inquired of Yahweh, saying, **"Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?"** Yahweh replied to him, **"Go up!"** Then David asked, **"Whither [where] shall I go up?"** He answered, **"To Hebron."** <sup>2</sup> So David went up there, along with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite, and Abigail, the former wife of Nabal the Carmelite. <sup>3</sup> As for his men who were with him, David brought up each man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

<sup>4</sup> Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David as king over the house of Judah. When they told David, saying, **"It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who entombed Saul,"** <sup>5</sup> then David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them,

**"May you be blessed by Yahweh because you showed this kindness to your lord, to Saul, when you entombed him and his son Jonathan."** <sup>v 6</sup> **Therefore may Yahweh show you benignity [hesed, loving kindness] and faithfulness; and I too, I shall repay you this goodness because you have done this loyal deed.** <sup>7</sup> **Now let your hands be steadfast, be sons of valor, for your lord Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me as king over them."** [end text]

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<sup>v</sup> This underlined section is from the Greek Septuagint, not from the Hebrew.

## David's Next Move

David asked YHWH what he should do, not knowing God's desires. Years before, with his family around him, David was anointed King by Samuel. Therefore, trusting God and mindful of his anointing, David knew he was to become king, but considering Saul's troubled reign, he did not want to make mistakes. Furthermore, over what kingdom was he anointed to rule? Was it to be all Israel or just Judah?

**“So he sent and had him come; he was ruddy, with lovely eyes and of good appearance. And Yahweh said, ‘Rise and anoint him, for this is he.’ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of Yahweh prospered on David from that day onward. Then Samuel rose and went to Ramah.**

**As for the spirit of Yahweh, it had withdrawn from Saul, and an evil spirit from Yahweh frightened him.”**

• 1 Samuel 16:12–14, CLV

God's Spirit of anointing (different from the Holy Spirit resident within believers today, 1 Corinthians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 1:22, 6:6) withdrew from Saul, and it was replaced with an evil spirit from YHWH which caused Saul fright. Saul disobeyed and God punished him. **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God [for judgment]”** (Hebrews 10:31, KJV).

The entire group, David and his two wives along with his warriors and their families, moved from Ziklag to the “cities,” plural, of Hebron, which was to be David's capital for 7½ years (2 Samuel 2:11). The total reigns for the first three kings show a pattern. The reigns are successive:

Saul reigned	40 years	Acts 13:21
David reigned	40 years	2 Samuel 5:4–5; 1 Kings 2:11; 1 Chronicles 29:27
Solomon reigned	40 years	1 Kings 11:42; 1 Chronicles 9:30

How did the apostle Paul know the length of Saul's reign? We cannot know, but he was definite. Perhaps he learned from the same information Josephus had:

**“Now Saul, when he had reigned eighteen years while Samuel was alive, and after his death two [and twenty]<sup>w</sup>, ended his life in this manner.”**

• Antiquities of the Jews 6:378

When the men of Judah came to David, they not only anointed him but also told him the story about the dangerous deed performed by the men of the city of Jabesh-gilead. They risked their lives to go and seek out the body of Saul (minus his head and armor) and the body of Jonathan (according to the LXX) from the battlefield. After all, some of the Philistines were still in the area, and the men of Jabesh-gilead had to go carefully past Beth-shan, a Canaanite allied city.

David, now King of Judah, was impressed with their courage, calling them **“sons of valor.”** He requested God's blessing be upon them. He also promised that he would reward them for their loyalty. Why did the men of Jabesh-gilead do this deed? After all, Jabesh-gilead is east of the Jordan River. Why did they risk encountering enemies?

The answer is found in 1 Samuel 11:1–11. The Ammonites under Nahash<sup>x</sup> attacked and besieged Jabesh-gilead. The inhabitants asked for mercy and requested a covenant be made so Jabesh-gilead would be subservient to Nahash. This usually means they would pay tribute to the Ammonites. Nahash agreed with the condition all males gouge out their right eyes. Only then would he covenant with them. They requested

<sup>w</sup> Some Josephus manuscripts have “two” and some have “twenty-two” for the number of years before and after Samuel in *Antiquities* 6:378 while *Antiquities* 10:143 has a total reign for Saul of 20 years, both from Loeb edition.

<sup>x</sup> His name is the same as the description of Satan in the Garden: *nahash*, which means serpent. It is not an ordinary serpent, but a glorious serpent. The word *nahash* occurs twice in conjunction with *leviathan* in Isaiah 27:1. It is not an ordinary snake.

seven days to discuss the horrific proposal, and to find someone to save them. God motivated King Saul to mount a rescue. Saul sacrificed to YHWH, gathered an army, and marched to Jabesh-gilead. Nahash and his Ammonite army were defeated in a battle lasting from morning to around noon. Jabesh-gilead was rescued. This was the debt Jabesh-gilead owed Saul and why they risked much to retrieve his body from his enemies.

It was unusual for the men of Jabesh-gilead to burn Saul's body and the bodies of his sons, because burial is the usual method, but no criticism is implied in the text and the author of 2 Samuel, and David took no notice of the cremation so far as we know.

Next, we see that Saul still had living relatives:

### ***TEXT: Ishbosheth Made King of Israel***

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#### **2 Samuel 2:8–11**

<sup>8</sup> As for Abner son of Ner, chief of the military host that Saul had, he had taken Ishbosheth son of Saul and had transferred him from the army camp<sup>y</sup> to Mahanaim. <sup>9</sup> There he made him king over Gilead and over Asher, over Jezreel and over Ephraim and over Benjamin, **over all of Israel**.<sup>z 10</sup> Ishbosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years.

The house of Judah however, they were followers of David. <sup>11</sup> The number of days that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months. **[end text]**

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Abner was a military commander of excellent character and ability. Without going into detail, the text indicates Abner was able to stabilize the military situation in the area east, west, and north of the area around Mount Gilboa where the Israelite army was badly defeated and Saul killed.

Abner moved Ishbosheth to the town of "Mahanaim," which means "two camps," It is east of the Jordan River near where Jacob had his encounter with the angels. Abner was also a kingmaker, as the text says "**he made him** [Ishbosheth] **king over ...**," then various areas are named both east and west of the Jordan River. The text does not say if he was anointed. Although Abner made him king, the people must have also acclaimed him king as Saul's closest heir.

Apparently, Abner gained control over the territory and the Canaanite population in such places as Bethshan and the larger valley area south and west of the Sea of Galilee. The bulk of the Philistine army must have returned to the coastal cities and Abner overcame the garrisons. Eventually Abner was able to secure sovereignty for Ishbosheth, as verse 9 says, "**over all Israel.**"

Then verses 10–11 tell us Judah, as opposed to the northern tribes of Israel, followed and gave their allegiance to David as King. Then it tells the length of his reign as king of Judah alone with his capital at Hebron.

We will find out in the next passage that wars persisted. The northern tribes under Ishbosheth continued to deal with the Philistines in the Jezreel valley and in the surrounding area. "**A long war between the house of Saul and the house of David**" began which lasts for two years (2 Samuel 3:1). Once Abner died, King Ishbosheth could not hold power against the juggernaut called David. When David became king over united Israel as Saul had been, problems arose again with the Philistines, as described later in 2 Samuel 5:17–25.

David Sielaff, August 2014

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<sup>y</sup> This is an addition from the Greek Septuagint translation. Without it the verse makes little sense. The Greek word denotes a fortress or an army camp.

<sup>z</sup> They claimed sovereignty and rule over all the 10 northern tribes.