



# THE BOOK OF samuel



## Week 29: Saul Consults a Medium, David Can't Fight

### **Read 1 Samuel 28:1-2**

Faltering in his faith, David left the land of Israel and pretended to defect to the Philistines, when in fact he was secretly leading missions against Israel's enemies.

Vs.1 Achish was the Philistine king of Gath to whom David "submitted"

1. Question: In verse two we are once again faced with the issue of David being deceptive. What is a so-called "white lie"? Was it acceptable to God in this case? Is it ever?

Answer:

Vs.2 Walter Roehrs- "The picture we get of David in Scripture is not of an idealized hero of unblemished rectitude... His flight to one of the five capitals of Israel's arch enemy did indeed put him beyond Saul's reach. But it also created serious dilemmas from which he had to extricate himself by resorting to wily cunning and morally questionable tactics... David's deliberately ambiguous response... led the king into putting the greatest trust in his cunning vassal." Another commentator refers to it as David's superlative skill in deceptive speech.

Vs.2 promise conditional on David's proof of loyalty

What Achish heard in these words probably is something different from what David actually meant, though this miscommunication was certainly what David intended. Achish obviously took the words to mean something favorable for the Philistines, for he offered to make David his "bodyguard [lit., "keeper for my head"] for life." Achish's words are ironic—David had already kept one Gathite's head (cf. [17:54](#)), but he did so only after he removed it from Goliath's body!

the reader is left in suspense regarding David's fate. Will the Lord's anointed actually fight against the Lord's people? Will David join forces with Achish and the Philistines? Stay tuned (cf. [29:1–11](#))!

The narrator alternates the episodes centered on David and those centered on Saul.

David 28:1–2 (A) → 29:1–30:31 (B)

Saul 28:3–25 (X) → 31 (Y)

### **Read 1 Samuel 28:3-11**

This is now the low point of Saul's life: he's fearful; he can't go to Samuel; God won't answer his prayers; so he seeks guidance and direction (1Chron.10:13) from dead Samuel through a medium; and learns of imminent death

Vs.3 In a good moment, Saul expelled "mediums and spiritists" NOTE:

Lev.19:31- "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God."

Lev.20:6- "I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people."

Dt.18:10-12- Let no one be found among you... who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord..."

Mediums (Hb., *'ōbûṭ*) and spiritists (Hb., *yiddē 'ōnōm*) were individuals who claimed the ability to contact the dead, either serving as intermediaries through whom the dead would speak (cf. [Isa 8:19](#)) or rousing the dead to speak for themselves.

The very need for such prohibitions is an indication that the problem of necromancy and of religious practices related to the dead was widespread in ancient Canaan.

Vs.4 The Philistine attack was designed to gain control of the strategic and rich plain of Jezreel; and virtually cut Israel in half. the Valley of Jezreel, a vital segment of the major trade route connecting Egypt with Mesopotamia. So, Saul could not ignore this incursion. Shunem was on the northern end and Gilboa on the southern side of the valley. This valley would favor the Philistine's chariots

2. Question: Verse 5 indicates Saul "was afraid; terror filled his heart" due to the location which favored the Philistines and the size of the Philistine army, described in 29:2 at units of hundreds and thousands. As opposed to the fear of the Lord, how is

this kind of fear a bad motivator? Describe a time when that kind of fear led to a bad decision or action

Answer:

3. Question: In verse 6 Saul inquired of the Lord, which was a good thing to do; but the Lord did not answer. God promises to hear and answer the prayers of His people, except for when? (Ps.66:18; Is.59:1-2)

Answer:

Vs.6- These three methods — dreams, Urim, and prophets — were normally used in Israel when seeking divine guidance. The authentic ephod and its Urim were with Abiathar, who was aligned with David (23:2,6,9). So either Saul had fabricated another for his use or it was a way to say that none of the usual means brought an answer.

Vs.7 Endor: Michael wanted me to be sure that you knew that the name of this town did not come from the Ewoks planet in Star Wars. a village northeast of the Philistine camp, and 10 miles north east of Saul's camp.

Vs.8 disguised. Why? He knew what he was doing was wrong and he had expelled mediums (vs.3) so he was going against his own previous action; and disguised from Philistines

Vs.10 Saul's oath was ironic in that it asked the Lord to grant immunity to one who broke the Lord's command—it turned God against himself. Such an oath was not only foolish but actually blasphemous.

### ***Read 1 Samuel 28:12-19***

Note that there is no description of the means by which the woman tried to bring up Samuel. Perhaps it is because it was so illicit that the writer did not want even to mention the actual act.

Vs.12 she cried out: to her consternation this seance produced unexpected results. Something about Samuel's appearance surprised the woman. This was certainly an extraordinary event for her. Something unexpected might have happened outside her control. Luth- The shock of the moment of revelation caused the woman to realize she was involved in something more powerful and threatening than she had supposed. Another wrote: It may be that as the spirit arose she heard it call on Saul by name. This caused her to cry out and let her know who Saul was.

Vs.13 It should be noted that Samuel's "coming up out of the ground" is presented as an actual event, whether by vision or not.

The fact that Saul asked the medium what she could see suggests that Saul himself was prevented from viewing the spirit, though he was able to speak with the prophet directly.

"spirit"= divine beings, gods, elohim; a unique use of that term

Vs.14 Her imprecise answer—"an old man wearing a robe"—was nevertheless convincing to Saul. The word used to describe Samuel's garment here (Hb., *mē'ól*, = "sleeveless robe") is the same one used previously to describe the garment the prophet was wearing when Saul grabbed and tore its hem ([15:27](#)). Out of respect for the prophet who had provided guidance during previous times of confusion and crisis in Saul's life (cf. [9:19–20](#); [15:1–3](#)), "Saul bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground."

Vs.15 Was this actually Samuel? There are two options possible here:

1. As a miraculous exception like the Transfiguration, God allowed dead Samuel to speak to Saul, though in the setting of a forbidden medium. (Concordia Self-Study Commentary; People's Commentary Bible)

John Mittelstaedt- says that Samuel appeared as a miracle from God because the medium was surprised by what she saw; the prophet spoke directly to Saul without using a medium; and the message was almost identical with Samuel's last words to Saul; and the details were fulfilled

Another: there is no question that it is Samuel himself who speaks here. In his speech in vv. 16–19 Samuel uses the divine name, Yahweh, seven times, while Saul said "God" once. The author certainly intends us to believe it is really Samuel — only he would have been able to give that message — and we have to assume that God permitted the witch to call Samuel up in this case even though he might not normally have allowed it.

First, the plain statement of the Hebrew text is that she did in fact see Samuel. Second, the medium reacted to Samuel's appearance as though it was a genuine—and terrifying—experience: she "cried out at the top of her voice." Her strong reaction also suggests that Samuel's appearance was unexpected; perhaps this was the first time she had ever actually succeeded in contacting the dead. Third, the speeches attributed to Samuel contained allusions to a prior interchange between the two, allusions that would have been appropriate only for the real Samuel to have made. Fourth, Samuel's role and message as a prophet, so much a part of his ministry in life, was unchanged in his encounter with Saul here.

2. An evil spirit impersonated Samuel. (Martin Luther quoted in The Lutheran Study Bible)

Lutheran- Here the future is also foretold in precise detail, which has led some interpreters to conclude that the spirit was truly Samuel's spirit (cf Dt.18:22). However, though Satan is the father of lies (Jn.8:44), he and his minions are perfectly capable of speaking the truth (cf Mt.8:29) and can even mouth God's word (Mt.4:3-10)... The

long-standing issue with this text is whether the spirit was truly Samuel's spirit or the work of an evil spirit, which the Lord compelled to speak the truth... Martin Luther, 'We may easily see that the bringing up of Samuel from the dead... was trickery and deceit; the whole event is against this commandment of God. Accordingly we may not assume that the real prophet Samuel was brought from the dead by the medium. But when the Scriptures are silent and do not tell us whether this was the real Samuel or not, it demands from all of us that we should well know that through Moses God has forbidden necromancy. And he never recants what he has said... Evil spirits have produced many wicked tricks by appearing as the souls of the departed...'"

Vs.16-19 The message only confirmed what the Lord spoke by Samuel during his lifetime (Saul's Amalek failure in 15:1-2 with Samuel's message in 15:26,28), with the additional detail of vs.19.

Vs.19 you and your sons will be with me. In other words, Saul will join the community of the dead by entering the netherworld, Sheol, which seems to have been the abode both of the righteous and the rejected. OR this may refer to hell.

By turning to a medium to receive guidance for his life, Saul committed a capital offense (cf. [Lev 20:6](#)). Less than twenty-four hours after he did so, he was dead—a sobering reminder of the swiftness and surety of the Lord's punishment for any who violate the divine word.

the story "depicts the futility of conjuring the dead, since this results in an announcement of death; to speak with the dead is to join the dead."

### ***Read 1 Samuel 28:20-25***

4. Question: Based on Saul's response in verse 20, were the words spoken to him Law or Gospel? Preachers are instructed to preach both Law and Gospel. So how should a sermon make us feel?

Answer:

Vs.25- Saul's last meal on earth was eaten not in communion with God but with one who dabbled in the occult and practiced witchcraft.

## **Read 1 Samuel 29:1-11**

Vs.1 Beginning with this section the author steps back in time a few days and returns to the story thread last encountered in [28:2](#). This is discernible from the fact that at the beginning of this episode the Philistine forces are still assembled “at Aphek” (v. [1](#)), whereas in [28:4](#) they have moved to Shunem.

Achish was fully deceived by David. How can we not be fully deceived by false teachers?

Vs.6 An Israelite oath formula is unexpected from a Philistine

Ironies abound in Achish’s relationship with David. A study of the author’s portrayal of the Philistine king suggests that Achish was intended to serve simultaneously as a type and a foil for Saul. Both kings made David their personal bodyguard (cf. [22:14](#); [28:2](#)); both were impressed with David, particularly his fighting abilities, yet both ended up removing him from the ranks of their armies; and both badly misjudged David. Saul considered David his mortal enemy, yet he was in fact his most loyal subject; Achish considered David his most trusted subject, yet he was in fact his most dangerous enemy. The parallels between Saul and Achish suggest that Saul was indeed a king “such as all the nations have” (cf. [8:5](#)).

5. Question: The turn of events in this chapter rescued David from a serious dilemma, a very awkward position. They were a providential supply of an alibi, excusing David from any involvement in the death of king Saul. This chapter answers any who might have accused David of conspiring with the Philistines to bring about the downfall of Saul’s dynasty. God had the imperfect David’s back. Describe a time when God had your back.