

## CHAPTER 7

# The Rise of Monarchy

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### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

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Following the period of the Judges, the Jewish nation pressed for the creation of a monarchy. Many thought tribal alliances were insufficient to protect the Hebrew people from its enemies. As Scripture explains, Samuel was initially opposed, but eventually agreed to this request. Yet, he warned of the dangers of having a king. In his view, there could only be one ruler of Israel – the Lord of Hosts who led them out of bondage and into the Promised Land. Fearful that the nation would forsake the covenant, he warned them of the consequences.

Jealous of David's popularity, King Saul's reign was beset with disaster. Later King David's moral failings overshadowed his rule. As Scripture relates, he was guilty of adultery and plotted the death of Uriah the Hittite. Speaking in God's name, the prophet Nathan condemned the king and demanded repentance. For the Hebrew writers, dedication to God's covenant was paramount: even kings were obliged to follow the moral law. The Biblical account therefore has profound significance in modern society. Scripture stipulates that the leaders of the nation must live according to the highest ethical principles. By extension, modern Israel and its leaders are obliged to put into practice the highest ideals of the Jewish faith. Hence, you should consider whether Israel's current political policies are consonant with the moral precepts of the Jewish faith.

### THINGS TO DO

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- Go to Amazon.com. Look at books dealing with the monarchy in ancient Israel.
- Go to Google.com. Click on images. Look at illustrations dealing with Samuel, Saul and David.
- Stay in Google. Click on web. Then type in 'Bible Samuel', 'Bible Saul', 'Bible David', 'Bible history'. You will find a large number of websites dealing with this period of ancient Israelite history, such as [www.bible-history.com](http://www.bible-history.com).
- Read the account of Saul's conflict with David in I Samuel 18–21. Imagine you are a psychiatrist. Write a report about Saul's psychological problems.

### TIPS FOR TEACHERS

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- Ask the students to read the account of Samuel's warnings about the monarchy in I Samuel 8–12. Divide the class into two groups. One group should represent the claims of the ancient Hebrews; they should look at the arguments in favour of kingship. The other group should assess Samuel's advice. Reassemble the class to discuss these issues.
- Tell your students that they must write a short play based on David's seduction of Bathsheba. It should fill in the details of the events in 2 Samuel 11.
- Ask your students to imagine they are writing a book about career development. Use King David

as a case study. Ask the students to write a report about David's efforts to win support in his quest to become king of Israel. Get them to look at such events as David's struggle with Goliath, his marriage to King Saul's daughter, his military exploits, his conflict with Ishbaal. Ask them to give advice based on David's successful rise to power.

- Divide your class into groups. Tell them to outline the central ethical principles of the Jewish faith (see Chapter 89). They should evaluate modern Israel's policies toward the Palestinians in the light of these moral tenets. Reconvene the class for a discussion.
- Read out the account of David and Bathsheba. Ask the class to evaluate the king's behaviour.