



## **PROGRAM 10. SAUL**

One of the most enthralling aspects of Saul's reign must be the complex interplay of relationships between the main characters — Samuel, Saul, Jonathan and David.

From Samuel's viewpoint, Saul proved an unworthy king by violating God's commands. He usurped Samuel's authority by acting as a priest at Gilgal and then proceeded to spare the life and property of the Amalekite king, against the orders of God. As far as Samuel was concerned, these acts confirmed his original misgivings about the Monarchy, by setting dangerous precedents. Samuel was determined to preserve the division of power between the king and the Priesthood, in contrast to neighbouring pagan kings who also performed priestly functions. Thus, Samuel anointed David as the next king of Israel.

Saul, on the other hand, faced the massive task of defending Israel's borders, but his authority was no doubt weakened by Samuel's reservations about the kingship. Samuel still had enormous popular support, and his anointing of David as Saul's successor, must have seriously undermined the king's power. This explains Saul's bitterness and his attempts to kill David — whom he considered a threat to the eventual succession of his son Jonathan.

In this context, David's friendship with Jonathan is remarkable because it transcended the political considerations of the moment. From Jonathan's point of view, it would have been expedient for Saul to have killed David and removed the threat to his succession; instead, he protected David from Saul. David's respect for the throne prevented him from harming Saul,

although he was confident of his eventual divine right to rule, since Samuel had anointed him as future king.

**Biblical references: 1 Samuel, Chapters 18-31**

