

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 456

1 Samuel 11

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Episode Summary

1 Samuel 11 explores the inauguration of Saul's reign as king of Israel. In the previous chapter, the prophet Samuel had given Saul several signs that his anointing was genuine and from the Lord. That validation ended with Samuel's directive that Saul accompany him to Gilgal to renew the covenant. Saul failed to do this. In this chapter of 1 Samuel, we discover what Saul did instead of going to Gilgal. In one respect, the chapter records Saul's lone real success as king with a victory over the Ammonites. But in another respect, it again sets the tone for Saul's unfitness to be king. On a wider, more surprising note, this chapter also seems to reveal a connection back to the serpent of Genesis 3 as part of a motif that Israel's kings were expected to be fulfillments of the promise of the seed of the woman overcoming the serpent.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 456: 1 Samuel 11. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike! How are you?

MH: I think the better question is, "How are you?" You had a pretty busy weekend, didn't you?

TS: I did. My kids are playing basketball for their schools and we had eight games over three days. They both had a regular season game followed by two tournaments, so I've been busy, busy, busy watching basketball. The good thing is that my son won the consolation bracket. They lost their first game but then they won the consolation. And then my daughter's team won the championship in their tournament, so that was good.

MH: Oh wow! Congratulations!

TS: Yeah, so it's that time in my life where the kids are just now starting sports (7th and 8th grade). That's just basically what my life is about right now.

MH: It pretty much monopolizes your time, yeah.

TS: Yeah, which is great because I waited over a decade for this time to come [laughs]. Because everybody knows I'm a big sports guy. So to have my kids play is fun to watch. The best Christmas gift, Mike! Since Christmas is basically this week (tomorrow)...

MH: Right around the corner, yeah. Nothing like that going on here. The only marathon we have over Christmas is we all get together and watch the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. I don't think we're going to be able to do it back-to-back-to-back but we get it in during the Christmas season.

TS: Do you watch *The Hobbit* before?

MH: No, just the *Lord of the Rings*. Just those three.

TS: Well, that's a good tradition. I think *Avatar* is out, so I think we might try to go see *Avatar* in the theater here pretty soon. I'm excited. It's only been what? Over 10 or 12 years. How long has it been? It's been a long time! [laughs] Did you like *Avatar*? Did y'all watch it?

MH: I've never seen it.

TS: Oh my gosh, Mike!

MH: I didn't see the original.

TS: Perfect timing, then. Now you can watch 1 and 2 back-to-back. You've got to watch it. It's really good.

MH: I have no sense of anticipation at all. [laughs]

TS: That's a good thing. Then you'll be pleasantly surprised. You've got to see it, though. It's a really good story.

MH: Well, maybe I'll give the original a watch then.

TS: I can only imagine you're going to tie that in with Samuel 11 somehow.

MH: [laughing] It has something to do with serpents... I don't know! Are there serpents in *Avatar*?

TS: No, not necessarily.

MH: Anything like that?

TS: Ah? No, not necessarily. But I mean, you could make some kind of point there somehow or some way.

MH: Make something out of it, yeah.

TS: Well, I'll let you know at the end of the episode.

MH: We'll see, we'll see.

Let's just jump in here. This is 1 Samuel 11. The serpent-talk might sound surprising, but if you listened to the last episode, I sort of ended the last episode with a hint that 1 Samuel 11 has something to do with the serpent of Genesis 3. We're going to explore that. I'm not entirely sold on the idea of it. I want to expose the audience to it just to let you all know about it, then you can judge that and see what you think.

But let's start in here, and I'll read the passage first. It's not very long so we can read the whole thing. This is Saul's defeat of the Ammonites, at least on the surface. But again, there might be something lurking underneath here. So 1 Samuel 11 (reading from the ESV) says:

Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you."² But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes, and thus bring disgrace on all Israel."³ The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you."⁴ When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud.

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⁵ Now, behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen. And Saul said, "What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the news of the men of Jabesh. ⁶ And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. ⁷ He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man. ⁸ When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. ⁹ And they said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the men of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have salvation.' " When the messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, they were glad. ¹⁰ Therefore the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." ¹¹ And the next day Saul put the people in three companies. And they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. And those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

¹² Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." ¹³ But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel." ¹⁴ Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom." ¹⁵ So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

So what's the passage about? Well, the passage explores what Saul did instead of going to Gilgal in the first place after Samuel requested that he do after the public declaration that Saul had been anointed king in the previous chapter. In that sense, it details what Saul was doing amid his failure—his failure to initially obey Samuel to go up to Gilgal. But on the other hand, it also details Saul's lone real success, since 1 Samuel 11 ends with Samuel again exhorting Saul to go to Gilgal along with the rest of the people. We can view what happens with the Ammonites as something desirable, but for a later time. Saul's disobedience came in disregarding Samuel's request and the timing of the events, but God still allowed him to accomplish what he did versus the Ammonites.

So in a nutshell, that's what we just read in 1 Samuel 11, but there's a wider picture here and I want to jump right into this because you probably already picked up on it. Saul is fighting Nahash, which is the same word as in Genesis 3 for the serpent. It just happens to be the king of the Ammonites, as he's identified a little bit later in chapter 12. But we can intuit that in chapter 11 (what we just read).

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So what's up with Nahash, the Ammonite? There's a canonical perspective here that some have argued for that I want to expose everyone to. We'll just see what these sources have to say. We can accept it, we can embrace it, or we can just wonder about it. I think it's interesting enough to bring it up. I'm going to be interacting with a relatively new book here. The book is by Brian Verrett: *The Serpent in Samuel: A Messianic Motif*. It's published by Wipf and Stock in 2020. There are two important resources that started Verrett down this path that he credits in his book for sort of stimulating him to go in this direction. One is John Ronning's dissertation from Westminster called "The Curse on the Serpent (Genesis 3:15) in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics," 1997. And there's also an article by James Hamilton called "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15" in *Southern Baptist Theological Journal*, Vol. 10, 2006. These are a good bit before Verrett's book, which was 2020, but you can already see the idea that the promise in Genesis 3:15 that there would be a seed of the woman who would crush the serpent (bruise his head or crush his head, however you want to take that passage)... There is something here in 1 Samuel 11 and in other places in 1 Samuel that have something to do with the fulfillment of this idea.

In the Foreword, Verrett identifies for us how the book of Samuel utilizes the serpent motif to foretell the triumph of the messiah over the serpent as the means for initiating the new creations. Verrett argues that 1 and 2 Samuel contain allusions to the serpent of Genesis 3 by means of the use of vocabulary that appears in Genesis 3 or would suggest something about the serpent of Genesis 3 in a variety of places. And this is the most overt example: 1 Samuel 11 with Nahash, king of the Ammonites. But Goliath is another example. Obviously, we're not going to get to Goliath yet. That's in 1 Samuel 17. But I just want to read this one paragraph so you get the idea. Verrett writes:

1 Sam 17: 5 says that Goliath's armor is scaly (קַשְׂקָשִׁים; qaśqaśsim— a word always used for the skin of a sea creature. According to most, David then crushes Goliath's forehead with a stone. He then falls with his face— and therefore mouth— to the ground immediately before David decapitates his head. Perhaps

the text intends to allude to Gen 3, when God's judgment falls on a scaly foe whose mouth is on the ground and who dies from a strike to his head.

You see just from that paragraph that on the surface it looks like there is some relationship going on between part of the way Goliath is described and what goes on in Genesis 3. So Verrett's thesis that he's going to take into the book and he's going to deal with in 1 Samuel 11 at least, if we're going to try to describe how he's going to do this... His thesis is this:

My thesis is that the Samuel narrative contains a serpent motif and that this motif's significance within Samuel is to present the seed of David as the promised seed of the woman from Gen 3:15 who will defeat the serpent and reign as king in the new creation.

Now Verrett devotes space to studying the serpent motif in general in his book. He argues, for instance, that the serpent is one who opposes God or expresses enmity against God by questioning and contradicting God's word, tempting and deceiving God's people, and exercising authority over humanity. He also argues that the serpent was no mere snake. He is a cosmic enemy of God, and as the biblical story moves on, he's the enemy of God's messiah. That ought to sound familiar because in *Unseen Realm*, I argue that we're not dealing with just a member of the animal kingdom in Genesis 3. Verrett also argues that there are numerous key words and concepts that later biblical authors could use to allude back to the serpent from Genesis 3. And lastly, the point of the Lord's promise of the seed of the woman was not only to defeat the serpent but also to restore the world and humanity to an Edenic-like state, in which none of the serpent's influence or effects appear.

Now Leithart, in his commentary on Samuel (we've quoted him before in previous episodes), he's aware of this motif and I like the way he captures its use. He writes:

Israel's new Adam-like kings must crush the heads of their adversaries.

So this is what they're kind of angling for—what Verrett, especially, is angling for in his treatment of 1 Samuel 11. So to expand a little bit on it, in other words, the kingship to which the Torah and other biblical material refers to positively (we've tracked on that ground before a couple episodes ago)... The positive kingship to which the Torah (the biblical material) refers are successive fulfillments of Genesis 3:15, leading to the ultimate king—the Messiah—who would be from Judah. Each king, ideally, was supposed to be the spiritual leader par excellence,

redefeating the earthly and cosmic enemies of God and God's people. Remember when we talked about the positive kingship idea, it was this idea that the king was supposed to be the spiritual leader. That was the kind of king God wanted. Saul, it's going to turn out, isn't that man. But this was the goal.

15:00 Secondly, we should recall that the people wanted a different kind of king—a military deliverer for national security. They do not have a spiritual leader in mind when they express the desire to have a king like other nations' kings. Those kings were military leaders, not Torah followers. And those kings would take military affairs into their own hands, not consulting Yahweh through the priesthood or the Urim and Thummim or whatever, like a Moses or a Joshua would do. They want a judgeship made permanent for earthly safety and deliverance. God's king was supposed to be more than that.

Thirdly, the choice of Saul is designed to give the people what they're asking for, while judging that king by God's standards. In other words, God says "yes" to their request for a king, knowing the desire for this sort of a king was a rejection of him, but he still would have honored Saul if he had the heart to be the spiritual leader God desired. We learn that in 1 Samuel 13:13. Let me just read that to you. This is when we get to when Saul sort of caves and really, really fails and has the kingship taken from him.

¹³ And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

And so Samuel had told Saul that he had a shot to be God's king—God's man—but he fails. God would have honored Saul had he succeeded, but he doesn't. God knew Saul, unfortunately, and this was ultimately a recipe for failure (his selection). But God was at work behind the scenes early on to elevate his own choice of king, which would be David. Once David was on the scene and anointed, the real kingship model was in place—the man after God's own heart (again, the spiritual leader). Hence, God made a covenant with David instead, extending kingship to his lineage.

Now, there's a more narrow literary context. That's sort of the big canonical look. Verritt takes an extended look at the relationship between Judges 19-21 and 1 Samuel 1-2. He's going to lay something out here that he's going to ultimately hook back into Genesis 3 (the serpent idea). Here he argues:

Samuel continues to anticipate the king Israel needed in Judg 17– 21 if they are ever to do what is right in the Lord’s eyes.

The compositional/thematic unity between Judges and Samuel...

...encourages the reader to identify the anticipated king at the conclusion of the book of Judges with the Messiah in Samuel.

In other words, if you remember the end of the book of Judges when there's just sort of a meltdown in society and there's some awfully wicked things going on... In the later chapters of Judges, the prostitute was killed and chopped up and parts of her sent to all areas of Israel. We have the near extermination of a tribe of Israel (the tribe of Benjamin). We have all these things happening at the end of the book of Judges. And what Verrett is arguing is that there are things happening at the end of those chapters that are going to get picked up in Samuel, because in the books of Samuel, we're supposed to get the solution to this. We're supposed to get the right kind of king. But of course, that's only going to come with David; it's not going to come with Saul. What Verrett is trying to argue is that 1 and 2 Samuel associate language from Judges 19-21 with the ministry of Samuel the kingmaker, who will ultimately anoint David as God's own choice above the people's choice for a king. And this is what happens. And it's especially true in 1 Samuel 1 and 2 in the way the story is told about Samuel's own rise and his own place and position as the replacement for the Elide family of priests, and ultimately his status as kingmaker.

So the storyline of 1 Samuel casts Saul as the solution to the problem of the book of Judges, but it ends with the absence of a king. So they start with Saul but they're not going to end with Saul because Saul is going to fail. And in effect, Verrett argues that Samuel casts Saul as though he were the solution—as though he were Messiah—in his victory over Nahash (over the serpent) in order to echo the seed of the woman's eschatological victory over the serpent from Genesis 3:14-15. But ultimately, all of that is going to extend to David. Now, Verrett's argument in more detail... He writes as follows:

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First Samuel 10 begins with Samuel privately anointing Saul as king over Israel (10: 1). The chapter then details how God chose Saul as king through lots because Israel had previously asked for a king (8: 5; 10: 24). Chapter 10 concludes with individuals rejecting Saul’s kingship (v. 27). First Samuel 11 ends by Israel

publicly declaring Saul as their king (11: 15). Thus, within the narrative's flow, the Nahash account is the means by which the nation recognizes Saul as its king.

In his own commentary, David Tsumura agrees about 1 Samuel 11:

The present chapter marks the transition from Samuel's judgeship to Saul's kingship. Here Saul is formally established as king.

As far as similarities between Judges 19-21 and 1 Samuel 11, Verrett has scoured the literature and draws attention to several studies and observations. He notes that:

Polzin [MH: I think his first name is Robert] (Samuel and the Deuteronomist) points out that both stories concentrate on the towns of Jabesh-Gilead and Gibeah (Judg 19: 12– 16; 21: 8– 10; 1 Sam 11: 1, 4, 9). They also both feature "right" (ימין) and "eye" (עין) language (Judg 19: 14; 21: 2; 1 Sam 11: 2, 10). Both stories also contain the otherwise unparalleled request of people saying, "Bring the men that we may put them to death" (Judg 20: 13; 1 Sam 11: 12).

So there are connections between the end of the book of Judges and 1 Samuel 11.

Fokkelman [MH: another literary scholar] (Narrative Art and Poetry in the books of Samuel, vol. IV: Vow and Desire) notices additional similarities. Both texts [Judges 19-21 and 1 Samuel 11] contain a man chopping up someone or something in order to rally Israel to enter battle (Judg 19: 29; 1 Sam 11: 7). Once Israel gathers for battle, both texts say that they gather "as one man" (Judg 20: 1, 8, 11; 1 Sam 11: 7). Furthermore, both texts contain "sons of worthlessness" who act wickedly (Judg 19: 22; 20: 13; 1 Sam 10: 27; cf. 11: 12).

Lastly, Tsumura recognizes that after both texts record the cutting of the concubine and oxen (cutting this victim in pieces—one is a woman and the other is this yoke of oxen), the pieces are sent "throughout all the territory of Israel (Judg 19: 29; 1 Sam 11: 3, 7)."

So I go through all that just to establish the fact that there is a connection between Judges 19-21, the early chapters of 1 Samuel, and 1 Samuel 11. Verrett wants to point this out because the problem at the end of the book of Judges is that Israel needs a king because everything is going crazy. And we're going to get a king through the kingmaker, Samuel, in the books of Samuel. And that king is going to be Saul and he's going to prove his worth [audio breaks up] in beating

the serpent. Again, it's the same word as occurs in Genesis 3.

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So what's the point? The point is these interconnections between these two passages show us that 1 Samuel 11 marks the beginning of the solution of the chaotic state of affairs of the Judges period. That is, Saul's kingship begins in 1 Samuel 11, but his kingship, unfortunately, will be short-lived because of his spiritual ineptitude, whereas it could have been something that God would have honored. (We just read that verse in 1 Samuel 13.) Samuel, unfortunately, is going to have to judge Saul. Saul is going to overstep Samuel's priestly authority as we keep reading past chapter 11, and his kingship is going to be very short-lived, due to the state of affairs Israel is left in at the end of Judges and the demise of the Elide priesthood. Samuel is God's prophet to fill the spiritual void and Saul was supposed to honor Samuel's status and leadership. But he doesn't do that, and so the whole arrangement just sort of falls flat when it could have succeeded quite well. And we get hints of how it could have succeeded in 1 Samuel 11.

Now what about Saul as the seed of the woman (this messianic figure) in light of the connection between these two sections? Verrett writes as follows:

The Nahash narrative in 1 Sam 11 contrasts material from Judg 19– 21. In Judges, after sexual abuse occurred, disseminating human body parts throughout the tribes caused Israel to assemble as one man to battle against one of its own tribes because Israel had no king. In Samuel, Saul disseminates oxen parts throughout Israel to rally Israel as one man in order to battle against a foreign people (Ammonites 1 Sam 11) because Israel did have a king (1 Sam 10: 24). First Samuel 11 uses Saul's rise to kingship to present Saul as the king who remedies the problems in Judg 19– 21. Since 1 Sam 1: 1– 2: 11 presents the Messiah as the one who will reverse the problems of Judg 17– 21, Saul comes off as though he were the Messiah in 1 Sam 11 when he appears to be the expected king from Judges's conclusion. It is on account of Saul's messianic presentation that 1 Sam 11 encourages the reader to interpret Nahash as a character within Samuel's serpent motif. We have seen... that Gen 3: 14– 15 anticipates that the seed of the woman, the royal eschatological deliverer, will defeat the royal serpent (נחש) that reigns as king over this world. Building on Judg 19– 21 and 1 Sam 1: 1– 2: 11, the Nahash narrative casts Saul as if he was the promised Messiah from 1 Sam 2: 10, whom Samuel presents as the royal eschatological deliverer from the Pentateuch. 294 Seen in this messianic light, one would expect Saul to defeat the serpent and thereby secure his royal kingship. This is exactly what one finds in 1 Sam 11. By

conquering Nahash (נחש), the serpent-king, Saul, the “Messiah,” delivers Israel and secures his kingship.

Again, he's going to lose it in a matter of moments, but this is the overall big picture. I just wanted to read through some of that stuff. I know it's dense, but just to suggest to you that there's really something going on here between the end of the book of Judges, the beginning of the book of Samuel, and 1 Samuel 11 being a portrayal of Saul as a defeater of Nahash—defeater of the serpent. Are we over-reading the passage? Well, Verrett might be. Again, I think it's interesting enough to point out that there could be something like this going on in the book itself.

So let's move on to a few nuggets in 1 Samuel 11—a few more down-to-earth observations about the passage. In terms of vocabulary, the most obvious thing is the term *nachash*. Verrett (and others he brings alongside him to help him make his case) point out that the king of the Ammonites bears the name Nahash—the term translated "serpent" in Genesis 3. Consequently, are references to *nachash* in 1 and 2 Samuel allusions to or comments on or hooks back into Genesis 3? Well, again, they might be. That's what Verrett is suggesting. *Nachash* is mentioned in 1 Samuel 11:1-2 and also in 1 Samuel 12:12 and later on in 2 Samuel 10:2 and 17:25-27. So *nachash* shows up later in the book as well. It's not going to be in connection with Saul, it's going to be in connection with David. So maybe there is something to this—that this *nachash* figure sort of winds its way through the book of Samuel and we're supposed to think of Genesis 3 and the messianic promise of a king—a human deliverer, the seed of the woman. Maybe we're supposed to think of the king (THAT king—ultimately David) as being the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. In one sense, we already know that much of Verrett's case is true because David is going to be the man after God's own heart. David is going to be the one God makes the covenant with to be the messianic king, who is ultimately going to be fulfilled in the messiah (Jesus), who has victory over the serpent. So again, maybe there could be something to this.

What about the Ammonites? The Ammonites are kind of interesting. This is the same group of people that had earlier cleared out the Transjordan. Ammon is a nation on the other side of the Jordan. They had cleared out the Transjordan of giant Rephaim that the Ammonites referred to as "Zamzummim." This is the same bunch or the same people group. Moses and Joshua let them alone for that reason, at God's instruction back in Deuteronomy 2:19-21. The fact that the Ammonites were loosely related to Abraham through a son born to Lot

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(Abraham's nephew) also seems to be part of the reason God told Moses and Joshua not to harass the Ammonites. But here in Samuel, the Ammonites were guilty of opening hostilities against Israel at a later time. I'm going to read a little bit from Harper's Bible Dictionary, which notes about the Ammonites as follows:

[The Ammonites were] a people who lived east of the Jordan River, in the area of the modern state of Jordan. According to Gen. 19:30–38, a son was born to Lot, Abraham's nephew, named Ben Ammi. This child is reputed to be the progenitor of the Ammonites. Conflicts between Ammon and Israel arose early in Israel's history. Sometime after the Israelites had entered the land of Canaan, they were defeated by a coalition of Ammonites and Philistines. Jephthah, the son of Gilead and a harlot, rallied Israel to battle against them. To ensure success, Jephthah vowed to sacrifice to God the first one to meet him if he returned home victorious. His subsequent victory was marred when his only child, a daughter, was first to greet him (Judg. 10:6-11:40). In subsequent battles, the Ammonites were defeated by Saul at Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. 11) and then by David at Rabbah (2 Sam. 12:26–31). Much that happened to the Ammonites after those defeats is obscure, but the defeats by Israel did not subdue them permanently. As the political fortunes of both Israel and Judah waned in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., Ammonite culture continued to develop, a conclusion substantiated by both epigraphic and artifactual evidence.

Now, Randall Younker is one of the few scholars in the evangelical orbit who have studied the Ammonites, given them any time. He also has something to say about this. He does so in the book *Peoples of the Old Testament World*. I'm going to quote a little bit from that about the Ammonites. Younker adds:

The biblical tradition views the Ammonites as an indigenous people who descended directly from Lot. According to Deuteronomy 2:20–21 the Ammonites eventually grew strong enough to displace an ancient people known as the Rephaim (called the Zamzummim by the Ammonites) from the headwaters of the Jabbok. There the Ammonites established their capital, Rabbah-ammon (2 Sam. 12:27). Thus, the biblical record indicates that the Ammonites occupied the central Transjordanian plateau for some time before the Israelites arrived on the scene (Gen. 19:38; Num. 21:24; Deut. 2:19).

Another observation we can make in 1 Samuel 11 is the circumstances of the threat. Saul had just been announced as king but **a)** not everyone recognized his authority or likely even heard the news and **b)** Saul had not yet proven his worth so as to be accepted as king. This proving of your kingly worth is part of a regular kingly motif in Old Testament kingship theology. That is, there was a three-step process. We actually went over it in Episode 333 of the podcast, which was

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entitled "The Israelite King and Jesus as King." There are three steps to the whole process of elevating a king in Israel. The first step was that there was some kind of anointing or public recognition of the king. Second, there was a testing of the king. Third, there was a validation (whether they survive the test or not) of the kingship. Hoffner notes in this regard:

Since the inhabitants of Jabesh had no king...

Recall this is 1 Samuel 11. 1 Samuel 10 is when Saul gets announced as king, but it's just an announcement and a lot of people haven't even heard it yet. So when the people of Jabesh-Gilead are threatened by King Nahash, they don't know what to do. They're not aware yet that Saul has been anointed as king. So Hoffner points out:

Since the inhabitants of Jabesh had no king, the negotiation was between the "men of Jabesh" (i.e., the city leaders or elders) and Nahash, king of the Ammonites. This is partially reflected in the narrative by pronouns. The Jabesh-Gileadites first offered a treaty of vassalship... But Nahash wanted more (v. 2), declaring that they would receive the same treatment he had meted out previously to other Gadites and Reubenites who had come under his control (according to the longer text)—gouging out the right eye of each inhabitant. One-eyed persons... lacking depth perception, could not fight effectively, but they could see well enough to serve their captors. Nahash, not trusting the Israelite men to keep the terms of the treaty, wished to make them incapable of ever resisting him militarily. This was the practical side of the measure. But the text adds that Nahash wished to disgrace (חֶרְפָּה, *cherpah*) all Israel, for the people of Jabesh-Gilead were also Israelites. This was like Hitler's yellow Star of David placed on the garment of every Jew in Nazi Germany, which authorized mistreatment by all who saw their condition.

So this whole thing about gouging the right eye out... If you were a footsoldier... Most people are right-handed. You would have held your shield in your left hand. That means you're peering out over the shield with your right eye. You're using your right eye to guide yourself in terms of depth perception to strike with spear and sword. This is why Nahash wanted to gouge out the right eye of each man—to make them militarily incapacitated, yet still able to serve him as slaves. This is why the people were so fearful and why Saul was so angry when he heard it.

Another observation... What about the Spirit of God rushing on Saul in verse 6? A search of the Hebrew verb חָלַץ (*tsalach*), this verb for rushing, shows that in

the qal stem (as it is here), the verb often takes a spiritual being as its subject. As Hoffner notes:

...either the Spirit of Yahweh/God (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13; Amos 5:6) or an evil spirit (1 Sam 18:10).

If you look up the verb that occurs in these verses, a spiritual being is the subject of the verb, either the Spirit of God in those cases or an evil spirit in 1 Samuel 18:10.

With other subjects or objects (namely people) the verb can retain the “rush” meaning (2 Samuel 19:18) or be understood as meaning “to be effective, succeed, or prosper” (Numbers 14:41; Isaiah 53:10; 54:17).

The response of the Spirit (in this case) shows that Yahweh had been provoked to war by Nahash. God takes it personally. God is going to be fighting against the serpent-king. So again, there's this lurking idea of God versus the *nachash* in the backdrop of 1 Samuel 11 that may or may not harken back to Genesis 3. Saul was now God's warrior and so the Spirit empowers him. Hoffner observes:

In chap. 10 the Spirit of Yahweh had taken control of Saul and thrown him into a prophetic state. But here its effect is like that produced in Samson (see Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14): It energizes him for battle against Yahweh's enemies.

40:00

Another observation: What about the battle elements and the use of deception? (This is going to be our last observation here.) But again, this is kind of interesting if we look at what is going on as we read through this account. The term translated "thousands"... Remember there were all these thousands and thousands of soldiers that were gathered when Saul sent out the pieces of the yoke of oxen and the response comes back with many thousands of soldiers. The term translated thousands there is translated *eleph* in Hebrew. It can also refer to a group of men, as in a military unit. Consequently, the narrative may be looking at 300 units for Israel's army with 30 of those coming from Judah. The issue is ultimately tied to the numerical counts for the people of Israel moving into Canaan found in the Torah. Opting for a figurative view of the latter is not undermined by the numbers here. So again, the numbers may have been quite a bit smaller than 300,000 (30,000). So that's a possibility. It might have been 300 units and then 30 units from Judah with a lesser number of men in there, but we don't know.

But the messengers of Jabesh-Gilead (however many there were) ultimately, when they see the amassing of soldiers on their behalf, they're emboldened. Saul says, "We're going to fight for you" and then the messengers of Jabesh-Gilead go back to Nahash with a cryptic response. Remember, they asked for a certain number of days to figure out what they were going to do. So they go back to Nahash with a cryptic answer after they discern Saul had mustered an army in their defense. In verse 10, we read this:

¹⁰ Therefore the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you."

So, "Tomorrow we'll be back and we're going to give ourselves up to you; do whatever seems good to you." And the interesting thing here is the verb translated "give ourselves up" or "to give up" or "give over" is the Hebrew lemma *yatsa'*, which can also mean "come out" or "come to." It's a term that is often used to go out to battle. What is Nahash thinking when he hears this? Is he thinking that the men of Israel are going to come out and let him gouge their eyes out or is there something else going on? So they're using deception here. They're sort of keeping Nahash in the dark to give him a response that says, "Hey, tomorrow we're going to come out to you" with the implication that supposedly, "We're going to give ourselves up, we're going to be your servants," and so on and so forth. But that is actually the opposite of what they have planned. So the use of this verb here is intentionally ambiguous, which is kind of interesting because it creates this climate of deception. As Joyce Baldwin notes in her commentary on Samuel:

[T]he message contained a clever ambiguity, while giving the impression that surrender was intended...

But of course, it wasn't. This harkens back to another use of deception. We discussed this on the Naked Bible Podcast Episode 210. We devoted a whole episode to God and deception that I recommend people go back and listen to. But here again is yet another example of the use of deception in battle. And God is okay with this. In fact, God honors this by honoring Saul's effort on behalf of the men of Jabesh in the defeat of the Nahash. So evil can be opposed by God in God's use of deception if God deems that necessary—if God deems that appropriate. Go back and listen to Episode 210 (God and Deception). There are examples from Joshua's wars and Joshua's battle tactics that clearly show God does use deception. We're also going to see it a little bit later in 1 Samuel 16,

where God uses deception to protect Samuel from the men of Saul who... By this point Saul has had his falling-out with Samuel and with God and so Samuel fears for his life, but God protects him through the use of deception. It's just an interesting undercurrent here that I wanted to point out that occurs in this chapter here in 1 Samuel 11.

45:00

And this is a good place to stop. There are a number of things in this passage that are interesting. The thing I want leave the episode with is this whole idea, "Is this kind of for real?" Is the reference to Nahash and the connections between the end of the book of Judges... It's the most anti-evil part of Israel's history. Everyone is doing what's right in his own eyes. The Edenic dream is long gone by the time you get to the end of the book of Judges. So we have this chaotic state of affairs at the end of the book of Judges, and the solution is supposed to be "there was no king in Israel." That's how the book of Judges ends. "There is no king in Israel." So the implication is "We need a king to reverse this, to take us back to Eden, back to a stable state of affairs.

Think about it, when Samuel anoints Saul, what does he say? "Let's go up to Gilgal." And do what? "Renew the kingdom." So they had this in the back of their minds, that the king is supposed to reverse the effects of what's going on. And this is just the long end of the road after the Fall in Genesis 3. But we have this promise in Genesis 3 of the human deliverer. And again, because of just going through a few of the things that Verrett goes through in his book, it looks as though the king that we get in 1 Samuel (the first one turns out to be Saul) is supposed to be the fulfillment of this manly promise—this promise of a man born of a woman who would undo the effects of the *nachash*, of the serpent. And Saul's first step—his test of validation as king—is to take on and defeat none other than the Nahash—the Ammonite king whose name is the same as the serpent in Genesis 3.

So again, it's kind of interesting. Maybe we're supposed to look at 1 Samuel 11 and think of Genesis 3. You can certainly make that case. I don't know that I'm married to the view yet, but I thought it was worth doing an episode on it or at least bringing it out here in 1 Samuel 11 as an example of intertextuality, where parts of 1 Samuel are interpreting (in this case) Genesis 3.

So with that, we'll be done with this chapter and move on because Saul's kingship... His success is not going to last very long, as we'll see in chapter 12.

TS: Mike, I have two observations myself. One being, there ain't no way I'm making a Genesis 3 connection with 1 Samuel 11 [Mike laughs] when I'm reading it on my own, so thank goodness we have you in this podcast to connect those dots for us.

MH: It is suggestive. It's kind of interesting.

TS: Absolutely. Then the second observation is, you know we've been doing this show a long time when you have multiple references back to old podcasts that we've already covered.

MH: Yeah, for sure.

TS: You'll just be able to reference all the shows. I can't believe it's coming up on eight years, Mike!

MH: All the different episodes, yeah.

TS: Yeah, we're knocking on the door of eight years, so we'll have to think of some way to celebrate when it comes around next month. Yeah, absolutely! All right, Mike, well, we're looking forward to 1 Samuel 12 next week, I assume.

MH: Yep.

TS: We want to wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And with that, I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.