



NEWSCAST 9. SAMUEL

As Newscast 9 opens, we find ourselves in the midst of a new and exciting period in Israel's history — the Monarchy.

However, the notion of a king was a revolutionary development because tribal loyalties had formerly been predominant and there were fears that a monarchy would prove to be tyrannical.

Although the Prophet Samuel warned of the consequences, the people were insistent for two reasons. First, the rule of Judges had fallen into disrepute since Samuel's own sons were corrupt. Second, the international situation demanded that Israel have a king.

The weakening of the Superpowers — Egypt and Mesopotamia — led to the forming of many small independent kingdoms amongst Israel's neighbors which undoubtedly influenced the popular demand for an Israelite monarchy. In addition, the only chance of establishing secure borders lay in the cohesion of all the tribes into an effective fighting force led by a national figure — the king. Thus, in the David and Goliath episode, we hear of the national army of Israel facing the Philistines across the valley of Elah.

Saul's kingdom, however, bore little resemblance to the later royal courts of David and Solomon. First of all, the gift of royalty was both granted and withdrawn from Saul by God acting through the Prophet Samuel. Unlike David his dynasty died with him. Second, Saul erected no royal palace or capital — nor did he surround himself with the bureaucracy of a central administration. He was a simple man of the people, who found his life increasingly surrounded by controversy. In many ways, Saul was one of the most tragic figures of Israel's early history.

Biblical references: 1 Samuel, Chapters 1 – 17

