

1 Samuel Chapter 9

1 Samuel 9:1 "Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name [was] Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power."

“A mighty man of power”:

I.e., “a man of wealth,” confirmed by the reference to donkeys and servants (in verse 3; compare Boaz in Ruth 2:1).

Kish is the father of Saul, who became king.

He was a very wealthy Benjamite.

Kish was the son of Ner and the grandson of Abiel.

The names given above are in the ancestry of Saul.

The penman sometimes skips a generation and calls a grandson a son.

The name "Kish" means bow.

"Abiel" means father of strength. "Zeror" means bundle.

"Bechorath" means offspring of the first birth.

"Aphiah" means refreshed.

1 Samuel 9:2 "And he had a son, whose name [was] Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and [there was] not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward [he was] higher than any of the people."

“Saul”:

Son of Kish, a Benjamite, he was Israel’s first king.

The Hebrew root for “Saul” means “asked (of God).”

(In 8:10), the people “asked ... [for] a king.”

Although God appointed Saul, he was really the people’s choice, given by the LORD in answer to their request.

The LORD’s choice would be from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10).

“A choice young man”:

Emphasis was placed on the external appearance of leaders (David in 16:18).

Saul was the first king of Israel (9:2 - 31:13; 1 Chron. 5:10-26).

He had several admirable qualities suitable for a king of Israel during such turbulent times.

First, he was a tall, attractive man.

Second, he was from the tribe of Benjamin, situated on the border of Ephraim and Judah, and so had credibility with both the northern and southern tribes.

Third, he was a capable military leader, as his early victories demonstrate.

His charisma (10:24), gained him popularity with the people.

Yet external advantages do not guarantee effectiveness; readiness for a task is far more about internal character and intimacy with the LORD.

But it was soon apparent that Saul had a rebellious nature and would not share either his power or popularity.

He failed to wait for Samuel at Gilgal and made several excuses (13:8-12).

Saul then neglected the needs of his own men and swore a foolish oath that almost cost the life of his son Jonathan (Chapter 14).

Finally, he failed to kill all of the Amalekites (15:18-19), and then lied to Samuel about the events (15:13).

Saul was then rejected as a king by God (15:26), and wasted the remainder of his years in fruitless attempts on David's life.

"Saul" means asked.

The Israelites would accept someone who was physically attractive and larger than his fellows.

We find that Saul was a head taller than anyone else in the land.

He looked like they thought a king ought to look.

Israel wanted an earthly king.

He will not only be their king, but will look like he is suited to be king.

1 Samuel 9:3 "And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses."

"The asses ... were lost":

"Lost donkeys" meant "lost wealth."

Kish had servants who could have gone looking, but Saul had been chosen to oversee this important task.

The asses were used for riding.

They were valuable to their owners, since they were their mode of transportation.

Saul was grown, or his father would not have sent him to look for the animals.

The reason for taking a servant with him was to help him catch them and bring them home.

Of course, we know the LORD set this situation up for His purposes.

1 Samuel 9:4 "And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found [them] not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and [there they were] not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found [them] not."

This being situated on the north of Benjamin, indicates the direction of Saul's journey.

The district explored means the whole of the mountainous region, with its valleys and defiles, which belonged to Ephraim.

Turning apparently southwards, probably through the verdant hills between Shiloh and the vales of Jordan (Shalisha and Shalim), he approached again the borders of Benjamin, scoured the land of Zuph, and was proposing to return, when his servant recollected that they were in the immediate neighborhood of the man of God, who would give them counsel.

This is speaking of the long mountain range of which mount Ephraim is a part.

It would be like the asses to go up the side of the mountain.

It seemed that Saul lived at the foot of the mountain range.

1 Samuel 9:5 "[And] when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that [was] with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave [caring] for the asses, and take thought for us."

In which was Ramathaim-zophim, the native place of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1), and so the Targum here, "the land in which was the prophet"

"Saul said to the servant that was with him, come, and let us return":

"Come, despairing of finding the asses after so long a search in different places:

"Lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us":

Fearing some evil should have befallen his son and his servant, in comparison of whom, and especially his son, the asses would be of no account, and so give himself no concern for them, but be in great care and uneasiness for his son and servant.

Wherefore Saul thought it most advisable to return home as soon as possible, lest his father should be overwhelmed with grief and trouble.

The father was a very wealthy man, and he would not be terribly distressed if they did not find the asses.

He would however, be disturbed if Saul does not return.

They have been gone a long time looking and Saul tells the servant it is time to give up hunting the asses and go home.

Verses 6-11:

Three terms for prophet occur in these verses:

"Seer," which stresses the reception of God's message; "Prophet," which emphasizes that the messenger is truly called of God to pronounce His word to the people; and "man of God," which underscores the messenger's relationship to God (see the note on 2:27).

Other terms include:

"messenger of the LORD," which reminds the prophet of his task of bearing God's word and "servant of the LORD," which underscores his task before God as called to serve.

1 Samuel 9:6 "And he said unto him, Behold now, [there is] in this city a man of God, and [he is] an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go."

"A man of God":

A description of the prophet and judge, Samuel.

“Man of God” referred to a prophet (2:27; see note on Deut. 33:1).

The servant is probably speaking of Samuel in the city of Ramah.

Samuel had a reputation among the people as being anointed of God.

He truly was an honorable man.

He was upright before the LORD.

The servant believes that the LORD might tell Samuel where Saul's father's asses are so he will not go home empty-handed.

1 Samuel 9:7 "Then said Saul to his servant, But behold, [if] we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and [there is] not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?"

“Not a present to bring”:

A gift expressed gratitude and thankfulness for the service of the “man of God.”

Gifts were offered to prophets (in 1 Kings 14:3; 2 Kings 4:42; 5:15-16; 8:8-9).

Saul wanted to take an offering to the man of God, if he inquired of him just where to search for the asses.

They had not planned to do this when they left home, so they really had nothing to offer Samuel.

They had been out so long; they had even eaten their bread.

1 Samuel 9:8 "And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: [that] will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way."

“The fourth part of a shekel”:

About one-tenth of an ounce.

It is interesting, to me, that it was the servant who had a fourth part of a shekel of silver.

This would be a much better offering, than the bread would have been.

1 Samuel 9:9 "(Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for [he that is] now [called] a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)"

“The seer ... now called a Prophet”:

Due to the God-given ability to know or “see” the future, the “seer” was so named in close relationship with what he did.

The person called a prophet, by the time this book was written, had been termed a seer in the earlier time of Saul.

A seer, in this particular verse, is the same as a prophet.

Prophets were anointed of the LORD.

They had spiritual visions as well as physical visions.

That is why they were known as seers.

The word "nabi" really meant a prophet, however.

1 Samuel 9:10 "Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God [was]."

The name of the city where Samuel and Saul first met in this strange way is not given.

Still, the impression which the narrative leaves on the mind is that it was Samuel's usual residence, “Ramah.”

We know Samuel had built an altar to the LORD at Ramah (1 Sam. 7:17); on the day of Saul's arrival there was a great sacrifice taking place on the altar of the high place of the city.

Samuel too, was known to Saul's servant as dwelling in this place.

Saul was agreeable to the servant's plan.

The city here is Ramah, and the man of God is Samuel.

1 Samuel 9:11 "[And] as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?"

For the city was built upon up a hill from whence had the name of Ramah, signifying high and lifted up.

"They found young maidens going out to draw water: going out of the city, to a fountain which was at the bottom of the hill; and this was the usual business of maidens in those countries to fetch water for the service of the family (see Gen. 24:11; 24:15-16).

"And said unto them, is the seer here?":

Meaning, is he in the city? Or is he at home? Or is he in the country?

It seems that Ramah was on a hill.

This is what the statement "went up the hill" means.

It appears, the young women went to the well for water and Saul and his servant passed them on the way.

Saul asked them how they might find Samuel?

1 Samuel 9:12 "And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, [he is] before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for [there is] a sacrifice of the people today in the high place:"

This is essentially Canaanite in background (compare Deut. 12:2-5).

Before the temple was built, the high place was used for worship and sacrifice because it provided the best advantage point for the participation of the people in worship and allowed them to visually see the sacrifice being made for them.

For the use of high places as locations of worship and sacrifice (see the note on 1 Kings 3:2).

It seemed that everyone kept up with where Samuel was.

They immediately answer, that he is here.

Saul must hurry to catch him.

If Saul and his servant will continue on straight ahead, they will find him.

The high places were accepted at this time as an appropriate place to worship.

It seems Samuel had built an altar in this high place to sacrifice.

When the temple in Jerusalem is built later on, it would be wrong to sacrifice in the high places.

God is the Creator of the universe, but sometimes people look at the beauty of the natural things God created and want to worship them.

We must worship God and nothing or no one else.

1 Samuel 9:13 "As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; [and] afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him."

"He doth bless the sacrifice":

The sacrifice was offered to the LORD as an act of worship by the “man of God.”

If they hurry, they will be able to catch him.

It appears that this sacrifice was to be eaten by Samuel and the people.

Samuel is still in town.

The people will not start the feast without Samuel, so it will not be a problem, if he is late.

1 Samuel 9:14 "And they went up into the city: [and] when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place."

Saul and his servant went up the hill to the city of Ramah.

"And when they were come into the city":

Were within it, within the walls of it.

"Behold, Samuel came out against them":

Came out of a door of his house upon them, just as they came up: or "to meet them".

His way to the high place lay where they were coming; unless it can be thought he went out purposely to meet them.

Perhaps having, as in the following verse, an intimation, that about that time one from the tribe of Benjamin, who should be king, would come to him, and so made this his way, knowing that one coming from that tribe must come that way.

"For to go up to the high place":

Or place of sitting down, or feasting (see 1 Sam. 9:12).

It seemed that, Samuel was just leaving to go to the high place, when Saul and his servant came into the city.

They seem to meet at the city gate.

1 Samuel 9:15 "Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,"

In a private manner, whispering in his ear, telling him in a free, familiar, friendly way, as a secret: This is one of the few more direct intimations in the sacred records of one of the ways in which the Spirit of God communicated Divine thoughts to the human spirit.

Here the Eternal Spirit is represented as whispering in the ear of man.

“The true spirit of Jehovah, full of compassion, had already on the preceding day whispered to Samuel that for the deliverance of Jehovah’s people, a Benjamite must be anointed king.”

"A day before Saul came":

That he might prepare for the entertainment of him, and not be surprised at his coming, as well as hereby be assured he was the person designed to be king of Israel, when he should come.

The statement "told Samuel in his ear" means this was a very private conversation that God had with Samuel.

It was as if God whispered a secret to Samuel.

1 Samuel 9:16 "To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him [to be] captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me."

“Anoint him”:

Anointing was a practice that was used to confirm the role of a priest (Exodus 28:41; 29:7; Leviticus 4:3; 8:12).

From this point onward, it was also done for kings.

Anointing signified the separation and divine equipping for a particular calling from the LORD, a consecration for service.

This represents a setting apart for service to the LORD, which occurs (in 10:1; see note on 2:10).

“Captain”:

Literally “one given prominence, one placed in front.”

The title referred to “one designated to rule” (1 Kings 1:35; 2 Chron. 11:12).

“Their cry is come unto Me”:

The people had been crying out for deliverance from the Philistines, their longstanding rivals, just as they did for liberation from Egypt (Exodus 2:25; 3:9).

It is so beautiful to me, that even though the Israelites have rejected the LORD as their King, He still loves them and hears their cry for help.

Samuel would have been expecting whoever the Benjamite is.

He now realizes it is Saul.

Saul has not asked to be king.

He is innocently looking for his father's lost asses.

Saul would look like a strong leader because of his height.

Samuel was to anoint Saul as leader.

1 Samuel 9:17 "And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people."

"This same shall reign over my people":

God identified Saul to Samuel, assuring there was no mistaking whom God was choosing that would be king.

God left no question in the mind of Samuel, that this man was the one.

He told Samuel, this is the man to lead the people.

1 Samuel 9:18 "Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house [is]."

"Tell me ... where the seer's house is":

A reference to Samuel's house.

We know from this question, that Samuel looked no different than anyone else, even if he did have such power and authority.

Saul asks Samuel, if he knows where the seer lives?

1 Samuel 9:19 "And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I [am] the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that [is] in thine heart."

For he supposed, by inquiring for his house, that his business was with him; wherefore this he said, not as boasting of his character and office, or in the pride and vanity of his mind, but merely for information sake.

"Go up before me unto the high place":

Instead of returning home with him, he invited him to go to the place of feasting, as the Targum, whither he was going to partake of the entertainment there; and he bids him go before him, either because he was an old man, and could not go at his pace, or he had business to do by the way, or this was in honor to Saul, whom he knew was to be king of Israel.

"For ye shall eat with me today":

He and his servant, at the public feast: he insisted upon his dining, or it may be rather supping with him.

"And tomorrow I will let thee go":

For it being in the evening when this feast was, he could not depart that night, but must stay till morning, and then he promised to dismiss him.

"And will tell thee all that is in thine heart":

Answer all questions he had in his mind to ask him, for which he came into the city, and inquired for his house.

The Jews have a tradition that it was in the heart of Saul that he should be a king, having in a vision seen himself placed on the top of a palm tree, and which was a sign of royalty, and this Samuel told him.

Saul had not expected this answer.

He just wanted to know where he could find his father's animals.

Samuel shows Saul great honor by asking him to eat of the sacrifice with him.

Samuel also tells Saul he will tell him all that is in his heart.

How could Saul refuse such an offer from such a noted man of God?

1 Samuel 9:20 "And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom [is] all the desire of Israel? [Is it] not on thee, and on all thy father's house?"

“All the desire of Israel”:

Saul was to become the focus of Israel’s hope for military victories over her enemies (8:19-20).

Saul had never mentioned to Samuel about the asses.

He would be surprised, that Samuel knows of that.

He would now be convinced that Samuel was a man of God, because he told him of the asses, without being asked.

I like the question Samuel asked him.

Will the finding of the animals save Israel from the Philistines?

The good of all Israel will lie on the shoulders of Saul.

God has called Saul to a much greater work than chasing animals.

The animals were lost, to put Saul in this place at this time.

The animals are no more a problem. They are found.

Verses 21-24:

Saul was from the “least” family in the “smallest” tribe in Israel, yet God called him to be king.

God needs neither affluence nor pedigree to advance His kingdom, this is a theme repeated throughout Scripture.

By giving Saul the priest’s “portion” (Exodus 29:27), Samuel indicated that he was God’s anointed king.

1 Samuel 9:21 "And Saul answered and said, [Am] not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?"

“A Benjamite ... smallest of the tribes of Israel”:

Saul’s humility and timidity was expressed by his proper assessment of his tribe and a humble estimation of his family.

It appears from this, that Saul was a humble man.

The Benjamite tribe had been reduced to just 600 men and grew from that.

They are indeed, a very small tribe.

Saul finds it hard to believe that God would call him to be king.

His family is not of great importance either.

This is who God calls though.

He does not want someone who is powerful in his own right.

God wants someone who will be strong in the power of the LORD.

1 Samuel 9:22 "And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlor, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which [were] about thirty persons."

“The parlor”:

The place where those who were invited ate with Samuel after the offering of the sacrifice on the high place (verses 12-13).

Samuel is showing great honor to Saul.

This guest chamber was where Samuel would eat his part of the feast.

It appears there were thirty chosen to share the feast with him.

The other people would eat out in the open.

Not only did he invite Saul and his servant to eat with him, but he gave them the place of the honored guest.

1 Samuel 9:23 "And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee."

All that took place in the meeting of the prophet and Saul at the sacrificial feast, and subsequently in Samuel's house, was arranged for beforehand; every event was foreseen and provided for, even the trivial details.

All was symbolical in this preparation for the great change in the constitution of Israel, which, under God's providence, was fraught with such important consequences.

The very piece of meat set before Samuel at the Ramah banquet was no chance piece, but one which, owing, no doubt, to its being considered the choicest, had been carefully set aside for him when the sacrificial feast was being prepared.

From the time that God whispered in Samuel's ear about Saul, the special portion had been set aside for Saul.

1 Samuel 9:24 "And the cook took up the shoulder, and [that] which [was] upon it, and set [it] before Saul. And [Samuel] said, Behold that which is left! set [it] before thee, [and] eat:

for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day."

"The shoulder ... kept for thee":

Samuel was following (Lev. 7:28-36).

Samuel received the leg, the portion of the sacrifice reserved for the priest.

Samuel's giving of this choice piece of meat to Saul was a distinct honor and reflected Saul's new status as the designated king.

The shoulder was a special piece, which would have been set before the anointed of God.

The cook set this before Saul, and Samuel told him to eat.

It appears that Samuel had chosen the thirty to witness the new king of all Israel.

1 Samuel 9:25 "And when they were come down from the high place into the city, [Samuel] communed with Saul upon the top of the house."

"Upon the top of the house":

The roof of Samuel's house provided a place for Saul and his servant to sleep for the night.

The top of the houses were flat where people went to party, or have meetings of various kinds.

This was a private place where Samuel could talk to Saul.

Perhaps, Samuel was relating to Saul the need for him as a leader of the people at this time.

1 Samuel 9:26 "And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad."

Saul was taken to lodge with the prophet for that night.

Before retiring to rest, they communed on the flat roof of the house, the couch being laid there (Joshua 2:6), when, doubtless, Samuel revealed the secret and described the peculiar duties of a monarch in a nation so related to the Divine King as Israel.

Next morning early, Samuel roused his guest, and conveying him on his way towards the skirts of the city, sought, before parting, a private interview.

The object of which is narrated in the next chapter.

It appears, from this, that Saul had spent the night.

This is speaking of early in the morning.

The housetop meeting was for Samuel to speak once more with Saul.

Saul must go home, so his father would not worry that he was lost, or overtaken by evil men.

1 Samuel 9:27 "[And] as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God."

“The word of God”:

Special revelation from God, given to Samuel and intended for Saul (see note on 3:1).

The servant was told to go ahead, so Samuel could speak privately with Saul.

Samuel had never revealed to Saul that God would make him king of Israel.

The showing of the Word of God, here is speaking of Samuel telling Saul what God's will was for his life.

1 Samuel Chapter 9 Questions

1. Who is Kish?
2. What tribe was he from?
3. What does the name "Kish" mean?
4. What does "Abiel" mean?
5. What does the name "Saul" mean?
6. Saul was a _____ taller than his fellows.
7. What would the people think Saul looked like?
8. What was lost, that Kish sent Saul to find?
9. The _____ were used for riding.
10. What area is verse 4 speaking of?
11. Why did Saul mention to the servant, they must turn and go home?

12. What does the servant say to Saul?
13. Who is the servant speaking of?
14. Where does he live?
15. What does the servant believe Samuel might tell them?
16. Why did Saul think they should not inquire of Samuel?
17. What did the servant have, that would make a nice gift for the man of God?
18. What had the prophet been called earlier?
19. Who did Saul inquire of, where he might find Samuel?
20. Why did they tell Saul to hurry?
21. When would it become wrong to sacrifice in the high places?
22. Where did Saul find Samuel?
23. What does "told Samuel in his ear" mean?
24. _____ told Samuel that Saul was the man to lead the people.
25. What does Saul ask Samuel in verse 18?
26. How did Samuel answer him?
27. What did Samuel ask Saul to do?
28. What had happened to his father's asses?
29. The good of all Israel will lie on the shoulders of _____.
30. What excuses does Saul give to Samuel, saying he is not worthy?
31. Where did Saul eat the feast?
32. What did Samuel tell the cook to do for Saul?
33. Where does verse 25 say Samuel communed with Saul?
34. Why did Samuel tell the servant to go ahead?
35. What is Samuel showing Saul about the Word of God?