

2. Hannah's Prayer & Samuel's Birth

(1 Samuel 1:1-4:1)

“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

1 The Downfall of Eli and the Rise of Samuel

(1 Samuel 1:1–7:17)

1.1 The Story of Samuel's Birth (1 Samuel 1:1–2:11a)

1.1.1 Samuel's Family is Described (1:1-8)

- According to 1 Chronicles 6:22–28, 33–38, Samuel was born into the family line of Kohath in the tribe of Levi. *Geographically*, Samuel's family was from Ephraim but *genealogically* from Levi.
- 1:3 - first use of “LORD of Hosts” (“YHWH of Armies”) in Bible.

“In 1-2 Samuel and the Psalms, this title associates Yahweh with the sacred ark (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; see also Psa 84:1) and with **his historic role as his people's protector and guide**. It thus has historical retrospective built into it, as is eminently appropriate at the beginning of a treaty-covenant. But as its use in the Psalms illustrates, it also has **close associations with Yahweh's role as Israel's true king** (Psa 24:10). In the case of Hannah (1 Sam 1:11) and the psalmists (Psa 84:8), **it is Yahweh of Hosts—like Israel's king who was the judge and defender of the widow, the orphan, and the poor—to whom needy and fearful Israelites turned in prayer.**”

[Harry A. Hoffner Jr., 1 & 2 Samuel, 150]

- **Shiloh:**
“Shiloh ... had functioned as the early center of the Israelite worship of Yahweh since the days of Joshua. It was there that the Tent of Meeting ... was set up (Josh 18:1), and covenant-related activities—for example, the determination of tribal allotments within the Promised Land, celebration of annual festivals, and calls to holy war—were carried out (cf. Josh 18:8; 19:51; 21:1–2; 22:9, 12; Judg 18:31; 21:12, 19, 21). Even in Eli's day the Tent of Meeting was still in use at Shiloh (cf. 2:22), but it had been augmented by a more permanent architectural structure (cf. 1:7, 9; 3:15) that served as the center of [worship].” [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 65]

- 1:3 - Hophni (“tadpole”?) and Phineas (“dark skinned one”) are most likely Egyptian names.
- 1:6 - the rivalry between Peninnah and Hannah recalls Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16) and also Rachael and Leah (Gen 30)

1.1.2 **Hannah Prays for a Son (1:9-20)**

- 1:11 - “no razor....” related to the Nazirite Vow (Num 6:2-21). Samson serves as a foil (contrast) to Samuel - both are born to barren mothers and both are consecrated as Nazirites. (see Jud 13:1-7)

1.1.3 **Samuel is Dedicated to the LORD (1:21-28)**

- 1:22 - “in the presence of...” > “Before the Face of the LORD” (See Exod 34:24; Deut 16:16; 31:11)

1.1.4 **Hannah Praises the LORD (2:1-11a)**

- Hannah’s song is a “bookend” for the whole work, parallel to David’s song in 2 Samuel 22.
- 2:11 - “His anointed” - Hebrew: “*meshiach*”- first reference to a King as “anointed”

1.2 **Eli's Household Contrasted with Samuel** (1 Samuel 2:11b–36)

- **Three Key themes** from the Torah begin in this narrative thread:
 - a) the shift of the priestly line from Eli's line to Eleazar's line (see Numbers 25:6-13), eventually to Zadok (see 1 Kgs 2:35; 1 Chr 29:22),
 - b) shift from Shiloh to Jerusalem (see Deut 26:2b),
 - c) the appearance of the "Prophet like Moses" (see Deut 18:15)

1.2.1 **Eli's Sons Prove Faithless (2:11b-21)**

- 2:12 - "worthless men" - "*sons of belial*" - those who do not recognize the Lordship of YHWH
- 2:15 - "before the fat was burned" - the fatty portion belonged to the LORD (see Lev 3:3–5; 7:30)
- The Book of Judges ends with a series of stories in which the Levites lead Israel into sin of idolatry and kin-slaying. The sons of Eli lead Israel in treating the sacrifices with contempt.

1.2.2 **Eli Rebukes His Sons (2:22-26)**

1.2.3 **The LORD Cuts Off the Family of Eli (2:27-36)**

- 2:25 - "a faithful priest" > most likely Zadok.

1.3 **The LORD Calls Samuel** (1 Samuel 3:1–4:1)

- 3:10 - “Samuel! Samuel!” so also Abraham (Gen 22:11), Jacob (Gen 46:2), and Moses (Exod 3:4) when he called them.
- Samuel is presented as the “Prophet like Moses”:

Deuteronomy 18:15–22

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen... 18:18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 18:19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. 18:20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’ 18:21 And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?’— 18:22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.

Deuteronomy 34:10

And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face...

“ The writer’s portrayal of this prophet/judge functions as a bridge between the text of 1, 2 Samuel and the Torah. Through the careful and highly selective use of historical detail, the author succeeds in **portraying Samuel as the long-foreseen prophet who would be like Moses** (cf. Deut 18:15–18). Both Samuel and Moses were raised in environments outside their own homes. Both received their initial revelations from God in solitude, in the presence of a burning object, with their name being mentioned twice by God at the beginning of the encounter. During that first encounter with the Lord both were told of divine judgments that would come against the authority structures in which they were reared. **Both were called prophets, and unlike any others in the Torah and Former Prophets, both were called “faithful.”** Both spoke words of judgment against leaders who had abused the Israelites. Both personally killed one oppressor of Israelites and then went into a season of self-imposed exile. Both wrote down regulations that were deposited before the Lord. Both performed some priestly duties, yet neither was ever termed a priest. Both acted as judges and were responsible for major transitions in Israelite history. Both had two named sons, none of whom played significant roles in later history. At the Lord’s direction, both anointed individuals who led Israel to fight against—and defeat—the inhabitants of Jerusalem, act in behalf of the Gibeonites, and conquer the Promised Land.” [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 3]

- Samuel is presented as a Key leader of Israel:

Psalm 99:6

Moses and Aaron were among his priests, **Samuel** also was among those who called upon his name. They called to the Lord, and he answered them.

Jeremiah 15:1

Then the Lord said to me, “Though Moses and **Samuel** stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go!

Some Summary Points:

- Everyone - Priest, Prophets, and Kings - are subject to the instruction of The Torah.

***Torah** refers to the *Book of Moses* - Genesis - Deuteronomy. Unfortunately, the term *torah* is often translated as “law.” The term means “instruction.” Although Torah may contain Law, it is better to think of it in the larger category of “instruction.”

- The LORD uses socially powerless people who are faithful to transform the social order.