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### Religious Conditions in Israel in the Age of Eli and Samuel

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CONCORDIA SEMINARY

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL IN THE AGE OF ELI AND SAMUEL

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE SEMINARY FACULTY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

DEPARTMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT

BY  
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SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

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## RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL IN THE AGE OF ELI AND SAMUEL

### Introduction

In more ways than one, the period of Jewish history during the age of Eli and Samuel is an age of transition. The greatest outward change appears in the change of government from that of judges to that of kings. This transition was to bring to an end the lament of the author of Judges that "in those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." For "the judges had only a limited influence. Called to their prominent position by the necessities of the times, they acted with energy in the affairs of the individual tribes at the head of which they were placed but exercised no abiding influence upon the nation, which on the contrary relapsed into its former course, when its burdens were lightened or when the judge was dead."<sup>1</sup> This rule of judges was to give way to the reign of a king. God's promise to Israel in the days of Moses that Israel would have its king at the proper time was soon to be fulfilled.

But a far greater inward change took place in this era without which the institution of the monarchy could not have

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1. Oehler, Dr. Gustav Friedrich, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 354.



been established effectively. Israel first had to suffer the penalty for apostasizing from Jehovah their God. God had to teach them the error of their ways in falling down before the works of men's hands. His temple had to be cleansed from the sacrilege and debauchery into which it had fallen. An inward change of heart had to precede the subsequent political union under a king.

Therefore to exhibit in its origin and growth the new order of things, which Samuel had introduced, the prophetic historian of the books of Samuel goes back to the time of Samuel's birth and makes us acquainted not only with the political oppression under which Israel was suffering but also with the religious conditions at the close of the period of the Judges and during the high priesthood of Eli. <sup>1</sup> He pictures to us the religious decline under Eli.

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1. Keil, C. F. and Delitzsch, F., Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, The Books of Samuel, p. 14.



## I. The Religious Decline under Eli

### A. Decline of the Theocratic Institutions

We find at the head of Israel a man, of whose rise nothing has been told: Eli, both judge and high priest. With respect to the history of the priesthood there is in this case a gap in the historical books of the Old Testament. Aaron, the choice of whom is also mentioned in 1 Samuel, 2, 27, was after his death succeeded by his two sons Eleazar and Ithamar, the former filling the high-priestly office, Numbers 20, 28; Deuteronomy 10, 6; Joshua 14, 1, and being succeeded by his son Phinehas, Judges 20, 28. The history of the high priesthood is not taken up again until Eli, 1 Samuel 1, 1. <sup>1</sup> The sudden appearance of Eli reveals that in the dark period preceding, there had been a change in the order of the priesthood. Eli was not of the regular house of Eleazar, 1 Chronicles 6, 4-15; 24, 4, the eldest son of Aaron, in which succession ought to have continued. There had been a transfer to the house of the younger and comparatively obscure Ithamar, "which had struck such deep root that it continued, in spite of the agitations of the period, till its final overthrow in the reign of Solomon."<sup>2</sup> In perfect agreement with this Josephus relates that after Ozi, the high

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1. Oehler, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

2. Standley, Arthur P., Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church, p. 414.



priest of the family of Eleazar, Eli, of the lineage of Ithamar, received the high priesthood.<sup>1</sup>

The circumstances which led to the transfer of this honor from the line of Eleazar to that of Ithamar are unknown. There was not a distinction of the line of Eleazar, for in the time of David, Zadok, a descendant of Eleazar, is spoken of as high priest along with Abiathar and Ahimelech, the descendants of Eli, 2 Samuel 8, 17; 20, 25. Usurpation on the part of Eli is out of the question. Did the transfer take place by command of God on account of grievous sins of the high priests of Eleazar's line?<sup>2</sup> The rabbinical commentators allege that the transmission of this high-priestly dignity took place because of the share of the High Priest Phinehas, the last one mentioned in the Old Testament before Eli, in the alleged sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps at the death of the last priest of the family of Eleazar, the remaining son was not equal to the occasion, either because he was still an infant or simply too young and inexperienced and hence unable to cope with the disorders of the time.<sup>4</sup> Therefore he was set aside in favor of one who evinced faculty to take the field and marshal the forces of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Eli, who was probably related by marriage to the high priest's family and was no doubt a vigorous man, was

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1. Josephus, Flavius, Antiquities of the Jews, V, XI, 5.
  2. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 39.
  3. Stanley, op. cit., p. 416.
  4. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 39.
  5. Meyer, F. B., Samuel the Prophet, pp. 12-13.



compelled to take the oversight of the congregation as judge and high priest.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the Philistines may have been repulsed from the position which they occupied according to the narration of Samson tends to confirm this conjecture. Was this effected through some heroic deed of Eli's youth? And did they then raise him to the office of high priest and judge? Such a supposition was rendered probable as is seen later by the union of warrior and priest in Phinehas.<sup>2</sup> In the final analysis no definite reason can be given for Eli's promotion to the high-priestly office.

Although Eli in his young life had done some stirring deeds, which raised him to this supreme position, yet, when we are introduced to him, "he comes before us in his feeble old age, with a soft and yielding goodness, ill-suited for the times."<sup>3</sup> Although presiding over the sanctuary as high priest, he was too old to perform the duties connected with the offering of sacrifices. Josephus claims that his son Phinehas officiated already as high priest, his father having resigned his office to him by reason of his great age.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of his shortcomings, Eli exercised no doubt "a beneficial influence, chiefly by the moral life that he led and less by his words, telling the people to come back to God."<sup>5</sup> His assent to God's judgment upon his house proves that, with

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 39.

2. Stanley, op. cit., p. 415.

3. Geikie, Cunningham, Hours with the Bible, p. 24.

4. Josephus, op. cit., V? XI, 2.

5. Graetz, Heinrich, History of the Jews, vol. I, p. 69.



all weakness and sinful indulgence toward his sons, he was thoroughly devoted to God in his heart. Although he had failed to keep his own children in subjection with all gravity, his handling of Samuel shows his goodness. His saintly life through his long service as high priest had its effects by commending the religion it exemplified, although with gentle words he was unable even to rebuke his unworthy sons with the sternness their offenses demanded.<sup>1</sup> Despairing hearts from Ephraim and Dan, or beyond the Jordan, must have constantly sought the High Priest Eli at Shiloh; nor can it be doubted that they would be pointed by him to Jehovah, the God of their fathers, as the true help of the nations in its trouble, and thus making them feel that their having forsaken him had brought them all their sorrow. Thus he was an agent in the religious revival which culminated under Samuel.<sup>2</sup>

But Eli had not been able to do more than sow the seed of a future reformation. The very priesthood around him, and even his two sons, were undermining the good which he accomplished. In the words of Scripture they were the sons of Belial, unbelievers. As priests they should have set an example for godliness, but, instead, they looked on their office simply as a means of gratifying their self-indulgence and sensual passions.<sup>3</sup>

The Mosaic rites were still observed at Shiloh, and

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 24.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 25.



these required that the burnt-offerings should be wholly consumed by fire on the altar. Sin-offerings were eaten by the priests. In the case of peace-offerings, however, the fat of the inside alone was burned on the altar. The priests had, they, for their share the breast and the shoulder, after they had been waved before the Lord, the rest of the victim being returned to the offerer to be eaten by himself and his family with such friends as he invited. But this appointed arrangement did not satisfy Eli's sons. They sent their servants to the place where the share belonging to the offerer was being boiled and there thrust a flesh-hook of three teeth into the pot and claimed for their masters whatever it brought up. Nor was this all; they forthwith demanded, even before the fat had been offered on the altar, a share of the raw flesh, ostensibly to roast but perhaps also to secure a larger booty. No greater outrage could have been thus committed than to desecrate the sacred offerings, nor was it a slight thing to take away the sacred food from those to whom it belonged. Amidst the prevailing lawlessness such an example set by the sons of the high priest soon showed its natural consequence by men holding in contempt the whole service of the Lord. <sup>1</sup>

Not content with their extortionate greed, Hophni and Phinehas introduced worse abuses—those which disgraced the voluptuous rites of the heathen deities.<sup>2</sup> They perpetrated

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1. Ibid.

2. Milman, Henry Hart, The History of the Jews, vol. I, p. 218.



the vilest excesses of heathenism amid the woods and vineyards of Shiloh. Licentious rites have from time immemorial been associated with heathen festivals, but never before had they soiled the sacred vestures of the priests of Aaron's line. Although they had wives of their own, they had no scruples in leading astray the women who were appointed to perform various duties about the sanctuary that demanded female labor. Complaints made to Eli availed nothing more than strong disapproval without their removal.<sup>1</sup> Eli's sons did not listen to this admonition which was designed to reform sinners, for "Jehovah would slay them." They were already given up to the judgment of hardening.<sup>2</sup> The fact that they could persuade other priests to carry out their diabolical practices shows that practically the entire priesthood at Shiloh was corrupt. So degraded were most of the priests that the people complained bitterly to Eli but without any avail. God Himself had to step in and pronounce a harsh judgment upon the priests generally.

But there <sup>were</sup> priests at Shiloh who were <sup>not</sup> affected by the profligacy of Eli's sons, the dissoluteness of morals in the community at large, and the general prevalence of a licentious and gross idolatry. Doubtless some priests remained true to Jehovah and sighed over the national and spiritual decay around them.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 33.

2. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 38.

3. Geikie, op. cit., pp. 36-37.



Samuel may well have caught their spirit. For it was in harmony with the religious influences that surrounded him in his boyhood. Although he perhaps was permitted at the age of three to enroll in the temple,<sup>1</sup> the yearly visits of his godly mother Hannah must have turned his thoughts into lofty channels. His consecration by a vow of perpetual Nazarite<sup>2</sup> devotion to God could not fail but affect him powerfully. His long hair never touched by scissors, his required abstinence from wine, the purity demanded of him, which forbade his approach to the dead, even of the nearest relation, would keep this consecration always before him.<sup>3</sup> The priestly clothing of the youthful Samuel was in harmony with the spiritual relation in which he stood to Jehovah.<sup>4</sup> Faithfully fulfilling his duties in closing and opening the doors of the tabernacle, in lighting the seven-branched candlesticks in the later afternoon and supplying it with pure olive oil every morning, and in rendering other services to Eli showed his consecration to God. He was entirely filled with the spirit of the contents of the stone

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 26.

2. Oehler, op. cit., p. 365 claims that Nazaritism may have been more widely diffused in the period of the judges by the examples of Samuel and Samson. The conditions of the time may have the more powerfully led individuals to take this vow. The instances mentioned prove that Nazaritism was in practice according to the Mosaic code, Num. 6, 2.

3. Geikie, op. cit., p. 36.

4. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 39. As Samuel served before the Lord, he wore clothes like those of the priests. He was girt with an ephod of white material, a shoulder dress, resembling the high priest's in shape but made of a simpler white cloth. The small <sup>2'3'7</sup> which Samuel's mother made and brought him every year was probably a coat resembling the <sup>msil</sup> of the high priest, made of simpler material without the symbolical ornaments which distinguished the official dress.



tablets kept in the Ark and of the Law of Moses.<sup>1</sup> It cannot be questioned that while he knew from the first the commands and prohibitions of the former, he carefully studied the latter day by day, for his future life was one long effort to revive its principles in the nation.<sup>2</sup> What an evident contrast Scripture therefore draws between Samuel and Eli's sons! As Samuel grew in favor with God and man, Eli's sons became worse.

Such a one as Samuel was hence spiritually fit, even at the age of twelve according to tradition,<sup>3</sup> to receive direct revelation from God, and thus end the lack of prophecy in Eli's day. It was in the stillness of the night that Samuel first heard the divine voice. That voice and visions still continued. "The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel," 1 Samuel 3, 21. It is, with perhaps one exception, the earliest instance of the use of the word which has since become the name for all divine communications: "The Lord uncovered the ear." Literally, it is a touching and significant figure of speech, taken from the manner in which the possessor of a secret moves back the long hair of his friend, and whispers in the ear laid bare the word that no one else may hear.<sup>4</sup> Thus amidst the sacrilege and the debauchery of the majority of the priests at Shiloh, Samuel and a few other priests registered their protest if not by words, then by the pious lives that they led.

The Levites also had their share in bringing about a religious decline in Israel at this time. Although

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1. Graetz, op. cit., p. 74.

2. Geikie, op. cit., p. 37.

3. Josephus, op. cit., V, X, 4: "Now when Samuel was twelve years old, he began to prophesy."

4. Stanley, op. cit., p. 438.



they often appear in this age in exactly the position the Mo-  
saic code assumes, as teachers of the people and keepers of the  
sanctuary, yet they are classed with strangers on account of  
their poverty. The case seems to have been as follows. Since  
all the Canaanites had not been driven out in the conquests, the  
cities appointed for the Levites did not come into undisputed  
possession of the Israelites, for example Gezer, Joshua 21, 21,  
compared with 16, 10; Ajalon, Joshua 21, 24, compared with  
Judges 1, 35. Hence it was quite natural for many of the Lee-  
vites to seek an asylum in the cities not included in the list  
of those allotted to them. In Judges 17, 7 following, a Levite  
is spoken of as sojourning as a 7<sup>ל</sup> in Bethlehem; another is  
said to be dwelling as a stranger on the north side of Mount  
Ephraim, Judges 19, 1. Hence it is not difficult to show  
that the Levitical services were not organized as they should  
have been. This period of disintegration of the theocracy was  
one utterly unadapted to enforce altogether the ordinances of  
the worship. Still the expression in Judges 19, 18, by the  
Levite, וְהָיָה לִי כְּאִשְׁרֵי אֲנִי, refers to a connection  
of this Levite with the sanctuary. The narrative of Judges 17  
following also shows the fact that this tribe had been appoint-  
ed to the service of the sanctuary was well known. For accord-  
ing to verse 13 Micah congratulates himself on obtaining a Le-  
vite as priest for his image worship. Thus the law had sepa-  
rated this tribe to the service of the sanctuary.<sup>1</sup> But under  
these adverse conditions the few faithful Levites were hardly

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1. Oehler, op. cit., p. 357



able to exercise any appreciable influence for good on the people.<sup>1</sup> Thus the degraded priesthood, together with the Levites, contributed heavily to the religious decline under Eli.

Such a corrupt, high-handed hierarchy left its mark upon the sanctuary at Shiloh, which for 300 years was God's "tent which He placed among men," Psalm 78, 59. All during the time of the Judges the tabernacle was permanently located at Shiloh, which was a new creation, since it was neither a priestly or Levitical city, Joshua 18, 1; 19, 51; Judges 18, 31; 1 Samuel 1, 1; Psalm 78, 60; Jeremiah 7, 12.<sup>2</sup> There is every evidence to sustain the belief that Shiloh was the spiritual capital of Israel throughout the reign of the Judges, as it has been dedicated in the days of Joshua by the congregation of all Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, it was the only legitimate sanctuary, 2 Samuel 7, 6. The condemnation of other sanctuaries, such as that of the Danites, Judges 17, 6, can only be understood by assuming the exclusive legality of one national sanctuary. According to the Mosaic Law, only that place is permitted to be a place of worship where God has established the memory of His name, Exodus 20, 24; Deuteronomy 12, 5.11. Those, who for the sake of the theory that there were several legitimate sanctuaries, embrace also the notion of several arks, have the usage of the language against them, which constantly speaks of the Ark.

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1. Graetz, op. cit., p. 57.  
2. Oehler, op. cit., p. 356.  
3. Glazer, Rabbi Simon, History of Israel, Vol. I, p. 171.



Moreover the whole narrative of 1 Samuel 4, according to which the capture of the Ark by the Philistines was regarded as a terrible calamity, is deprived of all its meaning, unless the existence of a single Ark is assumed.<sup>1</sup> Since the Ark was the vital heart and center of the elaborate cult of rites and ceremonies under the old economy, the tabernacle at Shiloh, which had this Ark, was the one legitimate sanctuary and was so recognized by devout Israelites in this age of Eli.<sup>2</sup>

The outward appearance of this tabernacle suffered changes during its 300 years at Shiloh. Originally the tabernacle was simply a tent in the wilderness and had only curtains at the entrance to the court. But when Israel established itself in fixed dwellings, the house of God was permanently erected at Shiloh. Instead of the tents that were usually pitched for the priests and the Levites, there were now erected habitations built against or inside the court, which not only served as dwelling places for the officiants at the sanctuary but were also used for the reception and custody of the gifts, that were brought as offerings to the sanctuary. These buildings in all probability supplanted entirely the original tent-like structure around the court, so that instead of the curtains at the entrance, there were folding doors which were shut in the evening and opened again in the morning.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Oehler, op. cit., p. 356.

2. Burrell, David James, Wayfarers of the Bible, p. 129.

3. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 50-51.



Thus a town, even on a larger scale than at Micah's sanctuary, had sprung up around the tabernacle, 1 Samuel 4, 13. The sanctuary itself was so encased with buildings so as to give it the appearance and name, palace מְצֻדָה, 1 Samuel 1, 9; 3, 3. As in Micah's sanctuary there was a gateway, Judges 18, 16-17; 1 Samuel 1, 9 compared with Exodus 12, 7; 21, 6, with a seat inside the door posts or at the pillars which supported it. Here Eli sat in the days of religious or political solemnity and surveyed the worshippers, as they came up to the sanctuary.<sup>1</sup>

Through the two passages in the hills around, many Israelites poured, amid scenes of joyfulness and gaiety to this sacred spot, where the three great festivals of the year were solemnized.<sup>2</sup> No doubt, the different tribes had a great feeling of unity imparted to them through the yearly gatherings at the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.<sup>3</sup>

Here at Shiloh the regular sacrificial worship was offered. The offense taken at the lawless proceedings of Eli's sons shows that pious Israelites held to the exact observance of the Mosaic worship. The different kinds of offerings are mentioned, the זֶבֶח and the מִנְחָה, thus designating that the sacrifices were in tact.<sup>4</sup>

The sacrifices offered by Elkanah and his family prove this contention. Elkanah was one of the true Isra-

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1. Stanley, op. cit., p. 416.
  2. Caldecott, W. Shaw, The Tabernacle, Its History and Structure, p. 25.
  3. Blaikie, William G., A Manual of Bible History, p. 211.
  4. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 41.



elites that went year by year according to the instructions of the law to the tabernacle to worship and sacrifice. As soon as the boy Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him to Shiloh with a sacrifice of three oxen, an ephah of meal, and a pitcher of wine, and gave Samuel to Eli, when the bullock had been offered in sacrifice as a burnt offering. The striking circumstance that Samuel's parents brought three oxen and yet only one is spoken of as sacrificed may be explained very simply, that that particular sacrifice is referred to, which was associated with the presentation of the boy, by virtue of which the boy was consecrated to the Lord as a spiritual sacrifice for life-long service at the sanctuary. But the other two oxen served as the yearly festal offering, that is, the burnt offerings and thank offerings which Elkanah presented year after year. The presentation of these sacrifices the writer did not think needful to mention, simply because it was taken for granted that Elkanah offered the rest according to the Mosaic law.<sup>1</sup> His sacrifice on these occasions was looked forward to in his house as a grand feast in which every member of the family had a portion of the sacrificial offerings.<sup>2</sup> Thus all the theocratic institutions, as they existed under Moses and Joshua, are in all essentials matters presupposed.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 27.

2. Stanley, op. cit., p. 416.

3. Oehler, op. cit., pp. 355-356. This disproves the contention made by Oesterley and Robinson in their book Hebrew Religion, p. 96, that Moses would have failed to recognize the worship at the time of Solomon because of the change during this period; and Mercer's absolutely wrong conjecture that the settlement in Canaan prepared Israel's mind for a realization of the great thought monotheism, which at Eli's time was not fully impressed upon the minds of the people, The Life and Growth of Israel, p.48.



But at this time when some God-fearing Israelites were going year by year to the house of God at Shiloh to worship and sacrifice before the Lord, the house of God was being profaned. As has been noted before, the priests were mostly to blame for this corruption. Not satisfied with their legally allotted portions, but succumbing to their rapacious greed, they robbed the people of their rightful sacrificial portion. "So they did unto all the Israelites that came thither," 1 Samuel 2, 14.<sup>1</sup> But worse than this robbery was the sacrilege that they committed in the tabernacle of God. Their roasting the flesh of the sacrificial animal before the fat had been burned on the altar was equivalent to robbery of God. This was the worst crime that Eli's sons committed.<sup>2</sup>

This entire corrupt procedure aroused the longsuffering people to exasperation. They were ready to give the priests as much as their hearts desired if only they first would burn the fat. Such sinful conduct as this thereby brought the sacrifice of God into contempt. "Men abhorred the offerings of the Lord," 1 Samuel 2, 17. It furnished an occasion for blasphemy. Thus the robbery which they committed was small in comparison with the contempt of sacrifices, which they were the means of spreading among the people.<sup>3</sup>

But this was not their whole offense. Eli's sons profaned the tabernacle with whoredom, 1 Samuel 2, 22.

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 31.
  2. Keil-DeLitzsch, op. cit., p. 35.
  3. Ibid.



Josephus relates that they were guilty of impurity with the women that came to worship God, obliging some to submit to their lusts by force and enticing others through bribes.<sup>1</sup> If this is true, then it was possible that the dances and assemblies of women in the vineyards and before the sacred tent, Judges 21, 21, gave occasion to these debaucheries.<sup>2</sup> More probably, the fornication was committed with the women employed outside of the temple to prepare the sacred bread, to look after the sacred garments, and to lead the sacred songs and dances, in which others of their sex from all tribes joined at the great festivals. Indeed, the popular poetry and music were left mainly in the hands of women till David's time, Exodus 38, 8; Psalm 68, 25; Judges 5, 12; 11, 34; 1 Samuel 2, 1-11; 18, 6-9. The female sex was not employed in cleaning the sacred tent, because they were excluded from part of it. These women the sons of Eli attempted to corrupt. Probably not all of them were affected with the shameful sin into which some seem to have been seduced.<sup>3</sup> This open profligacy at the door of the tabernacle created a great scandal. All the people that came to Shiloh heard of these priestly vices.

Clearly, this desecration and licentiousness caused much alienation of the people from the sanctuary. Even the people's worship at Shiloh was not on the high plane that it should have been. Eli's groundless suspicion that Hannah was

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1. Josephus, op. cit., V, X, 1.
  2. Stanley, op. cit., p. 418.
  3. Geikie, op. cit., p. 26.



drunk as she prayed silently for a long time to Jehovah throws light on the deplorable condition of the worship.

Since such wickedness in His own consecrated priesthood was especially hateful to Him, God planned to put an end to this dishonor of His name. Before He interposed in judgment, He sent a "man of God" to the aged Eli to announce the judgment which was about to fall upon the worthless priests of His house. In order to arouse Eli's own conscience the prophet pointed out to Eli, on the one hand, the grace manifested by God in the choice of his house to keep God's sanctuary, and on the other hand, the desecration of the sanctuary by the evil deeds of his sons.

Then follows the sentence for his guilt. The deepest disgrace would come upon these despisers of the Lord. The members of his family were to die early deaths. They were not however to be removed from the service at the sanctuary but to their <sup>sons</sup> Eli's descendants were to survive the fall of the sanctuary. But the Lord would raise up a faithful priest and cause him to walk before His anointed, and from him all that were left of the house of Eli would be obliged to beg their bread.<sup>1</sup>

As further punishment Eli would see the distress of the temple. One of his own family would serve at the altar of God to witness the decay and pine away in grief in consequence. As a sign for this Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas would both die on one day to show that the punishment would be carried out to its fullest extent.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 38.

2. Ibid., pp. 44-45.



Another sign of religious decay in Israel was the lack of direct revelation from God. God had promised His people that He would send prophets at all times, Deuteronomy 18, 15ff. But as revelation from God presupposed susceptibility on the part of man, the unbelief and disobedience of the people might restrain the fulfillment of this and similar promises, and God might even withdraw His word, Amos 8, 11-12, to punish the idolatrous nations. Such a time as this, when revelations were rare, arose under Eli.<sup>1</sup> No doubt this explains the strange comment of 1 Samuel 3, 7 that "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him." The intercourse which God had established in prophecy between Himself and His people had temporarily ceased. This silence of prophecy was a sign that God had withdrawn from Israel and consequently a grave punishment, Lamentations 2, 9; Psalm 74, 9.<sup>2</sup>

That helps partially to explain the fact that no important edition was made during this period to the religious knowledge of the people. No new revelation concerning the Messiah was given, except the many deliverers had forshadowed the great Deliverer.<sup>3</sup> Although the messianic hope was enshrined in the ceremonial system of the Jews, which was in full operation, and although the messianic prophecies of old were a great source of comfort to a faithful few,<sup>4</sup> "the word

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1. Ibid., p. 48.

2. Oehler, op. cit., p. 363.

3. Geikie, op. cit., p. 211.

4. Burrell, op. cit., p. 129.



of the Lord was precious in those days," 1 Samuel 3, 1. In fact after the "man of God" announced to Eli God's punishment upon his house, "there was no open vision" until Samuel's.

Although there were no series of inspired prophepts conveying the divine blessings either by mouth or written treatises, God's lessons to the nation were communicated by events. Israel was taught most impressively that the way of the transgressor is hard, but that the fear of God is the highway to blessing.<sup>1</sup> The great lesson in guarding sin, its hatefulness in God's eyes, and the certainty of its punishment, was continually renewed by the events of providence. Every public event served to show that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is the reproach to any people. <sup>2</sup> Such was the divine mode of teaching in Eli's day until Samuel was established in all Israel as the prophet of the Lord, 1 Samuel 3, 20-21. This in fact was God's mode of branding His utter anger and wrath upon the degraded priesthood and the idolatrous people.

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1. Blaikie, op. cit., p. 212.

2. Ibid., p. 211.



## B. The Decline of the Worship of Jehovah among the People

Three sentences repeated frequently and emphatically in Judges sum up the religious decline among the people in the days of Eli. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord." "The children of Israel cried unto the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Time and time again God had heard Israel's cry of distress as they were oppressed by Canaanite nations, when they had repented from their idolatry and immorality. But after each deliverance they had fallen into the same apostasy. Thus they showed their constant inclination to forsake the pure worship of the true God and to fall into idolatry and sinful practices of their neighbors.<sup>2</sup>

The neighboring idolatrous tribes played an important role in leading the Hebrews into false worship. Irruptions of great hordes of Midianites and Amalekites from the east, the Moabites and Amorites in the south, the Philistines in the west, and the Phoenicians in the north penetrating the land left traces of their idol and image worship in Israel.<sup>3</sup>

The idolatrous worship of the Phoenician deities, Baal and Astarte, rises above all others in seducing the Israelites from their rightful allegiance to God. It is marked everywhere

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 14.  
2. Blaikie, op. cit., p. 211.  
3. Oehler, op. cit., p. 354.



by the image and the altar, or the grove of olive round the sacred oak on which the altar was erected. Relics of such worship continued long afterwards in the names derived from this false worship, both of places and persons. "Everywhere throughout the land lingered traces of the old idolatrous sanctuaries. Even in families, such as that of Saul's, we find that the title of the Phoenician god appears as in names so common in Tyre and Carthage, 1 Chronicles 8, 30, 33, 34." Because Baal was the chief male deity of the Canaanites, worshipped by the different nations with peculiar modifications and therefore designated by various epithets, the plural Baalim was used to denote all false deities.<sup>1</sup> The most distinct and peculiar mark of the Phoenician WORSHIP AT this time is that of the cities congregated in leagues round such a temple of Baal, called Baal-Berith.<sup>2</sup>

Greater danger lurked within the land that Israel had conquered. The heathen people, whom the Israelites had permitted in the land contrary to God's command, proved to be a thorn in the flesh. For these people who had been rendered merely tributary, not only seduced the people to the service of the Canaanitish gods, but gradually regained the mastery

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1. Stanley, op. cit., p. 324. Stanley mentions a long list of these such as Baal-Gad, Baal-Hermon, etc.

2. Keil-Delitzsch, Judges, p. 268. Baal was the sun-god, "the vehicle and source of physical life, and of the generative and productive power of nature, which was regarded as an affluence from its own being." Astarte is the female counterpart of Baal, the Greek Aphrodite, "the leading female deity of the Canaanitish tribes, a moon-goddess, who was worshipped as the female principle of nature embodied in the pure moonlight," which had its influence upon terrestrial life. Graetz, op. cit., p. 154. "In honor of Astarte, half-frantic youths and men mutilated themselves."



in isolated parts of the land.<sup>1</sup> This situation paved the way for many intermarriages between the Hebrews and the heathen, which wrought much havoc with the true worship of Jehovah. Sinful mixed marriages among the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites tended very strongly to lead Israel to serve false gods and to introduce a low immorality, Judges 3, 5-6.

But the reason for Israel's fondness of idolatry lies not so much with the outward heathen attraction as with the inward inclination of their sinful flesh. The fact that the old desire for idolatry returned again and again clearly shows that a pure, spiritual worship is distasteful to the natural heart. Men do not relish coming into heart-to-heart contact with the unseen God. In fact, the ways of God are foolish to them. They are more partial to a worship conducted through images and symbols. For this reason the Israelites were always lapsing into idolatry.<sup>2</sup> This natural longing for the material instead of the spiritual manifests itself in their clinging to their century-old domestic deities אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ.<sup>3</sup>

"Just as the heathen were tolerant with regard to the recognition of deities of other nations and did not refuse to extend this recognition even to Jehovah, so the Israelites were tolerant <sup>to</sup> the Baals of the nations, whose sensuous nature-worship was more grateful to the corrupt heart of man than the spiritual-Jehovah-religion, with its solemn demands for sanctification of life."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Oehler, op. cit., p. 354.
  2. Blaikie, op. cit., p. 212.
  3. Keil-Delitzsch, Sammel, p. 153.
  4. Keil-Delitzsch, Judges, p. 270.



With regard to the nature of the Baal and Astarte worship, into which the Israelites constantly fell after the death of Joshua, sinking deeper and deeper with time, it is evident from the allusions contained in the history of Gideon, that it did not consist of direct opposition to the worship of Jehovah, nor did it involve any formal rejection of Jehovah; but it is evident that it was simply a syncretism of Jehovah worship with the Canaanitish nature-worship.<sup>1</sup> In fact, this dangerous blending of the worship of Jehovah with heathenism usually began in a seemingly innocent way. The worship of Gideon instituted at Shechem, Judges 8, 33; 9, 4, 46, shows the dangers into which schismatical worship led. After he had destroyed the worship of Baal and delivered Israel from the oppression of the Midianites, Gideon prepared an ephod designed to furnish a means of interrogating the divine will. His motive for separating from the legitimate sanctuary may perhaps be due to the fact that Shiloh was situated in Ephraim, which was hostile to him. As with other schismatical worships, Gideon's facilitated the relapse of the people to the worship of Baal, this time Baal-Berith.<sup>2</sup>

Another rival sanctuary of Shiloh, more noteworthy, is that of the Danites. This sanctuary had its beginning in the worship that Micah established in his own house. With money stolen from his mother, Micah had constructed two silver

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Judges, p. 269.

2. Oehler, op. cit., p. 359. The degradation of this worship caused the change of Gideon's name from that of Jerubbaal, 1 Samuel 12, 11, to that of Jerubbesheth, 2 Samuel 11, 21.



images, one sculptured, one molten, clothed in a mask and priestly mantle, so as to represent as nearly as possible the priestly oracle at Shiloh. Micah was particularly fortunate in obtaining a wandering Levite from Bethlehem-Judah as his consecrated priest.<sup>1</sup>

But the migrating tribe of Dan stole the equipment from Micah's sanctuary and convinced the Levite to serve the entire tribe which felt that they needed a sanctuary because of their isolation from the central worship in Shiloh. Thus under his auspices on the green hill by the sources of the Jordan a new sanctuary was built. This worship remained undisturbed during "all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh," Judges 18, 30, 31. The wandering, ambitious, lawless priest Jonathan and his sons were "priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land."<sup>2</sup> Whether this sanctuary had degraded into gross idolatry as that of Gideon's we are not told, but nevertheless this rival sanctuary had been constructed contrary to God's command.

Like Micah, no doubt others turned their houses into shrines and had similar images as oracles. Domestic altars were erected throughout the land. Foul orgies of shameless impurity were rife everywhere. The central sanctuary at Shiloh was not recognized by all as the only authorized place of sacrifice. Even during Israel's wanderings in the wilderness under the supervision of Moses, the people could not be

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1. Stanley, *op. cit.*, pp. 328-332.

2. *Ibid.* Was this Jonathan the son of Moses or of Manasseh? The Hebrew of Judges 18, 30 compared with 1 Chronicles 23, 15-16 indicates the probability that Jonathan was the grandson of Moses



brought, as is evident from Leviticus 17, 5, and Deuteronomy 12, 8, to renounce the custom of sacrificing in any place they might choose. How much less, then, would this be accomplished at a time when there was no individual of pre-eminent influence to enforce the law. Therefore the scattered people, dwelling among the Canaanites and entering into religious intercourse with them, mingled the heathen customs with the worship of Jehovah and even addicted themselves in a great degree to the adoration of the old gods of the land.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the idolatry into which Israel repeatedly fell had its roots in syncretism, which was altogether irreconcilable with the nature of the true religion. By so doing they had distorted the purity and holiness of God, and thus actually forsook their God. They were tragically wrong in supposing that the worship of Jehovah could even be outwardly continued in connection with idolatrous worship. Just as in case of the nations, the mutual recognition of their different deities was manifested by the fact that they all called their supreme deity by the same name Baal, so the Israelites imagined wrongfully that they could worship the Baals of the powerful nations round about them along with Jehovah, their covenant God, especially if they worshipped them in the same manner as their covenant God.<sup>2</sup> No wonder then that this sinful syncretism ended in gross idolatry. Israel's covenant God was soon completely forgotten. "The children

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1. Oehler, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

2. Keil-Dellitzsch, *Judges*, p. 270.



of Israel forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, which brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people round about them, and bowed themselves unto them," Judges 2, 12.

Moral decay set in together with idolatry. Even the Nazarite Samson, who had been set aside from his birth by a command of God, succumbed to the existing laxity of morals. To give us a graphic picture of the debauchery of the age, the author of Judges added illuminating appendices at the end of his book. One of the related episodes in particular leaves the reader without words to express the degradation of morals adequately. The men of Gibeah of the tribe of Benjamin had committed an outrage, calling to mind the crimes of Sodom, on a concubine of a Levite. It was a violation of the sacred rites of hospitality, as well as an act of unequalled iniquity. So dastardly was the deed that Israel at its lowest ebb rose in anger to avenge the outrage. That the perpetrators of such a crime were even defended by the entire tribe of Benjamin shows the lawlessness of the age.

The constant intermarriage with the heathen helped to bring about this low immorality. Although God had warned His people often against this sin of mixed marriages, Israel nevertheless indulged in it freely. A few voices were raised against this wicked practice, yet the custom of the day prevailed. Manoah's protest against Samson's marrying a Philistine was to no avail. Consequently, this



sin of intermarriage led to Israel's forsaking God and living on the same moral level as the heathen.

Also rampant at this time was polygamy. No one was publicly censured for having concubines. Later Saul indulged in the royal luxury of polygamy which was the fashion of the oriental courts. But the undermining effect of this practice was keenly felt in many homes. Even Elkanah, who no doubt brought a second wife into the home because of Hannah's barrenness, experienced misery. His home was filled with bickering and strife, augmented as child after child was born to Peninnah. Hannah became the subject of biting sarcasm and bitter taunts. Her pain reached its climax at Shiloh, where she received but one portion in contrast to the many that Peninnah and her children received.<sup>1</sup> The practice of polygamy had made such inroads that even pious Israelites had no conscience scruples about having more than one wife.

But amid the ever-growing apostasy of the times and the decline in morals, a few households remained faithful to Jehovah. Two families in particular stand out in this lawless age as shining examples of true godliness. The lineage from which David, and eventually the Messiah, would spring furnishes us such an example of piety in days of religious decay. Particularly the story of Ruth's becoming one of the few Gentile ancestresses of Christ affords a peaceful glimpse of an every-day

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1. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 16.17.



life, that was more the exception than the rule in those days. The outstanding feature is the intense religiousness pervading the entire narrative. It breathes of the lofty spirit of Jehovah at every turn. Even certain Levitical customs, no doubt neglected in such disorganized times as these, were obeyed by God-fearing Boaz. The grandfather of David permitted the poor to glean in his fields according to Mosaic ordinance, Leviticus 19, 9; 23, 22. The old Jewish marriage custom that required the nearest relative of the dead husband to become his "go'el" or redeemer by buying back his inheritance, if estranged, and by marrying his widow, if she were childless, to raise up a seed to the deceased, that "his name should not cease in Israel," was fulfilled in all its details by Boaz in his marriage to Ruth, the Moabitess, Deuteronomy 25, 7-10.<sup>1</sup> That such convictions still found a home in Israel shows that there were a few who looked to Jehovah as the God of their salvation.

The family of Elkanah affords the second example of true piety in Israel in these wild and evil times. In spite of his polygamy, which seems to have been prompted by Hannah's barrenness, he, together with his whole family was devoted to God. Yearly, in compliance with the law, he went up to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice with his wives and children.

But it is on one individual of the house of Elkanah that our attention is especially fixed, his beloved but

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1. Geikie, op. cit., pp. 22-24.



childless wife Hannah. She, especially of the entire family, was saturated with the most splendid traditions and hopes of her people. "Stricken with an agony of grief for the anarchy and confusion around her, she longed with passionate desire to enshrine her noblest self in a child that would rescue the nation and set it on an enduring foundation."<sup>1</sup> Her prayer, fulfilled vow, and song of praise showed the depth of her religious feelings and convictions. Pouring out her soul in continual praying to Jehovah of hosts,<sup>2</sup> "she held out her cup of trial, that it might become a cup of salvation."<sup>3</sup> Her love for God prompted her to fulfill her vow by dedicating her son Samuel as a Nazarite for a life-long service. Her song of thanksgiving is one of the first hymns, the direct model of the first Christian hymn the Magnificat, which has an indication of the coming greatness of the Anointed King as typified by the kings that God would give Israel.<sup>4</sup> The new name of God  $\text{יהוה}$   $\text{יהוה}$  as used by Hannah in this first instance of silent prayer shows that even in the darkest hours of Israel some believed that God was ruling and guarding the universe.<sup>5</sup>

But far too few Israelites placed their trust in God. As has been noted above, the majority had succumbed to the

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1. Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

2. Keil-Delitzsch, *Samuel*, p. 7. Hannah's prayer was based upon a new name for God, Jehovah of hosts, which occurs for the first time here, being unknown in the Mosaic period and in the age of Judges. Its roots are in Genesis 2, 1.

3. Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 19

4. Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

5. Keil-Delitzsch, *Samuel*, p. 7.



Prevalent idolatry, and some even had contempt for the worship of Jehovah. Israel truly was a sinful nation. The cup of iniquity for Israel was full and running over. Therefore Israel needed not so much a physical deliverance from the bondage of the heathen as a spiritual liberation from sin and idolatry.

God set about to do both for Israel. But if Israel was to be delivered from the bondage of its enemies, it was necessary, first of all, that it be redeemed from the bondage of sin, that its false confidence in the visible pledges of the gracious presence of God should be broken by heavy judgments, and the way prepared for its conversion to the Lord, its God, by deep humiliation.<sup>1</sup> God first had to plow up, as it were, the soil of Israel's souls by deep humiliation and heavy judgments, before the seed for a revival in religion could be planted.

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 2.



### C. The Punishment of God

With His honor at stake in His own sanctuary and with His own name desecrated by His people, God, following His past customary procedure of stirring up enemies as punishing rods for the children of Israel, set about to fulfill His prophecy made to Eli by a man of God and by Samuel. Israel's arch-enemy, the Philistines, was the tool in God's hands to humiliate Israel and arouse them from their spiritual lethargy and carnal security.

On the evening of the day when Israel had suffered a preliminary defeat at the hands of the Philistines in the battle of Aphek, 1 Samuel 4, 2, the elders of Israel held a council of war. It was evident that their defeat must be attributed to some failure in their relation to Jehovah. They said, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today?"

They thought of a happy expedient by which they might compel God to enter into the fray and take sides against the foe. "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh...that it...may save us out of the hand of our enemies." They had remembered the wonderful scenes in which the Ark had played a part, how the waters of the Jordan were divided before it and how the walls of Jericho had fallen down. Its going forth had always meant the scattering and flight of Jehovah's foes. Surely it would do the same thing



again.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Israelites misplaced their confidence in the Ark. "It shall save us..." It was no longer Jehovah but the material Ark that was the hope of the tribesmen and their elders.<sup>2</sup> To them it was expedient to turn the sacred relic of religion into an engine of war, as the heathen did, 2 Samuel 5, 21. They wanted to force God's hand. They did not realize that God's present help did not depend on the presence of a material symbol but on moral and spiritual conditions which they should have set themselves to understand and fulfill. Therefore they carried the Ark into battle in the belief that the sacred symbol would guarantee victory. By staking the most sacred pledge of their religion to pull them through ex opere operato instead of having faith in what this symbol stood for, Israel showed itself to have misplaced its trust in the sin of superstition.<sup>3</sup>

Probably no one but Eli had misgivings about this plan, for "when the Ark of the covenant came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang." For this act of national apostasy Eli must have been most unwilling to allow the Ark to leave its sacred enclosure, for "his heart trembled for the heart of God." But he had yielded too often and too long to sustain a successful protest, although without his permission the Ark was not to be removed

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1. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 51, 52.

2. Galdecott, op. cit., p. 28.

3. Stanley, op. cit., pp. 420, 421.



from Shiloh.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore God had to demonstrate to His people that the mere possession of the Ark was valueless as long as strange gods were tenaciously cherished and the adorations of the heathen constantly pursued.<sup>2</sup> In order to show Israel that He would not dwell in a nation of idolatrous and superstitious apostates, God permitted Israel to suffer a disastrous defeat, and, worst of all, to allow His Ark to be captured by the Philistines. To teach all Israel that the symbols of His gracious presence were of value to those only who seek the help of God by sincere repentance, God permitted Israel to suffer this catastrophe.<sup>3</sup>

The shock that shock pious Israelites, when the Philistines captured the Ark in the battle of Aphek, is best realized by the reaction of this defeat upon Eli and the wife of Phinehas. It was not the defeat of the army or the death of his sons that broke Eli's neck; the bitter pill that Eli could not swallow was the capture of the Ark.<sup>4</sup>

It was the same story with Phinehas' wife. Not even the birth of a living son could arouse her. "Their priests," exclaims the psalmist, "have fallen, and their widows made no lamentations," 1 Samuel 4, 19.20; Psalm 78, 64. With her, as with her father-in-law, her whole soul was absorbed

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 52.  
2. Ibid., p. 53.  
3. Stanley, op. cit., p. 422.  
4. Ibid.



in one thought, and with her last breath she gave to the child a name that should be a memorial of that awful hour, "Ichabod." "The glory is departed; for the Ark of the Lord is taken." There was expressed the whole significance of this calamity. It was known later as "the day of captivity." It was an epoch which brought to a close the irregular worship at Dan, Judges 18, 30. "God had delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hands," Psalm 78, 61.<sup>1</sup>

Such a calamity was appalling in an age which associated the presence of God with a symbol now lost. To the ignorant it would doubtless seem as if, in gaining the Ark, the Philistines had also secured the presence and aid of Jehovah. It was a tragedy for the tribes to have lost their God, but to find Him in the hands of their enemies was a disaster of inexpressible magnitude.<sup>2</sup>

Misfortune followed on misfortune in the succeeding years. After the Israelites in frantic haste had borne away the remnants of the sacred tent of God and its furniture, Shiloh, the religious capital, was speedily laid in ashes.

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1. Stanley, op. cit., p. 422. Blaikie, op. cit., p. 219. "If the fall of Troy happened as is supposed about 1184, it would be contemporary with the age of Eli and Samson, and thus, while the house of Priam was approaching its downfall through the lawlessness of Paris, that of Eli was hastening to its end through the profligacy of Hophni and Phinehas; and the aged king of Troy may have breathed his last amid the blazing ruins of his capital at the time when Eli was prostrated by the loss of the Ark, and when the great judge (Samson), whom a woman had betrayed and ruined, was performing his last achievement against the Philistines."

2. Geikie, op. cit., p. 29.



We catch a glimpse of massacre with fire and sword and of a city sacked and plundered by ruthless invaders in the words of Psalm 78, 56-63.<sup>1</sup>

In these few verses is also given the reason for this utter destruction. "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: They were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, He was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; And delivered His strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand, He gave His people also over unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation."

From the death of Eli on, Shiloh lost all its importance and sunk into obscurity. For centuries it had been the national holy place of Israel. Thither the faithful had come, year after year, for the great feasts to pour out their burdened hearts, like Hannah, before the Lord or to rejoice together on the great holidays. Here also, no doubt, the victories of the nation had been celebrated. But all this was now over. Shiloh lingered indeed, in significance, not

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 56



wholly deserted, 1 Kings 11, 29; Jeremiah 41, 25, but gradually sinking to such desolation that its fate was cited by the prophets as a warning to those who trusted in the safety of Jerusalem because it possessed the temple, Jeremiah 7, 14; 26, 6, 9. The name Shiloh became a proverb for destruction and desolation. "Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel," Jeremiah 7, 12.<sup>1</sup>

Surely, the condition of Israel, both religiously and politically, had sunk to its darkest and worst in these early days of Samuel's life. The Ark was in enemy's hands; Shiloh, the national religious center, was burned; and the Philistines, stimulated by past successes, were pushing on to the conquest of the whole country. Many of the Hebrews were forced to serve in the Philistine ranks against their own countrymen, 1 Samuel 14, 21. In fact, they had been forced to betray Samson to the Philistines, Judges 15, 11. To check any future uprising, the Philistines succeeded fairly well in keeping Israel from forging weapons by shutting up Israelitish smith's forge and forcing the people to go down to the plains to the Philistines just to sharpen a plowshare. Twenty years of Philistine oppression followed, 1 Samuel 7, 2, and it seemed as if the whole land would finally pass into the hands of that nation and that Israel would perish as a nation.<sup>2</sup> Thus God was teaching His people that deliverance

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1. Geikie, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36.



from oppression and dominion of its foes was absolutely impossible without its inward conversion to him.

So ended the period defined as that during which "the house of God was in Shiloh," Judges 8, 31. So ended the period of the supremacy of the tribe of Ephraim, for God "forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,...He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim," Psalm 78, 60, 67. So ended the still wider period of the first division of the history of the chosen people in the overthrow of the first sanctuary. A "captivity" had brought to an end the first period in Jewish history which lasted from Moses to Eli.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Stanley, op. cit., p. 425.



## II. The Religious Reformation under Samuel

### A. The Religious Revival among the People

The revival of the nation from the ruins of the first sanctuary begins the second period of Jewish history, when the "Lord awakened as one out of sleep...and chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion, which He loved," Psalm 78, 65, 68. That period called the "pure" theocracy was rapidly drawing to an end. Soon was to begin the new and untried future, which was to last five hundred years, the period of the monarchy under the control of a new tribe with a new capital.<sup>1</sup>

To unite the old and the new together God had placed Samuel in a strategic position. In this crisis of God's chosen people, second only to the Exodus in importance, Samuel, second only to Moses, was the qualified leader to lead Israel out of its spiritual wilderness. His word had already come to all Israel. "All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord," 1 Samuel 3, 20. The wreck of all the hopes and associations which clustered around the tabernacle placed Samuel in a position of great responsibility and power. In the failure of the high-priestly power, whatever of law and guidance remained, was held by him.<sup>2</sup>

The defeat of Israel, the death of Eli and his sons,

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1. Stanley, op. cit., pp. 426, 429.

2. Caldecott, op. cit., p. 30.



the overwhelming calamities that followed left the tribes without a sanctuary and virtually without a high priest, since Ahitub, the eldest son of Phinehas, was too young for the office.<sup>1</sup> Since the high priesthood almost lost all its significance for a considerable time after the death of Eli, all Israel had their eyes upon Samuel.<sup>2</sup> He stood literally between the living and the dead, between the past and the future, between the old and the new, with that sympathy for each, which, at such a time, was the best hope for any permanent solution of the questions which tormented it.<sup>3</sup>

Although Scripture is silent in regard to the years of Samuel's life following immediately after the overthrow of the sanctuary, yet his sudden appearance among the people, warning them against their idolatrous practices, throws much light on his previous activities. What was accomplished at the convocation at Mizpeh was the result of hard labor on the part of Samuel during these silent but important years. Such a revolution in the inner life of the people as manifested at Mizpeh, 1 Samuel 7, could only have been accomplished by degrees. Stolid indifference, unthinking lightness, old habits of thought, the dislike for strictness, and the bias for idolatry were not easily to be overcome.<sup>4</sup> From the first the work lay in raising and ennobling the moral and religious feelings of the race. Irregular worship like that of Micah or of Dan had to be wiped out. All this could

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 40.

2. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 40.

3. Stanley, op. cit., p. 432.

4. Geikie, op. cit., p. 41.



only be accomplished after the spiritual leaven had steadily and gradually been spread.

But Samuel had the moral greatness and ability which insured him success. His greatness manifested itself by the three offices that he held in Israel. For there were united in this one person Israel's supreme prophet, its virtual high priest, and its acknowledged ruler.<sup>1</sup>

Through the revelations from Jehovah he became known as "Samuel the Scer". By that ancient name, older than any other designation of the prophetic office, he was known in his own and aftertime, 1 Samuel 1, 9; 11, 18, 19; 1 Chronicles 9, 22; 26, 28.<sup>2</sup> But he was better known as Samuel the prophet. As a prophet his one intention was to bring Israel back to God. Two great objects he had to strive for so that a true reformation could be effected. Its first condition was the restoration of political independence. The worship of Jehovah could not be reinstated and rooted in a community enslaved by the heathen. The national spirit was therefore to be rekindled. The national unity must be recovered from the anarchy into which it had been overwhelmed.<sup>3</sup> But this could only be attained by arousing a common religious feeling. It was evident that only a widespread revival of religion could save the people from rotting away from the very evils for which the ancient Canaanites had been destroyed.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 55.

2. Stanley, op. cit., p. 439.

3. Geikie, op. cit., p. 37.

4. Meyer, op. cit., p. 64.



Zeal for Jehovah alone would infuse in all the hearts an enthusiasm which would give the Israelites vigor in action to restore the grand ideal of individual and community life.<sup>1</sup>

To effect this needed regeneration, Samuel set himself to educate his countrymen in his lofty and pure conceptions of individual and national duty. Like John the Baptist, he insisted, as the first step, on individual repentance of past sins. Speaking as a prophet in the name of Jehovah, he poured forth his rugged denunciation of sin. Having the vantage ground of God's revelation and command, he urged the people to put away the Phoenician deities, which as evils had eaten into the nation's heart. Strengthening his appeals and protests by the vision and revelation accorded him, he spoke with unwaivering sternness against idolatry as a crime against the invisible King of Israel. Gifted with a ready and forceful eloquence, he concentrated on the theme that the heathen gods could neither help nor save. He declared that it was folly and sinful to consult lying oracles and the jugglery of soothsayers.<sup>2</sup>

But not only convicting Israel of its transgression in forsaking God, Samuel also held out to Israel its salvation, if only they would trust in Jehovah. Fervently he exhorted them to repent and lean entirely on God as their present Help in all trouble. Having aroused them from their lethargy, he pointed out to them Jehovah as their certain help in the future

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 37.  
2. Glazer, op. cit., p. 178.



as in ages past. After having convinced them of the root of all their sorrow and grief, he proposed a sure remedy that would not fail them. Having demonstrated to Israel its foolishness and certain doom, unless they repent, by relating the history of their fathers and of the heathen nations, Samuel pointed to the coming Messiah, the Seed of the woman, the Prophet like unto Moses as further reason why they should seek God.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Samuel's pious life, concerning which Scripture does not mention even one of its imperfections, and his three-fold office of prophet, priest, and judge may have been typical to some pious Israelites of the greatest Deliverer yet to come.

Thus Samuel preached vigorously both the law and Gospel wherever he went. While Moses had commanded the people to come to him that he might declare God's will to them, Exodus 18, 14-16, Samuel visited many cities of the land. He did not wait for the people to come to him to address them. But he traveled through the land, now at the historic site of Jericho, then at the ancient heights of Carmel, or Shiloh, Nob, Hebron, witnessing to the vast gatherings of deeply moved and repentant people.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the land he appointed public meetings and announced to the multitudes the lessons revealed to him by the Spirit of God.

Thus his word went out to the whole land and did not return void. Communicated at first to his own circle at

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1. Acts 3, 24—"Yea and all the prophets from Samuel... have likewise foretold of these days."

2. Meyer, op. cit., p. 67.



Shiloh, Ramah, or other places he visited, his announcements of divine will were carried through the land. The elders of the tribes, who from time to time sought his counsel, would carry back to their homes new aspirations to spread through their neighborhoods. Thus Samuel's enthusiasm permeated the nation. He used the striking parable, the measured and rythmical expression, perhaps vivid symbolical action, to impress his words upon the hearers. Kindled by utterances so momentous in themselves and so strikingly enforced, it is no wonder that his fame as a prophet had been established while Eli still lived. Men repeated to each other all over the land that the Spirit of Jehovah rested on Samuel. There had been no prophet, in the higher sense of the word, since the day of Moses. The fact that a second Moses had now been raised up exulted the hopes of all that a better time was at hand.<sup>1</sup>

As its priest Samuel's hand also laid the course for Israel's reformation. The sanctuary having fallen into disuse, and the agency of the high priesthood partially suspended, the mediatorship between God and His people rested with the prophet, who though not of priestly descent now performed sacrificial services in the presence of the people.<sup>2</sup> Samuel's qualification for the priestly functions to offer up sacrifices and intercessory prayers for Israel dependd neither on

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1. Geikie, op. cit., pp. 41, 42.

2. Oehler, op. cit., p. 361.



his levitical descent nor on his Naz<sup>vw</sup>arite, but he performed these duties solely by virtue of his prophetic calling.<sup>1</sup>

As its virtual high priest, Samuel was accustomed to make the most of his visits by sacrificing and so building up the people in fellowship with the Lord.<sup>2</sup> Since the regular high priesthood was in abeyance and the central sanctuary was without its ark, Samuel sacrificed at various places, such as Ramah, Mizpeh, Bethel, and Gilgal. This did not mean that the bounds imposed by the Mosaic law were broken through,<sup>3</sup> but simply that God had suspended them due to the unique circumstances of the time. Thus Israel was to attain to the experience that the presence of God is not confined to the material ark, as Israel had so superstitiously believed. Thus Samuel taught the people by this priestly function of sacrificing that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, rather than in a mechanical and bartering way after the custom of the heathen.

Not only by the spiritual power of the word and sacrifice, but also by the efficacy of prayer, Samuel led Israel back from the worship of dead idols to the living God. Prayer was his perpetual resort. Whether for all or only for one, he never ceased to pray. He would have considered it a sin if he would. "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." Many a sleepless night he spent

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 24.

2. Ibid., p. 169.

3. Oehler, op. cit., p. 361.g



in tears and intercessions.<sup>1</sup>

As Hannah in her prayer life had availed much, so also her pious son, being pre-eminently a man of prayer, accomplished much for Israel. A peculiar virtue was believed to reside in his intercession. In later times even he was conspicuous among those that "call upon the name of the Lord," Psalm 99, 6; 2 Samuel 12, 10, and thus was placed with Moses as "standing" in the special sense of attitude for prayer "before the Lord," Jeremiah 15, 1.<sup>2</sup> No wonder then Israel later begged him, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord, our God, for us," 1 Samuel 7, 8. For all Israel realized how mightily he wrestled and prevailed in prayer. His own name testified to the power of prayer.

After the death of Eli, Samuel stepped in Eli's place as Judge, although not fully recognized as such until the convocation at Mizpah. Acknowledged even in Eli's time as a prophet and after Eli's death as virtual high priest, it was but natural that he should exercise the judgeship of the land. For the hopes of the years to come lay squarely upon this last judge of Israel. The eyes of the nation were upon him for deliverance.

As judge he played an important part in bringing Israel back to God. He realized that Israel first had to fight the greater battle against the forces of darkness and sin, before it could successfully conquer the Philistines. First Israel

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 243.

2. Stanley, op. cit., p. 436.



had to overcome the weakness of their flesh by warring against spiritual wickedness in high places, before they could tackle their traditional enemies. The root of all trouble first had to be removed, before its poisonous shoots could be trampled out. This Samuel attempted to do in his administration of justice in his journeyings.

His own record of blameless purity, integrity, and righteousness helped his cause much in this respect. By example of his own character he averted some decay and internal corruption. Surpassing the men of his time in the love of God, purity of heart, and unselfishness, he must have been a constant inspiration to them that came into contact with him. Revering this great and illustrious man, who was both statesman and saint in one, for the loftiness of his character, Israel must have felt the inspiration of his high ideals. With the law as a living force in his life, Samuel's manner of living set up an ideal for all to strive for. No lapses into sensuality or selfishness, and no lawless deeds in that wild lawless age marred his career. His was a beautiful life, wholly dedicated to God and untainted by the common sins of the day. This moral grandeur of his character, which helped to arrest the ruin of the people, held Samuel in good stead in the administration of justice throughout the land. As a judge he was incorruptible.<sup>1</sup>

Samuel did not stand alone in bringing about this reformation. The school of the prophets helped to prepare the minds of the people for a return to a belief in God. This

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 38.



prophetic office began to develop from Samuel's time, on which account the history of prophecy, properly speaking, dates from Samuel, Acts 3, 24.<sup>1</sup> It was a special distinction of Samuel that with him began the long roll-call of Jewish prophets.

Of course, there were prophets before Samuel and even in his early years. From time to time messengers of God, bearing the name of prophets, had delivered divine warnings to the people.<sup>2</sup> It was a prophet who appeared in Judges 11, 7, during the Midianite oppression, to remind the Israelites of their deliverance from Egypt, and to reprove them for their idolatry. In like manner, "a man of God," 1 Samuel 2, 27, exercised the office of a rebuker to the high priest Eli and his family, entirely in the manner of the prophets. There must also, as may be inferred from 1 Samuel 9, 9, have been from time to time seers  $\text{זִמְרִי}$ , as they are usually called instead of prophets  $\text{נְבִיאִים}$ .<sup>3</sup>

But the inspiration thus vouchsafed had been partial and intermittent. There is a distinction between prophecy before Samuel and after his time. The prophets before Samuel appeared sporadically without exerting lasting influence upon the national life. But from the time of Samuel onwards, the prophets sustained and fostered the spiritual life of the people and were instruments through whom God constantly made known

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1. Oehler, op. cit., p. 362.
  2. Geikie, op. cit., p. 42.
  3. Oehler, op. cit., pp. 363, 364.



His purposes to the nation.<sup>1</sup>

For his work of reconstruction Samuel organized the school of the prophets. Although the origin of this school is not given in detail in Scripture, yet in many ways the origination of the line of prophets center in Samuel. We may trace back to him the institution, even in its outward form. For in his time we first hear of what in modern phraseology is called the school of prophets. From the fact that these bands of prophets are mentioned in connection with Gibeah, Jericho, Ramah, Bethel, and Gilgal—places focal in the career of Samuel—the conclusion seems well assured that it was Samuel who called them into being.<sup>2</sup>

The chief place where they appear in his own life is his own birthplace and residence, Ramah. In fact, the existence of another such college at his time cannot be proved definitely. From this hamlet of Ramah or from some neighboring height, they were seen descending in a long line or chain, 1 Samuel 10, 5, 10. They were settled in a congregation,<sup>3</sup> and Samuel "stood appointed over them." Under the shadow of his house they dwelt as within a charmed circle. Thus "long before Plato had gathered his disciples round him in the olive grove, or Zeno in the Portico, these institutions had sprung up under Samuel in Judea."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 14.

2. Lauterback, Jacob Z., Samuel in The Jewish Encyclopedia, vol XI, p. 6.

3. 1 Samuel 19, 20, the LXX has Τῆς ἐκκλησίας .

4. Stanley, op. cit., pp. 440, 441.



There is no reason for supposing that this school of the prophets was merely an educational institution. It is true that they were assembled for educational purposes. They were associations formed for a purpose of mental and spiritual training that they might thus exert a greater influence upon their contemporaries by checking the decline of religious life in the nation and by leading the rebellious to the law. The cultivation of music and poetry was no doubt a part of the "curriculum," which also included writing down the sacred history.<sup>1</sup>

But they were not merely educational institutions. The prophetic gift was not to be engendered by instruction. It was not a product of study and reflection but was wrought entirely by the immediate work of the divine Spirit. Neither was this gift of prophecy given to those of certain descent. Hence it must be noticed that the prophets נביאי were not merely the sons of the prophets נביאי, an expression used to denote the disciples of the prophets. By this assembly of prophets, then, is to be understood rather an association of prophets drawn together by the Spirit. The exercise of this gift no doubt required an acquaintance with the law and history, which were therefore studied. This leads us to infer that Samuel aimed in these days when the sanctuary, deprived of the Ark, was no longer the central point of the Theocracy to found a home for the newly/religious life of the nation<sup>revised</sup>

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 202.  
2. Oehler, op. cit., pp. 365, 366. This is at variance with Kent's and Smith's assertions in their respective books, History of the Hebrew People, p. 114, and Old Testament History, p. 109 that "the prophets can be better understood by comparison with their fellows, the Galli and modern dervishes," and that "from the Canaanites the institution passed over into Israel," and "became contagious."



Samuel established the school of the prophets to promote his reformation. The vigorous revival of religious life that had been kindled in the prophets was to be passed on to others.<sup>1</sup> Since the priesthood had failed to realize the purpose for which it had been instituted, it is clear that some other religious office had to be called into existence. Hence the object of the school of the prophets was to further the great movement of reformation by restoring and establishing the old faith. Their chief mission was both to bring and keep the nation true to its allegiance to God as the Head of the Theocracy, and hence to oppose all idolatry, immorality, and merely formal religion.<sup>2</sup> They were preachers of repentance to the nation, its counsellors and consolers, the exponents and enforcers of the law.<sup>3</sup>

Neither was it just by chance that the development of the prophetic office preceded the introduction of the monarchy. God raised up these prophets to stand later by the side of the king. This new spiritual power of the prophetic office would provide for the future kingdom not only a firm support for its royal authority, but also a strong bulwark against royal caprice and tyranny. The prophets were to be the watchmen of the theocracy, controlling the conduct of the royal and priestly shepherds as well as of the people. They were to testify unreservedly before high and low, and especially before the theocratic office-bearers, against every declension

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1. Geikie, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

2., *Ibid.*, p. 49. The prophets were no ascetics. Though poor, as a rule, they maintained their wives and households by honest labor and private means. They were constantly seen in the haunts of men carrying out their work as opportunity allowed. Long hair and abstinence from wine are said, by Josephus, to have marked them in the time of Samuel.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 45.



from God and His law.<sup>1</sup> The answer given by Samuel to Saul, 1 Samuel 15, 22 ff., when the king sought to minimize his disobedience, contained what may be called the program of the prophets in regard to the kings, which was to censure all hypocrisy and advocate, in opposition to all self-righteousness, the sole supremacy of God.<sup>2</sup>

But before the prophets could take such a position along side a king, they had to resist the growing apostasy of the times and instruct and establish the congregation of Israel in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. They deserve much credit in sowing the seeds of godliness in Israel. With Samuel as the driving power, the prophets relentlessly renounced the idolatry and wickedness of the people and earnestly pleaded with them to return to God. Next to Samuel they exerted the greatest influence in this religious reformation.

From them went forth an influence which awed and inspired even the soldiers of that lawless age, 1 Samuel 19, 20, 21. Among them we find the first authors distinctly named in Hebrew literature, 1 Chronicles 29, 29, of actual books which descended to later generations. In that age of change and dissolution Samuel gathered around him many influential leaders. Among them were such as David, the shepherd warrior and wandering outlaw, Saul, the wild and wayward king, Heman, the grandson of Samuel, chief singer afterwards in David's court, and known especially as the

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1. Geikie, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

2. Oehler, *op. cit.*, p. 366, 367, 370.



king's secr, Gad, the devoted companion of David in his exile, and Nathan, his stern reprover in aftertimes and wise counsellor of David's sons.<sup>1</sup>

Another circumstance aided in raising the people from the depths of their degradation. Samuel had a hand in bringing about a union of Judah with the rest of Israel. Formerly the great tribe of Judah had taken no share in the affairs of the nation at large during the period of the judges. It lived apart from its bretheren. It fought its own wars, cut off from the rest of Israel by the Jebusites.<sup>2</sup> Even the depravity resulting from the influence of the Philistines remained unknown to the tribe of Judah until this time. The worship of Baal and Asarte, with its coarse and sensual rites, had not established itself among this tribe. Instead the simple customs of patriarchal life seems to have endured longer in Judah than elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> But the repeated attacks of the Philistines aroused Judah from its isolation. Having secured a peace pact with the Amorites, they joined in a common cause of Israel against its common foe. Thus God was gradually preparing Judah to take its unique place in the future among the tribes.

By the time Judah was stirred to wage war against the Philistines, Samuel's work of reformation had borne its fruits in Israel. The earnest appeals of Samuel and the prophets wrought upon all the people a great turning to

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1. Stanley, op. cit., p. 441.

2. Geikie, op. cit., p. 51.

3. Glazer, op. cit., pp. 180, 181.



God. The messages of God's prophets found a whole-hearted response in the hearts of Israel. After twenty years, in which the national spirit was gradually adjusting itself to the true relations which had formerly been established between Jehovah and His people, "all Israel lamented after the Lord," 1 Samuel 7, 2. Obeying Samuel's appeal they casted down the idols from their pedestals and brought to an end the vicious orgies in the groves and valleys. "It was as though the spirit of spring were breathing over some wintry waste, and through the thawing snow the grass and the flowers began to appear."<sup>1</sup>

When all was ready and the spirit of humble trust was seen to have permeated the assembly, Samuel called a national convention at Mizpeh to manifest outwardly their true repentance. If Israel would meet him here, Samuel told them, he would intercede with Jehovah for them. Vast multitudes obeyed the summons and at once joined in a solemn public humiliation before God. The day was devoted to fasting. They sadly owned, doubtless with loud weepings, that they had sinned against the Lord. A novel rite was introduced. With a symbolical rite, expressive partly of deep humiliation, partly of the libations of a treaty, they poured water on the ground.<sup>2</sup> It must have been a very striking spectacle, when Samuel, as representative of his country-

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 68. Blaikie, op. cit., p. 265. "How far the religious spirit pervaded the people at large cannot be answered very satisfactorily. Even in David's time there was a mass of people who were not truly godly, as demonstrated by the following Absalom's rebellion mentioned. The constant tendency was to idolatry. Under Solomon it took root so deep that all future reforms could not eradicate it. It was not till the seventy years captivity at Babylon that the soil of Palestine was thoroughly purged of the roots of that noxious weed."

2. Stanley, op. cit., p. 433.



men, brought the whole nation back to the true allegiance to God . We are not surprised to learn that Samuel was recognized by all as judge of Israel. <sup>1</sup>

This assembly of the Israelites did not escape the notice of the Philistines. They came up with a great army to assault Israel at a time when they least expected it and were the least prepared for it. Naturally Israel at first feared a worse defeat than that of Aphek, but Samuel gave them the antidote for which they had asked. Realizing their utter helplessness, they believed that Samuel could and would obtain God's help through prayer and sacrifice. Realizing that they were as peasants going against soldiers, as sheep against wolves, they placed their confidence for victory entirely in God. <sup>2</sup>

The smoke of the sacrifice was still ascending when the Philistines approached for battle. But, <sup>God</sup> had hearkened to Israel's prayer of faith and sacrifice of consecration, and granted them the victory over their enemies in a miraculous manner. Possessing only a few weapons, the Israelites gained the victory with all the credit to God. A violent thunderstorm <sup>3</sup> came to the timely assistance of Israel. <sup>4</sup> The Philistines fled, and exactly at the spot where twenty years before they had obtained their total victory, they were totally

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 68.

2. Josephus, op. cit., VI, II, 2.

3. Ibid. According to Josephus first an earthquake kept the Philistines from standing on their feet or made them fall into its chasms, after which the noise of thunder terrified them, and fiery lightning shone so brightly that it burned their faces. Thus He shook the weapons out of their hands.

4. Heikie, op. cit., p. 273. Perhaps this thunderstorm occurred at an unusual time of the year.



routed.<sup>1</sup>

The victorious army went to the scene of their former defeat, and there, on the very spot where the ark had fallen into the hands of their foes, they selected a great stone, already consecrated by sacrifice, 1 Samuel 6, 15, which they called Ebenezer,<sup>2</sup> and which after the example of Jacob at Bethel was perhaps anointed with oil. This was done in the spirit of humble gratitude, and as an acknowledgement that the event there celebrated, however it seemed at the time, was in reality the turning point of national fortunes. Thus they did kiss the rod with which they had been smitten.<sup>3</sup>

No other action could have been so expressive of the change which had passed over the people in the intervening years. "This success at Ebenezer was no mere victory but was the sign of a new spirit in Israel, which animated the nation during the lifetime of Samuel, and the reigns of David and Solomon and of the great Hebrew kings. The petty jealousies had disappeared, and had given place to a great desire for unity. The old idol worship of Canaan, which degraded every nationality which practiced it, was in a great measure swept away from among the chosen people while the pure religion of the Lord of hosts was established."<sup>4</sup>

Now that his reformation had established the theocracy in Israel again, Samuel's task was to build up in the hearts

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1. Stanley, op. cit., p. 433.

2. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

3. Caldecott, op. cit., p. 32.

4. Dean Spence in Ellicott's Commentary from Meyer, op. cit., p. 75.



of his fellow countrymen his profound belief in the reign of the Divine-King. He took measures so that prosperity would not efface the good results of his reformation. With all the force of his character and eloquence of his speech, he insisted that the people were subjects of Jehovah, owing allegiance to Him alone.<sup>1</sup> Year after year he called together the elders of the people, explained their duties, and warned against return to godlessness and idolatry. Such assemblies were probably held in the three towns of his circuit, Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, at which places he judges Israel.<sup>2</sup> He still retained his former custom of coming from one place to another unexpectedly for the purpose of reproof and punishing sins, 1 Samuel 16, 4, 5. Also as in the past, but now more frequently, he was consulted throughout the neighborhood to solve the vexations and difficulties of the common life. Thus Israel leaned upon him as their fathers had leaned upon Moses.<sup>3</sup>

No festive or solemn occasion was complete without his presence. "The people will not eat till he comes, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that he bidden," 1 Samuel 9, 13. He acted as priest, sacrificing on the altars which had been built at Ramah and other towns of his circuit. Samuel's sacrificing was not at variance with the Mosaic code. Although God had determined that the

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 85.

2. Glazer, op. cit., pp. 181, 182.

3. Stanley, op. cit., p. 435.



sacrifice and feast be kept at the tabernacle, Samuel as a called prophet had the God-given right to make an exception to this rule as far as his own person was concerned. The conditions of the time almost made it necessary that he sacrifice at different places and especially at Ramah. For one thing the tabernacle had fallen into disuse, especially since it did not house the ark. Thus the erection of the altar at Ramah did not involve a duplication of the tabernacle, although the altar with its court was constructed in a similar way.<sup>1</sup>

In constructing these altars, Samuel forwarded the best interests of the people and true religion among them. For as the laws of Moses, administered by Samuel comprised an ecclesiastical, a civil, and a criminal code, and in many cases required that restitution should be made to the compliance and to the ordinances of religion, an altar, where such sacrifices and sin-offerings could be received, became a necessity of every supreme court of justice. The object and application of law among the Hebrews was not solely to secure that justice should obtain between man and man, but also that every transgressor should be purged of his sin by sacrifice; and by penitance and prayer should obtain the divine blessing.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Caldecott, op. cit., p. 40.

2. Ibid.



### B. The Establishment of the Monarchy

While as one of the judges, among which he classed himself, Samuel brought the office of the judge to a close, Acts 13, 20, and introduced the monarchy, much to his own disapproval and disappointment. In the later years of his life his sphere of action had extended so far to the south that his sons Joel and Abiah were appointed by him in his growing feebleness to act as judges at Beersheba.<sup>1</sup> It was this move that soon gave Israel an occasion to ask Samuel to give them a king like the other nations. For Samuel's "sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgments. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all nations," 1 Samuel 8, 4,5.

The failure to realize his high hopes of pure theocracy in Israel was not primarily caused by the failure of his sons, to whom he had delegated authority, and certainly not at all by reason of his old age, as Israel intimated, but the greatest cause of his failure were the people themselves. They had not the faith and vision that Samuel had. Samuel's ideal was too lofty and spiritual for the people to appreciate and

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 55.



maintain. They could not believe absolutely in the invisible; they had to have the outward symbols and splendors of royalty.<sup>1</sup> A king was more to them than character, obedience to God, or loyalty to the Mosaic code. This request, in the sense in which it was made was a misconception of the power and faithfulness of the covenant God, inasmuch as a faulty constitution and not their departure from God and his law, was regarded as cause of the misfortunes they had hitherto experienced; while their hope of a better future was therefore founded upon the institution of an earthly government and not upon the return of the people to their God.<sup>2</sup>

Hence this popular demand for a king was not merely disappointing to Samuel but worse of all sinful to God. They did not reject Samuel, but God. True, Deuteronomy 17, 14, had promised them a king. In Hannah's song also there was an unmistakable prophecy of the day when Jehovah would give Israel a king. But the people wanted a king because the other nations had them and not because God had promised them one. This request had been sprung on Samuel prematurely and with undue haste and passion. Instead of seeking to ascertain the mind of God, the people made up their own minds. Instead of consulting the prophet on

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1. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 88, 89, 95.

2. Oehler, op. cit., p. 368. Luther, Martin, Saemtliche Schriften, 12, 56; 11, 325. Israel did not sin for merely wanting a king but in trusting more in a king than in God.



the best policy for coming days, they dictated the policy on which they had set their hearts.<sup>1</sup> The people did not have the spirit of Gideon who refused the crown with the words, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you," Judges 9, 22.

On the other hand, as the divine providence does not exclude the employment of human agents as its instruments, so neither was an earthly kingdom of necessity opposed to the theocracy. Since the people had shown themselves incapable of uniting in an ideal union, the kingship might— if the king, in obedience to the theocratic principle, were not regarded as an autocrat but as an organ of 'ehovah— even become the means of confirming the theocracy. It was on this principle that Samuel acted, after having obtained God's permission to grant the desire of the people. To make it evident that the divine choice was entirely independent of earthly consideration, it was not a man of importance but one as yet unknown, of the least family of the smallest of the tribes who was raised to the throne. A similar mode of proceeding was observed at the choice of David.<sup>2</sup>

After Saul had been led to Samuel and pointed out as God's choice for Israel's first king, Samuel effected Saul's consecration to the kingship by an ancient and recognized rite, Judges 9, 8, 15, anointing. Hitherto only the priests

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 88.

2. Oehler, op. cit., pp. 368, 369.



and sanctuary were anointed. When Saul therefore was consecrated as king by this usage, the monarchy was inaugurated as a divine institution on a par with the priesthood.<sup>1</sup>

Anointing with oil was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God, 1 Samuel 16, 13, through which God would bestow gifts for handling His kingdom in a just and wise way.<sup>2</sup> Thus the ability to rule righteously was an outflow of divine wisdom. Anointing made the king's person both sacred and inviolable, 1 Samuel 24, 6.7.<sup>3</sup>

In Saul's case his vestment with regal functions by his public presentation before the assembled people did not take place till after his consecration. After Samuel had once more charged the people with their sin in rejecting God by their demand for a king, "they inquired of the Lord," 1 Samuel 10, 22, perhaps by lot, to choose their king. The selection fell upon Saul as divine providence had ordained it. It was then that all Israel shouted, "God save the king."<sup>4</sup>

On this occasion Samuel announced to the people the "manner of the kingdom," 1 Samuel 10, 25, and wrote it in a book which was laid up before the Lord, that is, deposited with the Torah in the sanctuary.<sup>5</sup> The right of the monarchy

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 95. Oehler, op. cit., p. 369. Rabbinical teachers view that this rite was only practised at the elevation of a new dynasty, omitted usually when succession was regular. If this view is correct, anointing must be regarded as a rite, the efficacy of which continued as long as regular succession to the throne was uninterrupted.

2. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 95.

3. Oehler, op. cit., p. 369.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.



is not to be identified with the right of the despotic heathen kings against which Samuel had warned the people, when they demanded a king like the nations, 1 Samuel 8, 11. But it is the right which regulated the attitude of the partly monarchy in the theocracy and determined the rights and duties of the human king in relation to Jehovah, the divine king on one hand, and to the nation on the other. This right or constitution could be laid only by a prophet like Samuel to raise a wholesome barrier at the outset against all excesses on the part of the king.<sup>1</sup>

With Saul as king, Samuel, as it were, took a secondary position. Although he judged Israel all his life, he made use of this power only when the king failed to live up to his part of the program. From henceforth he executed chiefly the office of the prophet, the watchman of the theocracy.<sup>2</sup> Thus Samuel supported King Saul until Saul's rejection by God.

The first part of Saul's reign indicated the possibility of the kingdom being in harmony with the theocratic principle. Saul's good reign under the guidance of Samuel even showed signs of better things to come. With a new and pious heart and with an earnest zeal for maintaining the provisions of the law, Saul promoted the religious life of the nation. He waited till Samuel's sacrifice before fighting the Ammon--

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 108.

2. Oehler, op. cit., p. 369.



ites, 1 Samuel 11, 7. He opposed the sin of the people who had eaten flesh with the blood, 1 Samuel 14, 32, 33, although he was mostly responsible for this act by the foolish vow he made. He banished wizards, necromancers, and soothsayers out of the land, 1 Samuel 28, 3, 9. In general he appears to have kept a strict watch over the observance of the Mosaic law in the kingdom for the first part of his reign.<sup>1</sup> With Saul the days were gone when everyone could do what was right in his own eyes.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise the prophet Samuel carried on his work along side of the king. After the people had gathered at Gilgal after Saul's victory over the Ammonites, Samuel would not let the opportunity pass without raising his voice once more to warn all of their duty and responsibility and to justify his own career, which seemed to be challenged by the substitution of the monarchy for his rule. He had walked before them from his childhood, said he, and was now old and grayheaded, but could call on everyone present to witness before God, if he had taken any man's ox or ass, or defrauded or oppressed anyone, or accepted in any case a bribe to blind his eyes to judgment. A loud shout of assent to this self-vindication rose at once in reply from the vast multitude.<sup>3</sup>

Having established the integrity of his former judgeship, Samuel had set the stage for accusing Israel as having sinned

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 79.

2. Geike, op. cit., p. 62.

3. Ibid., p. 63.



grievously in demanding a king. Reminding them next of the divine goodness shown them in the past in their deliverance from Pharaoh, Sisera, the Philistines, and other enemies by the leaders raised by providence in answer to their penitent cry, Samuel frankly told them that their conduct in having demanded a king was both ungrateful to God in the sleight that they had offered Him and also unwise in their having trusted in a weak and mortal man rather than in Almighty God. To convince Israel of its great wickedness in demanding a king, God attested the truth of all that Samuel had said by sending the requested thunder and rain. This miracle, wrought by God in answer to Samuel's appeal, had its desired effect. Amazed and terrified, the people confessed this and their many former sins. Samuel took advantage of this situation <sup>to warn</sup> against any future relapse into sin.

Although at the commencement of his reign, Saul had undoubtedly supported the reforming zeal of Samuel, nevertheless the reign of Saul soon displayed the kingdom in conflict with the theocratic principle. Saul fell a victim to his efforts to render the kingdom independent of divine restraint and guidance from the prophets. He regarded his royal office chiefly on its warlike side, which the dangers constantly menacing him on the part of the Philistines never would let him lose sight of.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Oehler, op. cit., p. 370.



That his submission to the prophet was not complete and wholehearted was shown by his failure to stand even the first test imposed upon him by Samuel, that of waiting seven days at Gilgal for Samuel to come and sanction the war. Concerning himself more with the threat of the Philistines than with God's decrees, Saul sacrificed. His act showed a distrust of God, a spirit of self-assertion, as if he could make war by himself without the assistance of God as expressed by the prophet.<sup>1</sup> The offense thus involved the whole principle of absolute subordination of the theocratic king to the will of Jehovah as revealed by His representatives. Since Saul had violated it, he was unfit for the office of the king of Israel, as Samuel announced to him.

But ignoring, nevertheless, the evident consistency with which the prophet treated him, and transgressing the prophet's command for the second time after the promised victory over the Amalekites by not wiping out the entire race with its possessions, Saul had the divine sentence of rejection pronounced upon him. In spite of the fact that the people themselves were also guilty of taking spoil in this battle, Saul was held responsible for the great part that he played in this transgression. From this time

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, pp. 129, 130. Saul's sin did not consist in his entrenchment upon the prerogatives of the priest by offering sacrifice as maintained by Milman, op. cit., p. 226, Blaikie, op. cit., p. 225, Josephus, op. cit., VI, VI, 4, but simply in the fact that he had transgressed God's commandment in not waiting for the sanction of Samuel. Stanley, op. cit., p. 448. The conflict between Saul and Samuel was not a conflict between regal and sacerdotal power. Saul as king had the same right to sacrifice as David and Solomon did afterwards. Samuel himself designated Saul's sin when he spoke the words "to obey is better than sacrifice."



forward Saul was gradually but certainly approaching the consummation of his tragic fate. When Samuel had left, Saul called for Ahitub, the high priest. But Saul's infamous deed in killing the priests at Nob turned the priesthood against him. Saul is correctly characterized as one "quickly rushing from one extreme to another, enthusiastic in pleasure, deeply depressed in sorrow, and finally sinking beneath the waves of despair."<sup>1</sup> Thus Israel was to learn that royalty itself could never secure the salvation expected from it, unless the occupant of the throne would submit altogether to the will of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime David was being groomed to succeed Saul on the throne of Israel. After Saul was rejected and David was anointed as king, the prophets, holding no further intercourse with Saul, now associated with David as far as practicable.<sup>3</sup> Frequently David visited Samuel. From him he learned to know God more intimately. Through Samuel's influence, reliance on God had perhaps been awakened and certainly strengthened in David.<sup>4</sup> Most of the psalms that David wrote while Samuel was yet alive, for example, Psalm 57, 59, and 142, indicate Samuel's influence upon David.<sup>5</sup> Hence Ewald is perfectly correct in giving his evaluation of Samuel's reformation for David's kingdom in the words, "If David's visible deeds are greater

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1. Oehler, op. cit., pp. 370, 371.

2. Keil--Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 80.

3. Oehler, op. cit., p. 370.

4. Graetz, op. cit., p. 96.

5. Geikie, op. cit., pp. 95, 96.



or more dazzling than Samuel's, still there can be no doubt that David's blaze of glory would have been impossible without Samuel's less conspicuous, but far more influential career; so that all the greatness of which the following century boasts goes back to its real author.<sup>1</sup> Humanly speaking, David would not have been king if Samuel had not prepared the way.<sup>2</sup> Thus Samuel left Israel on the threshold of its highest glory under David.

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1. Ewald, Geschichte quoted in Meyer, op. cit., p. 99.  
2. Geikie, op. cit., p. 206.



### C. The Restoration of the Mosaic Worship

Samuel's revival of religion among the Hebrews eventually brought with it the future temple and its priesthood.<sup>1</sup> However, before this was possible, the children of Israel had to become acquainted with the real significance of God's symbols of His presence. Israel had to be instructed as to the importance of the Ark and tabernacle. Their evaluation of the ark and tabernacle had been discolored by the calamities that befell the tabernacle at Shiloh. Israel had little or no use for the tabernacle and its priesthood and none at all for the ark. Therefore Samuel's task was to educate his countrymen both as to the true meaning and importance of these neglected and theocratic institutions. Although Samuel was not able to bring about a complete restoration of the Mosaic worship, yet he laid the foundation to make such a thing possible in the days of David.

Israel's attitude toward the Ark of the covenant after its return from the Philistines demonstrates this indifference. God's miraculous deliverance of his Ark from the hands of these uncircumcised Philistines should have shown all Israel the value of His mercy-seat. But a study of the restoration of the Ark to the land of Israel, though not to its divinely appointed place and part in the worship,

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 55.



indicates Israel's unconcern for the Ark.

The joy of the Philistines in capturing the Ark was in proportion to the dismay of the Hebrews. To lead off the gods of a foe was the most signal mark of victory on one side, and of humiliation on the other. After the Philistines had led off the Ark, they placed it as a trophy in the shrine or chapel of their god Dagon at Ashdod, as a recognition of his victory over Jehovah.<sup>1</sup>

But this triumph brought about Dagon's speedy humiliation. The next morning his image was found lying on the ground before the Ark. After it had been raised to its place again, it was found once more on the second morning not only cast down but shattered to pieces in its upper half; only the lower being left whole, as if in contempt.<sup>2</sup> But the human part was broken to pieces, while the fish-half lay dishonored on the threshold.<sup>3</sup>

But the degradation of the idol was not the only vindication of the honor of God. Before long, a terrible plague broke out in Ashdod and its neighborhood. Plagues were inflicted successively also on the men of Gath and Ekron, so that the Ark became an object of desire to get rid of.<sup>4</sup> After smarting under such heavy visitations for about seven months,<sup>5</sup> during which time the Ark was in their

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 30.

2. Stanley, op. cit., p. 402. Dagon and his consort Derceto were intended to embody the legend of a fish-like being, having a trunk of a fish with hands and head of a man, who was said to have risen from the waters of the Red Sea.

3. Geikie, op. cit., p. 31.

4. Blaikie, op. cit., pp. 205, 206.

5. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 61. Josephus, op. cit., VI, I, 4, says that the Ark was captive for four months.



hands, the Philistines were glad to send it back unconditionally to the Israelites. They even attempted to propitiate Jehovah by sending along with the Ark a trespass offering.

But in spite of these visible confessions of Jehovah's power the Philistines made and in spite of the glory God manifested in the miraculous restoration of His Ark, some inhabitants of Bethshemesh, to whose town the unguided cattle had drawn the new cart with the Ark, did not show the proper reverence toward the Ark. True they joyfully received the Ark. After sacrificing the cart with the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord, they gave further expression of their joy at the return of the Ark by offering sacrifices to the Lord.<sup>1</sup> But many inhabitants were punished by death because of their profane curiosity in prying into the Ark of God.

After its restoration at Bethshemesh the Ark was soon removed to Kirjathjearim, Woodville, about five miles east of Bethshemesh, and found a resting place in the house of Abinadab, a Levite, who, in obedience of the priesthood, consecrated his son Eleazar. There the Ark lodged in its little sanctuary "in the fields of the woods," Psalm 132, 5, 6, until David found it and "having prepared an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" finally brought it to Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the Ark had fallen into the hands of the

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, pp. 66, 67.

2. Geikie, op. cit., p. 35.



heathen could not but fail to exercise an important influence upon the religious life of the people. After being restored, it was for a long time laid aside.<sup>1</sup> Since the captivity of the Ark was no doubt regarded as a judgment upon the tabernacle, which never again boasted of the Ark, Israel was satisfied with this temporary arrangement at Kirjathjearim.<sup>2</sup> The Ark was little missed by the Israelites in the next decades. Even in the days of Saul the people were not accustomed to consult the Ark, 1 Chronicles 13, 3, Psalm 132, 6. For over seventy-five years the Ark "was not inquired after."<sup>3</sup>

Having lost with the Ark its essential significance as the place of God's habitation, the tabernacle ceased to be the religious center of the nation, although the levitical services were carried on in it without interruption, 1 Samuel 21; 22, 17 ff.<sup>4</sup> This distress for the sanctuary had been prophesied to Eli by the man of God. It really began with the capture of the Ark and continued during the time that the Lord was sending help and deliverance to His people through the medium of Samuel in their spiritual oppression.

The history of the tabernacle after its removal from Shiloh is obscure. Immediately, on the receipt of the news that caused Eli's death, those who were in charge of the tabernacle hastily folded it together and moved it away. This was

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1. Oehler, op. cit., p. 361.

2. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, pp. 69, 70.

3. Only once does Scripture indicate that the Ark was perhaps taken from Kirjathjearim, 1 Samuel 14, 18. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 140, however, does not believe that this refers to the Ark deposited at Kirjathjearim, since the verb used in this connection indicates that the ephod is meant, as the LXX substantiates.

4. Oehler, op. cit., p. 361



probably done under the direction of Samuel, the sole remaining authority at Shiloh. Where it was first taken cannot be definitely ascertained.<sup>1</sup> Nob is the next place mentioned in Scripture as the abode of the tabernacle. However, Caldecott believes that it was first moved to Gilgal, its old place in the plains of Jericho, under the direction of Samuel, where Samuel for many years "appointed Saul to meet him, in order to offer the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, which could only be offered on the brazen altar before the tabernacle."<sup>2</sup> As reason for its removal from Gilgal to Nob Caldecott conjectures that Saul's enmity against the priesthood enflamed by his later breach with Samuel caused him to relocate the tabernacle at Nob under the supervision of the Quisling high priest Ahitub. Nob was chosen because of its convenient location for Saul.<sup>3</sup> Be this as it may, we know for sure that the sanctuary was situated at Nob. 2 Chronicles 1, 3, 5 proves that the tabernacle had not fallen into the Philistines hands. The same altar that had been constructed by Bezalel, Exodus 31, 2 ff, and the same tent that was made by Moses was set up at Nob.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Caldecott, op. cit., p. 51, makes an interesting remark in regard to the geographical situation of the places where Israel located its sanctuaries. These Israelitish high places were not a copy of heathenism, being based upon the material idea that the worshippers standing on them were nearer to the seat of the gods than when on the lower ground. In contrast to this it may be noticed that the sites chosen for the tabernacle were never those of hill-tops.

2. Ibid., p. 30.

3. Ibid., pp. 52, 53.

4. Ibid., p. 30.



Shortly afterwards the tabernacle was moved to Gibeon. The episode of the High Priest Ahimelech's giving Goliath's sword to David at Nob gave to the tyrant Saul the opportunity for carrying out a desire which for a long time he must have secretly cherished. The relations in which the family of Saul stood to Gibeon give the reason why the tabernacle was established there. It was his ancestral city. As the patriarchal head of the city Saul determined to make Gibeon the seat of worship for the country and the spiritual capital of the new kingdom. The death of Samuel about this time and the incident of the sword of Goliath gave Saul the opportunity he had long awaited. Sending for Ahimelech and all the priests that were in Nob, he had them foully murdered before his eyes. This was but a small part of his crime. He sent his executioners to Nob, and there he destroyed all the dedicated servants of the tabernacle, Abiathar alone as a priest escaping to David.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time Saul began a war of general extermination against the Gibeonites: hewers of wood and drawers of water for the tabernacle. We catch a glimpse of this act of uncalled for ferocity in the statement that the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, 2 Samuel 4, 3. Beeroth was one of the four Hivite cities that had drawn Joshua into a treaty of peace. By the destruction of all the r heathen inhabitants

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1. Ibid., pp. 56-59.



Saul hoped to purge Gibeon and the land of its foreign elements, and to secure around the tabernacle only men of Israel, 2 Samuel 21, 2, 5. We know how this series of monstrous crimes was expiated in the reign of David by the death of seven of Saul's descendants. Before that day came, however, the policy of blood and sacrilege at the tabernacle seemed to prosper.<sup>1</sup>

The distress of the sanctuary was partially caused by the people's attitude toward the priesthood, and especially the high priesthood. Israel lost faith in the rule of the priests on account of the past evil conduct of Eli's sons.<sup>2</sup> Hence for a considerable time after the death of Eli, the high priesthood almost lost all significance. Furthermore, now that all Israel had turned to Samuel, whom the Lord had established as His prophet by means of revelations, and whom He had also chosen as the deliverer of the people, the high priesthood lost most, if not all, of its past dignity and importance. Thus the high priesthood <sup>SANK</sup> into comparative insignificance, although Samuel himself was not in the least responsible for its degradation. This condition was the fulfillment of God's prophecy to Eli that his own descendants would not only witness the decay of the sanctuary but would also suffer in consequence.

The history of the high priesthood after Eli's death bears this out. Although Eli's house was not deposed till

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1. Ibid., p. 59.

2. Glazer, op. cit., p. 172.



Solomon's reign, 1 Kings 2, 27, yet his descendants went through tribulation. Ahitub, the grandson of Eli, the elder brother of Ichabod, had to flee with the tabernacle, perhaps to Nob, taking with him the priestly robes, the ephod, and Urim and Thumim, 1 Samuel 22, 19.<sup>1</sup> He was succeeded by his son Ahiah, 1 Samuel 14, 3, the same person as Ahimelech, or his brother and successor. Ahimelech was afterwards martyred by the command of Saul, together with the priests at Nob. However, his son Abiathar escaped to David with the Ephod.<sup>2</sup>

Yet in spite of this distress of the sanctuary and tribulation of the priesthood, there were certain signs which indicated that better days were on the way. Samuel also had a remote but important hand in bringing about this future restoration of the Mosaic worship. With the help of the school of the prophets, he introduced psalms, choruses, musical accompaniments, which tended not only to beautify the tabernacle services but also to stimulate religious feeling. The psalm of praise thus became a prominent part of the worship of God. Samuel himself was the forefather of the race of Korah, who were later the composers of psalms together with their musical accompaniment. Samuel's race was musical, for his grandson Heman, with Asaph and Jeduthun, were the great religious poets and musicians of the next generation.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Geikie, op. cit., p. 55.

2. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, pp. 137, 138.

3. Geikie, op. cit., p. 55.



1 Chronicles 9, 22 suggests that Samuel laid the foundation of that elaborate organization of the Levites for the service of the sanctuary, which was perfected by David and Solomon. He even began to accumulate the treasure by which the house of God was ultimately erected in the reign of Solomon, 1 Chronicles, 26, 27, 28. His interest in establishing the Mosaic worship is definitely proven by a later reference concerning a great Passover feast that was kept in his day, 2 Chronicles 35, 18.<sup>1</sup> Thus Samuel's influence and work aided the complete future restoration of the Mosaic worship as God had intended it to be.

"The time would fail to tell of ... Samuel ... who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness was made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," Hebrews 11, 32-34.

These foregoing words express the sentiment of all Israel when Samuel died. When the hour of his death came, we are told with a peculiar emphasis that "all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah," 1 Samuel 1, 25. His labors in reviving the true religion in Israel and in restoring the ordained worship of God were recognized by the entire nation. He has therefore been justly designated as the "reformer and restorer

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1. Meyer, op. cit., p. 242.



of the theocracy.<sup>1</sup> Luther and he have been rightfully called the greatest reformers of the Old Testament times and New Testament Times respectively. Not only time but also words would fail to express adequately and completely the work that God had wrought through His servant, who was always ready with the words, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

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1. Keil-Delitzsch, Samuel, p. 258.



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