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giant, and only later was the hero's role elevated to the better-known David.This supposition, however, finds no support in the rest of Scripture. If David did not kill Goliath, it becomes difficult to account for Saul's intense jealousy and for the song credited to David with slaying ten thousands (1 Sam 18:7). His conquering of the Philistine giant was his greatest triumph and paved the way for his leadership of Israel.In 1 Samuel 21:9 David was forced to take Goliath's sword from the priest Ahimelech. David had evidently dedicated the weapon to the Lord after his victory. His action parallels that of King Hattusilis III, the Hitt, whose "Apology" was earlier compared with Samuel. There is a strong possibility that Hattusilis also was involved in a battle of champions. H. Hoffner has recently discussed the evidence based on the "Apology of Hattusilis" (II:31-47). After leading his men to an unexpectedly overwhelming victory perhaps by individual combat, the Hitt, warrior dedicated his weapon to the goddess Ishtar. A battle of champions on Hitt, soil would provide an interesting analogy to the phenomenon already well-known in Gr. and Heb. lit.The context in 2 Samuel 21 also supports David's right to the victory. Four of David's mighty men are said to have killed descendants of the giant (v. 22). It is unlikely that David's warriors would have accomplished what their king himself could not do. The struggles of Goliath's relatives were an attempt to avenge the giant's death. A blood-feud of this type was a natural sequel to David's victory.The parallel in 1 Chronicles 20:5 supplies the needed solution, since it refers to Elhanan's triumph over Lahmi, the brother of Goliath. Apparently the MT of Samuel was defective at this point, changing "Lahmi" into "Bethlehem." The error involves similarly shaped letters and could easily have crept into the text. Samuel has שמואל instead of Chronicles' שמואל.C. The witch of Endor. Saul's experience with the medium or witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28 is a difficult passage to interpret. This woman was one of many wizards or spiritists who operated in Israel in spite of laws banning them. Isaiah condemned those "mediums and wizards" rather than listen to the word of God (Isa 8:19, 20). In Saul's case, he was desperate to know the future and sought some message from the departed Samuel, whose advice he had usually taken too lightly while he was alive.Several explanations have been given regarding this event and the powers of mediums in general. Some feel that Samuel not appear in any form; it was only a psychological phenomenon in which Saul thought he saw Samuel owing to his confused state of mind and the mysterious effects of darkness. This interpretation is hard to derive from the scriptural account.Within a more conservative framework, it has been proposed that God allowed Saul to see a form which resembled Samuel, but which was not actually the body or spirit of the prophet himself. The more obvious explanation, however, recognizes that Samuel did actually appear to Saul in visible form and that the deceased prophet communicated with Saul. Samuel looked like "a god" (v. 13), implying an unusual appearance for this spirit in visible form.While not denying the powers of mediums and spiritists within the demonic sphere, one need not conclude that calling up the dead normally lay within their ability. In this instance, God intervened and sent Samuel to His disobedient king. The woman revealed her surprise at the unusual success of this venture by crying out "with a loud voice" when she saw Samuel (v. 12). This implies that she and her colleagues could not ordinarily bring up the dead.The episode does demonstrate the conscious existence of departed spirits and supports the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.VII. TheologyAlthough the main emphasis of Samuel is historical and not theological, there are several chapters which touch directly upon important doctrines.A. The will of God. Scholars have puzzled over the attitude of God toward the establishment of the monarchy. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that God was displeased with the rejection of the theocracy (1 Sam 8:7). Samuel tried to dissuade the people from desiring a king, but the majority were adamant in their demand. Yet, even before Saul was anointed, God promised to bless him and to use him in delivering His people (9:16). Apparently some distinction can be made between the directive and permissive will of God in this case. The wish for a king was sinful, but God allowed this wish to become reality and blessed the kingdom greatly in subsequent years.Another aspect of the will of God relates to predestination and human responsibility, both of which find support in Samuel. After Saul had been king for some time, he disobeyed the commandment of God by performing sacrifices. Samuel severely reprimanded him for this behavior and announced that Saul had forfeited his right to a lasting dynasty. God "would have established your kingdom over Israel for ever" (1 Sam 13:13). Instead, Saul's sin led the Lord to transfer the leadership to David.It is clear that Saul's sin is pinpointed as the cause for his loss of dynastic rights. Yet, as early as patriarchal times Jacob prophesied that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Gen 49:10). The ruling tribe would be Judah, to which David belonged and not Benjamin, the tribe of Saul. Hence, would not the scriptural fulfillment have necessitated the disqualification of Saul? Interestingly, Samuel did not console Saul by saying, "It was not your fault, it had to happen." Saul was not excused for his sin but was judged for it. God, of course, foreknew this event making it certain long before, but human responsibility remained very much in the picture.B. The doctrine of sin. Both 1 and 2 Samuel illustrate all too vividly the sinfulness of the human heart and the inevitable results of sin. Godly leaders like Eli, David and even Samuel are singled out for their failures before the Lord. Strangely enough, all three men reared children who rebelled against God. As fathers, they experienced great difficulty in bringing their sons into the deep relationship with God they enjoyed. Eli's sons robbed the sacrifices, blasphemed God, and committed fornication, all in the role of priests (1 Sam 2:13-17, 22; 3:13). It is no wonder that God destroyed them before the Philistines. Because of the wickedness of Samuel's sons, the people were further motivated to ask for a king (8:5).Saul began his rule as a humble, Spirit-controlled man. As his reign progressed, however, he disobeyed the Lord, came under the influence of an evil spirit, and was consumed with murderous jealousy. He was finally reduced to dealing with a spiritist in an effort to contact the dead.The experience of David provides the greatest instruction, both positively and negatively. This great king, a man after God's own heart, nevertheless became secretly involved in adultery and murder after exhibiting great faith and devoutness for years. When David acknowledged his sin and was restored spiritually (2 Sam 12:13), the Lord forgave him, thus showing His great mercy. Although David's confession was deep and sincere, he had to suffer the inevitable consequences of sin, even of forgiven sin. Bathsheba's first child died, and David's first son Amnon imitated his father by committing fornication with Tamar. This precipitated Absalom's avenging murder which led directly to the major rebellion under Absalom. God still blessed the reign of David, however, and He even exalted Solomon, Philosophy & Religion Religious Personages & Scholars Hebrew: Shmu'el Flourished: 11th century bce, Israel Flourished: c.1100 BCE - c.1001 BCE Notable Family Members: mother Hannah Samuel (flourished 11th century bce, Israel) was a religious hero in the history of Israel, represented in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) in every role of leadership open to a Jewish man of his day—seer, priest, judge, prophet, and military leader. His greatest distinction was his role in the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. Information about Samuel is contained in the First Book of Samuel (called in the Roman Catholic canon the First Book of Kings). The ancient designation of the two books of Samuel does not indicate that he is the author (in fact, his death is related in 1 Samuel 25) or the hero of the books; indeed, it is difficult to deduce what the title was intended to mean. Samuel, the son of Elkhanah (of Ephraim) and Hannah, was born in answer to the prayer of his previously childless mother. In gratitude she dedicated him to the service of the chief sanctuary of Shiloh, in the charge of the priest Eli. As a boy Samuel received a divine oracle in which the fall of the house of Eli was predicted (1 Samuel 1–3). When he became an adult, Samuel inspired Israel to a great victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer (chapter 7). The proposal of the elders of Israel to install a king was indignantly rejected by Samuel as infidelity to Yahweh, the God of Israel (chapter 8). By the revelation of Yahweh, however, he anointed Saul king and installed him before all Israel (chapters 9–10). Saul was vindicated as king by his leadership of Israel in a campaign against the Ammonites (chapter 11); after this, Samuel retired from the leadership of Israel (chapter 12). He reappeared, however, to announce the oracle of Yahweh rejecting Saul as king, once for arrogating to himself the right of sacrifice (chapter 13) and a second time for failing to carry out the law of the ban—a primitive institution by which persons or objects were devoted to the deity, normally by destruction—against the Amalekites (chapter 15). By the oracle of Yahweh, Samuel secretly anointed David as king (chapter 16). He then faded into the background, appearing at the sanctuary of Naioth (chapter 19). He died, and his ghost was evoked by a necromancer, or sorceress, at the request of Saul; he then announced a third time the rejection of Saul (chapter 28). Samuel thus appears as a leader in all Israel; his leadership is exercised in war and law, but his authority is basically religious, mostly prophetic, although with some features of priestly authority. He appears at first as being hostile to the monarchy and then as being favourable to it. He is the spokesman of Yahweh in the election both of Saul and of David. Yet, the picture is not entirely straightforward, and a close examination of the material, as conducted by a large number of critical historians, reveals inconsistencies that raise questions about both the history of Samuel and the sources in which this history has been preserved. The same examination reveals that none of the material in its present form was contemporary with the events; if one source is taken as controlling, then the other materials lose all historical value. The two major divergences in the First Book of Samuel lie in those passages that critics call the "pro-monarchic" source (1 Samuel 9:1–10:16) and those passages called the "anti-monarchic" source (1 Samuel 8 and 10:17–27). In the pro-monarchic account of the rise of Saul, Samuel is an obscure village seer (with distinct evidence of occult practices). The institution of the monarchy and the election of the king occur according to the will of Yahweh as revealed to Samuel. The story of the anointing, however, has no story of accession to complete it; instead, there is the account of Saul's victory over the Ammonites. Examination discloses that this is still another account of Saul's rise without an anointing story; Saul is chosen king as the judges—the leaders of the Israelites during their conquest of the land of Canaan—were chosen, by a charismatic display of military courage and leadership. Samuel was very probably intruded into this narrative. The anti-monarchic account presents a different picture of the kingship and of Saul and Samuel. In this account Samuel is a figure known through "all Israel" (a term of uncertain meaning at this period); his authority rests on his position as judge. The institution of kingship comes not from divine revelation but from the request of the elders of Israel, and this request is treated by Samuel as rebellion against Yahweh. The king is chosen not by divine election but by lot, implying that no special qualities were required, and the bashful candidate has to be summoned from a hiding place. This story is related to the account of Samuel as judge in chapters 7 and 12, and he is clearly presented as the last of the judges; it is indicated that the system of the judges was rejected by the Israelites not because of its failure but because of their worldliness. This tradition has two questionable features: Samuel is the only judge who is a permanent magistrate as well as a military leader, and his conclusive victory over the Philistines in chapter 7 cannot be historical, since it is contradicted by the subsequent military exploits of Saul and David. The story of the birth and vocation of Samuel at the beginning of 1 Samuel is regarded by critics as legendary because of a number of obviously unhistorical features. This narrative is the major piece in establishing the role of Samuel as a prophet, but it is questionable whether the "prophet" as a distinct religious figure had emerged among the Israelites at this early date. The story is also at the root of the priestly role imposed on Samuel at a later date in 1 Chronicles 6; but this is an effort to explain in terms of the later priesthood the sacred functions performed by Samuel. There are also two different accounts of the rejection of Saul by Samuel. The first story (1 Samuel 13) describes Samuel's action as motivated by Saul's assumption of the prerogatives of the priesthood. It is quite unlikely that either the powers of the king or the prerogatives of the priest were as closely defined as this in the early period. In the second story (chapter 15), Samuel is motivated by the failure of Saul to observe the ethic of the holy war. This story does not exhibit the same improbability. It seems that there was a firm tradition of a split between the two men but an inexact memory of the details. SubtopicsProphetRelated TermsDeborah (10 Occurrences)Anna (1 Occurrence)Noadiah (2 Occurrences)Miriam (13 Occurrences)College (2 Occurrences)Ahikam (20 Occurrences)Achbor (7 Occurrences)Asher (43 Occurrences)Shallum (27 Occurrences)Wardrobe (4 Occurrences)Tikvath (1 Occurrence)Tikvah (2 Occurrences)Phanuel (1 Occurrence)Barak (14 Occurrences)Abdon (8 Occurrences)Asaiah (6 Occurrences)Shaphan (26 Occurrences)Jezebel (20 Occurrences)District (59 Occurrences)Quarter (33 Occurrences)Josiah (51 Occurrences)Keeper (72 Occurrences)Woman (4043 Occurrences)Huldah (2 Occurrences)Hasrah (1 Occurrence)Prophet (315 Occurrences)Hilkiah (31 Occurrences)Hilkiah (30 Occurrences)Virginity (12 Occurrences)Name'maher (1 Occurrence)No-adi'ah (2 Occurrences)Nicolaitans (2 Occurrences)Notwithstanding (37 Occurrences)Jez'ebe! (19 Occurrences)Jael (6 Occurrences)Lappidoth (1 Occurrence)Lapidoth (1 Occurrence)Lappidoth (1 Occurrence)Hilkiah (30 Occurrences)Grave (128 Occurrences)Isaiah (64 Occurrences)Idol-sacrifices (3 Occurrences)Frighten (15 Occurrences)Hazor (19 Occurrences)Thyatira (4 Occurrences)Tokhath (1 Occurrence)Tobijah (17 Occurrences)Timbrels (9 Occurrences)Tambours (8 Occurrences)Tambourine (8 Occurrences)Teacheth (22 Occurrences)Timbrel (7 Occurrences)Tambourines (13 Occurrences)Megiddo (13 Occurrences)Mahershalalhashbaz (2 Occurrences)Tolerate (8 Occurrences)Tobi'ah (15 Occurrences)Dances (8 Occurrences)Deb'orah (10 Occurrences)Dancing (21 Occurrences)Meroz (1 Occurrence)Misleads (8 Occurrences)Mindful (39 Occurrences)Married (152 Occurrences)Maher-shalal-hash-baz (2 Occurrences)Maidenhood (2 Occurrences)Megiddo (13 Occurrences)Mahershalalhashbaz (2 Occurrences)Maher-shalal-hashbaz (1 Occurrence)Permitted (1 Occurrence)Phan'u-el (1 Occurrence)Prophetesses (1 Occurrence)Belonging (90 Occurrences)Baz (2 Occurrences)Bond-servants (12 Occurrences)Bequilling (15 Occurrences)Conceive (27 Occurrences)Calleth (261 Occurrences) Samuel is one of the most intriguing Old Testament figures (to me, at least). He's a star player in the story of David and Saul: the first two God-anointed kings of Israel. We meet him as a baby. We see him as a national leader, intercessor, and even a ghost. Here are a few interesting biblical facts about the prophet Samuel.(Special thanks to Logos Bible Software on this: that tool makes it really easy to find how certain characters are mentioned across the Bible.)1. Samuel is a miracle child.The Bible tells of many significant adults, but only a handful of significant pregnancies. Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob & Esau, Perez, Samson, John the Baptist, and Jesus are the others. We meet Samuel's parents before we meet him. His mother Hannah cannot have children, but God hears her prayers and opens her womb, blessing her with the child Samuel.2. Samuel's name means "name of God."The translation of Samuel (sometimes spelled "Samual" when spelled in the English alphabet) literally means "name of God," or "God has heard."3. Samuel is from the tribe of Levi.Not only was Samuel from the tribe of Levi, but he may have had Ephraimite blood, too (1 Ch 6:33-38, 1 Sa 1:1). This qualified him to serve in the temple, but Samuel was much more than a priest (see below).4. Samuel is the last judge.You can read about most of the judges in the book of—*you guessed it!*—Judges. After Joshua dies, the nation of Israel enters the "days of the judges," (Ru 1:1) when there was no centralized government.During this time, God would raise up individuals to deliverer Israel from her enemies (Jdg 2:16). The book of Judges tells us about 12 judges, and First Samuel introduces two more: Eli and Samuel.Why is Samuel the last? Because after Samuel, Israel is led by kings (Ac 13:20).5. Samuel anoints the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David.When the people demand a national king, God directs Samuel to anoint Saul, a tall man from the tribe of Benjamin. Saul doesn't turn out so well, and so God has Samuel anoint a young shepherd named David as the future king: not the king Israel needs, but the king they deserve. You can read all about that in First Samuel.Samuel is qualified to do this because of another office he holds . . . 6. Samuel is the first of the prophets.In the book of Acts, Peter also considers Samuel to be the first of the prophets—after Moses, that is (Ac 3:24).A prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of God. Samuel isn't the first person to be called a prophet in the Bible (Moses is both earlier and greater), but as far as we can tell, he lead an order of prophets in Israel (1 Sa 19:20).Samuel's prophetic ministry is significant because it begins at a time when words from the Lord are rare and infrequent (1 Sa 3:1). But after Samuel, Israel's history comes alive with prophetic revelation: much of which is recorded in the prophetic books of the Bible.7. Samuel is a priest.He begins his ministry serving the chief priest in the tabernacle (1 Sa 3:1). Samuel makes sacrifices on behalf of the people, and offers intercessory prayers to God for them (1 Sa 7:9).8. Samuel is a Nazarite.Like the mighty Samson, Samuel is dedicated to the Lord as a child. This dedication was for life, and so he never cuts his hair (1 Sa 1:11, Nu 6:1-21).9. Samuel is the only ghost we meet in the Bible.After Samuel dies, Saul meets with an Ewok—or, a witch of En-dor (1 Sa 28:7). The medium conjures up the spirit of Samuel, who isn't too happy about what Saul has done. You can read the whole story in First Samuel chapter 28.10. Samuel led the greatest Passovers.Hundreds of years after Samuel's death, a king named Josiah celebrates the Passover. It's such an affair, the author says it's the greatest Passover ever—well, ever since Samuel's day (2 Ch 35:18).11. Samuel is remembered for his prayers.The psalmist who penned Psalm 99 ranks him with Moses and Aaron as one who called upon the Lord's name (Ps 99:6).12. God calls Samuel by name—twice!Samuel is one of 8 people in the Bible that God calls by name ... twice. The others are Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Martha, Simon, "My God," and Saul.BONUS: Two books of the Bible are named after Samuel, but he only shows up in one.Yes, we have the books of First and Second Samuel, but Samuel is never mentioned in Second Samue! This is because both books were originally one document.You can learn more about all 66 books of the Bible here.Samuel is one of my favorite Bible characters—I'd encourage you to get to know him in First Samuel.

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