
1SAMUEL 1: 1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite:

This and the three following books were formerly termed the first, second, third, and fourth books of Kings, and the two books of Samuel made in ancient times but one; the separation which has taken place seems to have been done without reason or necessity. These books are, properly speaking, a continuation of the book of Judges, as they give us an account of the remaining judges of Israel, down to the election of Saul; and of all the kings of Israel and Judah to the Babylonish captivity.

Of this book, called the first book of Samuel, the following are the contents: The birth and education of Samuel; the high priesthood of Eli; the Philistines attack the Israelites, overthrow them with a terrible slaughter, take the ark of the Lord, and set it up in the temple of their god Dagon; they are visited with Divine judgments, and are obliged to send back the ark with offerings and presents; Samuel, long acknowledged as a prophet of the Lord, takes the government of the people. Under his wise and pious administration, the affairs of Israel become re-established, and the Philistines are subdued. The sons of Samuel, who principally administered the secular concerns of the kingdom, acting unworthily, the people desire to have a king, who should be supreme, both in civil and military affairs. Samuel, after exhortations, yields to their entreaties; and, under the direction of God, Saul the son of Kish, whilst seeking the lost asses of his father, is met by the prophet, and anointed king over Israel. This man, not conducting himself in the government according to the direction of God, is rejected, and David the son of Jesse anointed king in his place, though Saul continues still in the government. This person soon becomes advantageously known to Israel by his single combat with a gigantic Philistine chief, called Goliath, whom he slays; on which the Israelites attack the Philistines, and give them a total overthrow. Saul, envious of David's popularity, seeks his destruction; he is in consequence obliged to escape for his life, and take refuge sometimes among the Moabites, sometimes among the Philistines, and sometimes in the caves of the mountains of Judah, everywhere pursued by Saul, and everywhere visibly protected by the Lord. At last Saul, being pressed by the Philistines, and finding that the Lord had forsaken him, had recourse to a witch that dwelt at En-dor, whom he consulted relative to the issue of the present war with the Philistines; he loses the battle, and being sorely wounded, and his three sons slain, he falls on his own sword, and expires on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines find his body, and the bodies of his three sons, among the slain; they cut off Saul's head, and affix the bodies to the walls of Beth-shan. The men of Jabesh-gilead, hearing this, go by night, and take the bodies from the walls of Beth-shan, bring them to Jabesh, burn them there, bury the bones, and mourn over their fallen king, fasting seven days. Thus concludes the first book of Samuel.

Concerning the author of these books there have been various conjectures. Because, in most of the Hebrew copies, they bear the name of Samuel, as a running title, it has been generally supposed that he was the author. But his name does not appear to have been anciently prefixed to these books, at least in those copies used by the Greek interpreters, commonly called the Septuagint, as they simply term each βασιλειῶν. The History or Book of Kingdoms. The Chaldee has no inscription. The Syriac and Arabic call each The Book of Samuel the Prophet; and the Vulgate, The Book of Samuel, simply. The Jews, in general, believe that Samuel is the author of the first twenty-seven chapters of this book, which contain the history of his own life and government, and what respects Saul and David

during that time. The remaining four chapters they suppose were added by the prophets Gad and Nathan. This opinion is founded on what is said 1Chr 29:29 : Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer. Others suppose the books to be more recent than the persons already named, but that they were compiled out of their memoirs.

But who was the compiler? Some of the most learned among the Jews suppose it to have been Jeremiah the prophet, and that the style bears a near resemblance to his prophecies. That they were the work of a more recent author than Samuel, etc., Grotius thinks evident from this circumstance, that the names of the months are comparatively modern, and were not known among the ancient Jews. Others have attributed them to David; others, to Hezekiah; and others, to Ezra the scribe, on his return from the Babylonish captivity.

Calmet's opinion is as probable as any, viz., "That these books were written by the same hand, though composed out of the memoirs left by persons of that time; and that the compiler has generally used the same terms he found in those memoirs, adding here and there something of his own by way of illustration." The equality of the style, the frequent eulogiums on the character of Samuel, the connection of the materials, particular quotations, and remarks on certain events, are, he thinks, proofs sufficiently clear of what he assumes. These books contain remarks or expressions which could only proceed from a contemporary author, and others which are evidences of a much later age.

1. For instance, we read, 1Sam 3:1, The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision; i.e., in the days of Eli, the high priest: hence it is evident that the author lived in times in which prophecy was more common; which, in fact, it was after Samuel, under David, and the succeeding kings of Israel and Judah.
2. Again, in the time of the author of this book, Beth-el was called Beth-aven, 1Sam 13:5, which name was given to it in derision after Jeroboam had placed there his golden calves.
3. Again, it is said, 1Sam 6:18, that the ark of the Lord was set down in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite, where it remained to the time of this author; and yet, in 1Sam 7:15, he speaks of Samuel as being already dead: And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.
4. It is not natural to suppose that Samuel would have spoken of himself as is done 1Sam 2:26 : And the child Samuel grew, and was in favor both with the Lord and with men; but if he were dead when this book was written, any author might have added this with the strictest propriety.
5. In 1Sam 27:6, it is said that Achish gave Ziklag to David, Wherefore Ziklag pertaineth to the kings of Judah unto this day. This is a proof that when this book was written the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were separated; and that, although the tribe of Simeon belonged to the kings of Israel, yet Ziklag, which was in that tribe, remained in the hands of the kings of Judah.

Here, therefore, are proofs that this book contains matters which must have been written by a contemporary author; and others which could not have been inserted but in times much posterior. These seeming contradictions are reconciled by the hypothesis that the books were compiled, by a comparatively recent author, out of materials of a much earlier date, the author not changing many of the expressions which he found in those ancient documents.

Several other proofs might be here adduced to support this opinion; but as the reader will find them noticed in the places where they occur, it is not necessary to repeat them here. Those who wish to see the subject farther discussed, may consult Calmet. We may rest satisfied with these three things:

1. That the books of Samuel were constructed out of original and authentic documents.
2. That the compiler was not contemporary with the facts he narrates. And,
3. That both the author and time in which he compiled his history, though comparatively more recent than the facts themselves, are nevertheless both uncertain.

Some account of Elkanah and his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, 1Sam 1:1, 1Sam 1:2. His annual worship at Shiloh and the portions he gave at such times to his wives, 1Sam 1:3-5. Hannah, being barren, is reproached by Peninnah, especially in their going up to Shiloh; at which she is sorely grieved, 1Sam 1:6, 1Sam 1:7. Elkanah comforts her, 1Sam 1:8. Her prayer and vow in the temple, that if God would give her a son, she would consecrate him to His service, 1Sam 1:9-11. Eli, the high priest, indistinctly hearing her pray, charges her with being drunk, 1Sam 1:12-14. Her defense of her conduct, 1Sam 1:15, 1Sam 1:16. Eli, undeceived, blesses her; on which she takes courage, 1Sam 1:17, 1Sam 1:18. Hannah and Elkanah return home; she conceives, bears a son, and calls him Samuel, 1Sam 1:19, 1Sam 1:20. Elkanah and his family go again to Shiloh to worship; but Hannah stays at home to nurse her child, purposing, as soon as he is weaned, to go and offer him to the Lord, according to her vow, 1Sam 1:21-23. When weaned, she takes him to Shiloh, presents her child to Eli to be consecrated to the Lord, and offers three bullocks, an ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, for his consecration, 1Sam 1:24-28.

Verse 1

Ramathaim-zophim - Literally, the two high places of the watchman; these were, no doubt, two contiguous hills, on which watchtowers were built, and in which watchmen kept continual guard for the safety of the country and which afterwards gave name to the place.

1SAMUEL 1: 2 and he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Verse 2

He had two wives - The custom of those times permitted polygamy; but wherever there was more than one wife, we find the peace of the family greatly disturbed by it.

The name of the one was Hannah - חַנָּה Channah, which signifies fixed or settled, and the other פִּנְנָה Peninnah, which signifies a jewel or pearl.

1SAMUEL 1: 3 This man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of Armies in Shiloh. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests to the LORD, were there.

Verse 3

Went up out of his city yearly to worship - As the ark was at Shiloh, there was the temple of God, and thither all the males were bound by the law to go once a year, on each of the great national festivals: viz., the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles.

The Lord of hosts - יהוה צבאות Yehovah tsebaoth, Jehovah of armies. As all the heavenly bodies were called the hosts of heaven, צבא השמים tseba hashshamayim, Jehovah being called Lord of this host showed that he was their Maker and Governor; and consequently He, not they, was the proper object of religious worship. The sun, moon, planets, and stars, were the highest objects of religious worship to the heathens in general. The Jewish religion, teaching the knowledge of a Being who was the Lord of all these, showed at once its superiority to all that heathenism could boast. This is the first place where Lord of hosts is mentioned in the Bible; and this is so much in the style of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., that it gives some weight to the supposition that this book was written by a person who lived in or after the times of these prophets. See the preface.

1SAMUEL 1: 4 When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

Verse 4

He gave - portions - The sacrifices which were made were probably peace-offerings, of which the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar; the fat was burnt on the fire; the breast and right shoulder were the portion of the priest, and the rest belonged to him who made the offering; on it he and his family feasted, each receiving his portion; and to these feasts God commands them to invite the Levite, the poor, the widow, and the orphan, Deu 16:11.

1SAMUEL 1: 5 but to Hannah he gave a double portion; for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had shut up her womb.

Verse 5

Unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion - The Hebrew here is very obscure, יתן מנה אחת אפים yitten manah achath appayim; he gave her one portion of two faces; which the Syriac renders, he gave her one Double Part; and the Chaldee, he gave her one Chosen part; the Arabic is nearly the same; the Vulgate Annae autem dedit unam partem tristis, but to Anna he being sorrowful gave one part. As the shew-bread that was presented to the Lord was called לחם פנים lechem panim, the bread of faces, because it was placed before the face or appearances of the Lord; probably this was called מנה אפים manah appayim, because it was the portion that belonged to, or was placed before, the person who had offered the sacrifice. On this ground it might be said that Elkanah gave Hannah his own portion or a part of that which was placed before himself. Whatever it was, it was intended as a proof of his especial love to her; for, it is added, he loved Hannah.

1SAMUEL 1: 6 Her rival provoked her severely, to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

Verse 6

And her adversary - That is, Peninnah.

Provoked her sore - Was constantly striving to irritate and vex her, to make her fret - to make her discontented with her lot, because the Lord had denied her children.

1SAMUEL 1: 7 As he did so year by year, when she went up to the LORD's house, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and didn't eat.

Verse 7

And as he did so year by year - As the whole family went up to Shiloh to the annual festivals, Peninnah had both sons and daughters to accompany her, 1Sam 1:4, but Hannah had none; and Peninnah took this opportunity particularly to twit Hannah with her barrenness, by making an ostentatious exhibition of her children.

Therefore she wept - She was greatly distressed, because it was a great reproach to a woman among the Jews to be barren; because, say some, every one hoped that the Messiah should spring from her line.

1SAMUEL 1: 8 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why don't you eat? Why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Verse 8

Am not I better to thee than ten sons? - Ten, a certain for an uncertain number. Is not my especial affection to thee better than all the comfort thou couldst gain, even from a numerous family?

1SAMUEL 1: 9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his seat by the doorpost of the LORD's temple.

Verse 9

Eli - sat upon a seat - על הכסא al hakkisse, upon the throne, i.e., of judgment; for he was then judge of Israel.

By a post of the temple of the Lord - I think this is the first place where היכל יהוה heychal Yehovah, "temple of Jehovah," is mentioned. This gives room for a strong suspicion that the books of Samuel were not compiled till the first temple was built, or after the days of Solomon. After this the word temple is frequent in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and in the prophets. Perhaps those Psalms in which this word occurs were, like many others in the Psalms, not of David's composition; some of them were evidently made long after his time.

1SAMUEL 1: 10 She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly.

1SAMUEL 1: 11 She vowed a vow, and said, "The LORD of Armies, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your handmaid, and remember me, and not forget your handmaid, but will give to your handmaid a boy, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come on his head."

Verse 11

I will give him unto the Lord - Samuel, as a descendant of the house of Levi, was the Lord's property from twenty-five years of age till fifty; but the vow here implies that he should be consecrated to the Lord from his infancy to his death, and that he should not only act as a Levite, but as a Nazarite, on whose head no razor should pass.

1SAMUEL 1: 12 As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli saw her mouth.

1SAMUEL 1: 13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart. Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

Verse 13

Spake in her heart; only her lips moved - She prayed; her whole heart was engaged: and though she spake not with an audible voice, yet her lips formed themselves according to the pronunciation of the words which her heart uttered.

1SAMUEL 1: 14 Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunken? Put away your wine from you."

1SAMUEL 1: 15 Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before the LORD.

Verse 15

I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink - Neither wine nor inebriating drink has been poured out unto me; but I have poured out my soul unto the Lord. There is a great deal of delicacy and point in this vindication.

1SAMUEL 1: 16 Don't count your handmaid for a wicked woman; for I have been speaking out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation."

Verse 16

Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial - אל תתן את אמתך לפני בת בליעל - al titten eth amathecha liphney bath Beliyael; 'Put not thy handmaiden before the faces of a daughter of Belial.' "If I am a drunkard, and strive by the most execrable hypocrisy (praying in the house of God) to cover my iniquity, then I am the chief of the daughters of Belial." Or, "Give not thy handmaid (to

reproach) before the faces of the daughters of Belial." Several of these probably attended there for the purposes of prostitution and gain; for it is said, 1Sam 2:22, that Eli's sons lay with the women at the door of the tabernacle, though this may refer to the women who kept the door.

1SAMUEL 1: 17 Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of him."

Verse 17

Grant thee thy petition - He was satisfied he had formed a wrong judgment, and by it had added to the distress of one already sufficiently distressed.

The fact that Eli supposed her to be drunken, and the other of the conduct of Eli's sons already mentioned, prove that religion was at this time at a very low ebb in Shiloh; for it seems drunken women did come to the place, and lewd women were to be found there.

1SAMUEL 1: 18 She said, "Let your handmaid find favour in your sight." So the woman went her way, and ate; and her facial expression wasn't sad any more.

Verse 18

Let thine handmaid find grace - Continue to think favorably of me, and to pray for me.

1SAMUEL 1: 19 They rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

1SAMUEL 1: 20 When the time had come, Hannah conceived, and bore a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD."

Verse 20

Called his name Samuel - As she gave this name to her son because she had asked him of the Lord, the word שמואל Shemuel must be here considerably contracted; if it express this sentiment, the component parts of it are the following: שאול מאל shaul meEl, "asked of God." This name would put both the mother and the son in continual remembrance of the Divine interposition at his birth. See on 1Sam 1:28 (note).

1SAMUEL 1: 21 The man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

Verse 21

The man Elkanah and all his house - He and the whole of his family, Hannah and her child excepted, who purposed not to go up to Shiloh till her son was old enough to be employed in the Divine service.

And his vow - Probably he had also made some vow to the Lord on the occasion of his wife's prayer and vow; in which, from his love to her, he could not be less interested than herself.

1SAMUEL 1: 22 But Hannah didn't go up; for she said to her husband, "Not until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and stay there forever."

1SAMUEL 1: 23 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems good to you. Wait until you have weaned him; only may the LORD establish his word." So the woman waited and nursed her son, until she weaned him.

Verse 23

Until thou have weaned him - On the nature of this weaning, and the time in which it was usually done, the reader will be pleased to refer to the note on Gen 21:8.

The Lord establish his word - Or, may the Lord establish his word - preserve the child, cause him to grow up, and make him a blessing to Israel.

1SAMUEL 1: 24 When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, and one ephah of meal, and a bottle of wine, and brought him to the LORD's house in Shiloh. The child was young.

Verse 24

With three bullocks - The Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, read, a bullock of three years old; and this is probably correct, because we read, 1Sam 1:25, that they slew את הפר eth happar, The bullock. We hear of no more, and we know that a bullock or heifer of three years old was ordinarily used, see Gen 15:9.

One ephah of flour - Seven gallons and a half.

A bottle of wine - נבל יין nebel yayin, a skin full of wine. Their bottles for wine and fluids in general were made out of skins of goats, stripped off without being cut up; the places whence the legs were extracted sewed up, as also the lower part; and the top tied. See the notes on Gen 21:14, and Mat 9:17. These three things, the ox, the flour, and the wine, probably constituted the consecration-offering.

1SAMUEL 1: 25 They killed the bull, and brought the child to Eli.

1SAMUEL 1: 26 She said, "Oh, my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the LORD.

Verse 26

As thy soul liveth - As sure as thou art a living soul, so surely am I the person who stood by thee here praying.

1SAMUEL 1: 27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of him.

1SAMUEL 1: 28 Therefore also I have granted him to the LORD. As long as he lives he is granted to the LORD." He worshipped the LORD there.

Verse 28

Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord - There is here a continual reference to her vow, and to the words which she used in making that vow.

The word Samuel, as we have already seen, is a contraction of the words שאול מאל Shaul meEl, that is, asked or lent of God; for his mother said, 1Sam 1:27, The Lord hath given me my petition, which שאלתי Shaalti, I Asked of him. In 1Sam 1:28 she says: הוא ששול ליהוה hu Shaul layhouah, he shall be Lent unto the Lord: here we find the verb is the same; and it is remarked by grammarians that שאל shaal, he asked, making in the participle פהול שאול shaul, Asked, in the conjugation hiphil signifies to lend; therefore, says his mother, 1Sam 1:28, השאלתיהו ליהוה Hishiltihu layhovah, I have Lent him to the Lord. This twofold meaning of the Hebrew root is not only followed by our translators, but also by the Vulgate, Septuagint, and Syriac.

And he worshipped the Lord there - Instead of וישתחווי vaiyishtachu, He worshipped, וישתחוווי vaiyishtachavu, and They worshipped, is the reading of six of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., of some copies of the Septuagint, and of the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic.

This and the following chapter are connected in most copies of the Septuagint and Vulgate thus: And Anna worshipped, and said, My soul is strengthened in the Lord, etc. It is very likely that the whole passage, from the beginning of 1Sam 1:26 to the end of 1Sam 2:10 of the ensuing chapter, contains the words of Hannah alone; and that even the clause, He worshipped the Lord there, should be, And she worshipped the Lord there, and prayed, and said, etc. Indeed this latter clause is wanting in the Polyglot Septuagint, as I have stated above.