

Lesson 18: Samuel, the Boy Prophet

Reading Preparation:

- 1 Samuel 1-4;7-8

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Lesson Notes:

[1. Overview: Book of Samuel](#)

I find the breakdown of the Books of Samuel to be essential in furthering our understanding of these two books. I particularly like the writings of David R. Seeley in this regard.

[1.1. Major People](#)

David R. Seeley states,

"The framework of the books of Samuel consists of the accounts of the lives of the key people: Samuel and Nathan—prophets; Eli, Sadok and Abiathar—priests; and Saul and David—kings." ("An Introduction To 1 and 2 Samuel," in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 261).

[1.2. Outline of 1 and 2 Samuel](#)

David R. Seeley divides the two books:

"1 Samuel [Three Major Characters]

- *Chapters 1-7: Samuel*
- *Chapters 8-15: Saul and the rise of the monarchy*
- *Chapters 15-31 The Rise of David"*

"2 Samuel

- *David is the central character throughout the book of 2 Samuel.*

[1.3. Three Major Periods of David's Reign](#)

- *Chapters 1-5: Rise to kingship over Judah and Israel*
- *Chapters 6-12: The consolidation of the empire*
- *Chapters 13-20: The story of David's son, Absalom, and the problem of succession*
- *Chapters 21-24: An appendix"*

("An Introduction to 1 and 2 Samuel," in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 262).

1.4. Relationship To the Old Testament

David R. Seeley notes,

"The books 1 and 2 Samuel are part of a continuous historical narrative that runs from Genesis through 2 Kings in the Hebrew Bible. They recount the history of God and his people from the creation of the world to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple [587 B.C.]—an event that in many ways can be seen as the focal point of the history of the entire Old Testament." ("An Introduction to 1 and 2 Samuel," in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 3.. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 259).

1.5. The Message of the Old Testament

David R. Seeley states,

"The key to the message of the Old Testament is covenant... The people accepted the call to become his people—the children of God... Obedience to the conditions of the covenant brought blessings, while disobedience resulted in disaster." ("An Introduction To 1 and 2" in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 259-260).

David R. Seeley states,

1.6. Recent Discovery

David R. Seeley states,

"[The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves at Qumran] demonstrates quite dramatically that both books (1 and 2 Samuel) were written on one scroll with no break in the text. In fact, the division of the book into two parts in the Hebrew text only occurred in A.D. 1448." ("An Introduction To 1 and 2 Samuel" in *Studies in Scriptures*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 266).

1.7. Time Period Covered

David R. Seeley observes,

*"Although this is a very difficult time period to date with precision, these two books probably cover a time period of 100-150 years, somewhere between 1100 B.C. and 961 B.C. ("An Introduction To 1 and 2 Samuel," in *Studies in the Scripture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 260).*

With the above insight in mind, we now begin our discovery of the chapters of 1 Samuel.

2. Hannah and Peninnah

The First Book of Samuel begins with a family. The husband's name is Elkanah and he has two wives.

1 Samuel 1:2

2 And he [Elkanah] 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.

To not be able to bear children made one "barren," and during this time of history, this was a serious problem. A woman's personal worth and value was often determined by the number of children she was able to bear. Being barren was made more serious for Hannah due to the attitude of Peninnah towards her and Hannah's trial by the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:6

6 And her adversary [Peninnah] also provoked her sore, for to make her fret because the LORD had shut up her womb.

As previously noted, the Lord does allow trials and adversity to come into our lives as a means of refining our natures and confirming our personal obedience to his commandments. When trials do come, an important question to ask, "What is the Lord trying to teach me?" This lesson, I believe, is the silver lining among the clouds of despair and disappointment.

3. Hannah, Eli and Samuel

Allan K. Burgess states,

"...the law of Moses required that three times a year all Israelite males present themselves before the Lord at the tabernacle [which was located in Shioh], where they would worship through prayer and sacrifice." (*New Insights into*

the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993,132).

Ellis T. Rasmussen notes,

"Elkanah, a righteous Israelite was of the tribe of Levi living in Ephraim." (A Latter-Day Commentary on the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993, 231).

In obedience to the law of Moses, Elkanah and his two wives journeyed to Shiloh to attend the tabernacle each year.

1 Samuel 1:7

7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

Year after year, Hannah's unhappiness regarding her being barren, continued to weigh heavy upon her mind. It was during one of the yearly visits that Hannah offered what may have been many prayers unto the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:10

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

Linda S. Reeves shares some thoughts similar to Hannah's feelings,

"Many years ago my husband became very ill with a rare disease. As the weeks went by and the sicker he became, the more I became convinced that he was dying. I told no one of my fears. We had a large, young family and a loving eternal marriage, and the thought of losing my husband and raising my children by myself filled me with loneliness, despair, and ever anger. I am ashamed to say that I pulled away from my Heavenly Father. For days I quit praying; I quit planning; I cried. I finally came to the realization that I could not do this alone.

"For the first time in many days, I knelt down and poured out my heart to my Father in Heaven, pleading for forgiveness for turning away from Him, telling Him all of my deepest feelings, and finally crying out that if this is what He really wanted me to do, I would do it. I knew He must have a plan for our lives.

"As I continued on my knees to pour out my heart, the sweetest, most peaceful, loving feeling came over me. It was as if a blanket of love was flowing over me. It was as if I could feel Heavenly Father saying, 'That was all I needed to know.' I determined never to turn away from Him again. Gradually and amazingly, my husband began to get better until he made a full recovery.

"Years later my husband and I knelt by the side of our 17-year old daughter and pleaded for her life. This time the answer was no, but that same feeling of love and peace that our Savior has promised was just as powerful, and we knew that even though Heavenly Father was calling her back home, everything would be all right." ("The Lord Has Not Forgotten You" in Ensign, November, 2012, General Relief Society Meeting, 119-120).

Both Hannah and Linda Reeves knew both the hurt and anger which often comes when we feel our prayers are not being heard. Both learned that they had not been forgotten.

1 Samuel 1:11

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

Initially when Hannah's mouth is moving, but no words are heard, the presiding priest of the tabernacle, Eli, believes that she had been drinking (see 1 Samuel 1:14). Hannah immediately clarifies the reason for her prayer.

1 Samuel 1:16

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

Eli pronounces a blessing upon her as he states,

1 Samuel 1:17-18

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

For Hannah, Eli pronouncement carried the verity of the word of the Lord. She, in faith, trusted that the Lord would bless her and her husband with a child and she would fulfill her vow unto the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:20

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, say, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

Hannah determines not to go to the tabernacle until she has weaned him and is prepared to present him to the Lord. As Samuel is weaned, she will now fulfill her vow to the Lord as she presents him unto the care of the priestly family at the tabernacle in Shiloh.

1 Samuel 1:27-28

**27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:
28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.**

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch state,

"Weaning took place very late among the Israelites. According to [2 Maccabees 7:27], the Hebrew mothers were in the habit of suckling their children for three years. When the weaning had taken place, Hannah would bring her son up to the sanctuary, to appear before the face of the Lord, and remain there forever, i.e. his whole life long... To this end he was to receive his training at the sanctuary, that at the very earliest waking up of his spiritual susceptibilities he might receive the impressions of the sacred presence of God." (Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 2:2:26. 10 bks. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, n.d.)

The Lord had granted unto Hannah the fulfillment of her righteous prayer and now Hannah has completed the condition of her commitment.

1 Samuel 2:11, 18-19

**11 ... And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.
18 But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with linen ephod.
19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.**

Some have questioned the magnitude of the sacrifice Hannah was willing to make in order to give birth to a male child. While we do not know all the particulars of her decision, we do know that she was sincere in her commitment and her covenant was honored by the Lord.

Ann Spangler and Jean F. Syswerda note,

"Like Jochebed placing... [her] child Moses into the waters of the Nile as though into God's own hands she ... [surrendered] her child to the priest's care." (Women of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Michigan, Zondervan, 1999, 145).

No sacrifice was too great for Hannah to be able to bear a son.

Hannah and Jochebed stand out in the scriptures as two mothers who made the supreme sacrifice to give their sons, at a young age, to serve the Lord on a full-time basis.

It is during one of the yearly visits to the tabernacle that Eli gave the following blessing to Elkanah and Hannah.

1 Samuel 2:20-21

**20 And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.
21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.**

Not only did the Lord accept the sacrifice of her son, but He then blessed Hannah and her husband with five other children. How great must have been Hannah's gratitude to the Lord.

[4. Eli and His Two Sons](#)

We turn now to the contrast between the obedience of Samuel and that of Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

Alan K. Burgess observes,

"Samuel grew up in the shadow of the tabernacle and ministered to the Lord under the direction of Eli the priest. While Samuel increased in faith and obedience, Eli's sons did just the opposite... Not only did they demand the best portion of the sacrifice which was brought to the Temple—before the sacrifice had been made to the Lord... [but they] also lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle!... [Their perversion of worship and immorality] was an abomination to the Lord and a desecration of his house." (New Insights into the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993, 134).

Just because parents are obedient to the teaching of the Lord, it does not guarantee the obedience of their children. The Lord has given each of us our free agency, but with this freedom comes also the responsibility of our choices. At times immediately, other times, later, we will receive either the blessings or the consequences of our actions. Not only were the two sons punished, but also their father, Eli, for his lack of action.

Old Testament Institute Student Manual notes,

"Eli failed in his parental responsibility as well as in his office as the presiding priest. Although he rebuked his sons, he took no action to see that the abomination in his family and at the tabernacle was corrected. Therefore 'a man of God' (an unnamed prophet) came to Eli... ." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 269).

1 Samuel 2:27, 29-30, 33-35

27 And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD... .
29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me,...
30 ... now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.
33 ... and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.
34 And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.
35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

Spencer W. Kimball taught,

"[D]iscipline is probably one of the most important elements in which a mother and a father can lead and guide and direct their children... Setting limits to what a child can do means to that child that you love him and respect him.. If you permit the child to do all the things he would like to do without limits, that means to him that you do not care much about him." (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball. Edited by Edward L. Kimball. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982, 341).

Sometimes we are afraid our children will be upset with us, so we back off from our responsibilities. In this regard we do them a great disservice. Not only do they not learn to curb their behavior, but they learn that a "temper tantrum," will get them their own way. We must learn as parents to take the bitter with the sweet, and discipline our children properly. I believe if we, as parents, do all we can to teach our children in love, if they error, the Lord will not hold us responsible for their actions.

Ardeth G. Kapp shared the following experience:

"I remember one evening years ago, while attending a Sunday School party, I looked at the clock, and it was past time I was told to be home. Just then a knock came on the door. I was horrified—my dad had come after me. I felt humiliated in front of my friends. I thought I wanted to die. I was not pleasant with my dad; disobedience never makes one pleasant.

"A few years later, my friends and I were driving home from a dance across an Indian reservation, ten miles from any shelter. It was 40 degrees below zero, and the wind-chill continued to lower the temperature. A few miles farther into the blizzard, we discovered that there was no heat in the car. Then the car froze up and would not run. We came to a slow stop. We watched the snow swirling in front of us only until the winds quickly froze over. We were quiet and sober as we contemplated our fate—our lives were in danger. The silence was broken as a friend in the backseat asked, 'How long do you think it will be before your dad will get here?'

"Why do you think they thought my dad would come? One time I had thought I wanted to die because he had come after me. This time we lived because my dad came through the blizzard to save my life and the lives of my friends.

This time I was pleased with my dad—pleased and very grateful.” (“Young Women Striving Together” in Ensign, November 1984, 96-97.)

Often the rewards of being a responsible parent are delayed. Often, however, with the passing of time, we will come to feel our own personal sense of satisfaction for having done the best we could do. It is also hoped our prayers will never end for our children to do a better job with their children than we did with ours.

As the years passed for Samuel at the tabernacle, we learn the following regarding Samuel's development.

1 Samuel 2:26

26 And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

5. Three Times the Lord Calls

Samuel, now a boy of approximately twelve years of age, lies sleeping and hears his name called. This occurs on three separate occasions during the night and each time Samuel goes to Eli and says, “Here am I.” On each occasion, Eli tells him that he did not call him and that he is to go back to bed. On the third occasion, Eli now understands that it is the Lord who is calling Samuel and instructs him as to how he is to respond.

1 Samuel 3:9

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord did call Samuel a third time.

1 Samuel 3:10-13

**10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.
11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.
12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.
13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.**

The message the Lord delivers to the boy Samuel is the punishment that Eli will receive due to the inappropriate actions of his sons and his failure as a father to restrain them. It appears the Lord instructed Samuel to give this message to Eli in the morning. The scriptures record,

1 Samuel 3:15

15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

The next morning, Samuel is questioned by Eli regarding the message from the Lord.

1 Samuel 3:18

18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

Eli's reaction to the message of the Lord seems to indicate that Eli had full recognition of the action he should have taken regarding the behavior of his sons and the penalty that was attached. He accepted his discipline.

As Eli faces the reality of the loss of his priesthood authority as priest over the tabernacle, he would also be a witness to the Lord having chosen Samuel to be his prophet.

1 Samuel 3:19-21

**19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.
20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.**

21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

Throughout his growing up years, Samuel has been taught and spiritually prepared to one day be Israel's prophet. Through his mother's willingness to dedicate him to the Lord while a young child; then the direction he received from Eli and others at the tabernacle, as well as Samuel's own obedience to the commandments of the Lord, he had been well tutored. Now he was called to this sacred calling.

The Israelites are so excited the Lord has blessed Israel again with a prophet that they go into battle against the Philistines. They [Israel] are completely defeated. They again go into battle, but this time they take the Ark of the Covenant with them.

1 Samuel 4:3

3 ... Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

Marion G. Merkley observes,

"The Israelites did not know that it was the Lord, and not the Ark that helped Joshua to fight Israel's battles. They even forgot that the first Covenant in the Ark was that they would 'have no other gods' before Jehovah: yet now they were ready to worship the Ark itself. The Ark was taken from the temple. We are not told what Eli thought of that. It is possible that his sons took the Ark away without telling him... In the battle the Philistines were easily winners. Israel was badly beaten. The Ark is captured by the Philistines as a prize of war." (Old Testament Stories. Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1946, [Third (Revised) Edition], 123).

At Shiloh, Eli anxiously awaits news from the battle as his two sons are among the soldiers. A messenger brings news from the battle regarding Israel's defeat.

1 Samuel 4:17-18

**17 And the messenger... said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.
18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.**

The prophecy of the Lord is fulfilled. Both of Eli's sons are killed; the Ark of the Covenant is taken, and at the news, Eli dies. Following Eli's death, his daughter-in-law also died in childbirth (see 1 Samuel 4:19-20).

6. The Lord Destroys the Philistines

Prior to the Philistines delivering the ark of the Lord to the inhabitants Kirjath-jearim, the Philistines had experienced both plagues and the death of many of their soldiers by the Lord (see 1 Samuel 5:11). The final loss occurred to the men of Beth-shemesh.

1 Samuel 6:19

19 And he [Lord] smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

Ellis T. Rasmussen states,

"[This] is not a proper expression of the number 50,070, and Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews 6:1:4), as well as some Hebrew manuscripts, reads simply, 'seventy men.'... The village of Beth-shemesh could hardly have had 50,070 inhabitants;" (A Latter-Day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993, 236).

The ark is then taken from Beth-shemesh to Kirjath-jearim where it is kept for twenty years (see 1 Samuel 6:20-21; 7:1-2). While it is unclear why the ark remained in Kirjath-jearim for twenty years, one reason may be the unrighteousness of the children of Israel. This is the focus of Samuel's speech as he speaks to the house of Israel.

1 Samuel 7:3-4

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then

put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

The children of Israel are now directed to gather to Mizpeh.

1 Samuel 7:5-6

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, 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 children of Israel in Mizpeh.

While Israel is gathered at Mizpeh, the Philistines prepare to come against them.

1 Samuel 7:7-8

7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

When we are righteous, we may, with confidence, call upon the Lord to protect us from our enemies. This principle applies to nations, communities, families, or as individuals. When we are not obedient to God's commandments, we are on our own.

1 Samuel 7:9-10

9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited [caused them confusion] them; and they were smitten before Israel.

The repentance of the people brought protection from the Lord. The final result of the battle with the Philistines is recorded.

1 Samuel 7:13

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

The Philistines "came no more" against Israel as the "hand of the LORD was against the Philistines," we may add, because Israel continued to be righteous "all the days of Samuel".

Surely if there were only one lesson we were to learn from the Old Testament, it is that protection from the Lord is predicated upon individual obedience. When the majority in a nation choose unrighteousness, that nation is then ripened for destruction. King Mosiah had learned this truth through his experience in governing the people.

B/M, Mosiah 29:26-27

26 Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law-to do your business by the voice of the people.

27 And if the time comes that the [greater] voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land.

7. Israel Requests A King

Samuel and his wife now experience the bitter pain of parenthood as their two sons, Joel and Abiah who had been serving as “judges in Beersheba” (1 Samuel 8:2), do not follow the righteous counsel of their parents.

1 Samuel 8:3

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

It is the actions of his two sons, that prompts the elders of Israel to gather together with Samuel. They express their request to Samuel.

1 Samuel 8:5

5 And said unto him [Samuel], Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all other nations.

The words of the elders must have been painful for Samuel to hear as he is again reminded of the unrighteousness of his sons. But that is not all. The elders of Israel are asking for “a king... [so they could be] like all other nations”. Their Lord was the King over Israel. It was He who had protected them and watched over them as a parent would care for his children. They were rejecting His leadership! They also wanted to be like the other nations around them. Surely they knew of the unrighteousness that had come to their neighbors through their own unrighteous choices! Samuel turns to the Lord in prayer.

1 Samuel 8:7-9

7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

The Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

Samuel now returns to the people and tells them of the three principal evils of a kingly form of government: “excessive taxation (see 1 Samuel 8:15,17); conscription (compulsory enrollment) of the labor force (see 1 Samuel 8:11-13,16), and seizure of private lands (see 1 Samuel 8:14-15).” (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 271).

Bruce R. McConkie observed,

“The system of kingly government itself, no matter how talented or noble an individual occupant of the throne may be, does not make the best form of government, one in which the instinctive automatic concern of government is to look after the best interests of the body of the people. It is inherent in the nature of even the best and most ideal kingly systems that special privilege and questionable adulation be heaped upon those in the ruling class.” (Mormon Doctrine. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966, [Second Edition, 1966], 414).

We find further clarification in the Book of Mormon from the wisdom of King Mosiah.

B/M, Mosiah 29:16-17

16 ... because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you.

17 For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction.

In spite of Samuel’s words of counsel to the Israelites, they do not listen.

1 Samuel 8:19

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

Samuel again returns to the Lord to make known the desire of the people.

1 Samuel 8:21-22

21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

22 And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king...

Ellis T. Rasmussen states,

"The Lord instructed Samuel to grant them their request even if it be to their detriment... by the way, ... this speech of Samuel's against the institution of monarchy in Israel was used by George Washington in his rejection of the proposal that he become a king in the American colonies freed from England by the American Revolutionary War." (Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings , Vol. 1. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1972, 164).

Modern revelation given to Joseph Smith confirms the consequences of our rejecting the counsel of the Lord.

Doctrine and Covenants 88:64-65

64 Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you;

65 And if ye ask anything that is not expedient for you, it shall turn unto your condemnation.

As we continue our study of the Old Testament, we will see the effects the choice to have a king will ultimately have upon Israel.

8. Conclusions

Through the lives of Hannah, Eli, and Samuel, we learn of the blessings that come through obedience and the consequences of disobedience. Hannah placing service to God above self, is blessed with a son who becomes the Lord's anointed prophet; Eli placing his sons before the Lord, loses his blessings and eventually the lives of his sons. Samuel placing his life in the hands of God, like Eli must not only deal with unrighteous sons, but also the unrighteous request of the children of Israel. Only when we modern Israelites give our total obedience to God and to his anointed servants will we ever find the peace and happiness that we seek. We too must learn to live in a world that often appears to be ruled by the "King of Evil," rather than the Lord of Heaven.

Paul Harvey, News Commentator, shares,

"In the midwest as a young couple was in a restaurant making plans to go to their prom, all was in order except for their transportation. The young man only had an old pickup truck in which to transport his date to the night's event. While he was ashamed and even suggested they arrive late so no one would observe them, the young girl stated that what mattered to her was that they were together.

"A now successful real estate salesman could not help but over hear the couple's conversation and recalling his own prom now stepped forward and offered to exchange his car with them for the evening. The fellow immediately agreed for anything would be better he thought than his old truck. The exchange was made and that night the couple went to the prom in the brand new Jaguar. It had deep bucket seats with leather upholstery: a paint finish in which you could see your face and a compact disc player, just to name a few of the accessories. That evening the car was parked right in front of the prom and many couple took turns sitting in the car as the night progressed. The next morning the car was parked in the owner's driveway complete with a "thank you" note and a full tank of gas.

"The owner has also spent a memorable evening. He had spent some time in the fellow's old truck where his thoughts had gone back to his own prom. He had then escorted his date in an old Pinto, as he had been too poor to afford better transportation for his prom date twenty years ago." (Paul Harvey News. Radio broadcast, June 10, 1994).

The trappings of materialism along with the need to impress others in order to boost our own sagging self-esteem still motivate the actions of many today. The girlfriend was right when she said, 'what mattered to her is that they were together.' True happiness today, as in the past, is found not in wealth or appearance, but in our daily acts of obedience and acts of thoughtfulness to others. Eli, his sons, and Israel put self before God. Hannah and Samuel put God and others before self. The choice we make today is still important.