

THEME 1

God's Divine Authority or Humans' Selfish Rule

This theme highlights the period of kings, beginning with Samuel—the last priest and judge. Students will begin to understand that under God's rule there is freedom and justice, while under human rule, selfish living brings loss of freedom. Basic questions of power and freedom are addressed throughout the units.

Unit 1: Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

Unit 2: Saul—Israel's First King

Unit 3: David—Servant King

Unit 4: Solomon—Wise and Wealthy, Yet Foolish

Unit 5: The Divided Kingdom

Grade 4—Unit 1

Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

In this unit, students will learn about the land of Israel and its neighbors, the Philistines, at the time when Samuel was God’s appointed judge and priest. Later, during the reign of Saul, he served as Israel’s first prophet.

Through a study of the land, students will learn about the resources available to the Israelites and their neighbors. They will witness the dramatic story of the loss of the Ark of the Covenant, the downfall of the house of Eli, and the return of the Ark.

The students will observe Samuel’s leadership as he leads the Israelites through a time of repentance and forgiveness. However, as Samuel ages and becomes less able to fill his office, the people once again reject God in favor of earthly leadership.

LESSONS

1. Israel and Its Neighbors, the Philistines
2. Meeting God at Mizpah
3. We Want a King!

Unit 1: Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

Unit Information

SUMMARY

This unit highlights Samuel as the last judge and first prophet of Israel. The people of Israel, who have turned away from the true God, live in fear of their neighbors, the Philistines. These neighbors to the west seek to do them harm and gain land from the Israeli stronghold.

In the war at Ebenezer, the Philistines not only win the battle, but also capture the Ark of the Covenant. However, having the Ark in their possession brings them much hardship, and they return it to the Israelites in a miraculous event. The Israelites return to their God and experience God's power and protection among them. But, as in many times in the past, they soon forget, and once again step out of God's plan and beg for a human king. Samuel warns them of the consequences that will come along with the rule of a king, but they persist, and their request is granted.

KEY BIBLE TEXTS

Lesson 1

1 Samuel 4:1-11

Lesson 2

1 Samuel 5-7

Additional Texts: 1 Samuel 3:10-21; 1 Samuel 9:15-16; 1 Samuel 25:1; Psalm 99:6; Jeremiah 15:1; Acts 3:24; Acts 13:20; Hebrews 11:32

Lesson 3

1 Samuel 8

Focus Text

1 Samuel 8:10-18

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Israel and Its Neighbors

The Israelites occupied a large portion of the area we now call Palestine. Each of the twelve tribes had settled around three bodies of water: the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea), the Salt Sea (Dead Sea), and the Sea of Chinnereth. In addition, the Jordan River was in their territory. Their large land holdings and these bodies of water were valuable resources. Because their land holdings were so vast, however, they were scattered over a large area. This made it difficult for leaders of the tribes to meet and plan together.

Around the Israelite nations lived other groups—the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Kenites, Philistines, Sidonians, and Cretans. Over the years, there were mild skirmishes between the Israelites and several of the neighboring groups, but the Philistines, often called “Sea People,” proved to be the most troublesome.

The Philistines occupied a small portion of the coast, directly south of Dan and

west of Judah. They were hungry for economic and political power. Their goal was to control the entire western coast of Palestine. This would give them greater access to the Great Sea. This body of water, along with their sophisticated sailing vessels, would increase their opportunity for trade. However, the land they coveted was occupied by several of the Israelite tribes.

The Philistines' land holdings were limited, and their cities were close together, so it was possible for the leaders to easily meet together and plan their conquest of Israel. In addition to the land they controlled, and their access to the Great Sea, the Philistines also had several other advantages. First, they had iron in their region, which enabled them to make more advanced and dangerous weapons than those of their neighbors. Among these weapons were spears with iron heads such, as the one Goliath carried. Second, they made use of chariots. During battles, three men would ride in the chariot—one driving, while the other two fought with spears. Third, they had an extremely well-trained army and were known for their military expertise.

The Miracle of the Ark

It was within this setting that the battle at Ebenezer occurred. The Philistines had made their way to the northwestern portion of Ephraim. The tribes did not want further invasion into their territory, so they put together a small army to stop them. During the first skirmish, the Israelites were defeated. They decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant from nearby Shiloh, to ensure speedy victory.

Thirty thousand Israelites died in battle that day. The two sons of Eli, the priest, who were in charge of the Ark, were killed. The Philistines captured the Ark and took it to Ashdod, their largest city. The temple of Dagon, the Philistines' most powerful god (*thought to be god of either grain or sea*), was located there.

The Philistines placed the Ark in the temple, next to the statue of Dagon. This symbolized a gift, or trophy, of sorts. The next morning, Dagon was found lying face down before the Ark of the Covenant. The temple leaders returned the statue to its place.

When they returned the following day, they found the statue of Dagon lying on the ground before the Ark, with its head and arms severed. To make matters worse, people in Ashdod began breaking out with tumors, and rats began roaming through the streets. A plague had begun.

Just in case Yahweh might have been responsible for the plague, the leaders from Ashdod sent the Ark to Gath for safekeeping. When the plague spread to Gath, people began to fear that the Ark had something to do with their troubles. They sent the Ark to Ekron, although the people in that Philistine city begged that it not be allowed to enter the city gates.

Ekron also suffered from the plagues. The Philistines realized that Yahweh was a great and mighty God, who was capable of marvelous works. They asked their diviners what to do with the Ark. The response was, "Remember Pharaoh and Egypt?"

The Philistines made a guilt offering to God by making five golden tumors and five golden rats, to represent illness and plague. They harnessed two cows, untrained to a yoke, to a cart. They then loaded the cart with the Ark and the guilt offering, and sent the calves off on a test. If the Ark went straight to the Israelite city of Beth Shemesh, they would be certain that God had caused all these things to happen in their land. If the Ark went in another direction, then the happenings were just a coincidence.

The calves and cart headed straight toward Beth Shemesh. The Israelites were elated at the return of the Ark and began celebrating at once. Several people were so excited that they took a forbidden peek inside the Ark and were struck dead. The people of Beth Shemesh then contacted the people of Kiriath-jearim and sent the Ark there, to be cared for by the family of Abinadab.

Twenty years later, Samuel called the people of Israel to stop all idol worship and begin worshiping God only. The people honored his request, and gathered at Mizpah to repent and celebrate their loyalty to God. The Philistines heard of this mass gathering and planned to attack the Israelites while they were preoccupied.

The Israelites asked Samuel to pray for them. God responded to their actions and Samuel's prayer by throwing the Philistine army into confusion with a thundering voice. God had fought the battle for the Israelites once again!

The Israelites Ask for a King

As time passed, the Israelites once again forgot the great things God had done for them. Samuel grew older, and it became clear that his sons were not capable of leading Israel. The Israelites told Samuel that they wanted a king, someone who could provide a political structure similar to that of neighboring groups.

Samuel was greatly disturbed by their request. He prayed to the Lord, and God said, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them." God then asked Samuel to also to warn the people of the ways of a king.

Samuel warned the people that having a human king would result in oppression much like slavery. The people would be heavily taxed. Their sons would be forced to serve in huge armies, and their daughters would be taken to work for the royal family. Their best fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and one-tenth of their grain and flocks would be given to the king's courtiers. Their cattle and donkeys would be used in the king's work.

The people did not hear. They continued to insist that they wanted a king. So, God said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and set a king over them."

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Samuel was prophet, judge, and priest during his entire lifetime.
- Samuel called the people to repentance and holy living.
- Sin and disobedience bring consequences.
- Repentance brings forgiveness and mercy from God.
- Reliance on earthly kings can be dangerous.

WORSHIP

1. Decorate the worship center to display the concepts in this unit. Use Scripture texts, pictures, charts, posters, and maps. Include the class Bible and a prayer basket or jar in the setting.

2. Include a theme liturgy or Scripture and theme song in your worship experience. A suggested theme liturgy is Proverbs 3:1-6, found in *Hymnal, A Worship Book*, #826. Reading this responsively helps bring the students into an attitude of worship. An appropriate theme song is "Obey my voice," HWB #163.

3. Make prayer a central part of your worship time. This is an opportunity to teach children to honestly bring their praise, thanksgiving, and petitions before

God. It may take time for students to feel comfortable, and to see prayer as an opportunity to talk to a friend. Following are suggestions for helping students feel comfortable:

- Model simple prayers, as if talking to a friend, using everyday language.
- Give students opportunity to speak their prayer requests in the group.
- Encourage specific students to pray for a certain prayer request.
- Ask one student to read a written prayer of praise or thanksgiving.
- Use “repeat after me” prayers.
- Ask students to write prayers anytime during the day, and put them in a prayer jar or basket.
- Have students select a prayer from the prayer jar or basket and offer a short prayer for the request.

4. Devote time to answering questions students have about the lessons, especially as they apply to daily living. Encourage wondering questions from students. Offer some of these questions yourself. This might help students understand that all of us sometimes have questions that can’t be answered. This is when believe in God’s faith promises.

MEMORY PASSAGE

There is one focus text for this unit, 1 Samuel 8:10-18. It is a long passage, and there is no expectation for memorization. It is used as part of the instruction and activities for Lesson 3.

ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING

This unit contains several activities and an end-of-unit assessment that can be used as formal assessment. Do not, however, overlook the opportunities for informal assessment. Class discussions and small group activities are wonderful ways to get to know your students. You can evaluate, through observation, their willingness to work, their level of cognitive understanding, listening skills, ability to work with others, etc. This kind of observation helps teachers assess students on an individual basis and understand how to more effectively assist each individual child.

Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

LESSON 1: ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS, THE PHILISTINES

Objective

Students will learn the importance of following God’s commands.

Key Concepts

- God provided for the Israelites when they were obedient.
- When they were disobedient, there were consequences.
- The Philistines coveted Israeli land and resources.
- God allowed the Philistines to capture the Ark of the Covenant so they would realize God’s power.
- God’s mercy and love for the Israelites restored the Ark of the Covenant.

Text: 1 Samuel 3:19-21, 1 Samuel 4:1-11, 1 Samuel 5-7:1

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- “Map of Palestine” (p. 50)
- “Philistine Chariot and Warship” (p. 51)
- “Whatever Happened to the Ark?” (pp. 52-56)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: “Who Were the Philistines?” (p. 57), “Compare and Contrast” (p. 58)

Teacher Preparation

- Review the early life of Samuel in the first three chapters of 1 Samuel.
- Study the geography and Philistine information in the Biblical Background (pp. 44-45).
- Make transparencies/projections of the map of Palestine and the pictures of the warship and chariot.
- Make copies of the readers’ theater, “Whatever Happened to the Ark?” (*Since this is an extensive use of paper, you might copy on front and back of the paper, and ask two students to share a copy. Save the sheets from year to year.*)
- If using Extend the Lesson, option two, make copies of “Who Are the Philistines?” and “Compare and Contrast,” one of each per student.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Who is Samuel? Ask the students to help you review the early life of Samuel. Make sure they mention Hannah’s prayer for a child, her dedication of him to God, Samuel’s childhood spent in the temple with Eli as his teacher, and the call from God that resulted in a message of consequence for Eli and his unfaithful sons. List these parts of the story on the board.

LESSON STEPS

1. Scripture search. Have students open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 3:19-21 and read the passage. Ask them to tell you what they learned about Samuel from this passage. (*God was with Samuel. He was recognized as a prophet in all parts of Israel. God was revealed to Samuel through God’s word.*) Students need to recognize Samuel as God’s messenger.

2. Display the map of Israel. Use the information in the first part of the Biblical Background and the pictures of a Philistine warship and chariot as a guide, as you tell about the geography and people of the land of Palestine.

3. Read I Samuel 4:1-11 to learn the story of the Battle at Ebenezer. Lead a discussion to ensure that students have gleaned the following information from the story: The Israelites lost the battle; the Ark was captured by the Philistines; as prophesied by Samuel as a child, Eli’s sons were killed in the battle; losing the battle and the Ark were consequences of not obeying God.

4. “Whatever Happened to the Ark?” Distribute copies of the readers’ theater, and divide the class into groups of six. Each group will read the theater piece together. (*Try to put several able readers into each group, assigning them the lengthy parts, such as the reporter and the leader. Woman 1 and Woman 2 parts could be given to hesitant readers.*) Assign each group a space in the room and ask them to read this exciting story of how God restored the Ark to the Israelites.

EXTEND THE LESSON

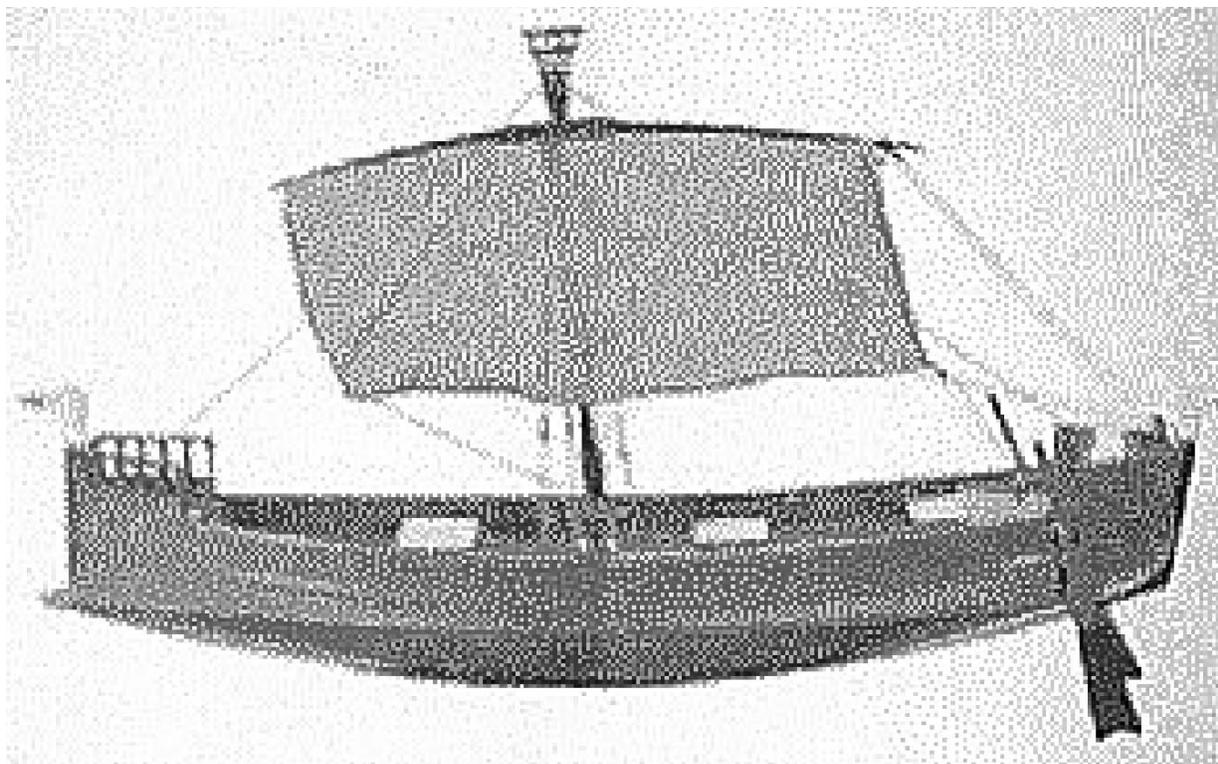
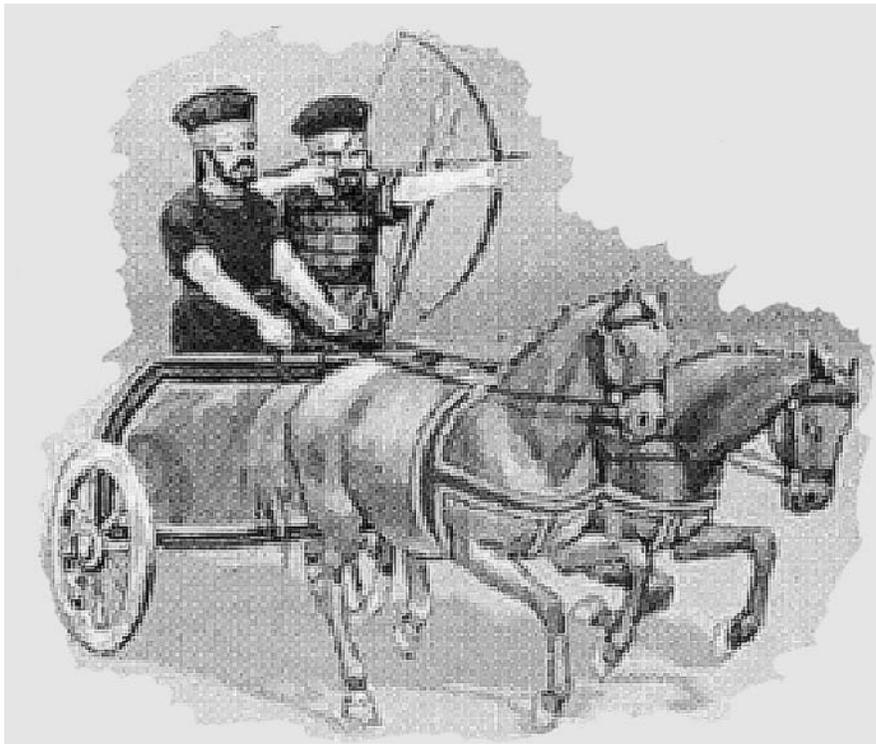
(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.)

- **Have students design a map of Palestine** and fill in all the tribes of Judah, their neighbors, and the important bodies of water. (*This activity could be saved to use as an extension with Lesson 3.*)
- **“Who Were the Philistines?”** Using the reading sheet as a resource, students should complete the “Compare and Contrast” sheet. They should then write a statement about why they think the Israelites lost the battle.

Map of Palestine



Philistine Chariot and Warship



Whatever Happened to the Ark?

Readers' Theater

Part 1

Reporter: Hello! I'm a roving reporter from the land of the Ammonites. For years we have been watching you attack the Israelites. Last month, someone came into our camp and told us you had actually captured the Ark of the Covenant, the famous Ark where the Israelites' God lives. Well, I'm not one to put much stock in rumors. I believe in reporting facts. So I decided to come to your land and see it for myself. Wow! Whatever happened to the Ark, anyway?

Philistine 1: Ark? Um . . . uh, I don't know ANYTHING about an ark. Nope! Don't ask me. Mum's the word!

Philistine 2: You don't know anything about that ark, huh? Then why did you just get back from washing your tumors in the river?

Reporter: Tumors? What's that got to do with anything! I asked about the Ark. You know, the Ark that the Israelites carried with them when they traveled in the wilderness. It has important stuff in it, like the two tablets that Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai, gold cherubim, the rod of Aaron, and other things. Can you help me or not?

Philistine 1: Well, I guess you're gonna find out sooner or later. But the story is just too-o-o painful for me to tell. *(To other Philistine)* YOU tell it!

Philistine 2: Okay. You see, we were really happy the night we defeated the Israelites. They were devastated! They couldn't believe their God had failed them. And better yet, we captured the Ark, the place they say their God lives. It was great!

Philistine 1: Yeah, until . . .

Philistine 2: Until we put the Ark in one of our chariots and brought it back from Ebenezer. It's 25 miles of mountainous terrain from Ebenezer to Ashdod, you know. But we figured it would be nice to put the Ark in the temple of our most powerful god, Dagon—sort of like an offering. And we couldn't risk keeping it in Israelite territory.

Philistine 1: That's when the trouble started.

Reporter: What trouble? What happened? Are you EVER going to finish the story!

Philistine 1: Chill, okay? We'll get to it. We've been through a lot, you know.

Philistine 2: *I'll* say! Anyway, we were all happy about the victory. There was much dancing in the streets. We thought for sure Dagon would reward us for such good work. We set the Ark next to Dagon in the temple, like a trophy, and then left to continue the celebration. In the morning, we went into the temple to worship Dagon. What a surprise!

Philistine 1: That's for sure! We should've known then . . .

Reporter: Known *what*? Come on! Finish the story!

- Philistine 2:** Dagon—you know, our most powerful god? God of grain and the sea? Well, when we went into the temple that morning, Dagon was lying face down in front of the Ark of the Lord!
- Philistine 1:** It looked just like Dagon was worshiping Israel’s God!
- Reporter:** Wow! I’d like to see that! Can you show me where the temple is?
- Philistine 1:** Hold your horses! The story is just beginning. The Ark’s not there now. It caused so much trouble . . .
- Philistine 2:** Don’t get ahead of yourself, friend. We put Dagon back in his place, figuring someone had sneaked into the temple and done this as a practical joke. We shrugged it off and went about our business.
- Philistine 1:** Until the next morning. What an ordeal!
- Reporter:** Would you two just get to the point?
- Philistine 2:** Okay. When we went to the temple the next day, Dagon was lying face down, with his head and hands broken off. Just lying there, right in front of the Ark of the Lord! Spooky!
- Philistine 1:** We were just beginning to understand the power of Israel’s God when disaster struck our region.
- Reporter:** This sounds exciting. What happened?
- Philistine 1:** Exciting to *you*, maybe. I’m still going to the Great Sea every day to get rid of these awful sores.
- Reporter:** I was wondering what those were . . .
- Philistine 2:** Well, we came out of the temple, really upset and a bit scared. No one had ever shown so much power. Suddenly, we heard people crying and groaning. Everyone began coming into the streets, with these disgusting tumors all over their bodies. It was a devastating plague. Many people got sick and died. My wife is still in bed because of it.
- Philistine 1:** So we did the only thing we could do.
- Philistine 2:** Yeah. We got rid of that Ark. Israel’s God was nothing but trouble for us. I don’t know why he allowed us to win the battle and capture the Ark, but he sure taught us a lesson. Don’t mess with Israel’s God! He’s mightier than all other gods put together!
- Reporter:** You got rid of the Ark! You mean it’s not here? I traveled all this way for nothing? I listened to you two ramble on and on forever and still have no idea where it is! Where is the ark, anyway?
- Philistine 1:** We sent it to Gath.
- Reporter:** Gath! Why send it to Gath? Aren’t they Philistines there, too? What have you got against them?
- Philistine 1:** Shows what you know about our leaders.

Philistine 2: Gath is our second largest city. Our leaders didn't think Israel's God caused the plague, so they sent the Ark to a place where it would be safe in case the Israelites tried to get it back.

Reporter: Oh.

Philistine 1: But we know better. The God of the Israelites is an awesome God! I'm just glad we got the Ark out of here before it caused even more trouble.

Reporter: Where is Gath, anyway?

Philistine 2: Just about 13 miles southeast of here. It's easy to get to. No mountains or rivers—just straight walking!

Reporter: Guess I'd better get going. Gotta get the scoop before another Ammonite gets this news back to my people. Thanks for the info.

Part 2

Reporter: Hi there! Would you be so kind as to give me a drink?

Woman 1: Why sure! What's good enough for my camel is good enough for you!

Reporter: Uh, thanks! I'm wondering if you could give me some directions.

Woman 1: Directions?

Reporter: Yeah. I'm looking for the Ark of the God of Israel.

Woman 1: Uh-oh. You're beginning to smell like trouble. I'm not gonna say anything to you. And don't bother giving me my drinking gourd back. I'll make another. You're bad news, mister!

Woman 2: She's got a point, you know! The very day they brought that ark here from Ashdod, people started getting sick. We got blisters and tumors all over our bodies. Even the children got sick! Lots of people died.

Woman 1: We couldn't get that old Ark out of here fast enough! Course, I felt sorry for the people who live in the city we sent it to.

Woman 2: Yeah, I wouldn't wish that kind of trouble on anyone. That God of Israel is major powerful!

Woman 1: I heard that the people of Ekron begged the leaders to keep the Ark from entering their city. As soon as it entered, people began dying. The plague there was even worse than ever! The rats took over the entire city!

Reporter: What did they finally do? Bury the thing?

Woman 2: Oh, no! The Lord God wouldn't be happy with that! Why, God is so great and mighty! They did the only thing they could. They sent the Ark back to the Israelites!

Woman 1: Good riddance, if you ask me!

Reporter: I guess. Wow! What a story. Then what happened?

Woman 1: There's one of our city leaders now. Ask him. He'll tell you the rest. We really need to be on our way. It's getting late, and we have meals to prepare and flax to dye.

Reporter: Can YOU finish the story for me?

Leader: With pleasure. It's such a relief to be done with the whole thing!

Reporter: So, can you tell me? Where is the Ark, anyway?

Leader: You know about the plagues by now. I think everyone in Palestine has heard about them. Awful business, I say.

Reporter: Yes . . . Go on.

Leader: The truth of the matter is . . . well, how to say it . . . um . . . Well, some of our leaders still didn't believe that the plague and all the deaths were related to the Ark. They didn't think Israel's God could do all those things. Why, they didn't even blink at the story about Dagon falling on his face before the Lord God Almighty!

Reporter: Really?

Leader: Yeah. So when we gathered together and decided to send some offerings back to Israel's God with the Ark, some of the leaders laughed. They thought we were being superstitious. Several diviners told us to send five gold tumors and five gold rats as guilt offerings to God. After all, we didn't want to end up like Pharaoh and the Egyptians!

Reporter: I can understand that!

Leader: But we still didn't know for sure that God had been responsible for the plagues and things. So we took two cows that had never pulled a wagon before and hitched them to the wagon with the Ark of the Covenant. Then we just let the cows go! If they went toward Beth Shemesh, we would know that the Lord was powerful and had brought the disasters upon us. If the cows went somewhere else, things had happened by chance.

Reporter: That sounds exciting. What happened?

Leader: The cows made a beeline for Beth Shemesh, mooing and making all sorts of noise. The people of Beth Shemesh stopped working and came from fields, houses, and shops to celebrate the return of the Ark. Unfortunately, several of them got so excited they peeked into the ark. Even we Philistines know not to do that!

Reporter: Uh-huh.

Leader: God struck them down right on the spot!

Reporter: POWERFUL!

Leader: You said it! The people of Beth Shemesh will never forget God's power and might. God is truly great!

Reporter: Wow! I can't wait to go to Beth Shemesh to see the Ark. I just hope I don't lose my head and take a peek inside! Thanks for your help, friend.

Leader: Hey, the story's not finished. You won't find the Ark if you go to Beth Shemesh. The Israelites moved it. They took it to a little town with a funny name. Hmm . . . I can't quite recall. Some guy by the name of Abinadab is guarding it. But you can be sure that the Lord God Almighty is busy doing great and mighty works all over the place.

Reporter: Think hard. What's the name of the place they took the Ark?

Leader: I honestly don't remember. But if you want to know, you can look it up in 1 Samuel 7:1. A reporter from Ammon was through last week and wrote the story down for his people to read. Don't know where he was headed when he left here.

Reporter: Oh, great. I've been wandering around for days and I still don't have an answer to my question. What kind of reporter am I? And where is the Ark, anyway? Maybe my father was right. Being a potter might not be so bad, after all. Or maybe I could be a shepherd . . .

The End

Who Were the Philistines?

The Israelites lived in a large portion of the area we now call Palestine. Each of the twelve tribes had settled in a specific area. They were located around three bodies of water: the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea), the Salt Sea (Dead Sea), and the Sea of Chinnereth. Their large pieces of land and the bodies of water were valuable resources, but the tribes were scattered over a large area. This made it very difficult for the leaders of the tribes to meet and plan together.

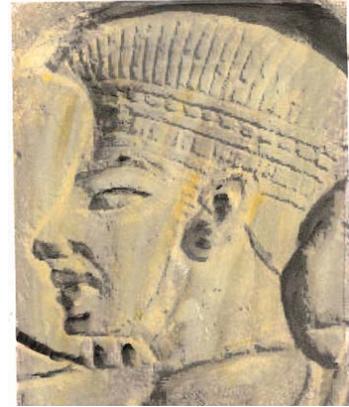
Around the Israelites lived other groups of people—the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Kenites, Philistines, Sidonians, and Cretans. Throughout the years, there were some fights between the Israelites and neighboring groups, but the Philistines, often called the “Sea People,” were the most troublesome.

The Philistines lived in a small portion of the coast of the Great Sea, directly south of Dan and west of Judah. They were wanted wealth and political power. Their goal was to control the entire western coast of Palestine. This would give them

greater access to the Great Sea, so they could use their sophisticated sailing vessels to trade with more countries. The land they wanted, though, was occupied by several of the Israelite tribes.

The Philistines didn’t have much land, and their cities were close together, so the leaders could easily meet together and plan how to conquer Israel. The Philistines also had other advantages: First, they had iron in their region, which allowed them to make more advanced and dangerous weapons than

those of their neighbors. Among these weapons were spears with iron heads. Second, they drove chariots. During battles, three men would ride in a chariot, one driving while the other two fought with spears. Third, the Philistines had a well-trained army and were military experts.



Carving of a Philistine warrior found at Thebes, Egypt. Egyptian hieroglyphs mention being invaded by the “Sea Peoples.”



A drawing of the Philistines' god, Dagon. The word “dag” means fish.



Ancient Philistine pottery

Compare and Contrast

the Israelites and Philistines

Use information from 1 Samuel 4:11 and the “Who Were the Philistines?” reading sheet to compare and contrast the Israelites and the Philistines. Put the information you gather into the appropriate sections of the chart. Then write a statement explaining why you think the Israelites lost to the Philistines.

	Israelites	Philistines
God		
People		
Land		
Water		
Resources		

What do you think was the real reason the Israelites lost the battle at Ebenezer?

Compare and Contrast

the Israelites and Philistines

Use information from 1 Samuel 4:11 and the “Who Were the Philistines?” reading sheet to compare and contrast the Israelites and the Philistines. Put the information you gather into the appropriate sections of the chart. Then write a statement explaining why you think the Israelites lost to the Philistines.

	Israelites	Philistines
God	<i>True God Ark of the Covenant</i>	<i>Idols Dagon</i>
People	<i>Slaves, nomads or wanderers Divided into 12 tribes Landholders Scattered Leaders lived far apart</i>	<i>“Sea People” Wanted wealth and political power Wanted more land Lived close to the Israelites Leaders could easily meet to plan</i>
Land	<i>Vast amount of land divided among the tribes Cities spaced far apart</i>	<i>Small land holdings Cities that were close together</i>
Water	<i>Great Sea Dead Sea Sea of Chinnereth Jordan River</i>	<i>Great Sea</i>
Resources	<i>Small, scattered army</i>	<i>Large, well-trained army Iron weapons and tools Well-made spears with iron tips Chariots and ships</i>

What do you think was the real reason the Israelites lost the battle at Ebenezer?

Answers will vary. Might include: According to the chart, it's no wonder the Philistines won, but if the Israelites had been faithful to God, God could have won the battle for them. Instead, God chose to remind them of their sin. Because they didn't obey, they suffered the consequences.

Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

LESSON 2: MEETING GOD AT MIZPAH

Objective

Students will learn that when we repent, forgiveness and restoration will follow.

Key Concepts

- Samuel called the people of Israel to repentance and holy living.
- The Israelites experienced forgiveness and restoration.
- God conquered the Philistines and restored Israel’s cities and land holdings.
- Samuel is identified as a follower of God.

Text: 1 Samuel 7:2-17

Additional texts: 1 Samuel 3:19-21, 1 Samuel 9:15-16, 1 Samuel 25:1, Psalm 99:6, Jeremiah 15:1, Acts 3:24, Acts 13:20, Hebrews 11:32

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- “Mizpah: The Place Where God Helped Us” (pp. 62-63)
- For Extend the Lesson: “Writing Frame” (p. 66)

Teacher Preparation

- Review the Scripture text to become familiar with the story of Mizpah and Samuel’s leadership. Review the additional texts, which identify characteristics of Samuel and characteristics of followers of God.
- Read the lesson and plan student pairs or groups.
- Make copies of “Mizpah: The Place Where God Helped Us,” one per student.
- If using Extend the Lesson, make one copy of the writing frame for each student.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Review Lesson 1. Explain that even though the Ark of the Covenant had been returned to Israel, they had lost some of their land and cities to the Philistines. During the next 20 years, the people were sorrowful and seeking after God. Finally, Samuel spoke. The exciting story for this lesson tells what happened.

LESSON STEPS

1. Read 1 Samuel 7:2-17. Have students find the text in their Bibles. Then read it to them or have students read it aloud. Discuss briefly the important concepts of the various parts of the story. (*The answer key for the activity sheet, pp. 64-65, will give you ideas for the discussion.*)

2. “Mizpah: The Place Where God Helped Us.” Distribute the activity sheet, read the instructions together, and then group or pair the students to complete it.

3. Discuss the activity. After the students have completed the sheet, bring them back into the large group to discuss their findings. *(This activity requires higher order thinking and should not be graded. Rather, it should be used to get the students thinking and discussing ideas with each other. Also, it is an opportunity for the teacher to help the students understand this story of forgiveness and restoration—see the answer key.)*

EXTEND THE LESSON

(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.)

• **Write a character sketch.** Using the writing frame from page 66 as a framework, have students write a character sketch of Samuel. They should select the three characteristics they think made Samuel a strong leader and follower of God.

The writing frame will direct them to write a beginning or introduction. *For example: Samuel was a strong leader of the Israelite people. He had many characteristics that made him a leader and follower of God. However, three characteristics stand out in my mind. They are a servant of God, _____, and _____.*

In paragraphs 2, 3, and 4, the students will discuss the three characteristics they chose to write about. *For example: First, I see that Samuel chose to be a servant of God. He was a servant when he called the people together at Mizpah, and led them through repentance to restoration. Another Scripture that shows his servant-hood is 1 Samuel 7:15-17. This passage tells us that he visited all the places he judged every year.*

Finally, paragraph 5 is a conclusion. *Example: A study of Samuel's life shows me that he was a strong leader and follower of God. He was a servant of God, _____, and _____. These are characteristics I admire. I hope people will be able to see them in my life, too.*

Mizpah: The Place Where God Helped Us

SECTION ONE

For each section, you need to provide two pieces of information. First, tell what important thing is happening. Next, tell what characteristic of Samuel is noticeable in this section.

1. Then Samuel spoke to the house of Israel saying, "If you are really serious about coming back to God, you need to get rid of all your foreign gods and worship only the true God. Then he will save you from the oppression of the Philistines." So, they got rid of their gods and paid attention to their God.

What happened: _____

Characteristic of Samuel: _____

2. Next, Samuel asked everyone to come together at Mizpah. He said, "There I will pray for you." So, the people came together. They cleansed themselves. They fasted and prayed. They admitted their sin.

What happened: _____

Characteristic of Samuel: _____

3. The Philistines heard about the meeting at Mizpah and came to attack Israel. The Israelites begged Samuel to pray to God with all his might. Then, Samuel took a young lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to God. He prayed to God for Israel's safety, and God heard and answered his prayer.

What happened: _____

Characteristic of Samuel: _____

4. While Samuel was offering the sacrifice, the Philistines came near. But then the Lord thundered and threw the Philistines into a panic. They ran away from Israel. The Israelites chased them to a point beyond Beth Car. Samuel marked the place and said, "This marks the place where God helped us."

What happened: _____

Characteristic of Samuel: _____

5. The Philistines learned their lesson and stayed away from Israel. All during Samuel's lifetime, God was hard on the Philistines. All the cities and lands that the Philistines had taken from the Israelites were restored to them.

What happened: _____

Characteristic of Samuel: _____

6. Samuel was a good judge over Israel the rest of his life. Every year, he went on a trip to visit all the places that he judged. He always went back to Ramah, because it was his home. He judged Israel from Ramah. He also built an altar there to the Lord.

What happened: _____

Characteristic of Samuel: _____

SECTION TWO

Read each Scripture. Decide what it tells you about Samuel and write it on the line.

1 Samuel 3:19-21 _____

1 Samuel 9:15-16 _____

1 Samuel 25:1 _____

Psalms 99:6 _____

Jeremiah 15:1 _____

Acts 3:24 _____

Acts 13:20 _____

Hebrews 11:32 _____

ANSWER KEY

Mizpah: The Place Where God Helped Us

SECTION ONE

For each section, you need to provide two pieces of information. First, tell what important thing is happening. Next, tell what characteristic of Samuel is noticeable in this section.

1. Then Samuel spoke to the house of Israel saying, “If you are really serious about coming back to God, you need to get rid of all your foreign gods and worship only the true God. Then he will save you from the oppression of the Philistines.” So, they got rid of their gods and paid attention to their God.

What happened: Samuel gave advice to the people.

Characteristic of Samuel: He was just.

2. Next, Samuel asked everyone to come together at Mizpah. He said, “There I will pray for you.” So, the people came together. They cleansed themselves. They fasted and prayed. They admitted their sin.

What happened: The community gathered and repented.

Characteristic of Samuel: He shepherded the people.

3. The Philistines heard about the meeting at Mizpah and came to attack Israel. The Israelites begged Samuel to pray to God with all his might. Then, Samuel took a young lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to God. He prayed to God for Israel’s safety, and God heard and answered his prayer.

What happened: The community asked for prayer.

Characteristic of Samuel: He acted as priest.

4. While Samuel was offering the sacrifice, the Philistines came near. But then the Lord thundered and threw the Philistines into a panic. They ran away from Israel. The Israelites chased them to a point beyond Beth Car. Samuel marked the place and said, “This marks the place where God helped us.”

What happened: The people experienced God’s mercy, forgiveness, and justice.

Characteristic of Samuel: He worshiped God.

5. The Philistines learned their lesson and stayed away from Israel. All during Samuel’s lifetime, God was hard on the Philistines. All the cities and land that the Philistines had taken from the Israelites were restored to them.

What happened: The Israelites’ cities and land were restored.

Characteristic of Samuel: He served God.

6. Samuel was a good judge over Israel the rest of his life. Every year, he went on a trip to visit all the places that he judged. He always went back to Ramah, because it was his home. He judged Israel from Ramah. He also built an altar there to the Lord.

What happened: God continued to protect the obedient Israelites.

Characteristic of Samuel: He was a good judge.

SECTION TWO

Read each Scripture. Decide what it tells you about Samuel and write it on the line.

1 Samuel 3:19-21 He was recognized as a true prophet of God by all the people.

1 Samuel 9:15-16 God revealed the king's name to Samuel.

1 Samuel 25:1 Everyone grieved Samuel's death.

Psalms 99:6 He was named as a man of prayer.

Jeremiah 15:1 He was honored and respected by God.

Acts 3:24 He was a prophet.

Acts 13:20 He was a prophet.

Hebrews 11:32 He was named in the Hall of Faith.

Writing Frame

PARAGRAPH 1: Introduction—Topic sentence

PARAGRAPH 2: First main idea sentence, relating to topic, with example and support

PARAGRAPH 3: Second main idea sentence, relating to topic, with example and support

PARAGRAPH 4: Third main idea sentence, relating to topic, with example and support

PARAGRAPH 5: Conclusion that relates back to topic sentence

Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

LESSON 3: WE WANT A KING!

Objective

Students will understand that a merciful God allows consequences for disobedient people.

Key Concepts

- Samuel was God’s messenger.
- The Israelites begged Samuel to appoint an earthly king, even though God was their king.
- Through Samuel, God warned the people of the consequences of being led by an earthly king.
- Who/what are earthly kings today, and how do they affect our lives?

Text: 1 Samuel 8

Focus Text: 1 Samuel 8:10-18

Estimated Lesson Time: 40-45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- Transparency or projection of 1 Samuel 8:10-18 (p. 69)
- “Our Earthly Kings” (p. 70)
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: “Quiz Game” (p. 72)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: transparency or projection of map of Palestine (Lesson 1, p. 50)

Teacher Preparation

- Read 1 Samuel 8 and the last section of the Biblical Background (p. 46).
- Spend time thinking about the focus text and how it relates to living in today’s society.
- Read the lesson and make appropriate copies.
- Write the questions found in lesson step 1 on the board.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Briefly review the story up to today’s lesson by asking students to recall the events in order. Make sure these important concepts are reviewed and recorded on the board or a chart:

1. Israel had turned away from God, to idol worship.
2. The Philistines won the battle at Ebenezer, and the Ark was lost. This is evidence of consequences for disobedience.
3. The Ark was recovered because God chose for it to reside with the people of Israel.
4. After 20 years of struggling to return to God, Samuel called the people to repentance at Mizpah.

5. God forgave Israel, extended mercy, and restored their land holdings and cities to them.

LESSON STEPS

1. Read 1 Samuel 8. Explain that this is the next story about Israel and Samuel. Ask students to follow along in their Bibles, and look for answers to the following three questions (*written on the board*).

1. What is the most important thing the Israelites did in this story? (*Rejected God*)
2. What did Samuel explain to the people? (*That God would allow them to have an earthly king, but there would be consequences—see focus text*)
3. In what ways are we like the Israelites in this story? (*We have earthly kings—maybe not people, but more likely, things.*)

Read the story with special emphasis on the focus text (*display the transparency or projection*), and then discuss the students' thoughts about the questions. The discussion of the last two questions and the focus text lead into the next activity.

2. “Our Earthly Kings.” In this activity, students will be ask to write down “gods” they might have and what consequences might come from having these “gods.”

Divide the class into same-gender groups to work on the activity sheet (*provide one sheet per group*). Each group should have a writer that can write quickly. The writer should write down anything a group member calls out. This activity will probably work quite well with first impressions. Call “time” after 8 minutes. Give the groups 2 more minutes to refine their lists. They might want to eliminate or add items at this point. Then, call them back together.

3. Make a class list. Develop two lists on the board from the group lists—one for earthly kings, and another for consequences. When the list is complete, call the students' attention back to the focus text (1 Samuel 8:10-18). Show them how their list might be a good paraphrase of this text. (*See example on the answer key for “Our Earthly Kings,” p. 71.*) Then write a class paraphrase based on the class list, or each group might write a short paraphrase based on its list.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40-45 minutes.)

• **Quiz Game review.** Divide the class into three or four teams. Read the questions, giving Team 1 the first one. If they answer *correctly*, they score 2 points, and the next question goes to Team 2. If they answer *incorrectly*, the question goes to Team 2. If Team 2 answers the question correctly, they get 1 point. (*If Team 2 also answers incorrectly, let any team answer but award no points, or answer yourself.*) The second question goes to Team 2, and play continues as before.

If you wish, make copies of the quiz sheet for students to use as a review.

• **Map review.** If the map activity from Lesson 1, Extend the Lesson, was not completed, it could be used as a review activity in this lesson.



So Samuel reported all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

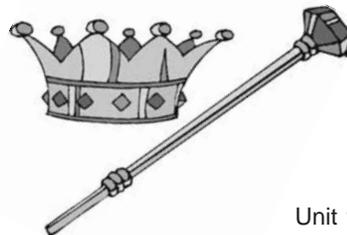
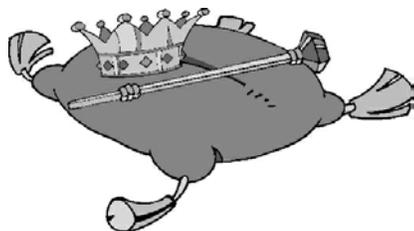
1 Samuel 8:10-18

Our Earthly Kings

Directions: Your group will have 8 minutes to complete the chart. In the first column, write anything that you own or wish you owned that might be an earthly king. In the second column, write consequences that might come from owning these things. You will have two additional minutes to refine your list by adding or deleting.

Your team needs one writer. When time begins, the writer should write everything the team members suggest.

Earthly Kings	Consequences
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.



ANSWER KEY

Our Earthly Kings

Directions: Your group will have 8 minutes to complete the chart. In the first column, write anything that you own or wish you owned that might be an earthly king. In the second column, write consequences that might come from owning these things. You will have two additional minutes to refine your list by adding or deleting.

Your team needs one writer. When time begins, the writer should write everything the team members suggest.

Earthly Kings	Consequences
1. EXAMPLES	1. EXAMPLES
2. <i>(Anything that takes too much of our time)</i>	2. <i>(Things we give up to have more time for earthly kings)</i>
3. <i>Cell phone</i>	3. <i>Loss of family time</i>
4. <i>Television</i>	4. <i>Don't want to go to church or Sunday School</i>
5. <i>Computer</i>	5. <i>Loss of friendships</i>
6.	6. <i>No physical exercise</i>
7.	7. <i>Forget devotions</i>
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.

Example of a paraphrase for 1 Samuel 8:10-18:

All the words of the Lord were told to the people who were asking for an earthly king. The speaker said, "This king could take away time spent with your family, playing games and having family dinners. It could take away money for necessities. It might make you forget to play with friends and get physical exercise. You might wish you didn't have to go to church or Sunday school, and forget to spend time reading the Bible and praying. You might never realize that this king is stealing important time from you, and then you may never cry out and ask God to be your true king."

Quiz Game

Divide the class into 3 or 4 teams, and ask them the following questions in turn. Award 2 points for a correct answer by the first team, 1 point for a correct answer by the second team.

1. Name the place where the battle was lost and the Ark was captured. (*Ebenezer*)
2. Name 3 of the 12 tribes of Judah. (*Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Judah, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun*)
3. Name the large river within Israel's land holdings. (*Jordan River*)
4. Name a man who was a judge and prophet. (*Samuel*)
5. What resources did the Philistines have? (*Warships, iron, chariots*)
6. Israel had brought the Ark from where? (*Shiloh*)
7. What plagues did the Philistines experience? (*Tumors and rats*)
8. Name 2 of Israel's neighbors. (*Ammonites, Cretans, Edomites, Moabites, Philistines, Sidonians*)
9. What 3 seas were important to the Israelites? (*Great Sea, Dead Sea, Sea of Chinnereth*)
10. What group wanted political and economic power? (*Philistines*)
11. Who was the Philistines' god of grain and the sea? (*Dagon*)
12. Where did the Philistines put the Ark after they captured it? (*In the temple of Dagon*)
13. What happened when the Philistines put the Ark of the Covenant next to their god? (*Their god bowed down to the Ark.*)
14. The Ark was returned to what city? (*Beth Shemesh*)
15. What Israelite guarded the Ark after it was returned? (*Abinadab*)
16. What word means "Thus far the Lord helped us?" (*Ebenezer*)
17. God warned the people that having what would make life difficult for them? (*An earthly king*)
18. At Mizpah, what did Samuel do for the people? (*He prayed for them.*)
19. After the people of Israel repented, what did God restore to them? (*God restored their land and their cities.*)
20. God told Samuel that the people did what to God when they begged for a human king? (*They rejected God.*)

Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

Unit 1 Assessment

Part 1

Put a circle around the letter that best answers the question.

- The land of Judah was divided between the
 - 12 tribes
 - 24 nations
 - Benjamin and Manasseh
 - Moabites and Ammonites
- The Philistines wanted to gain more land and more _____.
 - mountains
 - waterways
 - animals
 - people
- The Philistines were powerful because they
 - were God-fearing
 - lived in the mountains
 - had iron, chariots, and ships
 - were jealous
- When the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, they
 - put it in the temple of Dagon
 - hid it
 - put it in Jerusalem
 - destroyed it
- God showed power to the Philistines by sending
 - a terrible storm
 - an earthquake
 - locusts
 - tumors and rats
- Samuel set up a stone and named it Ebenezer, which meant
 - God helped us
 - Thus far the Lord helped us
 - God is great
 - The Lord is merciful
- After the people repented at Mizpah, God restored their
 - chariots and war ships
 - children
 - cities and land holdings
 - fruits and vegetables

Part 2

Write the correct answer in the blank.

- At Mizpah, Samuel _____ for the people.
- At Mizpah, God _____ the people.
- God warned the people that an _____ would make life difficult for them.
- God told Samuel that the people _____ him when they asked for a human king.
- According to Hebrews, Samuel is named in the _____.

Part 3

Answer these questions in complete sentences.

13. Give an example of a time when Israel was **disobedient**, and explain what happened.

14. Give an example of a time when Israel was **obedient**, and explain what happened.

15. Give an example of something that could become an earthly king for you. Explain what consequences you might experience because of this king.

ANSWER KEY

Samuel—Prophet, Priest, and Judge

Unit 1 Assessment

Part 1

Put a circle around the letter that best answers the question.

- The land of Judah was divided between the
 A. 12 tribes
B. 24 nations
C. Benjamin and Manasseh
D. Moabites and Ammonites
- The Philistines wanted to gain more land and more _____.
A. mountains
 B. waterways
C. animals
D. people
- The Philistines were powerful because they
A. were God-fearing
B. lived in the mountains
 C. had iron, chariots, and ships
D. were jealous
- When the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, they
 A. put it in the temple of Dagon
B. hid it
C. put it in Jerusalem
D. destroyed it
- God showed power to the Philistines by sending
A. a terrible storm
B. an earthquake
C. locusts
 D. tumors and rats
- Samuel set up a stone and named it Ebenezer, which meant
A. God helped us
B. Thus far the Lord helped us
C. God is great
D. The Lord is merciful
- After the people repented at Mizpah, God restored their
A. chariots and war ships
B. children
 C. cities and land holdings
D. fruits and vegetables

Part 2

Write the correct answer in the blank.

- At Mizpah, Samuel prayed for the people.
- At Mizpah, God forgave the people.
- God warned the people that an earthly (or human) king would make life difficult for them.
- God told Samuel that the people rejected him when they asked for a human king.
- According to Hebrews, Samuel is named in the Hall of Faith.

Part 3

Answer these questions in complete sentences.

(The following answers are examples. Any reasonable answer should be accepted.)

13. Give an example of a time when Israel was **disobedient**, and explain what happened.

Israel was disobedient when the people turned away from their true God and worshiped idols. They lost the battle at Ebenezer because of this disobedience.

14. Give an example of a time when Israel was **obedient**, and explain what happened.

Israel was obedient when the people went to Mizpah, repented from their sins, and asked Samuel to pray for them. As a result, God forgave them and restored their cities and land to them.

15. Give an example of something that could become an earthly king for you. Explain what consequences you might experience because of this king.

(This is an open-ended question. There is no right or wrong answer, as long as the student answers the question that is being asked.)
