

A dramatic landscape featuring a long, straight dirt road that stretches from the foreground into the distance. The road is flanked by dry, golden-brown grass and scattered rocks. In the background, a range of low mountains is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. The sun is a bright, glowing orb positioned centrally on the horizon, casting a warm, orange glow across the entire scene. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a dark, stormy grey at the top, with heavy, dark clouds hanging low.

SAMUEL

ISRAEL'S GREATEST
REFORMER

WILDERNESS CAMP

SAMUEL

ISRAEL'S GREATEST REFORMER

STUDY NOTES • 2024



WELCOME

Dear Young Person,

Welcome to Wilderness Camp 2024! We are delighted that you have chosen to join us and are looking forward to studying the life of Samuel together.

Wilderness Camp is designed to help each of us regularly put aside time away from the distractions in our lives to spend time with God and His Word. To meet this aim, the camp involves a personal commitment by each of us as attendees to study the life of Samuel. These notes will help in accomplishing that - they are easy to read and yet filled with fascinating insights into the incredible man before us.

The camp will be structured around interactive workshops and discussion groups rather than a series of talks, so the success of the camp relies on our preparation.

What does this mean for me?

As an attendee at Wilderness Camp, you are expected to:

- Prioritise attendance at the **Preparatory Workshops** and your **Mentor Sessions**.
- **Listen to a series of studies**, available on the website:
 - *Samuel - Faithful Living in Evil Times* (Bro Ken Styles), or
 - *Samuel the Seer* (Bro Roger Lewis), or
 - *Samuel, Israel's Greatest Reformer* (Bro Steve McGeorge).
- Study the life of Samuel using the **Camp Notes**, as well as any other materials you may find helpful.
- **Mark your study** into your Bible.

With that done, we will all be well prepared for the activities at the Camp.

We would like to thank the many Brothers and Sisters who have contributed to these notes and pray that God will remember their work for good.

The life of Samuel is both a sizeable and a rewarding study. We recommend you plan out and regularly put aside time for your study in order to complete it. Please get in touch with us early if there is anything we can do to assist you in planning or completing your study.

We look forward to sharing Wilderness Camp 2024 with you, God willing.

In the Hope of our Lord's return,

The Wilderness Camp Committee

January 2024

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RESOURCES

In preparing these notes, the following sources have been most helpful and are commended to any who may like further reading. We thank those brothers whose work has helped unlock the drama of Samuel's life story.

BOOKS

In-text Citation	Full Reference
Roger Lewis, <i>Hannah</i>	Hannah, Handmaid of the Highest by Bro Roger Lewis (2020). Published by <i>The Christadelphian</i> .
Michael Ashton, <i>Samuel the Seer</i>	Samuel the Seer by Bro Michael Ashton (2002). Published by <i>The Christadelphian</i> .
Edersheim, <i>OT History</i>	Bible History Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim (1890). Published by <i>Hendrickson Publishers</i> , 11 th Printing 2018, Book 4.

STUDIES

- Samuel - Faithful Living in Evil Times - Bro Ken Styles (1Sam 1-7)
- Samuel the Seer - Bro Roger Lewis (1Sam 8-25)
- Samuel, Israel's Greatest Reformer - Bro Steve McGeorge (1Sam 1-25)

KEY ABBREVIATIONS & REFERENCE WORKS

mg = margin

s/w = same word

Heb = Hebrew

Gk = Greek

Cp = compare

ASV = American Standard Version

ESV = English Standard Version

ISV = International Standard Version

LEB = Lexham English Bible

LXX = The Septuagint Old Testament

NASB = New American Standard Bible

NIV = New International Version

Roth = Rotherham's Translation

RSV = Revised Standard Version

YLT = Young's Literal Translation

Barnes = Barnes Commentary

BDB = Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Definitions

Camb. Comm. = The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

ESV Study Bible = The ESV Study Bible, Crossway, 2008 Ed.

ISBE = International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

NIV Study Bible = The NIV Study Bible, Zondervan, 2011 Ed.

Str = Strong's Concordance

TSK = Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge

BACKGROUND



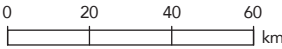
ISRAEL IN THE TIME OF SAMUEL



KEY

- 5 Cities of the Philistines
- ▲ Mountain Ranges

SCALE



INTRODUCTION

From his birth, Samuel was a man of destiny.

His life commenced in a world very much like our own. The closing scenes of the book of Judges show a nation in which spiritual apathy and self-expression prevailed, when everyone did whatever they wanted, and even the priesthood had fallen into apostacy.

Amid the spiritual darkness that enveloped the nation, a barren woman in the backwater town of Ramah in Mount Ephraim made a vow of commitment and dedication. The story that follows is nothing short of transformational.

In the miraculous conception of her son, a change would begin which would take Israel from the chaotic times of the Judges to the glory and stability of the age of the Kings. In fact, so great would be the reformation that would occur under this man, that his birth and early life would be taken as the inspired shadow for the birth of the Son of God.

Samuel would rise to become the national Judge for many years; he would inaugurate the monarchy, establish the Schools of the Prophets, reform the priesthood, and would lay the foundations for the magnificent Kingdom under David and Solomon.

And yet the account of his life is strikingly personal. He felt the pain of separation from his family, the heartache at the corruption of Shiloh. He felt the joy of national reformation, and the bitterness of personal rejection. And through it all, Samuel left behind him a legacy of faithful and unwavering service.

That is the story before us - the life of **Samuel, Israel's Greatest Reformer**.

We pray that our time considering the life of Samuel - both before the camp and at our weekend together - may inspire us all to take on the spirit of Samuel.

CHRONOLOGY OF SAMUEL'S LIFE

The chronology of Samuel's life has intrigued many students of God's Word throughout time. The reason for this is that, as with many sections in Scripture, the period abounds with chronological *clues*, and yet the work of stitching them together into a composite picture of the life of Samuel is challenged by the size of the project and a small number of textual changes due to copyist or translational errors.

It is therefore difficult to construct a timeline of Samuel's life with *absolute* certainty. But it is possible to reach a satisfactory conclusion as to the *best fit* as seen on the adjacent page. This timeline harmonises all the Scriptural time periods as best as we are able and serves as a useful framework in which to understand the events of Samuel's life.

Importantly, the exact chronology of Samuel's life has little bearing, for the most part, upon the lessons it conveys. The events recorded of him still took place with all their drama and reality, irrespective of their precise timing.

There is only one major timing factor that contributes dramatically to the story of Samuel's life, and that is its proximity to the times of the Judges. But thankfully we are not left in any doubt as to the era that Samuel was born into, as it is presented in vivid detail in the narrative of 1Samuel. Because of its immense bearing on the account of Samuel's life, this will be further explored in the following pages.

TIMELINE

The details of reconciling the Scriptural passages to form the timeline have been reserved to Appendix 1. But for simplicity, a short explanation is included in the paragraphs below:

The overall framework of the timeline is constructed from the outside in, beginning with the 480-year period between Israel's departure from Egypt and the commencement of Solomon's Temple (1Ki 6:1), and then filling in time periods from either end:

- Working forward from the Wilderness Wanderings, there was a 300-year epoch which the judge Jephthah very helpfully supplies. We can then add the times of each judge after Jephthah, as they are spelled out in Jud 12.
- Working backward from the beginning of Solomon's 4th year, the 40-year reigns of David and Saul can be deducted.

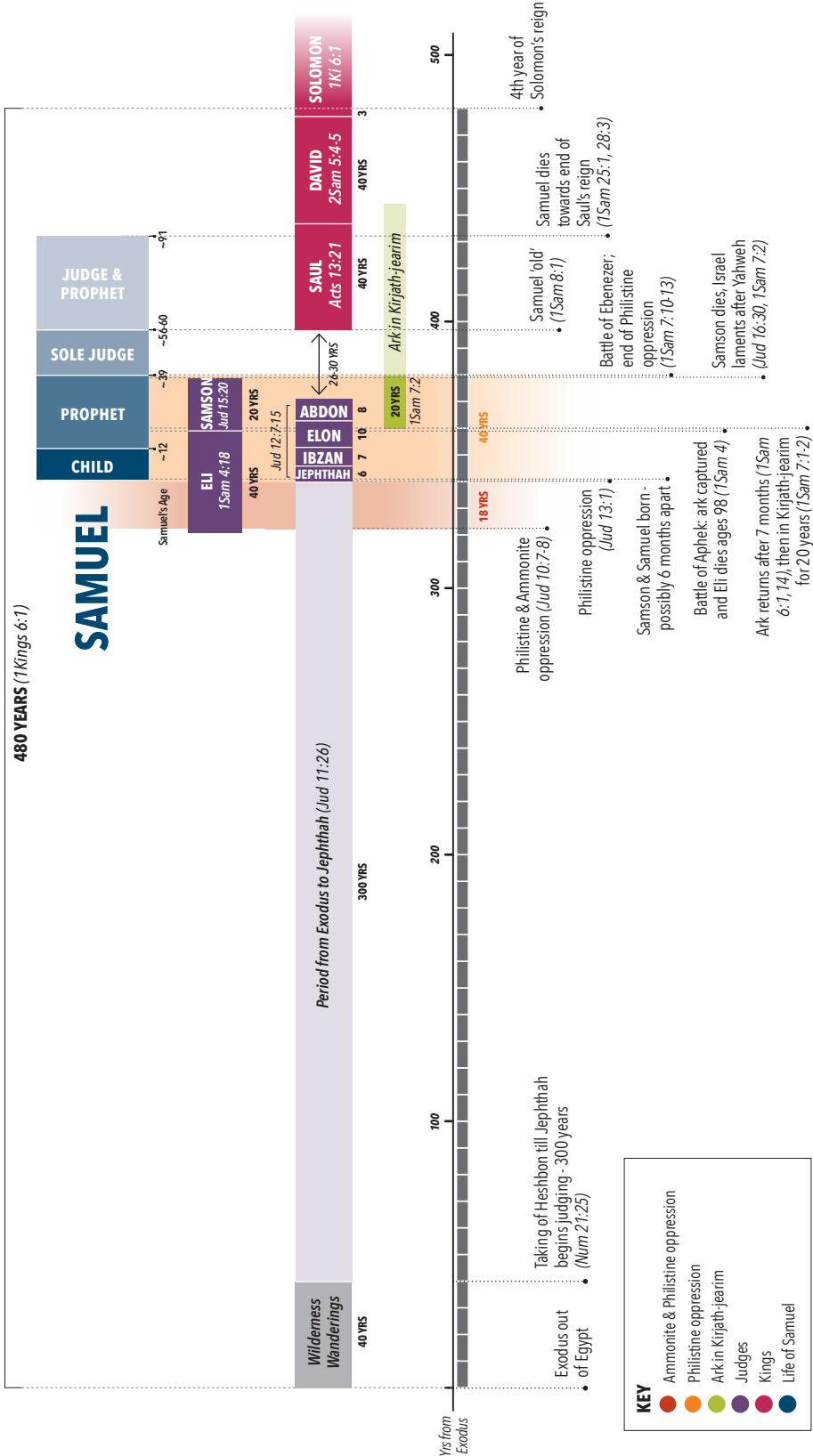
This leaves a period of about 26-30 years into which Samuel's work the national judge falls, along with a number of other significant people and events, as demonstrated on the timeline and discussed in Appendix 1.

From this broader timeline, a more focused timeline can then be constructed of the life of Samuel specifically. This is shown on p10.

TIMELINE - EXODUS TO THE KINGS

480 YEARS (1Kings 6:1)

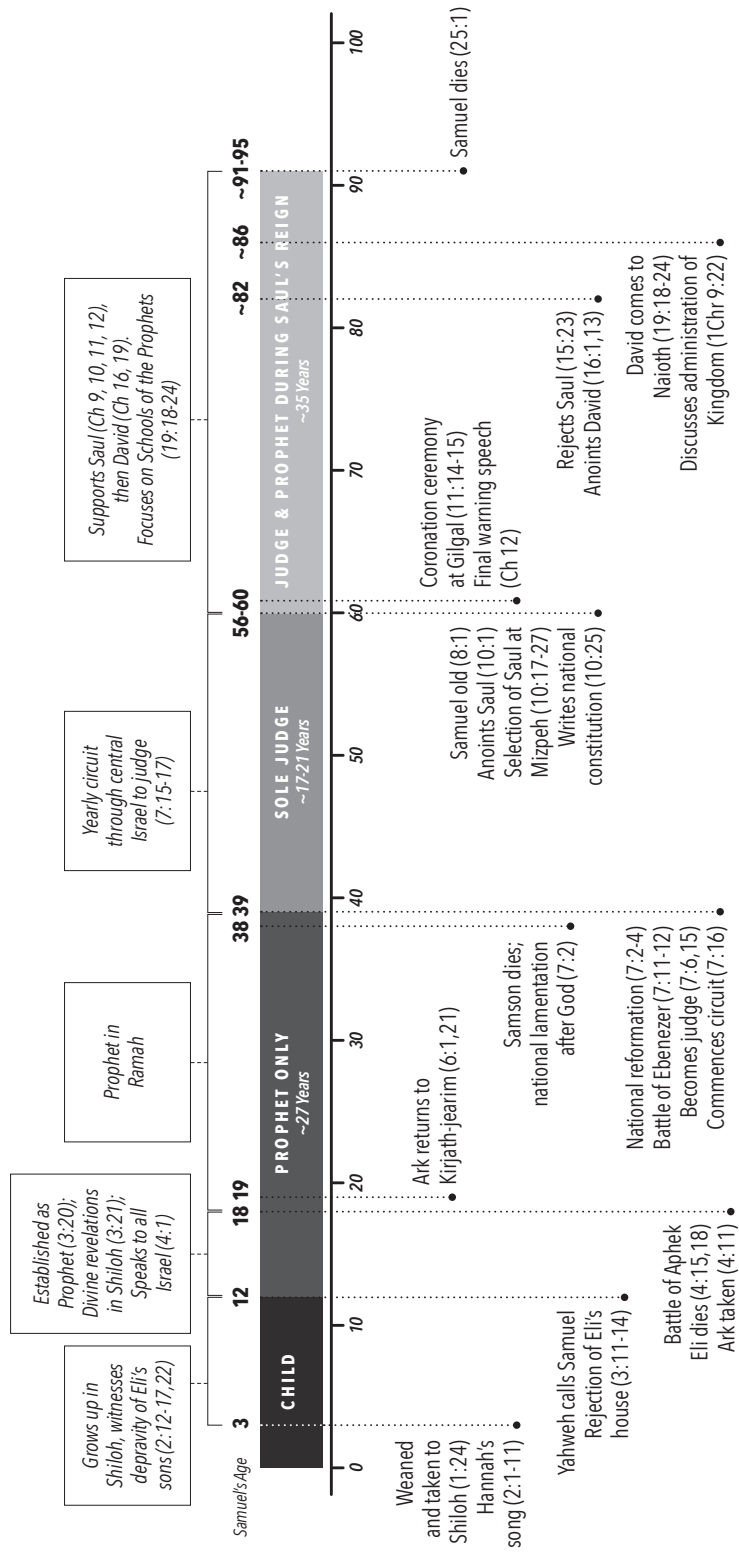
SAMUEL



Note: While many of these timeframes are known, some are not and are best estimates. See Appendix 1 for details.

Note: Dates on this timeline are approximate - see Appendix 1.

SAMUEL'S LIFE



IN THE DAYS WHEN THE JUDGES RULED

The first book of Samuel opens in a most significant way:

'Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah' (1Sam 1:1)

At first, there seem to be a few unnecessary details. Why doesn't the account of Samuel's life simply open with *'Now there was a man named Elkanah'*?

The answer is, of course, that the inspired narrator is setting the scene. It is here in the little town of *Ramathaim-zophim in Mount Ephraim* that we will find the home of Elkanah – the place into which Samuel would be born, and which, for the greater part of his life, would be his hometown.

The town of Ramathaim-zophim, or Ramah as it is more commonly referred to in Scripture, will be discussed in the notes on Ch 1:1, however it is the tribal region of Mount Ephraim that we cannot miss.

Mount Ephraim refers to the mountainous territory at the centre of the Land of Israel which was given to the tribe of Ephraim as their inheritance. Yet its reference here is more than just a geographical marker, for the region of Mount Ephraim had seen an awful lot of history already in the few short centuries in which Israel had been in the Land of Canaan. By its opening phrase, therefore, the writer is taking us right back into the days of the Judges, and to the centre stage of Mount Ephraim.

Israel had entered the Land of Promise under the leadership of a man of the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua (Num 13:8). This would naturally have imparted a degree of importance to the tribe from which the leader sprang. Following the conquests of the Land, Joshua took up residence in Timnath-serah, in Mount Ephraim (Josh 19:50).

The tribe were given their inheritance by Joshua in Josh 16:5-10, with their territory falling in the central highlands (see map, p6). However, the following chapter describes their failure to chase out the Canaanites with their iron chariots, and their consequent feeling of entitlement to more land (Josh 17:14-18).

With the inheritance of the tribe of Ephraim being located in the centre of the nation, it formed a natural place to assemble the tribes. As such, three cities of Ephraim hosted important national gatherings in the days of Joshua:

1. **Shiloh** (Josh 18:1) – All Israel gathered to set up the Tabernacle.
2. **Timnath-serah**, Joshua's hometown (Josh 23:1-2; cp 19:50) – The leaders of all Israel gathered for Joshua's last exhortation to them.
3. **Shechem** (Josh 24:1) – All Israel and their leaders for Joshua's last words.

Further to this, three great leaders were buried in Mount Ephraim in Josh 24, adding to the prestige of the region and its inhabitants:

1. **Joshua** (Josh 24:30) – in Timnath-serah
2. **Joseph** (Josh 24:32) – in Shechem
3. **Eleazar** the Priest, the son of Aaron (Josh 24:33) – in a hill in Mount Ephraim

With the passing of Joshua and his contemporaries, a pattern of spiritual decay set in which would eat out the nation throughout the entire duration of the Judges. *There arose another*

generation after them **which knew not Yahweh**' (Jud 2:10), and so commenced the downward spiral of the Judges. Brief periods of spiritual reformation occurred in different parts of the land as God raised up Judges to deliver His people from the oppression that He had sent as a punishment for their sins.

Yet each wave of reformation was short-lived, and the nation repeatedly fell into sin once more – a suffocating cycle of sin, suffering, seeking God and salvation (Jud 2:11-19). With each relapse, the nation sank ever lower into the depraved ways of the world around them. And over these next few centuries, much of the record of the Judges would be played out upon the stage of Mount Ephraim, the home of Elkanah.

Multiple Judges exercised influence in Mount Ephraim:

1. **Ehud** summoned Israel to Mount Ephraim in Jud 3:26-28.
2. **Deborah** judged there, in Jud 4:5.
3. **Gideon** called the men of Ephraim to battle in Jud 7:24-25.
4. **Tola** judged in Mount Ephraim in Jud 10:1.

There are twelve judges recorded in the book of Judges, and of course twelve tribes of Israel, yet five of the judges spent at least a part of their lives judging from Mount Ephraim – far more than an 'even' share. And it was due to their disproportionate eminence that the men of Ephraim became both arrogant and entitled.

- Abimelech of Mount Ephraim conspired to make himself king in Shechem (Jud 9).
- Not just once, but twice in the record of the Judges, the men of Ephraim became offended because a divinely-appointed man, more faithful than themselves, dared to go out in conquest without their permission and aid (Jud 8:1-3; 12:1-4).

But Ephraim's prominent reputation was a consequence of *faithful individuals* rather than *tribal faith*. In fact, they were just as apostate as the rest of Israel, if not more so. The appendices to the Book of Judges, from Ch 17-21, show that they became leaders in apostate worship and immoral practices:

- **The first appendix** (Jud 17-18) describes Micah, a man 'of Mount Ephraim' (4x! 17:1,8; 18:2,13), who establishes an apostate system of worship. This cancerous form of worship was a landmark **Corruption of Doctrine** and would work its way into the northern settlement of Dan, eating out the nation '*until the day of the captivity of the land*' (18:30)! And it all began in Mount Ephraim.
- **The second appendix** (Jud 19-21) speaks of 'a certain Levite' who was sojourning in Mount Ephraim (19:1). The account that follows describes one of the most horrific scenes in all Scripture in the way this Levite dealt with his concubine. These events were followed by a civil war, and an entire tribe – the tribe of Benjamin – was almost completely extinguished. Thus was illustrated a radical **Corruption of Practice** from the ways of God.

And so it was the mountains of Ephraim which were to become the arena in which both Doctrine (in Ch 17-18) and Practice (in Ch 19-21) would be corrupted in the most excessive of ways, and with utterly devastating consequences. Four times during these closing scenes of the Judges, a stark and constant reminder is given:

'In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.' (17:6; 21:25; cp 18:1; 19:1).

So degenerate had the ecclesia of God become, that people asked for guidance from God through a priest who worshipped idols (18:5). They were encouraged to make their opinions known (19:30), leading to a mob mentality that brought about national disaster (20:1,8,11).

And that is the Mount Ephraim in which the faithful Levite Elkanah lived with his wife Hannah. What a world to live in! They were surrounded by entitled, godless Israelites, and there was nothing they could do... well, almost nothing.

It is of course against this backdrop that the family of Elkanah will make their annual visit to Shiloh in 1Sam 1, and it will be because of these circumstances that Hannah will make her extraordinary vow which will change the direction of the nation like never before.

Years later, as the child Samuel grew into a young man, there can be no doubt that he came to appreciate fully the gravity of the situation that the nation was in, and the work that God had set before him. So acute was his awareness of the nation's plight, that it seems that Samuel recorded a history of that awful period so that the nation might not fall once more into its old mistakes, for *'the Book of Judges was probably written, as Jewish tradition relates, by Samuel.'*¹

We know that he understood well the cycle and lessons of the Judges, for he draws on them heavily in his final speech to the nation (1Sam 12); but the work before him would be to lift the nation out of the terrible times of the Judges to the glory of the Kings. That great work would begin in a small town in the hill country of Ephraim, *'in the days when the Judges ruled.'*

After that brief survey of the times into which Samuel was born, one can hardly miss the resemblance of those godless times to our own day. Predictably therefore, the examples of Samuel and the faithful men and women who formed a part of his story will leave powerful lessons for our own day, as we live in times when there is no tangible king in Israel, and everyone does whatever they please.

¹ Jones, Dr Floyd 2022. *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Master Books, 10th Printing, p 86).

STRUCTURE

The story of Samuel's life spans some 25 chapters of the first book bearing his name. To aid in scoping out the study, the parts that relate specifically to Samuel have been highlighted in **blue**. The overall chapter breakup has been retained as this provides a useful overview and context for the events in Samuel's life. It also serves as a reminder of the fact that Samuel would have seen and heard many of the events recorded between events in his own life.

PART 1: SAMUEL - THE YOUNG JUDGE (CH 1-7)

The Birth of Samuel (1:1-23)

- 1:1-2 The family of Elkanah
- 1:3-8 The annual visit to Shiloh
- 1:9-11 Hannah's vow
- 1:12-18 [Eli's blessing: A son](#)
- 1:19-23 Birth and early childhood of Samuel

The Presentation of Samuel (1:24-2:36)

- 1:24-28 Samuel brought to the Tabernacle
- 2:1-11 The song of Hannah
- 2:12-17 The perversity of Eli's sons
- 2:18-19 Samuel's early service
- 2:20-21 [Eli's 2nd blessing: Many children](#)
- 2:22-25 Eli rebukes his sons
- 2:26 Samuel's faithfulness
- 2:27-36 Man of God's prophecy: *Destruction of Eli's House*

The Commission of Samuel (3:1-4:1a)

- 3:1-2 The spiritual darkness of Israel
- 3:3-10 Yahweh calls to Samuel
- 3:11-14 [Yahweh's 2nd denunciation of Eli's house](#)
- 3:15-18 Samuel tells it to Eli
- 3:19-4:1a Samuel established as Prophet

The Capture of the Ark (4:1b-22)

- 4:1b-2 War with the Philistines
- 4:3-9 The ark brought into battle
- 4:10-11 The ark taken
- 4:12-18 Death of Eli
- 4:19-22 Birth of Ichabod: The Glory Departed

The Ark in Philistia (5:1-12)

- 5:1-7 The ark at Ashdod
- 5:8-9 The ark at Gath
- 5:10-12 The ark at Ekron

The Return of the Ark (6:1-7:2)

- 6:1-9 The counsel of the Philistine wise men
- 6:10-18 The ark returns to Bethshemesh
- 6:19-20 Slaughter at Bethshemesh
- 6:21-7:2 The ark brought to Kirjathjearim

Samuel's National Reform (7:3-17)

- 7:3-6 National reform in Mizpeh
- 7:7-8 The Philistines attack
- 7:9-12 Victory at the battle of Ebenezer
- 7:13-14 The Philistines subdued
- 7:15-17 Samuel's judgeship of Israel

PART 2: SAMUEL - THE AGED PROPHET (CH 8-25)

The Rejection of Yahweh & His Judge (Ch 8)

- 8:1-3 Samuel makes his sons judges
- 8:4-5 The elders request a king
- 8:6-9 God allows their request
- 8:10-18 Samuel warns of the manner of the king
- 8:19-22 Israel's stubborn refusal

The Anointing of Saul (Ch 9-10)

- 9:1-2 Saul introduced
- 9:3-5 Saul seeks the lost asses
- 9:6-10 His servant recommends asking Samuel
- 9:11-14 Directions to the Seer
- 9:15-17 God forewarns Samuel
- 9:18-24 Samuel honours Saul at the feast
- 9:25-10:1 Samuel anoints Saul
- 10:2-8 Three signs for Saul
- 10:9-13 Saul among the Prophets
- 10:14-16 Saul's conversation with his Uncle
- 10:17-27 Saul's selection

The Ammonites Attack (11:1-13)

- 11:1-3 Nahash sieges Jabesh-gilead
- 11:4-8 Saul musters all Israel
- 11:9-13 The Ammonites conquered

The Kingdom Renewed (11:14-15)

- 11:14-15 Saul's coronation ceremony

Samuel's Warning Speech (12:1-25)

- 12:1-5 Samuel's integrity as Judge
- 12:6-11 Lessons from epoch of Judges
- 12:12-13 Israel's sin in asking for a King
- 12:14-25 Samuel's counsel to the nation

War with Philistia (Ch 13-14)

- 13:1-4 Jonathan smites a Philistine garrison
- 13:5-7 The Philistines amass an army
- 13:8-10 Saul makes the offerings in Gilgal
- 13:11-14 Samuel rebukes Saul: **Rejection of Saul's Dynasty**
- 13:15-23 Philistine military dominance
- 14:1-3 Jonathan's secret mission
- 14:4-10 Jonathan's plan and sign
- 14:11-14 Jonathan's victory
- 14:15-23 Israel join the chase
- 14:24-30 Jonathan breaks Saul's curse
- 14:31-35 The people sin and Saul builds an altar
- 14:36-46 The people deliver Jonathan
- 14:47-52 Summary of Saul's reign

War with Amalek (Ch 15)

- 15:1-3 Samuel commissions Saul to destroy Amalek
- 15:4-7 Saul smites the Amalekites
- 15:8-9 Saul spares Agag and livestock
- 15:10-23 Samuel rebukes Saul: **Rejection of Saul Personally**
- 15:24-25 Saul appeals to Samuel
- 15:26-29 Samuel refuses to relent
- 15:30-31 Samuel returns to worship with Saul
- 15:32-33 Samuel carves up Agag
- 15:34-35 Samuel and Saul estranged

The Anointing of David (Ch 16)

- 16:1-3 Samuel commissioned to anoint a son of Jesse
- 16:4-5 A sacrifice at Bethlehem
- 16:6-13 Samuel anoints David
- 16:14-18 An evil spirit plagues Saul
- 16:19-23 David summoned to play for Saul

David & Goliath (Ch 17)

- 17:1-3 The Philistines attack
- 17:4-10 Goliath's challenge
- 17:11 Israel's dismay
- 17:12-15 Jesse's family introduced
- 17:16-19 David sent to his brethren
- 17:20-27 David hears Goliath's challenge
- 17:28-29 Eliab questions David
- 17:30-31 David questions the soldiers
- 17:32-37 David convinces Saul to let him fight
- 17:38-39 He refuses Saul's armour
- 17:40-51 David slays Goliath
- 17:52-53 Israel chase the Philistines
- 17:54 Goliath's fate
- 17:55-58 Saul enquires after David

David in Saul's House (18:1-19:10)

- 18:1-4 Jonathan & David's **1st Covenant** of friendship
- 18:5-9 The women celebrate David's victories
- 18:10-11 Saul attempts to murder David (**Javelin #1,2**)
- 18:12-16 Saul demotes and fears David
- 18:17-27 Saul tries twice to kill David by offering his daughters

- 18:28-30 Saul's fear of David increases
- 19:1-3 Saul conspires against David
- 19:4-7 Jonathan pleads David's cause
- 19:8-10 Saul attempts to murder David (**Javelin #3**)
- 19:11-17 David flees his own house

David with Samuel (19:18-24)

- 19:18-24 David and Samuel in Naioth at Ramah

David & Jonathan (Ch 20)

- 20:1-10 David appeals to Jonathan
- 20:11-17 Jonathan's **2nd Covenant** of friendship
- 20:18-23 Jonathan's sign for David
- 20:24-34 Saul's intentions revealed
- 20:35-40 The sad sign
- 20:41-42 The heart-breaking departure

David on the Run (Ch 21-25)

- 21:1-2 David comes to Nob
- 21:3-7 They eat the shewbread
- 21:8-9 David takes Goliath's sword
- 21:10-12 He flees to Achish
- 21:13-15 David plays mad in Gath
- 22:1-2 Cave of Adullam and 400 men
- 22:3-4 David takes his parents to Moab
- 22:5 Gad's instruction to return to Judah
- 22:6-8 Saul's 'leadership' speech
- 22:9-16 Saul confronts Ahimelech and the priests
- 22:17-19 Doeg slaughters the Priests
- 22:20-23 Abiathar escapes to David
- 23:1-6 David saves Keilah
- 23:7-8 Saul calls all Israel against Keilah
- 23:9-12 'They will deliver thee'
- 23:13-15 David flees to Ziph
- 23:16-18 Jonathan encourages David - **3rd Covenant**
- 23:19-23 Ziphites betray David
- 23:24-26 David surrounded in Wilderness of Maon
- 23:27-28 Saul called away to fight the Philistines
- 23:29-24:3 Saul pursues David to Engedi
- 24:4-7 David spares Saul in the cave
- 24:8-15 David calls to Saul
- 24:16-22 Saul acknowledges David's righteousness
- 25:1 Samuel dies and is buried

Samuel ... was one of those trailblazers, one of those ground breakers, one of those preparers of the way that was going to usher in a major epoch in the history of the nation.

Bro Roger Lewis
Samuel the Seer

SAMUEL & HANNAH



1 SAMUEL 1

SAMUEL & HANNAH (1SAM 1)

These opening verses take us deep into the times of the Judges to the house of Elkanah, set in the hill country of Ephraim. It soon becomes evident that his wife Hannah is no ordinary woman. Her exceptional faith and foresight lead her to ask of Yahweh a child; but not just any child – she asks for a son who could lift the nation out of the spiritual abyss into which it had fallen and commence a reformation that would alter the course of Israel’s history.

THE FAMILY OF ELKANAH (1:1-2)

1 *Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite*

A certain man of Ramathaimzophim

Ramathaim- Heb *rāmāthayim tsoḥp̄hîym* H7436 = ‘double height of the watchers’ (BDB, zophim Str). See 7:17 & note regarding exact location.

Ramathaim-zophim, also known as Ramah (1:19; 2:11), was Elkanah’s hometown and became Samuel’s as well (7:17; 8:4; 25:1).

Towns in ancient Israel were often named after physical attributes of the surrounding land, so that one might reasonably surmise that the town of Ramah was set on twin peaks, enjoying panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. This becomes an interesting feature of Samuel’s life (see box p55).

The NIV translates this opening phrase, ‘*a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite*’, with Zuph evidently being the region in which the town of Ramah was situated (9:5-6), dubbed with the name of Samuel’s ancestor named in 1:1 (see ESV Study Bible).

Mount Ephraim

This territory describes the central highlands of the Land of Israel, between Bethel and the Jezreel Valley.² But its reference is more than simply geographical; it is a chilling reminder of recent events recorded in the book of Judges. Mount Ephraim was the stage upon which much of the book of Judges was set,³ and upon which two of the most gruesome stories of the Bible unfolded (Jud 17:1,8; 19:1).

It is easy for us, when we open the book of Samuel, to superimpose upon the events of the opening chapters the setting of the Kingdom of Israel as it was under David. We can assume there was general law and order, a centralised national administration, and harmonious

² Easton’s Bible Dictionary, ‘Mount Ephraim’. See map on p6.

³ Ehud (Jud 3:27), Deborah (4:5), Gideon (7:24), and Tola (10:1) all judged or exercised influence in the territory of Mount Ephraim. For further info, see Background p11-13.

interactions between the tribes as there would be under their second king. Yet the days of Elkanah and Hannah were nothing like that. No, every man really was doing whatever they felt was right in their own eyes. Rather than a monarchy, there was anarchy.

The mountains of Ephraim were home to Micah, the founder of the false religion that spread to Dan and survived until the captivity of the Northern Tribes (Jud 18:30-31). Those same mountains were also the scene of the terrible abuse of the Levite's concubine in Jud 19. The little family of Elkanah, therefore, stands out all the more as a light in a dark place, and as he grew up, Samuel was to be faced with evil and corruption on every side.

Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph,

Elkanah Heb *elqânâh* H511 = 'God has possessed, or God has created' (BDB), 'God has obtained' (Str).

1Chr 6:33-38 gives more detail, tracing Elkanah's genealogy back to Jacob. From there we learn that he was a descendant of Kohath the son of Levi. Yet the genealogy here stops at Zuph, or Zophai, indicating he was a particularly significant ancestor of Elkanah's.

Ramah was not one of the towns originally allocated to Kohath (Josh 21:20-26) and appears to have been acquired by them at a later date. This may have been by Zophai, who gave his name to the town and its environs (9:5). Zophai's pioneering zeal gave his family an inheritance both physical and spiritual that would persist through many generations to the time of Elkanah and beyond. Samuel himself would later take up his inheritance and build an altar there (1Sam 7:17).

An Ephrathite

Ephrathite Heb *ephraṯhîy* H673 = 1. 'An inhabitant or descendant of Ephraim (an Ephraimite)', or 2. 'An inhabitant of Bethlehem (an Ephrathite)'. (BDB, Str).

Depending on context this can mean either 'Ephrathite' (e.g. Ruth 1:2, 1Sam 17:12) or 'Ephraimite' (e.g. Jud 12:5, 1Kg 11:26). The ASV, RSV, Roth etc. have 'Ephraimite' here which is evidently correct since we know Elkanah was a man of Mount Ephraim. When Israel settled in the land, the Levites were granted cities among the other tribes and therefore counted as belonging to those tribes by location.

2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Hannah Heb *channah* H2584 = 'Grace' (BDB).

Peninnah Heb *peninnah* H6444 = 'Pearl' (Str); 'jewel' (BDB).

And he had two wives

Polygamy was not uncommon in the Old Testament; it was practised by Abraham (Gen 16:3-4), Jacob (Gen 29:28), David (1Sam 25:42-43) and others. Whilst God did not condemn it, He did regulate it by the Law (Deut 21:15-17; 17:17). Marrying more than one wife may have been a method of ensuring the God-given inheritance could be passed to the next generation. Nevertheless, the Bible is very clear that **one wife** is the pattern designed by God from the beginning (Mal 2:15, Mt 19:8-9, 1Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6) and polygamous arrangements in Biblical accounts invariably resulted in significant problems.

The name of the other

Lit. 'the name of the second' (as in YLT).

Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children

It seems likely that Elkanah took a second wife not out of discontent, but from a desire to continue the family line and pass on his inheritance.

THE ANNUAL VISIT TO SHILOH (1:3-8)

3 *And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.*

Went up out of his city yearly

Went up Heb *alah* H5927 = 'to ascend' (Str). Used for a range of different ideas, notably of the smoke of offerings ascending. Closely related to Heb *olah* H5930 - the word for burnt offerings.

Under the law, males were required to appear before Yahweh three times every year (Ex 34:23, Deut 16:16). Elkanah here takes his entire family to the Tabernacle once a year, a faithful custom which Jesus' family also embraced (1Sam 1:3,21; 2:19; Lk 2:41).

There is much left unsaid in that small phrase! Travel in those days would have been both difficult and dangerous, and while the distance from Ramah to Shiloh was relatively short (~26 km as the crow flies) it may have taken up to two days each way due to the hilly terrain and the presence of animals and children. Although God had promised to provide protection for their homes while they were away (Ex 34:24), it would still have required tremendous faith to leave them unprotected and enormous commitment to do so year after year. Planning would be required for months in advance to set aside food for the journey and animals and produce for the sacrifices. We may imagine the excitement when the day finally arrived: the hurry of final preparations and the bustle of organising both children and animals into a coherent group. We feel their palpable sense of relief as they left the cares and responsibilities of home life behind and turned their minds toward the prospect of spending a few precious days entirely focused on their relationship with God. We can see them spending the journey in earnest discussion of the promises, making the most of this opportunity to instruct their children in the ways of Yahweh (Deut 6:6-7). Perhaps they travelled as part of a larger family group (cp Lk 2:41-44) meeting old friends as others joined along the route. Elkanah continued his family tradition of faithful service to Yahweh - and he was determined to pass that spirit to his children.

Yahweh of hosts

This is the first of 235 occurrences of this title, *Yahweh of Armies*, in the OT. The second is in Hannah's vow (v11 - see notes there, p26). It is an interesting place in which to introduce Yahweh as a militant God, especially in light of the following phrase.

The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas ... were there

Hophni Heb *chophniy* H2652 = 'pugilist' [a boxer]. From *chophen* H2651 = 'fist' (Str).

Phinehas Heb *piynechaš* H6372 = 'mouth of a serpent' (Str), 'mouth of brass' (BDB).

Eli Heb *eliy* H5941 = 'lofty' (Str).

This is an odd detail to include at this point because it breaks the flow of the narrative. Eli himself is not introduced until v9, and his sons are not mentioned again until Ch 2. But the introduction of these two men at this early stage is ominous, particularly in view of the meanings of their names: the men with 'clenched fist' and 'brazen/serpent mouths'! We learn from Ch 2 that these were men of brute force and no morals, stealing the sacrifices (2:12-17) and abusing the women (2:22).

Ch 1 is clearly about Hannah and her vow, so we can safely assume that the sons of Eli are essential context to understanding that vow. The record establishes a contrast between Hannah's lack of children (v2) and Eli's all-too-real sons (v3). The presence of these two immoral men at the Tabernacle caused Hannah great distress, let alone their status as the priests of Yahweh (see notes v6). The feasts of Yahweh were intended to be a time of great joy for those who participated (Deut 16:11,14), but Hophni and Phinehas did so much to destroy this feeling that the people came to '*abhor the offering of Yahweh*' (2:17).

4-5 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

He gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions

The only altar offering to allot a portion of the meat to the offerer (and their family) was the peace offering, detailed in Lev 3, 7:11-34 and 19:5-8. The word for 'peace offering' (*shelem* H8002) is from the root *shalam* which has the idea of 'safety, friendliness and reciprocation' (Str). Unlike other offerings which were wholly burnt, the peace offering was divided between several parties who would essentially share a meal together: the fat was offered to Yahweh, and the remainder was divided up between the high priest, the officiating priest and the offerer (Lev 7:15-33). It was thus a symbol of fellowship between the offerer and God himself.

The three main altar offerings were the sin offering, the burnt offering and the peace offering and when they appear together it is usually in that specific order (e.g. Lev 9:15-18,22, 2Chr 29:21-24,31-35). They therefore represented a progression of approach before God:

- Repentance and atonement for sins (sin offering)
- Total dedication to God (burnt offering)
- Fellowship with God (peace offering)

Whereas sin offerings and burnt offerings could be offered to cleanse a person from uncleanness (Lev 16:30), the peace offering was specifically restricted to those who were already clean (Lev 7:20-21). **The peace offering was thus the pinnacle of worship under the Law: the closest point that an ordinary Israelite could approach to their God.** For those like Hannah, who delighted in God's law, there could be no greater joy than this.

But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion

Worthy Heb *appayim* H0639 = 'Two faces or nostrils' (BDB; Logos word morphology).

The exact meaning of this phrase is unclear. Some translations (ESV, NASB, YLT, KJVmg) have simply 'double portion,' but it is different from the usual phrase for 'double portion' in Deut 21:17 and elsewhere. A more literal translation might be 'a portion for two faces, or

persons', which Edersheim suggests was 'to indicate that he loved her just as if she had borne him a son' (OT History, p410).

Yahweh had shut up her womb

This is the first indication that Hannah's situation was more than mere natural infertility: she had been kept from having children in order that she might fulfil a God-appointed purpose at a God-appointed time. This puts her alongside some of the most faithful women in history: Sarah (Gen 11:30), Rebekah (Gen 25:21), Manoah's wife (Jud 13:3), and Elizabeth (Lk 1:36:37).

Sometimes our greatest trials in life are the method through which God will work most wonderfully. Hannah's barrenness drove her to think deeply about her life and circumstances, as we see in the next verse (cp Ecc 7:3).

6-7 *And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.*

Her adversary

Adversary Heb *tsarah* H6869 = 'straits, distress, trouble' (BDB).

Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon gives a second meaning as 'a rival wife' however out of the 73 occ of this Heb word, it is translated:

- 'trouble' 34x
- 'troubles' 10x
- 'distress' 8x
- 'affliction' 7x
- 'anguish' 5x
- 'adversity' 4x
- 'tribulation' 2x
- 'tribulations' 1x
- 'adversities' 1x
- 'adversary' 1x

Only on one occasion is the word applied to a person by the translators, and that is here, where it is rendered 'adversary'.⁴

It was Hannah's **adversity** that agitated her - her **condition** of being barren, rather than an adversary who kept pointing it out. This is supported by the context (see box on p23) and is in harmony with YLT and the Septuagint:

YLT: 'And her **adversity** hath also provoked her greatly, so as to make her tremble... so **it** provoketh her, and she weepeth, and doth not eat.' (v6-7)

LXX: 'the Lord gave her no child in her **affliction** and she was dispirited on this account'.

For to make her fret

YLT 'so as to make her tremble' - so debilitating was Hannah's trial when she came to Shiloh that it made her physically shake.

⁴ 'TSarah' is the female form of H6862 'tsar' which can be translated as 'tribulation / distress / trouble' (Deut 4:30, 2Sam 22:7, 2Chr 15:4) but also as 'adversary / enemy' (Num 10:9, Josh 5:13) leading the translators to conclude that 'tsarah' here refers to Peninnah as Hannah's female rival. It is interesting to note that every other use of the word 'tsarah' in the OT refers not to a person but a circumstance (e.g. 'distress' Gen 35:3, 'troubles' Deut 31:17, 'tribulation' Jud 10:14 etc.) however there are certainly words in the OT where a distinct meaning rests on an individual occurrence (e.g. H5633 in 1Kg 7:30) and thus a contextual argument is essential to establish the correct interpretation here.

So she provoked her

There is no corresponding word for 'she' in the Hebrew - this would be more accurately translated 'so **it** provoked her' (as in YLT above).

WHAT WAS HANNAH'S 'ADVERSITY'?

On a surface reading, we might think that the cause of Hannah's 'adversity' or grief was Peninnah, however there are a number of clues in the immediate context that indicate this explanation does not really make sense:

- Hannah's distress was provoked **specifically by their yearly visits to Shiloh**, and particularly in relation to eating of the peace offering (see v7 and v5 note).
- If Peninnah was the source of Hannah's trial, surely that would be more bitterly felt in the privacy of the home where she would have had opportunity to taunt Hannah out of Elkanah's eye, should she want to?
- When Elkanah asked Hannah about the cause of her distress in v8, he seems unaware of any conflict between his wives and Hannah mentions nothing in response about Peninnah. If Peninnah were the problem, would not Elkanah have been the one to speak to?
- If Hannah's problem was simply that she couldn't have children, then it seems unreasonable for her to specifically ask for 'a man child' (v11) - shouldn't she be happy with a girl as well?
- It also seems illogical that Hannah would satisfy her craving for a child, only to give him away immediately (v11), if her only problem was a lack of children.
- Hannah's prayer of rejoicing over her enemies (2:1) was sung not when Samuel was born but when he was given away. This makes no sense if the 'enemy' was Peninnah since Samuel's devotion to Yahweh left Hannah childless once more.
- Hannah does mention '*she that hath many children*' in her song (2:5), however her ire is not directed against one woman, but against multiple '**enemies**' (2:1), '**mighty men**' (2:4), '**they** that were full' (2:5), '**the wicked**' (2:9) and '**the adversaries** of Yahweh' (2:10). Clearly her foe was not just a rival wife.

Thus, while Hannah's distress is clearly linked to her barrenness (v6), there must have been a deeper issue. She was barren all year round and yet there was something about the visit to the Tabernacle each year which intensified her grief.

Hannah's joy and triumph in Ch 2 stand in stark contrast to her distress of Ch 1, indicating that her distress at the peace offering was caused by those wicked enemies she mentions in her prayer. This is the key to unlocking the riddle:

- Aside from Elkanah's family, the only other people involved in the peace offering were the priests, Hophni and Phinehas, who desecrated the offerings of Yahweh for all the Israelites that came to Shiloh (2:14). This is why they are mentioned so ominously in 1:3, in what seems at first to be out of context.
- If the sin of Hophni and Phinehas caused men to 'abhor the offering of Yahweh' (2:17) we may well imagine the distress it caused such a spiritual woman as Hannah when even the peace offering - the symbol of her own fellowship with God - was disgraced.
- Hannah possessed remarkable spiritual foresight and could clearly see the need for a godly leader who might counteract the priests' evil influence on the nation.

She dearly wished to raise a son who would fill this role, **thus her 'adversity' was her barrenness which provoked her to distress year after year as she witnessed their wickedness and felt powerless to do anything to change it.**

- Hannah's dedication of Samuel as a Nazarite clearly shows her intention. The role of the Nazarite was designed to emulate the high priest (see v11), and it was the priesthood that Hannah wished to overturn.

Whereas Peninnah never appears in the record after v4, the remainder of 1Sam 1-4 is all about the replacement of the priesthood with Samuel. The record is at pains to reveal this faithful woman's distress at the state of her nation's priesthood. Hannah's spiritual foresight, her godly vexation, and her deep desire to help her ecclesia are all characteristics we would do well to copy.

8 *Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?*

Why is thy heart grieved?

Elkanah noticed the outward signs of Hannah's grief, but it seems that she had not disclosed its inner cause. He had been there with her at Shiloh and was no doubt disgusted at the desecration of the offering, but the latter part of his question indicates that he thought her grief at this time was due to her inability to have children.

In times of wickedness there are some who are distressed and stand aside from the wickedness they see around them (Ex 32:26, Ezek 9:4, 2Pet 2:7-8), but people like Hannah who take action against the ungodly possess both tremendous faith and a degree of godly vexation which may not be felt by others around them. Consider the examples of Phinehas (Num 25:6-8), David (1Sam 17:26,32), Nehemiah (Neh 1:4, 2:1-5, 13:8-9) and Christ (Mk 11:15-17).

Am not I better to thee than ten sons?

This was not intended as a literal comparison, rather it was a Hebraism indicating his depth of love. Cp Ruth 4:15 where Naomi's friends describe Ruth as being better than seven sons.

HANNAH'S VOW (1:9-11)

9-10 *So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.*

After they had eaten

i.e. Elkanah, Peninnah and their children. Hannah did not eat until after her prayer (v18).

Eli the priest sat upon a seat

Seat Heb 'kisseh' H3678 = 'Throne' (Str). This is the usual OT word for a throne.

This was an indictment since priests were supposed to stand to minister (Deut 10:8, 17:12, 18:5-7, Num 16:9, 1Ki 8:11, 2Chr 5:14, 29:11, Ezek 44:15, Heb 10:11). Unfortunately, this was but a symptom of Eli's general slothfulness regarding the service of Yahweh: while he was prepared to rebuke his sons (2:23-25), he failed to take any action against them (3:13).

We must stop and imagine what it was like for Hannah to enter the Tabernacle when she came to Shiloh. Knowing the greed (2:12-17) and immorality (2:22) of Hophni and Phinehas, she would enter with her family, and there, seated upon an elevated throne, she would see Eli the High Priest. He was fat because of his inaction and his complicit theft of the sacrifices (2:29), and there he sat, lazily presiding over this scene of corruption.

But there was more to Eli's throne than that. Sitting upon a throne in the temple of Yahweh is a position that rightfully belongs to Christ, and only Christ (Zech 6:13 - 'throne' s/w 'seat' 1Sam 1:9; cp Heb 10:11-12). In taking this position, Eli took a position that was not his, and so embodied the Man of Sin, who *'sitteth in the temple of God'* taking the place of God (2Th 2:3-4). As Eli had superintended over an apostate priesthood, he now sat representative of the greatest apostate system in history.

Post of the temple of Yahweh

Post Heb 'mezuzah' H4201 = 'Doorpost' (Str).

Temple Heb 'hekhal' H1964 = 'Temple' (Str). This is one of the words used to refer to Solomon's temple, the other being H1004 'bayit' = 'House'.

The Tabernacle was set up in Shiloh in Josh 18:1 and it seems that by the time of Eli it had become a more permanent establishment with both doorposts (v9) and doors (3:15). This may have been some kind of compound built to enclose the Tabernacle, with living quarters for the priests and others who worked there.

She was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto Yahweh

Hannah did not answer Elkanah's question in v8 but instead poured out her mind in prayer to God. Scripture shows us that it is not always possible to communicate our deepest feelings, even to our closest companions:

'Whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by any man or by all Thy people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart... (for Thou, Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)' (1Ki 8:38-39 RSV).

'The heart, knoweth its own bitterness, and, in its joy, no stranger shareth.' (Prov 14:10 Roth)

PERSONAL PRAYER

How does our relationship with God compare to Hannah's? Do we pour out to God our hopes, fears, and deepest feelings, or are our prayers confined to the mundane matters of food and shelter?

Hannah's approach to personal and consistent prayer made a deep impression upon her son. All through his life, Samuel took everything straight to God in prayer (e.g. 1Sam 7:5; 8:6; 12:19) - he was constantly communicating with Him, and prayer became Samuel's innate reaction.

11 *And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.*

Vowed a vow

Vows under the law of Moses were treated very seriously, and a failure to fulfil it was a sin (Deut 23:21-22). Ecc 5:4-6 reiterates that it is much better to not vow at all, than to make a vow and not fulfil it. Hannah clearly knew the law quite well and would have understood how serious a matter this was. It was not an empty promise but a well-considered commitment. Elkanah would also now be faced with the decision of whether to support Hannah's vow, or to disannul it based on Num 30 (see note v21).

Yahweh of hosts

Hosts Heb *tsaba'ot*, plural of *tsaba* H6635 = 'a mass of persons organised for war' (Str).

Hannah is the first person to use this title in Scripture, with the only prior occurrence being in v3. The word for hosts, or armies, (Heb *tsaba*), occurs almost 500 times in the Old Testament, almost universally in the context of war. The word is also used of the Levites who were employed in the service of Yahweh (Num 4:3,23,30, 8:24-26). The following quotation aptly conveys the sense of this word:

*'tsaba has to do with fighting... it has also a wider use in the sense of rendering service. Interestingly, four uses have to do with the work of the Levites in the tent of meeting. No doubt service for Yahweh is seen as involving total dedication and careful regimentation, and since God is Yahweh of hosts, enthroned between the cherubim and housed inside the tent of meeting, work associated with the tent may be considered **spiritual war**' (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p750)*

Life in the service of Yahweh is frequently described as warfare, as we fight against the power of sin both in our own lives and in the world around us (1Cor 9:26-27, 2Cor 10:4-5, Eph 6:11-18, 1Tim 1:18, 6:12, 2Tim 2:3-4, 4:7). Eph 6:12 is particularly relevant to Hannah's situation:

'For we wrestle ... against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'

Hannah's prayer in Ch 2 makes it clear that she saw herself as warring against spiritual wickedness in the priesthood. She desired a son who would join the hosts of Yahweh in dedicating himself to this work, and thus she called on Yahweh of Hosts to grant her petition.

Thine handmaid

Handmaid Heb *amah* H0519 = 'Maid servant / female slave' (Str).

Many faithful women in Bible times described themselves as a 'handmaid,' such as Ruth to Boaz (Ruth 2:13; 3:9), Abigail to David (1Sam 25:24-28) and Bathsheba to David (1Ki 1:17). But only two women in Scripture called themselves the handmaid 'of the Lord', and they were Hannah (1Sam 1:11) and Mary (Lk 1:38 - the Gk word *δουίλη* in the LXX is the same used by Mary), showing the special bond that Mary felt with Hannah, whom she would choose as her role model for life (see comparison of their songs in Appendix 2, p168).

There shall no razor come upon his head

Razor Heb *mowrah* H4177. Only other uses of this word are in Jud 13:5, 16:17.

This indicated lifelong dedication as a Nazarite (Num 6:5) in the same manner as Samson (Jud 13:5), where his uncut hair is taken to represent the complete vow. The Nazarite Vow was designed to consecrate a man specially to God's service by re-enacting in him certain characteristics of the priests:

Characteristic	Taught	High Priest	Nazarite
No wine or strong drink	Mental separation	Lev 10:8-11	Num 6:3-4
Symbol of holiness on head	Moral separation	Lev 21:5-6	Num 6:5
No contact with the dead	Physical separation	Lev 21:1	Num 6:6-7

Thus, Hannah was dedicating her son completely to God. But due to her husband's lineage, any son Hannah bore would have been a Levite and therefore already dedicated to God's service. Her additional commitment to make him a Nazarite shows just how concerned she was with the existing spiritual leadership. She saw the need for the corrupt priesthood to be overturned and a new order established, and she was offering her son to God for this purpose! A similar idea was echoed in the birth of John the Baptist who was commanded to keep the Nazarite law despite already being a priest by descent (Lk 1:15), showing once again that he came to herald 'another priesthood' (Heb 7:11).

This truly was a monumental vow that Hannah made. The sacrifice she was prepared to make is almost unparalleled in all of Scripture, as was her spiritual foresight that appreciated the need for a new and better priesthood.

ELI'S BLESSING: A SON (1:12-18)

12-14 *And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.*

Continued praying

Heb. 'Multiplied to pray.' Hannah was evidently praying for some time and said much more than is recorded here. To pray for any length of time is a skill only acquired by those of a deeply spiritual mind.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

What other examples can you find of the faithful who continued long in prayer? What lessons can we take from these individuals in terms of how we should pray?

She spake in her heart

Hannah followed the principle later taught by Christ that personal prayers should be kept as a matter between ourselves and our God (Mt 6:5-6).

Eli thought she had been drunken

Eli's mistake seems to imply that drunken behaviour at the Tabernacle had become a common occurrence. Notice how quick he is to reprove an innocent, helpless woman, yet he couldn't even restrain his own sons (3:13)!

15-16 *And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.*

Hannah answered and said, No my lord

Hannah's answer is another demonstration of her incredible character in patiently bearing with the undeserved rebuke of Eli. She replied with humility, giving due respect to the office of the High Priest even though he himself was undeserving (cp 1Sam 16:23). We are called upon to show a similar respect (Ex 22:28; Acts 23:5). Hannah leaves a wonderful example of patiently suffering wrong (1Pet 2:19-20), but remaining committed to the cause of the Truth, regardless of the personal injustices she received.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

Can you think of any other Bible characters who honoured those in authority despite their lack of respectability?

Could there ever be a situation where we should not defer to those in authority? What other Biblical principles might apply?

Drunk neither wine nor strong drink

Hannah echoes the Nazarite law (Num 6:2-3) - little did Eli realise quite how badly he had misunderstood this woman!

A daughter of Belial

How ironic that God would apply this very term to Eli's sons (2:12).

17 *Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.*

Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace

Hannah's response and Eli's subsequent reply demonstrate the wisdom of the proverb that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger' (Prov 15:1). Hannah clearly understood this principle.

The God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him

The language here is very similar to Eli's later blessing in 2:20 which clearly had divine endorsement. In Num 6:23-27, God outlines the priestly blessing, after which He says, 'and I will bless them' (v27). The Israelites had the assurance that the blessing of God's priest would bring a blessing from God Himself. This evidently gave Hannah great hope (v18).

18 *And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.*

In contrast to her family, we are not told that Hannah drank (cp v9). Manoah's wife was instructed to abstain from strong drink before bearing Samson (Jud 13:4); perhaps Hannah was proactively obeying this same commandment just in case God granted her petition.

BIRTH & EARLY CHILDHOOD OF SAMUEL (1:19-23)

19 *And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.*

Remembered Heb *zakar* H2142 = 'to mark, to remember'. This is the same word Hannah used in her prayer (v11).

'Zakar' implies a deliberate calling to mind and certainly does not mean that Yahweh had forgotten Hannah up to this point! While this word is used in many contexts, it frequently relates to God's deliverance of those undergoing trial, for example: Noah (Gen 8:1), Abraham (Gen 19:29), Rachel (Gen 30:22), Israel in Egypt (Ex 2:24), Israel in the land during wartime (Num 10:9), Samson (Jud 16:28) and Hezekiah (2Ki 20:3). See also the famous expression of Nehemiah: '*Remember me, O my God, for good*' (Neh 5:19, 13:14,22,31).

20 *Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.*

Samuel Heb *shemuel* H8050 = 'Heard of God' (Str). From *shama* = 'to hear' and *el* = a title of God.

Hannah was the one who named the child. It was apparently not uncommon for a mother to name their own children (Gen 29:32-35, 30:6, 38:4; 1Chr 4:9, 7:16). Possibly in this case it was a recognition by Elkanah of Hannah's primary role in bringing forth this child.

Samuel was born in response to God hearing his mother's cry, and having been promised back to Him, it became his life-long ambition to hear and obey his God (see 15:22-23, p137).

21-22 *And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.*

And his vow

Once again, the few words we have about Elkanah are quite insightful. The law of vows gave a husband the authority to annul any vow made by his wife if he thought it unreasonable. On the other hand, if he held his peace when hearing about the vow, then the vow would stand (Num 30:6-8,10-15). Elkanah might have had reason to disallow Hannah's vow when they left Ramah in v19: he might easily have seen her commitment as rash or unwise, the product of an intense but fleeting emotion. Hannah's son would of course be Elkanah's as well, and he might not have felt the same way about giving him away to grow up at the Tabernacle. Thus, for Elkanah to support Hannah's vow by simply 'holding his peace' would have been an act of faith in itself. But it seems he went above and beyond this by adding a vow of his own, wholeheartedly endorsing what Hannah had done and committing himself to support its fulfilment. Note that Eli later blesses both husband and wife, hinting at the depth of Elkanah's involvement (2:20).

I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before Yahweh and there abide for ever

Before Heb *paniyim* H6440 = 'face' (Str).

Lit. *'before the face of Yahweh'*. From the moment that Samuel would arrive at Shiloh, he was to dwell in God's presence for the rest of his life. Hannah would have used these precious few years to instil in Samuel a deep love of God (Prov 22:6).

23 *And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.*

Until she weaned him

This was the earliest opportunity for Hannah to take her son to live at the Tabernacle.

It seems that Jewish children were weaned at 3 years old. There is no direct proof of this in the Bible, however in the apocryphal book of 2Macc 7:27 (which can provide useful historical context) a Jewish mother says: *'O my son, have pity upon me that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years.'* From a Biblical perspective, food was only allocated for Priests and Levites once they reached this age (2Chr 31:16).

These three years would have been among the busiest of Hannah's life. She had three short years with Samuel; three years in which to establish a spiritual education that would be one of his few defences against the wickedness rampant in Shiloh. There is a strong parallel with Moses who was sent to live in the courts of Pharaoh once he was weaned (Ex 2:7-10), yet the spiritual foundation laid by Jochebed during those early years set him on a path to becoming one of the greatest leaders Israel would ever know. No doubt Hannah drew encouragement from Jochebed's example, understanding the principle that if we *'train up a child in the way he should go, then when he is old he will not depart from it'* (Prov 22:6). We may imagine her waking Samuel morning by morning to instruct him in righteousness (cp Isa 50:4), filling his young mind with the stories of Abraham, Moses and Joseph, teaching him daily to *'refuse the evil and choose the good'* (cp Isa 7:15). Having been chosen by Yahweh before his birth, Samuel would certainly have been an exceptional three-year-old: we may well imagine Hannah's joy as she witnessed this budding potential and spared no effort that might shape it for a life of service before his God.

SAMUEL BROUGHT TO THE TABERNACLE (1:24-28)

24-25 *And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.*

Three bullocks

i.e. 'a three-year-old bull' (ESV, RSV, NASB, NIV)⁵. As Hannah prepared to fulfil her vow, she brought a three-year old bull to be given as a burnt offering in accordance with the Law (Num 15:3). This was the most substantial animal an Israelite could give as a burnt offering (Lev 1:3,10,14), and may have been that offered by a priest (as with the sin offering Lev 4:3). A burnt sacrifice of a three-year-old bullock was the perfect way to represent the total dedication of the three-year-old Samuel to God.

⁵ This rendering is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, and the Syriac versions (ESV and NIV marginal notes).

One ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine

Num 15:3-12 give the requirements for meal and drink offerings to be given with various types of burnt sacrifices. The amount of flour and wine increased with the importance of the offering, the most important being a bullock which required 3/10 of an ephah of flour and 1/2 a hin of wine. Hannah went well beyond these requirements with a full ephah and a full bottle. Hers was no ordinary vow; Samuel was to be entirely devoted to Yahweh.

DISCUSSION POINT:

Our world is very different to Hannah's, and we cannot devote our lives to Tabernacle service in the manner of Samuel. Yet one lesson of the burnt offering is that complete dedication is something we should all aim towards: how might this appear practically in our modern lives?

They slew a bullock

i.e. 'the bullock' (RV, YLT). Note the way in which this verse associates Samuel with the bullock: 'She took him up with her, with a bullock ... they slew the bullock and brought the child.' The three-year old bull stood representative for the child, as both were given to God.

26-28 *And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.*

Yahweh hath given me my petition which I asked of him

Cp v17: Hannah quoted Eli's words back to him, confirming their fulfilment.

Which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him

There is a play on words here, in that 'asked' and 'lent' are both the same Heb word *sha'al* H7592. Hannah was highlighting the reciprocal nature of her offering: she saw it as her duty to return to Yahweh what He had given her in the first place.

RENDERING TO GOD THE THINGS THAT BE GOD'S

Hannah recognised that she could give nothing to God that was not already His. Do we recognise this principle in our own lives? Does it impact how we spend 'our' time? Is it visible in our attitude to ecclesial duties?

And he worshipped Yahweh there

The chapter begins with Elkanah's worship (v3) and ends with Samuel's, with the 'he' apparently a reference to the young boy. Notice that 'this child' is the subject of v27-28, and the 'he' and 'him' pronouns in v28 all refer to Samuel. This verse begins a sequence of similar descriptions of Samuel's devotion to God (2:11,18,21,26; 3:1,19), and forms the earliest beginnings of Samuel's ministry.

SAMUEL'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Few children in Israel's history faced the very testing experience of being removed from home at only three years of age, to go and live in a strange place. It must have been both scary and upsetting for the very small boy to be left at Shiloh by his parents. But before they took him there, they no doubt filled his mind with the story of another young boy...

Who was the son of a Levite	Ex 2:1	1Sam 1:1; 1Chr 6:38
And named by a woman	Ex 2:10	1Sam 1:20
Who was weaned/nursed then given away	Ex 2:9-10	1Sam 2:24
We are told that he 'grew'	Ex 2:10	1Sam 2:21
And was Yahweh's servant	Num 12:7	1Sam 2:18
He was a goodly child	Ex 2:2	1Sam 2:26

Doubtless Samuel came to appreciate the life of Moses greatly, so that in this place so far from home he would have felt like he had a friend - someone who understood exactly his predicament, and whose example would come to inspire him beyond all his contemporaries.



Samuel's Story

As Ch 1 closes off, we leave Samuel standing in the courts of the Tabernacle at Shiloh with his mother:

- He has spent just three years with his parents at their family home.
- His earliest memory must have been the caring instruction of his mother in God's ways as she made the most of the little time she had with him.
- And now he has been gifted to Yahweh in a remarkable demonstration of faith by his parents.

From the events of Ch 1, Samuel would learn as a small boy that **God always hears prayer**. He would never forget this lesson and would be found in prayer in every circumstance of life.



SAMUEL &
ELI'S SONS

1 SAMUEL 2

SAMUEL & ELI'S SONS (1SAM 2)

THE SONG OF HANNAH (2:1-11)

As she stood there in the courts of the Tabernacle, the offering having been made, and Hannah having just handed over her son to Yahweh, she now raises her voice in a song of thanks. We can but hear and imagine the elation this woman must have felt - that Almighty God had chosen to accept her offer, her vow, and work through her to bring a saviour and reformer to the nation.

In her prayer, we have an amazing insight into the spiritual mind of this woman. Hannah would only have had access to the first six books of the Bible and probably the book of Job, yet in this prayer, we see her spiritual perception and get a taste of the depths of her understanding of the God she worshipped. While access to God's Word would have been limited, her prayer is filled with allusions to scripture. Hannah must have been at the sanctuary when the priest read the book of the Law (Deut 31:10-11). She was attentive to God's words and thought upon them.

In her prayer, Hannah takes a number of pertinent concepts from Moses' song in Deut 32:

Song of Hannah (1Sam 2)	Song of Moses (Deut 32)
Rejoice in Thy salvation ... neither any rock like our Rock (v1,2)	Lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation (v15)
Yahweh killeth and maketh alive (v6)	I kill and I make alive (v39)

Hannah alludes to Deut 32 because she saw in Moses' description of 'Jeshurun' (meaning 'the upright one', a reference to Israel), a people very much like Hophni and Phinehas:

'They have corrupted themselves ... they are a perverse and crooked generation ... But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.' (Deut 32:5,15,16).

These words summarise the attitude of those leading the religious worship of the nation at Shiloh. Hannah's response to what she saw going on at Shiloh was the same as God's response; it provoked her and grieved her (1Sam 1:6 - s/w 'provoked' Deut 32:16,21). The behaviour of these men is the opposite to the God whom Moses describes in Deut 32.

Hannah's grief was due to the corrupt priesthood at Shiloh whose behaviour was spiritually destroying the nation; her prayer looks ahead and sees the sweeping away of the old priesthood and to the coming of one who would officiate as both king and priest from a very different order to that of Hophni and Phinehas.

Hannah's prayer is a well-thought out, calculated response to the situation she found herself in. It is both her prayer of thanks to God, and her song of victory over her enemies, which are in fact *His* enemies. As such, every phrase is loaded with meaning.

1 *And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.*

My heart rejoiceth in Yahweh

Roth. *'My heart hath leaped for joy in Yahweh'*. Hannah's ecstatic joy is seen in the opening words of her prayer. No doubt she would feel the pangs of separation as she trod the road home to Ramah, but her mind was far above that now. She was focused on a much bigger picture – on the ultimate purpose of God with His people, and the privilege of being involved in that. Like Nehemiah after her, the joy of Yahweh was her strength (Neh 8:10).

Mine horn is exalted in Yahweh

The horn is a symbol for strength or power, so that the phrase means *'my power is great in the Lord'* (Keil & Delitzsch). The horn of a wild beast epitomised its strength with which it conquered its enemies (Deut 33:17; Dan 8:7), so that the breaking of the horn symbolises the failing of one's power (Jer 48:25), whereas the exalting of the horn signifies an increase in strength and power (Psa 75:10; 89:17).

Hannah does not simply say that her horn is exalted, but that it is exalted **in Yahweh**. This is *God's battle* she has embarked upon, not her own. She sees herself empowered by God, to fight for God.

Four times in her prayer, Hannah references the fact that God lifts people up (exalt v1, 10 = s/w lifted up v7,8). She had known the depths of despair when she had journeyed year by year to Shiloh, only to witness the spiritual corruption of the nation, intensified by her own inability to change anything. But now God had raised her up above all those circumstances, and He would raise up all who trust in Him, no matter how oppressed they may be (v7,8,10).

My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies

Cambridge Commentary renders this, *'My mouth is opened wide against mine enemies' – I am no longer put to silence in their presence*, says Hannah. Her reference to her enemies in the plural cannot simply relate to Peninnah. No, it was against Hophni and Phinehas that she had been helpless to do or say anything; but she is silenced no longer. In fact, it will be her very own son who will prophesy their downfall in Ch 3.

Although Hannah begins by speaking of her enemies, she ends in v10 by speaking of the adversaries of Yahweh. Her enemies were God's enemies, and His enemies were hers, because she stood with her God (Psa 139:21,22).

Because I rejoice in thy salvation

For Hannah, this is all about God's salvation, God's people, God's plan and God's purpose. This is the reason behind her joy and her exaltation over her enemies. Right from the outset, Hannah's song will bear allusions to the saving work of Christ, *'Yah's Salvation'*. Her song reaches its climactic conclusion in her clear reference to the Messiah in v10.

GOD'S SALVATION

How often do we rejoice in God's salvation? Out of all the people in this world, we have been offered an amazing gift of salvation. Can we echo the words of the Psalmist, *'but I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation'* (Psa 13:5)?

2 There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

There is none holy as Yahweh: for there is none beside thee

Holiness is the moral reflection of the glory of the one absolute God. How much this meant to Hannah, who year in, year out, had been suffocating beneath the defiling influence of a profane priesthood. Moses declares *'Who is like unto thee, O Yahweh, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?'* (Ex 15:11). Nobody can get away with ruling God's house without knowing Him and being subject to Him, as Eli's sons had done.

Neither is there any Rock like our God

A common epithet/title for God, used to denote His protection and strength (Deut 32:4,15, 18; Psa 18:2,31). God had been there, unmoveable, unchanging, unyielding, the entire time. He was the only place where she could truly find refuge.

3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

Roth: *'Do not multiply words, so loftily—loftily, Nor let arrogance proceed from your mouth, For, a GOD of knowledge, is Yahweh, And, for himself, are great doings made firm.'*

Hannah speaks of both Hophni and Phinehas in this verse. There is only one arrogant speech recorded in the life of Hannah, and that is of the sons of Eli as they made their demands upon the worshippers at Shiloh (2:13-16). Their behaviour was arrogant and self-serving as they abused the power they had as they ruled the religious centre of Israel. Cp Psa 73:4-11.

Bear in mind, they may well have been watching and listening as she spoke the following words in the Tabernacle courts!

Talk no more exceeding proudly

Phinehas' name means 'the man of the brazen mouth' (1:3 & note), and no doubt he demonstrated this with his treatment of others. These priests were not 'keeping knowledge' as their forefather Phinehas the son of Eleazar had (Mal 2:7).

In Dan 4 we have an illustration in Nebuchadnezzar of one who spoke exceedingly proudly and was brought low by God. We do well to remember the words of Prov 8:13 *'The fear of Yahweh is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.'*

For Yahweh is a God of knowledge, by Him actions are weighed:

Hophni, the violent boxer (1:3), finds his very own rebuke too. His threats to take the sacrifices by force had not gone unnoticed, either by Hannah, or by God. God's knowledge extends to the actions nobody else sees, and even the motives behind our actions (1Sam. 16:7; Prov 16:2, 21:2; Heb 4:12), He knows which of our actions stem from pride and which come from a heartfelt appreciation of His salvation.

In Revelation, we see our Lord also has the power to search the hearts of man: *'all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.'* (Rev 2:23). It is what is inside our hearts that motivates our works.

4 The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

As she presents her son at the tabernacle, Hannah envisages Hophni and Phinehas as though they were mighty men on the battlefield; they've fallen, and their bow is broken and useless. That bow with which they once shot out piercing arrows of bitter words, is now rendered useless.

And simultaneously, Hannah, who had been struggling along, shaking and trembling in her mental agony, saw herself as girded with strength for the battle. Here she was, standing indomitable before her doomed counterparts. Cp Prov 31:17.

The bows of the mighty men are broken

Roth *'The bow of the mighty, is dismayed'*

The Psalms show us that Hannah is not necessarily referring to physical weapons here, but rather using a metaphor to describe their conduct and conversation: *'Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.'* (Psa 64:2-4; cp. Psa 11:2; 37:14,15; Prov 25:18)

Hannah would have seen the power of words to destroy others and so would have rejoiced at the prospect of that power being broken and those who had fallen being strengthened.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

In James 3 we have a strong warning of the power and danger of the tongue. It's often easier to use our tongue to pull down and criticise rather than to encourage and motivate. How often do our words encourage, and how often do they criticise?

Throughout her song, Hannah uses a literary feature called a 'merism', which is where two words on the extreme ends of a scale are used to express everything on the whole scale. The following table shows these contrasts, which Hannah uses to illustrate the complete control of Yahweh over all, and therefore His ability to reverse the fortunes of those who trust in Him, such as Hannah, and those who hate Him, like Eli's sons.

	Negative	Positive
v4	Bows of the mighty are broken	Stumbled girded with strength
v5	Full have hired out for bread	Hungry ceased
	She with many waxed feeble	Barren born seven
v6	Yahweh killeth	Maketh alive
	He bringeth down to the grave	Bringeth up
v7	He maketh poor	Maketh rich
	He bringeth low	He lifteth up

5 *They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.*

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread

Envisioning a time when Eli's priesthood would be overthrown, Hannah's certainty is such that she describes the future as though it is the present. This idea is picked up by Zacharias in his song where he says *'He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.'* (Lk 1:53).

Notice that God places His stamp of approval on Hannah's song and the sentiments she had expressed by referring back to these words directly in the prophecy of the man of God (2:36), and in so doing, He establishes beyond all doubt that the 'enemies' of Hannah were indeed the perverse sons of Eli, whose house is condemned in that prophecy.

The barren hath born seven

This phrase describes the sense of completeness Hannah felt with the birth of Samuel (cp Ruth 4:15). Peninnah and Hannah were representative of the natural and spiritual seed of Israel respectively. The natural seed was produced with ease and in abundance, but Hannah realised the reality of divine intervention in her life to produce a spiritual seed who would deliver the nation.

6 *The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.*

Yahweh killeth, and maketh alive:

Having experienced the deadness of an empty womb, Hannah would appreciate the truth of this statement; it is truly within God's power to bring life and to bring death.

Drawing from Deut 32:39 *'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.'* Cp. Job 5:18 *'For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.'*

He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up

This is one of the select Old Testament passages which speaks openly of resurrection, and shows Hannah's confidence in the power of God. The words of Job would have helped build this understanding *'For I know that my redeemer liveth... and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:'* (Job 19:25-26). What greater power could there be to reverse fortunes? Not only could God give life to the child Samuel and take it from Hophni and Phinehas, but He can and will resurrect His saints to glory and honour.

7 *The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.*

Once again, Hannah is probably alluding to Job here, when he said, *'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh.'* (Job 1:21).

God is present in prosperity and in trial; He brings both into our lives for our development: *'In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.'* (Ecc 7:14)

God makes poor and **then** makes rich, He brings low and **then** lifts up. This is the principle of first the suffering and then the glory (Rom 8:18; 2Cor 4:17-18; 1Pet 5:10). We only truly appreciate fullness when we have first experienced emptiness.

The life of Joseph is a good example of this verse. He was one whom God made poor and brought low, yet in due time, God lifted him up and he became a wealthy ruler in Egypt. Throughout all these experiences, he knew and trusted that God was at work (Gen 45:5).

3 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.

These words of Hannah are heavily drawn upon in Psalm 113:7-9, in the context of a Psalm of praise to Yahweh for His deliverance.

He raiseth the poor out of the dust... the beggar from the dunghill

There was of course a man who lived before Hannah's time, who had fallen from great heights to find himself cast into the 'dust' (Job 30:19), and Hannah had found an affiliation with his plight. While outwardly serene, inwardly she was in turmoil. As she had walked through the streets of Shiloh in the busy family entourage of Elkanah, she felt more of a kinship with the beggars in the gutter; such was her inner heartache. But now God had raised her up, and He would exalt her son to sit with princes of the nation (quite literally) for the furtherance of His purpose.

How Hannah must have treasured the character of the God she served – a God who, though He is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, yet He dwells with those who are humble and contrite in their attitude and revives their spirit (Isa 57:15). Another illustration of this would be seen in the life of David, when God used her son to raise him from the sheepcotes to become the ruler of Israel (2Sam 7:8).

To make them inherit the throne of glory

This is a majestic statement of Hannah's. Hadn't she stood in these very courts only a few years earlier and, between her sobs, pleaded with God to accept her vow of a son that he might rid this Temple of the corrupt priesthood enthroned within it?

In fact, 'throne' = s/w 'seat' in Ch 1:9. Eli was to be removed from his throne, and that quite graphically in Ch 4:18, and another, more righteous than he, would ultimately sit upon it.

For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's

This is the reason Hannah gives for the reversals she has just spoken of. She envisages the earth as being set upon pillars for a foundation, and states that God owns and controls those pillars. He can therefore steady those pillars (Psa 75:2,3 ESV) or shake them up (Job 9:5-6) at will. If He owns the very foundations, then cannot God control all the ups and downs of life?

9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

He will keep the feet of His saints

Following on from the previous verse, when the pillars are shaken the faithful need not fear because God '*keeps the feet of His saints*'. He would even keep the tiny little feet of three-year old Samuel, as he trod for the first time upon the threshold of the Tabernacle in Shiloh

- home to Hophni and Phinehas, and one of the most dangerous places in Israel in those days. Hannah's words would remain true the entire way through his life as he grew to become Israel's greatest reformer.

The words of Psa 37:23-24 provide assurance that, *'The steps of a good man are ordered by Yahweh: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for Yahweh upholdeth him with his hand.'*

The wicked shall be silent in darkness

The influence of these wicked men would be removed by the silence of death.

By strength shall no man prevail

While it might seem as though Hophni and Phinehas were prevailing by their strength, Hannah knew this was a temporary situation. They would be no match for God's strength.

God's strength is made perfect in weakness (2Cor 12:9). Down through their history, God had used, and would continue to use, unusual circumstances to bring about astounding results:

Person	Conquers	Quote
Shamgar and his ox-goad	The Philistines	Jud 3:31
Jael and her tent peg	Sisera, captain of Canaanites	Jud 4:21-22
Gideon and 300 men	Midianite confederacy	Jud 7:2,7,21-22
Samson, with the jawbone	1000 Philistines	Jud 15:15
Jonathan and his armour bearer	20 Philistines	1Sam 14:13-15
David and his sling	Goliath	1Sam 17:40-50

DISCUSSION POINT:

Why does God often choose to show His strength by using the weakness of man?

10 *The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.*

The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken in pieces

Hannah has a very vivid picture in her mind: *'They who strive with Jehovah will be smashed'* (Green's Literal Translation).

Perhaps she is thinking back to the Exodus and remembering the fate of another man who hardened his heart against Yahweh, and envisioning the same outcome on Eli's son: *'Thy right hand, O Yahweh, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Yahweh, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.'* (Ex 15:6).

Out of heaven shall He thunder upon them

There is a poetic justice about this final verse of Hannah's song. The word 'thunder' = s/w 'fret' in Ch 1:6. Hannah's enemies had thought they were simply *her* enemies, and had no doubt enjoyed the morbid satisfaction of making her fret. But they failed to realise that Hannah was *Yahweh's handmaid*, and that to rile her was to rile her God.

In Ch 1, Hannah had thundered within her troubled soul; now her God would break out in that very same thunder upon them, and there would be nothing they could do to pacify Him. It would be as if they were arguing with a thunderstorm.

David describes this picture well in Psa 18:13-14; *'Yahweh also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.'*

Samuel would never forget these words throughout his life: See 1Sam 7:10, 12:16-17.

Yahweh shall judge the ends of the earth

God's reckoning would be complete. Nobody will evade His just judgements when they come.

He shall give strength to His king

Israel had no king at this time. This understanding would have been based off the following passages:

- **Jacob's blessings to his sons:** *'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...'* (Gen 49:10).
- **Balaam's prophecy:** *'there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel...'* (Num 24:17).
- **Moses' instruction concerning kings of Israel:** *'...Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose...'* (Deut 17:14-15).

This highlights Hannah's knowledge of Scripture and appreciation of God's purpose being fulfilled. Her son would become the 'kingmaker' in anointing Israel's first two kings.

And exalt the horn of His anointed

Anointed Heb *māshîyach* H4899 = the Hebrew word for Messiah.

This is the first time the term 'Messiah' is used in scripture in the sense of him being God's anointed King. This word is only used four times previously and all in the context of a priest being anointed (Lev 4:3,5,16; 6:22). Hannah speaks of the coming of one who would bear the rights of Melchizedek; to be both king and priest and who would supersede the priestly order at Shiloh, and indeed of Aaron himself (Psa 110:4).

Hannah's expectation would find its first realisation in the anointing of David, *'the anointed of the God of Jacob'* (2Sam 23:1). Ultimately, her vision was of *the Messiah*, the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 2:26). When he came, his mother Mary found herself in a very similar situation, and offered a prayer framed upon Hannah's (See Appendix 2, p168).

In Lk 1:69, Zacharias speaks of him as the *'horn of salvation'* which God had raised up in the house of David. Cp 2Sam 22:3.

11 **And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.**

And Elkanah went to Ramah and to his house

The journey home would have been a difficult one and the cost of giving her son would have been something Hannah would have felt every day, but such was her love of the nation and her desire for a spiritual change that she was prepared to pay that price.

The child did minister unto Yahweh before Eli the priest

The first thing we are told of Samuel himself is that as a very young child, he ministered before Yahweh. Hannah had impressed upon him a love of Yahweh and a desire to serve.

This word 'minister' occurs again in 2:18 and 3:1. Samuel ministers before Yahweh at Shiloh, while Eli's sons are hindering the worship there. Notice their opposite trajectories:

Decline of Eli's Sons	Rise of Samuel
Wickedness of Eli's sons (2:12-17)	Samuel approved by Eli (2:18-21)
Eli reproves his sons (2:22-25)	Samuel grows in favour (2:26)
Prophecy against Eli and his sons (2:27-36)	Samuel called and given prophetic word (3:1-4:1)
The Philistines; the ark and Eli's house (defeat/capture/covenant defiled) (4:1-22)	The Philistines; the ark and Samuel (return /victory/covenant renewed) (7:1-17)

THE PERVERSITY OF ELI'S SONS (2:12-17)

After witnessing the joy of Hannah and her hope for the future, we now turn to a very different scene. We will see the corruption of Eli's sons and develop an appreciation for why Hannah longed for a change in priesthood.

12 Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

These men were the priests. They were supposed to bring people to God - to help them come to know Yahweh, and yet they don't even know Him themselves! These two descriptions of Hophni and Phinehas have been lifted straight out of the book of Judges:

- They were sons of Belial - just like the men of Mount Ephraim (Jud 19:2; 20:13).
- They knew not Yahweh - just like the generation of the Judges (Jud 2:10).

And here they were *inside the house of God*. No wonder Hannah was distressed!

Sons of Belial

Belial means 'worthlessness or hopeless ruin' (Vines). Hophni and Phinehas were utterly worthless in God's eyes. This is a dreadful contrast to Ex 19:5-6, where Israel were called to be a *special treasure* unto Yahweh. Now the nation is in such a low state spiritually that the religious leaders of the day are described as 'worthless'.

They knew not Yahweh

Malachi shows us that the role of the priest was to 'keep knowledge', so that the people might seek the 'law of Yahweh' at their mouth (Mal 2:4-9). But like those in Malachi's day, these priests were far from being able to provide instruction in God's ways. This is like an ecclesial world where the Arranging Brethren have no knowledge of God and His ways.

A similar problem was faced in the days of Hosea:

'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children ...' (Hos 4:6-9)

Of course, it wasn't just any lack of knowledge that was destroying God's people - it was their failure to *know* Him (Hos 4:1). The days of Eli and the days of Hosea provide a pertinent warning for our day. We too can be 'destroyed through lack of knowledge' if we don't invest time into coming to know Yahweh through His Word and live the Truth with purpose.

The record of Hophni and Phinehas gives warning as to how spiritual life can be destroyed when ecclesial shepherds fail to guard the heritage of the Truth. It occurs when those who guide ecclesias do not know where the ancient landmark has been placed, or why it has been placed there. Almost every custom in ecclesial life has come about because of a scripturally reasoned principle which stands behind the practice. When those in authority do not know where those boundary stones of the Truth lie, then they will not guard the Truth's heritage, and fail to pass it on safely to the next generation. In this age, as in every previous epoch of time, there are those who seek to move the boundary stones on everything.' (Bro Roger Lewis, *Hannah*, p118).

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Corrupt religious leadership was a repetitious theme throughout Israel's history, with a devastating cost to human life. Think of how many must have died in spiritual oblivion because of the perversion of Eli's house! Below is a list of other examples from Scripture. Can you think of others? What strategies can we use to help us remain faithful?

- Hosea's day (Hos 4:6-9)
- Jeremiah and Zephaniah's day (Jer 2:8; Zeph 3:1-4)
- Ezekiel's day (Ezek 22:26)
- Nehemiah's day (Neh 13)
- Malachi's day (Mal 2:1-9)
- Christ's day (Mt 26:14-15)
- Last days of Judah's Commonwealth (Jude 3-4; 2Pet 2)

13-14 *And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.*

The Law was very prescriptive in how the offerings worked and who received what portions. Commencing with the most important, the Law prescribed the portion for Yahweh, for the High Priest, the officiating priest and finally for the offerer. Hophni and Phinehas however established their own hierarchy with themselves at the top. They saw the worshippers at Shiloh as a food source to be exploited.

Both the wave breast and the heave shoulder were the priest's portion, yet this was not enough for these men. So, by intimidation and brutality, they took what they wanted and in so doing robbed the offerer of part of their fellowship meal with God.

15-16 *Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.*

Not only did they rob the offerer of their portion, but they robbed Yahweh of His. The priest, who was supposed to know the rules of sacrifice, was engaging in behaviour that shocked the ordinary worshipper. The fat belonged to Yahweh (Lev 3:16), and Israel was forbidden to consume it (Lev 7:23-25), yet these men wanted their portion before Yahweh was dedicated His portion.

These men were a vast contrast to the instructions Peter gave to the ecclesial elders of his day: *'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock'* (1Pet 5:2,3)

17 *Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.*

For men abhorred the offering of Yahweh

Abhorred Heb *na'ats* H5006 = 'to scorn, blaspheme, contemn, despise' (Str).

Whilst the behaviour of the priests caused great distress to the faithful remnant, to others it legitimised and encouraged a contempt for God and His principles. The priest's role was to lead the nation in religious worship, yet these men drove the nation further away from their God by blatantly disregarding His laws (cp Mal 2:8).

It is no wonder Hannah was left feeling sick with distress at the behaviour of these men and the dishonour that was shown to Yahweh every day.

SAMUEL'S EARLY SERVICE (2:18-19)

Once again, the record switches to show the contrast between the wickedness of Eli's sons and the faithfulness of Elkanah's family.

18 *But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.*

The record highlights a contrast here. While the sin of Eli's sons was great **before Yahweh**, Samuel ministered **before Yahweh**. In both cases, the Heb word for 'before' is *paniyim*, meaning face, as in 1:22. Hophni and Phinehas' actions were 'in the face of' and in defiance of Yahweh, but Samuel's actions were before and in honour of Yahweh.

Linen ephod

A priestly garment, which was associated with the role of divine communication (1Sam 22:18; 23:9-11; 30:7,8).

19 *Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.*

Coat Heb *meiy* H4598 = 'a robe'. s/w used of the 'robe' of the High Priest in Ex 28:4.

Hannah's gift of a coat year by year was a reminder to Samuel of his priestly calling. His was a priesthood of Nazarite origin, not by Aaronic descent, but it stood superior in that it was rendered by a voluntary choice (Num 6).

This word for 'coat' is the same word used throughout Samuel's life to describe the mantle, which he became known by (1Sam 15:27; 28:14).

ELI'S 2ND BLESSING: MANY CHILDREN (2:20-21)

20-21 *And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, the LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. and the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.*

And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife

Rotherham's translation of this phrase indicates that it was an annual blessing Eli bestowed on Elkanah and Hannah: *'And Eli used to bless Elkanah and his wife, and to say...'*

Yahweh give thee seed

Eli picks up on the words of Hannah in 1:26-28, *'I am the woman...therefore have I lent him to Yahweh...'* Hannah had given her son to alleviate the nation's spiritual poverty and had not sought for a reward for her sacrifice, but Yahweh's blessing through Eli would recompense her for her work.

And bare three sons and two daughters

Despite the godly upbringing Elkanah and Hannah would no doubt have provided, none of Samuel's siblings receive a mention in the divine record.

'The Bible was not a record of family history, or of personal achievement, but was instead the chronicle of divine purpose. Both Hannah and Samuel would only find their place in the holy writ because of the part they each played in the greater plan of God.'
(Bro Roger Lewis, *Hannah*, p132)

ELI REBUKES HIS SONS (2:22-25)

After showing the disregard Hophni and Phinehas demonstrated for all things relating to the worship of Yahweh and the contrast of Samuel ministering in Yahweh's presence, now we learn of the wicked behaviour of Eli's sons towards the people.

22 *Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

Assembled at the door of the Tabernacle

It would seem that the women assembled at the door of the Tabernacle to serve and contribute to the spiritual life of the nation (Ex 38:8). Here we have a contrast between two Phinehas'. One, an unfaithful priest who gratified the flesh and engaged in immoral behaviour, and the other, a faithful priest who acted decisively to kill those who engaged in such behaviour (Num 25:6-8; Mal 2:5-8).

23-24 *And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress.*

The key word in Eli's speech is **'heard/hear'**. Eli heard a lot of things (2:22,23,24), but he didn't do anything about it (3:13). Eli was obviously well versed in the external things of the Law as he evidently taught Samuel. But the power of God's Word did not drive him; he honoured his children above Yahweh's commands and so did not pass on a spirit of godly reverence to his sons. This can be a danger for us: we might think we are 'in the Truth' by being baptised and supporting ecclesial events, but if we are not driven by a love of God and His Word when we are old, the chances are our children will be lost.

While Eli no doubt knew the character of his sons, he speaks here of the reports he *hears*. Due to age, frailty and his weight, Eli's days ministering in the Tabernacle as High Priest would have diminished so that his sons had free rein to do as they pleased. Eli had neither the power nor inclination to stop them.

The corrupt worship and behaviour he had failed to challenge and correct while they were young was now too far gone to be reversed by the rebuke of an old man. Their wicked behaviour had become ingrained into their characters. Eli's failure demonstrates the truth of the proverb stating that godly discipline will *'deliver his soul from hell'* (Prov 23:13-14).

25 *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.*

The first word 'judge' is *elohim*, the second, *palal*, meaning to 'intervene, mediate or judge' (BDB). Accordingly, the ESV reads *'If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him'*. God judges the case by means of His earthly representatives (called *elohim* or 'judges' in Ex 22:8,9,28). As His representatives, they would act on His behalf (Deut 17:8-13).

'For man's offences against his fellow-man, there is a third superior party to arbitrate and rectify the wrongs, namely God, or God's representative, the duly appointed judge: but for man's offences against Jehovah, there is no third superior party to intercede as a mediator.' (Camb Comm).

The sons of Eli were in a very serious predicament and stand as a warning in our attitude towards Yahweh - cp Heb 10:29-31.

Notwithstanding they hearkened not

In comparing this to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Ex 4:21), Cambridge Commentary makes a very helpful observation: *'it is not till Pharaoh has turned a deaf ear to repeated warnings ... not till Eli's sons have ignored His existence and defied His laws does He determine to slay them'*.

SAMUEL'S FAITHFULNESS (2:26)

26 *And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.*

The record again highlights a contrast between Samuel and Eli's sons. A similar summary would later be written of the Lord (Lk 2:52).

MAN OF GOD'S PROPHECY: DESTRUCTION OF ELI'S HOUSE (2:27-36)

In this final section of Ch 2, a man of God appears to Eli bringing a warning of impending doom for his house, thus validating the feelings of Hannah and endorsing her prayer.

27a *And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him,*

Here we have the High Priest of Israel, the one man who should be closest to God in the nation, but God speaks to him through an intermediary. In contrast, God speaks directly to Samuel in a vision in the following chapter. This illustrates Samuel's devotion to spiritual things and Eli's remoteness from them.

Like Hannah's prayer, this prophecy is based off Deut 32. The following table shows how this prophecy validates Hannah's prayer:

Hannah's Song	Prophecy Against Eli's House
Steeped in Deut 32	Steeped in Deut 32
Yahweh can reverse situations (v4-8)	Yahweh will reverse priesthood (v34-35)
Yahweh kills and makes alive, He brings down and brings up (v6)	Yahweh kills Hophni and Phinehas (v34) and raises up a faithful priest (v35)
Full would go begging for bread (v5)	Eli's house would beg for bread (v36)
First mention of the Anointed King (v10)	Second mention of the Anointed King (v35)

27b *Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? **28** And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?*

The man of God asked three questions which underscored the privileges attached to Eli's house and showed how closely the priesthood was linked to redemption from Egypt:

1. Did God appear to Aaron when he was in bondage in Egypt?
2. Did He choose Aaron and his family to be priests above all the other tribes and families in Israel?
3. Were the priests given a share in all the sacrifices that were made in Israel?

God had made a distinction between the priesthood and the rest of the nation, and this distinction allowed the priests to participate in an act of fellowship both with God and with the offerer. When the priest ate his portion of the sacrifice, he ate on behalf of God in fellowship with His people. Yet Eli and his sons had despised this honour, and through abuse of the priest's portion, they had become fat and heedless to God's ways. They treated with contempt the redemption extended by God.

To be a priest was to ascend God's altar to offer sacrifice for redemption; it was to burn the daily incense as an intercessor; and it was to wear the ephod as an intermediary between God and His people. These three things were an enormous privilege and honour and involved a commitment to the spiritual welfare of the nation, yet Eli and his sons had despised this honour.

29 *Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?*

The only other occurrence of this word 'kick' is in Deut 32:15 and these words are so applicable that they could have been written about Eli and his sons: *'But Jeshurun **waxed fat, and kicked:** thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and **lightly esteemed** the Rock of his salvation.'*

The form of the verb 'kick' is an habitual action. Rotherham translates it, *'Wherefore have ye been kicking at my sacrifices'*. This highlights the gravity of Eli's position: by allowing his sons to continue their behaviour and by partaking in their sins, Eli too was guilty of scorning Yahweh and His sacrifices (cp James 4:17). He too had become fat with these stolen offerings (4:18).

30 *Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*

I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever

The privilege of priesthood was never theirs by right, but by the privilege of God. In Ex 29:9, the priesthood was promised to all of Aaron's sons. The first two, Nadab and Abihu, died in Lev 10, leaving Eleazar and Ithamar to continue the priesthood (Lev 10:6).

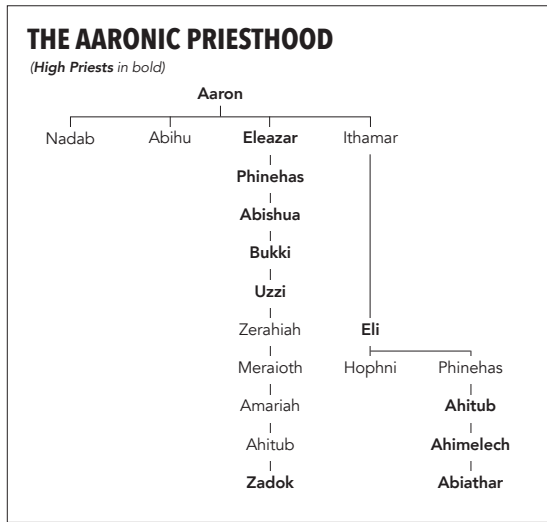
Because of his faith, the priesthood was promised to Phinehas the son of Eleazar (Num 25:13), yet by the end of Judges it had transferred to Eli, who was of the house of Ithamar.

Its continuance was dependent upon their obedience; disobedience would result in the termination of office and life, as was demonstrated with Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-3,9).

Them that honour me I will honour

We see a case study of this with Hannah and Eli. Hannah chose to honour Yahweh above all else, and in turn was honoured by God in His answer to her prayer. Eli chose to honour his sons rather than God, and so was lightly esteemed by Him.

Our destiny is directly related to our attitude towards God. A simple choice of whether we honour or despise Him has eternal ramifications. God responds to us in a spirit which matches ours towards Him.



31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

Physically, the arm is an extension of the body, and represents one's strength or ability to do something (e.g. Ex 6:6, Isa 40:10, Jer 17:5). Its cutting off represents the loss of influence and authority (Jer 48:25), which would come upon Eli's house.

This was mostly fulfilled in 1Sam 22:19,20 when Doeg killed all the priests of Nob except Abiathar. Later, Solomon banishes Abiathar in fulfilment of the remainder of this prophecy (1Ki 2:27).

32-33 And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

The Cambridge Commentary describes the 'enemy' as 'a rival', and then continues,

The best explanation of this difficult passage appears to be this: "Thou, in the person of thy descendants, wilt see another take thy place as priest in my habitation (cp 1Sam 2:29), at the time when the nation shall be most prosperous and the office most honourable;" the reference being to Abiathar's deposition by Solomon (1Ki 2:27).'

ESV *'Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men.'*

Eli's descendants would be shunted from the priesthood and would watch on in envy at the prosperity of the nation (cp 1Ki 2:27). His offspring would never reach the status of being 'old and full of days', and the family would be marked by premature death.

34 And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.

The death of Eli's two sons (1Sam 4:11) in his lifetime was a confirmation of the impending fulfilment of the rest of the prophecy.

Yet the man of God did not reveal that the same day Hophni and Phinehas fell, the Ark of God would be captured by the Philistines. In the mercy of God, Eli did not know this at the time, for when the time came for him to hear it, it would be the death of him (1Sam 4:18).

35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

Faithful/sure Both Heb *aman* H539 = 'to build up or support; to be firm or faithful, to trust or believe' (Str). Similar wording is used in promises to David (2Sam 7:16).

With the death of Hophni and Phinehas, God commenced the process of removing the house of Ithamar from the priestly role and restoring the house of Eleazar. During the period between the transfer of office, God provided a faithful priest who would begin the spiritual reformation of the nation. This prophecy is bookended by a commendation of Samuel (2:26

and 3:1), from this we infer that that faithful priest would, in the first instance, be Samuel, despite his lack of priestly lineage.

SAMUEL: A FAITHFUL PRIEST

Though not of the line of Aaron, Samuel was born a Levite (1:1) and dedicated to God as a Nazarite from birth (1:11 & note). As such, he would have experienced the upbringing of a priest, preparing him for the work ahead.

In his priestly role, Samuel would:

- Offer sacrifice on behalf of the people (7:9,10; 10:8)
- Engage in the priestly work of intercession (7:9; 12:18-25; 15:11)
- Bless the people (9:12-13)
- Wear robes of a priest, including the 'little coat' (2:19) and linen ephod (2:18)

Thus, the spiritual aspirations of his mother would be realised, that had been expressed years earlier as she made her vow in the Tabernacle courts.

Of course, however great Samuel's fulfilment of this prophecy may have been, and however transformational his priesthood for the nation, he was but an incipient, or partial, fulfilment. The prophecy relates ultimately to Christ:

- He was 'a faithful priest' (Heb 2:17)
- He was 'after God's heart and mind' (cp Heb 10:7)
- He was given 'a sure house' (Heb 3:6)
- Christ is both the 'anointed' priest and king (Heb 6:20,7:2)

As with many Bible prophecies, there appears to be several layers to the fulfilment of this prophecy:

- First in Samuel (as above).
- Then in the rise of Zadok, who would be given the priesthood before David, Yahweh's anointed (2Sam 8:17), and who would replace Abiathar, Eli's descendant (1Ki 2:35).
- Ultimately in the priesthood of Christ (Heb 7:11) who would combine both roles of king and priest (Zech 6:13).

I will build him a sure house

Even though Samuel's two sons had to be removed from office (8:1-3), his grandson became one of the spiritual leaders in Israel (1Chr 6:33). Thus, in the life of Samuel, this promise would almost seem to relate more to a spiritual house which would follow his example and bear a family likeness to his character, rather than his actual descendants.

36 *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.*

Hannah's statement concerning those who were full hiring themselves out for bread (v5) would become a reality for the house of Eli. These men who had so wickedly abused the power of their office and made themselves fat on the labours of others, would be desperate for the smallest piece of money and a morsel of bread. In this final phrase of his message of doom, the man of God places the divine stamp of approval upon Hannah, her intentions,

and the wonderful song of rejoicing she had offered at the completion of her vow. There could be no misunderstandings now; *'the Lord knoweth them that are His'* and He had made it known.



Samuel's Story

From the thrilling spiritual heights of his mother's prayer to the chilling depravity of Eli's sons, we have seen Samuel develop through his childhood years as he grew up at Shiloh.

- He never forgot the words his mother sang in the Tabernacle courts, and was doubtless reminded of them each year when he spoke to his mother on her annual visit to the Tabernacle.
- For years, Samuel witnessed first-hand the abusive behaviour of Hophni and Phinehas towards the people and the way they undermined the worship of God.
- Each year, his mother would remind Samuel of his special calling to minister to God with the distinctive coat she would bring to Shiloh.

From these years, Samuel would have learned the importance of **faithful service** and of **guarding the house and ecclesia of God**. He had seen firsthand the terrible implications when either are neglected, and these childhood lessons would make a deep impression upon his later life.

*From a child thou hast
known the holy scriptures,
which are able to make thee
wise unto salvation through faith
which is in Christ Jesus.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:15

SAMUEL & YAHWEH



1 SAMUEL 3

SAMUEL & YAHWEH (1SAM 3)

With the first revelation from Yahweh to the young boy, this chapter marks the beginning of Samuel's prophetic ministry and sets the stage for the transition in the nation's spiritual leadership from the corrupt priesthood under Eli to the faithful prophet Samuel.

THE SPIRITUAL DARKNESS OF ISRAEL (3:1-2)

1 *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.*

The child Samuel

Samuel is still very young – approximately 12 years of age according to Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk 5, Ch 10, para 4).

Even without the corresponding ages of the two boys, Samuel stands as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ who, at the age of 12, was found in the Temple, conversing with those many years his senior (Lk 2:42,49). Both boys were destined to replace the priesthood with whom they conversed on these two occasions.

Ministered unto Yahweh before Eli.

In contrast to the recent rejection of Eli's house by the man of God (2:27-36), Ch 3 opens with a distinct focus upon Samuel 'ministering unto' or serving God (cp 2:11 & note). This was of course the role of the priests (Deut 21:5; 1Ch 23:13), in contrast to the role that would generally have been assigned to Samuel as a Levite, that is, to serve the Tabernacle and the priesthood (Num 1:50; 3:6; 18:2).

Samuel is portrayed as the 'faithful priest' whom God was raising up as He prepared to replace the line of Eli.

And the word of Yahweh was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

NIV: *'In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.'*

Since the days of Moses, some 300 years earlier, prophetic utterances had been few and far between. This scarcity of direct communication from God was a recurrent theme during periods of spiritual decline. Cp.

- Amos 8:11-12 *'...they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of Yahweh, but they shall not find it...'*
- Ezekiel 7:26 *'...they seek a vision from the prophet...'*

It is worth highlighting **'the word of the LORD'** in this chapter (v1,7,21) as it forms one of the central themes of this chapter.

SPIRITUAL SIGHT & HEARING IN THE LIFE OF SAMUEL

The concepts of **spiritual vision** and **hearing God's word** underpin the entire life of Samuel and are interlinked throughout his story.

Vision: Samuel was born at a time when everyone did that which was right 'in his own eyes' (Jud 21:25). There was 'no open vision' (1Sam 3:1), meaning no inspired guidance from God, and even the High Priest was essentially blind (3:2). But despite his surroundings, Samuel was brought into the world in a place renowned for its extensive views: *Ramathaim-zophim* - 'the double height of the watchers' (1:1). He would grow up to learn the importance of spiritual vision and foresight, so that he would come to be known as 'the seer' (one who sees clearly).

Hearing: Communication with God was also extremely rare in Samuel's youth (3:1). Yet Samuel was named 'heard of God' by his mother because God had listened to her cry (1:20). This theme of communication with God grows from this point on to become a central feature of Samuel's life:

- **God spoke to Samuel** four times in 1Sam 3:4-10.
- God then **revealed to Samuel** the fate of Eli's house (3:11-14).
- Everything Samuel prophesied came to pass and he became **renowned nationwide as a prophet** (3:19-20).
- God continued **regular revelations** to Samuel in Shiloh (3:21).
- Samuel became **God's mouthpiece to the entire nation** (4:1).

And so, Samuel became renowned for both his spiritual foresight/perception (a 'seer'), as well as his role as God's mouthpiece to the nation (a 'prophet'). These were really one and the same role (9:9), and appropriately, Samuel is described as both (3:20; 9:18-19).

This background would form a strong foundation upon which Samuel would base much of his work in his latter life - see p154 and 162.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

The failing eyesight of Eli is stressed on multiple occasions ('eyes were dim... could not see' 3:2; 4:15) and stand as a telling metaphor for his waning spiritual perception. He had heard of much evil in his time (2:22-24) but had done little about it. Instead, he had indulged in the sins of his children (2:29). As such, Eli was a blind leader of the blind, and because of this he was to be uprooted in fulfilment of the man of God's prophecy (cp Mt 15:13-14). Compare also Isaac's failing physical and spiritual sight in old age (Gen 27:1).

YAHWEH CALLS TO SAMUEL (3:3-10)

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

And ere the lamp of God went out

Commentators suggest that the lampstand was lit in the evening and 'dressed', or tidied up, in the morning (Ex 30:7-8). The expression 'ere the lamp of God went out' is therefore a

reference to the time shortly before dawn. It was Eli's responsibility to make sure the lamps never went out before the morning (Ex 27:20-21 - See notes in Camb. Comm.).

Its explicit mention here appears once more to be a metaphorical reference to the fragile state of the nation spiritually, with the light of the Truth at risk of flickering out.

Where the ark of God was

Why are we specifically told this? Recall that when the ark was first made, the angel of Yahweh said to Moses,

'There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.' (Ex 25:8).

To hear a voice from over the ark, therefore, spoke volumes of what was about to transpire within Israel. The fact that God was once again communicating from over the ark - a feature that began with the greatest prophet in Israel's history to that time (e.g. Num 7:89) - meant that a major change was in store for the nation which would break the long prophetic silence.

In the temple of Yahweh... and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

In contrast to the KJV, most translations indicate that Samuel was sleeping *'in the temple where the ark of God was'* (See RV, YLT, LXX, ESV). The 'temple' is of course a reference to the Tabernacle (1:9 & note), and it appears that Samuel slept in a room adjoining the court of the Tabernacle (Keil & Delitzsch; Camb Comm on 1Sam 2:2).

4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

It was likely a frequent occurrence that Eli, being an old man, called upon the young lad for assistance. *'Here am I'* was the way in which Samuel would answer Eli on a daily basis (cp 3:16) and indicates a willingness to help or serve (cp Gen 37:13, Isa 6:8, Acts 9:10, etc).

As a young child, Samuel stands among several others who also answered, *'Here I am'* when Yahweh spoke to them:

Abraham	in response to the call of God: <i>'Abraham, Abraham'</i> .	Gen 22:11
Jacob	in response to the call of God: <i>'Jacob, Jacob'</i> .	Gen 46:2
Moses	in response to the call of God: <i>'Moses, Moses'</i> .	Ex 3:4

All these men were outstanding servants of God, and because of their willingness to heed the call of God irrespective of what it involved, they became major instruments in the outworking of His purpose.

5-9 *And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

Samuel did not yet know Yahweh

What does this statement mean?

It has been suggested that it indicates Samuel hadn't come to 'know' the character of God deeply. But we are faced with a dilemma, because on many occasions now, the record has made it very clear that Samuel was developing godly characteristics and growing in favour with Yahweh (2:11,18,21,26; 3:1)! It seems a tenuous answer at best to say that he simply didn't understand God's character.

Another suggestion is that *"Knowing the LORD' here denotes not the general religious knowledge of a pious Israelite, but the special knowledge communicated by a personal revelation."* (Camb Comm).

The second answer is not far from the truth, but we are left in no doubt as to the real import of this phrase, and the key lies in v10:

10 **And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.**

Notice that 'Yahweh **came and stood**' and called as at other times. But how is this possible, seeing that *'the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands'* (Acts 7:48)? It clearly was not the Almighty Creator Himself who 'came and stood' beside Samuel (cp 1Tim 6:16), so who did?

WHO CALLED TO SAMUEL?

The phrase, 'came and **stood**' in v10 is a signature phrase used of the angels, who stand in the presence of Almighty God (Lk 1:11,19) and who stand by the saints to deliver and guide them (Gen 18:2; Dan 7:16; Zech 3:5). On this occasion, Yahweh sent His angel to 'stand by' Samuel and to deliver a message (cp Acts 27:23).

But it was not just any angel who was sent to Samuel. Notice that it was '**Yahweh**' who came and stood in v10. There was one particular angel upon whom Yahweh placed His very own name (Ex 23:20-21), so that that angel came to be referred to as 'Yahweh' throughout the Bible, and he stood as representative for the Creator Himself.

It was this angel whom God had sent before the children of Israel to lead them through the Wilderness to the Promised Land (Ex 23:20-23), enshrouded in a pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 14:19,24; Deut 1:32-33). He was called 'the angel of His presence' because he represented the Almighty Himself (Isa 63:9).

When this angel of Yahweh said he would no longer travel in the middle of the nation after the sin of the golden calf (Ex 32:34, 33:1-3), Moses was distraught, and pleaded that God would not take them to the Promised Land without 'His presence' - that is, without the angel of His presence (Ex 33:15).

In the same chapter, Ex 33, we read that Moses *'spake unto Yahweh face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend'* (v11). Now, in the same way that it cannot have been Almighty God Himself who came and stood beside Samuel, it is not possible that God Himself spoke to Moses 'face to face', as He says in v20: *'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.'* So once again, v11 is speaking of Moses in conversation with 'the Yahweh Angel', or the angel who bore God's name.

Moses developed a very special relationship with this angel. He first appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3:2), where He called out to Moses twice (v4), marking his commission in a remarkably similar way to that of Samuel in this verse. This was the angel who endured all the strivings of the nation alongside his servant Moses (Isa 63:9). This was the angel who knew Moses 'face to face' (Deut 34:10), and who personally buried him in the closing scene of Deuteronomy (34:5-6).

And it was this angel who now called to the 12-year-old Samuel, signalling once more just how significant the life of this young man would become.

This angel would become the closest acquaintance of Samuel throughout his long and challenging life. On countless occasions, He would '*speak in Samuel's ear*' (e.g. 1Sam 9:15,17), as one talks to a friend. Samuel would take his requests to Yahweh and would respectfully converse with Him (1Sam 8:21-22), and would plead with Him on the nation's behalf, as Moses had done centuries earlier (1Sam 12:19,23; cp Ex 33:12-17).

Samuel would come to 'know' (3:7) and form a very close bond with this angel who now called to him out of the darkness, commissioning him to bear the news to Eli of his impending doom.

Speak; for Thy servant heareth

This became the mentality of Samuel all his life long. He was always ready to listen to the word of his God and obey it. In doing this, Samuel has set a high, but necessary, benchmark for us: '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*' (Mt 4:4).

YAHWEH'S 2ND DENUNCIATION OF ELI'S HOUSE (3:11-14)

11-14 *And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.*

In the same way that Saul would later receive a dual reprimand, involving the rejection of his dynasty (Ch 13) and of him personally (Ch 15) from the Kingship, so Eli received a dual confirmation that his priesthood would be removed - first by the man of God (2:27-36), and now through the child Samuel (3:11-14). The thing had been revealed to Eli twice, '*because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass*' (Gen 41:32).

Both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle

God was about to give young Samuel catastrophic news. In other places in the Old Testament, tingling ears are signs of an exceptionally severe judgment (2Ki 21:12, Jer 19:3).

Christ speaks of the fate of servants such as the sons of Eli in Mt 24:48-51:

'If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not

aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

For I have told him that I will judge his house

i.e. through the word of the man of God in 2:27-36. Eli already heard of the judgment to come. This word to young Samuel was a confirmation of the previous message from God.

For the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile

Eli knew of this iniquity from a number of ways:

1. His own observation – the meat that was brought to him (2:13-16; cp 2:29).
2. From the reports of the people – of immorality (2:22-24).
3. But especially through the message of the man of God (2:27-36).

When his day of reckoning came, all Eli could do was accept his judgement. There was no court of appeal (2:25); he knew God's judgement was just.

And he restrained them not

Eli had failed to restrain them as sons, and he had failed to rein them in as rogue priests under his watch. He may have felt that due to his own weaknesses in partaking of the stolen sacrifices he wasn't in a fit place to reprimand them, like David in later times (1Ki 1:6). But no excuse was good enough, and this failure would cost his sons their lives.

I have sworn

This marks a very serious oath given by God. Regarding another oath, Hebrews states that it is *'impossible for God to lie'* – the fate of Eli's house was now sealed (Heb 6:13-18).

The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever

Eli's house had reached the point of no return. Instead of responding with contrition to the warning of the man of God, they had continued to *'eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die'* (Isa 22:13-14). Their attitude became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

SAMUEL TELLS IT TO ELI (3:15-18)

15-18 *And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.*

Samuel lay down until morning

Of course, he would not have slept at all! We can imagine young Samuel laying on his bed, ears ringing with the message from God, wondering how he could ever tell Eli such a powerful word of judgment. His ears were the first of many to tingle in Israel.

Opened the doors of the house of Yahweh

Evidently this was one of Samuel's regular duties as a servant at the tabernacle. The Tabernacle itself had only curtains walling off access to the Holy and Most Holy places, so that these doors led into the court (Keil & Delitzsch).

There was a peculiar appropriateness of this role for Samuel, because he was a descendant of Korah by birth (1Chr 6:33-38; Num 16:1). Korah defied Moses at the door of the Tabernacle (Num 16:19), but remarkably his sons stood aside from their father's rebellion and came to appreciate the importance of guarding the door to the house of God, so that in time they were appointed as the doorkeepers of the Tabernacle (1Chr 9:19).

As he looked upon the sons of Eli, Samuel may well have recalled God's judgement upon Nadab and Abihu who dared to corrupt the priesthood in Lev 10:1-2, and he no doubt came to appreciate at this very young age just how important it was to guard the access into the house of God. So important was it, that along with David, Samuel later appointed the doorkeepers who would guard the house of God in 1Chr 9:22-23.

THE DOORKEEPER

How much importance do we place on the role of a doorkeeper today - both the literal role of a doorman, but also guarding access to the house of God, the ecclesia?

Do we see that role as simply welcoming people with a smile? Or do we appreciate the great responsibility that rests upon the doorkeeper of God's house to guard the sanctity of the Truth from corrupt influences such as the sons of Eli?

What is the thing that Yahweh hath said unto thee?

This was a pivotal moment in the life of Eli. God had chosen to speak via Samuel rather than the High Priest, and Eli knew that this did not bode well for him, as can be seen in his next statement:

I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee and more also...

This phrase is a very serious injunction in which the speaker sought to bring down the judgements of God upon the subject of that oath if they failed to uphold or do something (e.g. Ruth 1:17; 1Sam 14:44).

And Samuel told him every whit

How hard it is to bring a message of judgment, let alone when it is delivered by a 12-year-old boy to an aged man! Yet it is always the responsibility of God's messengers to convey *everything* God says, not just the easy words. This feature characterised Samuel, who would consistently deliver God's message exactly how He gave it, no matter how easy or hard.

It is Yahweh: let Him do what seemeth Him good

Eli accepted Yahweh's ruling, like Aaron (Lev 10:3), Job (Job 1:21, 2:10) and Hezekiah (Isa 39:8), but with the fatalistic resignation of a weak character. His approach was passive, so that while he submitted himself to the will of God, he would not rouse himself to do it. We should always submit to God's rod of correction, recognising that it also requires active repentance and a change of direction.

SAMUEL ESTABLISHED AS PROPHET (3:19-4:1a)

19 *And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.*

Yahweh was with him

Like Joseph (Gen 39:2) and Moses (Ex 3:12) before him, God was with Samuel and was working out a grand purpose through him. Samuel would become an unstoppable force for good within the nation (as per Rom 8:31). Yet it did not mean life was easy for the youth, as the disaster of Ch 4 will reveal. Like Joseph and Moses, he faced intense challenges, yet God was working through them all to develop Samuel and prepare him for the work ahead.

Let none of his words fall to the ground

This means all of Samuel's prophecies came to pass and were known to be true words from God. This was the test of a true prophet (Deut 18:21-22).

20 *And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.*

A PROPHET LIKE MOSES

It is no accident that Samuel became renowned as a prophet of Yahweh. Of course, it was by divine appointment that he was a prophet, but the young man had also come to pattern his life on the example of Moses, who from the time he was weaned had been a child of destiny like himself (see p32).

Notice once more the similarities between the lives of Samuel and that of his predecessor as God called each of them to be His mouthpiece to the nation:

Samuel (1Sam)	Moses (Ex)
'Yahweh came, and stood, and called ' (3:4)	' God called... out of the midst of the bush' (3:4)
' Samuel, Samuel ' (3:4)	' Moses, Moses. ' (3:4)
'And he answered, Here am I ' (3:4)	'And he said, Here am I. ' (3:4)
'Yahweh was with him ' (3:19)	'Certainly I will be with thee ' (3:12)
'Yahweh... did let none of his words fall to the ground' (3:19)	' I will be with thy mouth , and teach thee what thou shalt say' (4:12)
'Yahweh revealed himself to Samuel' (3:21)	'Yahweh spake unto Moses face to face' (33:11)
Would see 2 sons of the High Priest killed by Yahweh (2:25; 4:11)	Saw the 2 sons of the High Priest killed by Yahweh (Lev 10:1-2)

Right from early on in their prophetic ministry, both men stand as types of the greater Prophet, *'the prophet like unto Moses'* (Acts 3:22, Jn 6:14), who's coming had been spoken of in Deut 18:15-18.

From Dan to Beersheba

The phrase 'from Dan to Beersheba' is an expression found throughout the Bible signifying the entire extent of the land of Israel, from its northernmost point in Dan to its southernmost point in Beersheba. See Jud 20:1; 2Sam 17:11.

Samuel grew famous throughout the entire nation. All that came up to Shiloh to worship took notice of him. He would have been the admiration of expectant pilgrims; the topic of relieved murmurings between the faithful in Israel; the subject of dinner time discussions when they returned home. In his limited sphere of influence, he would have revitalised the aspects of Tabernacle worship in which he could be involved as a young man. His commission from God and established reputation with the people gave him a great opportunity of shining as a light in Israel, and he became a beacon of hope for the nation who had become so deeply enshrouded in the spiritual darkness of v1-3.

21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

Yahweh 'added to appear' (TSK), i.e. he continued to reveal himself to Samuel at Shiloh.

A TYPE OF CHRIST

Both Samuel and Jesus share remarkable similarities in their childhood narratives:

Samuel (1Samuel)	Jesus Christ (Luke)
Miraculous birth - barren mother (1:2)	Miraculous birth - virgin mother (1:27)
Annual visit to Shiloh (1:3)	Annual visit to Jerusalem (2:41)
Raised by unrelated 'father' (Eli)	Raised by unrelated 'father' (Joseph)
The child Samuel grew (2:21)	The child grew (2:40)
In Temple at 12 y/o (Josephus)	Found in Temple at 12 y/o (2:42,49)
The child Samuel grew on (2:26)	Increased in wisdom and stature (2:52)
Favour with Yahweh and with man (2:26)	Favour with God and man (2:52)
The child ministered unto Yahweh (3:1)	I must be about my Father's business (2:49)
God spoke in Samuel's ear (9:15)	God spoke in His Son's ear (Isa 50:4-5)
A prophet like Moses (see box 3:20)	The prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-18)
Ushered in a better priesthood (2:35)	Heralded a better priesthood (Heb 7:11)



Samuel's Story

Year in, year out, Shiloh and its Tabernacle worship had grown steadily more vile. The influence of Hophni and Phinehas plunged the nation deeper and deeper into a spiritual abyss. So when Samuel heard a voice from the Most Holy Place in the dead of night, there was something very ominous about the message it was bringing. The angel of Yahweh had chosen to speak to him - a mere lad - instead of the High Priest. Sure enough, this message would change Samuel's life forever.

Consider the weight of responsibility that fell upon the shoulders of this 12-year-old boy!

- Samuel would have to relay to Eli the divine sentence upon his house.
- It was from this point on that he became God's messenger to the nation.

Throughout the following years, the teenage Samuel learned to apply himself to the things of the Truth and embraced the important lesson of being a **faithful messenger of the things of God**. No matter how difficult the message, Samuel would convey it.

THE STORY OF THE ARK

1 SAMUEL 4-6

THE CAPTURE OF THE ARK (1SAM 4)

In Ch 4, the narrative takes a dramatic turn as the nation is brought to new lows with the death of their High Priest and the loss of the ark of the covenant in battle. Apart from the first verse of Ch 4, which really belongs to and concludes Ch 3, Samuel will not be mentioned in any of the terrible events that unfold in Ch 4-6. The ark takes centre-stage through these chapters, so that they really become 'the story of the ark'.

And yet we can imagine the immense impact these events would have had upon the young man Samuel who, for many years now, had called the ill-fated town of Shiloh his home. Samuel was to witness 'the glory depart' from Israel in Ch 4 - a disaster second to none for the spiritually minded young lad - as well as the burning of Shiloh which would become proverbial throughout the nation's history as the fate of those who neglected Yahweh.

PROPHECY FULFILLED

While the events of this chapter are a striking fulfilment of the prophecy given to Eli regarding the destruction of his lineage (2:30-34), this is not the only prophecy that was fulfilled. It is worth recalling that in the days of Samuel, the 'founding epoch' of Israel's early history under Moses and Joshua were only a few hundred years ago. Just before his death, Moses had been given a prophecy relating to the spiritual future of the nation, and that prophecy finds a fulfilment in the dreadful events of 1Sam 4.

In Deut 31:16-18, Yahweh revealed to Moses that after his death the people would forsake Yahweh and His covenant to follow other gods. Because of this, God would hide His face from them, removing His divine protection and letting their enemies overcome them. This was 'current events' in the days of Samuel, as can be seen from the many similarities below, some of which are borne out in the description of these events in Psalm 78:

Prophecy (Deut 31)	Fulfilment (1Sam 4)
This people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of strangers (v16)	Moved Him to jealousy with their graven images (Psa 78:58)
Break my covenant which I have made with them (v16)	They tempted and provoked the Most High God and kept not His testimonies (Psa 78:56)
I will forsake them I will hide my face from them (v17)	And the ark of God was taken (v11)
They shall be devoured (v17)	Israel was smitten (v10)
Are not these evils come upon us (v17)	Wherefore hath Yahweh smitten us? (v3,13)
God is not among us? (v17)	Glory is departed from Israel (v20)

God did not leave Moses with the hopeless future of his people forsaking their God, and God forsaking His people. Instead, He gave Moses a song to teach Israel in Deuteronomy 32, 'that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel' (Deut 31:19). The song both witnessed to their coming apostasy, but also held out hope of their ultimate salvation (v43).

WAR WITH THE PHILISTINES (4:1b-2)

1-2 *And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.*

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel

This phrase really belongs to the previous chapter, indicating that the word came from God to Samuel, and then from Samuel to the people: *'Yahweh revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Yahweh. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel'* (3:21-4:1).

From this point in the record, Samuel will not be mentioned again until Ch 7:3, after an interlude of 20 years and 7 months (6:1; 7:2).

Now Israel went out against the Philistines

It appears that the Philistines instigated this attack on Israel, because they had marched some 39 km north of Ekron, the northernmost city of Philistia, to encamp at Aphek. This is supported by the Septuagint translation (1 Sam 4:1 LXX):

'The Philistines gathered themselves together against Israel to war; and Israel went out to meet them and encamped at Aben-ezer, and the Philistines encamped in Aphec.'

Aphek was a strategic outpost for the Philistines. To its west lay the Yarkon River, with Aphek situated at the headwaters, and to its east, the hill country of Ephraim. It therefore served as a narrow funnel through which the two southern coastal trade routes converged to pass north to Mount Carmel. Because of its strategic location, Aphek was used as a guard post for the north-south highway by the Egyptians, Turks, Herod the Great and the Crusaders.⁶

The northern infiltration of the Philistines shows how weak Israel had become. To reach Aphek, the Philistines had to cross almost all the territory allotted to Dan. The book of Judges records how that Dan had failed to drive out the Canaanites in the valley, and so had taken territory in the far north (Jud 18). This left the Philistines in the ascendancy over the coastal plain, while Israel retreated to the safety of the hills, away from the Philistine chariots.

THE PHILISTINES

When God gave Israel the Promised Land, He warned them that if they failed to drive out the inhabitants of the Land, they would be thorns in their side (Num 33:55). One such nation Israel failed to drive out were the Philistines (Jud 1:18-19), and so God left them there to test Israel (Jud 3:1-4). They were renowned as 'the uncircumcised' (Jud 14:3; 1Sam 14:6; 17:26), and so epitomised the enemies of the Truth. To them, the battle against Israel was a battle between their gods and Yahweh (Jud 16:24, 1Sam 17:43).

As Samuel grew up, the Philistines were well and truly in the ascendancy. The Illustrated Bible Dictionary comments, *'At this time they probably controlled Esdraelon, the coast plain, the Negeb, and much of the hill-country. They also controlled the distribution of iron, and thus prevented the Israelites from having useful weapons (1Sam 13:19-22).'*

⁶ www.bibleplaces.com/aphek

Eben-ezer

Eben-ezer Heb *eben haezer* H72 = 'stone of the help' (Str, BDB).

This name would not be appointed until some 20 years later, in Ch 7:12. Its inclusion here, however, highlights Israel's ignorance of their own Stone of Help. It is an allusion back to the Song of Moses in Deut 32:18: *'of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.'* As the record will show, Israel went into war confident in their own ability, rather than the Rock of their salvation (Deut 32:15).

Aphek ... the Philistines put themselves in array

Aphek Heb *apheq* H663 = 'fortress' (Str).

There are several 'fortresses' in the land with the name of Aphek. This one lay in the plain of Sharon, about 40km north of the Philistine territory. The Philistines are portrayed as a well-trained military, marching out in formation from their fortress of Aphek.

THE ARK BROUGHT INTO BATTLE (4:3-9)

3 *And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.*

The elders, who were supposed to be the spiritual role models of the nation, should have known the answer to their own question. As Psa 78:58-61 reveals, they had a problem with idolatry. In fact, Jud 10:6-7 shows that even in recent times they had served the gods of the Philistines, and so, in an act of poetic justice, God had given them into their hands.

Wherefore hath Yahweh smitten us...?

The Israelites felt confused; how could they - God's own people - lose in battle to the uncircumcised? They realised that it was *Yahweh* who had smitten them before their enemies. The Philistines were merely His instrument of punishment. The elders sought desperately for an answer, and they found their solution in a box:

Let us fetch the ark...

'Such an event as the removal of the ark from the sanctuary, and its presence in the camp, had never happened since the settlement of Israel in Canaan.' (Edersheim, *OT History*, p419).

That, when it cometh among us, it may save us

Notice where the elders placed their confidence. They sought the ark so that **it** could save them. Bro Harry Tennant explains that their sin *'lay in the belief that the ark itself, as distinct from the presence of God, would save them'* (The Man David, p115). They thought there was something about the ark itself that would help them overcome their enemies. To them, the ark had become no more than a good-luck charm - an idol.

Historically, by God's appointment, the ark had led the people into battle (Num 10:35, Josh 6:6). But it was intended as a **symbol** of God's presence in the battle; it was **God Himself** who defeated the enemy (Deut 31:3). Accordingly, when God was not among a band of Israelites who went to conquer some Canaanites in Num 14, this was represented by His ark

remaining behind (Num 14:42-44). The ark was never intended as an end in itself or an item to be worshipped; it was a reminder of God and His presence.

Symbols are an important and powerful part of our worship, as they serve as physical demonstrations and reminders of an inner change of heart. There are a few symbols/rituals that we have been given by Christ to observe:

1. Baptism
2. The emblems
3. Head coverings

These symbols are important, but they are important because of **what they represent**, not because of what they are in themselves. Israel's problem was that they placed more importance on the symbol than that which it was intended to symbolise. God finds no pleasure in such worship (Amos 5:21-23), and as the Israelites were to find out on this occasion, it is ultimately fatal to the worshipper.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

This is the central theme of Ch 4:1-7:2. The record will revolve around what happens to this ark, and how its treatment by individuals determines their destiny. As such, the theme is worth highlighting:

- 4:3, 4(x2), 5, 6, 11, 13, 17, 18, 21, 22
- 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8(x3), 10(x2), 11
- 6:2, 3, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21
- 7:1(x2), 2

4-5 *So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.*

Notice the official title given to the ark by the narrator. The elders had sought 'the ark of the covenant of Yahweh' in v3, yet the narrator adds a few more details to show just whose ark they are treating like this:

- **Of Yahweh of hosts** - The ark belonged to Yahweh of armies (see note 1:11, p26).
- **Which dwelleth between the Cherubim** - It was from His throne between the Cherubim that God ruled over Israel (Num 7:89, 2Sam 6:2; Psa 99:1).

Despite the majesty of the One who rode upon the Cherubim, Israel now presumes to move the ark at their own whim. They had completely underestimated the God who rode upon the Cherubim, thinking they could drive Him to do as they pleased.

Hophni and Phinehas

See comment 1:3, p20-21. Of all the people in Israel to bear the ark, Hophni and Phinehas would have had to have been two of the least suitable characters. But given these two men did not have a spiritual bone in their body, it is not surprising that they agreed to carry the ark from Shiloh. God, on the other hand, had designs on the fate of these two men and the ark which they carried. He was about to orchestrate an event so devastating that the 'ears of

every one that heareth it shall tingle' - an event comparable to the destruction of Solomon's temple, and the carrying away of His people into Babylon (2Ki 21:12-15; Jer 19:3-9).

All Israel shouted with a great shout

Shouted Heb *rua* H7321 = 'To mar, esp. by breaking. Figuratively to split the ears with sound, to shout' (Str).

Shout Heb *teruah* H8643 = 'clamour, i.e. acclamation of joy or battle cry' (Str).

The people failed to see anything wrong with the actions of the elders, and so condoned it with a shout of such volume 'that the earth rang again'. The nation shouted not just to express their joy, but to strike fear into the Philistine camp in the form of a battle cry.

6-8 *And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.*

Heard the noise

This new jubilation in the Israelite camp generated significant consternation. After all, they had just suffered a great loss in battle. The Philistines no doubt sent spies across the short distance to investigate, who learned that the ark had come into the camp. The Israelite battle cry worked, striking fear into the hearts of the Philistines, who cried, 'Woe unto us!'

The Ark of Yahweh ... these are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness

The legendary events of the Exodus had made their way into the Promised Land and beyond. In the time of Rahab, Jericho had trembled at the coming of the Israelite armies because of the reports that preceded them (Josh 2:9-10), and now, 300 years later, Israel's neighbours were still terrorised by these accounts. (Cp Ex 15:14 in relation to the Philistines.)

It may seem at first that the Philistines are confused, and that they believed the 10 plagues occurred in the Wilderness rather than in Egypt, however the text has been slightly mistranslated. The phrase 'all the plagues' is comprised of two Hebrew words:

Heb *kol* H3605 = 'all, the whole' (Str).

Heb *makkah* H4347 = 'blow, wound, slaughter' (Str) (diff. word to 'plagues' in Exodus).

On this basis, the Cambridge Commentary says the phrase would be better translated: '*with an utter overthrow*'; and then comments: '*The word used is the same as that rendered slaughter in 1Sam 4:10, and the allusion is to the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, the shores of which are called wilderness in Ex 13:20, not to the ten plagues, for which a different word is used in Exodus.*'

The Philistines refer to 'the gods' that smote Egypt - they superimposed their polytheistic world view onto Israel's God, and viewed this as a contest between the two sets of gods.

9 *Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.*

Be strong

Despair can lead to despondency or determination, and in this case, the Philistines resolved that they would not succumb to despondency. Driven by the fear of becoming slaves, and the prospect of Israelite revenge for decades of Philistine oppression (Jud 10:7-8; 13:1), they threw themselves unreservedly into the battle, as their next phrase shows:

Quit yourselves like men, and fight.

What is most interesting about this passage is that the call of the Philistines becomes an exhortation to the ecclesia for vigilance and bravery in the battle for the Truth! In 1Cor 16:13, Paul uses this battle cry of the Philistines to encourage the Corinthian ecclesia to stay alert.

THE ARK TAKEN (4:10-11)

10-11 *And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.*

The losses for Israel came to a total of 34,000 men (v2,10). But the real disaster lay in the loss of the ark of God. Right from its inception as a nation, Israel had revolved around the presence of God which rested upon the ark. Their four-square encampment in the Wilderness had been designed to teach them this, for at the centre of the 12 tribal camps were the Levites, at the centre of the Levitical camp was the Tabernacle, at the centre of the Tabernacle was the Most Holy Place, and in the centre of the Most Holy Place resided the ark, over which dwelt the glory of God. All this was designed to teach Israel that God wanted to dwell among them and be their God, and that they should be His people (Ex 25:8,22; Lev 26:11-12). God had then visually demonstrated this to Israel by filling the Tabernacle with His radiant glory upon the day of its completion in Ex 40:34-35. But now the ark was gone, and the remainder of the chapter will show its devastating implications.

Hophni and Phinehas, were slain

This was the sign of veracity for both the prophecy of the man of God (2:34) and the confirmation by Samuel (3:11-12). The removal of Eli's line had begun.

DEATH OF ELI (4:12-18)

12 *And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.*

Ran a man of Benjamin

All armies would have had professional runners to convey news of the battle or send for supplies or reinforcements (cp 2Ki 11:4,6,19 'guard' KJV = 'runners' YLT; 2Sam 18:19,21).

The same day

An impressive feat considering it is 36km through mountainous terrain from Ebenezer to Shiloh. No doubt he was driven by the pain and fear of what he had just witnessed.

With his clothes rent and with earth upon his head

These were signs of deep mourning (Gen 37:34; Josh 7:6; 2Sam 1:2, 2Sam 15:32).

13-14 *And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.*

Upon a seat by the wayside watching

Seat Heb *kisseh* H3768 = ‘a throne’ (Str); s/w ‘seat’ 1:9.

Perched upon a throne once more, Eli sat ‘by the gate looking along the way’ (LXX), desperate for news of the battle. Blind as he was, it was not until he heard the entire city of Shiloh lamenting, that he enquired as to its cause (v14).

Eli matches Isaiah’s description of Israel’s watchmen: ‘His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are strong of appetite which know not to be satisfied, and they are shepherds that cannot understand.’ (Isa 56:10-11). Eli was blind to the evil around him and dumb in that he gave no warning to Israel.

For his heart trembled for the ark of God.

Despite his failure in correcting his sons and honouring God’s sacrifices, Eli still had a deep-seated respect for his God and the ark which heralded His presence. He was upset by its removal, but too weak to do anything about it when his sons had come to collect it.

All the city cried out

Cried out Heb *za’aq* H2199 = ‘to shriek’ (Str).

All the city was emotionally invested in the battle happening only a day’s march away from them. When the messenger returned in his dishevelled state, everyone was plunged into a bitter mourning. The shout of joy had become a shriek of despair because of misplaced trust. This was the same ‘cry’ that had reverberated through the times of the Judges – on each occasion the result of God’s punishment for Israel’s sin (s/w Jud 3:9, 3:15, 6:6-7, 10:10).

15-16 *Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?*

Were dim, he could not see

Dim Heb *qum* H6965 = ‘were set’ (Camb. Comm.), ‘stood’ (TSK). Diff. Heb to 3:2. Heb *qum* also used of blindness 1Ki 14:4.

Eli’s sight had worsened from Ch 3:2 when they ‘began to be dim/dull’, so that he was now essentially completely blind. In this, Eli stood in stark contrast to Moses:

Eli	Moses
‘Eli’s... eyes began to wax dim , that he could not see’ (3:2)... ‘Now Eli’s... eyes were dim , that he could not see’ (4:15)	‘Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim , nor his natural force abated.’ (Deut 34:7)
Eli heard lots but did nothing (about his sons’ wickedness) (1Sam 2:22,23,24)	‘Mighty in words and deeds ’ (Acts 7:22) He taught to ‘hear... and do’ (Deut 6:3)

As Samuel witnessed the failing of his contemporary mentor Eli, he looked for inspiration to the greater example of Moses.

17 *And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.*

Notice the crescendo of importance, with each blow heavier than the last: We fled... many died... your sons... the ark. The last was more than Eli could take.

18 *And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.*

When he made mention of the ark

From the prophecy revealed to Samuel, Eli would have prepared himself for the death of his sons. It was the loss of the ark, however, that the old man dreaded.

And his neck brake

This was a bloodless death and was therefore of the greatest significance for Eli, who had been told that the iniquity of his house would not be purged by blood.

Under the law, a firstborn ass either had to be redeemed (by the blood of a lamb), or it had to have its neck broken, and thus die a bloodless death (Ex 34:19-20). The ass represented Israel - either as a faithful, hard-working beast (Gen 49:14) who was essentially part of the family (Ex 23:12; Deut 5:14; 28:1), or as a stubborn, rebellious and lust-filled wild ass (Jer 2:24; Hos 8:9). The lesson for Israel was that they had to make a choice - either they could accept the redeeming blood of the Lamb (Christ Jn 1:29; 1Pet 1:18-19) or reject it and die a hopeless death (which is what they did - Mt 27:25). In such a case, the bloodless death illustrated that there was no hope of redemption, which came by blood (Lev 17:11).

It was in this manner that Eli died. He represented his people - a rebellious ass who had flaunted God's ways and warnings. There remained no more sacrifice for his house; only 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment' (1Sam 3:14; Heb 10:26-29).

An old man, and heavy

Eli was a large man who had grown fat indulging in the offerings of the people (2:29, cp Deut 32:15).

BIRTH OF ICHABOD: THE GLORY DEPARTED (4:19-22)

19-20 *And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.*

And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife

Brief though her mention is in the Bible story, this short episode in the life of Phinehas' wife is an incredible testimony to her faith. Like her father-in-law, her chief concern was related to the ark, over and above her husband. In fact, being married to Phinehas, who was not a nice man (2:12,16), she probably endured a horrible life. But through it all she maintained her faith in Yahweh.

21-22 *And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.*

Ichabod

Ichabod Heb *ly-kabod* H350 = 'no glory' (BDB, Str).

The scale of this disaster cannot be overstated, and the helpless, fading cries of the young mother show a woman in complete despair. Since the days of Moses, the glory of Yahweh had always rested over the mercy seat, between the Cherubim. As Phinehas' wife lay there dying, she knew that her husband would not return, and neither would her father-in-law. But what about the ark? How could Israel survive without their God? Her chief distress was that the ark of God was gone, and with it, His glory.

The glory is departed

One can only imagine the devastation that must have been felt by the young man Samuel. Had not this very threat been Moses' greatest concern those many years earlier at Sinai (Ex 33:15)? And now it had happened! The ark was gone, and with it, the God who rode upon it.

THE FATE OF SHILOH & THE TABERNACLE

We are not told in 1 Samuel what happened to Shiloh, but later Scriptures and recent excavations tell a sombre story. Psa 78 indicates that following the slaughter of the 30,000 footmen of 1Sam 4:10, the Philistines marched on Shiloh and burned it to the ground (Psa 78:58-64)⁷. Shiloh became proverbial as a standing witness of God's judgements: '*Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel*' (Jer 7:12-14; cp 26:6).

The Tabernacle itself, however, survived the Philistine invasion (2Chr 1:3). It is probable that before the Philistines reached Shiloh, Samuel orchestrated its dismantling and transportation out of harm's way. It was later to be found at Nob (1Sam 22:1,6), then Gibeon (1Chr 16:39), and then finally brought Jerusalem by Solomon (1Ki 8:4).



Samuel's Story

Unmentioned as he is in the awful conflict of Ch 4, the young man Samuel - probably approaching 20 years of age - would have witnessed it all from afar:

- He had heard the alarming report that the Philistines were on the march.
- He had learned of the devastating defeat of the Israelites, including the death of 4000 of his countrymen.
- He watched in horror as Hophni and Phinehas left for Philistia with the ark in tow.
- And shortly afterwards he learned that Israel had fallen, and the ark was gone.

From there, events must have taken place in quick succession. When the news reached Eli, he fell to his death. Samuel may have even witnessed this. He had no time to grieve,

⁷ Notice that whereas 1Sam 14:3 seems to suggest that Shiloh was still in operation in the days of Eli's grandson Ahiah, Barnes and Cambridge commentaries suggest that the phrase 'Yahweh's priest in Shiloh' is a description of Eli, who had been famous as Yahweh's priest in Shiloh, not Ahiah.

however, for the Philistines would already be halfway to Shiloh. Immediately, he set to work packing up all that could be transported of the Tabernacle. A short while later, he would have learned of the death of Phinehas' wife. The name of her son said it all: the glory had departed from Israel. What a bombshell this must have been for Samuel, for it was from over the ark that Yahweh had spoken to him in Ch 3.

But from the circumstances of Ch 4, Samuel would have learned the lesson of **trusting in Yahweh**, rather than a person, place or thing, all of which had failed.

THE ARK IN PHILISTIA (1SAM 5)

The Philistines, having conquered their Israelite foes, marched back with their trophy - the golden box in which the Israelites had placed their confidence. The next two chapters of 1Sam will continue 'the story of the ark' that had begun in Ch 4. But as they would shortly discover, it was now the Philistine's turn to learn a lesson.

Israel's problem had been that they placed *too much* emphasis on the symbol of the ark itself, rather than the God whom it represented. But God did not just disregard the symbol because of their failure to appreciate its true significance, so when the Philistines began to mock it, His vengeance upon them was swift.

GOD'S SYMBOLS & RITUALS

It is fascinating to see the way in which God used the very same object to teach two almost opposing lessons:

- To those who felt the symbol/ritual had intrinsic power to impart righteousness or to save, He taught that it's just a box, and **of itself it can do nothing.**
- But to those who disrespected His symbol/ritual, He taught that even though it might just be a box, it is *His* box - *His* symbol/ritual - and so **it must be honoured.**

In both cases, too much reliance upon a symbol/ritual, or disrespect of the symbol/ritual, could lead to death, and even though the symbols and rituals have changed, this lesson has not. Many a church has stumbled upon this lesson in the centuries since Samuel:

- Catholicism and Orthodoxy have placed too much emphasis on external ritual.
- Evangelical and Pentecostal churches have lost the sanctity of God's Truth.

Both stand as powerful reminders to the ecclesia that either extreme is wrong. God seeks worship in spirit and truth, with appropriate respect for the symbols and rituals he has given.

THE ARK AT ASHDOD (5:1-7)

To the Philistines, this was very much a religious battle (see box p65). It was not simply a battle between Philistine and Israelite warriors, but a contest between the two nations' gods.

As such, their first move was to bring the ark into the house of their god Dagon in Ashdod and place the small box in front of the towering statue of the idol.

Dagon had a human head and torso, with a fish's tail from the waist down. He was the god of corn and grain, seeds and vegetation, and was their chief god. The Philistines therefore saw this as a contest between their chief god and the greatest of the Israelite gods (cp 4:8).

But all did not go as planned. The morning after they put the ark in Dagon's house, the Philistine priests found him face down, prostrate before the ark (v3)!

Evidently in denial as to the cause of the fall, the Philistine priests set Dagon back in his place. But the next morning they found him face down again; this time with his hands and head cut off, lying on the threshold (v4)! The head a symbol of intellect, and the hands, of activity. Dagon had been shown to be without intelligence and without ability - he therefore failed the test of a god (Isa 41:23; 46:5-7).

After comparing Yahweh, who created Israel and can tell the future (Isa 46:3-4,10), to the useless idols who cannot even move by themselves or answer their worshippers (v7), Isaiah then makes a fascinating allusion to the Philistine battle cry:

'Be strong, and quit yourselves like men , O ye Philistines... and fight.' (1Sam 4:9)	'Remember this, and shew yourselves men ' (Isa 46:8)
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Isaiah's point was that Israel, like the Philistines, were going to have to show themselves to be men of valour and fight, because they weren't going to get any help from their gods!

Because Dagon's hands and head had lain on the doorstep, from this time on his priests would abstain from treading on it out of reverence to their idol (5:5). It was as if there was something about the threshold itself that had made Dagon fall, and so this practice amounted to a denial that it was the God of the ark who had done it. Much later in Scripture, the prophet Zephaniah condemns this superstitious practice of '*leaping over the threshold*' that had been adopted within Judah, having been borrowed from the Philistines (Zeph 1:9).

As a punishment for their lack of reverence, God smote the people of Ashdod with emerods (v6). There is some debate as to exactly what these were, with the NIV Study Bible describing them as '*tumours in the groin*', and others describing them as 'haemorrhoids' (Darby, LITV). Whatever they may have been, they must have been both debilitating and shameful. This was one of the loathsome skin diseases of Egypt, threatened against Israel if they were disobedient (Deut 28:27).

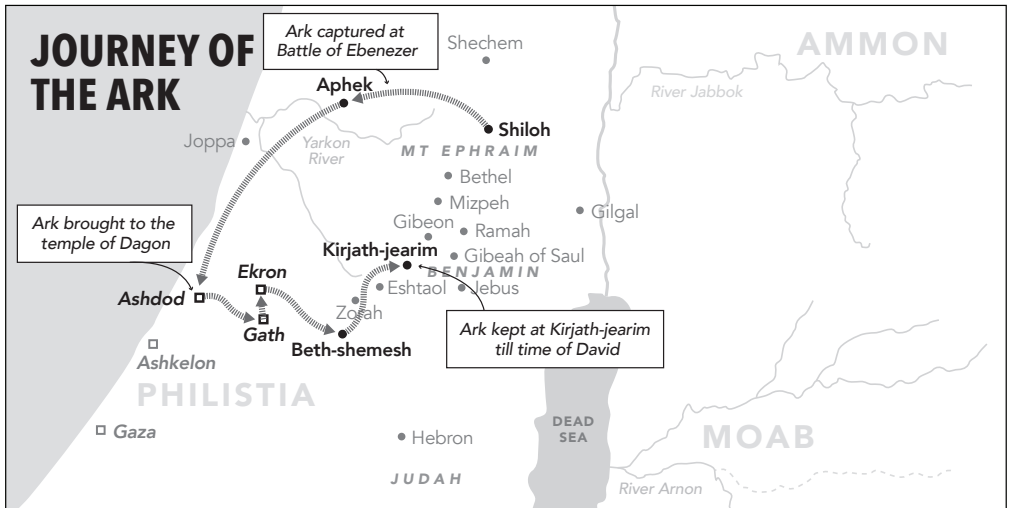
The land was devastated at the same time by a plague of mice (6:5). As the god of vegetation and grain, Dagon was exposed as completely powerless in this situation, when all he had to look after was destroyed by Israel's God.

The phrases '*the hand of Yahweh*' and '*His hand*' occur throughout this section in 5:6,7,9,11; 6:3,5,9 (and cp 7:13). When Dagon's hands were broken off (v4), Yahweh was showing the Philistines who was the real God. God's triumph over Dagon would again be seen when Samson brought his Temple in Gaza crashing to the ground (Jud 16:21-23,30).

THE ARK AT GATH (5:8-9) & EKRON (5:10-12)

There were five major Philistine cities: Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Gaza and Ashkelon (Josh 13:3). Their lords were now to see the population of three cities plagued with emerods and their crops destroyed by mice.

Finally, as the ark came to Ekron, they cried out in indignation in v10 at the passing on of the ark to their city, and then in v12 they cried out in despair. The Ekronites appealed to their lords to send the ark back to Israel. But still, the plague struck their town just as it had with Ashdod and Gath.



THE RETURN OF THE ARK (1SAM 6)

THE COUNSEL OF THE PHILISTINE WISE MEN (6:1-9)

The ark spent seven months in Philistine territory (6:1), while the inhabitants struggled with the devastating plagues of emerods and mice. Still the lords doubted Israel's God. Like Pharaoh before them, they had hardened their hearts, refusing to admit defeat (6:6).

Finally, the people demanded urgent action, and asked the priests and diviners for help. Instead of turning and serving Israel's God, who had clearly demonstrated His power, they sought the Philistine diviners who practiced magic.

The advice they received was a mixture of superstition and deceit. They were instructed to make golden 'images' of the emerods and mice to send back as a trespass offering. According to Ellicott's commentary, this was a popular pagan custom to represent the sufferings they had endured. Even though they were only instructed to send five of each, so desperate were the people to rid themselves of the ark and God of Israel, that they made far more images of the mice - one for each of their fenced cities and country villages (v18). Their desperation was much like the Egyptians, who pressed gifts into the hands of the Israelites, speeding along their departure (Ex 12:35-36).

The priests and diviners recognised Yahweh's power in sending the ark back to the Israelites with a trespass offering, but they still doubted His connection to the plagues. Hence, they set a test to see if it was really a 'chance that happened to us' (6:9).

THE ARK RETURNS TO BETH-SHEMESH (6:10-18)

Acting on the priests' instructions, the Philistines sent back the ark together with the golden images on a newly made cart, drawn by two milk cows (v11-12). When they were released, the cows set off down the highway to Beth-shemesh. They had been separated from their calves so that under normal circumstances they would have turned back to Philistia to be with their calves. But against nature, they went down the highway, '*bellowing as they went*' (6:12). The Philistines followed the cart all the way to Beth-shemesh and then returned to Ekron (6:12,16).

The cart came to rest in a field belonging to a man called Joshua - meaning 'Yah saves.' Yahweh's salvation had returned to the Land. Beth-shemesh was a Levitical city in the tribe of Judah (6:15; Josh 21:13-16), so the inhabitants would have been well acquainted with the laws surrounding the ark. They received the ark with great joy and offered a burnt offering with the cows and the wood of the cart (6:13-15).

SLAUGHTER AT BETH-SHEMESH (6:19-20)

The joy in Beth-shemesh was short-lived, however, when there was a devastating slaughter of the inhabitants because they looked inside the ark (6:19). A number of translations indicate the total number of men killed was actually 70 (e.g. ESV, Darby, YLT). The Cambridge Commentary notes there is evidently a corruption of the manuscripts here, for the town of Beth-shemesh cannot have held 50,000 residents, and that it seems best with Josephus and some of the Hebrew manuscripts of this passage to omit 50,000 altogether.

The resounding lesson of these two chapters is well summarised in the following quotation:

'Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are counselled to treat with respect the means of their salvation: "of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God ..." (Heb 10:29). If God destroyed uncircumcised Philistines who paid no regard to His supremacy, how will He deal with His covenant people who turn away from Him?' (Bro M Ashton, Samuel the Seer, p73).



Samuel's Story

In the months following the ark's acquisition by the Philistines, Samuel would have been keenly awaiting news of its whereabouts. Although he no doubt understood that God was teaching Israel that it was but a powerless box, he was also aware that the ark belonged to God. He must have been unsurprised, therefore, to hear of the humbling of the Philistines and their gods before it.

The journey of the ark would have served to reinforce two things:

- His appreciation of **the respect with which one must approach God**, and
- The **uselessness of human idols**.

Both lessons would pave the way for the national reform he would call in the next chapter.

SAMUEL & ALL ISRAEL



1 SAMUEL 7

SAMUEL & ALL ISRAEL (1SAM 7)

After two decades of silence on the life of Samuel, he returns to the record in Ch 7 as he leads a great national reform. For many years now he had served as God's prophet to the nation (3:20-4:1), but it was through the events of this chapter that he would commence his work of judging them as well (7:5-6,15). Through the national reformation of Ch 7, Samuel would seek to bring Israel out of the deadly cycle of the Judges and initiate a lasting change.

THE ARK AT KIRJATHJEARIM (6:21-7:2)

6:21 *And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.* **7:1-2** *And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.*

Kirjathjearim

Kirjathjearim Heb *qiryath yeariym* H7157= 'city of forests' (Str, BDB).

When the land was distributed between the tribes, Kirjathjearim was noted as a significant landmark on the border of Judah and Benjamin (Josh 15:9; 18:15). It was originally named Baalah (Josh 15:9) or Kirjath-baal (Josh 18:14), and it was from here that David brought up the ark the first time he attempted to bring it to Zion at the beginning of his reign (1Chr 13:6).

The House of Abinadab

Abinadab lived in the hill (Heb *gibah*, translated 'Gibeah' in 2Sam 6:1-2) near Kirjathjearim. We know of the names of two of his sons, Uzzah and Ahio, who drove the cart for David when he made plans to move the ark with tragic consequences (2Sam 6:3).

The ark abode in Kirjathjearim

The ark could not be taken to Shiloh as it had been forsaken by God and burned by the Philistines (p72). It appears that it was all but forgotten about by the nation during this period, along with the God whose presence it represented, as they again fell into idolatry (7:4).

This prolonged stay of the ark in Kirjathjearim deeply troubled one young man when he heard of it decades later. Out on the hills in Bethlehem Ephratah, David heard of the ark and he writes: '*we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood* (Heb *jaar* = 'forest', singular of *jaarim*).' (Psa 132:6).

The time was long; for it was twenty years

This verse is not stating that the ark remained at Kirjathjearim for a total of 20 years, but rather that *while* the ark was at Kirjathjearim, 20 years elapsed, at the end of which period the children of Israel mourned after Yahweh. The ark itself remained at Kirjathjearim for much longer than 20 years, as depicted on the timeline (p9):

- All the judgeship of Samuel (1Sam 7:2)
- All the reign of Saul - 40 years (Acts 13:21)
- At least 7.5 years of the reign of David
 - David reigned 7.5 years in Hebron before he took Jerusalem (2Sam 5:5; 1Ki 2:11)
 - This is where he came to collect it (2Sam 6:2-3,12; Josh 15:9)

Consequently, *'twenty years was not... the whole duration of the Ark's sojourn at Kirjath-jearim, but the time that elapsed before the reformation now to be recorded.'* (Camb Comm).

Throughout this twenty-year period, Samuel would have been tirelessly working in the background, converting the hearts of people. This effect was not immediate, as Samuel sought to educate a nation that had so long been misled by the priesthood of Eli.

And all the house of Israel

Notice the sense of completion about Samuel's work of reformation in this chapter:

- It involved **all** the house of Israel lamenting (v2)
- Samuel addressed **all** the house of Israel (v3)
- The reformation was to affect **all** of their heart (v3)
- Samuel gathered **all** Israel (v5)
- Samuel judged Israel **all** his life (v15)
- He judged Israel in **all** the places of his circuit (v16)
- There was some reprieve from their oppressors **all** his life (v13)

Samuel's work as a judge was thus markedly different from his predecessors in that his scope involved the entire nation. Throughout the remainder of his life, his influence was to be felt across all Israel (10:20,24,25; 11:7,14-15; 12:1,18,19; 25:1).

Lamented after Yahweh

They are now finally seeking after God, rather than just a box (cp 4:4-5), so that now God can work with them. Israel had had to learn that *'God that made the world and all things therein'* cannot simply be limited to *'gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device'* and that, quite to the contrary, He *'commandeth all men everywhere to repent.'* (Acts 17: 24-30).

NATIONAL REFORM IN MIZPEH (7:3-6)

3-4 *And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, if ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.*

If ye do return unto Yahweh with all your hearts

Reformation, be it personal or communal, must begin with a desire to change. The people were going to have to give up habits and addictions in the idol worship they were accustomed to, so there needed to be a strong desire to return to God first. Samuel would always be very clear that for a reformation to be successful, *all* of our heart is required (12:20,24).

Put away

Put away Heb *su̇r* H5493 = 'to turn off' (Str).

Baalim and Ashtaroth,

The people of Israel served a great many false gods during this period, but these two main ones come from Jud 2:13 where it first records them going astray.

Baalim Heb *ba'al* H1168, same as *ba'al* H1167 = 'lord' (BDB). *Baalim* is plural of *baal*.

If you trace the worship of Baal back through history, it clearly finds its origin in the Babylonian sun-god 'Bel', the 'lord' of all the gods.

Ashtaroth Heb *ashtaroth* H6252, plural of Heb *ashterah* H6251 = 'increase' (relating to fertility) (Str).

Similar to Baal, Ashtaroth traces back to Babylonian mythology - to the moon-goddess 'Ishtar', the goddess of love, fertility and war.

Together Baal and Ashtaroth were the head male and female gods of Babylon. Baalim and Ashtaroth are the plural forms, referring to all the false head deities whose worship varied slightly in each locality, but all had the same origin. Samuel again refers to them at the conclusion of his sole judgeship in Ch 12:10.

Idol worship in the Judges: After the death of Joshua, the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth became a perennial problem for Israel. It didn't take long: in the generation after Joshua, Israel turned to serve Baal and Ashtaroth (Jud 3:7). A little later, God told Gideon to rid his father's house from idol worship (Jud 6:25 'grove' = 'Asherah' ESV). Again, in the days of Jephthah, Israel turned to both gods (Jud 10:6). Because of this recurrent idolatry, God gave them over to their enemies (1Sam 12:10).

Idol worship in the Kings: So comprehensive was Samuel's reform that there is no more mention of Baal worship in Israel until the days of Ahab and Jezebel (1Ki 16:31). Under this wicked pair, Israel again followed Baal and Ashtaroth (1Ki 18:19 'groves' = 'Asherah' ESV). The evil Manasseh of Judah undid all the reforms of his father Hezekiah and erected altars to them also (2Ki 21:3). Before sending them into exile, God said of Israel,

'They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal' (2Ki 17:16 NIV)

Yahweh's view of idolatry: God had commanded Israel not to worship idols (Ex 20:3; Deut 5:7) even to the point of avoiding mentioning a false god's name (Ex 23:13). To prevent compromise, they were warned not to intermarry with the pagan nations and to shun practices that might be construed as pagan worship (Lev 20:23; 2Ki 17:15; Ezek 11:12).

THE IDOLS IN OUR LIVES

We have many distractions in this modern world, and these distractions are designed to take our attention and focus. Some of these distractions may be innocent, whilst others may not. Even the innocent ones, when taken to excess, can take our time and resources away from God. We must be careful not to entwine ourselves with the idols of this world, that lead us to a path of destruction, but should instead remove and replace these idols to dedicate our time to our God and the work of the Truth,

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' 1Pet 2:9 ESV

Think about some of the distractions you may have in your life. How can you remove these distractions and replace them with something positive, that will help your relationship with God?

And served Yahweh only

Only Heb *bad* H905 = 'separation' (Str).

Israel turned from their idol worship and separated themselves unto God. Being a jealous God, there was no room for dual service. We too have been called to be separate to God (1Pet 1:15-16; Lev 20:26).

5-6 *And Samuel said, gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, we have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.*

Mizpeh

Mizpeh Heb *mitspeh* H4708 = 'watchtower' (Str).

Mizpeh was evidently a town of considerable elevation so that it provided a vantage point over the surrounding territory. It was situated in the tribal allotment of Benjamin (Josh 18:26-28 - see map p6) and is not to be confused with the Mizpeh of Gilead, up in the northeast of the land (Jud 10:17; 11:11). Mizpeh was another central town to the nation, alongside Shiloh, and provided a suitable gathering point when there was an issue of national importance on a number of occasions in this period:

- To deal with the atrocity concerning the Levite's concubine (Jud 20:1; 21:1).
- When Saul was selected as king (1Sam 10:17).

I will pray for you unto Yahweh

This would not be the only time that Samuel would pray on behalf of the people, but it would introduce Samuel to the nation in his capacity as an intercessor.

SAMUEL THE INTERCESSOR

An intercessor is someone who pleads to God on behalf of others. To do this requires both an empathy for those on whose behalf one is pleading, as well as an understanding of the requirements of the God to whom he pleads (Heb 2:17). Samuel had both.

He therefore interceded for the nation on multiple occasions, sometimes on his own instigation (1Sam 7:5) and other times at the nation's request (7:8,9; 12:19). At these times he pleaded for God's mercy upon Israel, but at other times he expressed his serious displeasure or concern with their decisions (8:6). Samuel prayed for Saul after his rejection (15:11), because he was deeply upset that God had rejected him (15:35; 16:1). So committed was Samuel to praying to God on behalf of the people that he considered it a sin if he were to stop doing that on a regular basis (12:23)!

Intercession was part of Samuel's daily life, and he therefore goes down in Scripture as one of the greatest intercessors of all time, alongside Moses (Jer 15:1 cp 7:16; Psa 99:6).

While Samuel's work as an intercessor does point forward to Christ's work in interceding on our behalf (Isa 53:12; Heb 7:25), it is not enough for us to simply observe Samuel's admirable example and be thankful for Christ's intercessory work. Paul makes it very clear in 1Tim 2:1 that we all have a role to perform in interceding on behalf of our brothers and sisters - a work which Samuel regarded as his constant duty.

Drew water, and poured it out before Yahweh

Throughout scripture there are several references to the pouring out of water or oneself as being emptied and learning to rely on God, see below:

Character	Quote	Reference
David	Psa 22:14	I am poured out like water
Jerusalem	Lam 2:19	Arise... pour out thine heart like water before the face of Yahweh.
Israel	Psa 62:8	Trust in Him... ye people... pour out your hearts before Him.
Hannah	1Sam 1:15	I have poured out my soul before Yahweh.

The people had recognised their sins and are symbolically pouring out their hearts to Yahweh, both in contrition for past failings, and in openness to bringing God into their lives once more. Samuel demonstrates this with the pouring out of water before God, a physical demonstration of an inward change - not dissimilar to the practise of baptism that would come into effect much later.

And fasted on that day

On the Day of Atonement, God instructed Israel to 'afflict your souls' (Lev 16:29). The denial of food was one way of afflicting themselves, so that fasting came to be a tradition for the Jews on that day. It expressed their humiliation and contrition for their sin, but also their desire for God to take note and help them.

We have sinned against Yahweh

No reform can be successful without an open, honest confession to God of exactly what we have done (1Jn 1:9; Prov 28:13).

And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh

This indicates that it was here in Mizpeh that Samuel started judging the people. We are told in Ch 4:18 that Eli judged Israel for 40 years up until his death. It seems the next 20 years were occupied by Samson's judgeship while Samuel tried in the background to educate the

nation through his work as a prophet. Finally, after Samson's death, with all Israel gathered at Mizpeh, Samuel begins to judge them as a God-fearing nation.

It would seem also that this assembly lasted for some time as the Philistines had time to muster their army before it dispersed (1Sam 7:7).

SAMUEL'S ACTIONS

Throughout this chapter the actions of Samuel can be seen as he busily went about his priestly duties - a striking contrast to his predecessor Eli who we read of as always sitting (1:9, 4:13,18). Note all the actions of Samuel in this chapter:

- v3: Samuel spake
- v5: Samuel said
- v5: Samuel prayed
- v6: Samuel judged
- v9: Samuel took
- v9: Samuel cried
- v10: Samuel offered
- v12: Samuel took
- v15: Samuel judged
- v16: Samuel went
- v16: Samuel judged
- v17: Samuel judged
- v17: Samuel built

We would do well to take the example of Samuel in this regard, that we should be ever active in the Truth, and in the service of God (1Cor 15:58).

THE PHILISTINES ATTACK (7:7-8)

7-8 *And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.*

For forty years the children of Israel had been oppressed by the Philistines (Jud 13:1). This would have been marked by awful battles such as that at Ebenezer in 1Sam 4, as well as terrifying raids in which they would have ambushed the Israelites and looted their villages. So when, on this occasion, the Philistines decide to use this national gathering at Mizpeh as an opportunity to attack, the people are petrified.

This was a test for the nation who had just dedicated themselves to Yahweh, to see how their faith would hold and who they would turn to in their time of need.

Cease not to cry unto Yahweh our God for us, that he will save us

The Philistine invasion was not the response that the people had expected to their repentance. But unlike previous occasions, instead of resorting to idols of wood and stone, or trusting in themselves, they looked to Samuel to approach God on their behalf.

Turning to Yahweh does not preclude trials from our life; instead, trials are given to help mould and shape disciples into worthy vessels (Isa 64:8; Heb 12:5-7).

VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF EBENEZER (7:9-12)

9-10 *And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against*

Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

Samuel took a sucking lamb

Lit. 'a milk lamb.' A lamb could be offered from the 8th day onwards (Lev 22:17). But why did Samuel take a lamb that was so young that it was still drinking its mother's milk?

The answer may be found in the word for 'lamb' here:

Lamb Heb *taleh* = 'a lamb', this is not the usual word for lamb and occurs only 2x.
The root word has the idea of 'protection'.

The only other occurrence of *taleh* is Isa 65:25: 'The wolf and **the lamb** shall feed together ...', and the only occurrence of the root word *tela* is Isa 40:11: 'he shall gather **the lambs** with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.'

In both cases, the word has the idea of **protection**. The sucking lamb that Samuel offered on this occasion was the most appropriate representation of the nation's state. They were spiritually immature and utterly helpless, and just like a little lamb that is just a few weeks old, they relied entirely upon the protection of God.

Offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto Yahweh

A burnt offering signified complete surrender and commitment to God. The giving of the sucking lamb as a burnt offering represented the complete dedication of the nation to their God, and their utter reliance upon him for salvation.

It is important to visualise the scene: Israel had lost a major battle with the Philistines not so long ago in which countless families were decimated. Having heard of this national convention and suspecting a possible uprising from the vassal state, the Philistines are now on the march again. Over the hills they come into sight - a rolling sea of armour. The clatter of iron swords and helmets echoes down through the valleys. Time was of the essence. Meanwhile, Samuel is carefully organising the sacrifice while the people look on, one eye on Samuel and the other on the Philistines. Yet the people do not flee. They continue watching Samuel, their minds focused on the helpless little lamb about to be offered up.

Samuel cried unto Yahweh for Israel

For the second time that day, Samuel intercedes for the nation (see box p81).

Yahweh thundered with a great thunder ... and discomfited them

Thunder Heb *qol qol* H6963 = 'to call aloud, a voice' (Str).

Discomfited Heb *hamam* H2000 = 'to put in commotion' (Str).

This was a magnificent event for Samuel. It was he who had called the national convention (v5), and now it was to him that the nation had turned to intercede for them and plead for help. His mind must have flashed back immediately to the words of his mother in her song:

'The adversaries of Yahweh shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them' (1Sam 2:10).

How true Hannah's words had proven to be yet again in the life of her son!

The sound of thunder is often used to describe the voice of God (Psa 29:3-4; Cp. 1Sam 2:10; 2Sam 22:14-15), and God often 'discomfited' His people's enemies, causing confusion and sudden panic in their ranks (Ex 14:24; Josh 10:10; Jud 4:15; 2Sam 22:15).

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.

Bethcar Heb. *beyth kar* H1033 = 'house of pasture' (Str).

Yahweh answered Samuel's petition and delivered His people from the Philistines. The Israelites continued to pursue the Philistines from Mizpeh all the way to Beth-car, about 10km west of Mizpeh (see map on p6). In an almost poetic fashion, God had brought His helpless little lamb through the valley of death to 'the house of pasture' because the nation had dedicated themselves completely to Him (cp Psa 23:2-4).

12 Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

Samuel took a stone

Stones were often set up to mark an area where an important event had occurred:

Gen 28:18	'Jacob ... took the stone ... and set it up for a pillar'
Gen 35:14	'Jacob set up a pillar in the place ... even a pillar of stone'
Ex 24:4	'Moses ... builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.'
Josh 4:9	'Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests... stood: and they are there unto this day.'

This stone would forever be a reminder to the people of how Yahweh had provided deliverance from their enemies, and that they had made a commitment to serve Him.

Ebenezer

Ebenezer Heb *Eben haezer* H72 = 'stone of the help' (Str).

This was the very same place they had suffered a catastrophic loss in 1Sam 4, including the loss of the ark to the Philistines.

'What an irony to call the Rock Ebenezer! It would remind the nation of an ignominious defeat as well as a crushing victory ... It was the site of their national disgrace, when the ark was captured and their army was routed. Samuel knew this, but he also knew that problems can only be solved when they are faced ...' (Bro Michael Ashton, *Samuel the Seer*, p85).

By calling the rock *Ebenezer*, Samuel was directing Israel's attention to the reason that this latter battle was so different from the former. It was *the Rock of Help* from Deut 32 who had made the difference. Because they had cried to Him for help this time, rather than *lightly esteeming* Him, He had proven to be *the Rock of their salvation* (v15).

Whenever they reflected upon this memorial stone, Israel would have cause to recollect where each priesthood and system of worship had got them:

- The hypocritical and corrupt approach under Eli, focused on externals and personal enjoyment, had resulted in their fall before the enemy.

- Whereas the faithful leadership under Samuel and their genuine response had brought about salvation from God.

KEYS TO REFORMATION

Samuel's approach in this chapter provides an ideal pattern for reformation in our own lives and ecclesias today:

#	Outcome Required	Ch 7	Citation
1	A desire for God	v2	Israel lamented after Yahweh
2	A willingness to change	v3	If ye do return unto Yahweh with all your hearts
3	Removal of distractions / idols	v4	Put away Baalim and Ashtaroth
4	Single-minded commitment	v4	Served Yahweh only
5	Support from other believers	v5	Gather all Israel
6	Intercession for God's mercy	v5	I will pray for you unto Yahweh
7	Contrition for personal sins	v6	Fasted on that day
8	Confession & seek forgiveness	v6	We have sinned against Yahweh
9	Ongoing guidance in the Truth	v6	Samuel judged the children of Israel
10	Faith when tested	v7	The Philistines went up against Israel
11	Acknowledge utter reliance	v9	Samuel took a sucking lamb
12	Complete dedication	v9	Offered it for a burnt offering wholly
13	Help from God	v10	Yahweh thundered... and discomfited them
14	Crush the enemy/sin	v11	Israel... pursued the Philistines and smote them
15	A regular reminder	v12	Samuel took a stone... and called the name of it Ebenezer... Hitherto hath Yahweh helped us.

THE PHILISTINES SUBDUED (7:13-14)

13 *So, the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.*

Despite this, we find the people groaning under the Philistine oppression (1Sam 9:16); a garrison or a tribute-collector stationed at Gibeah (10:5, 13:3); a general disarmament of the nation by the Philistines (13:19); Hebrew slaves in the Philistine camp (14:21); and three invasions of the land (13:5, 17:1, 23:27), all during Samuel's lifetime.

The meaning of the verse therefore appears to be this: The Philistines were subdued to such an extent that they stopped invading Israel's territory in the years following this battle of Ebenezer. But even when they again attempted to oppress Israel, they found that for as long as Samuel was alive, God's hand was against them. (See Keil & Delitzsch on 1Sam 7:13). This is borne out by the NIV:

'So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.'

Following the rejection of Samuel as their judge, the Philistines clearly regained some level of ascendancy over Israel under the reign of Saul, especially as he drifted further from God. But it was shortly after Samuel's death that Israel suffered their next crushing defeat before the Philistines in which they lost their king and his sons (1Sam 31:1,6; cp 25:1). For now, however, the 40-year oppression of Jud 13:1 was over.

14 *And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.*

From Ekron even unto Gath

Ekron and Gath were the eastern two of the five major cities in Philistia. Being further inland, they bordered the Israelite territory, along with the towns in between them. Israel once again subjugated this region after David killed Goliath (17:52), and then when David was king, they took control of Gath (1Chr 18:1).

And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Whereas the Philistines dwelt down on the coastal plain, the Amorites were in the central mountains to the west of Jordan (Num 13:29; Josh 5:1), as well as the plateau to the east of Jordan (Num 21:13,26). Appropriately, their name means 'highlanders' (Camb Comm) or 'mountaineers' (Str). It appears they were a conglomeration of mountain-dwelling tribes, each with their own king (Josh 10:5).

With the Philistines subdued and the Amorites at peace, this would have been the most peace Israel would have experienced in their living memory.

SAMUEL'S JUDGESHIP OF ISRAEL (7:15-17)

15-17 *And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.*

Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life

With Eli and Samson both dead, Samuel now took on the civil role of a judge in addition to his spiritual role as a prophet. In this capacity he would have been the overseer of civil and religious matters for the nation for approximately 20 years (by the proposed timeline on p9). Initially he performed this role on his own, and then towards the end he was aided by his sons (1Sam 8:1).

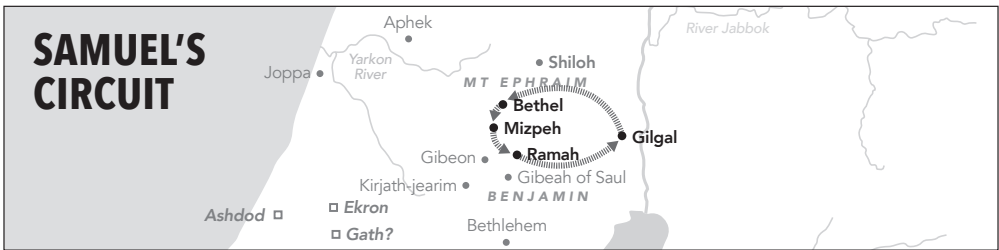
But when, at the people's request, a king was appointed, Samuel's role as judge continued to some degree, albeit in an altered fashion. Much of the civil administration he transferred over to Saul in the form of a guidebook for the administration of the kingdom (10:25), but Samuel evidently retained some civil authority, for it was through him that God deposed Israel's first king and anointed their second.

Decades of faithful, hard-working service are passed over in these three short verses. It is good for us to remember the countless hours Samuel gave for his nation - his ecclesia. Tirelessly he worked, travelled, studied, prayed and taught in order to galvanise the nation in God's service. The Truth was his life.

As a judge, Samuel's work would have been meticulous. He was personally upright and God-focused, so that he would have consistently judged the people with 'just judgement' and without respecting persons or accepting bribes (Deut 16:18-20). He was just the sort of man one would want to be administering the affairs of the nation, and the nation must have benefited immensely from his labours during these years.

Year by year

Such was Samuel's dedication to the cause of reforming the nation that he travelled to four main hubs where the people could meet him for judgement and spiritual encouragement. Commencing at his hometown of Ramah, Samuel travelled to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh each year, returning home to Ramah.



Bethel

Bethel Heb *beyth-el* H1008 = 'house of God' (Str).

A few miles north of Jerusalem, the city of Bethel was formally a Canaanite city known as *Luz* (Gen 28:19), at the head of the pass of Michmash and Ai. Here, Jacob saw the vision of the ladder going up to heaven, representing God's ever-present care (Gen 28:11), he received the promises from God for the first time (v13-15), and set up a stone pillar as a symbol that this was 'God's house' (v18,22). Here he made a vow of commitment to God (v20-22), and received the confirmation of his new name, Israel (Gen 35:10,15).

Gilgal

Gilgal Heb *Gilgal* H1537 = 'a wheel, rolling' (BDB). Cp Josh 5:9.

Gilgal was located down in the Jordan Valley, east of Bethel and Mizpeh. It was the first stop of the Israelites after their passage over the Jordan (Josh 4:19), and home to a stone memorial of this crossing (v20-24). It was here that the men born during the wilderness wanderings were circumcised, and the location of the first celebration of the Passover inside the Promised Land (Josh 5:2,10).

During the life of Samuel, it would be at Gilgal that sacrifices would be offered (1Sam 10:8), a national assembly convened (11:14-15) and the army mustered (13:4,7).

Mizpeh

Mizpeh was situated in the tribal allotment of Benjamin (Josh 18:26-28). It was at Mizpeh that Israel had dealt with the atrocity concerning the Levite's concubine (Jud 20:1; 21:1). This is the site of the national gathering Samuel had convened and housed the stone of Ebenezer - a witness to God's help for the nation (1Sam 7:12). It was also here that Saul would be selected to be king (10:17).

Ramah

Because it was named after its geographical features (see note 1:1), Ramah shared its name with several towns in Israel. Two Ramah's have been suggested as Samuel's birthplace - the one, close by to Mizpeh and Bethel, and the other further west, by the Mediterranean coast.

In identifying which Ramah was Samuel's hometown, therefore, it is helpful to note that this Ramah was in Mount Ephraim (1:1). No Ramah is mentioned in Mount Ephraim in the tribal

allocations in Joshua, but there is a Ramah in Mount Ephraim mentioned in Judges, and it was from there that Deborah judged (Jud 4:5). The reason this is helpful is because we are told she dwelt *'under the palm tree of Deborah **between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim.***' This places the Ramah of Mount Ephraim (Samuel's birthplace) in close proximity of Bethel, rather than over by the coast.

Ramah completed Samuel's circuit *'for there was his house; and there he judged Israel.'*

LESSONS FROM MOSES

When it came time to turn the nation back to their spiritual roots, Samuel knew exactly where to turn. Once more, his thorough grounding in the Word in his youth allowed him to become an instrument for the salvation of many in his prime of life.

Samuel	Moses
In his reformation speech, Samuel quotes Moses:	
'If ye do return unto Yahweh with all your hearts ' 1Sam 7:3	'If thou turn unto Yahweh thy God with all thine heart ...' Deut 30:10
Samuel then quotes Moses' minister, Joshua:	
'Then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you'	'Put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you'
'And prepare your hearts unto Yahweh'	'And incline your heart unto Yahweh God of Israel'
'And serve him only ' 1Sam 7:3	'Fear Yahweh, and serve Him ' Josh 24:14,23
Like Moses, Samuel became an intercessor, pleading with God on the nation's behalf:	
'Gather all Israel ... and I will pray for you unto Yahweh' 1Sam 7:5; cp 12:23	'Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto Yahweh , peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.' Ex 32:30; cp Num 14:19
'Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of Yahweh. ' 1Sam 8:21	'Moses returned the words of the people unto Yahweh ' Ex 19:8,9
Then, following the victory over the Philistines, Samuel again reminded Israel of Moses' song in Deut 32 when he set up a memorial to remind Israel of the help they had received from 'the Rock of their salvation':	
He 'took a stone ... and called the name of it Ebenezer (the stone of help)' 1Sam 7:12. In the first battle at Ebenezer, Israel had neglected 'the stone of help' (4:1,3).	God 'is the Rock ... But Jeshurun... forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation ... Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful ' Deut 32:18.



Samuel's Story

At the close of Ch 7, we leave Samuel in his prime of life, filled with vigour and extremely busy in the service of the Truth.

- After quietly teaching as God's prophet in Ramah for 20 years, he seized the opportunity to launch a national reformation and has now taken up the role of a judge in Israel.
- In the middle of the reform the enemies of the Truth decide that this is their opportunity. A lesser man than Samuel might have complained that the least God could do was prevent such a catastrophe in a time of spiritual revival; but not Samuel - he turns immediately to 'the Rock of their salvation'.
- The resulting victory would have placed the name of Samuel upon everybody's lips in Israel. He would have become a national hero overnight, and the reform he was leading would have escalated in momentum.
- Over the next two decades or so, his work in the Truth would take him across the countryside on an annual basis, as he educated people in the ways of God and judged as His representative in the nation.

In his national reform and subsequent judgeship, Samuel would underscore to the nation both their complete reliance on God who is **a very present help** in times of trouble, as well as the importance of **whole-hearted service** to God. There was no room in his life for distractions from the Truth, and there could be none in theirs.

SAMUEL & THE MONARCHY



1 SAMUEL 8

SAMUEL & THE MONARCHY (1SAM 8)

Samuel had been famous throughout the land from his youth (3:20), but after the defeat of the Philistines he would have become a national hero (7:10). Since then, he had served as judge over Israel for approximately two decades. He had lived a very busy life, and now in Ch 8 we find him in his old age when the elders approach his house requesting a king. Samuel will live another 35 years or so (see timeline, p10), and it will be in these twilight years that we will see some of the most monumental works of Samuel's life.

SAMUEL MAKES HIS SONS JUDGES (8:1-3)

1 *And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.*

Old Heb *zaqen* H2204 = 'To be old' (Str).

The term 'old' is often used to describe that time in life when one feels the physical effects of old age:

- 'Cast me not off in the time of old age ... **when my strength faileth.**' (Psa 71:9,18)
- Used of Abraham and Sarah when they were **too old to have children** (Gen 18:12).
- Used of Isaac when **he was blind from old age** (Gen 27:1-2).
- Of David when **'he gat no heat'** (1Ki 1:1).
- Used in Ex 10:9 to describe an age where you **need people to look after you.**

In terms of the Hebrew word itself, it encompasses a broad range of ages: From David at **<70** years of age (1Ki 1:1; 2Sam 5:4), to Barzillai at **80** (2Sam 19:32), Joshua at **85** (Josh 23:1-2), Sarah at **89** (Gen 18:12), Eli at **98** (1Sam 4:15,18), Jehoida at **130** (2Chr 24:15) and Abraham at **140** (Gen 24:1).

The following two references indicate that age **60** would be a reasonable estimate for when an individual may have come to be regarded as 'old' in Bible times: 1Tim 5:9, Lev 23:3,7. This is in harmony with the proposed timelines on p9-10.

After years of faithfully judging the whole nation (1Sam 7:15-17), Samuel had become old enough that the burden of his office weighed upon him and so evidently sought to ease the load by establishing his sons as helpers after the manner of Moses in Ex 18:18-26.

2 *Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba.*

Joel Heb *yoel* H3100 = 'Yahweh is his God' (Str).

Abiah Heb *abiy* H29 = 'Worshipper of Yah' (Str).

These are names with lofty ideals, suitable for the sons of the judge that was working to turn Israel back to God. However, as we soon learn, these sons would not fully live up to their names.

They were judges in Beersheba

Beersheba Heb *beer seba* H884 = 'Well of an oath' (Str).

While not technically the southernmost part of the land, Beersheba was taken as such because to its south lay the barren Negev desert (2Sam 24:7, see phrase 'from Dan even to Beersheba' Jud 20:1, 1Sam 3:20, 2Sam 3:10; 17:11; 24:2,7,15; 1Chr 21:2; 2Chr 30:5).

With the Philistines recently pushed back in the battle of Ebenezer (7:14), small Jewish communities would have sprung up in the area. It may be that Samuel considered this a vulnerable region, both to the military and spiritual infiltration of the Philistines, but be that as it may, he evidently decided that the presence of a couple of judges would be valuable.

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Lucre Heb *besa* H1215 = 'plunder, unjust gain' (Str).

Their crimes are of a different sort to those of Hophni and Phineas, but still fall far short of what was required by their calling. The Law was very clear that judges were to be '*men of truth, hating covetousness*' (Ex 18:21). In contrast to their father, they respected persons and took bribes which blinded their perception and corrupted their judgement (Deut 16:18-20).

Samuel finds himself in a similar situation to that which Eli had once been in. Despite his own faithful service, his sons have not lived up to his legacy. Recalling the denunciation that he had conveyed to Eli back in 1Sam 3, it is unlikely that Samuel would have knowingly appointed them to positions for which he knew they were unsuitable. It seems more likely that they were untested, and away from their father, they betrayed their calling.

THE ELDERS REQUEST A KING (8:4-5)

4-5 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered ... to Samuel

Imagine the old man - he's spent 'all his life' judging the nation faithfully (7:15), travelling from one town to the next to serve his fellow countrymen, and one day he comes to the front door of his house in Ramah to be met by an assembly of elders demanding a king 'to judge' them (8:20; cp 7:15)!

There's no enquiry asking Samuel what they should do. There's no appeal for God's help. There's no respect for God's ability to provide for the nation. There is only the craving to be accepted in their own society - to be like all the other nations.

To add salt to the wound, they give three arguments to support their request:

1. You're getting too old, Samuel.
2. Your sons are no good.
3. Scripture is on our side.

(1) Thou art old

We already learned that Samuel was old in v1, but the elders here specifically call it out to him as their first reason they need a king. Samuel was only going to live for so long, and then what would they do? The implication is that there is a sense of urgency to resolve this problem.

(2) Thy sons walk not in thy ways

The elders acknowledge that Samuel had attempted to solve the succession problem by appointing his sons to be judges, however his sons had shown themselves to be unsuitable for the office of judges (v3).

This rebuke would have stung, most of all because Samuel knew it was true. And it is in his response to this very public rebuke that we gain one of the greatest character insights into this man. In 1Sam 12:2, we learn that Samuel demoted his sons from office in response to the accusation of the elders. He didn't react to defend his family, for he knew his sons were in the wrong, and so he upheld God's principles in his own family, even when it hurt.

(3) Make us a king to judge us like all the nations

Whilst this statement may at first appear to be an 'innocent' request for a king, it was actually a carefully chosen and highly loaded citation from the Law. The elders are quoting Deut 17, the passage on the selection of a king:

*'When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, **I will set a king over me, like as all the nations** that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose ...'* (Deut 17:14-15).

Having argued the imminent need for a replacement for Samuel, and that his solution was unsatisfactory, the elders present their proposal using the language of God's own provision for a king in the law as their third argument.

Other solutions could have been pursued:

- Young men other than his sons had learned at the feet of Samuel and could have been candidates (19:20).
- God had raised up judges for 300 years – surely He could do it again.
- They could have even just prayed to God that Samuel might have time enough to find or train a successor.

But the elders had made up their mind. There is one last detail in their request which hints at what was really going on, and it lies in the final phrase of v5:

Like all the nations

Irrespective of the validity of their arguments, it ultimately came down to their desire to be like the nations around them. They were obsessed with 'fitting in' to the point where they denied their real King (God) in order to be accepted by their society.

In making this request, the elders had betrayed their calling to be God's 'peculiar treasure' (Ex 19:5) 'above all the nations' (Deut 14:2). He had intended that they remain separate from their neighbours. But after 300 years of trying to assimilate and then being humiliated and persecuted as a result, Israel had now succumbed to the temptation of a king.

There was a particular trigger that had led to this request, and that was the growing threat of the Ammonites (12:12), who launched an invasion shortly after Saul was anointed king (11:1). The people allude to these concerns in 8:20 when they express their intention for their king to *'fight our battles'*. How sad it was that the nation who had committed themselves to God and seen His salvation at the start of Samuel's judgeship (7:3,13) seemed to associate their salvation more with the man Samuel than the God he stood for.

Rather than wait for God's salvation, they decided to take matters into their own hands, taking the provision of Deut 17 as permission.

LIKE ALL THE NATIONS

- How often do we seek to conform just so as not to stand out from the crowd?
- What can we do to strengthen our resolve to remain separate?
- Do we cherry-pick scriptures to justify positions that match our desires rather than God's?

SURVIVING REJECTION

In this hour of personal crisis, when all that Samuel had devoted his life to came crashing down before his very own eyes, to whom might he turn for encouragement?

Samuel (1Sam)	Moses (Ex)
'Thou art old... Make us a king to judge us like all the nations' 1Sam 8:5	'Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?' Acts 7:27, Ex 2:14
' Make us a king ... like all the nations' 1Sam 8:5	'Let us make a captain , and let us return into Egypt.' Num 14:4
'They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me ' 1Sam 8:7	'All this evil congregation ... are gathered together against me ' Num 14:35
'That our king may... go out before us , and fight our battles.' 1Sam 8:22	'Let Yahweh ... set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them ... ' Num 27:15-17
Samuel learned the lesson of Moses' rejection, and became the redeemer / deliverer for the nation 1Sam 7:15, 12:23	Moses was rejected as ruler and judge, but God established him as ruler and redeemer / deliverer Acts 7:35

Amazingly, Samuel found within his Bible a man who had gone through the same types of trials that he was experiencing. It would have been very easy at this juncture in Samuel's life for him to say, *'It's all too hard!'* and throw in the towel. But quite to the contrary, Samuel turned for encouragement to Moses, and in him he found a man who *never* gave up. In fact, it would be a particular facet of Moses that would spur Samuel on in his next phase of life, as he threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of the Schools of the Prophets (see p154).

GOD ALLOWS THEIR REQUEST (8:6-9)

After the elders of Israel have confronted Samuel, he immediately knows that their request is not right, but first takes the problem to God before entering into any further discussion with them.

6 *But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.*

The thing displeased Samuel

Displeased Heb *yara* H3415 = 'to be broken up, be grievous' (Str); and
Heb *ayin* H5869 = 'an eye' (Str).

Heb '*was evil in the eyes of Samuel*' (KJV mg). The Hebrew phrase occurs only a handful of times in Scripture of which four describe God's reaction to events such as David's murder of Uriah (2Sam 11:27), his numbering of the people (1Chr 21:7) and Onan's mistreatment of Tamar (Gen 38:10). In each case, people died as a result of God's displeasure. These were major issues, so that this was not just a matter of Samuel being a little upset; he felt very strongly that it was wrong.

When they said, Give us a king to judge us

To accuse his sons and to explicitly desire to be like the surrounding nations are not insignificant issues to be dealt with, but the foremost issue for Samuel was their asking for a king. Samuel understood that their request was an implicit rejection of God, as 'God was [their] king' (1Sam 12:12).

And Samuel prayed unto Yahweh

The elders had severely upset Samuel, and how does he react? He takes the problem to God immediately, before responding to the elders. We see this approach repeated in v21-22 after the people's obstinate response to Samuel's first message. This is a major lesson for us in dealing with confrontation in ecclesial life.

7 *And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

Hearken unto the voice of the people

Though they had rejected God, He still chooses to grant their request '*in [His] anger*' (Hos 13:11). When we look back at Deut 17:14-15, while it indicates the people would say '*I will set a king over me*', it was to be '*whom Yahweh thy God shall choose*'. So God was still going to choose for them a king. But they would come to see that having a king was not all they hoped for, particularly if '*his heart be... lifted up above his brethren*' (Deut 17:20).

This was to be a similar situation to when the people cried for meat in Numbers 11. On both occasions, the request of the people angered God and displeased Moses/Samuel (cp Num 11:10). And on both occasions God granted the people's desire, but to their own peril (Num 11:33; 1Sam 8:11).

They have not rejected thee

God acknowledges that the people have also forsaken Samuel in v8. In this statement, God is emphasising to Samuel that although he was rejected as judge, the greater insult is that Israel have rejected Himself, their God.

That I should not reign over them

It is possible to imagine that the people could have asked the question 'Wherein have we rejected God?' So, we get the answer first - in that they would not have God reign over them. They did not see God as their king and did not want Him. Yet they should have known that ever since God made them His Kingdom at Sinai (Ex 19:6), He had been their King, as Moses had specifically told them (Deut 33:2,5)!

3 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

This was the nation's ongoing struggle in the wilderness and throughout the time of the judges. They would do evil in the sight of Yahweh (e.g. Jud 6:1), not obeying the voice of God but serving the pagan gods (Jud 6:10, 25). When they finally cried unto God (Jud 6:7), He would send them a judge who would deliver them (Jud 6:8-14). Yet inevitably they would repeat the cycle once again.

So do they also unto thee

Though clearly the central issue was that Israel was rejecting God as their king, this was still a rejection of Samuel as well, something clearly Samuel felt in response to the people coming to him.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

Protest solemnly

Protest, Heb *ood* H5749 = 'to duplicate or repeat; by implication to protest, testify (as solemnly by reiteration)' (Str).

The words 'protest' and 'solemnly' are the same Hebrew word repeated, which, as we will see in the following section, aptly describes the manner in which Samuel repeatedly warns about the manner of kings.

The manner of the king

Manner Heb *mishpat* H4941 = 'properly a verdict pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree (human or (particularly) divine law)' (Str).

What Samuel was to convey wasn't so much the type of king who would reign over them, but the types of laws and policies their kings would rule by. Compare this to what God commanded of the king in Deut 17:14-20, where we see a very different set of laws and policies to guide the king.

SAMUEL WARNS OF THE MANNER OF THE KING (8:10-18)

Having taken Israel's request for a king to God in prayer, Samuel now, at God's direction, agrees to their request but is only going to do so after making certain the people understand what it is they are asking, and what the consequences for them will be. Enticed by the thought of a king who could lead them to victory in battle, they hadn't stopped to consider the personal cost that having a king would have:

1Sam 8	He will take...
v11-12	Your sons
v13	Your daughters
v14-15	Your land and produce
v16	Your servants
v16-17	Your livestock
v17	You

HE WILL TAKE

Throughout this section we see a number of words frequently repeated:

- 'He/his/him/himself' is repeated 20 times
- 'Your/ye/you' is repeated 20 times
- 'Take' is repeated 6 times

There is no time given to describing what the king might do for the people or what he might give to the people. Samuel is carefully emphasising that it is the king who is doing all the taking, and the people are getting nothing in return.

10 *And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.*

Now that he has taken the matter to God in prayer and received His response, Samuel will diligently repeat all that God had said to the people (cp 3:18). Even though he disagrees with the people's decision, now that he knows God's will on the matter, there is no hesitation on Samuel's part.

11 *And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.*

Samuel begins by listing the realities of serving a king in a time of war. The fit young men would be taken from their families to be conscripted as soldiers away from their homes.

For his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots

- Adonijah, upon declaring he would be king, prepares chariots, horsemen, and runners before the chariots (1Ki 1:5).
- Solomon would accumulate so many horsemen and chariots (1Ki 4:26) that he had cities for them (1Ki 10:26).

12 *And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.*

Captains over thousands

We see this immediately after Saul's coronation (1Sam 13:2), and this would continue throughout his reign (14:52). David was taken (18:2) and appointed captain over thousands (18:13). 1Chr 27 lists all the captains of thousands and hundreds that David set up.

Captains over fifties

Again, we see captains of fifties sent after Elijah by Ahaziah king of Israel in 2Ki 1:9-14.

And will set them to ear his ground

The king would not work his own ground; rather those he took would be put to work on royal lands.

13 *And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.*

Next Samuel describes how the people's daughters would also be taken and put to service for the King.

Confectionaries Heb *raqqahah* H7548 = 'female perfumer' (Str).

Cooks Heb *tabahah* H2879 = 'female cook', from *tabah* H2876 = 'butcher' (Str).

Bakers Heb *aphah* H644 = 'cook, especially to bake' (Str).

All the people that would be gathered by the king for his service would need to be fed, so the king would take their young women to work in the royal kitchens.

14-15 *And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give them to his officers, and to his servants.*

The royal kitchens would need supplies, and so the king would acquire their lands to grow produce. Thus, the king would take the best of their inheritance, as well as a tithe of the produce of the remaining land. If this is in addition to the tithe for the Levites, the people's tax burden will have doubled.

1Ki 21 describes an extreme example of this when king Ahab asked for Naboth's vineyard but was refused. In response, Jezebel organised for false witnesses to accuse Naboth crimes such that Naboth was executed, and Ahab was able to acquire the land he desired.

16-17 *And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.*

Even servants and livestock wouldn't be exempt from the demands of the king.

Ye shall be his servants

After losing your sons, your daughters, your land, your produce, your servants, and your livestock, what would be left over? Nothing but yourself, but even that would the king take.

18 *And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.*

In the time that Samuel had judged Israel, the people were already forgetting the last 300 years. Time and again they had been made servants to the surrounding kings, with their possessions taken and their labour given to others. During this period, when their persecution drove them to cry out to God, He would send a judge to deliver them. But now Samuel warns that the very judge they had asked of God would oppress them and take all they had. What's more, given they had chosen their fate, God would not hear them to deliver them.

TO SERVE OUR KING

How often do we get exactly what we ask for but find it isn't what we imagined? In Rom 6:12-13, Paul describes two kings who can reign in our lives. Each comes at a cost, and each comes with a reward. Which king do we choose to serve, and what price are we prepared to pay?

ISRAEL'S STUBBORN REFUSAL (8:19-22)

Despite Samuel's warning, the people are adamant that they want a king over them.

19-20 *Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*

The people refused to obey the voice of Samuel

After years of obeying the voice of Samuel (7:15-16) and enjoying success because of it (7:3-4,13), the people choose to hear Samuel no longer, demanding a king once more. In contrast to their request of v5, where it is presented as a logical solution to Samuel's lack of a suitable replacement, and endorsed by the Law of Moses, we see the fear behind this request beginning to show.

That our king may ... fight our battles

With Nahash the Ammonite threatening to come against them (11:1; 12:12), they wanted a visible sign of strength that they could trust in. At the time of year 'when kings go forth to battle' (2Sam 11:1), Israel wanted their own king to lead their armies to victory and were unable to see the might of God (cp 2Ki 6:15-17).

The people hadn't learned to truly trust in God. What trust they had in God was anchored on Samuel, and now that he was old, and his decision to set up his sons as judges had not been a success, their faith wavered.

This is not the first time the people had pressed for a ruler over them:

- In Jud 8:22-23, the people of Israel asked Gideon to set up a dynasty to rule over them. Gideon had rejected the offer saying, 'Yahweh shall rule over you'.
- In Jud 9, Abimelech the son of Gideon decided he wanted to be king, so he killed most of his brethren, and the men of Shechem made Abimelech king for 3 years before they overthrew him when God sent an evil spirit between them (Jud 9:23).

Though Samuel had made it abundantly clear that a king would come at a high cost, their fear of the neighbouring kings, and their desire to have at their head the same visible symbol of power, led the people to blatantly disregard all the prophet's warnings.

21 *And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.*

Once again, Samuel's takes the matter to God in prayer before anything else, not rushing to give an answer. Through the pressure of the moment, while dealing with his own intense feelings on the matter at hand, he is consistent in his dialogue with God.

REHEARSED THEM IN THE EARS OF THE LORD

Once again, we see in Samuel a consistency of prayer that is able to stand up to even the most intense emotional situations. Grave consequences are attached to poorly thought through reactions (Psa 106:32), but Samuel's constant communication with God helped protect him from this.

Do we go to God first in times of trouble? Does prayer have a place in our life that is prepared to weather the storms of life? How do we develop and maintain that?

Samuel repeated all that was said to God. Do we likewise verbalise all that we wish to take to God, or do we simply assume that God already knows and so don't bother to form the words? Is there power in repeating all that needs to be said?

22 *And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.*

The command of v9 is repeated. God had directed Samuel to agree to set up a king after the first response, but only after Samuel had given the people the opportunity to reconsider and retract their request. With the people now stubbornly committing to their demand, all that is left is for God's command to be followed out, and for Samuel to set up for them a king.

Once more we see the patience of Samuel. Though he accepted their demands, there would be no immediate action. The people would return to their cities, Samuel to his, until a suitable king and been identified. Only then would the people be gathered for the appointment of the king in Ch 10:17.



Samuel's Story

After a lifetime of faithful service, Samuel had just been rejected by his ecclesia. Although the greater problem was their rejection of God, Samuel felt the added sting of personal denial. As he began to feel the burden of his age:

- Samuel was confronted by a demand from his contemporaries - the elders who should have known better - to appoint an extremely poor replacement for the governance of the nation.
- He suffered the public humiliation of being let down by his family.
- And yet, at the direction of God, Samuel had submitted to His instruction to warn his ecclesia and press on with their decision.

In this, Samuel demonstrated the quality of **godly resilience** when his life's work came crashing down before his eyes. Helped by his Biblical role model, he didn't just decide it was all too hard and give up on the Truth; as the next phase of his life will illustrate, he redoubled his efforts in committing to his life-long goal of bringing the nation to God.

*Moses and Aaron among
his priests, and Samuel
among them that call
upon his name; they called
upon the LORD, and he
answered them.*

PSALM 99:6



SAMUEL &
SAUL

1 SAMUEL 9-15

The people having made their request clear; the attention of the record now shifts to the appointment of Israel's first king.

The reign of Saul comprised a very significant portion of the life of Samuel – both in the length of time it occupied, and in the drama of the events that unfolded.

After anointing Israel's first king, it would be during the 40-year reign of Saul (Acts 13:21) that Samuel would serve as his spiritual guide and mentor, write a national constitution, strengthen the Schools of the Prophets, and eventually anoint Israel's second king.

Out of a reign of some 40 years, it is fascinating to consider the main interactions that are recorded between Samuel and Saul:

- Ch 9 – Saul's anointing
- Ch 10 – The signs that God was with him and his selection
- Ch 11 – His first conquest and coronation
- Ch 12 – Samuel's public handover to Saul and his retirement speech
- Ch 13-14 – War with the Philistines
- Ch 15 – War with Amalek

What is fascinating about these events is that the first four chapters are all to do with his **anointing** to the office of king, while the latter three relate instead to his **deposal** as king. Between these two periods in the reign of Saul, it is almost as though there was nothing worth recording.

THE ANOINTING OF SAUL (1SAM 9-10)

The first half of Ch 9 introduces us for the first time to Saul, the son of Kish, in the peculiar situation of pursuing his father's lost asses. Noted as he was for his handsome and imposing appearance (9:2), the same could not be said of his spiritual virtues, as Samuel was shortly to discover. Upon giving up the search, Saul had resolved to return home but upon his servant's recommendation they took a detour through the nearby city of Ramah, where the servant understood there was a man of God. Little did Saul realise the meeting he was about to participate in, and the magnitude of the change it would herald – both for him, and for the nation.

GOD FOREWARNS SAMUEL (9:15-17)

15 *Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,*

The phrase is a reminder of the closeness between Samuel and his God. Then in v17, the excitement in the angel's voice is palpable as He says to Samuel, *'This is him!'* In response to Yahweh's advice of v15-17, Samuel makes preparation for the arrival of the incoming king by arranging a feast.

16 *To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin,*

As soon as he received this commission, Samuel must have known that this man would not be suitable to be the lasting King of Israel, the 'Messiah' of whom his mother had spoken in

her song (2:10). The reason he must have known is that Yahweh's Anointed had to come from Judah (Gen 49:10), yet Saul would arise from 'the land of Benjamin'.

And thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines:

Captain Heb *nagid* H5057 = 'a commander (one at the front), civil, military or religious' (Str)

Notice that God never describes Saul as Israel's 'king' (Heb *melek*) until after Israel had called him their king. In both 9:16 and 10:1, Yahweh through His prophet refers to Saul as the *captain* of His people, and in 10:24 the man he had *chosen*, but it is the **people** who first describe Saul as their king (Heb *melek*) in 10:25 when they cried, 'Let **the king** live!' Because of this fact, Samuel would later describe Saul as 'the king whom ye have chosen and whom ye have desired' (12:13).

Saul was thus first appointed to be Israel's military leader. They had asked for one to fight their battles (8:20), so God would reward them with a captain whose work would be to save them from the Philistines.

For I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

This phrase from God to Samuel has overtones of the Exodus and God's response to Israel's groaning under the Egyptian oppression (Ex 3:7). This similarity would not have been lost on Samuel, given his profound respect for Moses.

17 ***And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.***

Reign Heb *atsar* H6113 = 'to restrain, retain, close up, shut, withhold, refrain, stay, detain' (BDB). Not the usual word used for rulership.

Whereas Samuel had 'judged' Israel (7:6), leading them in the right way (12:23), Saul would instead 'restrain' (ESV, YLT) or 'control' (Roth) the nation, as Samuel had warned them (8:10-18). Out of 45 occurrences of the word, it is only translated 'reign' once in the KJV, and that is here, so that it cannot be said that God was applying royal privileges to Saul, but rather warning that this was the man who would oppress his people.

SAMUEL HONOURS SAUL AT THE FEAST (9:18-24)

18 ***Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.***

One must stop and envisage the scene to appreciate the significance of this meeting. Here, for the first time, the first of the Kings will meet the last of the Judges. It really is a momentous occasion - the meeting of two men who stood for different eras in the nation's history - the handing over of the mantle from one epoch to the next. And for now, that transfer of government hangs upon the meeting of the unsuspecting youth and the aged prophet.

Notice all the characteristic features of Samuel that any Israelite should have recognised when they approached him:

1. Saul and his servant were in the Land of Zuph (9:5) - this was Samuel's territory (1:1) and his city of Ramah (9:6; 7:17). Only the servant recognised this (9:6).

2. Samuel was an old man by this stage (8:1).
3. He was a Nazarite with long hair (1:11) and his hair was gray (12:2). There must have been very few men with gray, flowing locks in Israel.
4. Saul met Samuel in the gate (9:18) – the place where a judge would sit (2Sam 15:2-6; 19:8; Deut 16:18).
5. He wore a characteristic mantle (see note 15:27, p141).

There could only have been one man in Israel who met that description, and *everyone* knew, or should have known, him (3:20; 4:1). Saul strides up to him in v18 and says, '*Ah, excuse me, do you happen to know where the seer is?*' How Samuel's heart must have sunk at his first impressions of this king-in-prospect!

Yet such is the character of Samuel, that he remains resolute in his intentions: As the remainder of his first encounter with Saul will show, Samuel intends to do all he can to educate and inspire this young man to godly leadership.

19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer:

Roth. places the following emphasis: '**I am the seer!**'. Saul's question was the hallmark of spiritual ineptitude, and Samuel would have immediately realised how much work was needed here if there was to be any hope for the nation under this man's control.

Go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

Samuel refers to two events that would shortly take place between Samuel and Saul.

1. The first was a feast which Samuel had already prepared and would shortly partake of with Saul in the high place at Ramah (9:18-24).
2. The second is the remarkable speech with which Samuel would send Saul away the following morning, directly after he had anointed him king (10:1-8).

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found.

The very fact that Saul enters the record in pursuit of his father's lost asses does not bode well for his suitability as king. Whereas David kept his father's sheep (16:11) and secured them with a keeper when he had to leave (17:20), Saul is introduced unable to find the asses, which likely represent the nation who would not hold to him (Isa 1:3; Jer 2:24; cp 1Sam 13:11).

And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

This phrase may be read two ways, depending on the emphasis in the Hebrew:

1. The reading of the KJV implies that all Israel desire Saul as their king. This is supported by a number of translations including YLT, NIV, LITV and LEB.
2. Whereas the ESV translates the latter half of the verse, '*and for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?*' (Roth, RV, ASV, Camb. Comm. are all similar).

It is true that Saul was the sort of man whom the nation desired as their king (12:13; 9:2), however the latter appears to be Samuel's point in this verse (Edersheim, *OT History*, p435). Don't worry about the asses, he says, because they've already been found and besides that,

all the good things of Israel will belong to you shortly anyway, which was the point of Samuel's speech to the elders in Ch 8:10-18.

21 *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?*

Benjamin as a tribe must have been a cause of embarrassment to the nation after the events of Jud 20-21 when the entire tribe was eradicated except 600 men! Saul's family was no mean family in Israel (1Sam 9:1), yet Saul shows genuine humility at this apparently inordinate show of attention (cp 15:17).

22 *And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons.*

Having greeted the prospective king, Samuel now takes him to a feast held in his honour. A cursory reading of v22-24 shows that all the arrangements have been made in advance by Samuel.

Samuel takes Saul into the specially prepared guest chamber at the high place in Ramah. It must have been a sizeable room, because when they arrived, 30 guests were already present. The Septuagint suggests that there were 70 guests present,⁸ yet the Hebrew manuscripts indicate only 30. Regardless of the exact number, it was evidently a feast of some importance, as all the guests were specially invited, or 'bidden' (v13,22).

Parlour Heb *lishkah* H3957 = 'room, chamber, hall, cell' (BDB). All 46 other occ. in KJV are trans. 'chamber(s)'. Roth. 'the guest chamber'.

Chiefest Heb *rosh* H7218 = 'head, top, chief' (BDB).

Samuel was the one who had arranged this feast and invited the guests. Ordinarily, he would be the one to sit in the chief place. Yet here he seats Saul at the head of the table in the most auspicious place. Samuel was honouring the shortly-to-be-anointed king with his own position!

23 *And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.*

Not only had Samuel arranged a feast, invited the guests, gone to find Saul and seated him at the head of the table, he had also instructed the cook to save a particular cut of meat for a special purpose.

24 *And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul.*

That cut of meat which had been saved for Saul was the shoulder. This is significant because the shoulder was one of the most highly prized cuts of meat (Ezek 24:4) and would usually

⁸ Just like the 70 elders who ate with Moses (Ex 24:9-11) and the 70 who later comprised the ruling council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. Josephus supports the idea that there were 'seventy in number' (Antiquities of the Jews, Bk 6, Ch 4, p 128) and William Whiston, who translated Josephus into English in 1862, comments in a footnote, 'It seems to me not improbable that these seventy guests of Samuel, as here, with himself at the head of them, were a Jewish Sanhedrim, and that hereby Samuel intimated to Saul that these seventy-one were to be his constant counsellors, and that he was to act not like a sole monarch, but with the advice and direction of these seventy-one members of that Jewish Sanhedrim upon all occasions, which yet we never read that he consulted afterwards.'

be given to the priest (Lev 7:32-34). Once again, Samuel was honouring Saul with that which was rightfully his as the officiating priest on this occasion (1Sam 9:12-13). And as he delivered this 'royal portion' (as Josephus refers to it⁹) to Saul, Samuel was conveying a message: *Yes, Saul, this is a privilege; but it comes with responsibility.* From now on, the government would rest upon Saul's shoulder (cp Isa 9:6) – a responsibility that he would need to put in a great deal of effort to rise to.

And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! Set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

ESV *'And Samuel said, See, what was kept is set before you. Eat, because it was kept for you until the hour appointed, that you might eat with the guests.'* Samuel did not offer Saul the left-overs, but rather the portion that had been specially reserved. The RV translates the first phrase, **'Behold that which hath been reserved!'**

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL (9:25-10:1)

25-26 **And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.**

Evening had likely been coming on when Samuel had first climbed the hill with Saul to join in the feast (see v11 and Gen 24:11). The NIV indicates that Samuel 'talked with Saul on the roof of **his house**', i.e. of Samuel's house. There must have been so much that Samuel would have liked to convey to this young man to prepare him for the responsibilities of government.

At daybreak, Samuel called 'to' Saul who had slept on top of the house (see NIV, ESV and Cambridge Commentary), and they headed out onto the street.

27 **And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.**

The word 'shew' here is the Heb *shama*, one of the root words of Samuel's name (1:20), and one of the major catch-cries of his life (cp 15:22). From the very outset of his appointment as king, Samuel resolves to do everything he possibly can to help Saul *'hear and obey the word of God'*.

10:1 ¶ **Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him,**

This is a most significant occasion, because up to this point in history, the rite of anointing with oil has only ever been used to inaugurate the priests into office (Ex 28:1; 30:30; 40:13; Num 3:3 etc). From now on, another divinely appointed institution would exist within the nation of Israel, and it all began here with the anointing into office of Israel's first king.

But notice the vessel that Samuel used to anoint Saul:

⁹ Antiquities of the Jews, Bk 6, Ch 4, p 128.

Vial Heb *pak* H6378 = 'vial, flask' (BDB). *'The Hebrew word indicates a narrow-necked vessel from which the oil would come by drops'* (Edersheim, *OT History*, p436).

The oil represented the spirit of God being poured out upon the king, and the restricted flow of the oil from the vial stands in stark contrast the horn used for David (see note 16:13). Just as the oil dripped slowly and intermittently upon the head of Saul, so the spirit of God would touch the heart of the king only sporadically throughout his rule.

and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

Samuel's choice of words again underlines the importance of the calling Saul has been given. Yahweh has anointed him captain over His inheritance - it's God's; God's people, God's land, God's kingdom - it's all God's, so it was imperative that Saul govern wisely.

THREE SIGNS FOR SAUL (10:2-8)

Having anointed Saul as the first king of Israel and solemnly impressed upon him the responsibilities this entailed, Samuel now tells of three events that would occur to Saul in the imminent future. Samuel must have perceived the challenge before him in converting this godless man into a faithful leader for the nation, and so he needed to instill in Saul a deep trust in himself - Samuel - as God's mouthpiece to both the nation and their king. He therefore refers to these events as 'signs' intended to show Saul that 'God is with thee' (v7).

It is difficult to reconstruct the precise route Saul would take on his journey home from Samuel, however it appears to be not so much the locations themselves that are significant, but their relevance to Saul.

Sign 1: Saul would find 2 men by Rachel's grave who would tell him that the asses were found (v2).

Sign 2: Saul would meet 3 men at the oak of Tabor, headed for Bethel with 3 kids, 3 loaves and a bottle of wine to sacrifice, and they would give Saul 2 loaves (v3-4).

Sign 3: Finally, Saul would come to 'the hill of God', or *Gibeah Elohim* - Saul's hometown, but described in a way he had never heard, for to him it was 'Gibeah of Benjamin!' There he would meet a gathering of the prophets, with whom he had also probably never made acquaintance before. They would be prophesying, and the spirit of God would come over Saul and he would prophesy too (v5-6). The men had 4 musical instruments, so - in keeping with the sequence - perhaps there were 4 men.

All of these signs were designed to teach Saul lessons:

Sign 1	Saul would find two men by Rachel's grave, showing him that he had the choice to be one of two men. Rachel had died in the process of giving birth to Saul's forefather, Benjamin. But because of her suffering and death, Rachel had wanted to call her son Benoni (Son of my sorrow) rather than Benjamin (Son of the right hand) (Gen 35:18). Saul would have the choice to be either a 'son of God's right hand', or a 'son of sorrow'.
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	<p>Zelzah, where they were to meet, is made up of two Hebrew words. One means 'shade' and the other means 'bright'. This further emphasised the choice that Saul had to make between light and darkness.</p> <p>These two men would also tell him that his father's asses had been found. He came to Samuel originally to find asses and he gains assurance here that they have been found, confirming Samuel's words to him.</p> <p>It is also interesting to note that Rachel was Jacob's preferred wife from the beginning, but that she represented natural Israel. Leah, on the other hand, was least preferred, but she represented spiritual Israel and from her would come the kingly line through Judah. In this there lay a parable, for Saul, the descendant of Rachel, would be natural Israel's king, but in time God would choose himself a king from Judah - a descendant of Leah.</p>
<p>Sign 2</p>	<p>This is not the first time in Scripture where a group on their way to Bethel met and made decisions under an oak. In Gen 35:2-4, Jacob makes plans to go and worship at Bethel, but before doing so he instructs his company to take any false gods that they had and give them to him and to change their garments. He then buried these false gods under an oak in Shechem. Saul was to do the same; to dedicate himself to the true God and put away any false worship, and to put on new robes and start afresh in God's service.</p> <p>Saul had come to Samuel with no bread, but here his daily needs are provided for. In fact, Saul would be provided with both bread and wine, which we know from their first occurrence (Gen 14:18) are symbols of fellowship. This indicated to Saul the fellowship that he could have with God should he choose to serve Him correctly.</p>
<p>Sign 3</p>	<p>Should he choose to be a 'son of God's right hand' and to put away false gods and worship Yahweh, then God would change him. He, through God's power and not through his own strength, would be filled with the power of God and his work would be blessed.</p> <p>He had come to Samuel for a prophecy about his father's asses, but he ended up prophesying himself! If Saul allowed God to enter his heart, then God would transform him and the nation.</p>

Finally, Samuel leaves Saul in v8 with the instruction to go down to Gilgal, on the bank of the Jordan river, where Samuel would join him to sacrifice offerings. Saul would have to remember this command because it related to an event a long while into the future (i.e. in Ch 13:8), and Samuel was very clear that he must wait seven days until Samuel came.

Saul then left Samuel, and we are informed that all these miraculous signs came to pass that day (v9). The next few verses describe Saul's journey to the High Place at Gibeon, including the time he spent among the sons of the prophets (10:9-16). This was such an unusual sight - Saul in the company of such godly men - that it became a common saying of surprise around Israel: *'is Saul also among the prophets?'* (10:12). Such spirituality was so unusual with Saul, that multiple times in his life this question was posed throughout Israel (cp 19:24).

SAUL'S SELECTION (10:17-25)

Despite Saul's lack of spirituality, God having given the command (9:16), the time arrived to publicly show Israel their ruler. Samuel therefore calls a national gathering at Mizpeh in 10:17 to appoint Saul as Israel's commander.

Samuel is still extremely upset about the nation's rejection of their God and desire for a king, yet he speaks not his own displeasure on this occasion, but God's, in v17-19. Yahweh takes Israel's minds back to His deliverance of His people from the control of their Egyptian overlords and from all the other kingdoms who oppressed them (v17-19). And yet they had been adamant that they wanted a 'real' king whom they could see, who would fight their battles (8:20).

God tells them through Samuel to *'present themselves before Yahweh by their tribes, and by their thousands'* (v19).

The nation's first interaction with Saul should have warned them that all was not well. Far from going out and coming in before them, he was instead to be found cowering away with the baggage that everyone had brought to Mizpeh (v22). But despite his lack of qualities in either godliness or leadership, Saul's outward appearance reassured the people that they had made a good choice (v23). While God had officially selected Saul, He had chosen the type of leader that the people were looking for. Samuel presented him to the people in v24:

24 See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

Notice three things:

1. Samuel never describes Saul as 'king' in this verse. God had 'chosen' Saul to be 'captain' (9:16; 10:1), rather than 'king'.
2. But in response to Samuel's words, the people shouted, 'Let **the king** live!' They thus chose Saul to be their king (see note 12:13)
3. In contrast to the wording in the KJV, there is no reference to God in the people's reply in the Hebrew of v24, as per most translations (e.g. Roth, YLT, ESV & NIV). The ESV has 'Long live the king!' God was not in their mindset.

Saul's task - if he chose to accept it - of raising the nation out of the days of the Judges into a God-fearing monarchy, would be fraught with challenges. United though the nation had been under Samuel (Ch 7), it still functioned as a loosely coordinated conglomeration of tribes, with no central administration and, apart from the dwelling of the prophet, no nationally accepted centre of worship. And so, with no royal city for Saul to move his residence to, he returned home to Gibeah in the land of Benjamin (v26).

But there were other challenges that would have to be faced as well. The 'children of Belial', whose evil influence had contributed to the depravity of the times of the Judges (Jud 19:22; 20:13; 1Sam 2:12), still held sway in parts of the nation, and even at the time when Saul was appointed by Samuel, their efforts had begun to undermine his kingship (v27).



Samuel's Story

The events of Ch 9-10 must have been some of the most difficult that Samuel ever had to carry out. He had just anointed the replacement for himself and his God.

- His first impressions of Saul must have been doubtful, as the stately young man failed to identify the most conspicuous spiritual figure in Israel.
- But despite the emotions he may have felt, there is not the slightest tinge of bitterness from the venerable prophet.
- Quite to the contrary, Samuel invites the newly appointed king to a feast, honouring him with his own meal and position, providing him with every possible aid to help him succeed as the nation's spiritual leader.
- After presenting their leader to the people, Samuel even writes up a constitution for the Kingdom, to be kept safely by the ark.

In Samuel's exemplary behaviour during the appointment of Israel's first king can be seen the lesson of **gracious acceptance of God's will**.

THE AMMONITE ATTACK (11:1-13)

Little is said of Samuel in the episode of 1Sam 11, however it is helpful to contemplate where the prophet might have been, and what may have been occupying his days between the ceremony at Mizpeh (10:17-24) and the great warning speech he gave at Gilgal in Ch 12.

We know that the battle of this chapter occurred very early on in the reign of Saul, because it was the Ammonite threat that initiated the request of the elders for a king (see 12:12).

So where was Samuel when the news reached Saul that the Ammonites were intending imminently to butcher the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead in 1Sam 11:1-4? We are not specifically told; however, a number of observations can be made:

1. After the selection of Saul in Ch 10 there is no record of Samuel returning to Ramah, whereas both Saul and the people returned to their own homes (10:25-26). In contrast to this, following the rejection of Saul in Ch 15, Samuel returns to his house at Ramah (15:34).
2. It is probable that the first place Samuel went from Mizpeh was a quick trip down to Kirjathjearim where the ark was still located (7:1-2; 1Chr 13:5) to place the newly written constitution there (10:25). But he didn't stay there.
3. When Saul hears the news of the Ammonite attack in Ch 11, he immediately calls all Israel to follow not just himself, but himself and Samuel (11:7). This would be hard to do authoritatively if Samuel were not present; much less if he did not yet even know of the impending attack.
4. At the conclusion of the battle, Samuel is to be found with Saul and the Israelite army (11:12).

The natural conclusion of these facts, therefore, would be that Samuel had not returned home following the gathering at Mizpeh in Ch 10, but rather had gone to be with Saul. Saul was young and *'little in his own eyes'* (15:17), and unspiritual though he was, Samuel had great hopes for the potential impact that godly mentorship might have on the wayward youth. He therefore devoted much time and energy into mentoring the newly appointed leader of God's people.

The conclusion that Samuel moved to Gibeah to be with Saul is further supported by the fact that later in Saul's reign, Samuel arose after rejecting Saul's dynasty in Gilgal (13:8-15) and went - not to Ramah - but to Gibeah of Benjamin, the hometown of Saul (10:26), where Saul then joined him shortly afterwards (13:27).

THE KINGDOM RENEWED (11:14-15)

Following the battle with the Ammonites and Saul's first victory over them, Samuel called another national assembly, this time to Gilgal. The assembly is described in 11:14-12:25, and its purpose was that they might *'renew the kingdom there'* (11:14). This was a most significant event, for it *'ratified the work of the assembly at Mizpeh [in Ch 10], finally closed the period of the Judges, and formally inaugurated the New Monarchy.'* (Camb Comm on 1Sam 12 intro).

Israel was first founded as a kingdom at Mount Sinai when God made them *'a kingdom of priests'* (Ex 19:6). It was here, in the awe-inspiring ceremony at the foot of Sinai, that Yahweh gave the Law and *'became king in Jeshurun'*, i.e. Israel (Deut 33:1-5 ESV).

But a major change had just occurred in the nation's governance, and so Samuel saw the need to take them back to their roots. The closest place he could get to Sinai within the territory of Israel was Gilgal, Israel's first stop after entering the Land. This was where God had *'rolled away the reproach of Egypt'* (Josh 5:9). It was the site of a new beginning for Israel - the old, rebellious generation had died out in the wilderness, and God chose this place to mark a fresh start (Josh 5:4-6). And so it is to Gilgal that Samuel gathers Israel.

The event included the official coronation of Saul, with sacrifices and offerings, followed by Samuel's last great public address to the nation in Ch 12.

In contrast to Saul's selection in Ch 10:22-24,27, this was a very joyful occasion involving sacrifices of peace offerings to celebrate the fellowship they had with their God as His chosen people, *'and there Saul and the men of Israel rejoiced greatly'* (11:15).

While the details of what transpired at this gathering are relatively limited, there are a number of echoes back to the events at Sinai, showing that Samuel clearly had this in mind:

Gilgal (1Sam 11-12)	Sinai (Ex 19-24)
Renew the kingdom (11:14)	Established as a kingdom (19:6)
Peace offerings (11:15)	Burnt and peace offerings (24:5)
Samuel calls for thunder (12:18)	Thunder (19:16; 20:18)
Pray for thy servants (12:19)	Moses spake, and God answered (19:19)

SAMUEL'S WARNING SPEECH (1SAM 12)

The speech of Ch 12 is Samuel's last to all Israel and serves as a dire warning to the nation. It was given at the coronation ceremony for Saul, and along with all the other great 'final speeches' in Scripture, Samuel crystallises the most important elements of what he wants to convey to the people. Samuel himself will continue to live for a long time - probably about 35 years or so - but with his increasing age and Saul now as king, this would be the last time he would summon a gathering of the entire nation.

Given the significance of this occasion in renewing the kingdom (see notes on 11:14-15), it comes as little surprise that in his speech on this day, Samuel will go back once more to the man under whose guidance God formed Israel into a kingdom:

Samuel (1Sam 12)	Moses
Gathered all Israel v1	Spoke to all Israel Deut 31:1
'I am old and grayheaded' v2	'I am an hundred and twenty years old this day' Deut 31:2
'Have made a king over you' v1	'When thou ... shalt say, I will set a king over me' Deut 7:14
'Witness against me before Yahweh ... whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken?' v3	'I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.' Num 16:15
'Your fathers cried unto Yahweh' v8	'Israel ... cried , and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.' Ex 2:23
'Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt' v8	'I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people ... out of Egypt.' Ex 3:10
'If ye will fear Yahweh , and serve him , and obey his voice' v14	'Ye shall walk after Yahweh... and fear him ... and obey his voice , and ... serve him' Deut 13:4
'Stand still ... and see this great thing, which Yahweh will do before your eyes.' V7,16	'Stand still , and see the salvation of Yahweh, which he will shew to you to day' Ex 14:13
'All the people greatly feared Yahweh and Samuel' v18	'The people feared Yahweh , and believed Yahweh, and ... Moses.' Ex 14:31; Josh 4:14
'Turn ye not aside: after vain things' v21	'Be not deceived, and ye turn aside , and serve other gods' Deut 11:16

Samuel's speech is directed not so much towards the king, but towards the people. He focuses less on the duties of their new monarch, which he had already committed to Saul in writing (10:25), but rather on the responsibility of each individual Israelite to set their direction and hence determine their destiny, regardless of who is ruling them. It stands as a powerful speech for us, filled with the insights of an old man who had seen much in his time.

SAMUEL'S INTEGRITY AS JUDGE (12:1-5)

Samuel begins his speech by compelling the gathered crowd to acknowledge that he has been an honest, reliable judge. Samuel was forced to establish this at the outset because his own sons had fallen prey to money and bribery (8:3), bringing the family into disrepute in Israel (8:5). For this reason, Samuel has no option but to begin by establishing his own integrity. The peoples' witness to this forms a foundation upon which he can then deliver the hard warnings of the remainder of his speech.

1 *And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.*

Throughout this speech, Samuel never addresses the king. He only addresses the people. This speech is to remind them that they are **not** absolved of responsibility for their actions now that they have a king. The king will not choose their way for them. Perhaps Samuel constructed the speech this way because he knew that Saul was going to be a spineless king who would give the nation no direction; but the same principle applied to any king of Israel. While God had entrusted the king to be a shepherd to His people (e.g. 2Sam 7:8), and while there were times where they led the people astray (e.g. Jeroboam - 1Ki 14:16), the people were **always responsible for their own actions**.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

It would be no good the people getting to the judgement seat and blaming their failures on their king. The same is true of us today. While ecclesial shepherds can help or hinder our growth, ultimately we are individually responsible to God (Rom 14:12).

Hearkened unto your voice

The work 'hearkened' is the Heb *shama* meaning to hear and obey (see 15:22 & note). The same phrase is used in v14-15, instructing the people about how they should 'obey' God's voice. Despite not wanting to do it, Samuel '*hearkened unto their voice*' because God had told him to (8:6-7,22). By commencing his speech in this way, the people could see the unwavering obedience to God that they had to show, even when they didn't want to.

Have made a king over you

King Heb *melek* H4428 = 'a king' (Str).

Colour in: From 11:15-12:25, '**the king**' is referred to 10 times (plus 2 references to Gentile kings and 1 reference to God as their king).

In contrast, at the last national gathering, the word 'king' is only mentioned twice (10:19,24), and never by Samuel. This is the first time that Samuel refers to Saul as the king, although he still does not use his name in this chapter. In the speech that follows, he maintains an icy manner about the whole situation, and justifiably so, as they have rejected their God.

2 *And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.*

The king walketh before you... I have walked before you

Walketh/walked Heb 116mpha H1980 = 'go, come, walk' (BDB)

Up until this point, the only being that 'went before' Israel was Yahweh or the angel who represented His presence in the pillar of fire and cloud (Ex 13:21; 14:19; Num 14:14; Deut 1:30-33 'went before' = s/w 'walked before' here). This places the role of the king into perspective: as the representative of Yahweh to the people, he would 'go before' them into battle. But he would only find success if he was doing it as a vessel of Yahweh's glory.

A further condemnation on the nation is made by Samuel emphasising that he had been playing this very role for them from his childhood, yet they had rejected him as well. Aside from Yahweh, he alone had walked before the nation leading them in His ways.

Grayheaded

The only other use of the word is in Job 15:10 which gives the sense of a very old person: *'With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father.'*

My sons are with you

The phrase *'are with you'* indicates that Samuel's sons were now 'with' the people as just normal citizens, in contrast to the king, who was to 'go before' the people as their leader, in the same way that Samuel had.

In this phrase, therefore, Samuel acknowledges that his sons had not taken up the mantle of being faithful judges, and that has a result he had demoted them from office. Samuel would have been well aware that God's problem with Eli had been that his sons had made themselves vile 'and he restrained them not' (3:12-14). The corruption of Samuel's sons was part of the elders' excuse for requesting a king (8:1-3). Despite the pain he felt, therefore, Samuel was swift to publicly rebuke his sons for their offence (1Tim 5:17,20).

It may be that Samuel's godly management of his sons' misbehaviour had a lasting effect for good upon them, or at least upon his grandchildren. 1Chr 6:33 speaks of *'Heman the singer, the son of Joel, son of Samuel'* (ESV), who would be appointed by David alongside the sons of Asaph *'to prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals'* (1Chr 25:1). This Heman was *'the king's seer in the words of God'* and was given 14 sons and 3 daughters as a blessing from God (1Chr 25:5). Of course, Samuel himself may well have had a hand in raising Heman to be such a faithful leader in Israel, but it seems possible – even probable – that Heman's father Joel may have repented after his father's public rebuke and raised a godly family.

From my childhood unto this day

Very few prophets or judges in Israel's history could claim such devotion. Samuel's truly had been a life of devotion to his God and his people, right from his days in Shiloh.

3 *Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you.*

Samuel's sons had been known to take bribes and pervert judgment (8:3), so he wanted to establish that he had not done this. If he had, this would undermine the rest of his speech. He therefore places himself on trial, with the people as the accusers, and God and the king as judges.

Witness against me

Witness Heb *anah* H6030 = 'to answer, respond, testify, speak, shout' (BDB).

Samuel asks the people to accuse him of any of these injustices, if indeed he had committed them. Compare 'witness' v5.

Whose ox/ass have I taken?

Samuel evokes a powerful incident from the life of Moses with these words. This was exactly the scenario given by Moses at the rebellion of Korah to illustrate his innocence before God and the nation, and Samuel now quotes this to the people (cp Num 16:15).

Stealing an ox or an ass was expressly forbidden under the Law (Ex 22:1-4). Even the act of coveting an ox or ass made it into the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:17). Job observed people who knew God was watching but ignored His presence and noted that, amongst other things, they would steal an ass from the fatherless and take a widow's ox for a bribe (Job 24:3). But he noted that, while *'they are exalted for a little while'*, they would be *'taken out of the way as all other'* (v24).

Of whose hand have I received any bribe

Bribe Heb *kopher* H3724 = 'a cover' (Str).

This word is most often used as a 'cover' in the sense of atonement (Ex 30:11-12; Psa 49:7). However, in this case, it is an illegitimate cover for sins, one that may blind the eyes of a corrupt human official, but will never blind Yahweh. It is like the fig leaf covering of Gen 3:7 which left Adam and Eve naked in the eyes of God (Gen 3:8-11).

'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' Hebrews 4:13

Samuel's sons were known for taking bribes (8:3), although this is a different word, often translated gift. Judges were specifically prohibited from taking gifts because it would inhibit their ability to deliver just judgements (Ex 23:8; Deut 16:19).

God, on the other hand, cannot be bribed, but will always remain a reliable judge to the fatherless, widow and stranger (Deut 10:17-18).

To blind mine eyes therewith

Samuel would never take a bribe to look the other way when a law was being broken or an injustice was being performed. To be an effective judge, everyone had to know that they could trust Samuel to fairly arbitrate between their disagreements. While judges often led the nation out to battle against their oppressors in the book of Judges, their primary role that gave them their title was to be a judge in the children of Israel's matters. They were the legal system - the only way the laws of God could be enforced. Without them, there was no consequence for breaking the Law and therefore the people spiralled into disobedience, as shown in the cycle of Judges.

I will restore it you

Each of the sins that had a punishment attached required the lawbreaker to restore what they had stolen:

The Sin	Condemned in the Law	Restitution
Taking an ox or ass	Ex 20:17; 22:1-4	Restore 5-fold for dead ox. Restore double for a live ox / ass.
Defrauding	Lev 6:1-5 ('deceitfully gotten')	Restore with an extra fifth
Oppressing	Lev 25:43 (similar word - to crack)	
Receiving a bribe	Num 35:31-32 (s/w 'satisfaction'); cp Ex 23:8; Deut 16:19	

This is what Samuel promised to do if they thought that they had defrauded them in any way.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.

This is a remarkable testimony to Samuel's character. He's been in the public eye all his life, and at about 60 years of age (p10,92), there is nothing the people can bring against him!

5 And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

Yahweh is witness, and his anointed is witness

Witness Heb ed H5707 = 'a witness' (from the root H5749 'duplicate') (Str).

God and the king were Samuel's witnesses that the people had affirmed Samuel's integrity. There was no doubting it now. Their testimony couldn't be rescinded, it was permanently on record.

Yahweh hears and sees all. He is a true and faithful witness (Jer 42:5) to all our conversations, our commitments, our transactions, our lives. And when the final judgment comes, He will know the truth and judge rightly. He has delegated this witnessing and judgement to Jesus Christ, the true and faithful witness (Rev 3:14).

He is witness

As the italics indicate, this phrase is just a cry of **'witness'** from the people. The last time the nation united to declare that was in Josh 24:22 when they promised to serve Yahweh alone and never to turn from Him and serve other gods. Samuel is taking their thoughts back to that moment to remind them of their failed commitment and to move them to renew it.

To take Yahweh as witness is a very serious and powerful thing, for He is awe-inspiring in His presence, so that none can argue with Him (Mic 1:2-5), He knows and sees all, and is both a faithful and true witness (Jer 42:5) who will not hesitate to call out evil (Mal 3:5).

LESSONS FROM THE EPOCH OF THE JUDGES (12:6-11)

Having established his own credentials as God's trustworthy messenger as a precursor to his speech, Samuel now shifts focus. In the balance of his speech, he mentions himself only once explicitly (v11), and never in the sense of being rejected; rather his emphasis is on God, and all that He has done for Israel, followed by their rejection of Him. **His intent is to**

bring to mind their history so that they will not repeat it, and he does this by outlining their pattern of failing, crying out to God and His unfailing response. This approach is used in other places, such as Josh 24, Psa 78, 106, 107, and Ezek 20.

6 And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

It is Yahweh

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, Samuel refers to 'Yahweh' no less than 30 times. His entire focus is on Yahweh, and His rejection, and their need to serve Him.

Moses and Aaron ... out of the land of Egypt

Given the purpose of this gathering, to '*renew the kingdom*' (11:14), Samuel immediately takes the peoples' minds back to the Exodus. This was the founding of Israel as a nation and was the point at which God became their king.

The escape from Egypt has now been brought up in all three discussions about anointing a king: 8:8; 10:18; 12:6. In this great event, Yahweh had challenged the **king** of Egypt (Ex 5:1-4), saying, '*Let my people go.*' It was a clear statement that Pharaoh was not their king: these were God's people.

7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

Stand still

Having brought the Exodus to mind, Samuel immediately uses a signature phrase from that event - an echo of Moses in Ex 14:13.

The phrase is also used by Jehoshaphat in 2Chr 20:17 and by Elihu in Job 37:14. All these instances are when God is about to perform a great miracle. In the case of Moses and Jehoshaphat, it was a work of redemption for His people Israel. In the case of Samuel, although there was also a miraculous thunderstorm later, the reason for their standing still was to hear the recount of some of the great acts of redemption God had performed for them in the past. In Job's case, he was to stand still and tremble as the Almighty proclaimed His terrible power.

STAND STILL

When we are in difficult situations, at times there is nothing we can do but stand still and watch God work. We are helpless, our friends cannot help, our ecclesia cannot help, our family cannot help, only God can. This is the circumstance the Israelites found themselves in at the Red Sea when they were encouraged by Moses that Yahweh would fight for them! (Ex 14:14)

'If God be for us, who can be against us?' (Rom 8:31)

It is good to stand still and consider the mighty acts of God at times, and to consider His redemptive work for us. Here are some passages of Scripture you might like to read to '*stand still*' and be awed by '*the righteous acts of Yahweh*': (Job 38-41; Psa 96; 103; 111; 139; 145; 147; 148; 149; 150).

Reason with you before Yahweh

Reason Heb *shaphat* H8199 = 'to judge' (BDB) - s/w 'judge' 7:6,15,16,17!

Having established his faithfulness, Samuel proceeds to 'judge' the people once more! And all of this is happening in the presence of Yahweh, their witness (v5).

To you and to your fathers

This was not just going to be a recount of 'ancient' history that happened to their fathers, but also of events that had happened in their own lives - in the previous chapter no less.

8 *When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.*

Cried unto Yahweh

Cried Heb *za'aq* H2199 = 'to shriek from anguish or danger' (Str).

This word first occurs in Ex 2:23, the event Samuel is referring to. Here, the children of Israel shrieked to God to save them from the oppression of Egypt. And who was it that saved them? Yahweh, who sent, not a king, but a prophet and a priest - Moses and Aaron.

Moses and Aaron

This is the second time Samuel has mentioned these two men in short succession (cp v6). The reason is that he is trying to accomplish with Israel what God had been accomplishing through them - to bring the nation to Himself. For this reason, Samuel is noted alongside these two men in Psa 99:6 as exemplary intercessors.

This place

While Samuel was no doubt referring to the whole land that they had dwelt in, there's no mistaking the fact that he made them gather at Gilgal as a reminder of the time of Joshua when God, their true King, first led them into the Promised Land. Compare note 11:15.

9 *And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.*

They forgot Yahweh their God

Forgot Heb *shakach* H7911 = 'to mislay, that is to be oblivious of from want of memory or attention' (Str).

When we don't actively place God in the front of our mind, it is so easy to be oblivious to His hand right in front of us. Forgetting is not usually an intentional act, but the symptom of other things crowding in - our mind can only store so much. In the book of Judges, it was the filling of their lives with other gods that caused them to 'mislay' God (v10; Jud 2:11-13). In our lives, it is often covetousness that crowds God out (Col 3:5 cp Mt 6:24).

The hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor

Occurs in Jud 4:2. The judge who delivered them was Barak.

The hand of the Philistines

Occurs in Jud 10:7; 13:1. The judges who delivered them were Samson and Samuel.

The hand of the king of Moab

Occurs in Jud 3:12. The judge who delivered them was Ehud.

10 *And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.*

Cried unto Yahweh

'Cried' is the same word as in v8. Being prevalent throughout the book of Judges as well, it is an apt word to use (e.g. Jud 3:9,15; 6:6,7; 10:10).

We have sinned

Israel recognised that it was a punishment for sin because they had forsaken Yahweh. In this verse the process of repentance to salvation is laid out:

1. Acknowledgement of sin
2. Redemption from the enemy (baptism into Christ)
3. A life of serving God

Forsaken Yahweh

Forsaken Heb *azab* H5800 = 'to loosen/relinquish' (Str).

As with 'forgot' in v9, there is the idea of this being an act of distraction rather than an intentional one. God was simply left behind in their haste to try the new, exciting gods of the nations around.

Baalim and Astaroth

See note 7:3-4. This is the kingdom of Nimrod (Gen 10:10) coming into conflict with the kingdom of God. This choice of phrase highlights yet again that the people of the kingdom of God have rejected their own king and asked for a human one!

11 *And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.*

Samuel describes God's deliverance from their enemies 'on every side' by mentioning four deliverers from the time of the judges who stood representative for them all:

Jerubbaal

Jerubbaal Heb *yerubbaal* H3378 = 'let Baal contend' (BDB).

This is another name for Gideon, who delivered Israel from the Midianites (Jud 6:33; 7:22-23), who originated from the **south** of Israel.

Interestingly, the name 'Jerubbaal' was given to Gideon by his father Joash when he threw down the altars of Baal at night (Jud 6:32). He is also referred to as Jerubbesheth in 2Sam 11:21, where *bosheth* is the Hebrew word for shame, so substituting it for Baal turns 'lord' into a 'shameful thing' (ISBE - Jerubbesheth), as it rightly should be (cp Hos 9:10).

Bedan

Bedan Heb *bedan* H917 = 'in judging' (BDB), 'servile' (Str).

There is no judge by this name in the book of Judges, and so there is some dispute as to who this refers to.¹⁰ The most likely solution appears to be that Beden is the name 'Barak', corrupted by a minor copyist error (Camb Comm). The LXX, ESV and NIV all translate Bedan as Barak. He was the one who saved Israel from the Canaanites, based to the **north** of Israel in Hazor (Jud 4:22,22-23).

Jephthah

The judge who delivered Israel from the Ammonites, to the **east** (Jud 11:32-33)

Samuel

Samuel completed Samson's deliverance from the Philistines, to the **west** of Israel (Jud 13:5; 1Sam 7:13).

Thus, God delivered Israel from their enemies 'on every side' through the service of the judges. In fact, Israel lacked nothing for safety under Samuel (1Sam 7:13-14), and when the Ammonite threat arose, all they needed to do was to ask God for help through Samuel as they had done before (1Sam 7:8). There was no need, so far as their safety from the enemies around was concerned, for Israel to request a king, as Samuel goes on to elaborate:

Ye dwelled safe

The word 'safe' is the same word used in the time of Solomon (1Ki 4:25) when every man dwelled under his vine and fig tree (cp Mic 4:4). Israel had enjoyed remarkable security under Samuel, with a peace that God alone can bring (Psa 4:8).

ISRAEL'S SIN IN ASKING FOR A KING (12:12-13)

Samuel now turns to recent history to drive home his point that the people have rejected Yahweh. He then amplifies this message by calling on God to terrify the people with a display of unearthly power, which leaves the people repentant.

12 *And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.*

Nahash the king of the children of Ammon

Nahash is the Hebrew word for 'snake' (BDB). He was the king that united Israel under the rule of Saul in Ch 11, and the Ammonite menace was evidently already felt in Ch 8.

Nay but a king shall reign over us

After Samuel's review of the rhythmic pattern of the Judges, we might expect these times of oppression to be followed with a cry to Yahweh for help. But instead, Israel abruptly breaks the pattern with their obstinate, 'Nay' - we will find a solution our own way! Samuel is quoting not from Israel's first request, but from their stubborn demand in 8:19, after they had been warned of what he would be like.

When Yahweh your God was your king

They should have known this from Deut 33:1-5, which describes the time when Yahweh 'became king in Jeshurun' (ESV) at the foot of Mount Sinai.

¹⁰ The only other man by this name is Bedan, a Manassite from Gilead, in 1Chr 7:17, who has no clear link to Judges.

THE REJECTION OF GOD REPEATED

This is the third time since their initial request that the record mentions that they have rejected God as their king (8:7; 10:19; 12:12). Each time Samuel escalates the situation:

1. **Ch 8:10-22** - No reference to their rejection of God directly but warns of the misery they will endure under their king if they choose to go ahead, which they do.
2. **Ch 10:17-25** - Refers briefly to God's deliverance from Egypt and later troubles. Then shows them their anointed king.
3. **Ch 12** - A long speech labouring how God had saved them in times of distress in the past, warning them to continue to fear Yahweh even with a king and then providing a terrifying sign from heaven as evidence of the veracity of his words.

Samuel's final speech evoked a repentant response from the people that was not present on the previous occasions. They now had what they wanted, and following a fearsome display of God's power in the thunderstorm, admitted their sin and pleaded for Samuel to atone for them. But despite their pleadings, Israel would still suffer the ill fortunes Samuel had warned them of.

13 *Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! And, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.*

The king whom ye have chosen

At Mizpeh, Samuel specifically said that Yahweh had chosen Saul (10:24). But now he says it was the people! Whilst God had selected Saul, He had really chosen a man whom the people wanted to be their king.

In fact, we are told that God chose Saul as Israel's 'captain' (meaning 'commander' - see note 9:16) who would 'control' God's people (see note on 'reign' 9:17). He never described Saul as king until after the people had done so in Ch 10:24 when they said, '*Let the king live!*'

Once they had made their choice, however, God accepted that, and Samuel called the coronation ceremony at Gilgal to acknowledge that to the nation:

Yahweh hath set a king over you

Hence it states in Ch 11:15 that '*they made Saul king before Yahweh in Gilgal.*'

SAMUEL'S COUNSEL TO THE NATION (12:14-25)

14-15 *If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.*

If ye will

Contrasted with the '*if ye will not*' in v15, this is a common pattern at key points in Israel's early history. God lays out the two options and gives the people a choice, but He is very clear about what the consequences of either choice will be. Previous examples include: The blessings and cursings of Deut 28:1,15 and the choice to serve God in Josh 24:14-15.

Fear Yahweh, and serve Him

Colour in: 11:7; 12:14,18,24

These are the only times that 'fearing Yahweh' occurs in 1Samuel - all related to this event of Saul's acceptance as king. It is only once Saul performs a shocking act (hewing the oxen) that the people 'fear Yahweh' and begin to follow Saul. Samuel wanted this fear of Yahweh to linger with the nation because that would motivate the second half of His command - to serve Him. To do that, he would shock the people again with a show of God's power from heaven (v17-18).

This theme of fearing Yahweh consistently appears throughout the references that Samuel alludes to from the Law and from earlier in Israel's history. Here are some examples:

Quote	Connection to 1Samuel 12	Fear/serve
Deut 10:17-18	God is just and takes no bribes (cp 1Sam 12:3)	v20
Deut 17:14	Appointing a king like the nations (cp 1Sam 8:5)	v19
Josh 24:1	The last national commitment to serve God (cp 1Sam 7:3)	v14

There is no doubt that God requires fear before we can serve Him. The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Prov 1:7,29; 2:5) because when we understand that God is all-powerful, all earthly fears are at once redirected to God who controls them.

Fear of Yahweh is not just an Old Testament concept, and nor was it done away with in Christ (Heb 12:28-29). But if we serve Him in perfect love, that fear - whilst still present below the surface - is balanced by the knowledge that He is on our side (1Jn 4:18).

FURTHER EXPLORATION

The fear of God is a big topic in the Bible. Here are some other ideas to dig deeper:

- Links to knowledge (Prov 1:7, 29-31; 9:10-11; 15:33; Job 28:28; Psa 111:9-10)
- Naturally preceded by following God's commandments (Deut 6:2-3; Job 28:28; Ecc 12:13)
- Leads to an increased lifespan (Prov 9:10-11; Deut 6:2)
- Fools and evil people don't have it (Prov 1:7; 16:6; Psa 53:1)

THE SIGN OF THE THUNDER (v16-18)

16-17 *Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.*

Stand and see

See note on v7; Ex 14:13.

See/eyes/perceive/see/sight (colour in)

There is an emphasis on seeing, because Samuel wanted them to realise that they could see evidence of their **true King**. They had wanted a king that they could lay their eyes on, who they could see at the front of the army; Samuel had emphasised this when first introducing

Saul to the people in 10:24 - 'See ye him who Yahweh hath chosen'. Now they would see the power of their true King. Perhaps he didn't ride a horse into battle before them, but if they just opened their eyes they would see Him in the miracles He performed (cp 2Ki 6:17).

It was later that God turned this around and chose a king based not on what the people (or even Samuel) could see, but on the heart (16:7).

Wheat harvest

Wheat harvest is in late spring, during the hotter months (cp Prov 25:13), an unusual time to have strong rains and thunderstorms (TSK). This, added to the fact that it came on Samuel's request, made the people truly appreciate God's power. A victory over Nahash could be attributed to human power, but not this! This was the God who controlled the elements (Psa 107:25; 148:8). His future anointed would do the same (Mk 4:41).

Thunder

Thunder Heb *qol gol* H9093 = 'to call aloud: a voice or sound' (Str). Cp Hannah's song 2:10.

The same Hebrew word is translated 'voice' v14,15 and 'thunder' v17, 18. Thunder is God's voice from heaven! The terrifying thunder at Sinai was indistinguishable from the words of God that emanated from it - the voice was the thunder (Ex 20:18-20 cp Heb 12:18-19). Psa 29 is a powerful Psalm that refers seven times to the 'voice of Yahweh' thundering (cp Rev 10:3).

Rain

While the thunder was loud and terrifying, the rain could have been devastating. Rain can ruin an entire crop if it comes just before harvest. This sign from heaven demonstrated to the people that they were completely at the mercy of God.

Not only was rejecting God a **great** wickedness, it was also very foolish: '*As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.*' (Prov 26:1).

18-19 *So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.*

So Samuel called unto Yahweh

Such was the clear-sightedness of Samuel that he now called upon God to bring a severe trial upon his ecclesia to help them see the folly of their ways. Elijah did a similar thing (James 5:17-18).

Pray for thy servants ... that we die not

As at the foot of Sinai, the effect of this display of God's power was that the people pleaded for Samuel's intercession '*lest we die*' (Ex 20:19).

Thy servants

In the face of this supernatural demonstration of power, the people feared Samuel and Yahweh (v18), both of whom they had rejected.

The lesson for our own day is pertinent: We will immediately see everything in the correct perspective when we stand before our King at the judgement seat; but now is our time to make things right before God. The people had already made their decision and would now live with the consequences.

We have added unto all our sins this evil

The people had sinned, as per the cycle of the Judges, but rather than turning to God when the Ammonites approached, they instead sought a human king to deliver them, and thus 'added unto all [their] sins this evil'.

Sometimes it is only a very evident show of God's power, or a difficult punishment, that makes a person realise the depth of their sin.

Yahweh thy God

The way that Yahweh is referred to throughout this chapter is very intentional, with a transition from 'their God' to 'your God' to 'thy God'. In v9 'they forgot Yahweh their God'. But in v12 and v14 Samuel drives this relationship closer to home by calling Him 'Yahweh your God'. They had to have a personal connection with Yahweh! Yet sadly, immediately after the thunderstorm of v18, the people cannot personally associate with this God. They should have been able to call Him 'Yahweh our God'; instead, they ask Samuel to pray to 'Yahweh thy God.'

The people struggled to reconcile a fear of Yahweh and a close relationship with Him. Israel at Mount Sinai had the same difficulty (Ex 20:19-20), yet God was clear that His intention was '*that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not*'. This event in 1Sam 12 was this generation's own Sinai moment - a reminder of their covenant relationship with *their* God. The choice was laid before them, to fear and serve Yahweh their God, or to do wickedly.

THE MOST 'YAHWEH-RICH' SECTION OF THE BIBLE!

Did you know that there are no 20 verses in the Bible that contain the name 'Yahweh' more times than 1Samuel 12:5-24? It occurs a total of 31 times! Samuel knows who the true king is - in a speech about the new king, Yahweh is mentioned over 3 times more often than the king. It is interesting that the second most 'Yahweh-rich' section of the Bible is also a pivotal moment of commitment in their history when they called upon a witness (Josh 22:15-34).

20-21 *And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.*

Vain things that cannot profit or deliver

Vain Heb *tohu* H8414 = 'to lie waste: a desolation, that is desert, a worthless thing' (Str).

The same word 'vain' is used to describe the earth 'without form' in Gen 1:2. Meanwhile, the word used in Ecc 1:2 (*hebel*) is a different one, but the principle is the same. According to Solomon, 'all is vanity'. Here are some examples:

- A horse - it cannot deliver (Psa 33:17)

- All nations (Isa 40:7)
- Insincere sacrifices and feasts (Isa 1:13-14)
- Idols - a piece of wood cut in half, one half is worshipped and the other half is used as firewood (Isa 44:9-20)

Samuel warns the nation they would find no safety nor satisfaction in any source other than God; the same conclusion that Solomon reached: *'Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man'* (Ecc 12:13-14).

22 ***For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.***

For his great name's sake

The nation of Israel were God's name bearers. At the crossing of the Red Sea, He captured the attention of the world and in the same action drew attention to the fact that they were His people. In this event He *'made Himself a name'* (2Sam 7:23; 1Chr 17:21; Neh 9:10, etc.). His name, His reputation was now inextricably linked to the nation. God could never forsake them, because to do so would be dishonouring to His name and reputation. This would cause nations to mock Yahweh as the God who could not even keep a promise to His own people and who could not keep them safe from destruction (Ex 32:9-14; Ezek 36:20-24).

Yet it was also true that they repeatedly failed their part of the covenant to remain faithful to Him. So God would punish them *'for His name's sake'* (Ezek 20:9,14,22,44), because they were polluting His holy name (Ezek 20:39).

It hath pleased Yahweh to make you His people

The fact that Israel were God's people was first declared in Egypt (Ex 3:18) and formalised at Sinai (Ex 19:5-6). This was not for any great achievement of their own, but because *'it pleased God'* - He loved them (Deut 7:6-8).

23-25 ***Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.***

God forbid

ESV *'far be it from me'*. There is no word for 'God' in the Hebrew here.

That I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you

Such was Samuel's focus on intercession throughout his life that he saw it as a sin to stop praying for his people (see box on *Samuel the Intercessor*, p81). He had truly taken upon him the spirit of Moses (cp Ex 32:30-32).

The good and right way

Samuel has consistently used the imagery of a path or way to follow. For example, follow (v20), turn not aside (v20,21), way (v23). Cp Mt 7:13-14. Samuel would be like the voice of instruction of teachers in the Kingdom age:

'Thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left' (Isa 30:20-21).

Fear Yahweh and serve Him in truth with all your heart

This phrase has an almost exact parallel to the words of Joshua in his parting speech in Josh 24:14-15: *'Fear Yahweh, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth'*. This is a powerful citation for Samuel to draw upon, for it recalls a landmark commitment made by the nation in the past to serve Yahweh. When Joshua challenged their ability to serve Him, they replied, *'Nay; but we will serve Yahweh'*! Moreover, it was on that occasion that they had unitedly cried *'witness'* to affirm their commitment, as the nation had done here in Gilgal (v5; Josh 24:22).

Consider how great things He hath done for you

In Psa 126:2-3, Hezekiah writes, *'Yahweh has done great things for us whereof we are glad.'* The Psalms are full of praises to God and reminders to think about what God has done for us so that we *'forget not all his benefits'* (Psa 103:2). Take time to stop and consider God's great acts in your life.

MARK THEM FOR AN EXAMPLE

Towards the end of his life's work preaching the Gospel across the then-known world, the Apostle Paul gathered the elders of Ephesus to him to Miletus so that he could deliver one final speech of warning and encouragement to them. Remarkably, as he speaks of his constant witness to them and warns them of the perils that await the ecclesia after his departure, we can detect that Paul clearly has someone else in mind - another man who, all his life, never *'shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God'* (Acts 20:27):

Samuel (1Sam 12)	Paul (Acts 20)
Samuel called all Israel to deliver final national speech (v1)	Paul calls elders of the Ephesian ecclesia to deliver farewell speech (v17)
'I have walked before you' (v2)	'Ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the word of God' (v25)
'From my childhood unto this day' (v2)	'From the first day ... I have been with you at all seasons' (v18)
'Here I am: witness against me' (v3)	'I take you to record this day' (v26)
'Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed?' (v3)	'I am pure from the blood of all' (v26)
'They said ... neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand' (v4)	'You yourselves know that I worked with my own hands to support myself' (v34 ISV)
'Whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? ... or bribe' (v3)	'I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel' (v33)
'God forbid that I should sin against Yahweh in ceasing to pray for you' (v23)	'When he had said this, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all' (v36)

As Samuel had been empowered by Moses' example (p114), so his own life inspired Paul in his work. The lesson is articulated for us by the Apostle in Php 3:17: *'Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.'*

Paul is telling us to find the brothers and sisters in the ecclesia who live like him - people who are not in the Truth for what they can get out of it, but for what they can give to it (Acts 20:35). Samuel was this type of man; he *'kept back nothing'* but gave everything for the Truth (Acts 20:20). And Paul says, work out who they are, and follow their example; make them your role models, because they are the spiritual leaders in the ecclesia.



Samuel's Story

Having served as Israel's prophet, priest and judge for many years, Samuel had just handed over the reins of government to the newly crowned king. Yet his sympathies on this occasion lay not for himself, but for his God, as his speech revealed:

- In the great coronation ceremony at Gilgal, Samuel had done everything he could to bring the people to God by taking them back to their roots at Sinai.
- In his mind, the key issue was to work out how the nation could operate with God at their helm, even though they now had an earthly monarch.
- Having verified his own innocence, Samuel issued a solemn reminder of the past and a dire warning for the future.
- Such was his affinity with his God, that Samuel called upon God to stamp His authority through the terrifying sign of the thunderstorm, after which Samuel assured the people that he would continue to intercede for them.

As the nation departed from the gathering at Gilgal, they must have been left wondering about the prophet they had rejected and the God he served. In view of all they had done against him despite his personal integrity, they must have been impressed by his selfless example of **patient intercession**.

WAR WITH PHILISTIA (1SAM 13-14)

Sometime after Samuel's public handover to Saul at Gilgal and his resignation speech in Ch 12, war broke out between Israel and the Philistines, recorded in 1Sam 13-14.

It is hard to be sure how far into the reign of Saul these events occurred, although it would appear to be many years. While the KJV states that these events occurred only 2 years into Saul's reign (13:1), the Hebrew texts from which the translation is taken are ambiguous, with the actual numbers having been omitted or lost (Camb. Comm.). This has led to a vast array of suggestions in different translations and commentaries.

There is some contextual evidence to suggest that this is well into Saul's 40-year reign (mentioned in Acts 13:21): When Saul was first introduced, he was described as a 'young man' (1Sam 9:2) who was still under the care of his father (v5), whereas in Ch 13, his son Jonathan is now second in command of the army (13:2). This would imply it is some 10-15 years or more into Saul's reign (Barnes' Comm.)

Be that as it may, it is significant that Samuel arises only once in the entire story of these two chapters, and that is to reprove Saul for his disobedience of Samuel's command (10:8) and impart the consequent divine rejection of Saul's dynasty (13:11-14).

The story itself may be broken up as follows:

13:1-4	Jonathan smites a garrison of the Philistines
13:5-7	The Philistines amass an army
13:8-10	Saul makes the offerings in Gilgal
13:11-14	Samuel rebukes Saul: Rejection of Saul's Dynasty
13:15-23	Philistine military dominance
14:1-3	Jonathan's secret mission
14:4-10	Jonathan's plan and sign
14:11-14	Jonathan's victory
14:15-22	Israel join the chase
14:24-32	Jonathan breaks Saul's curse
14:33-35	The people sin and Saul builds an altar
14:36-46	The people deliver Jonathan
14:47-52	Summary of Saul's reign
14:47-48	His conquests over Israel's enemies
14:49-51	His family
14:52	War with Philistia all his reign

There is a major lesson that arises out of the events of these two chapters, but to appreciate it, we need to understand the situation that Saul was in.

The Philistines at this time had encroached well beyond their borders, having set up camp in the central highlands of Israel in 'Geba', or '*the hill,*' between the towns of Gibeah and Michmash, where Saul and Jonathan were camped respectively (13:2-3).

With his small force of 1000 men, Jonathan headed north and launched an attack on the Philistines, routing the military outpost at Geba. The Philistine reprisal was swift, however, and they gathered a formidable army along with chariots and cavalry, and marched on Michmash, where they established their new stronghold.

Saul and his 2000 men retreated quickly down the other side of the central mountain range and into the Jordan valley to Gilgal, with many of his men disbanding and some even fleeing across the Jordan river (v6-7). Those who were left *'were quaking with fear'* (v7 NIV).

And thus began the seven days of nervous waiting for Samuel to join them at Gilgal. The prophet had commanded Saul to wait seven days for him to come and sacrifice on the nation's behalf and instruct Saul on what to do (10:8). There were no conditions given by Samuel; there were no qualifying factors. The command was absolute.

Saul waited until the seventh day. Every day, fewer and fewer men remained with Saul (v8), and still there was no sign of Samuel. Desperate and helpless, the king finally decided to make the offerings himself (v9), but no sooner had he finished, and Samuel came (v10).

'What have you done?' was the prophet's opening line. The impertinent Saul responded with a volley of excuses (v11-12):

- *Because I saw that **the people** were scattered,*
- *And **you** didn't come in the agreed time,*
- *And **the Philistines** had reached Michmash,*
- *And **they** would surely descend upon Gilgal,*
- *And I hadn't asked God for guidance or help,*
- *So I forced myself to offer a burnt offering.*

Saul's response blames every but himself and suggests there was no other option - he was *forced* to do what he did. But Samuel's response is both blunt and direct:

'Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of Yahweh thy God.'

And because of this disobedience, Samuel continues, God has rejected 'thy kingdom' - that is, the dynasty of Saul (v13-14). Saul had tried everything he could to evade responsibility, but he was the king, and there was no escaping the accountability that rested upon his shoulders. God's command through His prophet had been unambiguous in Ch 10:8, and no exceptional circumstance or diplomatic rationalising could remove from Saul the guilt of his sin in refusing to obey God's command, nor the consequences that would ensue.

With this declaration, Samuel turned on his heel and left the Israelite encampment at Gilgal. But he didn't head home to Ramah, instead he went back to Gibeah of Saul, for though Saul's dynasty had been rejected, the King himself had not, and Samuel held out hope that at least he personally could reform (cp v15 with note on Ch 11, p112).

Well, time moved on for Saul, and despite the astonishing victory over the Philistines headed by Jonathan in Ch 14, battles with the Philistines became a regular occurrence throughout the reign of Saul (14:52). How Samuel's heart must have ached with the knowledge that Israel had regressed spiritually under their new king. Under the guidance of Samuel, conquest over the Philistines had been achieved, so that under his godly leadership the nation had enjoyed peace and security from the Philistines all the days of his judgeship (7:13). Due to the lack of spiritual leadership, God had seen fit once more to afflict his people

at the hands of their enemies; yet now God had promised that He would raise up another, 'a man after His own heart' to be captain over His people (13:14). Sadly for the wayward king, the next meeting between Saul and Samuel would only serve to reinforce this reality.

In the meantime, Saul secured the Kingdom over Israel by fighting against the enemies of Israel on all sides (14:47-48):

- The Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites to the East
- The kings of Zobah to the North
- The Philistines to the West, and
- The Amalekites to the South

The more Saul increased in power, the more Israel tasted of the reality of Samuel's warning, as 'when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him' (14:52), in fulfilment of Ch 8:11. Power and popularity became an addiction for Saul, and the fear of losing either would, in time, drive him mad.

WAR WITH AMALEK (1SAM 15)

One such military campaign for Saul took on a new significance when Samuel arrived on his doorstep once more with a divine command:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and sucking, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (1Sam 15:2-3).

Once again, God's command through Samuel is unambiguous. He could not have been clearer:

- **Smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have** - Nothing is excluded.
- **Kill man and woman, infant and sucking** - Every single human being of the Amalekites.
- **Ox and sheep, camel and ass** - Not even the best of their animals can be kept, even if they are really valuable.

But before issuing this command, Samuel also gave Saul a gentle but clear reminder of the events of Ch 13. He reminded Saul who it was that was issuing this command:

*Samuel also said unto Saul, **Yahweh sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel:***

And on that basis, Samuel instructs Saul,

...now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of Yahweh. (1Sam 15:1).

There is a solemn warning in the tone of the prophet on this occasion. And so, Saul set off on the campaign against the Amalekites. It is evident that by this stage in his reign, he is now far more established because his army now numbers 210,000 (v4), in contrast to the 3000

of Ch 13:2. But despite Samuel's words ringing in his ears, Saul failed to complete the mission as God had instructed him (v6-9).

WHY SMITE AMALEK?

Why did God insist that Amalek must be **completely** destroyed?

- Just after Israel left Egypt, Amalek initiated unprovoked war on the newly formed nation (Ex 17:8).
- The war tactics they used were especially brutal: they picked off the faint and weary who couldn't keep up (Deut 25:17-18). These tactics never changed (1Sam 30:1-3).
- They are described as *'the first of the nations'* (Num 24:20), which the KJV mg suggests is in reference to them being the first nation to fight against Israel.
- The Amalekites joined with many of Israel's enemies to attack Israel, including the Canaanites (Num 14:43-45), Moabites and Ammonites (Jud 3:12-13) and the Midianites (Jud 7:12).
- Yet Amalek were related to Israel, being descendants of Esau (Gen 36:12). Along with Edom as a whole, they *'pursued their brother with the sword and did cast off all pity'* (Amos 1:11-12).
- They are described as *'the sinners the Amalekites'* (1Sam 15:18). Right down to Saul's day, the nation was utterly corrupt.
- Amalek's other crime was that they did not fear God (Deut 25:18). They were arrogant towards Him, which is intolerable for the supreme Monarch.
- The policy of the Amalekites never changed: They wanted Israel gone (Est 3:10,13).

Because of Amalek's brutal, unprovoked treatment of His people in the wilderness, God had declared that He would fight against Amalek perpetually until they are eradicated (Ex 17:14-16). Then 40 years later, He gave a specific instruction through Moses that now reached its prophetic application in the life of Samuel. Moses said,

*'When Yahweh thy God hath given thee **(1) rest from all thine enemies** round about, **(2) in the land** which Yahweh thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that **thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven**; thou shalt not forget it.'* (Deut 25:19).

There were two qualifications that needed to be met before this command came into effect. Firstly, they had to be in the Promised Land (which they had now been in for hundreds of years), but secondly, they had to be at rest from all their enemies around them. This was fulfilled in its most complete form to this point in time in 1Sam 14:47, forming a natural segue into the divine command of Ch 15.

SAMUEL REBUKES SAUL: REJECTION OF SAUL PERSONALLY (15:10-23)

10-11 ¶ *Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.*

Despite the king's oft waywardness, the spiritual success of Saul was a matter of great importance to Samuel. His love for his people had stirred him to invest a great deal of time, energy and emotion in their first king, whom he sincerely wanted to guide God's people in the right way. With all the time he spent with Saul, Samuel must have developed a close relationship with the young man, particularly when the spirit of God moved him to 'become another man' (10:6,10; 11:6).

But finally, God had had enough. The Hebrew words in this verse show the strength of emotion felt by both Samuel and his God:

It repenteth me

Repenteth Heb *nacham* H5162 = 'to sigh, breathe strongly, to be sorry or rue' (Str).

We can imagine God letting one very long sigh - of exasperation, of anger, of hurt and of disappointment. He is a God who is *long-suffering* (Ex 34:6 - the word has the idea of being very *slow to breathe out in anger*). Yet Saul had flagrantly disregarded the reprimand of Ch 13, and the warning of Ch 15:1, and now God had had enough. Not only his dynasty, but now even Saul himself was finished.

This is the same word used of God's sorrow that led to the flood (Gen 6:6-7) and of His disappointment with Israel that led to their demise (Jer 15:6). So it would be with Saul - the fall of the man and his dynasty would be complete, because, as Samuel says a little later to Saul, Yahweh '*will not lie or repent (s/w): for He is not a man, that he should repent (s/w)*' (v29). God's ruling was final; Saul must go.

And it grieved Samuel

Grieved Heb *charah* H2734 = 'to be hot, furious, burn, become angry, kindled' (BDB).

Cp 8:6 - Samuel was '*displeased*' when Israel asked for a king. The Heb indicates he was *broken at the fountain or eyes* - we can imagine him pouring out his heart in grief to Yahweh as He felt the pain of the nation's rejection of their God, but also of His judge.

But now, after many years of trying to work with the king of the people's choosing, Yahweh had rejected him. We can only imagine the wave of emotions that must have swept the prophet - the anger, despair, hopelessness, exhaustion and incredulity he must have felt that Israel was back here again.

Why did Samuel 'cry unto Yahweh all night'?

This was not the first time in Israel's history that God had decided to destroy one or many of their number. When God was infuriated at the rebellion of the Golden Calf, He threatened to annihilate the nation and start again with Moses. On that occasion, Moses pleaded with Yahweh, and He 'repented' (s/w 1Sam 15:10) of His destructive intentions against Israel (Ex 32:11-14). Samuel no doubt hoped that by pleading with his God he could change His intentions regarding Saul.

Samuel's actions on this occasion serve as a powerful lesson in intercessory prayer. He had assured the people that his pleading to Yahweh on their behalf was not only his privilege, but his duty (12:23), and even now when Samuel could have simply stood back and said, '*I told you so!*', he instead pleads once more on behalf of the nation and their king. Because of his dedication to pleading with God on behalf of his people, Samuel goes down as one of the greatest intercessors in history (Jer 15:1).

FURTHER LESSONS IN PRAYER

What did Samuel ask of Yahweh that night? What might we say to God all night in prayer? Do we ever pray for others like Samuel?

12 *And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning,*

Many a faithful man or woman rose early to obey the commands of God, even when it was an unpleasant task:

- Abraham rose early to offer Isaac (Gen 22:3)
- Moses rose early to confront Pharaoh (Ex 8:20)
- Joshua rose early to expose Achan (Josh 7:16)

We are told that Samuel rose early on two occasions: to anoint Saul (1Sam 9:26) and to depose him (15:12). Both tasks were immensely challenging for the prophet; yet both he made a matter of priority because they were God's will.

it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

Having fought the Amalekites on the southern frontier of the territory of Israel (cp Num 13:29; 1Sam 30:1), Saul had commenced his ascent through the land. It was really more of a victory march, and we are told that when he came to Carmel (that is, the Carmel in the tribal portion of Judah (Josh 15:55), where Nabal lived (1Sam 25:2), rather than Mount Carmel), that there he set up a 'place'.

Place Heb *yad* H3027 = 'the open hand (indicating power, means, direction)' (Str).

At first it seems peculiar that Saul should '*set him up a hand*' in Carmel, but the hand is often used of a symbol of power and strength, and as such, the same word is used of the pillar that Absalom set up as a memorial of himself and named, '*Absalom's Place*' (2Sam 18:18). Here in 1Samuel, the hand is a central theme:

THE SYMBOL OF THE HAND

- The Philistines were rightly afraid of the hand of Yahweh: 4:8; 5:7,9,11; 6:3,5,9.
- God demonstrated His superiority by cutting off the hands of Dagon: 5:4,7.
- The hand of the Philistines becomes the phrase used to describe the Philistine domination over Israel: 7:3,8; 9:16; 12:9; 28:19.
- Thus, a contest develops between 'the hand of the Philistines' and 'the hand of Yahweh' 7:13-14.
- Samuel took Israel's minds back to the time that Yahweh delivered them out of the hand of their enemies 10:18; 12:10-11.
- Saul delivered Israel out of the hand of their enemies on every side 14:47-48.
- The hand of Yahweh could also be against His people 12:15.
- When Yahweh judges His enemies, He does it through His people, so that 'the hand of Israel' becomes a theme as well 14:10,12,37; 17:46-47.
- Saul became power-hungry and preoccupied with the power of his own hand 23:12,14,17,20; 24:15; 27:1; 28:17.

Thus, when Saul *'set himself up a hand'* or a monument to his victory, it becomes very evident that success has gone to his head. The marker that he erected was a memorial to his own valour and success in vanquishing the Amalekites. Having set it in place, the triumphant king then continued his march, descending once more into the Jordan Valley to Gilgal (v12).

13-14 *And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?*

One cannot help but get the feeling that Saul has found himself in precisely this situation before (13:10). The wording of v13 here is just as ominous: *'And Samuel came to Saul'*.

Once again, the king, who knew better but suspected little, went out to bless the prophet, and as he did so, it is almost as though his guilty conscience speaks louder than his positive affirmations: *'I have performed the commandment of Yahweh'*

Even as he spoke, the bleating of the sheep and the mooing of the cattle sounded over the words of the king.

15 *And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.*

In a remarkable repetition of events, Saul immediately blames the people and superimposes a godly motive (cp 13:11), showing he had learned nothing from Samuel's indictment that he personally was responsible: *'thou hast done foolishly'* (13:13-14).

Saul's response here is the classic response of human nature when caught in sin: minimisation of the sin, denial of any wrong-doing, and shifting of any blame that may remain. Unwittingly, he followed the pattern of Adam and Eve to perfection (Gen 3:12-13). This stands in sharp contrast to his successor, David, who confessed as soon as he was caught out (2Sam 12:7,13).

16 *Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.*

ESV: *'Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Stop!..!'. ISV: 'Be quiet!'* Samuel has no patience for Saul's obvious excuses.

17-19 *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? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?*

Samuel takes Saul's mind back to those early days in his reign, when despite his spiritual immaturity, Saul was at least humble (9:21). He reminds Saul that he was made 'head' of the tribes of Israel, using the s/w *rosh* that described the 'chiefest place' at the royal feast convened by Samuel (9:22). But as Saul had grown in power and in his own estimation, so his care for divine requirements had diminished.

Samuel's reference to Yahweh's anointing of Saul in v17 is an eerie premonition of what is to come. The very reference indicates that his position as king hangs in the balance (cp v1; also note 2Sam 12:7).

20-21 *And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.*

Saul's persistence is almost incredible. He knew he had disobeyed Yahweh; yet he continues to insist on his personal uprightness, he assumes that he can make exceptions to God's commands (in saving Agag), and then shifts the blame once more.

Agag was king of the Amalekites. It was his mind that designed their evil schemes; he was the head of the snake. And yet, somehow Saul thought that he could preserve Agag and still satisfy God's instruction.

RATIONALISING SIN

Saul provides an epic demonstration of the power of the human mind to rationalise sin - even in its most blatant forms. There was absolutely no way in which Saul's decisions to save Agag and the livestock could be acceptable before God, yet Saul had successfully eased his conscience by explaining it away.

How easy it can be to do the same today! The problem is that it only served to make Saul feel better while there was no voice of God in his life. But the moment Samuel appeared, that façade was blown away. So it will be with us at the judgement seat, when Christ will 'bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart' (1 Cor 4:5 NIV).

22-23 *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

These would have to be Samuel's signature words in Scripture, and they touch upon the central theme of his life and message. The essential message of Samuel's words to Saul is:

Listen, and obey.

It is dramatically simple, and yet human nature makes it disturbingly complex.

Samuel contrasts the physical, outward fulfilling of God's laws with the genuine, moral obedience to what He has instructed.

To obey is better than sacrifice...

Obey Heb *shama* H8085 = 'to hear, listen to, understand and obey' (BDB).

This word '*shama*' is the catchphrase of Samuel's life. It makes up the first part of his name: '*Shama-el*' - '*Heard of El*' (1:20), and it was a cornerstone of his message. The very life of Samuel was a living witness to the way in which God had heard the cry of his mother. Having been gifted to Him, it became the lifelong mission of Samuel to teach the nation to hear their God.

As described above, the word '*shama*' has a very broad meaning in Scripture. First and foremost, it involves listening to God, as Samuel did when God called to him (3:9-10). But it

also involves the intelligent comprehension of what we have heard, and most importantly, obedience to it (e.g. 8:19; 12:14-15, s/w 'obey'). Samuel tried to help Saul hear and obey God right from the outset (9:27 s/w 'shew') and up until he was rejected (15:1 s/w 'hearken').

The importance of Samuel's words in v22-23 cannot be overstated. If Saul had genuinely listened to them and responded, the entire trajectory of his life from this day on could have been different. In them lay the answer to his problem of superficial religion (p140), and indeed the answer to hypocrisy for all time. As such, Samuel's words become one of the defining themes of the prophets in their witness against hypocritical worship. Outward religion as a façade over inward corruption is worthless before our God, who seeks our hearts before our hands:

THE REFRAIN OF THE PROPHETS		
David	<i>'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened...'</i>	Psa 40:6-8
	<i>'For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'</i>	Psa 51:16-17
Asaph	<i>'Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High'.</i>	Psa 50:13-14
Solomon	<i>'To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice.'</i>	Prov 21:3
	<i>'Be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools...'</i>	Ecc 5:1
Isaiah	<i>'...I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats... learn to do well; seek judgment...'</i>	Isa 1:11-17
Jeremiah	<i>'Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.'</i>	Jer 6:20
	<i>'I spake not unto your fathers... concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice... and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you...'</i>	Jer 7:22-23
Hosea	<i>'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.'</i>	Hos 6:6
Amos	<i>'I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.' 'Seek good, and not evil... establish judgment in the gate'</i>	Amos 5:14-15, 21-24
Micah	<i>'Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams?... what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'</i>	Mic 6:6-8
Jesus Christ	<i>'Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice...'</i>	Mt 9:13
	<i>'If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.'</i>	Mt 12:7

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SAMUEL'S WORDS

'With a burst of prophetic inspiration Samuel rends asunder Saul's tissue of excuses, and lays bare his sin. His words are the keynote of the long remonstrance of the prophets in subsequent ages against the too common error of supposing that external ceremonial can be of any value in the sight of God when separated from the true devotion of the worshipper's heart which it symbolizes... The rhythmical form of the original adds force and solemnity.' (Cambridge Commentary, 1Sam 15:22).

Why does Samuel liken rebellion to witchcraft, and stubbornness to iniquity and idolatry?

Iniquity Heb *aven* H205 = 'emptiness, vanity' (Ges), 'trouble, wickedness, idolatry' (BDB).

Idolatry Heb *teraphiym* H8655 = 'images, family idol' (BDB).

The words Samuel uses fall into two categories:

1. **Rebellion** and **stubbornness** speak of a deliberate choice to break God's commands, and a determination not to change, respectively.
2. **Witchcraft, iniquity** and **idolatry** all relate to trusting in things or beings other than God: alternate sources of divination, empty idols or images.

Cambridge Commentary therefore summarises the intent of Samuel's phrase as follows:

'Opposition to the will of God is as bad as divination by the help of evil spirits, which is tantamount to apostasy from God: obstinate resistance to Him is no better than worshipping idols (vanity or emptiness) and images (teraphim). Disobedience is in fact idolatry, because it elevates self-will into a god.'

One of Saul's passions in life was his staunch and public opposition of idolatry and witchcraft (1Sam 28:3). Samuel chooses this one pet topic of Saul's to illustrate the gravity of his other sins, and shows that he is just as bad as those he condemns.

By rebelling against God and yet continuing to offer sacrifices as though all is well, Saul was **placing his trust in the sacrifice** rather than the One to whom it is offered. This was precisely his problem in Ch 13 - he wanted direction from God, so he broke God's command to wait for Samuel (i.e. rebellion), and then trusted that an answer would be revealed because he offered (i.e. witchcraft, because God clearly wasn't in his thoughts) - 1Sam 13:11-12.

Saul had then been given the opportunity to change, but he had stubbornly refused. This second time in Ch 15, God had given him the instruction to destroy Amalek. Again, he disobeyed, preserving their king as a trophy and the animals to sacrifice. But God didn't want these sacrifices that He had commanded Saul to destroy - so Saul was really offering them to 'emptiness' and idols.

That is the reality of superficial service to God. Saul is the epitome of the hypocritical legalist. Everything he did was for appearances. He knew he wasn't doing everything right (v24), yet he persisted, convincing himself that his 'righteous deeds' could outweigh the areas he had intentionally neglected for ulterior motives.

The life of Saul also presents the fate of such an approach to life: If we spurn God's commands, as the word 'rejected' means in v23, He will spurn us.

Rejected Heb *ma'as* H3988 = 'to spurn, reject, despise, refuse' (Str, BDB).

SAUL APPEALS TO SAMUEL (15:24-25)

24-25 *And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.*

It was only after the magnitude of the punishment was disclosed that Saul finally found it in him to confess, and by that stage it was too late (contrast David in 2Sam 12:13).

But that which Saul does confess to is alarming: *'I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.'* That fear of men cost Saul the Kingdom. Not only that, but it also cost him his life.

This has been well described as Saul's **fatal weakness**. It was the great problem he struggled with all his life, and he was prepared to sacrifice God's principles in order to retain the peoples' favour. Saul lived by a religion of externals, focused on courting popularity.

SAUL: THE SUPERFICIAL CRISTADELPHIAN

Samuel was already old by the time we read about Saul. This means that for Saul's entire life, Samuel had been with Israel. Since the gathering at Mizpeh in Ch 7, Samuel had been doing the rounds every year so that all Israel could come to learn from him. He was the most influential man in Israel and the nation's spiritual leader. And yet, our first impression of Saul is of a man whose servant is more aware of Samuel than he is (9:5-6), a man who thinks that to get answers from Samuel he should pay him (9:7-8), and who does not recognise Samuel (who was a Nazarite) when they first meet (9:18 and note).

While he did show some good traits at times, by removing witchcraft from the land (28:3) and leading the people into battle and to victory (11:1-11; 13:3-4; 14:6-23; 15:1-9; 17:52-53), none of this went any deeper than the surface.

Saul's was a life marked by hypocrisy. On the one hand, he rid the land of witchcraft, yet on the other he still resorted to using it himself when in need (28:7). And almost all of his battle victories were tainted by some failing:

1Samuel	Enemy	Saul's failing
13:9-14	Philistines	Lacked the faith to wait for Samuel and sacrificed himself.
14:24-45	Philistines	Made a rash vow causing the people to unlawfully eat raw animals due to their hunger.
15:9-35	Amalekites	Saved Agag and animals when asked to destroy everything.
17	Philistines	Didn't have the faith to fight Goliath, leaving David to do it.

Saul was *'small in his own eyes'* when he first met Samuel (15:17); he was humble and did not seek out leadership (9:21; 10:22). But power can very easily corrupt a man:

- He cared more about appearances than he did about obeying God (13:9-14; 15:22,30).
- He didn't take responsibility and instead blamed others for his failings (15:21).
- He didn't lead the people in obeying God but succumbed to pressure (15:24).
- And he became envious (18:8) to the point of anger (20:30) which led to attempted or successful murder of righteous people on numerous occasions:

Samuel (16:2), Jonathan (20:33), the Priests (22:16-19) and David for a significant portion of his reign.

Saul never attended anything spiritual that he didn't have to, which was a known fact in the nation (10:9, 19:24). This led to a lack of faith in God and a very shallow understanding of what serving God really meant. He worshipped God however he wanted and cared more about how he was perceived and his popularity than he did about God.

Saul's life holds good lessons for us:

- Humility is important if we are to properly give God glory (Mt 5:16, 1Pet 5:6).
- Genuinely taking responsibility for our sins and asking forgiveness is necessary for mercy (Prov 28:13).
- God looks not on the outward appearance but on the heart (1Sam 16:7).

And it's this last lesson that most likely hits home the hardest. Saul's physical appearance didn't help him, but neither did his attempts at looking spiritual. He forced Samuel to worship with him so that others thought highly of him, he offered sacrifices, he fought battles in the Truth and destroyed some forms of wrong doctrine. But all these appearances did not matter to God because his heart was not in it.

Are our hearts committed to God? Are we humble and is our focus on giving God the glory? Do we have a deep enough faith and understanding of God's word to draw on in times of distress or when questioned?

Our understanding, our service, our faith and our love for God and others needs to be much more than surface deep. It needs to reach our heart, because God knows.

SAMUEL REFUSES TO RELENT (15:26-29)

26-29 *And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.*

Samuel's mantle was a special one, and it was illustrative of his office as Yahweh's prophet. The same word is used of the 'robe' of the High Priest in Ex 28:4, and this is what Hannah had intended to convey to Samuel in 1Sam 2:18-19 (s/w 'coat'). Samuel therefore uses the tearing of his symbolic robe to represent the rending of Saul's office as king.

This event haunted Saul for the rest of his days. He would never see Samuel again until the day of his death (v35), yet time and again he would hear the sound of that tear reverberating through his head, and then the cutting words that followed: '*Yahweh hath rent the Kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine*'. In fact, it would be that 'neighbour' of Saul's who would remind him of this very day, when, years later in the cave of Engedi, he cut off '*the skirt of Saul's robe*' and then showed him (1Sam 24:4-6,11), and Saul responded, '*I know well that thou shalt surely be king*' (v20).

Finally, at the end of his life, all it took for Saul was to hear of a mantle, and he recognised the description of Samuel (1Sam 28:14); he never forgot this event, and yet he equally never owned its lesson.

The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent

Strength Heb *netsach* H5331 = 'eternity' (KJV mg). Combines the ideas of 'stability, permanence and constancy', and of the 43 occ, only here as a title of God (Camb. Comm.)

Samuel's closing remarks to Saul seal his fate. There would be no negotiations; God had made His decision, and as the Eternal Monarch in the heavens, He would not alter it. Samuel knew this, because he had pleaded all night for Yahweh to change His ruling concerning Saul, but to no avail (v11). Thus, Samuel quotes Num 23:19 where Balaam states that God will never change His mind about Israel. But whereas in that instance God had blessed Israel, He had now cursed Saul.

This statement that God does not repent appears to contradict v11. The explanation, however, lies in the fact that whilst God never changes His principles (Jas 1:17), He deals with mankind according to their attitude and actions towards Him. Thus, as Ezekiel 18 describes, if a righteous man turns to sin, God will change His mind regarding the fate of that individual, whereas if a sinful man repents, God will 'repent' of the evil He intended to bring upon that person. In both cases, whilst God changes His mind regarding the fate of an individual (as is the case with Saul in v11), He *never* compromised His righteous principles (hence the rejection of the rebellious king in v29).

FURTHER READING

Bro Michael Ashton gives an excellent explanation of this concept of God's repentance in *Samuel the Seer*, p160-161.

SAMUEL RETURNS TO WORSHIP WITH SAUL (15:30-31)

30-31 *Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.*

Saul's problem with popularity hasn't changed one bit. We may wonder, therefore, why Samuel appears to relent and returns to worship with Saul. Would God accept his worship (cp Prov 28:9)? The answer must be that he had an object in view - one final lesson to convey to the king before they parted ways for good.

SAMUEL CARVES UP AGAG (15:32-33)

32-33 *Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.*

Agag Heb agag H90 = 'I will overtop' (BDB).

Agag was probably a hereditary title, like 'Pharaoh' was to the Egyptians (Camb Comm). Thus, Agag is spoken of again by Balaam in Num 24:7, in reference to the conquest of Israel's king over Agag. The prosperity of Israel is associated with the downfall of Amalek:

Israel vs Amalek (Num 24)	
Israel's rise (v5-6)	Amalek's demise (v20)
Israel's king (v17)	Will conquer Agag (v7)

If we stop and consider this scene, this action by the old man Samuel appears both ruthless and gruesome. So why did he do it? Was this too harsh?

To pity Agag is to fail to understand the severity of his crimes. Samuel references this in his short speech to Agag in v33. Amalek were renowned for picking off the vulnerable (Deut 25:17-18), and their king was the chief offender. Samuel knew that God had declared relentless war against Amalek, and that this man had to go (Ex 17:14-16; 1Sam 15:1-3). Samuel's decisive action followed the spirit of Phinehas and is a good example to all believers of the zeal we must show for preserving God's Truth, and of the role we will have in the future (Psa 149).

Unlike Saul, Samuel would not have carried a sword (cp 13:22). So as Agag emerged, it is probable that Samuel would have lent forward and withdrawn Saul's own sword. Then, as Agag raised his eyes to meet Samuel's, he would have seen the fiery glint in his eyes, and the threatening sword in his hand. Samuel then lifted the king's own sword in a vivid demonstration of what he, Saul, should have done for his God and his people.

SAMUEL & SAUL ESTRANGED (15:34-35)

34-35 *Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.*

This is a very sad moment in the life of Samuel. Since his rejection by the nation in Ch 8, he had devoted his life to the guidance and development of their first king. He had given prophecies to Saul to inspire trust, he had delivered warnings to engender obedience, and he had provided godly companions to encourage faithfulness. He had also set up the national administration under Saul; he led the nation in worship to their God and he continued to enquire of God on behalf of their king.

Yet now God had rejected Saul. Samuel must have felt like his life work was shattered - for the second time.

Despondent, he returned to Ramah, never to seek out the wayward king again. Despite Saul's spiritual faults, Samuel had no doubt grown fond of him as he set about teaching the young king how to rule God's people. Time and again he must have felt hurt as Saul spurned

his advice; and now, finally, God had spurned Saul. Ever the interceding prophet, this grieved Samuel to his heart.

What would happen to the rejected king and his people? Samuel had dedicated his life to guiding Israel as their final judge - but that had failed. Then he gave himself to serve under their first king - that had now failed too. How could he start a third time?

And it is in this frame of mind that the Yahweh Angel again comes to Samuel in Ch 16:1, and opens the next, and final, era of the old man's life, with the anointing of the Shepherd-King.



Samuel's Story

Samuel had now reached his twilight years, and we find that:

- Though he struggled emotionally with God's decision to reject Saul, he remained as spiritually clear-sighted as ever.
- Both in his command to Saul and in his rebuke of Saul, Samuel is black and white, for we see in each his devotion to **hearing and obeying** his God.
- He shows a deep understanding of the age-old battle between Amalek and Yahweh, his perception and zeal untarnished with age.
- Samuel also shows himself to be a man of **decisive action** like Phinehas, when the need arises.

But God's work with Saul had finished, and so it was that Samuel would return to Ramah, there to await the call of God to anoint his replacement.



SAMUEL &
DAVID

1 SAMUEL 16-25

THE ANOINTING OF DAVID (1SAM 16)

The crushed old man is again called upon by a familiar voice as the angel of Yahweh instructs him to anoint the next king of God's people in 1Sam 16.

SAMUEL COMMISSIONED TO ANOINT A SON OF JESSE (16:1-3)

1 *And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.*

Jesse was of a most significant line in Israel. His father, Obed, was born to Ruth and Boaz, and Boaz was the son of Salmon and Rahab (Mt 1:5). This family were thus the subjects of great blessings in Israel (Ruth 4:14).

Jesse himself was an old man like Samuel (17:12), and evidently of a very faithful disposition. The names of his children display a vibrant faith in his God. Over 20 times, David is described as 'the son of Jesse', even by himself at the very end of his own life (2Sam 23:1), a testimony to the legacy of Jesse towards his son. The Truth was at the centre of his home.

It is ironic that, where Samuel had come from Mount Ephraim - famous in the appendices of the Judges for its spiritual corruption (see p11-13), Jesse originated from Bethlehem-judah (17:12), which also featured in both of those infamous appendices (Jud 17:7; 19:1). Out of the festering corruption of both localities, God raised up two faithful families under Elkanah and Jesse, from whose houses would come both reformer and king. Samuel's attention was now to be brought to the faithful line in Bethlehem whom God had preserved all the way through the times of the Judges, as is detailed in the book of Ruth.

2 *And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me.*

How low the nation had sunk once more under the leadership of Saul. This objection by Samuel was not a lack of faith, for if it was, God would have rebuked him for it. Rather, it was the reality of the situation - if Saul heard about the plan, he really would murder Samuel. It was very shortly after this that the spirit of God departed from Saul, and 'an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him' (v14 NIV), making his moods even more erratic.

This sense of foreboding felt by Samuel is very similar to that felt by Elijah many years later:

1Sam 10	Samuel	Elijah	1Ki 19
v1	How long wilt thou mourn?	What doest thou here?	v9
v1	Go, I will send thee...	Go, return on thy way...	v15
v1	I have provided me a king	I have left me 7000 in Israel	v18
v2	If Saul hear, he will kill me	They seek my life to take it away	v10
v3	Anoint... him whom I name	Anoint Elisha	v16

Both men were suffering the acute pain of rejection by the nation they loved, and persecution from the king who should have sought their guidance and intercession.

And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

It appears there was an annual sacrifice and feast held in Bethlehem (1Sam 20:6,28-29), and God instructs Samuel to attend the town under that pretext.

Interestingly, there was only one condition under the law in which a heifer was to be sacrificed, and that was in the case of murder by an unknown assailant (Deut 21:1-6). In such a scenario, the **elders** and **judges** of the nearby cities would have to work out which was the closest city, and then the elders of the closest city had to take a **heifer** and break its neck in a nearby valley in the presence of a **priest**, after which they would appeal for God's mercy so that they would not be held guilty for the murder. Notice the eerie set of parallels to the circumstances of Samuel's approach to Bethlehem!

3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

Just like Samuel made a feast in honour of Saul (9:13,22), God now instructs Samuel to call Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice and feast. However, it seems that Samuel feels differently about this feast, which turns out to be very different to that of Ch 9.

A SACRIFICE AT BETHLEHEM (16:4-5)

4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem.

Samuel's despondent state of mind did not make him waver for a moment. As always, he obeyed the word of Yahweh, irrespective of his own feelings.

And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

Trembled Heb *charad* H2729 = 'to tremble, quake, be afraid, startled, terrified' (BDB).

News of Samuel's arrival must have quickly made its way across the little town of Bethlehem. On hearing of the prophet's coming, the elders were immediately gripped with fear. The sight of Samuel anywhere outside Ramah had likely become an uncommon spectacle since Saul's rejection (15:34), let alone here in the gate of Bethlehem. But there was more to the elders' fear than just his sudden arrival: At his side stood the conspicuous heifer. Their minds must have gone back to Deut 21 – there was only one reason for such a visitation. Before them stood the **judge** with a **heifer** at his side, the **elders** were gathered and Samuel would be the officiating **priest** (cp note v2). The only thing they didn't know was what had triggered this visit, and so they ask, 'Comest thou peaceably?'

5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Once again, as with Saul's anointing (v13), the sacrifice will be accompanied with a feast (cp note v11), to which Samuel invites the elders here in v5, as well as Jesse and his sons.

Sanctifying themselves evidently involved washing themselves and their clothes in water and abstaining from anything that would make them unclean (Ex 19:10,14-15; Gen 35:2).

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID (16:6-13)

6-7 *And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

Looked Heb *ra'ah* H7200 = 'to see' (Str), but note s/w 'seer' 9:9.

Perhaps in an indication of how low Samuel was feeling at this time, he takes Eliab to be the most suited of the brethren for kingship based on the very same qualities that Saul had been chosen for (9:2)! The fact that God rebukes him for it in v7 indicates that it was Eliab's good looks and height that had appealed to Samuel.

Samuel's reaction is very uncharacteristic for this faithful man. He was renowned as the spiritual watchman of the nation (9:9 - note that 'the seer' = s/w *ra'ah* translated 'looked' in this verse). Samuel was renowned for his spiritual insight, which had broken the prophetic silence in the days when there had been 'no open vision' (3:1). See box p55.

This is another of the profound teachings that arise from the life of Samuel. God had told Samuel that He had found 'a man after His own **heart**' (13:14), and that was really all He was interested in. Samuel no doubt discussed this lesson with David, who in turn taught it to Solomon (1Chr 28:9). The Lord Jesus Christ picks up on it to counter the Pharisees' hypocrisy (Lk 16:15), and Paul uses it as a master stroke in his argument against the Judaisers within the Corinthian ecclesia, when a particular individual was using his physical prowess to vaunt his message over Paul's to the recent converts (see 2Cor 11:13, 10:10, 10:7).

HOW DOES GOD SEE IT?

The importance of this principle that God looks upon the heart is underscored many times in Scripture.

- God desires a genuine, heartfelt love for Him and His Truth (Psa 51:6)
- He has no regard for physical strength/appearance (Psa 147:10-11; Prov 31:30).
- He has no regard for how men perceive us - righteous or otherwise (Lk 16:15).
- God values inner disposition over outward rituals (Rom 2:29) or looks (1Pet 3:4).

This principle is life changing. If only we can learn to think in this way, then we will learn to value the things that truly matter in life, as Samuel did in his life.

God's response to Samuel is unequivocal: he uses the same word of his refusal of Eliab that he used of his rejection of Saul!

Refused Heb *ma'as* H3988 = 'to spurn, reject, despise, refuse' (Str, BDB). s/w 15:23.

8-10 *Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.*

One can sense the increasing tension and bewilderment as one by one the boys filed before Samuel: Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah, Nethaneel, Raddai and Ozem (1Chr 2:13). Each was refused in turn by God - a humiliating experience before the elders of the town (v5). Surely

this would generate a spirit of jealousy amongst the brothers as they watched the youngest preferred (cp Joseph, Gen 37:3-4,11).

So why did God allow this process? Why didn't he simply direct Samuel to David? Wouldn't it lead to unnecessary tensions in the house of Jesse?

It certainly wouldn't have helped David, who was absent, or his brothers, who were turned away; nor would it have benefited Jesse. This must have been for the benefit of Samuel. God was teaching him a very important lesson: It was God who was overseeing this, not Samuel, and this time it would be His choice, not the people's, because He sees what is in the heart, not just the externals (v7).

How different this anointing was to be from the last! The record is emphatic that this king would be *Yahweh's* choice:

- 'I have provided **me** a king among his sons' (v1)
- 'Anoint unto **me** him whom **I** name unto thee' (v3)
- 'I have refused' Eliab (v7)
- 'And **Yahweh** said, Arise, anoint him: **for this is he**' (v12)
- 'I have found David my servant; with **my** holy oil have **I** anointed him' (Psa 89:20)
- 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after **mine** own heart, which shall fulfil all **my** will.' (Acts 13:22)

This was all the work of God, and Samuel was to learn that. It is a powerful lesson for us too - that the work of the Truth is God's work and not ours. We are simply instruments in the hand of God.

11 *And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep.*

It seems David was considered so young and inconsequential that his presence at the feast was deemed unnecessary. It may be that he was about the same age as Joseph, at 17 years of age (cp Gen 37:2).

Jesse also noted that he was busy looking after the sheep. It was this very circumstance in the life of David that Eliab despised (17:28), but which God had been using to train David up to be a good king (Psa 78:70-71).

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

Sit down Heb *sabab* H5437 = 'to revolve, surround or border' (Str).

Cambridge Comm: 'We will not **sit round** the table for the sacrificial feast' until David comes.

12 *And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.*

Ruddy Heb '*admoñy* H132 = 'reddish, of the hair/complexion' (Str). 'The word denotes the red hair and fair skin which are regarded as a mark of beauty in southern countries, where the hair and complexion are generally dark.' (Camb. Comm.)

It is not that David had to have unattractive looks or be of an unimposing frame, but rather that they were not the essential qualities that suited him for kingship. Just like Samuel could

perceive the excitement in the voice of Yahweh's angel at the arrival of Saul (9:17), so here, He once again confirms His choice in the ear of the prophet.

13 *Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.*

David Heb *da'vid* H1732 = 'beloved' (BDB).

This is the first mention of David's name in Scripture, apart from the genealogy of Ruth 4. As the 'beloved' of his father and of his God, David stands typical in the Bible account of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 3:17).

The anointing of David was very different from that of Saul.

- Saul was anointed in solitude (9:27); David 'in the midst of his brethren' (16:13).
- Saul was anointed using a 'vial', a flask with a small opening through which the oil dripped out (10:1); David with a horn full of oil, from which it flowed freely (16:13).
- In both cases, the anointing with oil was followed imminently by the spirit of Yahweh coming upon both men (10:10; 16:13), but where in Saul it was out of character (10:10-12), in David it found a fitting habitation (2Sam 23:1-2).

David would never have forgotten this experience of the oil pouring over his head and down his neck right down to his garment - an experience hitherto reserved for the priests (cp Psa 133). The oil itself was the 'holy anointing oil' (Psa 89:20; Ex 30:31; Lev 21:10), taken out of the Tabernacle (cp 1Ki 1:39), and poured liberally upon David from the open horn.

David's anointing provided a beautiful fulfilment before Samuel's very own eyes of the famous song of his mother. Many years earlier, in the corrupt times of the judges, she had rejoiced to see the day when Yahweh would 'exalt **the horn of His anointed**' (2:10). While those words ultimately refer to Christ, the anointing of David with the horn of oil provides a beautiful shadow of that event (cp Psa 92:10). Saul's anointing, on the other hand, did not even come close to that which Hannah envisaged.

Anointing was not just a one-off experience that could then be forgotten. Once the oil had fallen upon David's head, he took on the ever-present status of 'Yahweh's Messiah' or 'Anointed'. Just like the priests, 'the anointing oil of Yahweh was upon him' all the days of his life (Lev 10:7), bringing a solemn responsibility to faithfully fulfil his role as God's appointed king. To help him in this, God had generously 'anointed his head with oil, so that his cup ran over' (Psa 23:5), and simultaneously endowed him with His Holy Spirit that it symbolised (1Sam 16:13; Psa 51:11). David's greater Son, whose responsibility was so much more again than David's, was similarly given the Spirit 'without measure' to help in his work (Jn 3:34).

In another interesting allusion, the description of David's anointing 'in the midst of his brethren' has been lifted straight out of Deut 17:15, which records God's provision for a king. He said he was to be taken 'from among thy brethren'. The two phrases are composed of exactly the same two Hebrew words. This was important, because it meant that David had a sympathy for his people - he was one of them. Governed by the Law which he no doubt wrote out (cp Deut 17:18), David's heart would therefore 'not be lifted up above his brethren' (v20). In this he is again a wonderful type of the Messiah (Heb 2:11-12,17).

Samuel finds his own counterpart in the atypical anointing of 'the beloved'. As he stood over the lad, horn of oil in his hand, he stood in the shoes of another:

Samuel, the Anointer (1Sam 16)		John, the Baptist	
v3	'I will shew thee... him whom I name'	'I knew him not'	Jn 1:31
v13	'In the midst of his brethren'	John said, 'there standeth one among you, whom ye know not'	Jn 1:26
v12	'Arise, anoint him, for this is he'	'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending... the same is he'	Jn 1:33
v13	'The spirit of Yahweh came upon David'	'The spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him'	Mt 3:16
v13	David, 'the beloved'	'This is my beloved Son'	Mt 3:17

So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

As David rose from bended knee before the venerable prophet, we can picture the responses of those present:

There were the **elders**, no doubt intrigued by the day's proceedings, but perhaps kept in the dark by Samuel as to their true significance (cp 16:2,5). At the very least, they would be relieved to see that Samuel's visit had indeed passed in peace.

Then there were the **brothers**. Already there was a general disregard for their younger brother, but it seems a feeling of angst developed due to this unexpected show of attention towards him (see Eliab's sharp response in 17:28).

Jesse, the faithful old man that he was, evidently accepted Samuel's anointing in good faith.

Samuel, however, appears to have struggled with the day's events. Feeling desperately discouraged after the rejection of Saul (15:35, p143-144), Samuel was initiating a national reform for the third time in his life. First, through his own work as Judge (Ch 7), then, following his rejection in Ch 8, through Saul's work as king (Ch 9-10), and now finally in the anointing of Israel's second king. Perhaps he struggled to shake off the doubts - would it really work this time? With no further interaction recorded between Samuel and the king-elect, he returned home to Ramah at the end of v13.

And then there was **David**. Taken from the sheepfold as he was (Psa 78:70-71), David's life had changed indescribably in a few short hours. He had gone from being the despised youngest brother, to the anointed above his brethren (Psa 45:7). He was taken from following the sheep to be ruler over God's people (2Sam 7:8)! And not only that, he was now filled with the spirit of God (1Sam 16:13), which, he explains in 2Sam 23:1-2 drove him to write many beautiful Psalms under inspiration. It would seem, therefore, that as Samuel departed back home to Ramah, David returned once more the hills of Bethlehem where God had found him, and he sat down to write his first Psalm - Psa 23. In v1-4 he speaks of the ever-present care of his Shepherd, Yahweh. In v5 he recalls how that Yahweh had prepared for him a table (1Sam 16:11) in the presence of his enemies (his brethren, who despised him (1Sam 16:13; 17:28). *'Thou anointest my head with oil,'* he continues, *'my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of Yahweh for ever'* (v5-6).



Samuel's Story

At the time of his visit to Bethlehem, Samuel appears to be at a low spot in his life, as age and apprehension take their toll:

- He never ceases to obey his God, but there are now *'fears in the way'* (Ecc 12:5) as he lives with the anxiety that Saul will kill him (1Sam 16:2).
- A despondent tone overshadows his life, as he obediently, albeit somewhat mechanically, fulfils God's instruction to anoint the next king.
- Samuel also makes the mistake of acknowledging Eliab's external appearance - a thing that is very out-of-character for the faithful old man.

Yet even in this difficult time of life, Samuel never failed to obey and rely upon his God, so that God was able to continue working through him despite his personal struggles. Remarkably, as events unfolded from this point on, Samuel's spirit would be revived as he heard news of David's faithful exploits, and he was reassured that there was still hope for the nation.

DAVID & GOLIATH (1SAM 17)

Having left the house of Jesse in a somewhat despondent frame of mind, nothing is mentioned of the prophet for a number of years now. The focus of the record will shift from the interactions between the rejected King and aged Prophet, to the rise of the Shepherd-King of God's choosing. Yet all the while, Samuel will remain present behind the scenes.

We can imagine the interest with which he would watch events from his home in Ramah. News of another Philistine attack under the leadership of the giant Goliath would quickly filter through the land (1Sam 17:1-3), and the faithlessness of their Captain would again disappoint the prophet (v11). Wait as he might for a summons, Samuel never once saw the messengers of Saul coming over the hills of Mount Ephraim to seek counsel of Yahweh.

A period of 40 days ensued with this terrifying stand-off (v16). Skirmishes with the Philistines broke out (v19), and twice daily this colossus of human flesh came out to taunt Israel (v16), yet there was still no envoy to Samuel.

Then one day news reached Ramah. Goliath was dead and Israel had routed the Philistines. Imagine the thrill that Samuel would have felt as he heard that a faithful youth had taken on the Philistine and won! And not just any youth - it was David, the shepherd boy of Bethlehem, whom he had recently anointed king! It must have had a reviving influence on the old man, as at last he saw hope for the nation. Here was a man who would surely take up the baton; a man who truly was *'after God's own heart'* and who, like Samuel, had opened his ear to the word of Yahweh (Cp 3:10 with Psa 119:97).

DAVID IN SAUL'S HOUSE (1SAM 18:1-19:10)

If the faithfulness of David filled Samuel with joy, then the events which followed must have filled him with sorrow. We can imagine the worry of the old man for David as he heard reports of Saul's increasingly erratic melancholia, including many attempts on David's life – by javelin (18:10-11, 19:8-10), the Philistines (18:17,21), and conspiracy (19:1,11).

Eventually, driven from his home for fear of his life (19:11), David fled to find Samuel in his hometown of Ramah (19:18).

DAVID WITH SAMUEL (1SAM 19:11-24)

18 *So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him.*

It is a wonderful reflection on the character of the young man David, that when it seemed as though there was no safe place left in the Land, he fled to the home of Samuel. David saw a spiritual dimension to his physical danger, for Ramah itself was not far from Gibeath of Saul (see map p6).

Here, David unloads the weight of all the events that had passed over him since that fateful day when Samuel came to anoint him king. Notice the theme of David's life at this stage:

- David **'escaped'** from the javelin (19:10)
- David **'escaped'** through a window (19:12)
- Saul asked Michal, why did you let him **'escape'** (19:17)
- So, David 'fled and **escaped'** and came to Samuel (19:18)

David is now on the run. He must have had so many questions about why life in the Truth had taken such a difficult turn, and so he turns to Samuel for safety and support.

And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

This is a most intriguing statement. David comes to Samuel in his hometown of Ramah, and next thing Samuel **moves house** with David, and went to dwell in Naioth! Yet Naioth is not another town, because we're told in v19 that it is **'in** Ramah'. So where does Samuel take David on this occasion?

Albert Barnes, in his commentary on this verse, provides a very helpful explanation:

'No such place as Naioth (or Nevaioth) is known, but the word means 'dwellings'. Hence, it is considered that Naioth was the name of the collegiate residence of the prophets, in, or just outside, Ramah, to which Samuel removed with David from his own house, for greater safety, owing to the sanctity of the place and company.'

The Cambridge Commentary adds that the Targum, a Jewish commentary on the Bible, renders the word Naioth *'house of instruction'*. Edersheim describes it as *'the dwellings, which seems to have been a block of dwellings within a compound, occupied by an order of prophets'* (OT History, p 479).

Naioth Heb *nāvîyth* H5121 = 'residence' (Str); 'habitations' - a dwelling place of prophets in the time of Samuel (BDB).

In taking David to Naioth, therefore, Samuel was taking him to a neighbourhood within Ramah where a community of prophets lived together! Samuel never missed an opportunity to further the work of the Truth, and when David came to him in fear of his life, Samuel essentially says, *well I know there's a lot you need to talk about David - but there's also a lot I need to talk to you about!* And so he takes him to the safety and sanctity of the neighbourhood of the prophets, where he can immerse David in spiritual things and spiritual company.

In taking David to Naioth on this occasion, Samuel lifts the curtain on what is perhaps his greatest life work - that is, the establishment of the Schools of the Prophets throughout the nation of Israel.

THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS

Samuel will become renowned in the Scriptural account as the founder of the Prophetic Order - not because he was the first of the prophets, for there were others before his time - but because he set up the Schools of the Prophets to facilitate the systematic and continuous education of young men and their families in the matters of the Truth.

As it is a magnificent story in its own right, the tracing of these Schools throughout Scripture and their effect upon the nation of Israel throughout time, has been reserved to Appendix 3. They have been described as *'the voice and conscience of God'* amongst the nation, and such became their role throughout history.

But much can be learned about these Schools from the two passages that relate to them within the lifetime of Samuel himself - that is, 1Sam 10, where Saul met *'a company of the prophets'* following his anointing as king, and here in 1Sam 19, where Samuel takes the recently anointed David to the company of the prophets.

Evidence of the Schools of the Prophets persists for centuries within the nation of Israel. Of note in the days of Elijah and Elisha, about 200 years after Samuel, the Schools were thriving, with locations across the central portion of the Land (see Appendix 3).

The Schools provided an environment in which young men could be spiritually developed so that they would grow up suitable for use by God as prophets to the nation. This is evidenced by Amos' protestation that, unlike most prophets, *'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son'*. Amos had been told to stop prophesying by the King of Israel. In response, he contends that he didn't just grow up through the Schools of the Prophets, but was instead a farmer - *'an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit'* and that Yahweh had specifically called him: *'and Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.'* (Amos 7:14-15).

Because of his work in establishing these Schools, Samuel - the great judge and king-maker that he was - was to become enshrined in the nation's history as *the Founder of the Prophets*. This is how he is portrayed in all three references to him in the New Testament:

- In Heb 11:32, Samuel is separated from the Judges (Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah) by a king, David, and then he is grouped with 'the Prophets.'

- In Acts 13:20, Samuel marked the end of the epoch of the Judges, but he is not called 'Samuel the Judge', but rather 'Samuel the Prophet'.
- In Acts 3:24, as he brings all the prophets forward as a witness of Christ, Peter takes Samuel as the beginning of 'The Prophets'.

Samuel therefore goes down in history as '*Samuel the Prophet*', and this, he stands alongside his life-long example:

*"So Moses the servant of Yahweh died there... And **there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses**, whom Yahweh knew face to face."* (Deut 34:10)

19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.

This marks the beginning of a very damaging pattern in the life of David, where babbling tongues reveal his whereabouts to the oppressive king:

- '*It was told Saul... David is at Naioth*' (19:19)
- '*Then answered Doeg... I saw the son of Jesse come to Nob...*' (22:9)
- '*It was told Saul that David was come to Keilah*' (23:7)
- '*It was told him... David is in the wilderness of Engedi*' (24:1)
- '*Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah*' (26:1)
- '*It was told Saul that David was fled to Gath*' (27:4)

The events which would befall David as a result of these betrayals illustrate the seriousness of gossip and its consequences. He felt the cutting effects of betrayal on every side - but it was all behind closed doors.

The Proverbs counsel us strongly in the use of our tongues: '*A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends*' (Prov 16:28). However, when David came to Samuel, he met a very different man: '*Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.*' (Prov 16:24)

20 And Saul sent messengers to take David:

It is very revealing of Saul's mindset that he sent messengers to take David, rather than coming himself. He tried three times, in fact, in v20-21, but to no avail. We might ask why Saul didn't just go himself in the first place?

The last time Saul saw the old man, he had rejected him from being king on God's behalf (25:23-28,35). Saul clearly had no desire to see the old man, and evidently lived in trepidation of ever meeting him again (cp 28:14). He had no doubt done everything he could to keep Samuel out of sight and out of mind.

and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying

This is the second mention of '*a company of the prophets*' in scripture, the first being 1Sam 10:5,10, when Saul met them in fulfilment of Samuel's prophecy.

These 'companies' or gatherings of the prophets, were groups of young men and their families who had gathered to study and expound the Word of God under the leadership of Samuel. From the life of Samuel, we learn that there were at least two Schools in existence in his time - one in Gibeah of Benjamin (10:5,10) and one in Ramah (19:20).

and Samuel standing as appointed over them,

That is, 'with Samuel standing there as their **leader**' (NIV), '**head**' (Roth, ESV) or '**president**' (Darby). Edersheim comments, 'Samuel was the "president," and, we may add, the founder' of the Schools. He then notes that Samuel was not the first *prophet*, for Abraham, Moses, Miriam and others had *the gift of prophecy* before his time (Gen 20:7; Deut 34:10; Ex 15:20; Num 11:25); but rather he was the first of the *prophetic office* in Israel (Edersheim, *OT History*, p479). Samuel becomes known in Scripture as the founder of the prophetic order in Israel, and he did that by setting up these *companies*, or *Schools*, of the prophets throughout the land.

the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

What an astounding effect this school of the prophets at Naioth had upon Saul's messengers! It is reminiscent of the change of heart in the officers who came to arrest Christ in Jn 7:45-46. Such was the spiritual environment that had been nurtured in this place, that God saw fit to overpower these men with His Holy Spirit so as to make them prophesy in the same way that Saul had (10:10).

22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah.

Finally, Saul relents and sets out himself. On the way, he stops and asks, 'Where are Samuel and David?' This is peculiar for two reasons: Firstly, because he already knows that David is 'in Naioth at Ramah' (v19), and secondly, because he was only trying to kill **David** in Ch 18-19, and he had only instructed the messengers to take **David** in 19:20. So why does he ask about '**Samuel and David**'?

Once again, this would appear to be an indicator of Saul's fear of the venerable prophet. If he was going to dare to venture into Samuel's territory, where once he had been so blissfully ignorant of who lived there (9:5-6), he wanted to know exactly where he might meet him.

23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

Once again, the spirit of God comes upon Saul spontaneously, and for another short moment in his life he is affected by spiritual thoughts. It was as if one more little drip of oil had landed on Saul's head, but the influence of the spirit that it represented would again be short-lived. While it lasted, however, it had an incredible influence on the king.

24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

Clothes Heb *beged* H899 = 'a covering' (Str).

The same word is used of the '*other raiment*' Saul used to disguise himself when approaching the witch of Endor (1Sam 28:8). On that occasion he had removed his royal robes that spoke of his kingly office and replaced them with those of the common people. It would seem therefore that in this last recorded episode in which the spirit of God came upon Saul, it drove him to do a wonderful thing - to publicly remove his royal robes in an

admission that he was unfit to rule and had been personally rejected. And he made that declaration in the very presence of his successor! (Compare Jonathan's private handover to David 18:4).

But there appears to be more to this event than that. The record is emphatic in stating that Saul *'lay down naked.'* Now, while the word 'naked' most likely just refers to the removal of his outer, royal garments, his actions are highly reminiscent of Adam and Eve's. Having rejected God's command (Gen 3:6; 1Sam 15:18-19), they were found to be naked (Gen 3:7; 1Sam 19:24) and tried to cover themselves in their own garment (Gen 3:7; 1Sam 28:8). But because of their disobedience they were rejected (Gen 3:24; 1Sam 15:28) with a curse that could not be broken until it was fulfilled (Gen 3:17-19,22-23; 1Sam 15:29). In a sense, therefore, we have Saul before his judge at the end of his life. Having defiled and dishonoured his garments and his role, he is found 'naked' before the representative of God. The assembled prophets watch as the disgraced king all but resigns the symbols of government to David.



Samuel's Story

David's arrival at Ramah must have been a breath of fresh air for Samuel:

- We are only given this one interaction between the prophet and the future king, but there may well have been more in these final years of Samuel's life. Certainly, it appears from Samuel's role in helping David plan out the administration of the kingdom (cp 1Chr 9:22-23), that they spent a reasonable amount of time together.
- The old man's heart would have filled with joy to see the spiritual vigour of this young man whom God Himself had chosen to reign over His people.
- Samuel's unstoppable commitment to teaching Israel *'the good and the right way'* (12:23) had found full expression in his work with the Schools of the Prophets, which he had founded. These would become a spiritual lifeline for the nation, and amount to one of the greatest legacies of Samuel.

As David fled from Saul once more at the beginning of the next chapter, he would have left Samuel - sorrowful at the trials David had to endure but reassured that God had provided a king who would continue the work that Samuel had begun. With this assurance, Samuel was now ready to hand over the baton and lay down his mantle at last.

THE DEATH OF SAMUEL (1SAM 25:1)

1 *And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.*

So inconspicuous is the mention of Samuel's death in the Scriptural account, that it can be easy to forget he was still alive during the events that transpired since David's stay at Naioth (Ch 19). Terrified by the coming of Saul, even to the hometown of Samuel, David had fled from Naioth to the company of another friend - Jonathan (Ch 20).

At the close of Ch 20, David commences life on the run, as he and Jonathan acknowledge that *'Yahweh had sent him away'* (20:22,42). We can sense the desperation in David's mind as he flees to the next spiritual sanctuary - to Nob, where the Tabernacle had been set up (21:1-9). Then, having collected the sword of Goliath, he headed into Philistine territory to Gath where he was almost slaughtered (21:10-15). He escaped by pretending to be mad, and came to the cave of Adullam, where *'every one that was in distress'* came to him, amounting to some 400 men (22:1-2).

With the pressure from Saul ever mounting, David then left Israelite territory once more to take his family into Moab for safe-keeping (22:3-4). But David's time outside the Land was brought to an end by the prophet Gad who instructed him to return to Judah (22:5). News of these events no doubt found its way back to Samuel in one form or another - particularly through men such as Gad, who likely spent time at the Schools of the Prophets along with Nathan and others like them.

But in one of the most alarming developments, Samuel would one day have heard that all bar one of the priests at Nob had been slaughtered (22:6-23)! How this must have upset Samuel. Not only had the mad king been rejected; he had now slaughtered the priesthood in a rage of fury, and that by the hand of an Edomite - a relative to the Amalekites (Gen 36:15-16)! Samuel could not have been more correct in his assessment of Saul's dangerous potential on the day he was instructed to anoint David (16:2)! In this, Samuel witnessed the next stage in the removal of Eli's line, in fulfilment of the man of God's prophecy (2:31).

From here, David endured betrayal after betrayal - first at the hand of the men of Keilah, whom he had saved from invasion (23:1-12), then by the men of Ziph, where he had sought refuge (23:13-23). He came within a hair-breadth of capture by Saul, when he was surrounded in the Wilderness of Maon (23:24-28), and is then chased down to Engedi on the coast of the Dead Sea (23:29-24:3). There, David provides Saul with an unpleasant reminder of his rejection as king, by cutting *'the skirt of Saul's robe'* (24:8) in memory of the tearing of Samuel's on the day Saul was rejected (15:27).

How much Samuel heard of all these experiences that David went through, we will not know until the Kingdom, but no doubt the heart of the seasoned prophet would have ever been with the courageous youth. Samuel had lived a long and, in many ways, turbulent life. He had seen much before the coming of the young warrior king; in fact, most his life had been lived out before David's time.

Everywhere David looked, he saw the corruption and spiritual apathy that resulted from Saul's terrible leadership; but in just a few short years, he would look around once more and see an entirely different nation. Israel stood on the brink of a new age - an age of spiritual growth, of regal glory, and of national prosperity. And all of this, because of the long, hard life of the man who now dwelt in his quiet home of Ramah.

And so it was, that as David took up the baton, the old prophet of Ramah finally breathed his last and was laid to rest in his hometown on the twin mountain peaks. He had been a consistent force for good in the nation for decades. Never had the Seer shrunk from his duties of the nation's watchman, and now, finally, his work was over.

It must have been both a surreal and a somber occasion. Surreal, because both king and king-elect were present, for 'all Israel' gathered to mourn for him. Somber, both because of the significance of the loss for the nation, and the magnitude of his work on their behalf.

In his death, the final pieces are put into place in the mosaic which blends the lives of Samuel and his exemplar, for the falling asleep of each was marked by a national lamentation:

Samuel	Moses
'And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him' 1Sam 25:1	'So Moses the servant of Yahweh died... And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days' Deut 34:5,8

Both men would leave behind them a successor who would continue the work, and who would typify 'Yah's Salvation' - 'the Beloved':

'Samuel died... and David arose' 1Sam 25:1	'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise' Josh 1:2
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The mourning of that day must have been most acute for one particular man. As David watched the old man laid to rest, he said goodbye to his guide and counsellor. This was the man whom David had looked up to; the man who had taken him under his wing and talked him through the persecutions he was experiencing at the hand of Saul; the man with whom he had discussed all the plans for the Kingdom and how it would run. And now he was dead, and the work rested upon the shoulders of David alone - together with the other faithful young men whom God had raised up, likely through the very same Schools of the Prophets.

We are reminded of the heartache of the Lord Jesus when he learned of the death of John the Baptist, and he sought solitude in the wilderness to grieve (Mt 14:12-13). So David, ever on the run for his life, also headed down to the wilderness (25:1), no doubt taking stock, mourning his beloved friend, and preparing for the work ahead. There is a kinship of spirit between these two scenes: the Lord had heard of the laying to rest of 'the greatest of the prophets' (Lk 7:28), and David, the *Founder of the Prophets*.

After many decades of consistent service, it could truly be said of Samuel that he had been 'given to Yahweh all the days of his life' as his mother had promised (1:11). And so, as he was finally laid to rest, Samuel left behind him a towering legacy of faith for his people - a legacy that would remain with them for generations to come.

'Samuel had died, mourned by all Israel. Although his work had long been finished, his name must always have been a tower of strength.

He was the link which connected two very different periods, being the last representative of a past which would never come back, and seemed almost centuries behind, and also marking the commencement of a new period, intended to develop into Israel's ideal future.

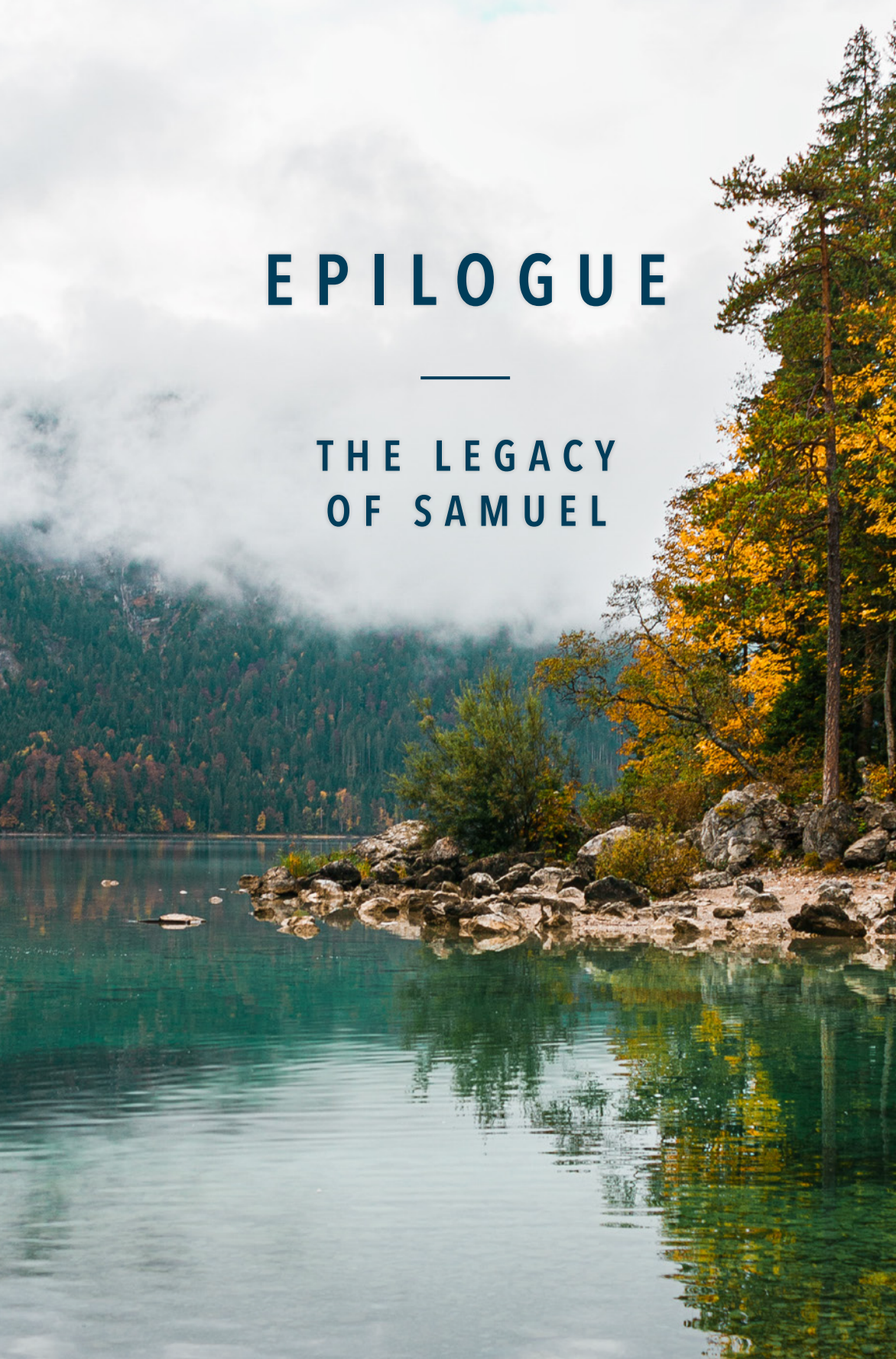
Samuel was, so to speak, the John the Baptist who embodied the old, and initiated the new by preaching repentance as its preparation and foundation.'

Alfred Edersheim
Old Testament History, p 496

EPILOGUE



THE LEGACY OF SAMUEL



THE LEGACY OF SAMUEL

If one were to stumble across the tombstone of Samuel, what might we find engraved upon its surface? Perhaps it does us well to stand for a moment, as it were, at the foot of his grave, and ponder his life, in the same way that he ever contemplated that of Moses before him.

As we gaze down upon the cold, hard stone, we see a life complete; a race run; a record closed. But we see more than that. We see a legacy left for all time.

Thinking back over this man's long and difficult life, we are impressed by his unwavering commitment to his God, his dedication to his people, his love of the Word, and his constant desire to serve.

We stop and think about all the things that Samuel did in his lifetime. Importantly, we don't see a resume of achievements, but a record of service. We see not a man of great strength and ability, but a man of great submission and devotion.

Like Moses before him, Samuel excelled in meekness. From a young age he learned from his mother to give himself over as a bondsman to his God (cp 1:11), and because he gave himself completely to his God, God was able to achieve wonderful things in His purpose.

Consider what God was able to achieve in the life of his servant Samuel:

- Raised Israel from the chaos of the Judges to the stability of the Monarchy
- Commenced the transition to a new priesthood (1Sam 3:11-14)
- Called a national reformation (1Sam 7:3)
- Anointed Israel's first two kings (1Sam 10:1; 16:13)
- Wrote out the constitution for the Kingdom (1Sam 10:25)
- Established temple roles with David (1Chr 9:22)
- Became one of the greatest intercessors of all time (Psa 99:6)
- Wrote a history of the nation (1Chr 19:29)
- Established the Schools of the Prophets (Acts 3:24; 1Sam 19:20).

Samuel's signature would be engraved upon the nation's heart for centuries to come. As Israel rode the spiritual highs and lows of their history, there would remain at their core the unwavering witness of the Prophets, the *'voice and conscience of God'* amongst the wayward nation.

Think of the many thousands of people who owe their lives to the witness of the prophets. They were men and women of faith, of whom the world was not worthy (Heb 11:32-40); and all of them inspired by Samuel, who in a metaphorical sense still stood *'as their leader'*.

Samuel would be laid to rest, a father figure in Israel. In death, he would be united with his Bible hero Moses, as the *giver of the Law* was now joined by *the founder of the Prophets*. And in a beautiful tribute, the lives and work of these two men would blend to tell of a greater man to come: he of whom *'the law and the prophets'* spoke (Mt 5:17; Lk 24:44; Jn 1:45; Acts 28:23; Rom 3:21-22).

Truly, God worked through Samuel to transform countless lives. The unanswered question that remains is, what will we say to Samuel when we see him? Will we be able to tell him how his life changed our own?

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX 1: CONSTRUCTING THE CHRONOLOGY

While we cannot be certain about every aspect of the chronology of events surrounding the life of Samuel, there are both strong chronological markers and possible inferences, and it is helpful to distinguish between the two.

CHRONOLOGICAL MARKERS

Overall Framework:

1. There were **480 years** from the time that Israel left Egypt until Solomon started building the Temple in the 4th year of his reign (1Ki 6:1).

Set time periods can then be deduced from both the start and end of this 480-year period:

From the start:

2. Israel was in the final year of their **40 years** Wilderness Wanderings when they attacked a city called Heshbon (Num 21:21-31, esp. v25. Cp Num 20:29; 33:38).
3. Jephthah then states that from the conquest of Heshbon until he started judging, there was a period of **300 years** (Jud 11:26).¹¹

From the end

4. Solomon had reigned **3 years** and was in the 4th year of his reign when he commenced building the Temple (1Ki 6:1).
5. Before Solomon, David reigned **40 years** (1Ki 2:11; 2Sam 5:4-5).
6. Before David, Saul reigned **40 years** (Acts 13:21).

After removing these five time periods from the 480 years, we are left with the period of time between the beginning of Jephthah's judgeship and the start of Saul's reign:

	Time periods	Years	References
Total period	Exodus to Solomon's 4 th yr	480	1Ki 6:1
Time before	Exodus to Conquest of Heshbon	-40	Num 21:25; 20:29; 33:38
	Conquest of Heshbon to Jephthah	- 300	Jud 11:26
Time after	Solomon's reign before 4 th yr	- 3	1Ki 6:1
	David's reign	- 40	1Ki 2:11; 2Sam 5:4-5
	Saul's reign	- 40	Acts 13:21
Deductions	Sum of above	- 423	
Remaining	Start of Jephthah's judgeship to Saul	= 57	

Within this **57-year** interlude between the start of Jephthah's work as a judge and the beginning of Saul's reign, a number of smaller periods can then be fixed:

	Time periods	Years	References
Total period	Start of Jephthah's judgeship to Saul	= 57	Table above.
Judges	Jephthah judged 6 years	- 6	Jud 12:7
	'After him' Ibzan judged 7 years	- 7	Jud 12:8-9
	'After him' Elon judged 10 years	- 10	Jud 12:11
	'After him' Abdon judged 8 years	- 8	Jud 12:13-14
Deductions	Sum of judges after start of Jephthah	- 31	
Remaining	End of Abdon's judgeship to Saul	= 26	

¹¹ While it has been suggested Jephthah's reference to 300 years may have been approximate, Dr Floyd Nolan Jones argues it was a reasoned, accurate statement in his *Chronology of the Old Testament*, Master Books Ed 2022, p85-87.

The references on the previous page establish an overall framework for the period from the Exodus to the reign of Solomon. There remains only a few people and periods to account for in the Biblical record between Jud 12 and the anointing of Saul in 1Sam 9:

- a) Samson (Jud 13-16)
- b) The two appendices to the Judges (Jud 17-21)
- c) The story of Ruth (Ruth)
- d) The early life of Samuel (1Sam 1-8)

Regarding (b) and (c), there are strong indicators that both the appendices to the book of Judges and the story of Ruth occurred **early on in the times of the Judges**.¹² Consequently, they are all accounted for within Jephthah's 300-year period.

This leaves only (a) Samson and (d) Samuel to place.

In relation to **Samson**, we know the following:

- He was born to deliver Israel from Philistine oppression (Jud 13:5),
- The period of Philistine oppression lasted **40 years** (Jud 13:1).
- Samson judged Israel for **20 years** (Jud 15:20; 16:31), evidently in the latter half of the 40-year oppression, as he had to grow up before becoming a Judge.
- Samson's judgeship would only **begin** to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Jud 13:5) - he would not complete it; someone else would.
- It was then **Samuel** who completed the work of ending the Philistine oppression at the battle of Ebenezer (1Sam 7:13).

The above references, therefore, place the work of Samson as a prelude to that of Samuel, and make the two men contemporary. This fits well with a number of other references:

- After the ark was returned to Israel following its removal to Philistia in 1Sam 4, it remained in Kirjathjearim for **20 years** before Samuel called a national reform in response to Israel's repentance (1Sam 7:2-3).
- It was at the close of this 20-year period that the 40-year Philistine oppression also came to an end (1Sam 7:13), making it essentially parallel with Samson's 20-year judgeship.
- During this period, it appears that God judged the five major cities of the Philistines in two ways:
 1. Through the plagues that came upon them with the journey of the ark - these were against the cities of Ashdod, Gath and Ekron (1Sam 5:1,8,10).
 2. Through the exploits of Samson, against the remaining two cities of Ashkelon and Gaza (Jud 14:19, 16:1-3,21,30).

Samson and the 40-year Philistine oppression within which he lived therefore need to be placed within the existing framework. The problem is, Jud 13 cannot simply follow on chronologically from Jud 12, because as the table on p164 illustrates, there is only a gap of 26 years between the end of Abdon's judgeship and the start of Saul's reign - not enough

¹² **Appendix 1** (Jud 17-18) is in the time of Moses' grandson, Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh (should be Moses) - 18:30. **Appendix 2** (Jud 19-21) is in the time of Aaron's grandson, Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron (20:28). **The story of Ruth** is in the days of Boaz, the grandson of Nashon who was the >20 years old during the Wilderness Wanderings and therefore didn't enter the Promised Land (see Ruth 4:20-22; Num 1:1-3,7). All three stories, therefore, occurred within two generations of the Wilderness Wanderings, and therefore early in the period of the Judges.

for the 40-year oppression. Unlike the three judges after Jephthah, Samson is not noted as judging 'after' Abdon (as noted in table on p164).

This means Jud 13:1 must step back in time, and the question is simply *how far back in time?*

POSSIBLE INFERENCES

It is from this point on that we cannot be definitive. The most likely solution to the above question, however, is that the 40-year Philistine oppression of Jud 13:1 followed on directly from the 18-year Ammonite and Philistine oppression of Jud 10:7-8, as illustrated on the timeline, for the following reasons:

- While Jephthah dealt with the Ammonites (Jud 11), he never dealt with the Philistines, and neither did the subsequent judges of Ch 12. There is no record of the Philistines being opposed until Samson.
- The specific mention of 'forty years' of oppression in Jud 13:1 would indicate that this is an additional 40 years to that of Jud 10, rather than in parallel, as some Commentators have supposed.
- The reference to Israel doing evil 'again' in Jud 13:1 would seem to initiate a new period following the previous period of punishment for their sin in 10:6-8.

This suggestion places the judgeship of Samson, in the south-west of Israel, in parallel with Elon in the north, and then Abdon in central Israel.

It also allows **18 years** for Samuel to judge Israel between the death of Samson and the coronation of Saul.

In relation to **Samuel**, almost no definitive information is known about his age from Scripture. We are left with a couple of clues and then conjecture. The clues are as follows:

- i. Josephus suggests he was **12 years old** when Yahweh appeared to him in 1Sam 3 (*Ant of the Jews*, Bk 5, Ch 10, para 4). Scripture affirms he was 'a child' (1Sam 3:1).
- ii. It appears that Samuel's **judgeship** commenced at the battle of Ebenezer in 1Sam 7 (see v6,12-13,15,17). Before this time, he is only referred to in his prophetic role.
- iii. When Israel requested a king, just before Saul's reign began, we are told that 'Samuel was **old**' and he had made his sons judges (1Sam 8:1). This suggests a number of questions:
 - a. How old is 'old'? (see notes on Ch 8:1, p92) - the proposed timeframes above would make Samuel almost 60 years of age.
 - b. How old would Samuel's sons have needed to be to be appointed judges? If Samuel was about 60, his sons could easily have been over 30.

One final note to mention regarding the precision of the timeline is that some flexibility needs to be made for rounding years. This is because we are generally only given **whole numbers**, rather than the precise number of years and months. In Jewish dating, the number of years may be rounded up or down¹³. If each of the time periods used to construct the 'framework' of the timeline were rounded up by an average of 6 months¹⁴, then this

¹³ This was observed by Edwin Theile in his chronology on the Kings entitled, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. See https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mysterious_Numbers_of_the_Hebrew_Kings for a summary.

¹⁴ For example, we know that Heshbon was taken between 1/6/40 (conclusion of the month of mourning for Aaron, Num 33:38; 20:29) and 1/11/40 (the day that Moses addressed Israel, Deut 1:3-4) of the Wilderness Wanderings. This means that technically this first period on the timeline may have only been about 39.5 years, adding an extra 6 months to the period between Abdon and Saul.

would add **up to approximately 4 years** to the gap between Abdon and Saul, making Samuel anything from **56 - 60 years of age** when he was 'old' and anointed Saul.

PROBLEM PASSAGES

There are a couple of potential 'problem passages' with which the proposed chronology does not fit, and it is worth briefly considering these.

The first is Acts 13:19-20.

- **Problem:** In the KJV, this states that the judges spanned 450 years, obviously contradicting 1Ki 6:1 and the timeline.
- **Solution:** Many translations (including YLT, ESV, LEB, NIV) state that, rather than the 450-year period referring to the length of the Judges, it is actually a summary of the epoch that Paul had just described, i.e. that there were 450 years from the choosing of the Patriarchs until the conquest of Canaan (Acts 13:17-19). This works well chronologically.

The second is 1Sam 7:2.

- **Problem:** This passage can be read as a summary of the complete duration of which the ark was in Kirjathjearim, i.e. that it was only there for 20 years. The problem is that we know that the ark was at Kirjathjearim until David brought it up to Zion (2Sam 6:2, Josh 15:9), allowing only 20 years for the judgeship of Samuel, the reign of Saul and 7.5 years of David's reign.
- **Solution:** 1Sam 7:2 states that, while the ark remained at Kirjathjearim, there were 20 years *before Israel started lamenting after Yahweh*, not that the ark only remained there for 20 years. See explanation on 1Sam 7:2, p79.

INTERESTING SUPPOSITIONS

Finally, when surveying the timeline, there are a number of interesting possibilities that present themselves. As Scripture does not articulate them, these can be treated as suppositions only, however they do provide possible explanations for circumstances we may otherwise consider a little odd:

1. Given Jephthah devoted his daughter to Yahweh, evidently in service at the Tabernacle in Shiloh where all the daughters in Israel would meet annually '*to talk to the daughter of Jephthah*' (Jud 11:40 YLT; Jud 21:19), it is plausible that she was present serving at the Tabernacle when Hannah brought Samuel to serve there. This may explain how it was possible for Hannah to leave a 3y/o child in the care of an elderly priest whose sons were so dangerous.
2. In 1Sam 7, the nation suddenly '*lamented after Yahweh*' after a 20-year interlude. No trigger is mentioned for this abrupt change of heart; the timeline, however, indicates that Samson had died only a few months before they mourn, so that it is plausible that it was his death that triggered the national repentance.

APPENDIX 2: HANNAH & MARY

Hannah's prayer, filled with scripture and prophetic language, would have been an inspiration to many brethren and sisters throughout history. One young sister who we know was inspired by the words of Hannah, to the point of using them as a framework for her own song, was Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Mary would have seen the similarities between her situation and Hannah's, and she too was promised a son who would bring about an even greater transformation than that of Samuel.

Notice the similarities between the two songs:

Lk 1	Mary's Song	Hannah and her Prayer	1Sam
v46	My soul doth magnify the Lord	My heart rejoiceth in Yahweh	2:1
v47	Rejoiced in God my Saviour	I rejoice in Thy salvation	2:1
v48	Regarded the low estate of His handmaiden	Look on the affliction of Thine handmaid	1:11
v49	Holy is His name	None holy as Yahweh	2:2
v51	Shewed strength with His arm	He shall give strength unto His king	2:10
v51	Scattered the proud	Talk no more exceeding proudly... adversaries... broken to pieces	2:3,10
v52	Put down the mighty...	Bows of the mighty men are broken	2:4
v52	...from their thrones (Gk)	Throne of glory	2:8
v52	Exalt them of low degree	He bringeth low, and lifteth up	2:6
v53	Filled the hungry	Those who were hungry have ceased to hunger (ESV)	2:5
v53	The rich hath He sent empty away	Yahweh maketh poor, and maketh rich	2:7

Both sisters provide us with a beautiful guide to our praise and worship of God, using the language that God gave to others through inspiration to praise Him.

Paul explains in 1Cor 2:11-16 (ESV) that, *'No one comprehends the thoughts of God'* except through His Holy Spirit. Now of course, we do not have the Holy Spirit today, but as Paul goes on to explain, the Apostles imparted their God-given understanding of the Truth *'in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual'*.

Given God's power and works are so wonderful that we cannot fully comprehend them (Ecc 11:5), we are unable to find sufficient words of praise on our own. Instead, like Mary we have been given the inspired writings of faithful examples in Scripture to elevate our own thoughts and understanding so that we can find adequate words of praise and thankfulness.

Hannah's prayer is a wonderful place to begin as we contemplate how we can meditate upon our Father's greatness and express our appreciation of Him and His ways.

APPENDIX 3: THE STORY OF THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS

As described in the box on p154, the founding of the Schools of the Prophets would have to be one of Samuel's greatest life works and gifts to the nation.

They were to be a beacon of light for the nation throughout the coming centuries, holding aloft the flame of God's word throughout the waves of darkness that would pass over God's people. They really were *'the voice and conscience of God'* amongst the nation.

To appreciate the impact of the Schools of the Prophets on Israel's history, one must trace through their story as it is presented throughout the Scriptural record.

The Beginnings of the Schools

The Schools are first referred to in the life of Samuel, where they are mentioned on two occasions:

1. 1Sam 10, where Saul met *'a company of the prophets'* following his anointing as king (v5-13).
2. 1Sam 19, where Samuel takes the recently anointed David to the company of the prophets (v18-24).

By this early stage, the Schools were a known entity in Israel, and were described as:

- *'The prophets'* (1Sam 10:11), or
- *'A company of the prophets'* (1Sam 10:5; 19:20), and later
- *'The sons of the prophets'* (2Ki 2:3).

As mentioned earlier, it was because of his work in establishing these Schools that Samuel became known as *the Founder of the Prophets*. Note the link to the Prophets specifically in all references to him in the New Testament (Acts 3:24; 13:20; Heb 11:32).

The Locations of the Schools

Given at least some of the Schools were already established by the time Saul was anointed king in 1Sam 10, Samuel had evidently been setting them up during the period of his sole judgeship over Israel. During these years, he went on an annual circuit from Ramah through Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh, returning to his home in Ramah (1Sam 7:15-17).

Interestingly, later Scriptural evidence will be found of Schools in three of these four towns, along with a number of other locations, affirming that the formation of these Schools was likely a large part of Samuel's work during this period:

- **Ramah** - home to a School of the Prophets in the days of Samuel (1Sam 19:19-20).
- **Bethel** - a School of the Prophets in Elisha's day (2Ki 2:3). Also a centre of worship in Samuel's time (1Sam 10:3), an old prophet's home in the days of Jeroboam (1Ki 13:1,11) and one of Elijah's stops before God took him (2Ki 2:2).
- **Gilgal** - home to a School in Elisha's time (2Ki 4:38). Also the location Elijah was found at before God took him (2Ki 2:1).
- **Jericho** - where Elijah and Elisha met the sons of the Prophets (2Ki 2:5).
- **Gibeah** of Benjamin - where Saul met a company of the sons of the Prophets (1Sam 10:5-6, see Camb Comm on this verse).

- **Dothan**, where Elisha apparently resided for a time with the sons of the Prophets (2Ki 6:1,13).¹⁵

The Duration of the Schools

The Schools are referred to throughout the centuries of Israel's history, from the time of Samuel until close to the end of the Kingdom. They may even have been alluded to after the return from captivity:

- In the days of Samuel (1Sam 19:18)
- In the days of Ahab (1Ki 18:4), about 200 years after Samuel.
- In the days of Jehu (2Ki 9:1), about 250 years after Samuel
- In the days of Uzziah (Amos 7:1,14), about 300 years after Samuel.

The Teachers of the Schools

We know of three men who served as leaders and teachers for the Schools of the Prophets:

- Samuel, who is described as their 'leader' (NIV) or 'head' (Roth) in 1Sam 19:20.
- Elijah, who is described as their 'master' (2Ki 2:3,5,16) and 'father' (v12).
- Elisha, who is described as their 'master' (2Ki 6:5), the 'man of God' (2Ki 4:40).

These men were highly respected, and their authority was duly recognised (2Ki 2:15).

The Size of the Schools

Scripture contains many helpful hints as to the size of the Schools themselves:

- When Jezebel set about to kill the prophets, Obadiah hid **100** in a cave, in two groups of 50 - evidently from one or more of the Schools (1Ki 18:4).
- A farmer of Baal-shalisha asked, '*Should I set this before **an hundred** men?*' when he offered to feed the Sons of the Prophets at Gilgal (2Ki 4:42).
- The Sons of the Prophets at Jericho offered to go and look for Elijah, sending '**fifty** strong men' (2Ki 2:16).
- God told Elijah that he had reserved 7000 faithful in Israel, many of whom would have lived in these Schools (1Ki 19:18).

The Operation of the Schools

Much can be deduced from the scattered mentions of the Schools in terms of how they functioned on a daily basis.

- We know that they lived in their own little communities, such as *the dwellings* in Ramah (1Sam 19:18; 2Ki 6:1).
- These neighbourhoods were made up of men, women and children (2Ki 4:1), so that the Schools were comprised of young men who had dedicated both themselves and their families to the Truth.

¹⁵ It has also been suggested that Schools were to be found at Mount Carmel and Samaria, given that Elisha lived in both locations for a prolonged period of time (Mount Carmel: 2Ki 2:25; 4:25; Samaria: 2Ki 6:32), and given he was heavily involved with the Schools, he likely established them in his home town if they did not already exist there, just as Samuel did. Additionally, it has been suggested that there was a School in Jerusalem based on 2Chr 34:22 which states that Huldah the Prophetess lived in '*the college*' (KJV), or '*the House of Doctrine*' (Jubilee Bible). However both of these are suggestions only and while these locations may well have housed Schools of the Prophets, it is difficult to prove it from the Bible record.

- We also know that they sometimes ate meals together (2Ki 4:38,42), indicating the close-knit atmosphere in these Schools.
- The Schools were alive with the Word of God, as the prophets would prophesy by the Holy Spirit (1Sam 10:11).
- This provided an environment which was conducive to praise, and we know that they used musical instruments to aid them in this (1Sam 10:5).
- Additionally, that they held weekly and monthly meetings was a known fact in Israel (2Ki 4:23).

The Schools were therefore a structured environment in which God's ways were encouraged and respected. A general fervour was felt for the Truth, and this manifested in their regular meetings and praise to God. Although their accommodation style was different, living in a neighbourhood together, the Schools provide a good pattern for us to follow in our Ecclesias.

The Wisdom of the Schools

Samuel's choice to establish the Schools of the Prophets under the guidance and help of God was a truly marvellous one. A moment's reflection upon the other roles of the highest national importance will reveal that both the kingship and the priesthood were passed on on the basis of lineage, rather than suitability. The prophetic order, however, was to be of God's choosing. As the priesthood and monarchy went astray, therefore, God could, and would, appoint prophets through time who would convey His divine perspective and warnings.

The Impact of the Schools

Samuel's entire life had been framed upon that of Moses, the greatest prophet in Israel's history to that time (Deut 34:10). It had been this man's desire that '*all Yahweh's people were prophets*' (Num 11:29), for he understood that if this were the case - if God's Spirit was endowed upon more Israelites, and if His Word was in their hearts and minds - then the nation's trajectory would be far better.

Samuel resolved to make Moses' desire his own ambition. From what appears to have been an early age, the young man Samuel set about establishing the Schools of the Prophets so that the nation might have a constant supply of deeply spiritual men and women to guide and direct them.

As he was laid to rest many years later, Samuel left behind him a new institution in Israel: *The Order of the Prophets*. Having successfully founded these Schools with the help of God, Samuel became the symbolic head of the prophets who came through those gates. Consider the way in which the Old Testament Scriptures are described:

- Christ came to fulfil 'the **law** and the **prophets**' Mt 5:17
- 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the **law** and the **prophets**.' Mt 7:12
- 'All the **prophets** and the **law** prophesied until John.' Mt 11:13
- 'On these two commandments hang all the **law** and the **prophets**.' Mt 22:40
- 'The **law** and the **prophets** were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached...' Lk 16:16

- 'That all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the **law** of Moses, and in the **prophets**, and in the psalms, concerning me.' Lk 24:44
- 'We have found him, of whom Moses in the **law**, and the **prophets**, did write, Jesus of Nazareth' Jn 1:45
- 'And after the reading of the **law** and the **prophets** ...' Acts 13:15
- 'So worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the **law** and in the **prophets**' Acts 24:14
- 'He expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the **law** of Moses, and out of the **prophets**' Acts 28:23
- 'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the **law** and the **prophets**' Rom 3:21

The Scriptures would primarily come to be known under the umbrella terms of 'the Law' and 'the Prophets', with Moses responsible for the former, and Samuel for the latter.

At every turn, therefore, in the nation's history, the signature of Samuel could be seen and felt, as God's work through him continued to bear fruit for centuries to come.

In fact, the magnitude of this man's impact for good can be seen by noting all the faithful prophets who may have been through the Schools of the Prophets:¹⁶

Heman the seer, grandson of Samuel (1Chr 25:5)

Asaph the seer (2Chr 29:30)

Jeduthan/Ethan, the king's seer (2Chr 35:15)

Nathan the prophet (1Chr 29:29)

Gad the seer (2Sam 24:11; 1Chr 29:29)

King David, a prophet (Acts 2:30; 1Sam 19:18-20)

Zadok the priest, a seer (1Sam 15:27)

Shemaiah, the prophet to Rehoboam (2Chr 12:15)

Iddo, the seer to Jeroboam (2Chr 9:29)

Ahijah the Shilonite, prophet to Jeroboam (1Ki 11:29)

The old prophet (1Ki 13)

Jehu, prophet to Baasha (1Ki 16:7)

Oded, the prophet to Jehoshaphat (2Chr 15:8)

Micaiah, prophet to Ahab/Jehoshaphat (2Chr 18:6-7)

Hanani, seer to Asa & Jehoshaphat (2Chr 16:7; 19:2)

Elijah, the prophet to king Ahab (1Ki 18:22)

Elisha the prophet (1Ki 19:16)

The Seers who attended Manasseh (2Chr 33:18-19)

Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet (2Ki 14:25)

Isaiah, prophet to Hezekiah (2Ki 19:2)

Huldah, prophetess to Josiah (2Ki 22:14)

Jeremiah the prophet (2Chr 36:12)

Joel the prophet (Acts 2:16)

Daniel the prophet (Mt 24:15)

Haggai the prophet (Ezra 5:1)

Zechariah the son of Iddo, the prophet (Ezra 5:1)

John the Baptist, prophet of the Highest (Lk 1:76)

God had truly brought about a great work through the life of Samuel, the man who was '*given to Yahweh all the days of his life*' (1Sam 1:11). How many individuals throughout history will owe their lives to God's work through this man and the prophetic voice that sounded out in Israel ever since, only the resurrection will reveal.

¹⁶ It would appear from Amos' words in Amos 7:14-15 that many, or even most, of the prophets went through the Schools, though Amos himself did not.