

1Samuel 11:1 ¶ Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

1Samuel 11:2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make a *covenant* with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.

1Samuel 11:3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee.

1Samuel 11:4 Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

Sometime after Saul has been acknowledged as king in Israel, Nahash the Ammonite and his army threatened an attack against Jabeshgilead. Reminder—the land of Gilead was east of the Jordan River.

According to Clarke, the Vulgate indicates that this occurred about a month after Saul had been acknowledged as king.

The men of Jabesh offered to make a covenant with Nahash to serve them. Nahash agreed to a covenant with one stipulation—that he be allowed to take out the right eye of each person as a mark of shame against Israel. The leaders of Jabesh asked to be given seven days to seek help from the other tribes. If no one would come to their aid, they would agree to his terms.

Amazingly, Nahash agreed to their request. He was certainly not lacking in pride and confidence. Maybe he thought he would get to humiliate more Israelites if he waited.

I liked the thoughtful comparison between Nahash and Satan made by Guzik: “We can see in this account a similarity between Satan, our spiritual enemy, and Nahash, the enemy of Israel.

- Satan attacks us but cannot do anything against us without our agreement. He asks for, and requires our surrender.
- Satan wants us to serve him and will attempt to intimidate us into giving in to him.
- Satan wants to humiliate us and exalt himself over us. Through humiliating one saint, Satan wants to bring reproach on all God's people.
- Satan wants to take away our ability to effectively fight against him.
- Satan wants to blind us and if he cannot blind us completely, he will blind us partially.
- The name Nahash means serpent or snake.”

When the messengers reached Gibeah, Saul's hometown, they told the people the threat confronting them causing a great sound of mourning.

1Samuel 11:5 ¶ And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul

said, What *aileth* the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

1Samuel 11:6 And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

1Samuel 11:7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

1Samuel 11:8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

Saul came home from working in the field and asked what was wrong with everyone, and they told him the news from Jabesh. When Saul heard the news, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he became very angry. He cut up two oxen and sent the pieces throughout Israel with a strong message: Whoever refuses to come and follow Saul and Samuel will find their oxen cut up in the same way. The message accomplished its purpose. The people responded in the fear of the LORD and they rallied to his support. When he numbered those gathered at Bezek (evidently the appointed place), there were 300,000 men from Israel plus 30,000 from Judah.

I think by invoking the name of Samuel that Saul was reminding the people that his appointment as their leader was from the LORD. To refuse him was to disobey the LORD. It must have served the intended purpose, because the people responded in the fear of the LORD.

I don't know why Judah was numbered separately.

1Samuel 11:9 And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by *that time* the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed *it* to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.

1Samuel 11:10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.

1Samuel 11:11 And it was *so* on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

The messengers were sent back to Jabeshgilead to tell them that help would arrive by the next day before the sun was hot—noon or shortly thereafter. Confident that help was on the way, the men of Jabesh sent a message to Nahash that they would surrender to him the next day.

The IVP Old Testament Commentary provides this insight: “If both Bezek and Jabesh Gilead have been identified correctly by modern archaeologists, then the two cities were about thirteen or fourteen miles apart. This could easily be covered in a march that began in the evening and concluded in the Ammonite

camp in the early hours of the morning.”

On the next day Saul divided his army into three companies and attacked the Ammonites in the morning watch; I think that references the 6:00-9:00 am time period. They fought and killed the Ammonites until the heat of the day. When the battle was over, very few men of Ammon survived.

1Samuel 11:12 ¶ And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.

1Samuel 11:13 And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

The people were ecstatic with Saul’s leadership. They immediately determined to put to death those that had not given their support to Saul as their king. Saul, however, ordered that no one was to be put to death. He rightfully acknowledged that it was the LORD that had given them the victory.

1Samuel 11:14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

1Samuel 11:15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Samuel called for the people to gather once again at Gilgal and renew or reaffirm the kingdom under Saul. So they did. They went to Gilgal and once again confirmed Saul as their king and sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD. It was a time of great celebration for Saul and all the men of Israel.