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Samuel Meets Sha'ul
First Samuel 9: 15-25

Samuel meets Sha'ul DIG: Why did Sha'ul balk at Samuel's desire to anoint him king? What does this say about the way he viewed himself? In what ways did Samuel honor Sha'ul at the feast? How might Sha'ul have become a great king? What are some of the indications we see in this story as to why he ended up going astray? Ultimately, did Sha'ul choose to choose the path to ruin?

REFLECT: Which habit is strongest in your life: the habit of obedience or the habit of indulgence? What area of obedience could you strengthen this week? What gifts has God given you? How are you using those gifts to obey Him more fully? How are you demonstrating faith that God will use those gifts to achieve His purposes? Like King Sha'ul, you have choices, how will you use them?

The people would get their king, but it ended up being part of His judgment against the nation.

So it was that **the people** had demanded **a king**, and **ADONAI** had agreed to **their** demands (**to see link click Bq – Give Us a King: ADONAI's answer to Samuel**). **The** young **man YHVH** would select for the job was named **Sha'ul**. **He** was young, strong and tall, standing head and shoulders above everyone else in **Isra'el**. From the world's perspective, **Sha'ul** had the perfect background and ideal qualifications for **a king**. But the world's perspective is not **God's** perspective. **Sha'ul** may have appeared kingly on the outside, but as we will see, **his** heart was not turned toward **the LORD**, which was the primary qualification for **Isra'el's king**. **His** life would ultimately demonstrate a failing common in politics even today: doing what is expedient while always looking out for one's own self-interests.[217]

God's revelation to Samuel (9:15-17): God's purpose in **Sha'ul's donkey** chase (see **Bu – Sha'ul and the Lost Donkeys**) becomes clear as soon as we get **Samuel's** perspective. **Now the day before Sha'ul arrived, ADONAI had given**

Samuel a revelation, literally *uncovered the ear of,* as if whispering in **Samuel's** ear**: Tomorrow at about this time I will send you an** obscure **Benjaminite**, emphasizing **God's** sovereignty in the matter**. You are to anoint him** with olive oil **as the prince** (Hebrew: *nagid*) **over My people Isra'el (9:15-16a).** It symbolized the coming of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. The word **"king"** is deliberately avoided because **YHVH** is **Isra'el's King**.[218] It is interesting that **the LORD** didn't identify **Sha'ul** as **Isra'el's king**. In any case, we can be assured that **God** had not changed **His** approach based on the demand of **the elders**. **Ha'Shem** was still raising up **a man** of **His** own choosing to lead **His people** in troubled times. Even though **Sha'ul** would be made **king** by popular demand, **he** would still be raised up as **God's** choice, as had been true of **the judges**.

He will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. This shows that **the Philistines** had regained **their** dominance over **Isra'el** after being defeated a few years earlier (see **Be – The Ark in the Land of the Philistines**). **I have seen My people's situation, and their cry of distress has reached me" (9:16b).** In language strongly reminiscent of **the Exodus**, **the LORD** had looked upon **the people of Isra'el (Exodus 2:23)**, whose **cry** had reached **Him (Exodus 3:9)**. The new leader would have the potential of delivering **Isra'el** from **the Philistines**, although some **troublemakers** doubted that **Sha'ul** would be able to drive **them** out.[219]

When Samuel saw Sha'ul, ADONAI said to him, "This is the man I told you about, the one who is going to govern (Hebrew: *ya'tzor*) **My people' (9:17).** The word *ya'tzor* is almost always used in a negative way, meaning *imprisonment or hindrance*. In other words, **God** determined to use **Sha'ul's** career as a means of punishing **the nation**. As **he governed Isra'el**, **his** policies and behavior would hinder the welfare of **the nation** and act as a sort of a barrier separating **Isra'el** from **God's** best for **them**.[220] **Ha'Shem** gave **them their king** all right, but it ended up being part of **His** judgment against **the nation**. As **they** were sitting in **Babylon** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu – Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**), **Zedekiah** would be the last human **king** of **Isra'el** (see **Jeremiah Fy – A Warning to Zedekiah**). **God's** ultimate answer to **their** foolish decision is recorded in **Hosea 13:9-11, "It is your destruction, Isra'el, although your help is in Me. So now, where is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are your judges, of whom you** said: **Give me a king and leaders'? I gave you a king in My anger; and in My fury I took him away."**[221]

Samuel meets Sha'ul (9:18-21): Sha'ul approached Samuel in the gateway and said: **Please tell me where the seer's house is. He** didn't know who **Samuel** was. So **Samuel answered Sha'ul, "I'm the seer (9:18-19a). Samuel, the seer,** "caught sight" of **Sha'ul**, and raised **him** up to **govern** because **YHVH** had seen **the distress** of **His people**. **This is the man, God** said to **Samuel (9:17)**, in a scene that would be replayed with only modest variations a few years later, this time in **16:12** with **David** as the subject (**anoint him, for he is the one**). The string of parallels can be extended to **Isaiah 42:1-4** (**Here is My servant**) and **John 19:5** (**Here is the man**), **John 19:14** (**Here is your king**), all of which refer to **Yeshua** as **"the Messiah," the "Anointed One,"** who neither disappoints nor fails and whose Kingdom has no end.[222]

Sha'ul knew nothing of **God's** message, nor did **he** know who **Samuel** was. But **Samuel** knew **Sha'ul**, and **he** responded to **the young man's** greeting with an invitation to come to **the high place** to partake in the sacrificial meal and spend the night. **Go up ahead of me to the high place, because you are going to eat with me today. In the morning, I will let you go and I will tell you everything that is in your heart (9:19b). Samuel the seer** authenticated **his** prophetic role by revealing **Sha'ul's** innermost thoughts and relieved **Samuel's** mind by informing **him** that **his father's donkeys** had **been found**.[223] **As for your donkeys that got lost three days ago, don't worry about them; they've been found. Now, who is it that all Isra'el desires?** The **desirable** thing that **all Isra'el wanted** was **the kingship**, and Sha'ul was destined to receive **it**. Therefore, the answer was: **Isn't it you, and all your father's household" (9:20)?**[224]

Puzzled, **Sha'ul** replied: **I'm only a man from Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Isra'el** (see the commentary on **Judges Cd – War Against the Tribe of Benjamin**)**; and my family is the least important of all the families in the tribe of Benjamin! Why are you saying such a thing to me (9:21)?** Like **Gideon** before **him (Judges 6:15), he** felt unworthy of the honor, whatever it was, and not a little scared **(10:22)** by the sudden new development in **his** life. It may also have been considered good manners to play down one's social standing, especially in the presence of **God's** prophet or messenger, but in **Sha'ul's** case there seems to have been a modesty that was combined with a shy temperament.[225]

Sha'ul at the feast (9:22-24): Sha'ul was surprised to be seated at the place of

honor, with choice cuts of **meat** set aside in advance for **his** coming. **Sha'ul and his servant** were ushered into the feast where **they** would eat, **and had them sit in the place reserved for the most important of the invited guests, who numbered about thirty persons. Samuel instructed the cook, "Serve the portion of meat I gave you and told you to set it aside." The cook took the right thigh,** normally reserved for **the priest (Exodus 29:27; Leviticus 7:32-34)**, **and served it to Sha'ul,** who thought of **himself** as the least, was treated as the greatest. This was a visual picture that **Sha'ul** was the one **destined** to be **the** first **king of Isra'el**.

Sha'ul must have also been confused that not only was **he** expected, but **he** was also treated as though **he** were **a priest**. **Samuel** said: **Here, this is what has been kept for you! Eat, because it was kept especially for you for this occasion. I have invited guests,** but **they** would have to wait to **eat** until **Sha'ul** started **eating (9:22-24a). Sha'ul** did not yet know that **he** was **ADONAI's** choice for **Isra'el's** first **king,** and so, as the **LORD's anointed, he** was entitled to special privileges, including the portion of **meat** normally eaten by **a priest**. It was a "special time," indeed, a time for celebration – unlike a future "set time" **(13: 8** and **11)**, when **Sha'ul's** impatience and disobedience would start **his** downfall (see **Ck – God rejects Sha'ul**).[226]



That same day, after coming down from the high place to the city, he spoke with Sha'ul on the roof of his house (9:24b-25). There, **they** had a long talk in which **Samuel** rehearsed for **Sha'ul** all the events that led up to this historic meeting**. Sha'ul** didn't understand everything that was happening to **him**, but all would be explained to **him** the next day (see **Bx – Samuel anoints Sha'ul**).[227]

If we make a habit of obeying **ADONAI**, it will be easier to obey **Him** when we face stressful situations. **Sha'ul** was concerned with outward appearances and took

great care to say and do "the right things." **He** worried about having a suitable **gift** for **the seer** when **he** couldn't find **his father's donkeys**. **He** was concerned about the protocol of dealing with **God's prophet**, but not so concerned about the obedience that came with it. **Samuel**, in contrast, had made it an overriding habit to obey **the LORD's** voice. **He** had learned that lesson as a boy in the Tabernacle, and **he** had continued to practice it the rest of his life. Later, when **YHVH** commanded **him** to anoint **David** as **king** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Ah – Samuel Anoints David**), **he** obeyed in spite of the fact that **he** was risking **his** life in the process. **Samuel** obeyed **God** in difficult circumstances because it was **his** habit – a habit that **he** developed on a daily basis. We make something a habit by doing it frequently over an extended period of time. For example, physical exercise can become a habit if we do it each day for several months. Obedience to **God's Word** can also become a habit simply by the routine of obeying **it** on a daily basis.[228]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being omniscient, knowing all, omnipresent, being everywhere, and omnipotent, all-powerful. **Your** magnificent qualities mean that when **You** guide me, **You** are always guiding me to what is best. **You** see the future so you know how to lead me in **Your** godly ways. Sometimes a path may appear to look like it might be easier than what **You** have said in **Your Word**, or something that **You** have warned me not to do from **Your Spirit**, but the world can be deceiving. **Lord**, help me to always follow **You** and say no to the world.* ***Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; love and faithfulness go before You (Psalms 89:14).*** *I know I can trust **You** with total confidence; the more I obey **You**, the more I am blessed. To **the One Who** sits at **Your right hand**. Amen*