



# 1 SAMUEL

---

The events of 1 Samuel occupy a crucial place in the story of Israel, and indeed in the whole history of God's salvation of the world, as the book tells the story of how God brought his people out of the dark, chaotic time of the judges and established a monarchy over them. Since long ago in Genesis, the establishment of a throne and crown over the nation of Israel had been one of God's most important promises to his people. He told them in Genesis 3:15 that a figure in Adam's line would come to set things right for humanity, and this promise was reiterated in Genesis 48:10 when Jacob promised his son Judah that the scepter would not depart from him until the Promised One came. Then there was the beautiful—yet cryptic—prophecy in Numbers 24 of a scepter and a royal star rising in Israel from the tribe of Judah. Finally, Moses himself had told in Deuteronomy of the day in which God would give a king to his people—not a king like those of the nations but one who would submit to God's own divine throne and serve his people rather than oppressing them.

All of that expectation, however, dissolved in the chaos of Judges, when the nation's rejection of God and his purposes resulted finally in jaw-dropping levels of bloodshed and ultimately civil war. But even in the midst of that darkness, the delightful little book of Ruth ended with a flash of hope: Obed, the son of Ruth and Boaz, would turn out to be the grandfather of David, the greatest king of Israel and a man after God's own heart.

This is what the book of 1 Samuel recounts—the story of how God established Israel's monarchy and ultimately the throne and dynasty of King David. But it would not come easily. Before David could assume the throne, God would have to completely reset his people's expectations of what a king should be and do. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are meant to be read together, and together they relate a sweeping epic, full of war and intrigue, suspense and humor, tragedy and triumph. Armies march, flags wave, swords clash, and crowns are lowered onto brows only to fall to the ground as kings die. Moreover, God makes promises that will reverberate all the way through the New Testament and the rest of history. This is the national epic of God's

chosen people, a giant step forward in his divine plan of salvation. But it begins in a surprising place—in the personal anguish of a childless woman.

### The Birth of Samuel

**1** There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. **2** He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

**3** Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. **4** On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. **5** But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. **6** And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. **7** So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. **8** And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?”

**9** After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. **10** She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. **11** And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”

It is beautiful how the epic story of the establishment of the throne begins with this one particular woman. From one perspective, her problems seem so insignificant: she is taunted by another woman because she has no children. But, at the same time, this woman and her anguish clearly matter to God. Hannah is one of the most poignant characters in the Bible, even if we never hear of her again. She trusts God, and God cares for her.

**12** As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. **13** Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. **14** And Eli said to her, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you.” **15** But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. **16** Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” **17** Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.” **18** And she said, “Let your servant

find favor in your eyes.” Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

<sup>19</sup>They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup>And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the LORD.”<sup>1</sup>

### Samuel Given to the LORD

<sup>21</sup>The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. <sup>22</sup>But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever.” <sup>23</sup>Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish his word.” So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. <sup>24</sup>And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young. <sup>25</sup>Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. <sup>26</sup>And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup>For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. <sup>28</sup>Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.”

And he worshiped the LORD there.

### Hannah's Prayer

**2** And Hannah prayed and said,

“My heart exults in the LORD;  
my horn is exalted in the LORD.  
My mouth derides my enemies,  
because I rejoice in your salvation.

<sup>2</sup> “There is none holy like the LORD:  
for there is none besides you;  
there is no rock like our God.

<sup>3</sup> Talk no more so very proudly,  
let not arrogance come from your mouth;  
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,  
and by him actions are weighed.

<sup>4</sup> The bows of the mighty are broken,  
but the feeble bind on strength.

<sup>5</sup> Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,  
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.  
The barren has borne seven,  
but she who has many children is forlorn.

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel* sounds like the Hebrew for *heard of God*

- 6 The LORD kills and brings to life;  
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
- 7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich;  
he brings low and he exalts.
- 8 He raises up the poor from the dust;  
he lifts the needy from the ash heap  
to make them sit with princes  
and inherit a seat of honor.  
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,  
and on them he has set the world.
- 9 "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,  
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,  
for not by might shall a man prevail.
- 10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;  
against them he will thunder in heaven.  
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;  
he will give strength to his king  
and exalt the horn of his anointed."

<sup>11</sup> Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest.

---

Thus the stage is set, and it is clear that little Samuel will figure prominently in the story ahead. But how? Did you notice what Hannah said at the very end of her song? She praised the Lord because "he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn [or power] of his anointed." This is the clue that tells us what this book is about: God is about to keep his promise to give Israel a king. In fact, with verse 11 following so closely on the heels of verse 10, we are tempted to think that maybe, just maybe, it is *Samuel* who will wear the crown.

Meanwhile, it turns out that Eli—the old priest who blessed Hannah back in chapter 1—is not just an old priest but actually the current ruler (that is, the latest judge) of Israel. And things are not well under his administration.

---

### Eli's Worthless Sons

<sup>12</sup> Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, <sup>14</sup> and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." <sup>16</sup> And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it

by force.”<sup>17</sup> Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed with a linen ephod. <sup>19</sup> And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. <sup>20</sup> Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the LORD give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the LORD.” So then they would return to their home.

<sup>21</sup> Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD.

### **Eli Rebukes His Sons**

<sup>22</sup> Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>23</sup> And he said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. <sup>24</sup> No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. <sup>25</sup> If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.

<sup>26</sup> Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.

---

We can see the pattern unfolding here. This chapter has been relating two stories at once—one concerning the fall of the house of Eli, the other the rise of Samuel. Thus while Eli’s sons are stealing meat from the people (and from God, claiming the fat that belonged solely to him), little Samuel is ministering before the Lord. While Eli remains blind to what his sons are doing—and only scolds them when he finds out, instead of taking decisive action—Samuel is growing in wisdom and stature and favor.

There is another dramatic tension here, too. We have already seen how God has promised to give his people a king. At this point in the story, it has become clear that Eli and his sons are an obstacle to that plan. If Israel is to have a king, this next-to-last judge and his sons will need to be cleared from the stage. And this is exactly what God promises to do.

---

### **The LORD Rejects Eli’s Household**

<sup>27</sup> And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? <sup>28</sup> Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. <sup>29</sup> Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?’ <sup>30</sup> Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your

house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,' but now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. <sup>31</sup> Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. <sup>32</sup> Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. <sup>33</sup> The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. <sup>34</sup> And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. <sup>35</sup> And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. <sup>36</sup> And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, "Please put me in one of the priests' places, that I may eat a morsel of bread."'"

---

The fall of Eli's house will happen in due time, but meanwhile, the time has come for Samuel to be called to his divinely appointed role. The story of how God calls him is one of the most unique in the entire Bible.

---

### The LORD Calls Samuel

**3** Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.

<sup>2</sup> At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place. <sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" <sup>5</sup> and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down.

<sup>6</sup> And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" and Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." <sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

<sup>8</sup> And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears." <sup>11</sup> Then the LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. <sup>12</sup> On that day I will fulfill against

Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. <sup>13</sup>And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. <sup>14</sup>Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

<sup>15</sup>Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. <sup>16</sup>But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." <sup>17</sup>And Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." <sup>18</sup>So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him."

<sup>19</sup>And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. <sup>20</sup>And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

It seems that Samuel's role is not to be king after all, but rather to serve both as the last major judge of Israel and also as the first in a centuries-long line of prophets who will point forward to God's ultimate purposes in salvation.

It is important to see the unique significance of what is happening here, lest we think that Samuel's experience of God's speaking audibly to him is a model for each and every one of us to expect. The fact is, this story is a critical turning point in the story of salvation. For centuries, the word of the Lord has been rare in Israel (3:1), but now God is establishing a prophet in Israel, one who will, at long last, speak God's word to God's people. After centuries of chaos and futility throughout the period of Judges, the machinery of God's plan of redemption is beginning to whirl again.

The next major moment in the story will come in chapter 8, when the people of Israel ask Samuel the prophet for a king. Before that happens, though, chapters 4–7 tell a riotous story in which God shows his people in no uncertain terms that he does not need a human king in order to protect them—or himself.

### The Philistines Capture the Ark

**4** And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. <sup>2</sup>The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. <sup>3</sup>And when the people came to 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 here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies." <sup>4</sup>So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is

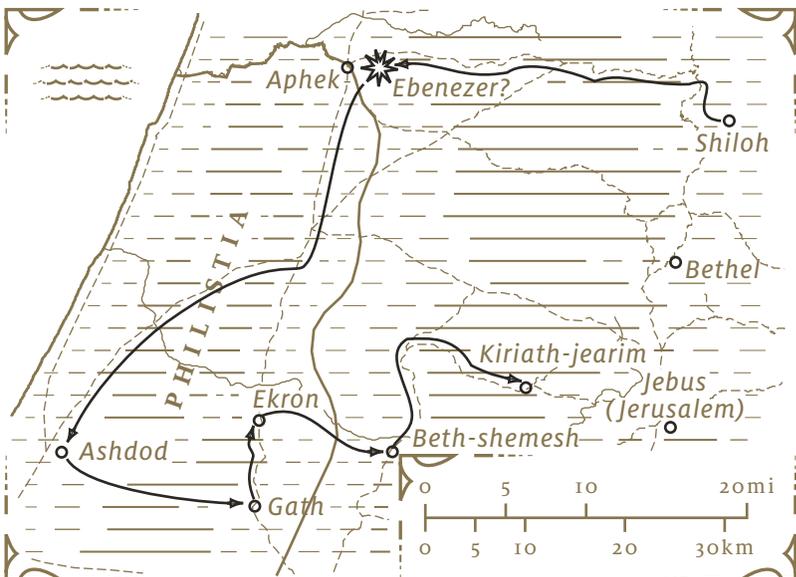
enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

<sup>5</sup>As soon as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. <sup>6</sup>And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, “What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, <sup>7</sup>the Philistines were afraid, for they said, “A god has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. <sup>8</sup>Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. <sup>9</sup>Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.”

<sup>10</sup>So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. <sup>11</sup>And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

Why does God allow the ark to be captured here? Are the Israelites not doing exactly what they are supposed to do—trusting in the power of God to save them? Well, no. The point seems to be that they are using God like a magic talisman. They seem to think they can wield him like a weapon instead of trusting in him. So God teaches them otherwise, and he will soon show

### THE ARK'S TRAVELS IN 1 SAMUEL 4-7



them—and the Philistines too—that he is no talisman to be wielded or stolen or put on mocking display.

At the same time, God's promise that the house of Eli will come to an end has begun to be fulfilled. Hophni and Phinehas are dead.

### The Death of Eli

<sup>12</sup> A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head. <sup>13</sup> When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. <sup>14</sup> When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, "What is this uproar?" Then the man hurried and came and told Eli. <sup>15</sup> Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see. <sup>16</sup> And the man said to Eli, "I am he who has come from the battle; I fled from the battle today." And he said, "How did it go, my son?" <sup>17</sup> He who brought the news answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured." <sup>18</sup> As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

<sup>19</sup> Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. 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 and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. <sup>20</sup> And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or pay attention. <sup>21</sup> And 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. <sup>22</sup> And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

Eli is a complicated character. On the one hand, he is quite likable and seems like a genuinely nice person. His kindness to Hannah after he is convinced she is not drunk is remarkable, as is his patience when Samuel keeps waking him up in the night. But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that he is also a feckless ruler, and his physical blindness is almost certainly meant to signal a certain spiritual blindness too. At any rate, God's promise to bring his house and line to an end has been fulfilled; even his untimely born grandson—Ichabod—will live as an enduring curse on his legacy.

And what about the ark? Read on through chapter 7 and enjoy the history of how God brings the Philistines to their knees. In the end, they have no idea what to do; all they know is that they have to get the ark of God out of their territory, and *fast!*

**The Philistines and the Ark**

**5** When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. <sup>2</sup> Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. <sup>3</sup> And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. <sup>4</sup> But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. <sup>5</sup> This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

<sup>6</sup> The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. <sup>7</sup> And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god." <sup>8</sup> So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. <sup>9</sup> But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. <sup>10</sup> So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people." <sup>11</sup> They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. <sup>12</sup> The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

**The Ark Returned to Israel**

**6** The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. <sup>2</sup> And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place." <sup>3</sup> They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you." <sup>4</sup> And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. <sup>5</sup> So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. <sup>6</sup> Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed? <sup>7</sup> Now then, take and

prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. <sup>8</sup>And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way <sup>9</sup>and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence.”

<sup>10</sup>The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. <sup>11</sup>And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. <sup>12</sup>And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh. <sup>13</sup>Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. <sup>14</sup>The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>15</sup>And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the LORD. <sup>16</sup>And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

<sup>17</sup>These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron, <sup>18</sup>and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwallled villages. The great stone beside which they set down the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

<sup>19</sup>And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. <sup>20</sup>Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?” <sup>21</sup>So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you.”

**7** And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

### Samuel Judges Israel

<sup>3</sup>And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and

he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”<sup>4</sup> So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the LORD only.

<sup>5</sup> Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you.”<sup>6</sup> So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.<sup>7</sup> Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.<sup>8</sup> And the people 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.”<sup>9</sup> So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.<sup>10</sup> As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel.<sup>11</sup> And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car.

<sup>12</sup> Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer;<sup>1</sup> for he said, “Till now the LORD has helped us.”<sup>13</sup> So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.<sup>14</sup> The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.<sup>16</sup> And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places.<sup>17</sup> Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the LORD.

---

Once the ark is returned to Israel, twenty years pass before much else of significance occurs. Apparently, Samuel is functioning through all this time as both prophet and judge in Israel. By the time chapter 8 begins, Samuel is an old man, and the most important events of his life are about to take place.

---

### Israel Demands a King

**8** When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.<sup>2</sup> The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.<sup>3</sup> Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

<sup>4</sup> Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah<sup>5</sup> and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.”<sup>6</sup> But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.”

<sup>1</sup> Ebenezer means stone of help