

1 Samuel 10:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

Analysis

And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

The people 'ran' (ruts) to retrieve Saul, suggesting eager excitement at discovering their king. When presented, his physical stature immediately distinguished him: 'higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward' (gavoah mikol-ha'am mishikmo vamalah). This impressive appearance fulfills Israel's desire for a king 'like the nations' (8:5, 20) - outwardly impressive, visually commanding. Samuel earlier warned that Israel evaluated by external appearance (16:7: 'man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart'). Saul's height satisfied human expectations but did not guarantee internal qualification. This physical description foreshadows the Goliath narrative where another exceptionally tall figure would terrify Israel - including Saul, who should have been their champion. Physical impressiveness without spiritual courage proves worthless against true threats.

Historical Context

Height and physical appearance signified leadership capacity in the ancient Near East. Egyptian and Mesopotamian art depicted kings as larger than subjects.

Israel's desire for an impressive-looking king reflected cultural values God would later subvert in choosing David, the youngest and least impressive of Jesse's sons.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you evaluate leaders - by external impressiveness or internal character?
2. What does Saul's height foreshadow about his failure against another tall opponent, Goliath?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּצֵאוּ And they ran H7323	וַיִּקְחוּ הוּא and fetched H3947	מִשָּׁם H8033	וַיִּתֵּן בּוֹ him thence and when he stood H3320	בֵּת וְיָ among H8432
הָעָם than any of the people H5971	וַיְהִי he was higher H1361	מִכָּל H3605	הָעָם than any of the people H5971	
מִשְׁכָּמוֹ from his shoulders H7926	וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ and upward H4605			

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 9:2 (Parallel theme): And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a

goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

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