

1 SAMUEL

Introduction

The book of Samuel is artificially divided into two parts: 1Samuel and 2Samuel. It is called that way because its main protagonist is Samuel, a mixture of judge and prophet, a “man of God” that rules the destiny of Israel by his prestige and his contact with God. His main function will be to give Israel a king, Saul, and when this king becomes incompetent, substitute him by the one who will be Israel’s “king of kings,” David who is so important and definitive that he will become the image of the future Messiah, the Savior of the people.

Vocation of Samuel

3 ¹The boy Samuel ministered to Yahweh under Eli’s care in a time in which the word of Yahweh was rarely heard; visions were not seen.

²One night Eli was lying down in his room, half blind as he was. ³The lamp of God was still lighted and Samuel also lay in the house of Yahweh near the ark of God. ⁴Then Yahweh called:

—Samuel! Samuel!

Samuel answered:

—I am here!

⁵and ran to Eli saying:

—I am here, did you not call me?

But Eli said:

—I did not call, go back to sleep.

So he went and lay down.

⁶Then Yahweh called again:

—Samuel!

And Samuel stood up and went to Eli saying:

—You called me; I am here.

But Eli answered:

—I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.

⁷Samuel did not yet know Yahweh and the word of Yahweh had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸But Yahweh called Samuel for the third time and, as he went again to Eli saying:

—I am here for you have called me.

Eli realized that it was Yahweh calling the boy. ⁹So he said to Samuel:

—Go, lie down, and if he calls you again, answer: “Speak, Yahweh, your servant listens.”

¹⁰Then Yahweh came and stood there calling as he did before:

—Samuel! Samuel!

And Samuel answered:

—Speak, for your servant listens.

¹¹Then Yahweh spoke to Samuel:

—Look, I am about to do something in Israel which will scare everyone who hears about it.

¹²On that day I will carry out what I told Eli regarding his family. All will be fulfilled from

beginning to end. ¹³For I told him that I was about to sentence his family forever. He himself knew that his sons were blaspheming God, but he did not stop them. ¹⁴This is why I have cursed the family of Eli. Their sin shall never be atoned for by sacrifice or by any offering.

¹⁵Samuel lay down until morning and rose up early. Then he opened the doors of Yahweh's house. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli, ¹⁶but Eli called him and said:

—Samuel, my son.

Samuel answered:

—I am here.

¹⁷Eli asked:

—What did Yahweh tell you? Do not hide it from me. Fear the punishment of God if you hide from me even one thing he told you.

¹⁸So Samuel told him everything to the end and Eli said:

—He is Yahweh. Let him do what seems good to him.

¹⁹Samuel grew; Yahweh was with him and made all his words become true. ²⁰All Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was really Yahweh's prophet. ²¹Yahweh would appear at Shiloh; there he revealed himself to Samuel by giving him his word.

The Israelites asks for a king. The Monarchy

8¹When Samuel grew old, he made his sons judges over Israel. ²His elder son was Joel and the second was Abijah, and both of them were judges in Beersheba. ³But they were not like their father; they had their vested interests, taking bribes and perverting justice.

⁴Because of this, all the chiefs of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel in Ramah. ⁵They said to him:

—You are already old and your sons are not following your ways. Give us a king to rule over us as in all the other nations.

⁶Samuel was very displeased with what they said:

—Give us a king to rule us.

And he prayed to Yahweh. ⁷And Yahweh told him:

—Give to this people all that they ask for. ⁸They are not rejecting you but they have rejected me as their king. They are now doing to you what they did to me from the day I brought them out of Egypt until now, forsaking me and serving other gods. ⁹Nevertheless, listen to them, and give them a serious warning. Tell them how they will be treated by their king.

¹⁰So Samuel answered those who were asking him for a king, ¹¹and he told them all that Yahweh said to him:

—Look, these will be the demands of your king: he will take your sons and assign them to his chariot and his horses and have them run before his chariot. ¹²Some he will assign as commanders over a thousand men and commanders over fifty. Others will till his ground and reap his harvest, make his implements of war and the equipment for his chariots. ¹³He will take your daughters as well to prepare perfumes, to cook and to bake for him. ¹⁴He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards and your olive orchards and give them to his officials. ¹⁵He will take a tenth portion of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. ¹⁶He will take your menservants and maidservants, the best of your cattle and your asses for his own work. ¹⁷He will take the tenth of your flocks and you yourselves will become his slaves.

¹⁸When these things happen, you will cry out because of the king whom you have chosen for yourselves. But by then, Yahweh will not answer you.

¹⁹The people paid no attention to all that Samuel said. They insisted:

—No! We want a king to govern us as in all the other nations. ²⁰Our king shall govern us, lead us and go ahead of us in our battles.

²¹Upon hearing all that his people said, Samuel repeated it to Yahweh. ²²But Yahweh said to him:

—Listen to them and give them a king.

Samuel then said to the Israelites:

—Go back, all of you, to your own cities.

SAMUEL AND SAUL

⁹¹There was a man from the tribe of Benjamin whose name was Kish. He was the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a valiant Benjaminite. ²Kish had a son named Saul, a handsome young man who had no equal among the Israelites, for he was a head taller than any of them.

³It happened that the asses of Kish were lost. So he said to his son Saul:

—Take one of the boys with you and go look for the asses.

⁴They went all over the hill country of Ephraim and the land of Shalishah but did not find them. They passed through the land of Shaalim and the land of Benjamin, but the asses were nowhere to be found.

⁵When they reached the land of Zuph, Saul said to his boy:

—Let us go back, lest my father be more worried about us than about the asses.

⁶But his servant said to him:

—Look, there is a man of God in this city. He is a highly respected man. All that he says comes true. Let us see him for he may be able to help us find what we are looking for.

¹⁰And Saul said to his boy:

—Well said! Come, let us go.

¹⁴So they went up to the city and entered it, and saw Samuel coming out towards them on his way up to the high place.

¹⁵The day before Saul came, Yahweh had already disclosed this to Samuel:

¹⁶—Tomorrow, about this time, I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin and you shall anoint him to rule over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines for I have seen the affliction of my people and their cry has come to me.

¹⁷So, when Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh told him:

—Here is the man I spoke to you about! He shall rule over my people.

¹⁸Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and said:

—Tell me, where is the house of the seer?

¹⁹Samuel answered Saul:

—I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me. In the morning, before you leave, I will tell you all that is in your heart. ²⁰As for your asses that were lost three days ago, do not worry about them for they have been found.

Samuel added:

—For whom is the first place in Israel? Isn't it for you and for all your father's kin?

²¹Saul answered:

—I am a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the lowliest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why do you speak to me in this way?

²²Samuel took Saul and his boy, brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of the table, before some thirty guests. ²³Then Samuel told the cook:

—Bring in the portion which I asked you to put aside. ²⁴The cook brought in the leg with the tail portion and set it before Saul, saying to him:

—This has been set aside for you. Please eat.

So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

²⁵Then they went down from the high place and entered the city. On the terrace they prepared a bed for Saul where he lay down to sleep.

Saul's anointing

²⁶Early the next morning, Samuel called to Saul:

—Get up, for I must send you on your way.

Saul got up and began to walk down the street with Samuel.

²⁷As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul:

—Tell your servant to walk ahead. You stay here for a while and I shall give you a message from God.

10¹Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head. And kissing Saul, Samuel said:

—Yahweh has anointed you to rule over and to lead his people Israel!

Election of the king by lots

¹⁷After that, Samuel called the people together before Yahweh at Mizpah. ¹⁸He then spoke to the Israelites:

—Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: I brought Israel out of Egypt and I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from all the kingdoms oppressing you. ¹⁹But you have this day rejected your God who saves you from all your calamities and your distress. You have said, 'No! Give us a king to rule over us.' So now present yourselves before Yahweh, grouping yourselves into tribes and clans.

²⁵Samuel then told the people the rights and duties of the king. He wrote all these in a book and presented it before Yahweh. Then Samuel sent all the people home. ²⁶Saul himself went home to Gibeah with these valiant men whose hearts God had touched.

11¹⁵So all the people went to Gilgal and there they proclaimed Saul king before Yahweh. They sacrificed peace offerings and Saul and all Israel celebrated.

13¹Saul became king and he ruled over Israel for twenty-two years.

14⁴⁷When Saul felt secure as king of Israel, he began to fight against all his surrounding enemies: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah and the Philistines, routing his enemies wherever he went.

Saul is rejected

15¹⁰Then Yahweh spoke to Samuel:

¹¹—I feel sorry that I made Saul king because he has turned his back on me and has not kept my command.

Samuel was troubled and cried to Yahweh all night.

¹²Early next morning, he went looking for Saul, but was told that Saul had set off for Carmel to erect a monument to himself and then had gone on his way to Gilgal.

¹³When finally they met, Saul greeted Samuel:

—May Yahweh bless you,

²²Samuel then said:

—Does Yahweh take as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to his command? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission better than the fat of rams. ²³Rebellion is like the sin of divination, and stubbornness like holding onto idols. Since you have rejected the word of Yahweh, he too has rejected you as king.

³⁵From that day Samuel did not see Saul again until he died, but he was grieving over Saul because Yahweh regretted having made him king over Israel.

SAUL AND DAVID

Introduction to David

David is one of the great figures in the history of Israel: a military, political and religious figure. It is the beginning of a new election, of a stable saving institution. To remember him will be an occasion for discovering and maturing the messianic hope.

For this reason David is an exalted and idealized figure, formed by history and legend, by memory and fantasy, making it impossible for us today to separate its components. Most probably right from the beginning diverse traditions about his life and deeds were formed, making it difficult for the author of this book to put them aside or harmonize them.

New variations were added to these loosed or braided narrative threads.

A hazardous life can be depicted under a lyric or epic presentation leading towards the throne and to a stable dynasty.

David anointed king

16¹Yahweh asked Samuel:

—How long will you be grieving over Saul whom I have rejected as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way to Jesse the Bethlehemite for I have chosen my king from among his sons.

⁴Samuel did what Yahweh commanded and left for Bethlehem. When he appeared, the elders of the city came to him asking, fearfully:

—Do you bring us peace?

⁵Samuel replied:

—I come in peace; I am here to sacrifice to Yahweh. Cleanse yourselves and join me in the sacrifice.

He also had Jesse and his sons cleansed and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶As they came, Samuel looked at Eliab the older and thought:

—This must be Yahweh's anointed.

⁷But Yahweh told Samuel:

—Do not judge by his looks or his stature for I have rejected him. Yahweh does not judge as man judges; humans see with the eyes; Yahweh sees the heart.

⁸Jesse called his son Abinadab and presented him to Samuel who said:

—Yahweh has not chosen this one either.

⁹Jesse presented Shammah and Samuel said:

—Nor has Yahweh chosen this one.

¹⁰Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel who said:

—Yahweh has chosen none of them. ¹¹But are all your sons here?

Jesse replied:

—There is still the youngest, tending the flock just now.

Samuel said to him:

—Send for him and bring him to me; we shall not sit down to eat until he arrives.

¹²So Jesse sent for his youngest son and brought him to Samuel. He was a handsome lad with ruddy complexion and beautiful eyes. And Yahweh spoke:

—Go, anoint him for he is the one.

¹³Samuel then took the horn of oil and anointed him in his brothers' presence. From that day onwards, Yahweh's Spirit took hold of David. Then Samuel left for Ramah.

David, in the court of Saul

¹⁴The spirit of Yahweh had left Saul and an evil spirit sent by Yahweh tormented him.

¹⁵Saul's servants said to him:

—We know that an evil spirit sent by God is tormenting you. ¹⁶If you so wish, your servants who stand before you will look for someone who can play the lyre so when the evil spirit from God comes over you, he will play and you will feel better.

¹⁷So Saul answered them:

—Get someone who can play the lyre well.

¹⁸One of them said:

—A son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, plays very well. He is, moreover, a courageous man, intelligent and pleasant to talk with and Yahweh is with him.

¹⁹So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and asked for his son David who tended the sheep.

²⁰Jesse loaded an ass with bread, a wineskin and a kid and had David take all these to Saul.
²¹David then left and entered Saul's service. Saul grew very fond of David and made him his armor-bearer. ²²Then he sent word to Jesse, saying:

—Let David remain in my service for I am very pleased with him.

²³So, whenever the evil spirit from God overpowered Saul, David would play on the lyre and Saul would feel better for the evil spirit would leave him.

David and Goliath

17 ¹The Philistines prepared their forces for battle and gathered together at Socoh, a territory of Judah. They encamped between Socoh and Azekah in Ephesdammim. ²Saul and the Israelites, meantime, assembled and pitched camp in the valley of Elah, ready for their encounter with the Philistines. ³The Philistines took their position on one hill while the Israelites took theirs on another hill, with a valley separating the two forces.

⁴Then a champion named Goliath came out from the Philistine camp. He was from Gath and was about three meters tall. ⁵He wore a helmet of bronze, and a coat covered with bronze scales. His armor weighed sixty kilos. ⁶He had bronze greaves strapped on his legs and a bronze spear slung between his shoulders. ⁷The shaft of his spear was the size of a weaver's rod; its head weighed seven kilos. His shield-bearer went before him.

⁸He stood in front of the Israelite ranks and shouted:

—Why have you come out in battle array? I am a Philistine and you are Saul's men! Choose a man from among yourselves who can challenge me. ⁹If he fights better and kills me, we shall be subject to you; but if I overpower him and kill him, you shall be subject to us.

¹⁰The Philistine added:

—This is my challenge to the Israelite troops this day. Give me a man who can fight with me alone!

¹¹When they heard this challenge of the Philistine, Saul and his men were afraid and greatly terrified.

³²David said to Saul:

—Let no one be discouraged on account of this Philistine, for your servant will engage him in battle. ³³Saul told David:

—You cannot fight with this Philistine for you are still young, whereas this man has been a warrior from his youth.

³⁴But David said:

—When I was tending my father's sheep, whenever a lion or bear came to snatch a lamb from the flock, ³⁵I would run after it, kill it and rescue the victim from its mouth. If it attacked me, I would hold it by its beard and slay it. ³⁶I have killed lions and bears and will do the same with this uncircumcised Philistine, for he has defied the armies of the living God.

³⁷David continued:

—Yahweh, who delivered me from the paws of lions and bears, will deliver me from the hands of the Philistine.

Saul then told David:

—Go and may Yahweh be with you!

³⁸Saul fitted his armor on David, put a bronze helmet on his head, and clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹David secured his sword over the armor but could not walk because it was his first time. So he said to Saul:

—I cannot move with all these trappings on me because I am not accustomed to wearing them.

David got rid of all this armor, ⁴⁰took his staff, picked up five smooth stones from the brook and dropped them inside his shepherd's bag. And with his sling in hand, he drew near to the Philistine.

⁴¹The Philistine moved forward, closing in on David, his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴²When he saw that David was only a lad, (he was of fresh complexion and handsome) he despised him ⁴³and said:

—Am I a dog that you should approach me with a stick? Cursing David by his gods, ⁴⁴he continued:

—Come and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field!

⁴⁵David answered the Philistine:

—You have come against me with sword, spear and javelin, but I come against you with Yahweh, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. ⁴⁶Yahweh will deliver you this day into my hands and I will strike you down and cut off your head. I will give the corpses of the Philistine army today to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, and all the earth shall know that there is a God of Israel. ⁴⁷All the people gathered here shall know that Yahweh saves not by sword or spear; the battle belongs to Yahweh, and he will deliver you into our hands.

⁴⁸No sooner had the Philistine moved to attack him, than David rushed to the battleground. ⁴⁹Putting his hand into his bag, he took out a stone, slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead; it penetrated his forehead and he fell on his face to the ground. ⁵⁰David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, felling him without using a sword. ⁵¹He rushed forward, stood over him, took the Philistine's sword and slew him by cutting off his head.

25 ¹The day Samuel died, all Israel gathered together to mourn him; after which they buried him at his home in Ramah.

Then David went down to the desert of Maon.

Death of Saul

31 ¹Now the Philistines fought against the Israelites who, in their flight, fell mortally wounded on Mount Gilboa. ²The Philistines surrounded Saul and his sons and killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, Saul's sons. ³The battle raged around Saul, and he was afraid when he saw that the archers had found him.

⁴Then Saul commanded his armor-bearer:

—Draw your sword and run me through lest these uncircumcised men come and stab me themselves, making fun of me.

But his armor-bearer did not move because he was greatly terrified. So Saul drew his own sword and fell upon it. ⁵Seeing that Saul was dead, the armor-bearer also fell upon his sword and died with him. ⁶Thus, Saul, his three sons, his armor-bearer and all his men died together on the same day.