

Sample research paper on the prophet samuel

[Family](#), [Father](#)



The story of Samuel, the thirteenth judge in ancient Israel, overlaps with that of some of ancient Israel's most famous and first kings: Saul, David and Solomon. The reason is that Samuel was the last of the judges-rulers who governed ancient Israel before the era of the Kings began. Some of the Bible's most popular narratives revolve around him: including that of Eli and his own mother Hannah. Samuel's father, Elkanah, had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah was childless and apparently incapable of bearing, whilst Peninnah had children. Elkanah used to go to offer sacrifices every year to God in the Tabernacle, at Shiloh. Peninnah chastised Hannah for her barrenness and shamed her. Hannah grew bitter of her childlessness, and one day she went to the temple and prayed earnestly and passionately, but no voice came forth from her moving lips. Eli, who observed Hannah, thought she was drunk and admonished her to put her drink away. Hannah assured him of her sobriety, and told him she was but a sorrowful woman.

Hannah continued her prayer, and begged God to give her a male child. She promised to offer the boy to the service of God all his days. She later bore Samuel, and brought the boy to Eli after she had weaned him. She bore five other children after Samuel. She then sang an eloquent psalm in praise of God. Samuel's name means "The name of God" in Hebrew. Hannah named him so because she had "asked him of the lord." Eli's sons engaged in immoral behavior, such as laying with the women who assembled at the tabernacle while Samuel was growing up, feeling their father with dread. Samuel, on the other hand, grew up "In favor with the Lord, and also with men" (1 Samuel Chapter 3, 26). Her mother visited him and made him a coat every year. Samuel is like Samson by virtue of being dedicated to God as a

Nazarite from birth.

The time of Samuel's birth was terrible and deplorable, and no one was recognized as leader. Everyone did what they thought was right to them. The people abhorred the sacrifices required by law and the worship of God had been neglected. There was great dishonor against God. Visions and the word of God were rare. People engaged in idol worship. Eli's sons were worthless and disgraced themselves and their father, who was a priest, by engaging in sexual immorality. They fattened themselves with meat meant for sacrificial offering. Eli tries to rebuke them but they do not listen. God is angry that Eli does not restrain his sons, and tells Eli (through a man of God) he will bring his house to a bad end. Samuel brings about reformation and sets the worship of God right in the land. The last person to possess the prophetic gift before Samuel is Enoch. Samuel was also a writer, and contributed to the Bible. However, it is not easy to accurately determine how much he contributed to the Bible. Samuel marked the transition of Israel from theocracy to monarchy.

The calling of Samuel by God is one of the Bible's most popular stories. Samuel hears a voice call his name thrice, and each time thinks it is Eli calling him, and rushes to his side. Twice Eli tells the boy that he has not called him, and tells him to go back to bed. On the third time he realizes that God is indeed calling the boy. Eli tells the boy to reply with "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth". When Samuel replies as he has been told, God tells him that he is going to do a great thing, and that all things that he had said would come upon the house of Eli for the transgressions of his sons will come to pass. Eli implores Samuel to tell him what he has been told, and not to

hide anything from him, upon which Samuel tells him everything. Eli is resigned and expresses submission to the will of God: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good." (1 Samuel Chapter 3, 18) God continues to speak to Samuel all his life.

Samuel's calling included the prophetic announcement that he would shape Israel's future, as well as the denouncing of Eli's line. His career begins with an invasion by the Philistines. The first battle is disastrous, and the elders decide to bring out the ark to the camping grounds. The Israelites rejoice with renewed hope and confidence, and for a moment the Philistine's confidence falters as they hear the jubilation of the Israelites. However, the second battle is an even worse disaster for the Israelites, thirty thousand men are slaughtered and the ark is captured. Eli's two sons are killed, and when news of the battle, the fate of his sons and especially the capturing of the ark reaches him, he fell off his seat and broke his neck. The wife of Phinehas went into labour, and with her dying breath named the boy Ichabod, to signify that glory had left Israel.

The ark was returned to Israel after it proved to be too much trouble in foreign land. However, for twenty years the Israelites were oppressed by the Philistines so severely that they became disheartened. The Israelites lamented this, and Samuel told them to put away their false Gods and serve their God only. The Israelites gathered and fasted. When the Philistines heard that the Israelites were gathered they assembled for war. Samuel offered a burnt offering and pleaded for mercy and forgiveness from God, and God responded by subjecting the Philistines to thunder. The Philistines, who were well aware of the destruction of the Egyptians, were frightened

and they fled, and the Israelites pursued them and slaughtered many of them.

Samuel judged Israel for many years, going year to year from Bith-gel to Gilgal and Mizpeh. He settled disputes in a judicial capacity. He finally settled in Ramah, and built an altar for God there. The building of the altar is in the tradition of Abraham, Noah, Isaac, Moses, Jacob, Aaron and Joshua. Samuel is, like Joshua, both a prophet and a judge. He is also a priest, making him the only biblical figure to serve all three roles at once. His own sons turned out to be like those of Eli, they were corrupt and immoral. The elders of Israel, noting that Samuel was old, and that his sons were corrupt, approached him and asked him to plead with God to give them a King.

Samuel was not pleased with this, but he did as they asked. God told Samuel to listen to them, and tell them of the conditions which the King shall impose on them. These included taking their sons to do his labor, and using them as instruments of war. He would also take their best fields and give them to his servants, take a tenth of their sheep, and make them all his servants.

Samuel made it clear that the price of Kingship would be great, and that eventually the people would grow bitter over the rule by Kings, but that God would not listen to their cries.

Samuel believed that a King would stray the people from the one true God, and would undermine their loyalty to God. He also believed that it would lead Israelites to a culture of materialism and social inequality. Samuel was heart-broken and thus yielded unwillingly. He believed God was the one true King of Israel.

The people wanted a King anyway, and so he sent them all home, and set to

finding them a King. They wanted to be like other nations, and were also driven by the fear of Nahash the Ammonite. They therefore wanted a permanent army. Samuel reminds them that the King is not above divine law. Thunder and rain come in an unusual time of the year, ruining the harvest. The people see this as a sign of God's displeasure. The people repent, but the act cannot be undone. Samuel gives them encouragement and warns them to fear and worship the lord or else the wrath of God will be upon them. He reassures them that God will never abandon them, but warns them sternly of idolatry.

A tall handsome young man, the son of Kish, was on an errand with one of his father's servants to look for his father's lost asses. The young man was Saul, soon to be the first King of Israel. He came from the smallest tribe, Benjamin, and his family was one of the humblest of the tribe. God told Samuel of Saul's coming, and told him to make Saul the King of Israel. Samuel communed with Saul and anointed him in secrecy, before publicly announcing his Kingship. The act of anointing is a powerful symbol, and is carried over as tradition as later Kings are said to be "anointed". It is also a sign of the religious nature of the kingship.

The anointing of Saul is actualized in three unusual signs: He meets strangers who know the asses' location, pilgrims who offer him bread, and will meet a band of prophets. Saul is secretive about his anointing and hides when it is made public, but God discloses his location. He had also earlier demurred when his uncle enquired of his activities. When he is found, the people are impressed by the tall handsome man. Saul offers the sacrifice himself after Samuel is late just before a battle, committing a major

transgression. The people were supposed to wait for the priest, but the delay was demoralizing the soldiers.

Saul conducted a successful war against the Amalekites, but disobeyed God's orders to kill everyone and everything, including women, children and animals. He spares the King and the best of the sheep and oxen, claiming he would sacrifice them to God. Samuel admonishes Saul for this disobedience, and gives him notice of God's rejection of his kingship. At first Saul feigns innocence, and it is for his arrogance and evasion of truth that Samuel denounces him. Saul asks for forgiveness and repents, but his words sound hollow. He blames the people, saying he feared them, just as he had before blamed his army for sparing the animals. Samuel then slays the King of Agag. The will of God is hence fulfilled by a prophet and not a king, a theme that would echo throughout the rest of the Old Testament. From this, Samuel decides that Saul has not learned from his error, and does not forgive him. Even after many instances where Samuel relays God's wishes, Saul refuses to relinquish the throne.

Saul was chosen chiefly because he was more handsome than any man in Israel, but it quickly became apparent that he was a poor choice for a leader. Although brave and idealistic, he was poor in judgment, and committed suicide after engaging in a war he could not win. He experienced great mental anguish at his denouncement from God's favor, and great jealousy when David was anointed King. Saul is at first a humble man, and he even tries to hide when he is announced King. He also expressed doubt when Samuel revealed to him God's plan, pointing out that he came from the humblest family of the smallest tribe. His transformation from this humble,

obedient young man to the jealous and seemingly mad king chasing David for six years and trying to kill him is fascinating.

Samuel's retirement is marked by the speech at Gilgal, in which he tells the people that Kings should be held responsible, and that prophets and judges were more important. Samuel's doubts prove to be justified, as the people fall into immorality and hypocrisy. Other prophets attempted to bring the people back to righteousness, namely Elijah, Isiah and Jeremiah. Although not all the Kings were corrupt, such as Hezekiah of Judah, the majority forsook righteousness and became greedy and cruel. The theme of greediness, cruelty and debauchery among Kings is echoed by later Kings such as Ahab.

The stubborn refusal of Saul to relinquish the throne divides the people, and Saul is called upon by God to look for another King. The division caused by Saul results in a civil war. Samuel travels and locates God's new choice. He assembles the sons of Jesse and eyes them each in turn. He is impressed by the eldest son, Eliah, and thinks that he must be the chosen one, but he is not. It is revealed that God sees differently, that he looks at the heart of men and not their outward appearance. David is absent, because he is tending to his father's sheep. Saul was also absent when he was proclaimed King, but he was hiding among baggage, while David tended his father's sheep. The young boy is sent forth and anointed the King of Israel.

The last appearance of Samuel in biblical text is his rise from the dead as Saul is desperate on the eve of a battle and seeks the services of a witch, ordering her to bring Samuel back. He had tried to seek guidance from God, but God had not answered. However, instead of offering comfort Samuel

instead foretells an ominous future for Saul and the Israelite army. Saul is terrified by the experience, as well as the witch herself, who expresses her surprise and screams in terror on realizing that she has brought back the great prophet of God.

The witch realizes the man who wishes to contact Samuel is Saul himself, and claims she has been tricked into a dangerous position and expresses regret for raising Samuel, but she is threatened into silence by violence. Saul had earlier banished all witches from the land, hence the witch's terror.

Samuel is furious that he has been woken up before his time (presumably time for judgment). Despite the harrowing encounter with Samuel and the witch, Saul proceeds with the battle. Later Saul's sons are killed in battle, and Saul dies ignobly by letting himself fall on his sword, out of despair.

Samuel is arguably the most revered and respected national leader in ancient Israel after Moses. His legacy changed the course of Israelite history.

By asking for accounting just before his death, Samuel does a unique and unusual thing. He is however pronounced completely free of any blame.

Samuel was by all accounts an honest and committed servant of God.

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