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# Saul & Samuel (1 Samuel 3-15)

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# Reflection Paper: Your opportunity to reflect & articulate what you have gained from studying the Old Testament.



**Alternative Prompt:** Identify and explain how specific stories, ideas, or methods of study from our Old Testament course of study have increased your ability to live or inspired you to live each aspect of the BYU aims: spiritually strengthening, intellectually enlarging, character building, leading to lifelong learning and service.

What have I gained by studying the Old Testament, particular and general? The successful reflection paper will analyze first what you will take-away from the course's study of the Old Testament in general. This may include ways of looking at scripture, individuals, context, or moral/ethical teachings. Think in terms of major concepts that have altered your perception of the Old Testament, scripture, Yahweh, lived religion. The paper will then move to focus on a specific individual or story and what you specifically gained through a study of that individual or story. **The finished assignment will be 3 double-spaced pages, Times New Roman 12 pt font 1 inch margins.**

# Structure of Samuel

- **Samuel (1 Sam. 1–12)** – the last judge who institutes the monarchy at the end of his life
- **Rise and Fall of Saul (1 Sam 13–31)** – the first, problematic king
- **Rise and Decline of David (2 Samuel)** – the glorious king, but whose later sins obscure his triumphs
- **The Rise of David (1:1–10:19)**
  - David Established as King (1:1–5:6)
  - David's Consolidation of the Kingdom (5:6–6:23)
  - The Davidic Covenant (7:1–29)
  - David's Conquests for & Administration of the Kingdom (8:1–10:19)
- **The Decline of David (11:1–24:25)**

1&2 Samuel originally constituted a single book in the Hebrew Bible. The division into two separate books probably occurred when the book of Samuel was translated into Greek, which necessitated putting the book on two scrolls instead of one.

## Crises at the beginning of the book of Samuel

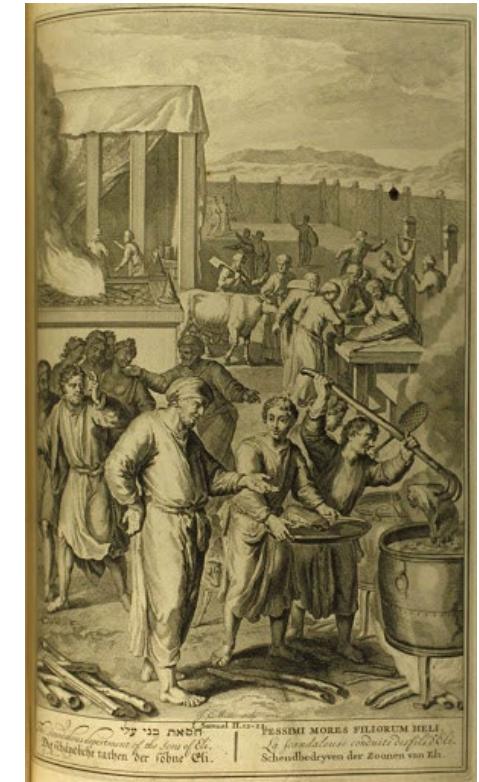
First Samuel opens with the story of Samuel's birth to Hannah and her dedication of her son to the service of Yahweh at Shiloh. Shiloh appears to have been the most important shrine prior to the monarchy, and the prophet Jeremiah will refer to it as the place where Yahweh first caused his name to dwell (Jer 7:12). Following the birth of Samuel, a series of crises are revealed. The first is a religious crisis. The priest Eli, also described as a judge but perhaps only in order to fit him into the prevailing pattern of leadership is said to be aging, and his sons are corrupt. As a result, the word of Yahweh is said to be rare in those days (1 Sam 3:1). The second crisis regards the question of political succession. First Sam 2:12-17 reports that Eli's two sons are clearly unworthy and dissolute: They dishonor the sacrifices and, according to one reading, lie with women at the door of the shrine. Yahweh says he will cut off the power of Eli's house, his two sons will die in one day, and Yahweh will raise up a faithful priest—but in the meantime, no leader is apparent. The third crisis is military. In Judges 4-7, the Israelites suffer a defeat at the hands of the Philistines, Eli's two sons are indeed killed, the ark of Yahweh is captured, and the news of these events causes Eli's sudden demise.

-Christine Hayes, Introduction to the Bible 203-204

The purpose of the books of Samuel is to tell the story of the establishment of the kingship covenant with David. God's plan was to have an earthly king who would give a good example of what God's kingship was like. David is shown to be the legitimate choice of God, but also is shown to have been at time an obstacle rather than an instrument of God's rule  
Hill & Walton, Survey of the Old Testament, 257

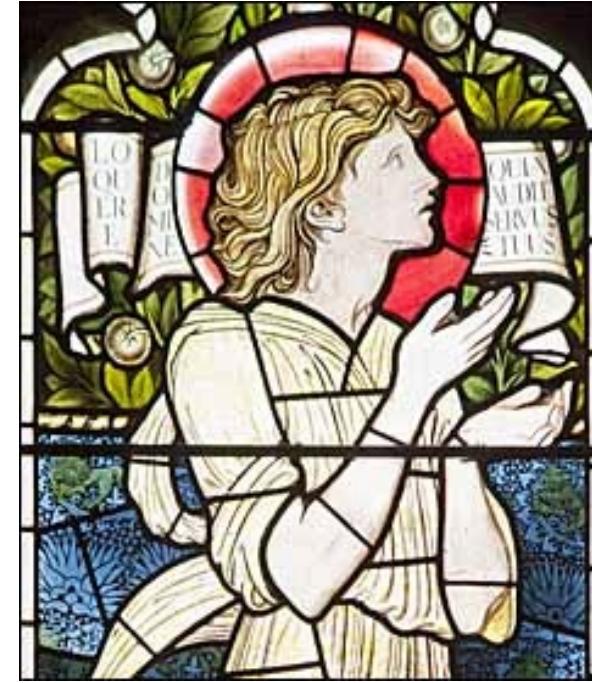
# Eli's downfall and Samuel's Call (2:11-4:22)

- **Corruption of the house of Eli (2:11-36)**
  - Eli's Sons and the Oracle against his house: "I will cut off your strength of your ancestor's family, so that no one in your family will live to an old age."
  - "a faithful priest" refers to **Zadok**, the royal high priest under David & Solomon
- **Samuel hears the Lord's call at Shiloh (3:1-21)**
  - "And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision."
  - Samuel slept near the Ark of the Covenant
  - "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words drop to the ground . . . Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD" (3:19-21)
- **Prophecy against Eli's house fulfilled**
  - Eli's sons are killed in the battle with the Philistines
  - Eli himself dies when he hears that the Ark has been taken
- The loss of the Ark is also symbolic of **the priesthood and presence of God being removed from Shiloh**



# Samuel hears the Lord's call at Shiloh (3:1–3:21)

“And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men . . . And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And **the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision** . . . And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that **Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord**. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.”(1 Sam 2:26, 3:1, 19–21; cf. Luke 2:52)



*4 That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.  
10 And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.*

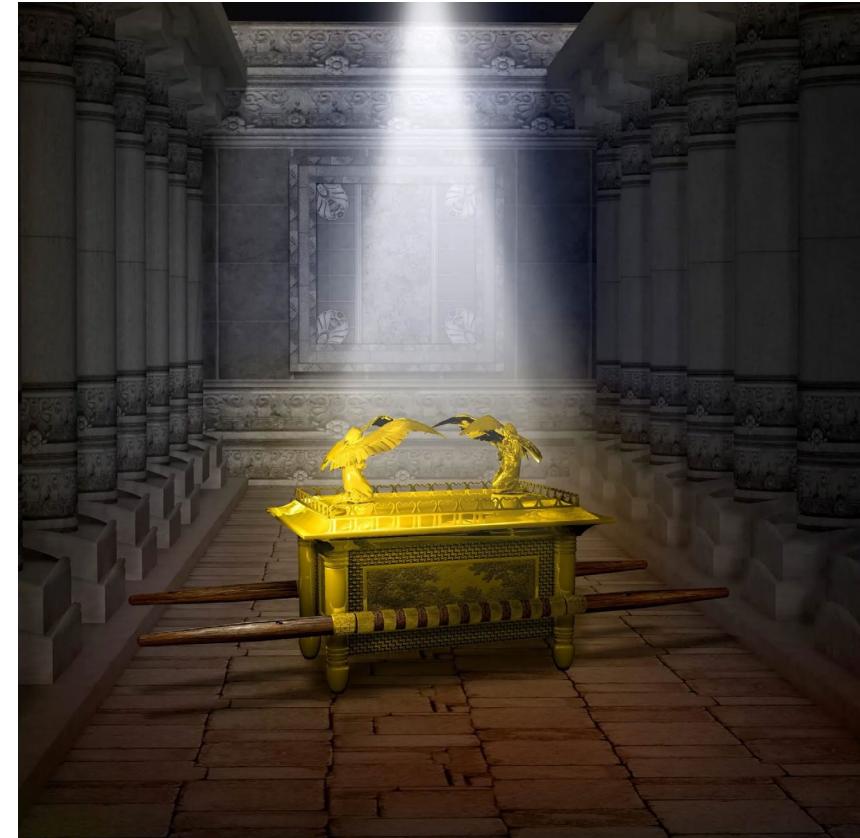
# How do we cherish the word of the Lord?

I fear that many of us rush about from day to day taking for granted the holy scriptures. We scramble to honor appointments with physicians, lawyers, and businessmen. Yet we think nothing of postponing interviews with Deity—postponing scripture study. Little wonder we develop anemic souls and lose our direction in living. How much better it would be if we planned and held sacred fifteen or twenty minutes a day for reading the scriptures. Such interviews with Deity would help us recognize his voice and enable us to receive guidance in all of our affairs. We must look to God through the scriptures. -Elder Carlos E. Asay, Ensign, Nov. 1978

I hope you will get your copy of the [Ensign or Liahona] and underline the pertinent thoughts and keep it with you for continual reference. No text or volume outside the standard works of the Church should have such a prominent place on your personal library shelves—not for their rhetorical excellence or eloquence of delivery, but for the concepts which point the way to eternal life. (President Spencer W. Kimball, In the World but Not of It, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [May 14, 1968], 2–3).

# Downfall of Eli's House (4:1-22)

- Prophecy against Eli's house fulfilled
  - Eli's sons bring the ark to the battlefield because Israel thinks it will help them defeat the Philistines
  - Eli's sons are killed in the battle with the Philistines
  - Eli himself dies when he hears that the Ark has been taken
- The loss of the Ark is also symbolic of **the priesthood and presence of God being removed from Shiloh**
  - The Lord's purpose in permitting the capture of the ark is to remove it from Shiloh, whose priesthood he has just condemned.



# Israel and the Ark of the Covenant (5:1-7:17)

- The Philistines take the ark to their cities
  - Taking over the god of a land was symbolic of capturing the land
  - They place the Ark before Dagon, their god, who falls before YHWH with his hands & head cut off
  - The Philistines are struck with plagues in each city where the ark is housed, so they pass it from city until city pass before finally accepting that they need to send it back to Israel. The Lord does slay Israel's enemies on his terms.



With Yahweh's demonstration of his power over the idol of Dagon and also his plague on the Philistine people, it became clear that the Lord had not been overpowered, but had rejected and therefore abandoned the Israelites. The theme of divine abandonment is well-known in the ancient Near East. This self-imposed exile marked a distinct break between the period of the judges and the monarchy. The account of the return of the ark from exile uses language that is reminiscent of the exodus. It is of theological interest that the ark's temporary housing continued throughout all of Saul's reign and that the ark was not officially brought back into prominence until David brought it to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). This suggests that both Samuel and Saul were transitional figures." (Hill & Walton 261)

# Israel and the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 5:1-7:17)

This story illustrates three major points about YHWH

- 1. He cannot be “used” for Israel’s benefit as they tried to do
- 2. He is more powerful than other gods even in their own “territory”
- 3. The Israelites need to respect YHWH



The scene at the temple of Dagon attested that the Lord God of Israel had the power to take care of himself. The message for Israel was that if they suffered defeat at the hands of their enemies, it was due to their own unrighteousness, not the powerlessness of their God.

# Israel's First Monarchy (8:1–22)

- **Samuel as Judge** (7:1–17)
  - Return to the Samuel story with Samuel calling the people back to the worship of YHWH and leads them as a righteous religious and military figure. He is priest, prophet, and judge. Samuel recalls Moses—also priest, judge, and prophet—the idealized leader of early Israel when Yahweh was its king
- **Israel Demands a King** (8:1–9)
  - Israel fears for the transition of leadership after Samuel, and demands to have a king like their surrounding neighbors. Their demand is offensive to Samuel and the LORD.
    - Samuel's sons, like Eli's, are not trusted by the people
    - **YHWH was supposed to be King in Israel, so Israel is here rejecting YHWH as king**
    - **“they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them”**
- **Samuel Warns the People of the Dangers of a King** (8:10–18)
  - a king will tax them heavily, draft their children, and not rule in righteousness, but Israel refuses to listen
- **Israel’s Request for a King is Granted** (8:19–22)

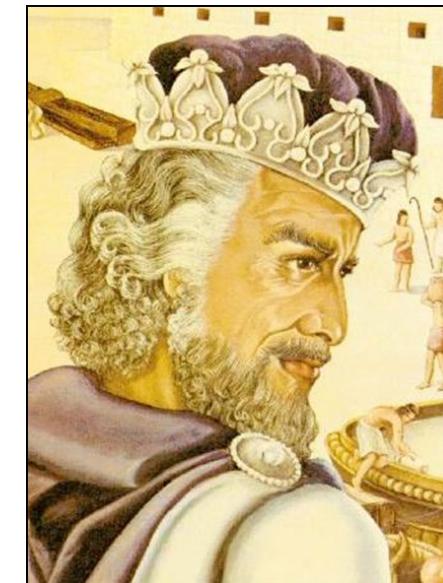
# Problems with Israel's Demand for a King

The people of Samuel's day viewed kingship as a more permanent office that would eliminate the need to wait for the Lord to raise up a deliverer. It was this perspective on kingship that caused the Lord to be angry. . . . The crime of the people, then, was not their request for a king, but their expectation that a human king could succeed where they believed the Lord had failed. Saul was chosen as the one who would "go out before us and fight our battles." (1 Sam 8:20). . . .

In contrast, the true king—David—fully realized that it was the Lord who fought their battles for them (1 Sam. 17:37, 46). A proper monarchy still had to function as a theocracy rather than replace it. The king was to be viewed as the earthly head of God's theocratic kingdom." (Hill & Watson 269-270).

**What does this look like in your life?**

## Like All the Other Nations (1 Samuel 8:4-5)



*"Those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world... they are those who must be brought low in the dust."*  
(1 Nephi 22:23)

# Samuel's Kingship Prophecies Fulfilled

Samuel's Warnings About Having a King in Israel	Evidence of Fulfillment of Samuel's Warnings
He will take your sons for his armies (1 Sam 8:12).	David mans standing garrisons in several countries, as well as a standing army under Joab's command (2 Sam 8). Solomon sets Israelites as his captains and men of war (1 Kings 9:22).
He will take your sons for his chariots and horsemen (1 Sam 8:11).	David mans a chariot force (2 Sam 8). Solomon has a force of 40,000 horses for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen (1 Kings 4:26). He sets Israelites as his rulers of chariots and horsemen (1 Kings 9:22).
He will take your sons for his agriculture work (1 Sam 8:12).	David sets servants Saul had acquired to till the land and bring in the produce (2 Sam 9-10).
He will take your daughters and servants for his domestic service (1 Sam 8:13, 16).	David takes Bathsheba unto himself (2 Sam 11), and is ministered to by Abishag (1 Kings 1). Solomon sets Israelites as his servants (1 Kings 9:22).
He will take your fields, vineyards and oliveyards (1 Sam 8:14).	Ahab takes Naboth's choice vineyard (1 Kings 21).
He will tax you (1 Sam 8:15, 17).	Solomon acquires his food from the twelve districts of Israel (1 Kings 4:7). His personal provisions are enormous (1 Kings 4:22-23), as well as those for his cavalry (1 Kings 4:28). Eventually the Northern Kingdom departs because of the heavy taxes (Kings 12:4, 14-16).
He will take your livestock for his use (1 Sam 8:16).	Solomon acquires large amounts of horses and dromedaries (1 Kings 4:28)
If ye shall do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king (1 Sam 12:25)	Hoshea is imprisoned and Israel is destroyed by Assyria (2 Kings 17:4-6); Zedekiah is bound and blinded, Jerusalem is destroyed and Judah is led captive by Babylon (2 Kings 24:7-11). Large amounts of horses and dromedaries (1 Kings 4:28)

# The Rise of Saul (9:1–11:15)

- Saul Chosen as King (9:1–24)
  - From the small tribe of Benjamin, but son of a strong man
  - Saul himself is handsome (and tall!)
- Samuel Anoints Saul (9:27–10:8)
  - **Mashiach**, or anointed is the root of our word Messiah, the Greek equivalent is **christos**, from which we get Christ
  - This did not imply divinity originally merely divine call
- Saul Prophesies (10:9–16)
  - And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. (10:6)
- Saul Proclaimed King (10:17–27)
- Saul Defeats the Ammonites (11:1–15)

**Saul's Initial Humility**  
*Saul answered, “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?” (9:21)*



**Two sources for 1 Samuel 8–12**  
Pro-monarchy 9:1–10:16, 11:1–15  
Anti-monarchy 8:1–22, 10:17–27, 12:1–25

And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. (9:6)



*1 Samuel 10:9-10 And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.*

“Some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord’s work, and when we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.” Thomas S. Monson, “Duty Calls,” Ensign (May 1996): 44

# Thoughts on becoming a new individual . . .

“In the full gospel sense, however, conversion is more – far more – than merely changing one’s belief from that which is false to that which is true; it is more than the acceptance of the verity of gospel truths, than the acquirement of a testimony. To convert is to change from one status to another, and gospel conversion consists in the transformation of man from his fallen and carnal state to a state of saintliness. A convert is one who . . . has been born again: where once he was spiritually dead, he has been regenerated to a state of spiritual life . . . . He changes his whole way of life, and the nature and structure of his very being is quickened and changed by the power of the Holy Ghost.” Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 162



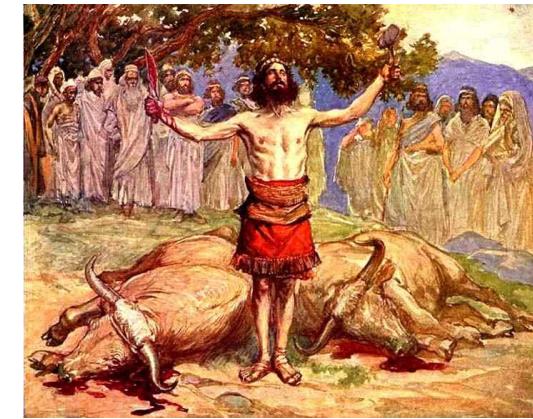
What do you  
need/want to change?  
What do you need to  
alter to more fully allow  
this transformation in  
your life?

# Saul begins well . . . Defeats the Ammonites

1 Samuel 11:1-2 Nahash[a] the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, “Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you.” But Nahash the Ammonite replied, “I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel.”

4-6 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud. **Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen**, and he asked, “What is wrong with everyone? Why are they weeping?” Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said. When Saul heard their words, **the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel**, proclaiming, “This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel.” Then the terror of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out together as one.

12-13 The people then said to Samuel, “Who was it that asked, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Turn these men over to us so that we may put them to death.” **But Saul said, “No one will be put to death today, for this day the Lord has rescued Israel.”**



*Israelites were bound in covenant by an oath, sanctioned by the slaughter of an animal, to join in any military action needed for the defense of fellow Israelites. Saul's summons of the tribes appeals to this oath.*

# Samuel's Final Warning to Israel (12:1-25)

- A long speech inserted possibly by DH expresses his views of the monarchy
- “**If ye will fear the Lord**, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also **the king that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God**: But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.” (1 Sam 12:14-15)
- “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but **I will teach you the good and the right way**: Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you. But **if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.**” (12:23-25)

# Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice (13:1–15a)

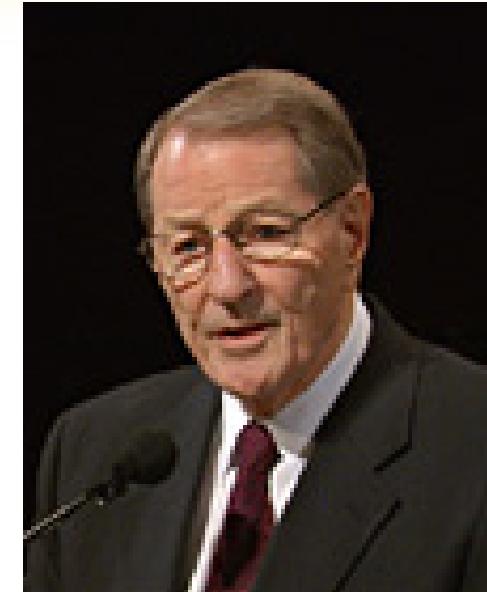
- At this point, **Saul** has been anointed as king (c. 9) and won the approval of Israel because of his military prowess (11)
- Saul has gathered his troops at Gilgal to battle the Philistines
  - “And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, *and* to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: **seven days shalt thou tarry**, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.” (10:8)
- The Israelites see the Philistines preparing for battle and are afraid
- When **Samuel** fails to arrive, Saul foolishly goes ahead with the sacrifice himself to prevent his army from deserting him
  - As soon as Saul completes the sacrifice, Samuel arrives
  - “And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now **would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever**. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: **the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart**, and the Lord hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the Lord commanded thee.” (13:13–14)



**Trusting in the Lord &  
His Timetable:  
How can we all relate?**

“The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also his timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best?...  
Our faith needs to include faith in the Lord's timing for us personally, not just his overall plans and purposes.”

Neal A. Maxwell, *Even As I Am*, p. 93.



Neal A. Maxwell  
Apostle: 1981-2004

“The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith means trust — trust in God’s will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable.

We should not try to impose our timetable on His... It is not enough that we are going in the right direction. The timing must be right, and if the timing is not right, our actions should be adjusted to the Lord’s timetable as revealed by His servants... We must wait upon the Lord’s timing.”

Dallin H. Oaks, “Timing,” *Ensign* (Oct 2003), pp. 12-13.



# Saul's Rash Oath (13:15b-14:26)

- **Jonathan**, Saul's son, surprises and routes the Philistines
  - Note the piety shown by Jonathan (14:6-13)
  - While witnessing the commotion of the Philistines because of Jonathan and his companion, Saul commands the priest to bring the ark to him, but the LXX (Greek) reads *ephod* the breastplate of the priest, which contained the *urim* and *thummim*
- At this point, the Israelites could have wiped out the Philistines at that point, but Saul had commanded the troops to fast that day
  - **Saul continues to lack sound judgment here, which can be interpreted as a sign of YHWH's disfavor, or perhaps just an anti-monarchy statement**
  - The troops, starving after a day of fighting while fasting fall upon the spoils of the enemy and improperly eat the blood, so Saul builds his first altar to the Lord, a large stone so that the blood could drain

## Saul and Jonathan (14:27-52)

- Jonathan unknowingly breaks the commanded fast.
- Saul “casts lots” to determine if there is any sin in Israel, and rashly vows to kill he who has sinned
  - In 14:41-42 the KJV says Saul “cast lots” but the LXX has Saul casting the **Urim and Thummim**
- When the lot falls on Jonathan, Saul intends to kill him but the people cry out against this
  - “And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. **So the people rescued Jonathan**, that he died not.” (14:45)

## Saul defeats the Amalekites but spares their King and is rejected (15:1-33)

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.” (15:2)

- The Israelites are commanded to destroy their long time enemy the Amalekites completely, even their children and animals. The rules of Israel’s holy war required that everything captures in battle be consecrated to the Lord.
- Saul again disobeys YHWH and spares their King Agag and some valuable livestock
- Note that whenever you see “it repented the Lord” the JST clarifies the meaning by changing it to “Saul repented” etc
- ***The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.*** 15:21
- Saul recognizes his sin and pleads to Samuel, but Saul has been rejected as king

“Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.” (15:32-33)

**15:22 “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices  
as much as in obeying the Lord?  
To obey is better than sacrifice,  
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.**

“Most of the time it is not total disobedience that gets us into trouble. It is, rather, that we are selectively obedient. Selective obedience is when we push the limits of what we know to be right. We may recognize what we must do to be obedient, yet we selectively do only part of what we are commanded to do... Saul had been a choice young man... But eventually he decided to practice selective obedience by obeying only part of the commandments... Saul had practiced selective obedience because he had destroyed all the animals except those he wanted to keep.”

Robert D. Hales, “Return with Honor,” *Ensign* (June 1999), p. 10.

“In God’s eyes, disobedience to God’s word far outranks sacrifices in God’s honor, while ‘rebellion’ and ‘arrogance’ are tantamount to the abominable sins of ‘divination’ and ‘idolatry,’ respectively. Humans may prefer to “do (external things” to win God’s favor, but God prefers simple obedience to what God says.”  
(Hubbard & Dearman 160).

It is better to obey than to rationalize and sacrifice. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Pillars of Truth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 6

# Saul and Excuses

We should take responsibility for our actions, rather than placing the blame on others.

“I saw that *the people were scattered* from me,  
and that *thou camest not* within the days  
appointed, and that *the Philistines gathered  
themselves* together at Michmash”  
(1 Samuel 13:11)

“*The people* took of the spoil, sheep and oxen”  
(1 Samuel 15:21)

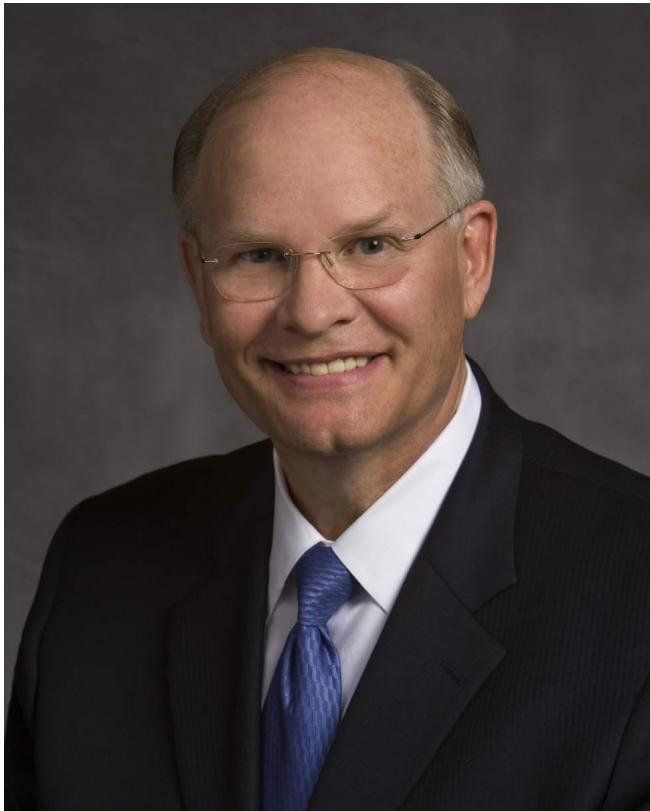
# Making an Excuse or Taking Responsibility? Our Language is the Key

Language that accepts responsibility states that YOU are in control.

- I will do it.
  - I choose not to...
  - I won't work on Sundays.
- 

The language of excuses blames the problem on someone or something else.

- I can't.
- I have to.
- He made me.
- I don't have time.



Elder Renlund

Blaming others, even if justified, allows us to excuse our behavior. By so doing, we shift responsibility for our actions to others. When the responsibility is shifted, we diminish both the need and our ability to act. We turn ourselves into hapless victims rather than agents capable of independent action.

Ensign, November 2016