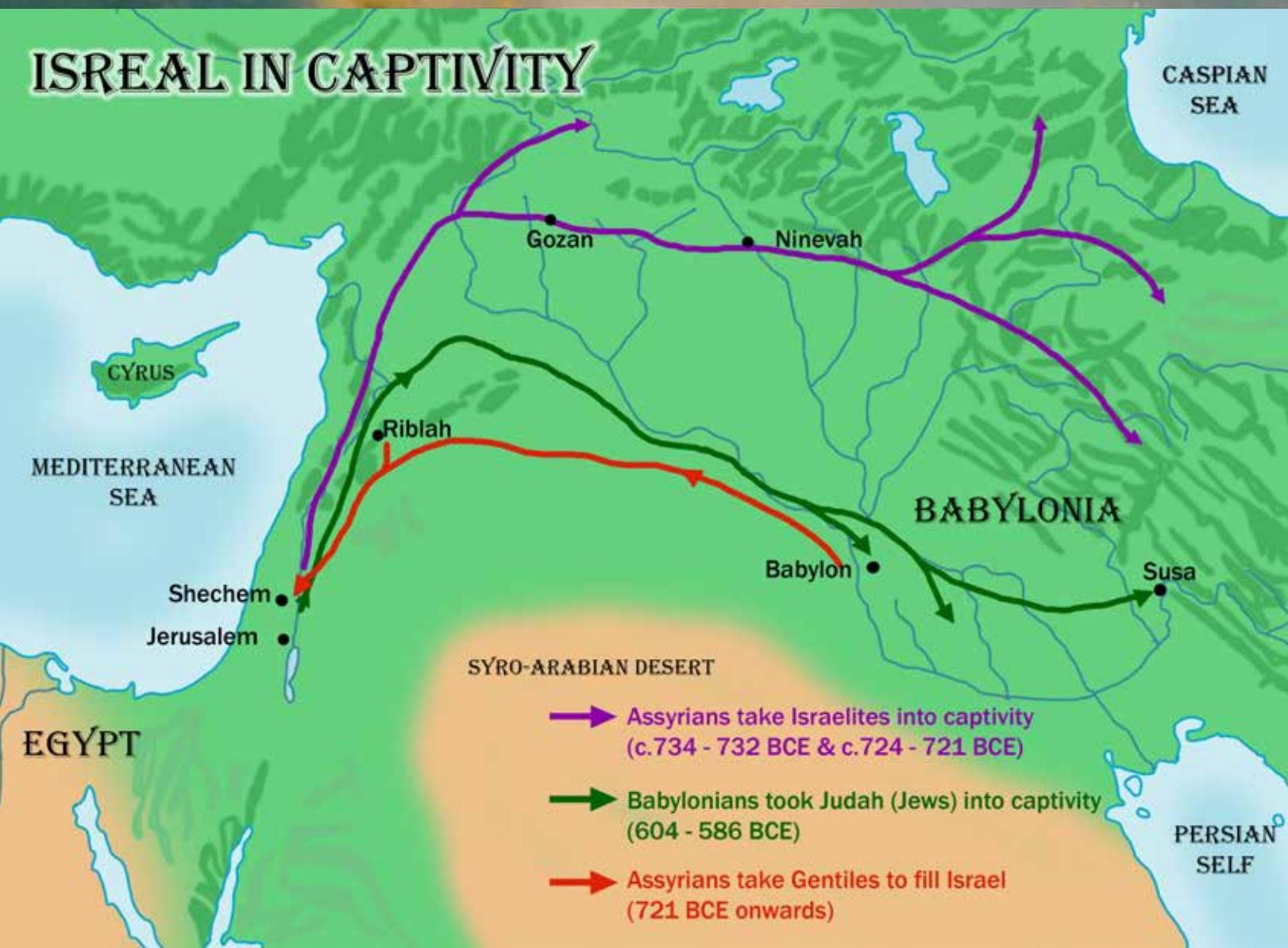


ISREAL IN CAPTIVITY



Kings and Prophets

1. Prophet Samuel - Last Judge of Israel

One day in the land Israel, Samuel, the last of the great judges, now an old man, was having a conversation with a young man who had come to meet him.

He spoke to the young man like a father speaking to his son: "It has been more than 300 years since Moses led us out of slavery in Egypt. By His mighty hand, the LORD struck Egypt with plagues and destroyed Pharaoh's army as Moses led our forefathers across the Red Sea."

Then Joshua led us across the Jordan. The LORD instructed us to conquer and take possession of this land. He gave us judges to help defeat our enemies. Ehud, Deborah, Gideon and then came an enemy we could not defeat; the Philistines. God gave us a mighty warrior, Samson. He caused much trouble for the Philistines. But he fell in love with a Philistine woman, Delilah. In the end he was betrayed by the woman and fell into the hands of the Philistines.

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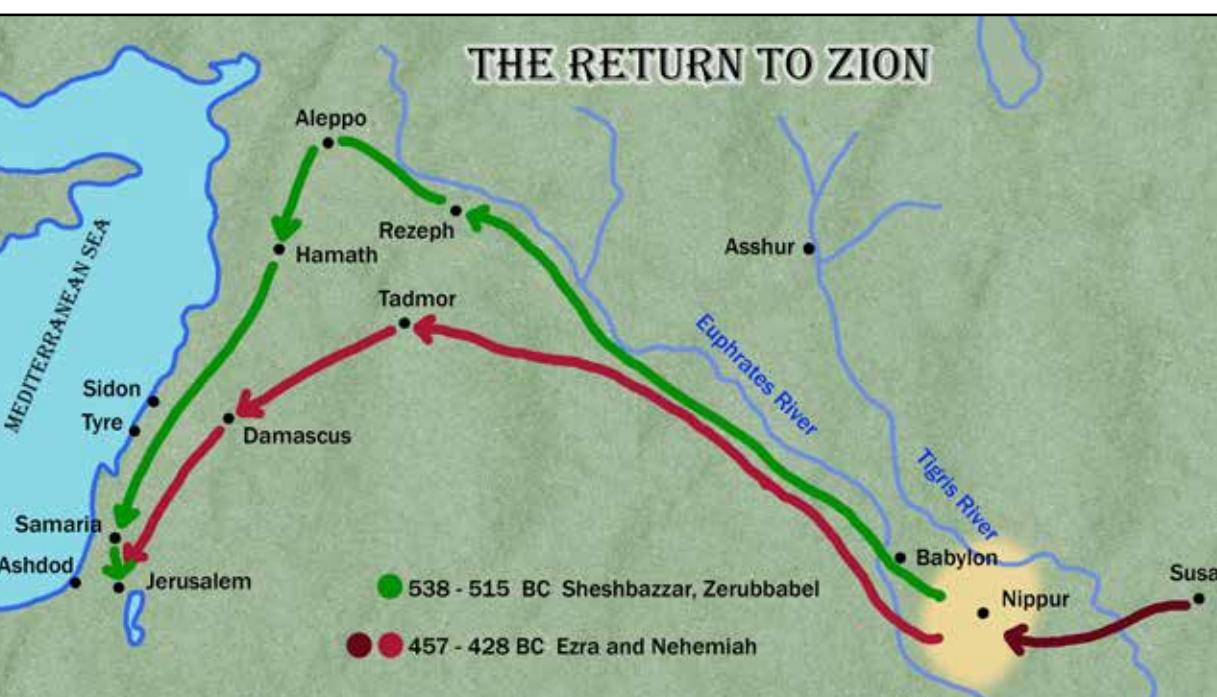
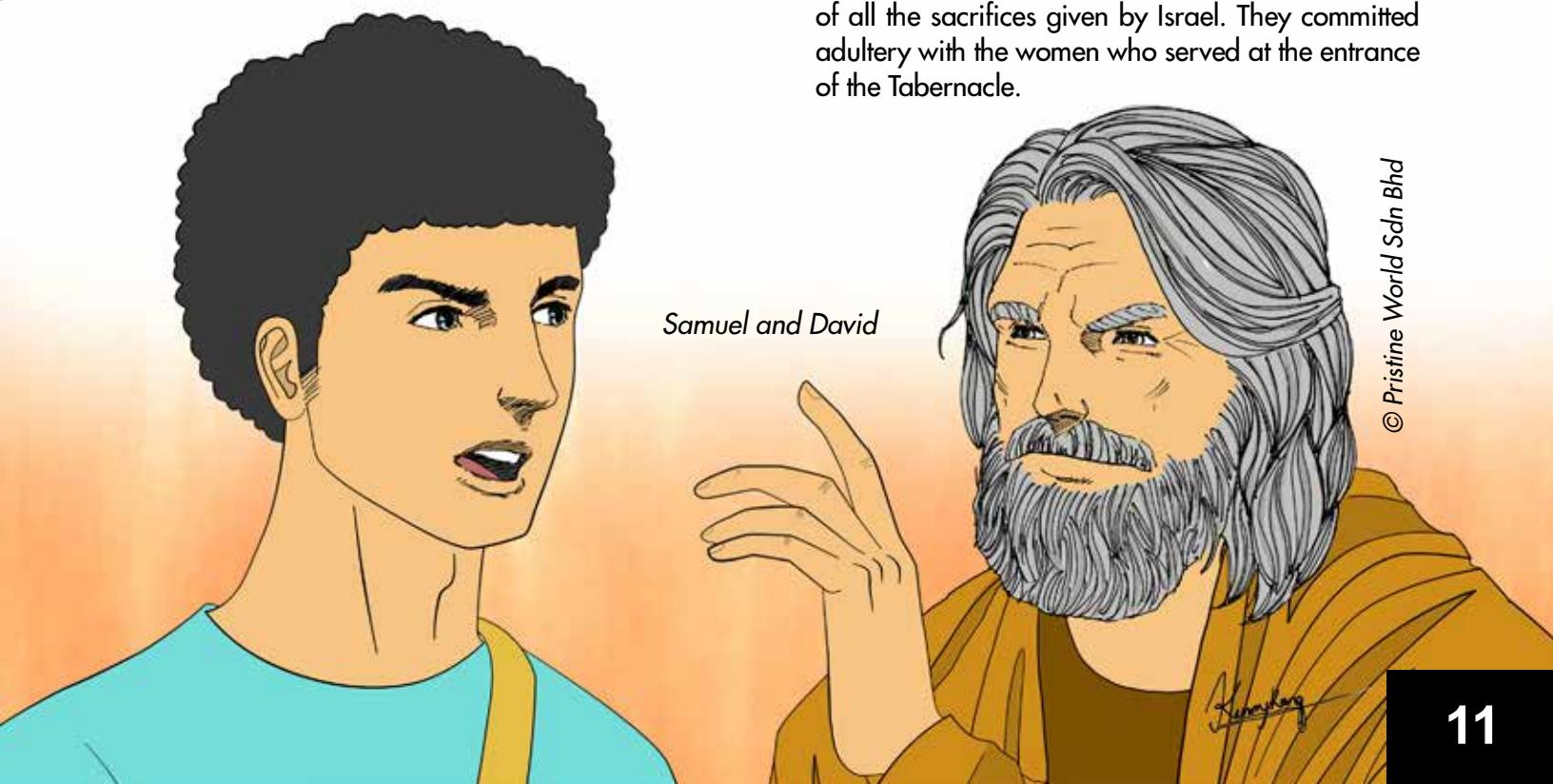
Samuel

Samuel was priest, prophet and judge of all Israel. He was unique in many ways. He was the last judge whose influence covered not just one or two tribes but all the tribes of Israel. He was also the first of the great prophets after Moses who was so influential that when the people wanted a central ruler, they turned to Samuel to find a king for them.

"About this time, Eli the priest was called to be a judge of Israel."

At the mention of the name Eli, the young man asked, "I have heard of Eli. Wasn't he the judge before you?"

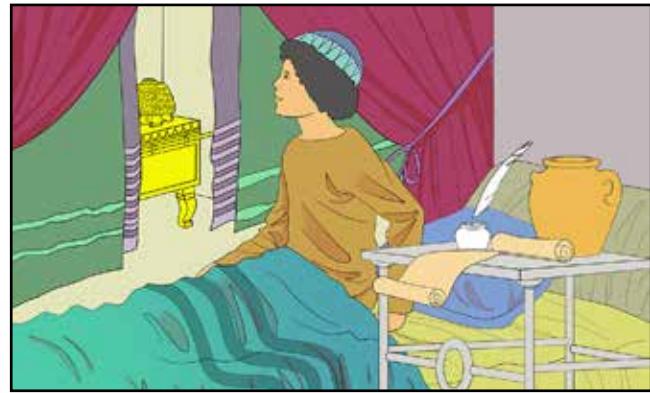
Old Samuel said, "Yes, I served Eli from my youth in the Tabernacle in Shiloh. Eli served the LORD well, but his sons did evil. They stole the best parts of all the sacrifices given by Israel. They committed adultery with the women who served at the entrance of the Tabernacle."



I was a young boy at that time and did not know that the LORD had already warned Eli to discipline his sons." The young man asked, "What happened then?"

Samuel replied, "One night while I was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark, I heard a voice calling, "Samuel, Samuel" I ran to old Eli and asked what he wanted. But Eli said he did not call me.

This happened three times before Eli realised that it was the LORD who was calling me and he told me what to do."



Samuel sitting on floor mattress inside a big tent with the Ark of Covenant nearby.

1 Sam 3:10-13

"What happened then?" asked the young man. Samuel continued, "I heard the voice again, 'Samuel, Samuel.' This time I answered, "Speak LORD, your servant is listening.

The LORD spoke to me: *"I am about to do a shocking thing in Israel. I am going to carry out all my threats against Eli and his family, from beginning to end. I have warned him that judgment is coming upon his family, forever, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn't disciplined them.* (NLT)



That was the first time the LORD spoke to me directly. The next morning I told Eli all that the LORD had said to me. Eli accepted the message from the LORD without protest. He knew he had failed in his duty to restrain his sons and that judgment was inevitable. 'It is the LORD's will,' Eli replied. Let him do what he thinks is best."

Then Samuel looked at the ground and continued, "Shortly after that there was a battle with the Philistines. **Israel's armies were defeated** and the **Ark of the Covenant was taken by the Philistines**. Eli's sons were killed and Eli also died when he heard the news.

On hearing this the young man asked, "and how did the Ark finally return to Israel?"

Samuel laughed, "By His mighty hand, the LORD sent plagues to whichever Philistine city that received the Ark and they were forced to send the Ark back to Israel ... but that is another story. Now, coming back to what happened to Eli.



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Israel's armies were defeated

The battle is described in detail in 1 Samuel 4 where Israel camped at Ebenezer and the Philistines camped at Aphek. After a first defeat, the Israelites brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battle field thinking that the presence of the Ark would help them win. But instead they were comprehensively defeated and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were killed in battle.

Ark of the Covenant was taken by the Philistines

The Ark of the Covenant was taken by the Philistines. Read 1 Samuel 5-6 on how the Ark was finally returned to the Israelites.

"Eli had failed to do the LORD's will and failed to heed the LORD's warning. I did not know it then, but the LORD had chosen me to replace him. Since then, the LORD has spoken to me many times and I

Battle. Israelites defeated and many killed in battle. Ark taken by Philistines.

have not failed to bring forth His word to Israel or to carry out His instructions. I was His spokesman, His prophet from Dan in the north to Beer-Sheba in the south."

Samuel paused for a while. Then he continued, "Many years passed. Then one day, the people and the elders of Israel gathered and approached me here in Ramah. They said to me, 'You are old and your sons are not like you. They accept bribes and pervert justice. Give us a king to judge us. We want a king like what the other nations have.'

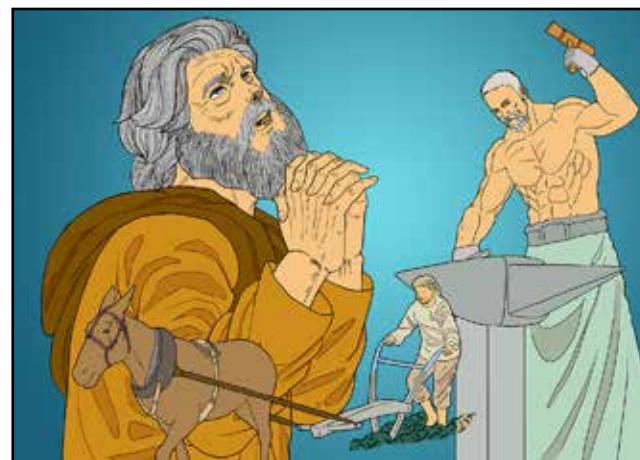
"I was so disappointed then. I cried before the LORD and asked Him what should I do now? The LORD said to me, ^{1 Sam 8:7} "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king."

⁸ As they have done from the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

⁹ Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights." ^(NIV)

Elders of Israel and people shouting with hands raised 'We want a king'.

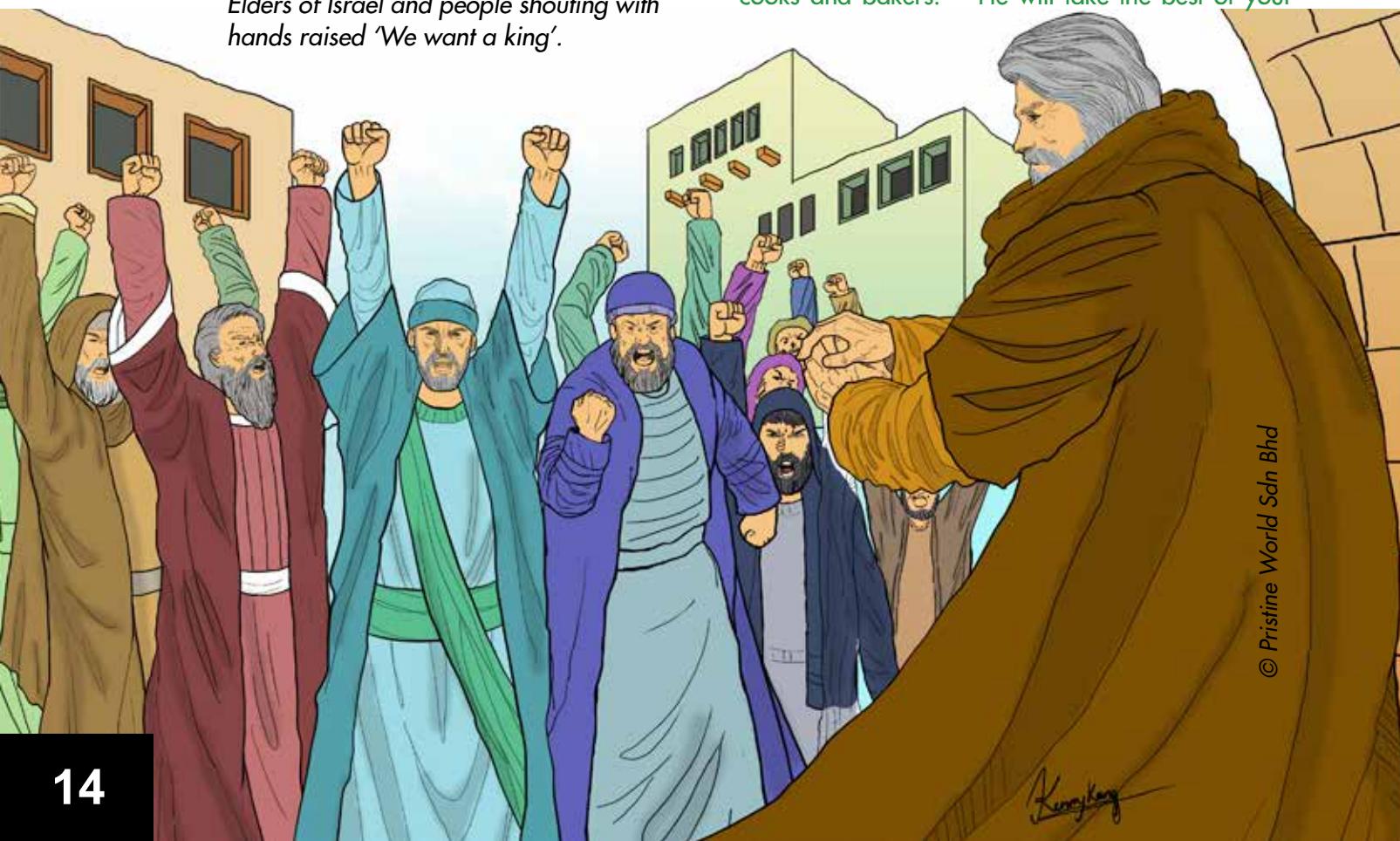
"I told them everything the LORD told me. ^{1 Sam 8:11} This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots.



Samuel tells the people what to expect of a king.

¹² Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest; and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your



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fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants.

He will tax you heavily, taking your grain, your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys for his own use. You might end up becoming his slaves. What will you do then?

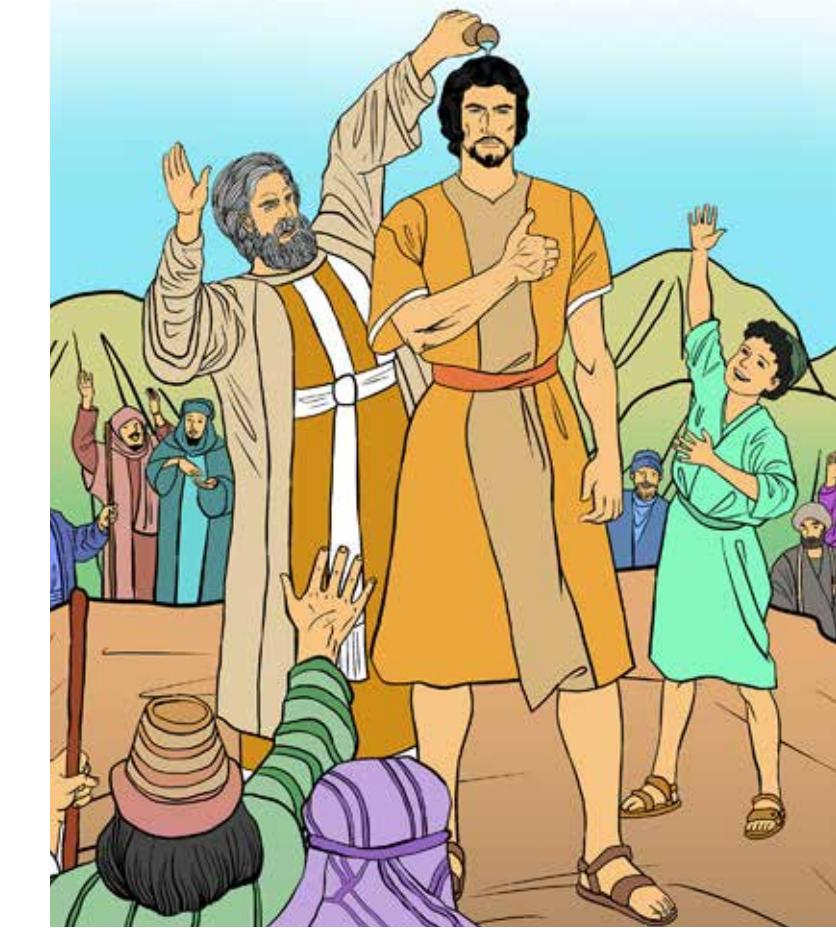
But the people answered, 'We want a king over us. Just like all the other nations, we want a king to lead us and go out before us and fight our battles. Find a king for us.'

The LORD said to me, ^{1 Sam 8:22} Listen to them and give them a king. And so I agreed to find a king for Israel and sent the people home.

Later, I anointed Saul, son of Kish and presented him to the elders and people in Mizpah. The people shouted, "Long live the king!" Then I explained to them the rights and duties of kingship. I wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. I did this so that the people would know what they could expect from a king and also in the hope of preventing abuses by the king. Yes ... I was the one who anointed Saul, and in the beginning he started well.

The young man turned to look at Samuel directly and said, "Then why did you anoint me? I was a contented shepherd taking care of my father's flocks. Today, I am a hunted fugitive. Hunted like a wild animal ... by the very person you anointed. Why?"

Samuel became sad and replied him, "Because Saul had failed to follow the instructions of the LORD. Many warnings were given to Saul. But he failed to heed the warnings." Then Samuel looked at the young man and a smile came to his face, "because of this, the LORD has chosen you to replace him."



Samuel anointing Saul in front of his family and tribe.

Lessons from the Story

1. The LORD chooses. But those who disobey his call run the danger of being replaced, especially if they continue to ignore His warnings. Just as Eli had been replaced by Samuel, Saul would be replaced by David.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why was Samuel so highly respected as a prophet of God?
2. Why did the people want a king to succeed Samuel?
3. Why did Samuel anoint a second king while the first king was still alive?