

NOTES ON THE BOOKS OF 1 & 2 SAMUEL

\* \* \* ESTABLISHMENT OF MONARCHY IN ISRAEL \* \* \*

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

"And [Israel] said unto [Samuel], Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations . . . And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

1 Samuel 8:5,7

AUTHORS: Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (c. 900 BC)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF COMPOSITION. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel were originally one book (scroll) in the Hebrew canon; Samuel was partitioned into two books for the first time in the Septuagint (LXX). The author of 1 & 2 Samuel is not named, but according to the Babylonian Talmud Samuel wrote the first part of the book (1Sam1-24), and Nathan and Gad wrote the remainder (1Sam25-2Sam24; cf. 1Chron29:29). It would not have been assembled into its final form until after the death of David (c. 971 BC). Furthermore, a comment in 1 Samuel 27:6 that reveals a knowledge of the divided kingdom indicates that the book must have been at least edited after the death of Solomon.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel cover the period of time from the birth of Samuel (c. 1120 BC) to the impending death of King David (David's death is recorded in 1 Kings 2:10-11; c. 971 BC), a period of approximately 150 years. From an historical perspective, the book of 1 Samuel is preceded by that of Judges, a period of about 450 years (Act13:20). Samuel is raised up as the final judge over the twelve tribes prior to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. The loose confederation of the twelve tribes during the period of the judges, and their frequent and lengthy periods of apostasy which brought oppression from neighboring enemies (as divine chastisement under the Mosaic covenant; Lev26:14-39; Deut28:15-68), proved to be an unstable form of government. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel record the end of the period of the judges, the circumstances that led to a call for the establishment of a monarchy over Israel, and the reigns of the first two kings (Saul and David).

THEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE. Samuel was the first prophet to the nation of Israel (Act3:24) and established in effect a school of the prophets (cf. 1Sam19:20). His life and ministry defined/modeled the role of the prophet for the nation of Israel: 1) to speak on God's behalf against any sins or excesses, especially on the part of the kings and the priests, using the Law of Moses as the national standard of behavior, and 2) to offer messages of divine judgment or eschatological hope to the nation as a whole.

God's unconditional covenant made with David is recorded in 2 Samuel 7. The Davidic covenant ensures that the throne of David is established in

perpetuity over the nation of Israel, and that the Lord Jesus Christ as a descendant of David will ultimately reign from that throne forever (Cp., Luk1:31-33); as the first king of the eternal dynasty over the nation of Israel, and his physical forefather, David typologically prefigures Christ in many ways. David's dispossessing of the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and making it the eternal capital of Israel is recorded in 2 Samuel 5. David's bringing of the ark of the covenant to permanently reside in Jerusalem is recorded in 2 Samuel 6, foreseeing that Jerusalem was to be the unique place where God had chosen to put His name (cf. Deut12:5-14).

Although the circumstances that led to the establishment of a monarchy in Israel (and especially its timing<sup>1</sup>) were improper, both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants anticipated that a king would eventually be raised up from the descendants of Abraham (Gen17:6,16) to rule over the nation of Israel (Deut17:14-20); such would have to be the case, since the Messiah prophesied to come was destined to be King of Israel (cf. Gen49:10; Isa9:6-7; Mic5:2; Luk1:31-33).

While the books of 1 & 2 Samuel include much theological and prophetic truth, it must not be overlooked that they are not fables (Cp., 2Pet1:16), but a divinely-inspired (and therefore inerrant) record of genuine history. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel are two (oftwelve) anchor books that carry the historical narrative of the O.T. period (consult the **CHART: Chronological Relationships of the Books of the Old Testament**).

OUTLINE OF 1 & 2 SAMUEL.

I. <b>SAMUEL</b> as PRIEST and JUDGE	<b>1 Samuel 1-7</b>
A. Birth and Childhood	1Sam1-2
B. Ministry as Priest and Judge	1Sam3-7
II. <b>SAUL</b> as KING (SAMUEL as PROPHET)	<b>1 Samuel 8-31</b>
A. Ascendency of Saul as King	1Sam8-12
B. Decline of Saul and Rise of David	1Sam13-31
III. <b>DAVID</b> as KING	<b>2 Samuel 1-24</b>
A. Rule over Judah	2Sam1-4
B. Rule over All Israel	2Sam5-24

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<sup>1</sup> The improper timing of the Israelite's demand for a king explains the paradox

## CHAPTER 1

### THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

The book of 1 Samuel opens in the waning days of the period of the judges (Samuel himself will be the final judge), a time of gross national apostasy. The closing verse of the Book of Judges provides the historical context for 1 Samuel; "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg21:25).

- [1] "Elkanah", the father of Samuel, was "an Ephraimite". This is a geographical designation, not an ethnic one. Elkanah lived in "Ramah" (v19), "of Mount Ephraim", which was a city in the portion of land given to the tribe of Ephraim. However, ethnically Elkanah and Samuel were Levites<sup>2</sup> (cf. 1Chron6:16,27-28).
- [2] Scripture never condones the taking of multiple wives; it is not God's pattern for the divine institution of marriage (cf. Gen2:23-24). Apparently Hannah was Elkanah's first wife, but he took a second wife, Peninnah, presumably for the practical purpose of bearing him children when it appeared that Hannah was barren (v5). This likely explains why Hannah was "loved" (v5) and Peninnah was not. The name "Hannah" is derived from the Hebrew word for **grace**.
- [3] The fact that Elkanah visited the tabernacle "yearly" to "worship" and "sacrifice" may actually carry a negative spiritual connotation, since the Law required a greater frequency of attendance<sup>3</sup>; thus, what superficially sounds like devotion may actually have been neglect. At this time, the tabernacle was located in "Shiloh" (Josh18:1).
- [4] The worshipper received no share of the mandatory sacrifices, the sin and trespass offerings (Lev4-5), and the freewill burnt offering was entirely consumed on the altar (Lev1). However, the worshipper received back a significant portion of the freewill peace offering (Lev3; cf. Lev7:11-36), which was customarily eaten by the family in a social feast that signified fellowship with the LORD (Cp., Exod24:9-11). Apparently Elkanah sacrificed peace offerings to the LORD when he visited the tabernacle, and naturally he shared "portions" of the sacrifice with his family at the fellowship meal that followed.
- [5] However, Elkanah gave to Hannah a "worthy" (i.e., better, or larger) portion, "for he loved Hannah".

Note that Hannah was barren according to the sovereign will and purpose of God. In a national (though not necessarily individual<sup>4</sup>) sense, Hannah's barrenness was undoubtedly a divine consequence of the failure of Israel to remain faithful to the LORD under the terms of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deut28:15,18).

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<sup>2</sup> The tribe of Levi was not allotted its own portion of land in Israel, but was given 48 cities that were scattered among the lands allotted to the other tribes (cf. Josh18:7; 21:1-42).

<sup>3</sup> The requirement of the Law was attendance at the tabernacle a minimum of three times per year at the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Exod34:22-23; Deut16:16).

<sup>4</sup> The common perception that barrenness was necessarily a curse from God for personal sins was not correct (Cp., Jn9:1-3).

- [6] Hannah's barrenness was a source of derision from Peninnah, "her adversary" for their husband's love and attention. Elkanah's open favoritism shown toward Hannah undoubtedly contributed to this hostile relationship. Polygamy is not God's design for marriage, and it is never condoned in scripture (though its practice is commonly seen in the O.T., tragically even among the people of God). On the contrary, scripture is replete with examples of the devastating consequences that inevitably result from this pagan family practice.
- [7] Hannah's barrenness went on for "years". The provocation of Hannah by Peninnah over this issue was apparently particularly acute during visits to the tabernacle, presumably inflamed by the open favoritism shown by Elkanah for Hannah at these times. Ironically, Hannah was so distraught over her situation that she could not enjoy the favors with which her husband graced her.
- [8] Even a husband who loved her dearly could not comfort Hannah, whose greatest desire was to give birth to a son (v11). The Bible consistently portrays motherhood as the highest calling for women; the fact that it is so often belittled today is a measure of how far modern thinking has deviated from a Biblical worldview.
- [9] Following one of these fellowship meals, Hannah approaches the "temple" to make an appeal to the LORD; in doing so, she is noticed by "Eli" the high "priest". Note that "they" (i.e., Elkanah and the rest of the family) had eaten and drunk, Hannah had not (Cp., vv7,15). Though the text says "temple", this is obviously a reference to the tabernacle.
- [11] Since a married woman's "vow" could be nullified by her husband (Num30:6-8), the implication is that Elkanah concurred with Hannah's vow. Hannah's "vow" is that if the LORD gives her a "male child", she will devote him to the LORD's service "all the days of his life". Since she further qualifies this commitment by vowing that "there shall no razor come upon his head", this implies that her son will live under a life-long Nazarite<sup>5</sup> vow (cf. Num6:1-8). Nazarite vows were normally taken for a defined period of time; Samson (Judg13:5), Samuel, and John the Baptist (Luk1:15) are the only life-long Nazarites recorded in scripture. Since their hair was never cut, they lived lives of unremitting shame (Cp., 1Cor11:14).
- [12] Hannah prays directly to the LORD, she does not make use of a priest as a mediator to intercede on her behalf.
- [13] Hannah's silent prayer was apparently unusual, and Eli mistook her behavior for drunkenness.
- [14] To approach the tabernacle in a "drunken" condition would be sinful, and Eli rebukes her accordingly.
- [15] Hannah denied not only being "drunk", but having drunk "neither wine nor strong drink" at all. Her behavior is entirely attributed to a "sorrowful spirit".

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<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew word "Nazarite" means 'devoted one' or 'consecrated one'.

- [16] Hannah acknowledges that to approach the tabernacle, in which dwelt the very presence of the LORD, would be a gravely wicked offense (cf., Lev10:9).
- [17] As high priest, Eli apparently genuinely prophesies that "the God of Israel" will "grant" Hannah's "petition".
- [18] Hannah's response to Eli's prophecy is a testimony to her deep and sincere faith. She believes God's word (given through Eli the high priest) will surely come to pass, evidenced by her instantaneous and complete transformation from sorrow to joy.
- [19] The "LORD remembered her", and upon returning home Hannah immediately conceives (Cp., Gen30:22). Ramah is the abbreviated name of Ramathaim-zophim (v1).
- [20] Hannah names her son "Samuel", which means 'heard of God', in recognition that the prayer of her heart (v13) had been heard by God.
- [21] On his subsequent visit to the tabernacle, Elkanah consecrates "his vow", indicating that the "vow" to dedicate their son to the LORD (v11) had included Elkanah's commitment as well as Hannah's.
- [23] With Elkanah's concurrence, Hannah and Samuel did not accompany Elkanah on his visits to the tabernacle, "until the child [was] weaned" (usually about 3 years old). In Hannah's mind, once the child was weaned and capable of living apart from her, her vow to "give him unto the LORD" (v11) must be fulfilled. Elkanah seems equally concerned that their commitment to the LORD be honored promptly.
- [24] Once "weaned", Hannah took the "young" child to present him at "the house of the LORD in Shiloh", along with sacrifices that included "three bullocks", "fine flour", and "wine". One of the "bullocks" was presumably for the required "sin offering" (Lev4:3), one for a freewill "burnt offering" (Lev1:3), and one along with the "flour" and "wine" as a "sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Lev7:13), undoubtedly offered in gratitude for the birth of Samuel.
- [25] The "child" is brought to "Eli" as the high priest serving at the tabernacle.
- [27] Hannah confesses publically that the child she brings was born in response to her "petition", in fulfillment of the LORD's promise, as prophesied by Eli (v17).
- [28] Hannah fulfills her vow to "give [her son] to the LORD" (11), for "as long as he liveth". The English translation (KJV) says Hannah "lent" her son to the LORD, which seems to connote that the transaction is temporary in some sense. However, there is no such connotation in the underlying Hebrew word, which is used in reference to the fulfillment of a request or a demand. Hannah is giving her son into the LORD's service for the remainder of his life.

"And he worshiped the LORD there" seemingly refers to Samuel, indicating that even a small child can be taught to genuinely know and worship the LORD.

**CHAPTER 2**

THE PROPHETIC PRAYER OF HANNAH

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**CHAPTER 5**

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**CHAPTER 7**

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**CHAPTER 8**

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**CHAPTER 9**

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**CHAPTER 10**

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**CHAPTER 11**

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## CHAPTER 16

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**CHAPTER 20**

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**CHAPTER 21**



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**CHAPTER 24**

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