

# *Justifying Disobedience*

## *1 Samuel 12-15*



*For if ye will not abide in my covenant  
ye are not worthy of me.  
Doctrine and Covenants 98:15*



# Samuel's Conference

Samuel introduces  
Saul as their King



Samuel witnesses of his  
just dealing with the  
Israelites.

Samuel reproved them  
for ingratitude and  
exhorted them to follow  
the Lord.

Samuel reminds them  
of their heritage and  
the flight out of their  
enemies in Egypt.

*But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.*

# Justify

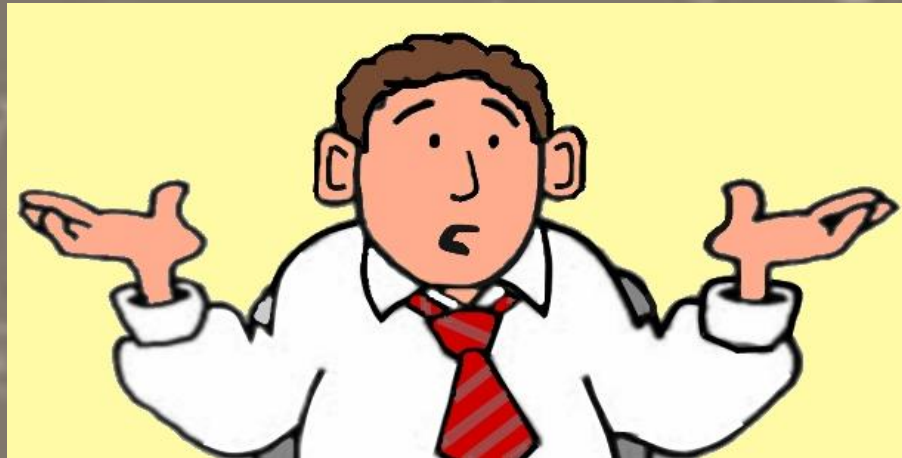
To rationalize or excuse

It wasn't  
that big of a  
deal

It was  
\_\_\_\_\_'s  
fault

The others  
wanted to  
do it

It wasn't as bad  
as what \_\_\_\_ did



# Battle With the Philistines

A group of Israelite soldiers under the command of Saul's son Jonathan attacked a group of Philistine soldiers stationed in Israelite territory

Knowing this attack would lead to war with the Philistines, Saul gathered additional soldiers.



The Philistines were camped at Michmash

The Israelites were afraid because of the large number of Philistines and hid in caves, pits, high places, etc.



# Jonathan

He was the son of Saul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin

He was known for his military prowess and speed

He excelled in archery

Unbeknownst to him, his father had called for a fast and Jonathan ate of honey and Saul sought to kill him, but the people defended him, and Jonathan's life was preserved

He had a great friendship with David and defended David before the murderous ambitions of Saul

He fell by the sword along side his father at the battle of Gilbon

David recovered the remains of Saul and Jonathan and buried them "in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulcher of Kish



# *Saul's Disobedience*

The prophet Samuel had previously told Saul that he was to go to Gilgal and wait seven days for Samuel to come and offer sacrifices to the Lord



This sacrifice would be a way to seek the Lord's blessings before the Israelite army went into battle.

It would also help the soldiers dedicate themselves to the Lord and strengthen their faith.

Saul did not wait and went a performed the sacrifice for which he did not have the authority to do so

# Justifying



What hast thou done?



The people scattered and hid because they were afraid...and you weren't here...



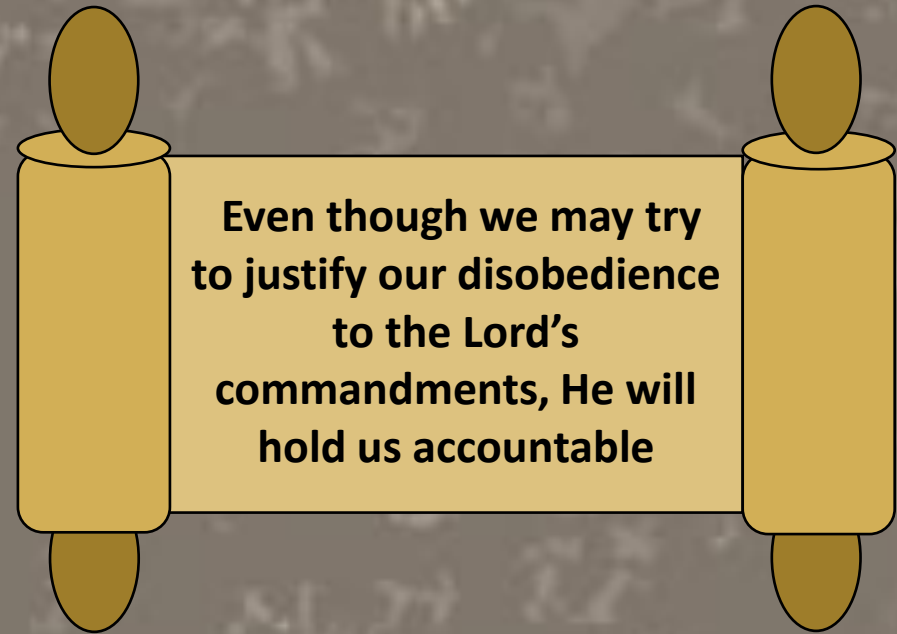
So I made a supplication for them in the burnt offering



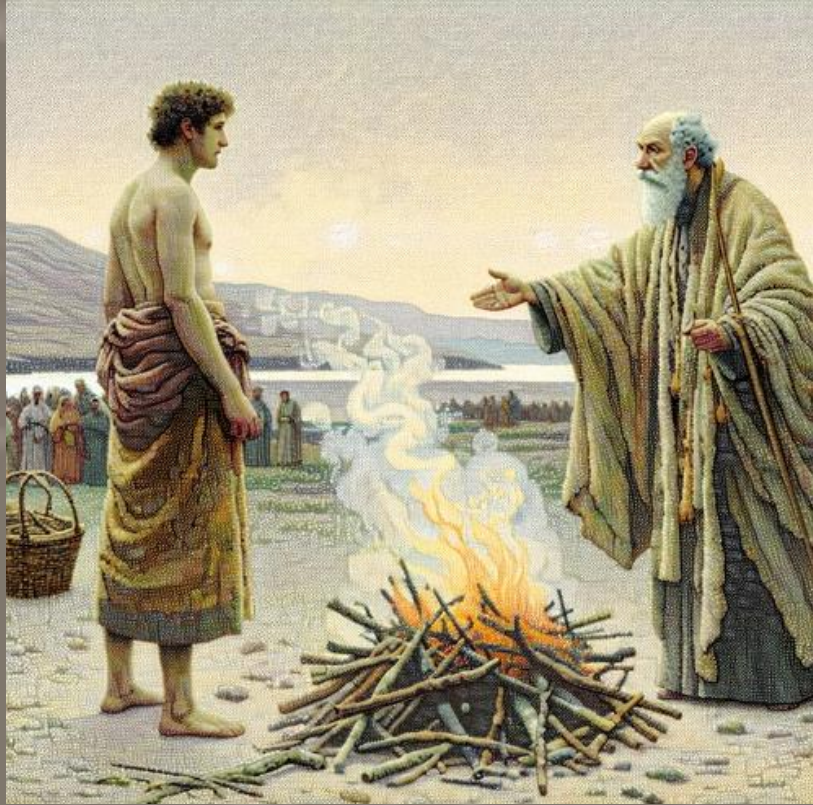
Thou has done foolishly and not kept the commandments of the Lord



The kingdom will not continue with a man after his own heart



# *Under All Circumstances*



The circumstances were critical, but one of the purposes of mortality is to demonstrate that one will remain faithful and obedient under all circumstances.

Saul failed that test and thereby lost his right to be God's representative of the people. (2)

Samuel left Saul, and the Philistines sent raiding troops to destroy the land and torment the Israelites.

# *The Attack*

Trusting in the Lord, Jonathan and his servant courageously attacked a group of Philistine soldiers.



This act, combined with an earthquake that followed, caused confusion and panic in the Philistine army.

Saul's army then attacked the panicked Philistines and defeated them.



# *The Required Fast*

During this battle, Saul demanded a fast and forbade his soldiers from eating in a misguided effort to get help from the Lord and prevail over his enemies.

Jonathan was unaware of this command and ate some honey while pursuing the Philistines.



# *Saul Seeks a Sign from the Lord*

Later in the day, when Saul sought revelation from the Lord about whether to attack the Philistines during the night, no answer came.



Saul concluded that the Lord did not answer because someone in the army had sinned.

He gathered the people together and swore an oath that whoever had eaten earlier in the day would be put to death, even if it had been his own son Jonathan.

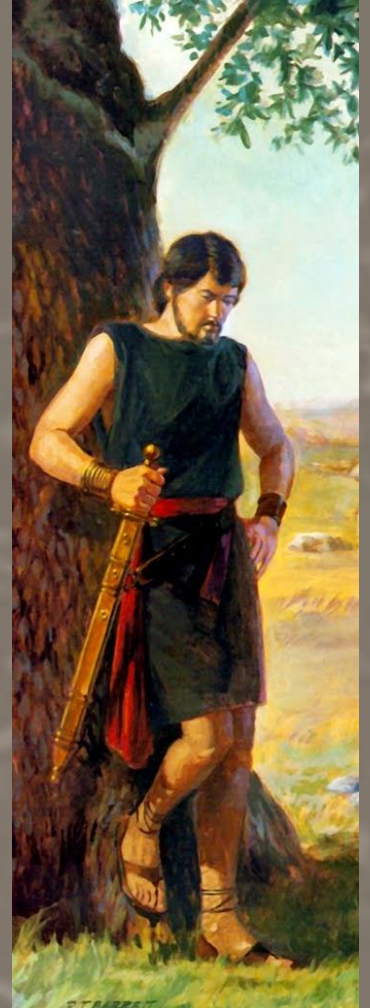
When he learned that Jonathan had eaten some honey, Saul said Jonathan must die.



# *The People's Response*

When told about the oath, Jonathan frankly said that his father had done a foolish thing. Since his own strength had been revived by the food, he wondered aloud how much greater the victory would have been if the people had been allowed to eat instead of fighting in a state of physical exhaustion. (2)

*And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.*



# Recognizing One Had Sinned

And Saul could not fail to recognize now, that it was not Jonathan, but he himself, who had sinned, and through his arbitrary and despotic command had brought guilt upon Israel, on account of which God had given him no reply.” (3)



Most of the time it is not total disobedience that gets us into trouble.

It is, rather, that we are selectively obedient. Selective obedience is when we push the limits of what we know to be right.

We may recognize what we must do to be obedient, yet we selectively do only part of what we are commanded to do. (4)

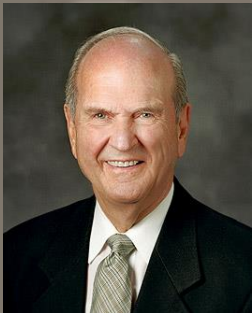
# *Justifying Disobedience*

Sometimes we might be tempted to try to justify our disobedience to some commandments because we are obedient to others.



Example:

“Because I pray and read my scriptures daily, it is okay if I do not attend my church meetings.”



# Pick and Choose

[Have] faith to keep *all* the commandments of God, knowing that they are given to bless His children and bring them joy.

[You] will encounter people who pick which commandments they will keep and ignore others that they choose to break.

I call this the cafeteria approach to obedience. This practice of picking and choosing will not work.

It will lead to misery. To prepare to meet God, one keeps *all* of His commandments.

It takes faith to obey them, and keeping His commandments will strengthen that faith. (7)



**Obedience to some commandments does not justify disobedience to other commandments**

# *A Second Chance*

The Lord gave Saul a second chance to prove his obedience.

He commanded Saul to destroy **all** the Amalekites and their livestock.

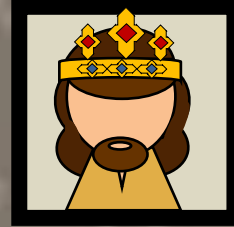
The Amalekites were a murderous people and were enemies of the Lord



*Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; Det. 25:17*

# Saul Disobeys the Lord Again

The Lord told Samuel that Saul had turned back from following Him and had disobeyed His commandments.



We have brought the best of the animals and we have destroyed all the rest



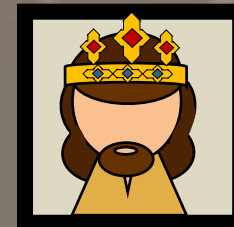
Come to Carmel



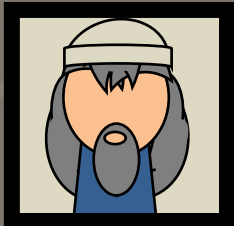
You have been anointed King and you have not done what the Lord has asked



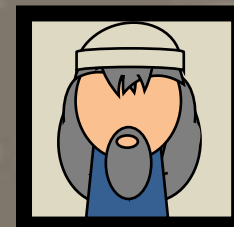
I have done what the Lord wanted me to do



I have brought the king, Agag with me as a prisoner, and I have destroyed the Amalekites and I have sacrificed the animals unto the Lord



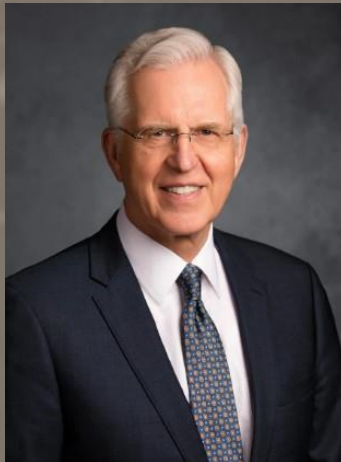
Why do you have the Amalekites flocks?



Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

“At times we may rationalize that the Lord will understand our disobedience because our special circumstances make adherence to His laws difficult, embarrassing, or even painful.

However, faithful obedience, regardless of the apparent size of the task, will bring the Lord’s guidance, assistance, and peace”  
(8)



God sees things in their true perspective, and He shares that perspective with us through His commandments, effectively guiding us around the pitfalls and potholes of mortality toward eternal joy. ...

I haven’t met anyone who found the gospel later in life who didn’t wish it could have been earlier. “Oh, the poor choices and mistakes I could have avoided,” they will say.

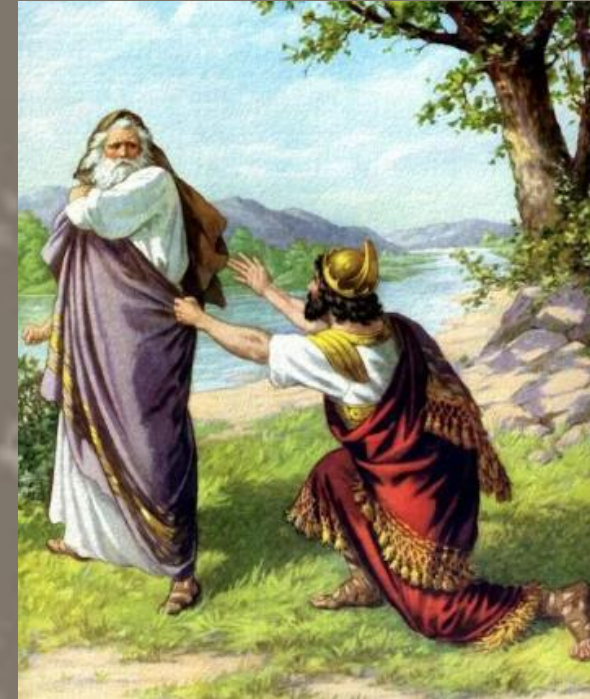
The Lord’s commandments are our guide to better choices and happier outcomes. How we ought to rejoice and thank Him for showing us this more excellent way. (5)

# Too Late

Samuel told Saul that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to someone else.

Saul's repentance was too late and very short-lived. This second violation was essentially the same sin of disobedience he had been guilty of before.

Had Saul's repentance been deep and sincere, the second incident would never have happened. As the Lord warned in modern times, "But unto that soul who sinneth [after the Lord has forgiven him] shall the former sins return." (2)



***And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.***

# *Next...*

This evil spirit did not depart from Saul during the remainder of his reign. His temper became intolerable, his jealousy unbounded. He was ready to commit murder on the slightest provocation, and at one time he hurled a javelin at his own son, Jonathan.

This was a far cry from the day when God gave Saul a new heart as he commenced his reign, when the spirit of God was his companion, and even when he was given the gift of prophecy. (6)

Sources:

Video:

“Honesty: You Better Believe It!” (4:46)

“Blessed and Happy Are Those Who Keep the Commandments of God” (5:41)



1. *Who's Who in the Old Testament* by Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen p. 106-107
2. Old Testament Institute Manual
3. (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 2:2:146–47.) Found in Old Testament Institute Manual
4. Elder Robert D. Hales (“Return with Honor,” *Ensign*, June 1999, 10)  
Presentation by ©<http://fashionsbylynda.com/blog/>
5. Elder D. Todd Christofferson (“The Joy of the Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 16)
6. Mark E. Peterson (*Three Kings of Israel* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980], 36)
7. Russell M. Nelson (“Face the Future with Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 34)
8. Elder Bruce A. Carlson (“When the Lord Commands,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 39).

**Saul's decision:**  
“...growing impatient at Samuel’s delay, Saul prepared the burnt offering himself, forgetting that though he occupied the throne, wore the crown, and bore the scepter, these insignia of kingly power gave him no right to officiate even as a deacon in the Priesthood of God; and for this and other instances of his unrighteous presumption he was rejected of God and another was made king in his place.” (Talmage, Articles of Faith, pp. 184–85.) Old Testament Institute Manual

**No Smith in the Land:**  
Scholars believe that at this time the Israelites did not know how to work with iron. The Philistines guarded the secret carefully to maintain superiority in weapons over the softer brass weapons of the Israelites. As a result, the Israelites did not have the superior chariots of iron, nor could they manufacture swords and spears of iron. The other instruments mentioned, “share,” “coultter,” “axe,” “mattock,” and “goad,” had to be taken to the Philistines for sharpening. A *share* was a metal instrument used to plough the ground, and a *coultter* was a small garden hoe used to loosen the earth and weed the soil. A *mattock* was an Egyptian hoe or grubbing axe, and a *goad* was a sharp rod about eight feet long used to prod stubborn animals

**Spoilers:**  
In the armies of ancient times, certain men were assigned to go out and destroy crops, homes, barns, cattle, and so forth. Their prime purpose was not to take human life, but to make living difficult for the civilian population who supported the military (see Clarke, Bible Commentary, 2:249). Old Testament Institute Manual

**The Fasting Decision:**  
This command of Saul did not proceed from a proper attitude towards the Lord, but was an act of false zeal, in which Saul had more regard to himself and his own kingly power than to the cause of the kingdom of Jehovah, as we may see at once from the expression ... ‘till I have avenged *myself* upon mine enemies.’” (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 2:2:142.)

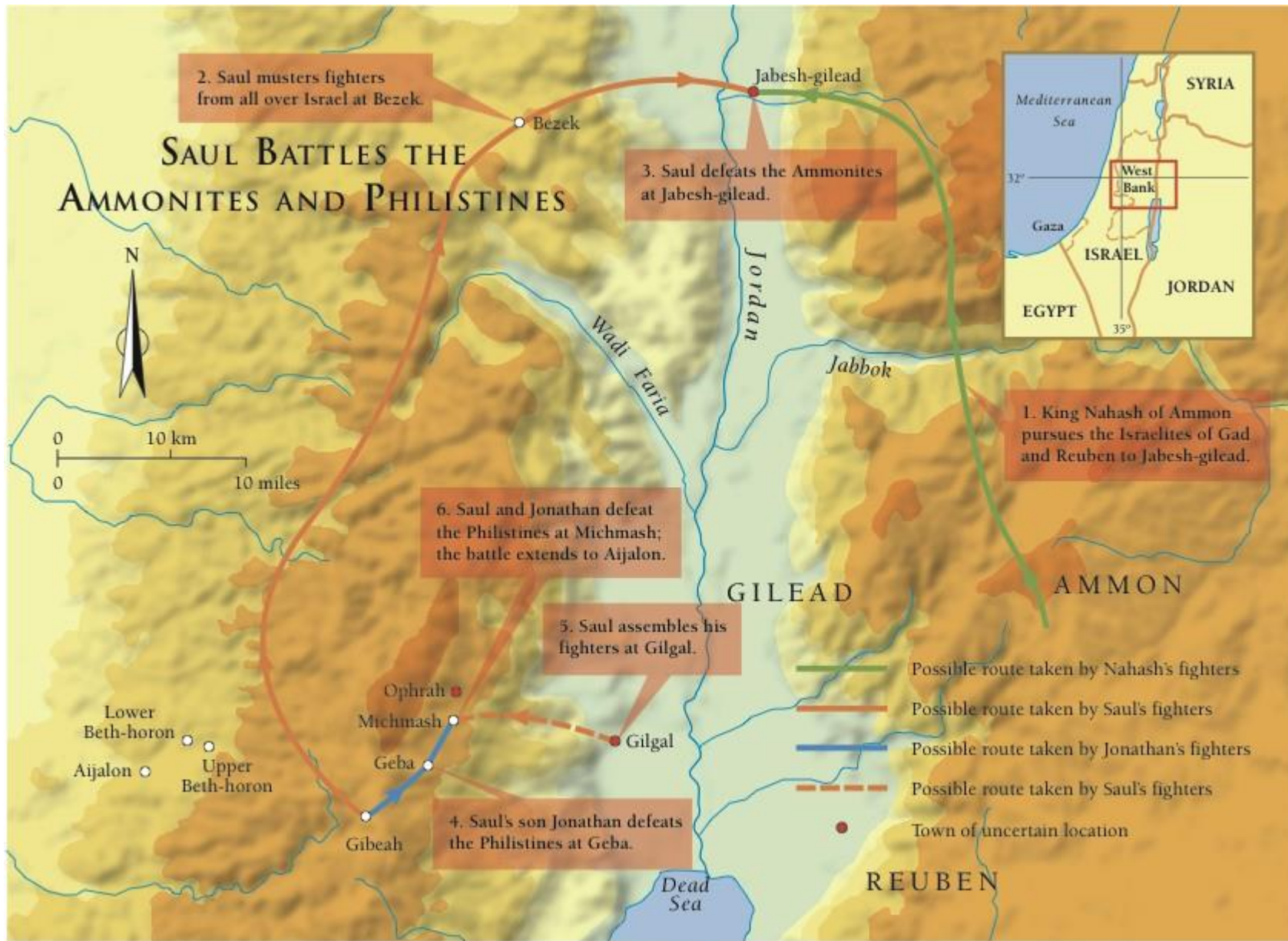
**To obey is better than sacrifice:**  
When Samuel taught Saul that “to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22), the sacrifice Samuel referred to was animal sacrifice and other sacrificial offerings made to the Lord as part of the law of Moses. Samuel was not saying that offering sacrifices was not a correct practice. Offering sacrifices was part of the Israelites’ obedience to the Lord, but these offerings were to be made with a submissive, obedient heart. The Lord requires and delights in complete obedience to Him in heart and action. When an animal was sacrificed to the Lord, the Lord delighted more in the obedience of the person making the offering than in the sacrificed animal. The animals Saul had obtained for the claimed intentions of sacrificing were obtained by his disobedience to the Lord. The Lord would not delight in these offerings if they were to be made. What’s more, the Lord had not required that such a sacrifice be made in this situation. Samuel taught Saul that complete obedience to the Lord is better than performing a singular religious practice and that complying with one religious practice did not justify disobeying the Lord’s other commandments. Saul’s decision to disobey was influenced by his desire to please others rather than the Lord because he feared the judgments of men (see Robert D. Hales, “Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 26). Saul gave in to the temptation to be popular rather than obeying the word of God.

**Saul's supplication:**  
Now to Saul it may have appeared a very simple matter that he should not wait the coming of the prophet. Why could not he, a king, make offering and supplication to the Lord? Why should he wait for the coming of Samuel? Because it was the will and commandment of the Lord, and he did not obey it. In this we have an evidence of the goodness of God in one way and of his strictness in another way. The king was assured by the prophet that if he had obeyed the commandment of God, his kingdom would have been established over Israel forever; but that having departed therefrom, his kingdom should not continue. **Rudger Clawson**(*Conference Report*, October 1899, First Day—Morning Session 123-124)

**Saul's Perception:** (1 Samuel 15)  
You have to love Saul’s perception of his own obedience! He is sure he has done what he was supposed to, declaring “Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” Had he performed the commandment of the Lord? Had he done exactly as commanded? Had he obeyed perfectly? No, he had not.

Can we make the same mistake? Can we offend God yet convince ourselves that we have honored him with our obedience? It’s a sobering question.

“The story of King Saul stands as a solemn warning to all of us. If the time ever comes that we think we can better serve God by following our own wisdom than we can by following the direction of the Lord through his Holy Spirit and through his holy prophets, we have apostatized. If we thus reject the Lord, we have broken the slender thread of communication. Our prayers cannot then be effective.” (Chauncey C. Riddle, “Obstacles to Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 28)



What Saul Did	Scripture
Saul lied about his obedience	1 Samuel 15:13, 20
Saul tried to justify his disobedience	1 Samuel 15:15,21
Saul blamed others for his actions	1 Samuel 15: 15,21
Saul became prideful	1 Samuel 15:17
Saul didn't prioritize what was most important	1 Samuel 15:22
Saul worried more about the opinions of others than obeying God	1 Samuel 15:24

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# Saul's Disobedience

Read 1 Samuel 15:13–24, and answer the following questions:

- What did Saul say he had done? (See verse 13.)
- How did Saul try to justify the fact that he and his soldiers had been only partially obedient to the Lord's commandment? (See verse 15.)
- How had Saul changed since he was anointed as king? (See verse 17.)
- Even after being rebuked by Samuel, what did Saul do? (See verse 21.)
- What did Samuel teach was more important than making animal sacrifices? (See verse 22.)
- What reason did Saul give for his disobedience? (See verse 24.)
- What principles can we learn from Saul's mistake?

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