

The First King of Israel

It was early morning when Nathan approached the town square. He was surprised to see so many people gathered there. There seemed to be a heated discussion going on. Even the elders of Israel were voicing their opinions on the matter. Nathan went closer and listened.

"It's time the people of Israel had their own king to rule them, like all of the other nations," said one man.

"But the people of Israel are not like these other nations," said another. "These foreigners worship many false gods. We have one God, Yahweh."

"That's right," someone else spoke up. "Yahweh is the one true God of Israel. Choosing a king from among our people is the same as rejecting God!"

"You can't deny the fact that we are always under attack from these foreigners," another man in the crowd answered. "A king could help unite our forces and defeat our enemies."

The debate went on and on. Nathan listened for a few more minutes and then he decided to voice his opinion, too.

"Ever since the people of Israel left Pharaoh's rule in Egypt to seek their own land, they've been at war. The Philistines have tried to destroy us for a long time now. We are worn out with all of this fighting. But aren't we supposed to be a people that trusts God to lead us? What is the answer?"

The elders of Israel spoke up now.

"We will take this matter to Samuel, our prophet. God has appointed him to judge. Let Samuel decide for us."

Samuel had been a prophet and a judge for the people in Israel for many years. He was old now and had appointed two of his sons, Joel and Abijah, as judges to help him. But they

were greedy and had not followed Samuel's ways. When they were called upon to rule in a case before them, they accepted bribes. A bribe was a payment made to them by someone so that the case would be ruled in their favor, even if that wouldn't have been a just ruling.

"Samuel," the elders of Israel said, "we are not happy with the behavior of your sons. The people feel we should have a king to rule over us."

Samuel was very upset when he heard this request. "Please go away now," he said. "I must pray and seek God's advice."

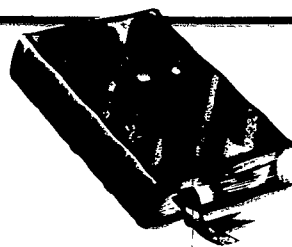
Samuel went alone and prayed to the Lord. He told God that he was sorry the people wanted to be like other people and have their own king. The Lord told Samuel not to worry. If this was what the people of Israel wanted, He would show Samuel the right person to be king.

In a nearby town lived a man named Kish. Kish was a rich man from the tribe of Benjamin. One day, some of his donkeys strayed away. So Kish told his son, Saul, to go with one of the servants and bring the donkeys back. The two men searched for a long time for the donkeys, but they were nowhere to be found.

Finally, the servant said, "Saul, I have an idea! I hear the prophet Samuel lives in the next town just over the hill. He is a seer, and maybe he will be able to tell us where the donkeys are."

When Saul and the servant arrived at Samuel's house, the Lord spoke to Samuel and said, "Here is the man I have selected to become the king of the Israelites. He will save my people from the Philistines."

So Samuel greeted the two men and said, "Don't worry, your father's



The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone

donkeys have already been found. As for you, Saul, you must stay here because the Lord has chosen you from all of His people to be king of Israel."

"Me, a king?" said Saul. "Why, the tribe of Benjamin is the least important tribe of Israel. You must have the wrong person!"

"God will be pleased with your humility, Saul," answered Samuel. "But there is something even more important, if you want to be a good king for the people. You must be careful to obey God in everything that you do and say."

"I will," Saul promised.

Samuel took Saul and his servant and prepared a great feast. He gave Saul the place of honor at the head of the table, and the best food to eat.

After all of the people had gone, Samuel told Saul to kneel down. He took a container of holy oil and poured it over Saul's head and blessed him. The anointing of Saul by the prophet Samuel was a sign that God had chosen him to be king.

"Tomorrow, Saul, I will present you to the people of Israel," promised Samuel.

The town square was overflowing with people. Nathan could hardly see the place where Samuel stood with the elders of Israel. Everyone talked excitedly of the news. Today was the day the king was to be named for the people of Israel. Nathan listened as Samuel spoke to the crowd.

"The Lord has decided to let a king from among His own people rule in Israel. You must obey your king in all that he commands you to do. This is the man God has chosen to rule."

Nathan watched as the tall man came forward now. He stood head and shoulders above everyone. His name was Saul.

"Long live the king! Long live King Saul!" the people shouted.

"Now we will no longer be defeated by our enemies. Let peace reign among our people!"

Samuel then told the people all about the rights and duties of a king and how the people must obey him. He wrote everything down in a special book and placed it before God for all to see.

For discussion:

- 1) What is the other name the people of Israel used for God?
- 2) Why did the people of Israel want their own king?
- 3) What is a bribe? Why is it wrong to take a bribe?
- 4) Why did Samuel pray to God about the people's request for a king?
- 5) Samuel was a prophet and a judge for the people of Israel. He was also known as a seer. What is a seer?
- 6) What was the most important thing for Saul to do as a king?

For further reading:

The Story of Saul, the first king of Israel, is found in 1 Samuel 8-10 in the Old Testament.

Cable Offers Catholic Series

"Glory to God," an award-winning weekly Catholic television series, will be offered by Greater Rochester Cable beginning this month. The program, hosted by Father John Bertolucci, a priest from the Diocese of Albany, includes interviews with such Christian leaders as Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Father Bruce Ritter of Covenant House in New York City.

Also featured are inspirational teachings about youth, the sacraments and scripture. "Glory to God" can be seen at 7 p.m. Monday evening on Channel 35 in the City of Rochester and Channel 2 in suburban areas, according to Father George Norton, diocesan director of communications. The program replaces "American Catholic," which has been discontinued by its producers.

Mercy's Y.G.C. at City Hall

Our Lady of Mercy High School's Youth and Government Club participated in the annual High School District conference on Jan. 18 at Rochester's City Hall.

Twenty-eight Mercy students submitted four bills that were all passed in the legislature. Three seniors, Julie Doran of Penfield, Erin Maloney of Pittsford and Gerette Gordon of Webster, were elected committee chairpersons at the conference,

attended by Monroe County high school students.

Valentine Celebration

Children of all ages are invited to Assist House-Casa Del Amigo, 194 Lyell Avenue, on Saturday, Feb. 8, at 1 p.m. Children will share God's love through song, simple dance, Valentine crafts and worship. Call (716)247-0729 for information.

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