**September 29 – 1 Samuel 13-31**

**Outline:**

1 Samuel 13:1 Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice1 Samuel 13:15 Preparations for Battle1 Samuel 13:23 Jonathan Surprises and Routs the Philistines1 Samuel 14:24 Saul's Rash Oath1 Samuel 14:36 Jonathan in Danger of Death1 Samuel 14:47 Saul's Continuing Wars1 Samuel 15:1 Saul Defeats the Amalekites 1 Samuel 15:10 Saul Rejected as King1 Samuel 16:1 David Anointed as King1 Samuel 16:14 David Plays the Lyre for Saul1 Samuel 17:1 David and Goliath1 Samuel 18:1 Jonathan's Covenant with David1 Samuel 18:10 Saul Tries to Kill David1 Samuel 18:17 David Marries Michal1 Samuel 19:1 Jonathan Intercedes for David1 Samuel 19:8 Michal Helps David Escape from Saul1 Samuel 19:18 David Joins Samuel in Ramah1 Samuel 20:1 The Friendship of David and Jonathan1 Samuel 21:1 David and the Holy Bread1 Samuel 21:10 David Flees to Gath1 Samuel 22:1 David and His Followers at Adullam1 Samuel 22:6 Saul Slaughters the Priests at Nob1 Samuel 23:1 David Saves the City of Keilah1 Samuel 23:15 David Eludes Saul in the Wilderness1 Samuel 24:1 David Spares Saul's Life1 Samuel 25:1 Death of Samuel1 Samuel 25:2 David and the Wife of Nabal1 Samuel 26:1 David Spares Saul's Life a Second Time1 Samuel 27:1 David Serves King Achish of Gath1 Samuel 28:3 Saul Consults a Medium1 Samuel 29:1 The Philistines Reject David1 Samuel 30:1 David Avenges the Destruction of Ziklag1 Samuel 31:1 The Death of Saul and His Sons

**Notes from Enterthebible.org**

**A. God Rejects Saul as King (13:1-15:35)**
Saul is rejected as king for disobedience at the beginning and end of this segment. In between, Saul's behavior is contrasted with that of Jonathan, his son.

**B. Introduction to David (16:1-17:58)**
David's anointing by Samuel introduces his status as God's chosen one. His first encounter with Saul at court and his defeat of Goliath in single combat foreshadow his success.

**C. David and Jonathan (18:1-4)**
David's friendship with Jonathan results in Jonathan's symbolically granting David the right of succession.

**D. Saul Becomes Jealous of David (18:5-16)**
Saul continues to decline while David succeeds. David's successes make Saul jealous and he plots to kill his young rival.

**E. David Marries Michal (18:17-30)**
Saul continues in his attempts to kill David, this time by offering him each of his daughters in exchange for impossible acts of bravery. When David succeeds, Saul begins to fear that all is lost.

**F. Saul Pursues David (19:1-28:2)**
Throughout these ten chapters, David--thanks to the efforts of his wife Michal, Samuel, Jonathan, Ahimelech, a priest at Nob, and Nabal's wife--repeatedly escapes from Saul's frantic attempts to have him killed. David twice spares the life of Saul before joining forces with the Philistines.

**G. Saul's Last Days (28:3-31:13)**
The end of Saul's tragic life finds him devoid of God's direction, seeking help through the medium at Endor. In the end, with his defeat by the Philistines at hand, Saul commits suicide, falling on his own sword.

**NOTES & ANALYSIS**

**1 Samuel 13:1-15:35 Overview (segments from www.enterthebible.org)**

Saul's victories in war (13:15b-14:23; 14:47-52) secured his kingdom and gave the impression that the new institution of kingship might work out after all. But just as Saul's handsome appearance hid a troubled and depressed soul, so his outward achievements did little to conceal the inner problems of his reign:

* Saul's impatient usurpation of Samuel's priestly role (13:8-14) would result in God's future selections based upon the heart (16:7) and indicates a lack of proper respect for worship.
* Saul's foolish oath (14:24-46) against eating before battle would have resulted in the death of his son, Jonathan, had the people not prevented Saul from following through, and indicates a lack of judgment.
* Saul's failure to follow God's instructions concerning the "ban" (15:1-33) is the most serious disobedience and results in Samuel's caustic rebuke: "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king" (15:23).

The section ends with the mournful note that “the Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.”(15:35) Saul will remain in the story for the rest of 1 Samuel, but the focus will shift to David beginning with Chapter 16.

**Read 1 Samuel 16:1-23**

What is the contrast between Saul and David?

What do you think the “evil spirit” means in this passage?

Read also 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 - what does those verses add to this passage?

**ANALYSIS**

Just what this "evil spirit" sent by God to "torment" (better: "terrify") Saul is, remains in obscurity. There is no lack of educated guesses, however, which usually revolve around some form of paranoia, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or depression. Suffice it to say that Saul was ill.

Theologically speaking, we are on slightly firmer ground. For example, the word "evil," which here modifies "spirit" (vv. 14, 23), does not necessarily denote "wicked, demonic, or hellish." Saul's "tormentor" may be as innocuous as a "bad mood" or a "gloomy disposition." It definitely has negative connotations, but it need not be supernatural and certainly is not satanic at this time in Israel's religious development.

Besides the irrecoverable nature of Saul's mental health, two points stand out in this passage:

* Saul's suffering is sent by the Lord (v. 14). However, this is not to be seen as vindictive, since *all*things beyond human control come from God in Israel's conception of God's all-embracing will.
* Together with verse 13, verse 14 is the theological pivot point of 1 Samuel. The rest of the narrative will depict the contrast between Saul and David. Just as David received the spirit of the Lord in verse 13, now we see Saul experiencing the loss of that spirit and the beginnings of the devastating effects of the "evil spirit" that will continue to plague him. God has abandoned Saul, leaving him bereft of the spirit; his kingship is over, and he will continue to decline without these two necessary aspects of rule, even as David, God's chosen and the recipient of the spirit, will continue his rise to the throne of Israel.

# Listen to 1 Samuel 17:1-49 – David and Goliath

# How can a boy defeat a giant? (v45)

# What other questions or ideas does this story prompt for you?

# 1 Samuel 17:57-20:42 – Saul Becomes Jealous of David

# Read 1 Samuel 18:17-30

# ANALYSIS

Poor Saul. No matter what he does, David continues to enjoy unparalleled success while Saul's life and mental state continue to decline into ever-increasing darkness. Following David's success against "the Philistine," that is, against Goliath in chapter 17, the women praise David with the words, "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (18:7). Recent investigations of Hebrew poetry have determined that the poetic element consists in a "that is true, and what's more, this is also true" approach.

David's success caused Saul to "eye" him with suspicion "from that day on" (18:5-9). This chronological reference signals a major literary break in the narrative and hints at the growing rift between Saul and David that will continue. As Saul sinks deeper into his depression, even his own family members throw their support to David, who marries Saul's daughter, Michal (18:17-30). There follows a series of five episodes designed to drive home the point that David's only choice is to flee from a Saul blinded by jealousy:

* 19:1-7. When Saul explicitly informs Jonathan of his intention to kill David, Jonathan mediates between the antagonists.
* 19:8-10. Saul's second attempt to kill David fails when David escapes Saul's spear.
* 19:11-17. Saul's third attempt to kill David is foiled when Michal deceives her father with an "idol" placed in David's bed after David's escape through the window.
* 19:18-24. Saul's fourth attempt to kill David is thwarted by Samuel in the only meeting of these three.
* 20:1-42. This long account shows how Jonathan relinquished his claim to the throne (v. 13). His signal to David warns David of Saul's evil intent so that David can flee yet again. As did Michal, his sister, Jonathan deceives his father to save his friend.

**Listen to 1 Samuel 24:1-26:25 – David’s Respect for the Lord’s Anointed**

**ANALYSIS**

Chapters 24 and 26 are virtually identical in their plot. Both begin with Saul learning of David's hideout (24:1; 26:1); narrate David's refusal to harm Saul, "the LORD's anointed" (24:6, 10; 26:11); and conclude with Saul's recognition that David is to be the next king (24:17-22; 26:21, 25). As such, they frame chapter 25, which relates the death of Samuel (v. 1).

All three stories portray David's nobility and magnanimous nature. This is clearly indicated in the sparing of Saul's life, not once but twice. The story of foolish Nabal ("fool" in Hebrew) and his clever wife Abigail also contributes to this impression.

* David understandably asks for provisions in return for the protection he has afforded the wealthy Nabal and his shepherds (25:2-8).
* Nabal, true to his name, refuses, betraying a selfish and ungrateful nature (vv. 9-11).
* Upon hearing Nabal's response, David prepared to annihilate every male in Nabal's household (vv. 12-13, 21-22).
* Fortunately, Abigail, Nabal's clever wife, stepped in to prevent David's reckless show of force against her foolish husband: first by arranging a meeting (vv. 18-20) and then, in a magnificent speech, convincing David to relent by reminding him that since the Lord has previously kept David from incurring bloodguilt (by sparing Saul?), it would be foolish to jeopardize his future position as "prince over Israel" by acting recklessly now (vv. 23-31).
* Later, Abigail told her husband what she had done and "his heart died within him"; ten days later, "the LORD struck Nabal, and he died" (vv. 33-38). The story ends with David's courting of, and marriage to, Abigail (vv. 39-42).

# Read: 1 Samuel 28:3-25 – Saul Consults a Medium

## SUMMARY

Saul consults a medium at Endor who conjures up the ghost of Samuel. When Samuel announces Saul's death and the defeat of Israel, Saul is terror-stricken.

## ANALYSIS

This is a strange and troubling text. Modern readers wonder about the occult aspects of Saul's séance. This is especially so because Saul himself had banished all wizards and mediums from the land (vv. 3, 9) in obedience to such texts as Deuteronomy 18:10-11. Of course, the reason Saul resorts to this unusual (and forbidden) practice is that he has exhausted all other means of determining what he is to do. God has abandoned him and he is frantic.

In addition to the information that Saul had banished all "mediums and wizards," the narrator's introduction also reminds us that "Samuel had died" (v. 3). It is ironic that Saul attempts to dabble in the dark arts in light of these facts. Further irony appears in the willingness of the medium to obey Saul's prohibition of what Saul is asking her to do (v. 9), as well as her concern for Saul's physicalwell-being, demonstrated by her serving Saul what would become his last meal (vv. 21-24).

But the most significant aspect of this text is found in the center: Samuel's announcement of Saul's imminent demise and that the routing of Israel will be fulfilled on Mount Gilboa (see chapter 31). More important, Samuel's announcement terrifies Saul (vv. 15-20). The medium may be able to minister to Saul's physical needs but, abandoned by God, he is at the mercy of his distraught spiritual situation.

# 1 Samuel 31:1-13 – The Death of Saul

## ANALYSIS

First Samuel ends on a tragic note. Saul, who had been anointed by Samuel to defend Israel from the Philistine incursion (9:16), now dies by his own hand at the end of a Philistine victory that will annex most of Saul's kingdom. Throughout 1 Samuel, David's successes have been contrasted with Saul's defeats. This pervasive theme climaxes in the parallel between chapter 30, where David's dramatic victory over the Amalekites apart from Saul and his armies starkly contrasts with Saul's miserable defeat in chapter 31 at the same time. Adding to the tragedy is the realization that this has come about in fulfillment of Samuel's announcement, when Saul consulted the dead prophet through the medium at Endor, thatGodwould deliver Israel into the hands of the Philistines (28:19). Another parallel is found in the decapitation of Saul by the Philistines (31:9) and David's decapitation of Goliath, the Philistine giant (17:51). Even Saul's suicide, often taken as a courageous act to preserve the honor of Israel, arises out of fear of being abused by the Philistines, as Samson had been (Judges 16:21, 25, 28-30).