

1st Samuel

Lesson 13

b) Kish's Donkeys Lost and Gone (9:3-4)

We are fortunate that the writer tells us about the search for the new king. The reality is Samuel did not have to engage in a search. As always, when the LORD has given direction, the LORD provides. Samuel will not have to search for this king; the LORD will send this new king to Samuel. But the LORD truly moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to behold. The writer tells us how the LORD operated to bring this new king to Samuel. It began with Kish's donkeys lost and gone. Verse 3.

"Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take now with you one of the servants, and arise, go search for the donkeys."⁴ He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them." (9:3-4)

The passage does not tell us where Kish's home was, but because it was Saul's home, on his family's designated plot since the division of the land in the days of Joshua, Kish's home was in Gibeah, in the tribal area of Benjamin. By the way, this is the same town where the tribes of Israel fought with the tribe of Benjamin and virtually destroyed all the men of Benjamin except six hundred who survived as recorded in Judges 22. Gibeah will be the capital of King Saul when he is anointed by Samuel. The tribal area of Ephraim sat north of the tribal area of Benjamin. It, like Benjamin, was a small tribal area and could be searched in a relatively short period.

Shalishah means *a triangular area*. It means that Saul made a triangular journey from Gibeah up through Ephraim and then took a sharp left to head to the land of Shaalim. Shaalim means *the land of foxes*. If you will remember, Samuel told us about Samson and introduced us to the land of the foxes in Samson's story. Samson lived on the eastern edge of the tribal land of Dan. Therefore, Saul traveled from the eastern edge of Benjamin's land where Gibeah sat, straight north to the top of Ephraim's land, turned a hard left, crossed the mountains of Ephraim and entered the eastern portion of Dan's land, then turned another hard left to search Benjamin's land from the west to the east. All of this was without success.

(1) The Prolonged Pursuit (9:5)

On his way back to Gibeah, the LORD prolonged the pursuit when Saul came to the land of Zuph. Verse 5.

"When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, and let us return, or else my father will cease to be concerned about the donkeys and will become anxious for us." (9:5)

If you will remember, we were introduced to the land of Zuph (Zoph) when we were introduced to the story of Samuel and his parents. Samuel's hometown of Ramah sat in the land of Zuph, west of the city of Gibeah. The LORD had led Saul to the home of Samuel the prophet. Saul was ready to be home. He was ready to get through Zuph (Zoph) and get home. So, when we are almost where the LORD wants us to be in life, we seem to want to rush ahead of Him. In our human error, we put our eyes on our desires, not on the LORD's.

(2) The Possible Plan (9:6)

In the conversation with his servant, Saul's servant knew about Samuel and proposed a possible plan. Verse 6.

"He said to him, 'Behold now, there is a man of God in this city, and the man is held in honor; all that he says surely comes true. Now let us go there, perhaps he can tell us about our journey on which we have set out.' (9:6)

Samuel was fully in control of Israel at the time. All of Israel knew of Samuel. Saul's mind was not about Samuel. Why would he have the time to be concerned about a few donkeys? But the servant knew that Samuel had a reputation for telling the future. If Samuel said it, it was true. The servant encouraged Saul to at least seek out Samuel to see what he had to say.

(3) The Provided Payment (9:7-10)

But Saul knew that he could not seek the knowledge of Samuel empty-handed. The LORD had the provided payment already in the hand of the servant. Verse. 7.

"Then Saul said to his servant, 'But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is gone from our sack and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?'"⁸ The servant answered Saul again and said, 'Behold, I have in my hand a fourth of a shekel of silver; I will give it to the man of God and he will tell us our way.'⁹ (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, "Come, and let us go to the seer"; for he who is called a prophet now was formerly called a seer.)¹⁰ Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was." (9:7-10)

With the payment in the hand of his servant, Saul had no excuses. Into Ramah, the two men headed to see Samuel.

(4) The Prophesying Prophet (9:11-14)

Not even in the city yet, Saul and his servant asked a young woman about the prophesying prophet. Verse 11.

"As they went up the slope to the city, they found young women going out to draw water and said to them, 'Is the seer here?'"¹² They answered them and said, 'He is; see, he is ahead of you. Hurry now, for he has come into the city today, for the people have a sacrifice on the high place today.'¹³ As soon as you enter the city you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat, for the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up for you will find him at once."¹⁴ So they went up to the city. As they came into the city, behold, Samuel was coming out toward them to go up to the high place." (9:11-14)

Samuel was in his normal place, doing his normal business when the LORD brought Saul to him. And so, it is the same when the LORD is with us. Nothing extraordinaire is needed. Nothing exceptional must be done. Nothing special must be prepared. If the LORD uses us, He will make the way where there seems to be no way. He will make the impossible possible, the improbable probable, and the unimaginable imaginable.