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Discover Your Bible Series

# Discover 1 SAMUEL



STUDY GUIDE

**STUDY GUIDE**

# *Discover* **1 SAMUEL**



by  
Steven L. Petroelje



Grand Rapids, Michigan

*The LORD said to Samuel . . . “People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

1 Samuel 16:7

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# How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says.

Questions are the key to discovery Bible study. Through questions you search for the writers' thoughts and ideas. The questions in this booklet are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they discover the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this booklet will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with Today's New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

**Step 1. Read each Bible passage several times.** Allow the ideas to sink in. Think about their meaning. Ask questions about the passage.

**Step 2. Answer the questions,** drawing your answers from the passage. Remember that the purpose of the study is to discover what the Bible says. Write your answers in your own words. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries or Bible handbooks, do so only after completing your own personal study.

**Step 3. Apply the Bible's message** to your own life. Ask,

- What is this passage saying to me?
- How does it challenge me? Comfort me? Encourage me?
- Is there a promise I should claim? A warning I should heed?
- For what can I give thanks?

If you sense God speaking to you in some way, respond to God in a personal prayer.

**Step 4. Share your thoughts with someone else** if possible. This will be easiest if you are part of a Bible study group that meets regularly to share discoveries and discuss questions.

If you would like to learn of a study group in your area or would like information on training to start a small group Bible study,

- call toll-free 1-888-644-0814, e-mail [smallgroups@crcna.org](mailto:smallgroups@crcna.org), or visit [www.smallgroupministries.org](http://www.smallgroupministries.org)
- call toll-free 1-800-333-8300 or visit [www.FaithAliveResources.org](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org) (to order materials)

# Introduction

The events of 1 Samuel bridge two major eras in the history of Israel. The priest and prophet Samuel becomes the last major judge of Israel, thus closing the period of judges—and he anoints the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David, thus opening the age of kings (monarchy).

Of course, God is and always will be the true King of his people. But history shows that Israel went through many stages of human leadership before the Son of God (Jesus) became human and established himself as King of all kings for the blessing of all nations—God’s plan from the beginning (see Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:11-16; Matt. 1:1-16; 28:16-20; Eph. 1:18-23; Rev. 1:4-5, 17-18; 21:1-7).

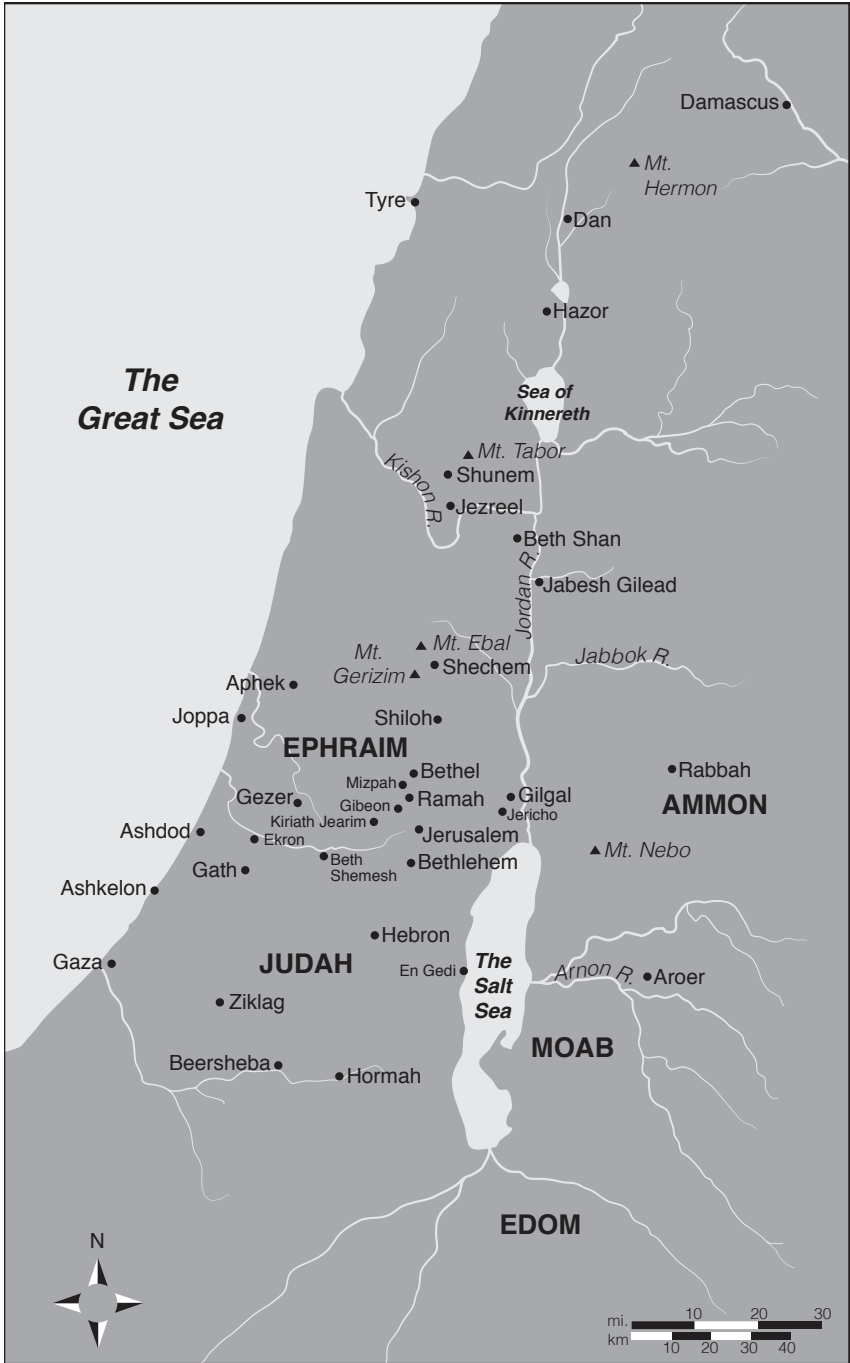
As we journey through 1 Samuel, we’ll focus on the characters of Samuel, Saul, and David. Their stories contribute powerfully to Israel’s vivid history. But, more important, we’ll also focus on God’s faithfulness and care for his people. God shaped and sustained this nation so that one day it could become a light to all others—by giving birth to the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

In Israel’s story we see parallels to our own: sin, rebellion against God, cries for God’s mercy. We also see a few examples of the people’s faithfulness to God—showing that God works in and through his people. Israel’s story in 1 Samuel reminds us again that “the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, [is] slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (Ex. 34:6-7). At various places in the story we also see signs and parallels pointing to Jesus.

God bless you as you study this book of the Bible together.

*Note:* Because of the narrative (storytelling) nature of 1 Samuel, some accounts covered in the lessons of this study are lengthy, spanning two or more chapters of Scripture. This may call for more reading than your group is used to, so you may wish to read ahead in your Bibles at home before doing some of the lessons together.

# Land of Israel in Samuel's Day





# Glossary of Terms

- Adullam**—a town in the western foothills of the territory of Judah in Israel (Josh. 15:35). David stayed alone in a cave near here while Saul was pursuing him to try to kill him (1 Sam. 22:1).
- Amalekites**—descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:12, 16); they had attacked God’s people when they were weary and newly released from Egypt (Ex. 17:8-15; Deut. 25:7-19; 1 Sam. 15:2-3).
- Ammonites**—descendants of Lot through his younger daughter (Gen. 19:36-38).
- ark of God, ark of the covenant**—a wooden chest overlaid with gold that was placed in the innermost room (Most Holy Place) of the tabernacle (tent of meeting) or, later, in the temple (1 Kings 8). It symbolized the presence of God among his people (see Ex. 25:10-22).
- Ashdod**—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, along with Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza. Ashdod was the location of the temple of Dagon, where the Philistines placed the ark of God after it was captured (1 Sam. 5:1-2)
- Ashkelon**—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. See **Ashdod**.
- Baal and Ashtoreth**—Canaanite god and goddess of fertility and war. The phrase “Baal and Ashtoreths” (1 Sam. 7:4) refers to idols that were used to worship Baal and Ashtoreth.
- Beersheba**—often referred to as the southernmost town in ancient Israel (see 1 Sam. 3:20).
- Benjamites**—Saul’s native tribe, the people of Benjamin (see 1 Sam. 9:1-2).
- Bethlehem**—the hometown of David (1 Sam. 16:1, 13); also the birthplace of Jesus, which by then was known as “the town of David” (Luke 2:1-21).
- burnt offerings**—sacrifices laid on an altar and completely burned.
- Carmel**—a town near Maon in the area of Hebron (1 Sam. 25:2); not to be confused with the place called Mt. Carmel, where the prophet Elijah met King Ahab and the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:16-46).
- covenant**—a mutually binding agreement between two parties; usually both parties agree to accept certain responsibilities.
- Dagon**—one of the main gods worshiped by the Philistines.
- Dan**—often referred to as the northernmost town in ancient Israel (see 1 Sam. 3:20).
- David**—the second king of Israel, beloved by God as a person “after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), a military genius, and the ancestor to the kings of Judah who ruled throughout the Old Testament. Jesus

of Nazareth, a descendant of David, filled the promised role of Son of David, Messiah, Son of God.

**Edom, Edomite**—Edom was the region inhabited by the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. Esau was also called Edom, and his descendants were the Edomites (see Gen. 25:21-34; 36:9).

**Ekron**—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. See **Ashdod**.

**Endor**—a town about six miles northwest of Shunem (see map). Saul and his attendants went there to visit a medium (1 Sam. 28:7).

**En Gedi**—a desert area with an oasis fed by warm, fresh-water springs on the west shore of the Dead Sea. David and his men fled to the mountain strongholds there and hid from Saul (1 Sam. 23:29).

**ephod**—a special garment worn by the high priest (Ex. 28:6-14). It had a pouch containing lots that the priest would use for inquiring the will of the Lord. See **lot casting**.

**Gath**—the place where David and his men fled in Philistine territory to get away from Saul, who was trying to kill them (see 1 Sam. 19:10; 27:2). Gath is one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. See **Ashdod**.

**Gaza**—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. See **Ashdod**.

**Gibeah**—Saul's hometown in the territory of Benjamin (1 Sam. 10:26). Its location was near Ramah but is not known (see Judg. 19:13-14). There was also a Gibeah in the hill country of Ephraim (Josh. 24:33), and another Gibeah in Judah (Josh. 15:20, 57).

**Gilboa**—a cluster of mountains near Jezreel where Saul fought his last battle (see 1 Sam. 28:4; 29:1; 31:1).

**the Glory of Israel**—a reference to God (1 Sam. 15:29). Some people in Israel confused the Glory with the ark of the covenant, a symbol of God's presence among the people. That confusion led to a serious mistake, in which some treated the ark almost as a god or as a good-luck charm (see 1 Sam. 4:3-11, 22). See also **ark of God**.

**Hebrews**—descendants of Abraham. Abraham's descendants through Jacob (Israel) became known as Israelites.

**house of the Lord**—the place of the worship of God in Israel. In the days of Samuel this "house" consisted of a large tent ("the tabernacle") consisting of chambers and exquisitely crafted furnishings for use in worship. The ark of God rested within its innermost chamber, the Most Holy Place. During the time of Eli the priest, the house of the Lord was at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1:3; 3:1-3; 4:3). After Shiloh was destroyed by the Philistines, the tabernacle was apparently moved to Nob (21:1; see **Nob**).

**Israelites**—the descendants of Israel (Jacob).

**Jesse**—the father of David. Jesse was a son of Obed and grandson of Ruth and Boaz.

- Jonathan**—a son of Saul and close friend of David (1 Sam. 18:1-4; 20:42).
- Keilah**—a town in the western foothills of the territory of Judah in Israel (Josh. 15:44). At the Lord’s direction, David and his four hundred men rescued this town from the Philistines (1 Sam. 23:1-6).
- lamp of God**—a temple lamp that burned oil and symbolized the presence of God (1 Sam. 3:3).
- lot casting**—In ancient Israel, lot casting was used to inquire of the will of God. The lots approved by God for use in Israel were the Urim and Thummim, to be placed in the breastpiece of the sacred ephod worn by the priest of God (Ex. 28:30). See Numbers 27:18-21 for the Lord’s instructions on lot casting in Joshua’s day. Note as well that the land divisions in Canaan were determined by lot (Num. 26:55-56; 33:54; 34:13-17).
- lyre**—a stringed musical instrument similar to a harp.
- Maon**—a town in the area of Hebron, near a town named Carmel. Nabal and Abigail lived in that area (1 Sam. 25:2-3).
- mediums and spiritists**—people who seek to speak and consult with the dead, an exercise forbidden by God (see Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:9-13).
- Moabites**—descendants of Lot through his older daughter (Gen. 19:36-38). David’s great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabite who married Boaz of the tribe of Judah (Ruth 1:3; 4:10, 21-22).
- Naioth**—This word means “dwellings” and probably refers to a complex or compound in Ramah where a local company of prophets lived. Samuel took David there when he was running from Saul (1 Sam. 19:18-20).
- Negev**—a hilly desert region in southern Israel where David spent time on the run from Saul.
- Nob**—described in the *TNIV Study Bible* as “a town northeast of Jerusalem and south of Gibeah where the tabernacle [house of the Lord] was relocated after the destruction of Shiloh” (see 1 Sam. 4:1-10; Jer. 7:12-15).
- Paran**—a desert area in the Sinai peninsula to which David fled from Saul after Samuel died (1 Sam. 25:1).
- Philistines**—descendants of a grandson of Noah’s son Ham (Gen. 10:6, 13-14) who, in the time of the early judges, occupied a strip of land along the Great (Mediterranean) Sea from Gaza to Egypt. By the time of Saul and David, the Philistines had grown powerful in metalworking and warfare (1 Sam. 13:16-22), and they continually attacked and often captured portions of Israel.

**priests**—a powerful class of religious rulers in Israel who cared for the ark, made God’s will known through the drawing of sacred lots, conducted worship, and oversaw sacrifices.

**prophet**—one who speaks God’s message to the people. Samuel was an effective, faithful prophet.

**Rachel’s tomb**—Rachel was one of the two wives of Jacob (Israel), and she died giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, while the family was on the road to Ephrath (Bethlehem—see Gen. 35:16-20). Benjamin became the father of the Benjamites, the tribe of Israel into which Saul was born (1 Sam. 9:1-2). So Rachel’s tomb, near the town of Ramah (Samuel’s hometown—7:17), marked the birthplace of Benjamin and later became a border marker for the land allotted to the tribe of Benjamin in Israel (10:2). (See also Jer. 31:15; 40:1; Matt. 2:16-18.)

**Ramah**—A town of Benjamin that was the birthplace, home, and burial place of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:19-20; 7:17; 25:1; 28:3; see also 1:1).

**sacrifice**—the act of offering something precious to God. In the Old Testament this was usually an animal (the best of the flock) or the firstfruits of a harvest.

**Samuel**—a faithful priest and prophet who was also the last major judge in Israel. He anointed the first two kings of Israel, thus opening a new era in the history of God’s people.

**Saul**—the first king of Israel; he was not fully devoted to the Lord, so God rejected him as king and anointed David to succeed him.

**Shiloh**—the town where the house of the Lord, with the ark of God, was kept. Eli and his sons served there. The ark rested there until it was captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:1-11).

**Spirit of the Lord**—In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon certain individuals to empower them to accomplish certain tasks or missions for the Lord.

**stronghold**—a military location of strength and defense.

**uncircumcised**—not having the male foreskin removed through circumcision; this term was used to describe those who did not worship the God of Israel (1 Sam. 17:26). All males in Israel over eight days old were to be circumcised to be included in God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-14).

**Urim and Thummim**—marked stones worn in a pouch over the high priest’s heart and used as sacred lots to discern God’s will (see 1 Sam. 28:6 and **lot casting**).

**Ziph, Ziphites**—Ziph was a town in the area of Hebron. David stayed in the desert of Ziph for a while when he was running from Saul. On two occasions the Ziphites told Saul that David was hiding out there (1 Sam. 23:19; 26:1).

# Lesson 1

1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

## Samuel's Early Years

### Introductory Notes

The book of 1 Samuel opens with the background story about Samuel's family in Israel. This account begins in a stormy period of Israel's history when judges and priests led the people of God (with limited success) to worship the Lord and keep his commands (see Deut. 5:28-33; Josh. 24:24). In those days, as always, God was the true leader of his people, but the people often rejected God and turned to live their own way—and because of sin, that always led toward destruction.

The Bible reveals a pattern that repeated dismally throughout this period (see Judg. 2:10-19):

- Israel would reject God and worship other gods.
- God would eventually punish Israel's sinfulness by giving them over to enemy nations, who would plunder and oppress them.
- When the people cried out to God and repented of their sins, God would raise up a deliverer (a judge) to help them defeat their enemies in the name of the Lord and lead them in peace for a while.
- "When the judge died, the people [would return] to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors" (Judg. 2:19).

The people became stuck in this downward spiral for nearly 300 years before the time of Samuel. As the closing line of the book of Judges says, characterizing the whole period, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit" (Judg. 21:25).

But, of course, some people remained faithful, because God worked faithfully in and through them.

With these things in mind, let's see what the Bible teaches about God and his people in the book of 1 Samuel.





*Questions for Reflection*

What have these first chapters of 1 Samuel taught us about God?  
About God's people?

In what ways does Hannah's story encourage us to trust in the Lord?  
How can you share that encouragement with others?



# Discover Your Bible Series

## *Bible Studies for Small Groups*

The events of 1 Samuel bridge two major eras in the story of Israel. This book witnesses the close of the period of judges and the opening of the age of kings.

As you stroll through 1 Samuel, you'll grow to know the characters of Samuel, Saul, and David. Their stories contribute powerfully to Israel's vivid history. Even more important, you'll ponder God's faithfulness and his care for his people. God shaped and sustained Israel so that one day it could become a light to all others through the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

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