

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

Book of 1 Samuel – Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Alex O. Stone

Classes Presented on “Zoom”

[MEETING ID: 395 133 283 * PASSCODE: 281215] Or, Call: [1-646-558-8656](tel:1-646-558-8656)

Overall Theme: Actions of Samuel “Priest/Prophet/Judge” (1:1–7:17)

- I. The Family of Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:1-1:18)
- II. Samuel is Born (1 Samuel 1:19-1:28)
- III. Hannah’s Prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-2:11)
- IV. Eli’s Wicked Sons (1 Samuel 2:12-2:36)
- V. Samuel’s First Prophecy (1 Samuel 3:1-3:21)
- VI. The Ark of God Captured (1 Samuel 4:1-4:11)
- VII. The Death of Eli (1 Samuel 4:12-4:22)
- VIII. The Philistines and the Ark (1 Samuel 5:1-5:12)
- IX. The Ark Returned to Israel (1 Samuel 6:1-6:21)
- X. Samuel Judges Israel (1 Samuel 7:1-7:17)

**CURRENT FOCUS: “ISRAEL’S TRANSITION OF LEADERSHIP FROM JUDGES TO A KING”
SAMUEL: THE LAST JUDGE (1 Samuel 1:1–7:17)**

The Family of Elkanah

1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ²And he had two wives: the name of one *was* Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. ³This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there. ⁴And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶And her rival also

provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb. ⁷ So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.

Hannah's Vow

⁸ Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? *Am* I not better to you than ten sons?"

⁹ So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD. ¹⁰ And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish. ¹¹ Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

¹² And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth. ¹³ Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore, Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴ So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!" ¹⁵ But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I *am* a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now." ¹⁷ Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him." ¹⁸ And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*.

Samuel is Born and Dedicated

¹⁹ Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, "Because I have asked for him from the LORD." ²¹ Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to

offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and his vow. ²² But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “*Not* until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the LORD and remain there forever.” ²³ So Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the LORD establish His word.” Then the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

²⁴ Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child *was* young. ²⁵ Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli. ²⁶ And she said, “O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I *am* the woman who stood by you here, praying to the LORD. ²⁷ For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. ²⁸ Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD.” So they worshiped the LORD there.

Hannah’s Prayer

2 And Hannah prayed and said:

“My heart rejoices in the LORD;
My horn is exalted in the LORD.
I smile at my enemies,
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

² “No one is holy like the LORD,
For *there is* none besides You,
Nor *is there* any rock like our God.

³ “Talk no more so very proudly;
Let no arrogance come from your mouth,
For the LORD *is* the God of knowledge;
And by Him actions are weighed.

⁴ “The bows of the mighty men *are* broken,
And those who stumbled are girded with strength.

⁵ *Those who were full* have hired themselves out for bread,
And the hungry have ceased *to hunger*.
Even the barren has borne seven,
And she who has many children has become feeble.

⁶ “The LORD kills and makes alive;
He brings down to the grave and brings up.

⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
He brings low and lifts up.

⁸ He raises the poor from the dust
And lifts the beggar from the ash heap,
To set *them* among princes
And make them inherit the throne of glory.

“For the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD’S,
And He has set the world upon them.

⁹ He will guard the feet of His saints,
But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.

“For by strength no man shall prevail.

¹⁰ The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces;
From heaven He will thunder against them.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

“He will give strength to His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed.”

¹¹ Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest.

The Wicked Sons of Eli

¹² Now the sons of Eli *were* corrupt; they did not know the LORD. ¹³ And the priests’ custom with the people *was that* when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. ¹⁴ Then he would thrust *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did

in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵ Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." ¹⁶ And *if* the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; *then* you may take *as much* as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "*No*, but you must give *it* now; and if not, I will take *it* by force." ¹⁷ Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

Samuel's Childhood Ministry

¹⁸ But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *even as* a child, wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring *it* to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰ And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD." Then they would go to their own home. ²¹ And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

Prophecy Against Eli's Household

²² Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ²³ So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. ²⁴ No, my sons! For *it is* not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress. ²⁵ If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them. ²⁶ And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.

²⁷ Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? ²⁸ Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? ²⁹ Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have

commanded *in My dwelling place*, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?’ ³⁰ Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I said indeed *that* your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.’ But now the LORD says: ‘Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. ³¹ Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. ³² And you will see an enemy *in My dwelling place*, *despite* all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. ³³ But any of your men *whom* I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. ³⁴ **Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons**, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. ³⁵ Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest *who* shall do according to what *is* in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. ³⁶ And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come *and* bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, “Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.” ’ ’ ”

Samuel’s First Prophecy

3 Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; *there was* no widespread revelation. ² And it came to pass at that time, while Eli *was* lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, ³ and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God *was*, and while Samuel was lying down, ⁴ that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, “Here I am!” ⁵ So he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” And he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” And he went and lay down. ⁶ Then the LORD called yet again, “Samuel!” So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” He answered, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” ⁷ (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.) ⁸ And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. So he arose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you did call me.”

Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy.⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.¹⁰ Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel answered, “Speak, for Your servant hears.”¹¹ Then the LORD said to Samuel: “Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.¹² In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.¹³ For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.¹⁴ And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

¹⁵ So Samuel lay down until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision.¹⁶ Then Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son!” He answered, “Here I am.”¹⁷ And he said, “What *is* the word that *the LORD* spoke to you? Please do not hide *it* from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you.”¹⁸ Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It *is* the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him.”¹⁹ So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel *had been* established as a prophet of the LORD.²¹ Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

4 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

The Ark of God Captured

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek.² Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field.³ And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the

covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies.”⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells *between* the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

⁵ And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook. ⁶ Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, “What *does* the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews *mean*?” Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. ⁷ So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, “God has come into the camp!” And they said, “Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before. ⁸ Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These *are* the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. ⁹ Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!”

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. ¹¹ Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

Death of Eli

¹² Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. ¹³ Now when he came, there was Eli, sitting on 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. ¹⁴ When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, “What *does* the sound of this tumult *mean*?” And the man came quickly and told Eli. ¹⁵ Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see.

¹⁶ Then the man said to Eli, “I *am* he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line.” And he said, “What happened, my son?” ¹⁷ So the messenger

answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured." ¹⁸ Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

Ichabod

¹⁹ Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *due* to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. ²⁰ And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard *it*. ²¹ Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. ²² And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

The Philistines and the Ark

5 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ² When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. ³ And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. ⁴ And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands *were* broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso was left of it. ⁵ Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

⁶ But the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, *both* Ashdod and its territory. ⁷ And when the men of Ashdod saw how *it was*, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not

remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon our god.”⁸ Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?”

And they answered, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath.” So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away.⁹ So it was, after they had carried it away, that the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction; and He struck the men of the city, both small and great, and tumors broke out on them.

¹⁰ Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, “They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!”¹¹ So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people.” For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.¹² And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

The Ark Returned to Israel

6 Now the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.² And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it to its place.”³ So they said, “If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but by all means return *it* to Him *with* a trespass offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you.”⁴ Then they said, “What *is* the trespass offering which we shall return to Him?” They answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden rats, *according to* the number of the lords of the Philistines. For the same plague *was* on all of you and on your lords.”⁵ Therefore you shall make images of your tumors and images of your rats that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand from you, from your gods, and from your land.

⁶Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, that they might depart? ⁷Now therefore, make a new cart, take two milk cows which have never been yoked, and hitch the cows to the cart; and take their calves home, away from them. ⁸Then take the ark of the LORD and set it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you are returning to Him *as* a trespass offering in a chest by its side. Then send it away, and let it go. ⁹And watch: if it goes up the road to its own territory, to Beth Shemesh, *then* He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that *it is* not His hand *that* struck us—it happened to us by chance.”

¹⁰Then the men did so; they took two milk cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. ¹¹And they set the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the chest with the gold rats and the images of their tumors. ¹²Then the cows headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh, *and* went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right hand or the left. And the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beth Shemesh.

¹³Now *the people of* Beth Shemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the valley; and they lifted their eyes and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see *it*. ¹⁴Then the cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and stood there; a large stone *was* there. So they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹⁵The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the chest that *was* with it, in which *were* the articles of gold, and put *them* on the large stone. Then the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices the same day to the LORD. ¹⁶So when the five lords of the Philistines had seen *it*, they returned to Ekron the same day.

¹⁷These *are* the golden tumors which the Philistines returned *as* a trespass offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; ¹⁸and the golden rats, *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines *belonging to* the five lords, *both* fortified cities and country villages, even as far as the large *stone of* Abel on which they set the ark of the LORD, *which stone*

remains to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. ¹⁹Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

The Ark at Kirjath Jearim

²⁰And the men of Beth Shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?” ²¹So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, “The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down *and* take it up with you.”

7 Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

Samuel Judges Israel

²So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. ³Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.” ⁴So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

⁵And Samuel said, “Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you.”

⁶So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah. ⁷Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *of it*, they were afraid of the Philistines. ⁸So the children of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not

cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”

⁹ And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered *it as* a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.

¹⁰ Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.

¹¹ And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. ¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set *it up* between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.”

¹³ So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. ¹⁴ Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

¹⁵ And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. ¹⁶ He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. ¹⁷ But he always returned to Ramah, for his home *was* there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Commentary: Israel’s Transition From “Judges” to a “King” (CHAP. 1:1-7:17)

1. SAMUEL’S FAMILY (1:1–3)

1 Samuel 1:1–3. Samuel was the son of **Elkanah ... an Ephraimite** from **Ramathaim Zophim**. This area, otherwise known simply as Ramah (“the height”), was in the hill country about 25 miles north of Jerusalem. Perhaps, according to Eusebius, it is to be identified with Arimathea, the home of Joseph of Arimathea of New Testament

times. (Ramah was Samuel's birthplace [vv. 19–20], residence [7:17], and burial place [25:1].) Elkanah's description as an Ephraimite appears troublesome since Samuel served as a priest, an office reserved exclusively for Levites. However, Elkanah was a direct descendant of Levi (1 Chron. 6:33–38) and was therefore qualified to function in a priestly capacity. He was a Levite by lineage but an Ephraimite by residence. One indication of how lawless were the times in which Samuel was born is his father's bigamous marriages. Often in those days (though it was never sanctioned by God), a man whose wife was infertile would take a second wife by whom he could bear **children** (Gen. 16:1–3; 30:3–4, 9–10; etc.). This explains why Elkanah **had two wives** and why **Hannah**, the beloved but barren one, so fervently desired a son.

2. HANNAH'S PROBLEM (1:4–8)

1 Samuel 1:4–8. Because a Hebrew man's posterity was bound up in his having a son to perpetuate his name, his wife's inability to conceive a son was regarded as a curse from God. (According to Deut. 7:13–14 having children was a sign of God's blessing. Conversely the Israelites considered the inability to bear children as a curse.) But Hannah's barrenness did not diminish Elkanah's love for **her**. In ¹ fact he gave her twice what he gave **Peninnah**, his second wife, when they took their offerings to the **LORD** at **Shiloh**, the place some 15 miles north of Ramah where Joshua had located the tabernacle (Josh. 18:1). This antagonized Peninnah, so she belittled **her rival** Hannah (1 Sam. 1:6–7). One thinks of the jealousy which Jacob's bigamy wrought in Rachel's heart (Gen. 30:1). **None of Elkanah's assurances of**

¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 432–433). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

devotion had any beneficial effect upon Hannah and her sorrow (1 Sam. 1:8). Her only resort was to cast herself entirely on the mercies of God.

3. HANNAH'S PRAYER (1:9–18)

1 Samuel 1:9–18. The Law required all adult Hebrew males to appear at the tabernacle or temple of **the LORD** for the three major religious festivals of the year (Ex. 23:14–17). At this period of history the tabernacle was at **Shiloh** about 15 miles north of Ramah. Elkanah regularly attended the festivals with his wives, and **Hannah** there poured out her soul to God in petition for **a son**. On one such occasion **Hannah made a vow** that if God would grant her request she would **give her son to the LORD for as long as he lived**. This dedication of her son was a commitment to the Nazirite vow, described in Numbers 6:1–8. It was the same vow undertaken by the parents of Samson whom they dedicated to **the LORD** under nearly identical circumstances (Jud. 13:2–5). So intense was Hannah's silent prayer that **Eli**, the high **priest** who was seated nearby, noted the movement of **her lips** and assumed **she was** intoxicated. When the priest learned about her true plight, he assured her that **God** would answer her prayer.

4. SAMUEL'S BIRTH (1:19–23)

1 Samuel 1:19–20. Shortly after Hannah's return to **Ramah**, she **conceived** and in due **course** bore **a son** whom she **named ... Samuel**. Though the name technically means "his name is God" or something similar, **Hannah** may, by assonance, have understood the name to mean "asked of God." She had "asked" (*šā'al*) God for a son, and He had "heard" (*šāma'*) her. "Samuel," then, would be associated with *šāmūa' 'ēl*, "heard of God," because **she had asked the LORD for him**.

1 Samuel 1:21–23. At the next **annual** festival **Elkanah** went to Shiloh to offer **sacrifice to the LORD** (cf. v. 3), but this time he also paid **his vow** to the Lord. This payment of the vow must have consisted of the offering of Samuel himself whom Elkanah (and Hannah) had promised to give if the Lord would answer their prayers for a son (cf. Lev. 27:1–8; Num. 30:1–8).

Hannah and Samuel **did not** accompany Elkanah, for Samuel was not yet **weaned** and was therefore totally dependent on his mother. **Elkanah** saw the wisdom in this and agreed that Hannah and Samuel might remain at home. However, he was perhaps fearful that the temporary withholding of Samuel from the service of the Lord might jeopardize the Lord's favor (in giving them a son who would survive and mature) and so Elkanah prayed that **the Lord** might **make good His word**.

5. SAMUEL'S PRESENTATION TO GOD (1:24–28)

1 Samuel 1:24–28. After Hannah had **weaned** her son, she fulfilled her pledge and **took** him to **Shiloh** to offer **him to the LORD** as a lifelong Nazirite. Since it was customary for a child to be nursed until he was about three years of age (see the apocryphal 2 Maccabees 7:27), the lad Samuel would be no unusual burden for **Eli** and the priestly staff at Shiloh. Also, *Samuel would be old enough to learn the rudiments of tabernacle service.*

B. Hannah's song (2:1–10)

This is one of the earliest and most stirring poems in the Old Testament. So messianic in character is it that Mary, the mother of Jesus, incorporated it into her

own song of triumph, the Magnificat, in which she praised God for having selected her to be the human mother of Jesus, the Messiah (Luke 1:46–55).

1. HANNAH'S EXULTING IN THE LORD (2:1)

1 Samuel 2:1. Hannah, with clear reference to her rival Peninnah, spoke of her joy **in the LORD** who had helped her achieve satisfaction at last. Horns, used by animals for defense and attack, symbolized strength. Thus Hannah spoke of her **horn** in describing the strength that had come to her because God had answered her prayer.

2. HANNAH'S EXTOLLING OF THE LORD (2:2–8)

1 Samuel 2:2–8. Through His attributes such as holiness, strength (a **Rock**), knowledge, and discernment (vv. 2–3), and in view of His actions toward both the ungodly and the godly (vv. 4–8), the Lord demonstrates His awesome sovereignty in human affairs. Especially pointed is Hannah's reference (v. 5) to herself and Peninnah respectively: **She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.** Hannah eventually had five other children (v. 21), but the expression "seven children" here symbolizes the full granting of her desire for a son. The ² breaking of **the bows** (v. 4), satisfying of the **hungry** (v. 5), raising of the dead (v. 6), and elevating of **the poor** (vv. 7–8) refer to the principle that the final disposition of all things is in the hand of **the LORD**. He who created the world (v. 8) was able to cause Hannah to triumph.

² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 434). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. HANNAH'S EXPECTATION FROM THE LORD (2:9–10)

1 Samuel 2:9–10. In addition to stating that **the LORD** blesses **His saints but** brings **the wicked** to destruction (v. 9), Hannah closed her poem with the prophetic announcement that the Lord **will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed.** The reference to a king here in this premonarchial passage has led many critics to maintain that the poem is a redaction from a later period which was placed in Hannah's mouth. This is unnecessary, of course, if one accepts the possibility of predictive prophecy. In addition, the notion of a coming human king was in no way foreign to Israel's expectation since **the LORD** had clearly intimated this as early as the time of Abraham (see *Introduction*). The word parallel to "king" (v. 10) is "anointed," a translation of *māšîaḥ* ("Messiah"). This is the first Old Testament reference to an individual's being "the Anointed One." Though it may be unwarranted to make a direct connection between Hannah's prophecy and Jesus the Messiah, it is evident that the juxtaposition of "king" and "anointed one" points to the royal nature of the anointed one(s) whom God would raise up (see Ps. 89:20–24).

C. The situation at Shiloh (2:11–36)

1. SAMUEL'S PROGRESS (2:11, 26)

1 Samuel 2:11, 26. Immediately after the return of his parents to their **home** young **Samuel** began his training **under Eli** (v. 11), a training which was characterized by his development physically, but especially morally and spiritually (v. 26). He grew **in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men**, an appropriate description of a son who, like Mary's, had come as a blessing of God to the world (Luke 2:52).

2. THE SINS OF THE PRIESTHOOD (2:12–17, 22–25)

1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–25. The human reason for the birth of Samuel had been recounted. He came in response to a godly mother’s prayer. Now it was important to see the divine reason. The Book of Judges asserts, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Jud. 21:25). This was also true of the priests. **Eli**, though apparently a moral man himself, had lost control of his priestly **sons** who went so far as to appropriate for themselves the choice **meat** of the sacrificial animals which rightfully belonged to **the LORD** as His **offering** (1 Sam. 2:12–17). Moreover, they engaged in ritual fornication in the very precincts of the tabernacle at Shiloh in accord with Canaanite cultic practice (vv. 22–25).

3. THE BLESSING OF SAMUEL’S FAMILY (2:18–21)

1 Samuel 2:18–21. As though to show the contrast between the ungodly and the godly about which Hannah had sung, the narration now contrasts the family of **Samuel** with that of **Eli**. Though Samuel’s **mother** had given **Samuel** to **the LORD**, she retained her maternal love and responsibility. She came yearly to Shiloh to attend to the needs of her son. ³ Nor did **the LORD** forget **Hannah**. As is so often the case, He gave her not only what **she** had **prayed** for but much more—in her case **three sons and two daughters** (cf. the example of Rachel, Gen. 30:22–24; 35:16–18).

³ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 434–435). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

4. THE REJECTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD (2:27–36)

1 Samuel 2:27–36. It is no wonder that God rejected the priesthood of Eli and his **sons**. After reviewing the circumstances of the selection of Eli’s ancestors to be priests of **the LORD** over **Israel** (vv. 27–28), an unnamed **man of God** announced to **Eli** that his priesthood would end because it had violated the conditions for its ongoing existence (vv. 29–33). Yet **the LORD** would not terminate the office of priest altogether for He would **raise up ... a faithful priest** (v. 35) whose line of succession (**house**) would be **firmly** established and who would **minister before** His **anointed one** (i.e., the king) forever. In human terms this was fulfilled when the priesthood was taken from Abiathar, descendant of Aaron’s son Ithamar, and given to Zadok, descendant of Aaron’s son Eleazar (1 Kings 2:27, 35). But in the ultimate sense the “faithful Priest” and “Anointed One” are One and the same, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is both Priest and King (Ps. 110; Heb. 5:6; Rev. 19:16).

D. Samuel’s Call (chap. 3)

For centuries God had rarely visited His people with revelation (v. 1). Now He had one to whom He could entrust His message. He called the young lad Samuel.

1. THE DIVINE VOICE (3:1–10)

1 Samuel 3:1–10. Though Samuel had been ⁴ dedicated to the Levitical ministry at Shiloh and had undergone training in the things of **the LORD**, he **had not yet been** addressed by the direct revelation of God (v. 7). At last the time came for **the LORD** to fulfill His promise to remove Eli’s priesthood and establish another, so the divine

⁴ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 435). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

silence was broken. While **Samuel** was reclining **in the** tabernacle (the meaning of the Heb. *hêkāl*, **temple**, v. 3) attending to the burning **lamp**, he heard the voice of **the LORD**, which he mistakenly took to be that of **Eli**. Finally **Eli** discerned that the lad was being addressed by **the LORD** so he advised him to submit himself to whatever **the LORD** would have him do.

2. THE DIVINE MESSAGE (3:11–14)

1 Samuel 3:11–14. The message consisted of the announcement that the promised removal of Eli's family from the priesthood was about to occur. It was an announcement so shocking that it would cause **the ears** of the people to ring like hammer blows on a bell. The reason is explicitly stated—Eli's **sons** were wicked, and though **he knew** it **he failed to restrain them**. Though the message was given right then to Eli through Samuel, Eli himself lived for a short time thereafter, and indeed the priesthood continued in his family for three more generations.

This is clear from 14:3—*Ahijah served as priest to King Saul. He is identified as the great-grandson of Eli through Phinehas and Ahitub*. The prophecy to Samuel came to pass fully when Abiathar, son of Ahijah (the same as Ahimelech of 22:9–12), was apparently replaced by King David with Zadok after Abiathar sided with Adonijah against Solomon (1 Kings 1:7–8; 2:27, 35). Thus the time between prophecy and fulfillment was more than 130 years. Yet it did come to pass and the priesthood switched to Zadok, a descendant of Aaron's son Eleazar, and it remained with his offspring throughout Israel's subsequent history.

3. SAMUEL'S VINDICATION (3:15–21)

1 Samuel 3:15–21. This first act of **Samuel** as a prophet was recognized by **Eli** as having come from **God**. This was only the beginning of a public ministry as prophet, which would last through a lifetime and be recognized by all the people as a divine calling. The **word of the LORD** had been rare in those days (v. 1). Now, however, it would be common, for God had found a man to whom He could entrust it. The sign that **Samuel** was a spokesman for God was the fact that God **let none of his words fall to the ground** (v. 19), that is, everything he prophesied came to pass. **All Israel from Dan to Beersheba** (the northernmost and southernmost towns in Israel—a distance of about 150 miles) **recognized that Samuel was ... a prophet of the LORD**. There was no clearer indication that a man was called to be a prophet than the fact that his predictive word invariably was fulfilled (Deut. 18:21–22). When it was understood that Samuel’s credentials as a prophet were established, a new era was under way. Revelation through priest and ephod was passing away, and revelation through prophets was beginning.

E. The Ark (chaps. 4–7)

1. THE CAPTURE OF THE ARK (CHAP. 4)

The Philistines, Israel’s principal enemy during the period of the last of the Judges (Jud. 10:6–8; 13–16), were a non-Semitic people whose origins were most likely in Crete or in some other part of the Aegean Sea area (Gen. 10:14; see Jer. 47:4; Deut. 2:23; Amos 9:7). *They came to Canaan in two different migrations*, one as early as Abraham’s time (2000 B.C.) and the other about 1200 B.C. **They lived in five main towns on the southern Canaan coast—Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Ashdod.** They were technologically advanced, pioneering in the use of iron and in other skills

(1 Sam. 13:19–20). *The primary god of their pantheon was Dagon*, a deity worshiped also in upper Mesopotamia as a grain god. Some scholars suggest that the Philistine Dagon was represented as having a human torso and upper body and a fish's tail. It may well be that the originally seafaring Philistines brought their fish god with them to Canaan and then adapted him to the Semitic god Dagon (or Dagan, as it is known outside the Bible), because of their need to become a grain-producing people (Jud. 15:3–5).

1 Samuel 4:1–11. When Samuel was yet a youth, Israel was attacked by **the Philistines at Aphek**, a site about 25 miles west of Shiloh. When it was clear that the Philistines would win, the Israelites **sent men to Shiloh** to bring ⁵ **the ark of the covenant** to the battlefield, superstitiously supposing that its presence, like a good-luck charm, would turn the tide. The ark *did* represent the presence of **the LORD** in battle (Num. 10:35; Josh. 6:6) but only when the people carried it in faith and by divine leading. Even **the Philistines** were terrified when they knew **the ark** was in **the camp** of Israel, for they had heard about its association with Israel's **mighty gods** who had brought that people out of Egypt more than 300 years before (1 Sam. 4:6–8). Nonetheless, summoning their courage, they **fought** on and **defeated** Israel. In the process **the ark ... was captured** and the **sons** of Eli, its keepers, were slain (v. 11).

1 Samuel 4:12–22. When **Eli**, back at **Shiloh**, learned that **the ark** had been taken by **the pagan Philistines** and that his **sons** were **dead**, he **fell backward off his** seat,

⁵ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 436). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

broke **his neck**, and **died**. Shortly thereafter **his daughter-in-law**, Phinehas' **wife**, died as she **gave birth ... to a son** whom **she named**, appropriately enough, **Ichabod**, "there is no **glory**" (*ʾî k̄āb̄ôḏ*). Since the presence of **the ark** represented the presence of **God** in Israel, its capture suggested that not only was **the ark** gone but **God** Himself and all His **glory** were now in enemy hands. To the pagans it was conceivable that gods could be taken into exile (Isa. 46:1–2), but the Israelites should have known that their omnipresent God could not be taken away from them. How heathen Israel's perception of God had become!

2. THE POWER OF THE ARK (CHAP. 5)

1 Samuel 5:1–5. That the Lord of Israel was not only omnipresent but also omnipotent was a fact that **the Philistines** were ⁶ about to learn. Bearing **the ark** like a trophy of conquest, they took it first to the **temple of Dagon** at **Ashdod**, some 50 miles southwest of Shiloh. There they laid it at Dagon's feet (or tail) as though to say that **Dagon** was victor and **the LORD** his prisoner. But **the next** morning **Dagon** lay prostrate **before the ark**. Restored to his pedestal once again, **Dagon**, on **the following** day, again lay in submission before **the LORD**, this time shattered and broken. **Only his torso remained** intact. **Head and hands** were **broken off** and lay scattered across **the threshold** or podium. The word translated "threshold" (*miptān*) may also and perhaps ought to be understood as the pedestal on which the idol stood. So embarrassed were the Philistines over this misfortune of their god that they forever after refused to set foot on the scene of his calamity.

⁶ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 436). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

1 Samuel 5:6–12. The Philistine **people** were affected as well, for the Lord sent a plague on the inhabitants of **Ashdod** which was evidently carried by mice (“rats,” NIV; 6:4–5) and caused large **tumors** to erupt on their bodies (5:6). The nature of the plague is unclear but seemed to consist of growths particularly in the rectal area as the Hebrew *’ōpel* indicates. Perhaps it was a hemorrhoid-like condition, as suggested in many versions.

In complete despair over this turn of events, the Ashdodites decided to send **the ark** on to **Gath**, some 12 miles southeast and toward Israel. The same disaster befell the Gathites, however (v. 9); so finally **the ark** was moved to **Ekron** where its deadly reputation had already preceded it. The citizens of Ekron fared no better than the others and at once determined to send **the ark** (the chest which, in their view, contained **the God** ⁷ **of Israel**) **back to its own** land. This seems naive to modern readers, but people in all times have attempted to box God in and manipulate Him to their own convenience.

3. THE RETURN OF THE ARK (6:1–7:1)

1 Samuel 6:1–12. After suffering the humiliation of their god Dagon and the painful and fatal consequences of God’s **plague**, the **Philistine** lords decided to **return** the **ark of the LORD** to Israel. In accordance with their superstitious techniques they consulted their **priests** and **diviners** who advised them to **send** the ark **back** accompanied with tokens of tribute in the form of **five gold tumors and five gold**

⁷ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 436–437). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

rats, representing the five Philistine cities (vv. 17–18). These offerings to **Israel's God** would indicate their acknowledgment of His superiority (v. 5). Furthermore **the ark** should be sent on a **new** driverless **cart**, as a further test of the source of their troubles. If the animals (**two cows** still nursing their young and not previously **yoked**, v. 7) pulled **the cart** directly back to Israel it would be clear that Israel's God had indeed caused their affliction. **But if** they wandered aimlessly about, the Philistines could attribute their misfortune to mere **chance**.

Though not much is known about divination from the Old Testament, since it was forbidden to Israel, divination texts abound from the ancient Near Eastern world. They indicate both the techniques employed to discover the intent of the gods and those used to avert portended evil. Frequently, as in the present story, it would take a binary form, that is a given test would be applied to which a yes or no response would be possible. Perhaps Gideon's use ⁸ of the fleece reflects such a divinatory practice, though stripped of pagan overtones. The casting of lots would be similar. In any event, the deepest suspicions of the Philistines were confirmed when the animals made their way **straight** back to Israel. It was obvious that **the LORD** had been at the root of all their troubles.

1 Samuel 6:13–7:1. The Israelites were so overjoyed to see **the ark** after seven months (6:1) that they offered a sacrifice of **the cows to the LORD** at **Beth Shemesh**, the border town where the ark had been directed, about 15 miles west of

⁸ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 437). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Jerusalem (see the map “The Wanderings of the Ark of the Covenant”). Unfortunately **the people of Beth Shemesh** not only **rejoiced** at the return of **the ark** (6:13) and **offered ... sacrifices** in worship (6:14–15), but they desecrated it by opening it and looking inside (6:19) perhaps to see if the stone tablets of the Law were still there. This violated the Mosaic statute that only **Levites** could handle **the ark** and not even they could touch it directly, to say nothing of looking within it (Num. 4:5, 15, 20). Disobedience in this respect would bring death. The sin of the people of Beth Shemesh was a deliberate, “high-handed” violation of the clear will of God (1 Sam. 6:19; cf. 2 Sam. 6:6–7).

(According to the NIV and a few Heb. mss., **70** people were put **to death**. Most Heb. mss., however, have 50,070. This seems an unusually large number, but it may be accounted for in some yet unknown way.) The point, of course, is that not only unbelievers (the Philistines) suffer when the Law of **the LORD** is disregarded; believers (the Israelites) also suffer when they do not conform to His strict requirements. After this disaster at Beth Shemesh **the ark** ⁹ was moved again (1 Sam. 6:21), this time to **Kiriath Jearim** (modern Abu Ghosh, about 10 miles northwest of Jerusalem). No doubt **the ark** was taken there rather than to Shiloh, because the latter was destroyed by the Philistines, perhaps after the battle of Aphek (chap. 4; cf. Jer. 26:9). The ark remained in the custody of the family of Abinadab (1 Sam. 7:1) for about 100 years.

4. THE RESTORATION OF THE ARK (7:2–17)

⁹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 437–438). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The return of the ark to Kiriath Jearim seemed to be a tangible sign that God was once again among His people to bless them and deliver them from all their oppressors. The mere presence of the ark did not guarantee God's favor, however, as Israel had learned at the battle of Aphek. Rather, it was submission to the God of the ark that was essential (v. 4).

1 Samuel 7:2. After **the ark** was at **Kiriath Jearim** for **20 years** Samuel addressed the Israelites (v. 3). In other words, the ark was in Kiriath Jearim for 20 years before Samuel undertook his first recorded public ministry. In actual fact the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim for about 100 years. It was taken there just after the battle of Aphek (1104 B.C.) and remained until David brought it from there to Jerusalem in his first year as king over *all* Israel (1003 B.C.; see 2 Sam. 5:5; 6:1–11).

1 Samuel 7:3–4. After these 20 long years with the ark at Kiriath Jearim, **Samuel** challenged the people **of Israel** to prove their loyalty to **the LORD** by abandoning their **foreign gods** and turning to **the LORD ... only**. The plural **Baals** and **Ashtoreths** describe the many local shrines of those Canaanite nature deities. Baal, variously identified as son of El (chief of the ¹⁰ Canaanite pantheon) or as son of Dagan (the Mesopotamian deity), was particularly recognized as the god of thunder and rain whose task was to make the earth fertile annually. Ashtoreth (or Astarte) was goddess of both love and war, as were her Babylonian and Greek counterparts Ishtar and Aphrodite respectively. She apparently functioned with Baal as a fertility deity and by their sexual union in some magical way the earth and all its life

¹⁰ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 438). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

supposedly experienced annual rejuvenation and fruitfulness. (See the chart “Some of the Pagan Gods and Goddesses Worshipped in Nations Surrounding Israel,” near Jud. 10:6.)

1 Samuel 7:5–9. **Samuel** next summoned the people to **Mizpah**, some seven miles north of Jerusalem, and there prayed for them and **offered** sacrifice to **the LORD** on their **behalf** (v. 9). This was a common place of assembly for Israel. In the time of the Judges the elders of the tribes gathered there to decide Benjamin’s fate following the murder of a Levite’s concubine (Jud. 19:1–20:1, 3; 21:1, 5, 8). Later, Saul was presented to Israel as king at Mizpah (1 Sam. 10:17). It was even the capital of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:23, 25). The town of Mizpah should probably be identified with modern Tell en-Nasbeh.

1 Samuel 7:10–17. When **the Philistines** learned of the assembly, they attacked **Israel** at **Mizpah** but **the LORD**, in a mighty demonstration of power (by **thunder**), defeated them. In commemoration of this great triumph **Samuel** erected on the site **between Mizpah and Shen** (whose location is unknown), a monument which he called **Ebenezer**, literally, the “stone of [God’s] help.” This ¹¹ apparently ended Philistine occupation of **Israelite** soil though **the Philistines** came later time and time again to harass Israel (13:5; etc.). **Amorites** (7:14) refers to the hill-dwellers of southern Canaan (see Num. 13:29; Josh. 10:5). Thereafter **Samuel continued** to

¹¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 438–439). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

judge ... Israel in a circuit (approx. 50 miles in circumference) including **Bethel ... Gilgal ... Mizpah**, and his hometown, **Ramah** (see the map “The Cities of Samuel”).

F. Selection of a king (chaps. 8–9)

After the battle of Ebenezer (7:12), about 1084 B.C. (see comments on 7:2), the nation of Israel was content to follow Samuel’s leadership for the next 30 years or so. Israel had made abortive attempts to establish a human monarchy during the days of the Judges (see Jud. 8:22–23; 9), actions contrary to the theocratic ideal of the kingship of the Lord Himself. But when Samuel had grown old and it appeared he would not live much longer, the people again expressed the desire for a king. God had such a king in mind, one who would be raised up and identified in His own good time (Deut. 17:14–15), but that time had not yet come. Thus the stage was set for an encounter between Samuel and the people.¹²

¹² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 439). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Overview – Reference:

- ❖ The book of 1 Samuel can be divided into **three main sections**, each of which focuses on a different person. **Chapters 1–7 recount the actions of Samuel, the righteous priest, prophet, and judge. Chapters 8–15 focus on Saul, the first king of Israel. Chapters 16–31 describe the rise of David**
- ❖ **The theme** of the Book of Samuel **is the supreme nature of god and god's favor of the Israelites.** We see this throughout the book in god's anointing of Saul and then David. The power of god is demonstrated through the fact that he determined the leader of Israel.
- ❖ The book of **1 Samuel focuses on three characters: Samuel, Saul, and David.** A poem near the start of the book reveals the book's key themes: **God's opposition to the proud, exultation of the humble, faithfulness in spite of evil, and the promise of a messianic king.**
- ❖ The book of 1 Samuel is all about **leadership and character.** Human leaders rise and fall, but God is consistently good. As you read 1 Samuel, you'll find the stories of Samuel the prophet; Israel's first king, Saul; and Israel's most remembered king, David.
- ❖ The book of 1 Samuel **outlines the fall of King Saul and David's rise to the throne as a humble servant of God.** The book of 1 Samuel outlines the fall of King Saul and David's rise to the throne as a humble servant of God. **God raises up two kings, one proud and the other humble.** Why is the story of Samuel important?
- ❖ Samuel is a figure who, in the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, **plays a key role in the transition from the biblical judges to the United Kingdom of Israel under Saul, and again in the monarchy's transition from Saul to David.** He is venerated as a prophet in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

