

# 1 Samuel 9:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

## Analysis

---

**And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?**

Saul's response reveals either genuine humility or strategic self-deprecation, possibly both. His rhetorical questions emphasize dual lowliness: Benjamin was the smallest tribe, and his family was the least within Benjamin. The language echoes Gideon's similar protest (Judges 6:15), establishing a pattern of God choosing the unlikely. Saul's reasoning, if sincere, shows appropriate awareness of his inadequacy for such a calling. Yet the mention of Benjamin's smallness requires nuance: the tribe had been nearly exterminated in the civil war of Judges 19-21, making their later provision of Israel's first king a remarkable restoration. Saul's question 'wherefore then speakest thou so?' (lamah dabbarta elai kadavar hazeh) expresses bewilderment at Samuel's suggestion. This moment of self-effacement stands in stark contrast to the pride that would later characterize Saul's reign.

## Historical Context

---

Benjamin's decimation in the tribal war (Judges 20-21) had reduced them to a remnant. Their gradual recovery made Saul's emergence as king a testimony to

tribal restoration. The pattern of God choosing smaller tribes and lesser families (Gideon from Manasseh, David from Judah's lesser line) reinforced the theological principle that 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble' (James 4:6).

## Related Passages

---

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

---

1. How should we respond when God's calling seems to exceed our qualifications or background?
2. What does Saul's initial humility teach about the danger of forgetting our origins once we achieve success?

## Interlinear Text

---

answered	And Saul	and said	H3808	הָיָה	Am not I a Benjamite	H595
H6030	H7586	H559		H1145		
of the smallest	of the tribe	of Israel	H3478	מִקְטָבִי	מִקְטָבִי	H3605
H6996	H7626			H4940	וְהַיְתָה	H6810
and my family	of the tribe	of Benjamin	H1144	בְּנֵי־	מִשְׁפָחָה וְהַ	H413
H4940	H7626			H4100	לֹא־	H1696
thou so					דְּבָרָתֶךָ	
H1697					וְהַ	
					אַתָּה	
					כִּי־	
					רְאֵתָה	

## Additional Cross-References

---

**1 Samuel 15:17** (References Israel): And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

**Psalms 68:27** (Parallel theme): There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.

**Ephesians 3:8** (Parallel theme): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

**Luke 14:11** (Parallel theme): For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

---

From KJV Study • [kjvstudy.org](http://kjvstudy.org)