

1 and 2 Samuel Overview

- I. 1 and 2 Samuel
 - a. Samuel is the last of the judges.
 - b. The books are named after the initial figure of Samuel but he does not figure in them much after chapter 15. Originally the 2 books comprised one book but they were divided because of the length of the Greek translation.
 - c. Author
 - i. Baba Bathra 14b – Samuel wrote it. Perhaps portions but not all. He records his last words in 1 Sam. 12 but does not die until chapter 25!
 - ii. Eyewitnesses to the events? Because of the detail this seems likely.
 - iii. Bottom line: we don't know who wrote the books.
 - d. Date: when was the book written?
 - i. Hard to know for sure.
 - ii. No mention of fall of Samaria in 722 so probably before then.
 - e. Purpose: The legitimacy and establishment of the Davidic monarchy and the fact that true kingship was derived from God and exercised through obedience to God and the covenant.
 - f. 1 and 2 Samuel – highlights
 - i. Poems at the beginning and end
 - 1. 1 Sam 2:1-10 Prayer of Hannah; 2 Sam. 22:1-51, 23:1-7 the Song of David. Both are full of thanksgiving for the works of Yahweh. Bookends of a sort
 - 2. Yet they are not the exact beginning and end. Hannah's prayer is preceded by her abased situation and David's song is followed by his contrition and penitence. The movement is from abasement to honor and from honor to abasement.
 - 3. Hannah's prayer has both specificity and universality. It is both her heart revealed and a model for God's people. It has strong similarities with Psalm 113 and also with the Song of Mary in Luke 1:46-55
 - ii. Samuel's selection and birth is not because of any lineage but God's grace. Samuel is not only a gift from God but also a gift to God! (See Hannah's vow.)
 - iii. Sons of Eli are condemned. Why? Me first, God second has become their modus operandi. – they take their portion of the sacrifice before God receives his portion. The language used of them vs. Hannah – she is perceived as worthless (by Eli) but is just

the opposite. Eli's sons occupy a place of honor but are actually worthless!

- iv. The loss of the Ark – the Israelites in battle with the Philistines. They send for the Ark but not for Samuel! Israel loses without the Ark, they lose with the Ark and they lose the Ark! They turn the Ark into an idol and do not seek God's presence.
- v. The "evil spirit from the Lord" in the books of Samuel. Occurs eight times in the OT and 7 of those refer to Saul. (the other is to Abimelech). N.B. that the spirit of God left Saul and yet he was not removed from office. David was anointed but he does not start to reign immediately.
- vi. The request for a king: was it a bad thing?
 1. 1 Samuel 8 – Samuel is upset (part of the people's concern is Samuel's corrupt sons inheriting power) by it but what is God's response? (Listen to the voice of the people) What about Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11? – God's plan all along? Deut. 17:14-20 has a king as part of a list of officials: the only official who does not have any rights or authority mentioned! His role in the govt. is not delineated! It does limit his power. Optional office for Israel?
 2. The problem in the people's request is their motivation – they are deposing God as their king.
 3. Proper kingship was such that God retained his place as the ruler and warrior of Israel and the human king functioned under that assumption. Israel wanted to be just like the other nations. God allows it – uses the situation at hand to accomplish His purposes.
- vii. David and the giants in the land – slays Goliath but is not very successful in slaying his own personal giants (lust). As with Israel, the greatest threat is from within.
- viii. Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28)
 1. Saul is completely cut off from divine communication and is desperate. 28:6
 2. He seeks out a necromancer – one whom he had put out of the land! (v.3) He has to cross enemy lines to get to her.
 3. Lev. 20:27 – death to necromancers!
 4. an "elohim" (in this context=judge) coming up out of the earth!
 5. Does Saul expect help from illicit means from a prophet of God when God has refused to answer him? The word he receives – tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me.

Saul's desperation gets him in trouble once again. – Wait on the Lord!

- ix. David wants to build God a house. (ch. 7)
 - 1. The purpose of a sanctuary:
 - a. Brings order to the worship of God
 - b. Provides a tangible, “real” aspect to the idea of divine presence
 - c. Place of assurance that the divine presence is there and that God will be available to the worshipper.
- x. David and Bathsheba
 - 1. David remains behind at a time of war: not the first time and not completely unusual. Cannot ascribe the sin to this factor.
 - 2. Bathsheba's grandfather is Ahithophel – an advisor sought out by David and the wise counsel for Absalom. In fact, he advises Absalom to sleep with David's concubines to secure his claim to the throne!
 - 3. The text says nothing about Bathsheba's willingness.
 - 4. Uriah – refuses to go home and sleep with his wife. Why? Fairness to his fellows. No impurity in the war camp brought on by sexual congress.
 - 5. When condemned by Nathan – David does repent. This is actually unusual for the kings after him (Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam).
 - a. Retribution is mitigated but not cancelled – the child will die. Is this fair? How do we understand this?
 - b. David prays. Despite the certain word of the prophet, Nathan, David prays for the life of his gravely ill child (2 Sam. 12:16) He asks for a reversal of the judgment which shows He understands the heart of God. But in this case his prayer is denied.
- xi. Tamar, Amnon and Absalom – family turmoil for David
 - 1. Amnon “loves” Tamar – the issue at hand is rape and not that they were siblings.
 - 2. David is angry but does nothing.
 - 3. Absalom – two years later takes revenge and starts the downward spiral for David's family. Did he have political motivations? (Amnon's murder made him the eldest.)
 - 4. Absalom does to his father what David would not do to Saul. David flees Jerusalem and is once again a fugitive.

5. Absalom is eventually killed (thwarted by God! – convinced to take the poor advice – “He chose poorly” – instead of the good advice of Ahithophel).

Samuel, Saul, David

What is the biblical author's opinion of each of these characters?

Do any of the characters change through the narrative?

Samuel is the suspected author of the writings bearing his name with some probable later additions. Therefore the view that is presented regarding the three topic persons is mostly found in the books of Samuel.

Samuel when writing about himself provides an autobiography in I Samuel 1-12. He was an Ephraimite in geography but a Levite by tribal identity (HOTHB, 863), His father was Elkanah and his mother was Hannah. He was adopted into the family of Eli. He trained for the priesthood under Eli becoming a prophet and judge of Israel (I Samuel 3:19-4:1; 7:13-17). He is surrounded by the corrupt sons of Eli and later by his own sons who are corrupt. Samuel is very clear about understanding that Israel is better off when Yahweh is their king. However he reluctantly grants the people's request to appoint a king. The people chose Saul and Samuel supported the choice. He rebukes Saul for performing the priestly sacrifice (I Samuel 13:1-13) and in slaying the Amalekites by retaining their animals against Samuel's instructions (I Samuel 15:1-35). Samuel becomes biographer of Saul's reign and declares his downfall. Samuel as judge and prophet is God's gift to Israel not due to his ancestral lineage but due to God's grace (Hearson notes, 1.f.ii.). Samuel's mission to serve the Lord and guide the people is foretold in the prayer of his mother Hannah (I Samuel 2:1-11). Thereafter Samuel is referred to as an example of faithful leadership in Acts 3:24; 13:20, and Hebrews 11:32.

Saul is the first king of Israel and is a Benjamite from the town of Gibeah. This begins the shift from tribal confederacy to dynastic state. Israel under Saul and his two successors will become more centralized in structure based on the authority of a king rather than the authority of judges during the prior 400 years. Israel demanded a king due to a number of factors which included: Samuel's old age, the corrupt sons of Samuel, the elder's demands for a king (I Samuel 8:1-3), Abimelek's power grab (Judges 9), the fall of Shiloh, the loss of the ark to the Philistines, population growth, and urban centralization (HOTHB, 446-447). Saul was anointed at Ramah, elected by lot of the people at Mizpah, coronated at Gilgal, and treated like a sovereign of the ancient near east with all the symbols of power and authority (throne, palace). Saul was a military leader king along with his uncle Abner who was appointed military commander. In this role Saul had military victories over Moab, Ammon, Zoab, Amalek, and the Philistines (I Samuel 14:47-48). By location he had victories at Mickmash Pass, the valley of Elah, and over the Amalekites. His defeat occurred at Gilboa where Saul and his three sons died (I Samuel 28-31). He is attributed for military victories and establishing a standing army. He was rebuked by Samuel as mentioned earlier on two primary occasions and rejected based upon his seeking advice from the witch of Endor rather than from Yahweh (I Samuel 28:4-15). He tried to kill

David out of anger and jealousy on several occasions (I Samuel 19:9) and did order priests to be killed (I Samuel 22:18). The author of Samuel describes Saul as a tragic figure whose throne, reputation, life, and posterity would be taken from him. He revealed all too many human self-serving images of Saul capped by the spirit being taken from him. "Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him." I Samuel 16:14. Saul's epitaph is written thereafter in Acts 13:22 "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.'" This is also a condemnation of Saul as well as a confirmation of David.

David was chosen by God to lead the people (I Samuel 15:28). His rise to power is recorded in I Samuel 16:14 – II Samuel 5:25. The author's portrayal of David is generally positive (HOTHB, 199). For example David slew Goliath (I Samuel 17) and fled from Saul rather than harming him. His early rule of Israel was deemed positive by the author because in winning military victories the land was brought into security and rest (II Samuel 7:1, 10-11). But the author was faithful to history which renders the account of David's life as more believable because of identifying David's failures as a person. For example he took Bathsheba unlawfully, ordered the murder of Uriah, produced a family with strife, murder, rape, and rebellion resulting (HOTHB, 200). He was in effect a murderer and adulterer. Finally he ordered an unwise census to be taken of the people. Yet with all of the negatives in his personal life he remained a military hero, reorganized the Levite and priesthood institutions, and laid the plans to build the temple in Jerusalem. Later the author(s) of Chronicles would refer the people returning from exile to respect and return to the model of kingship established under David. This also meant that the only acceptable kingly dynasty and succession was to be through the House of David. God gave David and his descendants the right to rule over Israel forever by covenant (II Chronicles 13:5) (HOTHB, 207). The Deuteronomic Historian establishes the covenant between Yahweh and David by influencing the author(s) of Samuel (II Samuel 23:1-7). The Chronicler restates the covenant in II Chronicles 13:5; 21:7; and 23:3. All three are looking back toward the history of Israel but with final failure resulting in DH and Samuel as doom and punishment for forsaking Yahweh versus the Chronicler who portrays opportunity for the returning exiles on the Davidic monarchy and supporting institutions if the people and leaders in the next generations will only seek Yahweh and obey His commandments. In Samuel's account David is a heroic figure with a flawed personal life whereas in Chronicles David is a model to learn from the good and not repeat the bad which will result in the blessings promised by the Lord.

The Davidic Covenant

How does the Davidic covenant relate to the Sinaitic covenant?

The Sinaitic covenant is a national covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel where He remembered the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and heard the cry of the children of Israel while in bondage in Egypt (Ex. 2:23-25). In initiating this covenant Yahweh would reveal Himself to Israel with the promise that Israel would reveal Yahweh to the surrounding nations (DOTB, 150-151). The terms of the covenant indicate that Israel will retain its ethical distinction, continue in a special relationship with Yahweh, become a priestly kingdom, become a holy nation, and be delivered from bondage (Ex. 19:5-6). The people ratified the covenant which was conditional in nature (Ex. 24:3-8). Israel's obedience to the law would be a witness to the other nations (Deut. 4:6-8).

The Davidic covenant begins with the promises given in II Samuel 7:11-16. Yahweh promises to make David's name great, establish a royal house and throne for David and his posterity, and He will bring the people to the Promised land and give them rest. The covenant is reaffirmed in II Samuel 23:5; II Chronicles 13:5; 21:7; and 23:3. The conditional nature of the Davidic covenant would result in punishment for the king and/or for the people but the promise of the dynastic line of David and the everlasting ownership of the land is an unconditional promise (DOTHB, 209-210).

The covenants of Sinai and David relate to each other in several ways. First both covenants include promises of blessing by Yahweh if the promises are kept by the people. Both covenants also include curses or punishments if the people disobey the terms agreed to (Deut. 28:1, 15; Psalm 132:11-12). Second Moses is the mediator of the Sinaitic covenant and David is the mediator of the Davidic covenant (Deut. 29:14-15; Psalm 89:3). Third in both cases the covenants are a gift granted by Israel's sovereign God to Israel (The Complete Bible Handbook, Bowker, 61). Fourth the conditionality of the Sinaitic covenant is a greater responsibility than the more unconditionality of the Davidic covenant. For example the terms of the Sinaitic covenant place requirements on ritual such as keeping the Sabbath, establishing an Aaronic priesthood and a Levite order, building a tabernacle, providing for sacrifices and offerings, and keeping the laws of the Decalogue. The Davidic covenant has a different emphasis and purpose. All of the Sinaitic requirements are meant to be kept and preserved in Israel's occupation of the Promised Land. It was not necessary to repeat the specifics again in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. The Davidic covenant continues the plan of God to occupy the land, establish a royal house in perpetuity, displace the foreign gods, and bring rest to the land. The conditionality is based upon punishments when Israel forsakes God or blessings when they seek God. The permanence of the occupation of the land reflects the presence of God. In the Sinai God dwelt in Pillars and settled in the tabernacle which was a temporary place. In the time of Solomon God dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem where His presence would be lasting in that place if the covenant was kept by the

people (I Kings 6). Fifth both covenants were made between God and a people. The ancient near east practice of a suzerainty treaty prevalent in the Hittite culture was between a superior and a subordinate party which is similar in structure to the Sinaitic covenant. (On the Reliability of the Old Testament, Kitchen, 284-289). The royal grant practiced in Assyria and Babylon was between a king and a vassal which is similar in structure to the Davidic covenant. The stipulations of each ANE practice are similar but only Israel had a covenant with a sovereign deity (DOTP, 173). Sixth the emphasis in the Davidic covenant shifts from the site of Sinai to Jerusalem as the geographic focal point of fulfilling God's plan. There was no rest in the desert whereas the promise of rest is resumed in Canaan with the center being Jerusalem (The New Bible Commentary, Wenham, 325). Additionally the emphasis is on the house of David anticipating the everlasting nature of his dynasty which the New Testament reveals is fulfilled in Jesus Christ as his descendant as the promised seed (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 3:16; II Sam. 7:12; Matt. 22:42). Seventh the Sinaitic covenant applies to both the northern and southern kingdoms following Solomon's rule during the divided monarchy. The Davidic covenant applies primarily to the southern kingdom and only to the northern kingdom when "All Israel" is a reality (II Chron. 30:1) under Hezekiah and (Ezra 23:1-3) under Josiah. However note should be made of the northern emphasis on the priesthood of Aaron as their tradition versus the priesthood of Moses in the southern kingdom and the differences in shrines for worship at Dan and Bethel and a sanctuary at Shechem versus the temple in Jerusalem. Eighth both covenants speak of obeying the covenant in terms of generations. In Sinai it is the old generation versus the new generation. In Canaan it is each independent generation who must live up to the terms.

Walter Kaiser suggests at least four great moments in biblical history that reflect God's continual plan of redemption: (1) the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, 17; (2) the promise given to David in 2 Samuel 7; (3) the promise in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31, and (4) the death and resurrection of Christ (The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity, Kaiser, 298). The histories of both covenants are filled with conditions but the absolute certainty of God's mercy, love, and sovereign plan are never in doubt.