

Through the Bible — 1 Samuel 1-7 — 5/24/2023

Introduction

- **[Timeline]** The events in this book begin around 1060 BCE.
- The books of Samuel conclude the story of the Judges period and bring us into the period of the monarchy.
- As we study this section, remember what you have heard throughout the time of the Judges: Every man did what was right in his own eyes.
- This theme is not gone, but we will start to see much of the disarray and tribal issues start to melt, at least for a little while.

Birth of Samuel

- Elkanah was a righteous man. Despite everyone doing what was right in his own eyes, Elkanah followed the Torah.
- Hannah was a righteous woman, but she was unable to give birth.
 - What other famous women do we know with this same issue? (Sarah, Samson, Elizabeth, Mary)
 - What happens when a miraculous birth occurs? (The resulting child brings salvation)

Sidebar: The Tabernacle and Elkanah's Offering

- Before we move on, let's take a little side trip and talk about the Tabernacle and the priesthood.
- **[PPT - Layout of Shiloh]**
 - 1 -- Altar horns and Pomegranates
 - 2 -- Dr. Stripling's proposed location for the Tabernacle
 - 3 -- City Walls
 - 4 -- *Favisa* and bone deposits
 - 5 -- Storage rooms with collared rim jars
 - 6 -- Finkelstein's proposed Tabernacle location
 - 7 -- Charles Wilson's proposed tabernacle location
- We have not heard a lot about the tabernacle in the last few hundred years. Joshua 18:1 says that once the land was subdued Joshua set up the tabernacle in Shiloh.
- In Judges 18, we are told that the tribe of Dan settled in the northern part of the Land and built an altar there, and they set up the idol that the priest had created so that they could worship there. (This is the beginning of a long history of idolatry in Dan that we will see again after the death of Solomon.)
- Then in Judges 21 we hear that the people of Israel would go to Shiloh each year to celebrate a feast (likely Sukkot), and we get the interesting story of how the 10 other

tribes worked out a plan to ensure that the tribe of Benjamin would not be lost after the incident with the concubine.

- So, the Tabernacle is located in Shiloh, and Eli is serving as the high priest there.
- Modern Archaeology has been revealing some very interesting discoveries in Shiloh. Dr. Scott Stripling from Houston, Texas, has been doing active excavations at the site over the last few years, and has found some very interesting artifacts and is making some revealing discoveries at the site. See <https://armstronginstitute.org/721-interview-dr-scott-stripling>
- **[PPT]** At **location 1** on this diagram they found two ceramic pomegranates (a fruit associated with the tabernacle, as well as priestly garments). They also found a demolished four-horned altar in that location, with carbon dating placing it in the time frame of the destruction we will talk about in a little bit.
- **[PPT]** At **location 2** Dr. Stripling has also partially uncovered a large building or platform that has remarkably similar dimensions to the tabernacle, is dated to the same period as the tabernacle, and it is oriented east to west, just as the tabernacle was.
- There are two other proposed locations for the tabernacle, locations 6 and 7, but Dr. Stripling's work is still ongoing and seems to be revealing the most logical location.
- 1 Samuel 1:4 says that Elkanah would give "portions" to his family members. Portions of what?
- These were specifically portions of the thanksgiving offerings that Elkanah was giving to HaShem.
- Thanksgiving offerings are part of a category of sacrifices called peace offerings. These were not sacrifices made for sin, they were sacrifices made to thank HaShem for a bountiful harvest, or for some other good thing that he had done for you.
- There are some rules that you must follow when you bring peace offering sacrifices. These rules are discussed in Leviticus 7.
- First, if you bring a thanksgiving offering to the altar you are also obligated to bring three kinds of unleavened bread (matzah) made with oil, and leavened bread, as well. These become the property of the priest who conducts the sacrifice.
- Second, a "memorial" portion of the fat from the animal is burned on the altar.
- Third, the breast of the animal is waved before HaShem in front of the altar, then it is given to the entire priesthood as their portion.
- Fourth, the right thigh of the animal is given to the priest who performs the sacrifice as his payment for the service.
- Fifth, after the sacrifice is done and the priest has taken his portion, the person offering the offering takes the rest of the meat and eats it. However, this meat is not normal or "common" meat anymore.
- The meat is considered to be *kedoshim* (translated "consecrated things, holy things") and can only be eaten within a certain distance of the Tabernacle. If the meat comes in contact with anything that is unclean, it has to be burned up instead of being eaten. And

if someone who is unclean eats the *kedoshim*, they are supposed to be cut off, excommunicated, from Israel.

- Sixth, it is also necessary for person offering the animal to eat all of the meat within a given period of time, either within the one day, or within three days if the offering was part of the fulfillment of a vow.
- At **location 4** they found a *favia*, a deposit of thousands of animal bones and pottery used in sacrificial practices. Two thirds of the bones are from the right side of the animal; one third are from the left side of the animal. They also found pottery dating from the time of Joshua and the early Judges period, 1400–1300 BCE.

Back to the Story

- So, that's what Elkanah was doing. He was a righteous man, offering thanksgiving sacrifices to HaShem, and his family participated in the ritual.
- Hannah was unhappy, though. While she was the favored wife, she really wanted to have children.
- She decided to petition HaShem directly.
- Eli was sitting at the entrance to the Tabernacle, in the doorway, where he could offer judgment (remember Deuteronomy 17? If you had a question or needed justice you were supposed to go to the Priest.)
- As Hannah was praying, she made a vow.
 - Callback to the topic of Oaths and Vows in Numbers 30.
 - **[PPT]** Oath: שְׁבוּעָה *shevu'ah*, is a solemn and formal declaration or promise, typically appealing to a higher source of authority.
 - "May the Lord deal with me severely if I don't do such and such."
 - **[PPT]** Vow: נֶדֶר *neder*, originally was a type of oath whereby someone would bind themselves to bring a sacrifice or dedicate something to the temple service. It was often stated conditionally, "If such and such happens, I will dedicate this thing."
 - A vow is an obligation or prohibition that someone takes upon themselves.
 - "If I don't die from this tornado, I will never drink coffee again."
 - "If my crops succeed this year, I will dedicate an extra 10% of my produce to the Temple service."
 - A vow can be taken without an oath, but an oath calls on God as a witness, adding more weight to the vow.
- Here, Hannah only takes a vow, not an oath. What does she vow?
 - If you give me a son, "then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head." (1 Samuel 1:11)
 - What is this "a razor shall never come on his head"? A Nazirite vow. She is saying that her son will be dedicated to HaShem his entire life, not just in service in the Tabernacle, but also as an individual who lives a life completely dedicated to HaShem. (This is found in Numbers 6 in case you are interested in a refresher.)

- Hannah was so distressed as she prayed, she looked like she was drunk. Considering how many times people were likely drunk as a result of the celebrations, I think it's fair that Eli would think that.
- Eli, as the priest of HaShem, worked in the role of a prophet. When he said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your request that you have asked of Him" (1:17) he prophesied that she would have a son.
- The name Samuel (שְׁמוּאֵל *Sh'muel*) means "Name of God."
- The rabbis say that she weaned him when he was two years old (24 months).
- She did not go to the Tabernacle again until after that time was passed.
- When she took him to the Tabernacle, the text says that she lent him to HaShem, or entrusted him to HaShem. The English text is often translated "dedicated", but that's a different word in Hebrew.
- Then she sang a song.
 - What other time do we see a woman sing a song related to her miraculous pregnancy? Mary

Sin of Eli's Sons (and the comparison with Samuel)

- **[PPT]** Next, we are told that Eli's sons are doing evil things. The text here says literally that they were (בְּנֵי בְלִיַּעַל) "sons of Belial." That word Belial means "uselessness" or "worthlessness." Some translations say they were scoundrels.
 - By the first century, this name was associated with demons. Paul says, "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers; for what do righteousness and lawlessness share together, or what does light have in common with darkness? Or what harmony does Messiah have with Belial, or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? Or what agreement does the temple of God have with idols?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-16a)
- Based on what the text here says, what were they doing that was wrong?
 - They were taking more than their fair share of the offerings, stealing from the people. They did that by taking extra meat from the pots as the *kedoshim* was cooking, and even earlier, telling the men offering the sacrifices that they had to give them an additional portion of the raw meat before they would offer the memorial fat portion on the altar.
 - Look a little further down, in verse 22. They were also taking advantage of the women who served in the tabernacle to keep the daily processes running. These women were likely there because they had no family to take care of them. They might have been widows or orphans who were taken in by the Levites.
 - The text seems to be implying that not only were the priests taking advantage of these women sexually, they were doing so in the gates, in full view of the other people. It was a power play.
- Essentially, they were bullies.

- But we see a comparison being made here between these sons of Belial and Samuel.
- Not only was Samuel serving in the Tabernacle, he was doing so in purity.
- His mother still loved him, too! She brought him a new coat every year. Eli blessed her and Elkanah that they should have more children, and they did.
- Eli did finally rebuke his sons, but it was too little too late. He was also an old man, and it does not appear that he had the authority or the strength to actually rein them in.
- After Eli rebuked his sons, a "man of God" came to him and rebuked him, too, for not controlling his sons and the other priests under his care. Take note of the language here in the last part of chapter 2. You will see this same language come up again and again as the later prophets try to turn the people back to HaShem.
- Also, note the prophecy in verse 32: "But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always."
 - Who is this prophecy about?
 - If we look forward in our story, the likely candidate is Zadok the High Priest who served in the Tabernacle in the time of David. Zadok does not appear to be from the same line as Eli, and some scholars say that Eli's line may have been descended from Moses, not from Aaron, and were therefore illegitimate. Zadok, on the other hand, did descend from Aaron, and was a legitimate Aaronic priest that David placed back in leadership.
 - 1 Chronicles 16:39 says that Zadok and his family served in the Tabernacle when David brought it to Gibeah.
 - We are also told that Zadok did not abandon David when one of his sons tried to claim the kingship in his old age, and instead helped David anoint Solomon as King.
 - **[PPT]** The words "my Anointed" is מְשִׁיחִי *m'shichi*, my Messiah, my anointed one. David was the anointed king of Israel, and Zadok walked before David, and as the Anointed, David was also a type of the Messiah who came later from David's line.
 - An interesting historical reference here: The Sadducees (*Tz'dukeem*) may have come from the line of Zadok. At the very least they were interested in making people think that. There is a lot of debate among scholars as to whether the Sadducees were even from the tribe of Levi.

Call of Samuel

- **[PPT - Tabernacle]** The text sets up the story for us: Samuel is a boy, he is serving alongside Eli, working in the tabernacle.
 - English translations often make it sound like Samuel was sleeping in the Holy of Holies. Not only would that be inappropriate, it does not match the Hebrew text. The Hebrew just says that the lamp and the boy were both in the tabernacle. The lamp would have been in the Holy Place, and Samuel would have been sleeping in

the court of the Levites with the other people who took care of the Tabernacle service.

- The text also tells us that "word from HaShem was rare in those days; visions were infrequent."
- The people were in need of direction. Eli was definitely not providing it.
- As he was sleeping, Samuel heard a voice call to him. He thought it was Eli calling him, so he went to where Eli was sleeping, only to hear that it was not Eli. This happened three times before Eli figured out what was going on. He instructed Samuel how to respond: "Speak, your servant is listening."
- What does HaShem tell Samuel?
 - HaShem gives a prophecy, telling Samuel that he will do something so crazy that everyone will hear about it.
 - He is going to bring judgment on Eli's house because he did not rebuke his sons and get them in line.
- Eli's reaction to this is actually very humble, and I get the impression that at this point he was just resigned to his family's fate.
- Samuel's prophetic gift, though, became more publicly visible as he grew up. The text says that HaShem honored Samuel's gift and fulfilled all of the prophecies he gave to Samuel.
- This was a big deal! HaShem appeared again in Shiloh, in the Tabernacle.

Background: The Philistines

- **[Timeline]** Before we move on with our story, we need to set up some more context and explain who the Philistines are.
- In the time of Abraham and Moses (around 1800-1400 BCE) the original "Philistine" inhabitants were Canaanite, and were called Philistines (*P'lishtim*) because they lived in the land by that name. It appears that the people were also called the Avvim, which means "fathers."
- The century between 1250 and 1150 BCE saw the cultural collapse of the Mycenaean kingdoms in Greece, the Kassites in Babylonia, the Hittite Empire in Turkey and Syria, and the New Kingdom of Egypt, as well as the destruction of the city of Ugarit and the Amorite states in Israel, and more. This is called the Bronze Age Collapse.
- Not a lot is really known about the cause of the Bronze Age Collapse except that it was likely a perfect storm of negative issues. These city states were destroyed seemingly without warning.
- One cause of the destruction seems to have been an amorphous group normally called The Sea Peoples.
- While some of the city states were prepared for invasion, others were not, and the Sea Peoples were out for destruction. They completely leveled many cities, including large metropolises like Ugarit. Ugarit was discovered by accident in 1928, along with a trove

of texts that have tremendously helped us understand the culture and the language of the Semitic peoples of this part of the world.

- The king of Ugarit, Ammurapi, wrote a letter to a neighboring king who was asking for assistance, saying essentially, "Sorry, I can't help you, I'm dealing with my own issues":
 - My father, behold, the enemy's ships came (here); my cities were burned, and they did evil things in my country. Does not my father know that all my troops and chariots are in the Land of Hatti, and all my ships are in the Land of Lukka? ...
Thus, the country is abandoned to itself. May my father know it: the seven ships of the enemy that came here inflicted much damage upon us.
- Around the year 1280 BCE, during the time of Ehud, the Sea Peoples tried to invade Egypt. However, the pharaoh at that time, Ramesses II, had studied how the Sea Peoples fought, and he worked out a defensive strategy to protect the nation. Then he apparently used some of those defeated Sea Peoples as mercenaries in his army when he marched through the western part of Israel a few years later and defeated the Hittites in the Battle of Kadesh.
- If we go back to Deuteronomy 2, Moses is telling the story of the Israelites wandering in the Wilderness. Verses 20-23 are a parenthetical thought added to the text, describing various regions in Canaan. Various commentaries highlight the fact that it was likely added by later editors to provide clarity for people of their day who were unclear on the area being described in Deuteronomy.
- Deuteronomy 2:23 says, "And as for the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place."
- So, the Avvim, the original Philistine Canaanites, were later supplanted by migratory waves of foreigners from the Greek isles—specifically from Crete—during the Judges period.
- This migration of the Philistines seems to be connected to the Bronze Age Collapse. I think the Sea Peoples that were kept out of Egypt and used as mercenaries became the Philistines. They came from Crete, and they moved into the cities of the local Avvim and took them over, gaining in strength and starting to take over more land from the Canaanites and the Israelites.
- These new "Philistines", so called because, again, they lived in the land with that name, grew in power during the late Judges period, and hit critical mass around the time of Samuel and David. They caused constant problems for the Israelites and surrounding nations (especially Egypt), but their influence rapidly deteriorated during the time of David and Solomon.
- I highly recommend an article from the Armstrong Institute of Archaeology that talks about the Philistines in depth. <https://armstronginstitute.org/663-are-philistines-during-abrahams-time-evidence-against-bible-historicity>
- Also these videos:
 - Bronze Age Collapse: <https://youtu.be/B965f8AcNbw>
 - The Sea Peoples: <https://youtu.be/xl9RaHE9Zpl>

The Philistines take the Ark of the Covenant

- Okay now that we know who the Philistines are, let's go back to our story.
- The prophecy God gave to Samuel comes true. The Israelites went out to fight the Philistines, and they lost the battle.
- The people were desperate for a miracle. So someone suggested that, since HaShem was showing up again in the Tabernacle, maybe they could get Him to fight for them if they took the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield with them.
- Why was this a bad idea? What did God want from them in order for them to win these kinds of battles? (Righteousness! Obedience! Follow Torah!)
- When the Ark of the Covenant, joined by the corrupt priests Hophni and Phineas, showed up in the Israelite camp, the Philistines heard the shouts of jubilation and became afraid.
- Notice what they said: First, they called the Israelites "Hebrews," which is a great reference back to the Exodus. It's also interesting because there are references to the Habiru or the Hapiru at this time in the Amarna Letters.
- Also, the Philistines know the story of the Exodus!
 - "Woe to us! Who will save us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness." (1 Samuel 4:8)
- So they fought. And they won.
- Hophni and Phineas were both killed, along with 30,000 Israelites, and the Ark was captured.
- **[PPT picture of the path through the city]** A man who escaped the battle ran to Shiloh and ran through the city to tell Eli the bad news.
- If you ever get to go to Shiloh, you'll see that the location of the Tabernacle is at the back of the city, on the opposite side from the city gate, so by the time he got to the entrance of the Tabernacle, the man had raised quite a ruckus with his news.
- Eli heard what had happened, and he was so surprised and grieved that he fell over backward in his chair in shock. The text says that he was old and fat, and he broke his neck.
- His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phineas, was pregnant and went into labor because of the shock. She named her boy Ichabod, אִי־כָבוֹד, which means "where is the glory?".

The Fall of Dagon

- **[PPT - Map]** The Philistines knew what they had taken. They were excited about having stolen this valuable ritual item, and they took it to the logical place, the temple to their own god Dagon, in Ashdod.
- But the idol that represented Dagon fell down in front of the Ark during the night, seemingly in worship

- They set the idol back upright, but the same thing happened again the next night, this time the idol's hands were cut off where they had landed on the threshold of the door of the temple.
- This interesting addition here by the writer of this story points to the authenticity of the tale of the Ark in Dagon's temple, and explains a quirk that people in the writer's time still see when they go to visit Dagon's temple.
- Then HaShem struck the people of Ashdod with hemorrhoids.
 - This is watered down in the translations, mostly because translators don't like to be too graphic in their translations.
 - However, the text says that the people were afflicted with hemorrhoids
 - Rashi, a rabbinic commentator in the 1100s, says this was, "The mesentery of the large intestine, a plague of the rectum. Mice would enter their recta, disembowel them, and crawl out."
 - The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible from around 70 BCE, refers to mice swarming in the Philistine ships and invading their fields.
- Whichever version you decide to go with, the effect was not pleasant.
- The men of Ashdod called a committee meeting and decided they wanted the Ark gone. So it was sent to Gath, where it did the same thing.
- The people of Gath decided to send it along to Ekron, but the Ekronites were not happy with this idea. They called another council meeting and decided they should just send it back to the Israelites.

The Ark is Returned

- The council called on their priests and diviners to figure out what to do.
- They (correctly) said that the only thing to do was to send it back to the Israelites, but not to send it empty handed.
- So, they made golden representations of the hemorrhoids and the mice, put the Ark and the golden objects on a new cart, led by two dairy cows that had never been yoked before, and sent it back to the Israelites.
- The cows made it to the Israelite town of Beth-Shemesh, where the people immediately realized what it was.
- They put the ark on a large stone in a field, broke the cart up, and used it as firewood to sacrifice the cows as a burnt offering to HaShem.
- However, some of the men in the town looked inside the Ark, not protecting its sanctity, so HaShem struck 50,070 people dead.
- They sent word to the men of Kiriath-Yearim, telling them about the Ark and asking them to come get it.
- So the men from that town came and got the Ark. They put it into the house of a man named Abinadab, and they consecrated his son Eleazar to watch over it.
- Why not at Shiloh? Why not take the Ark back to where it had been before, to the place Joshua originally put it?

- Because Shiloh had been destroyed. Psalm 78:58–61 tells us:
 - For they provoked Him with their high places
 - And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.
 - When God heard them, He was filled with wrath
 - And He utterly rejected Israel;
 - So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh,
 - The tent which He had pitched among people,
 - And He gave up His strength to captivity
 - And His glory into the hand of the enemy.
- Dr. Stripling says that in 2021 they found a plaster floor in one of the buildings they were excavating, which meant that anything underneath it was protected and could be accurately dated. They carbon dated it to 1060 BCE, plus or minus 30 years, which puts it directly into the timeline of destruction by the Philistines after the Battle of Ebenezer.

Return and Salvation

- The return of the Ark to the Israelites caused a return of the Israelites to HaShem.
- Samuel, now the accepted leader and judge of the people, said:
 - If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroath from among you, and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will save you from the hand of the Philistines.” So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroath, and served the LORD alone. (1 Samuel 7:3–4)
- Sidebar: Ashtaroath
 - This is a reference to the Canaanite goddess *Ashtart* or *Astarte*, which is mentioned in non-Biblical texts from the Phoenicians and others, all the way from Egypt to Iraq.
 - Most interpreters believe the Hebrew pronunciation, “Ashtoreth,” is an intentional alteration of the name *Ashtart*, by which the goddess was known in non-biblical sources. The Hebrew pronunciation replaces the usual vowels in *Astarte*’s name with the vowels for the word “shame” (בִּשְׁתָּה, *bosheth*).
 - It is also important to note that this goddess is not the same as Asherah, the Canaanite fertility goddess who is mentioned more frequently in the Biblical text. However, the two are sometimes conflated with one another.
 - Asherah worship was usually done in conjunction with a sacred wooden pole, a fertility symbol, that the Israelites were often accused of using in their idolatrous worship on high places.
 - Also, Ba'al is the chief deity in the Canaanite pantheon, the god of storms and rain.
- Back to the story!

- Samuel tells the people to come meet with him at Mizpah, and that he will pray for them there.
- The water libation ceremony here indicates the attitude of repentance before HaShem. Targum Yonatan, a later Aramaic translation of the Torah, translates this as, "and they poured out their hearts like water, in repentance, before HaShem." They also fasted, which is another sign of repentance.
- Notice, as well, that as part of this repentance process Samuel institutes the judicial system again and sits as the chief judge. A key aspect of repentance is a desire to see justice done and to defend the weak.
- However, the Philistines thought this gathering offered a perfect opportunity to attack and finally defeat the Israelites. Maybe they were still a bit sensitive over the whole "my God is better than your god" thing..
- When they lined up in battle against the Israelites, Samuel offered a burnt offering to HaShem and cried out in prayer.
- And HaShem showed up! He confused the Philistines with thunder and caused them to flee.
 - The Hebrew in this verse actually says that he confused them בְּקוֹל־גְּדוֹל, *b'qol-gadol*, with a great voice. The Voice of HaShem is powerful!
 - **[Read Psalm 29:3–9]**
- After the Philistines were defeated, we are told that Israel was able to push these interlopers back and take back the cities Ekron and Gath that they had captured. And the Philistines didn't cause any more problems throughout the life of Samuel.
- With that ensuing peace, Samuel was able to set up a rotating judgeship, traveling in a circle in the middle part of Israel, offering counsel and providing judgment in legal cases that required his attention.

Conclusion

- Samuel was the last judge, and one of the first prophets. It's not that there were no other chief justices after this, or that there were no prophets before this, but the Bible shows Samuel as a transitional figure, someone who sits between the time of the judges and the time of the kings.
- And that's what we are going to talk about next week: The beginning of the monarchy in Israel.