

1st Samuel 13

Verse 1

Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for forty-two years over Israel.

There is a lot of confusion concerning this verse so let's take a look at some different versions to see if there is an answer to this dilemma.

NIV Saul was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned 42 years.

RSV Saul was (blank) years old when he began to reign; and he reigned (blank) and two years over Israel.

KJV Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

Septuagint This verse is not recorded.

If we accept the **NIV** version, we have a problem. The Apostle Paul said the length of Saul's reign was 40 years.

See Acts 13:21

²¹ **Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.**

Also, in verse 2 Jonathan is a competent military commander in charge of a thousand men. If Saul is 30 years old at this point then how old is his son Jonathan? If Jonathan was a competent military leader at the age of 15, and that seems a bit young, then Saul would have been 15 years old when he had Jonathan.

The **RSV** leaves the time frame blank.

The **KJV** completely changes the context of the verse.

The **Septuagint** does not have this verse at all.

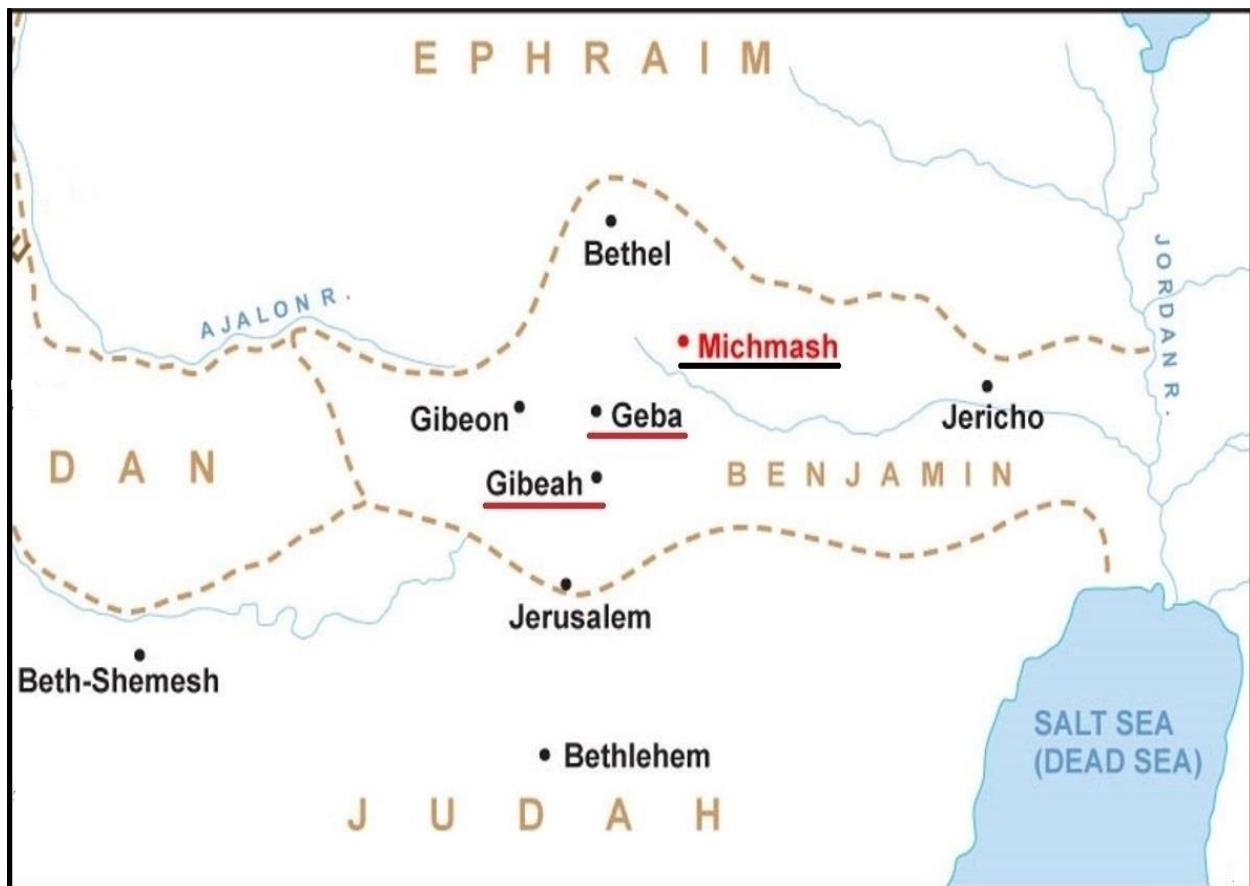
The Septuagint is based on the oldest transcripts and for that reason it seems likely that it is the more reliable version.

Verses 2 - 4

² Now Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel, of whom two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent the rest of the people away, each to his tent. ³ And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard *about it*. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" ⁴ And all Israel heard the news that Saul had attacked the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become repulsive to the Philistines. Then the people were summoned to Saul at Gilgal.

² Now Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel, of whom two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent the rest of the people away, each to his tent.

See map 1305



³ And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard *about it*.

We learned in chapter 10 verse 5 that there was a Philistine garrison at “the hill of God”.

See 1 Samuel 10:5

⁵ Afterward you will come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is; and it shall be as soon as you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre in front of them, and they will be prophesying.

Was the garrison at the hill of God the same garrison that we find here at Geba? It seems somewhat likely because it would be unusual that two garrisons would be so close to each other.

⁴ And all Israel heard the news that Saul had attacked the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become repulsive to the Philistines. Then the people were summoned to Saul at Gilgal.

Saul had told all the men to go home except for the 3,000 that were with him and Jonathan. But now a war was likely to break out so he went to Gilgal and called on Israel to meet him there.

Verses 5 – 7

⁵ Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people kept themselves hidden in caves, in crevices, in cliffs, in crypts, and in pits. ⁷ And *some of* the Hebrews crossed the Jordan *into* the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him, trembling.

⁵ Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

Many scholars think this is a scribal error, that it should read 3,000 not 30,000. Since there were only 6,000 horsemen, it seems more likely that it was 3,000 chariots. Also 30,000 chariots would be a lot for this area.

The Philistines came to Michmash after Saul left there for Gilgal.

⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people kept themselves hidden in caves, in crevices, in cliffs, in crypts, and in pits. ⁷ And some of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead.

The residents of Michmash and the surrounding area hid themselves wherever they could or left that area for the land of Gad east of the Jordan.

See map1110 Gilgal and Gad



Verses 8 – 14

⁸ Now he waited for seven days, until the appointed time that Samuel *had set*, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. ⁹ So Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering. ¹⁰ But as soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him *and* to greet him. ¹¹ But Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “Since I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come at the appointed time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, ¹² I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the Lord.’ So I worked up the courage and offered the burnt offering.” ¹³ But Samuel said to Saul, “You have acted foolishly! You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for the Lord would now have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”

⁸ Now he waited for seven days, until the appointed time that Samuel *had set*, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him.

Two years earlier when Saul was selected by God to be king a very similar command was given to Saul.

See 1 Samuel 10:8

⁸ And you shall go down ahead of me to Gilgal; and behold, I will be coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and inform you of what you should do.

⁹ So Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering.

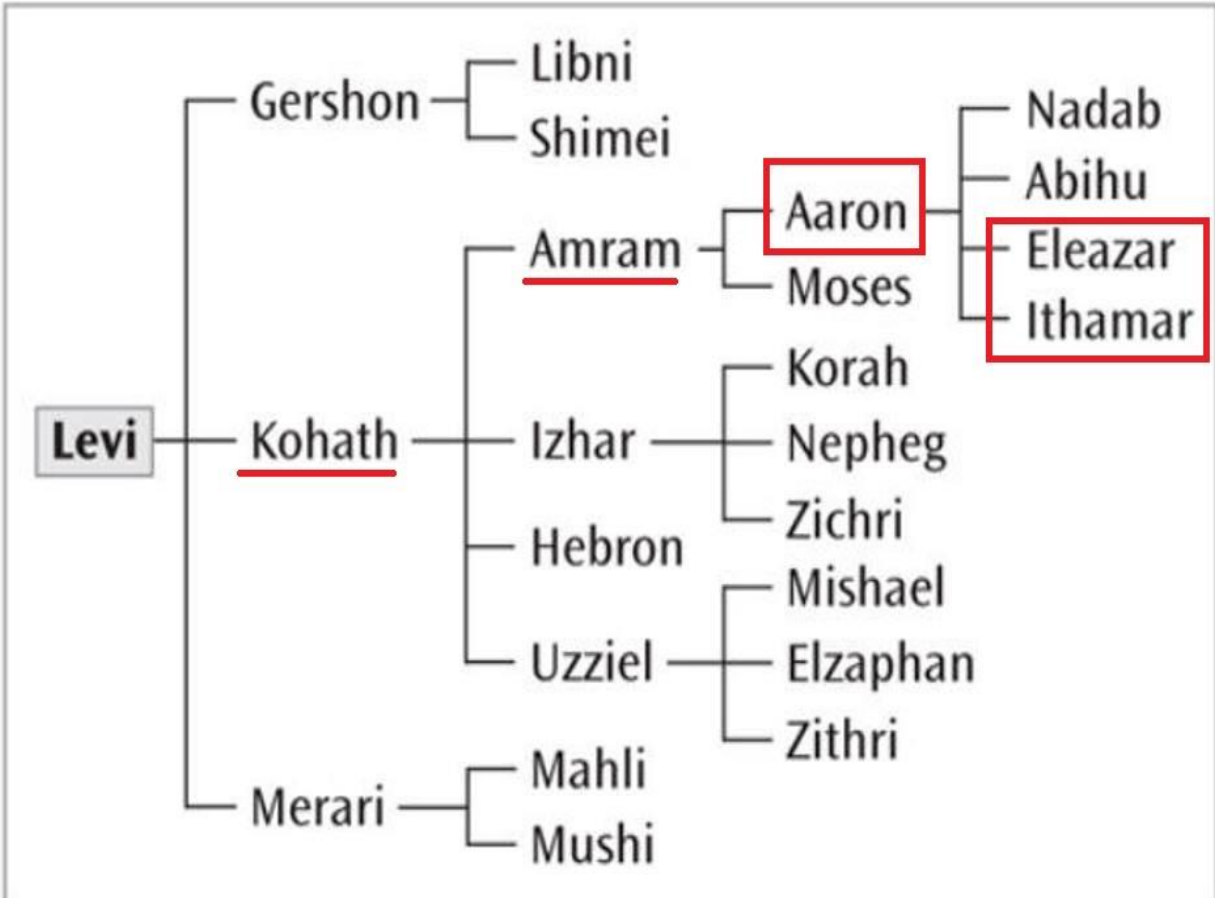
Saul waited the full seven days but he did something that he was not allowed to do according to the law. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin (not a priest) and he took it upon himself to offer the sacrifice.

Yes, Saul was the king of Israel but God had made a clear distinction between the Tribe of Levi and all the other tribes of Israel.

In addition not all Levites were priests. Only the descendants of Aaron were given the priesthood.

See chart 1315

Descendants of Levi



However, it should be noted that Samuel was a Levite but he was not from the line of Aaron. Instead he was from the line of Kohath.

See 1 Chron. 6

²² The sons of Kohath were Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son,
²³ Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son, ²⁴ Tahath his son, Uriel his
son, Uzziab his son, and Shaul his son. ²⁵ The sons of Elkanah were Amasai and
Ahimoth. ²⁶ As for Elkanah, the sons of Elkanah were Zophai his son, Nahath his
son, ²⁷ Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, and Elkanah his son. ²⁸ The sons of
Samuel were Joel, the firstborn, and Abijah, the second.

Apparently Samuel was given this special honor to offer sacrifices by God.

See 1 Samuel 2:18

¹⁸ Now Samuel was ministering before the Lord, as a boy wearing a linen ephod.

Samuel replaced the two sons of Eli who were corrupt and died in the Philistine war shortly before their father died.

¹¹ But Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “Since I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come at the appointed time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,¹² I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the Lord.’ So I worked up the courage and offered the burnt offering.”

Saul gave 4 reasons why he needed to offer the sacrifice rather than obey God. None of these excuses were valid and it seems that Saul never repented of this sin. He will sin again in chapter 15 (22 years after this event) and that time he does repent but God will not relent in taking the kingdom away from Saul.

¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”

Saul had only been king for 2 years and he committed a sin that cost him the kingship in the sense that it would not continue thru his lineage. David would replace Jonathan as the rightful heir of the throne.

Verses 15 -18

¹⁵ Then Samuel set out and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul counted the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. ¹⁶ Now Saul, his son Jonathan, and the people who were present with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash. ¹⁷ Then raiders came from the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, ¹⁸ and another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the border that overlooks the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

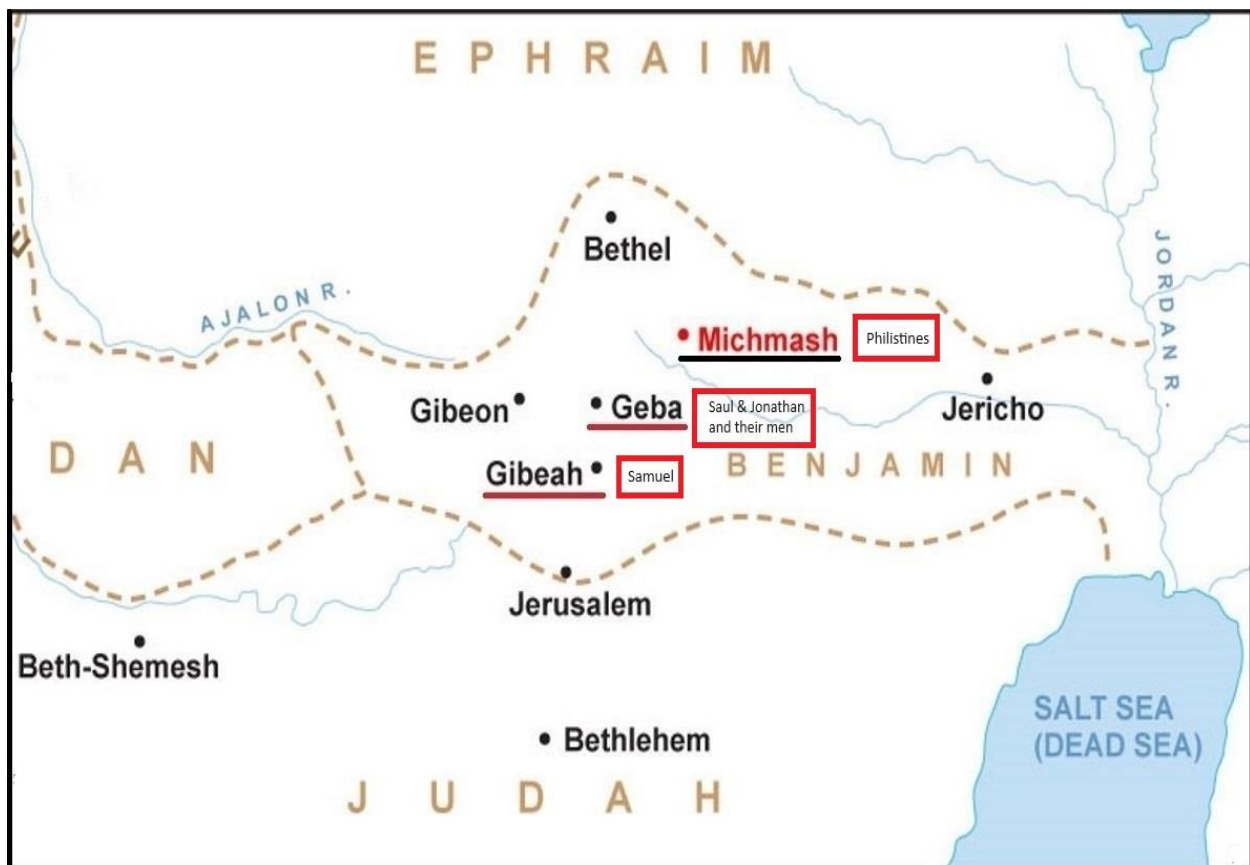
¹⁵ Then Samuel set out and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul counted the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.

Saul had 2000 men with him when he was at Michmash and now there are only 600. 1400 men must have left him while they were in Gilgal.

¹⁶ Now Saul, his son Jonathan, and the people who were present with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash.

Jonathan had defeated the garrison in Geba so this was now a safe place to stay. So Samuel is at Gibeah and Saul & Jonathan and their men are at Geba

See map 1320



¹⁷ Then raiders came from the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, ¹⁸ and another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the border that overlooks the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

Ophrah was North of Michmash, Beth-Horon was west and The Valley of Zeboim (Achor) was east.

See map 1325



The Philistine raiding parties avoided going south since Saul and Jonathan were in Geba with their men.

Verses 19 – 23

¹⁹ Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, because the Philistines said, “Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears.” ²⁰ So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. ²¹ The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the cattle goads. ²² So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan. ²³ And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the gorge of Michmash.

¹⁹ Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, because the Philistines said, “Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears.”

At some point in the not too distant past the Philistines took total control over Israel by setting up garrisons throughout this part of Israel. This may have happened shortly after they defeated Israel, killing 30,000 of their soldiers and capturing the Ark. This event took place 22 years prior to this chapter.

See 1 Samuel 4:10-11

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the defeat was very great, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell.

¹¹ Moreover, the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

²⁰ So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe.

This shows that the Philistines had a firm grip over Israel at this time.

²² So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan

The Israelites probably only had the sling and the bow and arrow. However, Saul and his son Jonathan did have swords.

It should be noted that it does not say, sword nor spear in all of Israel, but rather no sword nor spear in the hand of any with Saul and Jonathan.