

THE FIRST KINGS OF ISRAEL

“In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

Why do the children of Israel want a king?

Under the leadership of **Samuel**, the last of the Judges, various tribes (esp. Judah, Benjamin, & Ephraim) are being overwhelmed by the Philistines. The line of charismatically inspired leaders seems to have failed. The people say Samuel: “You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.”

What are the pros and cons of kingship?

Pro: Unity – especially against a foreign enemy
 Law & Order
 A sense of security

Con: Loss of freedom

Here are the cons according to Samuel:

These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will **take** your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will **take** your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will **take** the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will **take** one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will **take** your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will **take** one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day. (1 Samuel 8:11-18)

What do we give up for the sake of security?

In about 1020 B.C.E., **Saul**, from the tribe of Benjamin, was anointed the first King of Israel.

Almost before he began, he was rejected by Yahweh, and another man, “after [Yahweh’s] own heart” (13:14) was anointed in his stead.

Why did Yahweh (Samuel?) reject Saul?

Nonetheless, Saul continued to reign for about 20 years, haunted by madness and by an increasing awareness that his line would die out and

David would succeed him.

Why does Yahweh prefer David to Saul?

David reigned from about 1000 to 961, nearly forty years. But his reign was undermined by “trouble out of [his] own house” (2 Samuel 12:11).

What was the trouble?

In 961, David was succeeded by his son,

Solomon. But that is a story for next time.