SAMUEL sam'u-al [Heb. *semu'el*; Gk. *Samouel*] The last leader of Israel in the premonarchical period, who anointed both Saul and David. He functioned as a priest-prophet at Shiloh, as a seer at Ramah, and as the last of the great judges in early Israel.

Neither the date of Samuel's birth nor that of his death is known, but his life is to be placed in (the last two-thirds of) the 11th cent. B.C. Samuel's parents were Elkanah, an Ephraimite (1 S. 1:1), and the previously barren Hannah, who prayed for the gift of a child at Shiloh and promised to dedicate her son to lifelong service to Yahweh. Hannah later bore three other sons and two daughters (2:21). The name Samuel, which meant something like "His divine name is 'El," is explained in 1:20, 28 by a series of puns on the verb *sha'al* ("request," "dedicate"), which also happens to be the root behind the name Saul. These puns suggest that the real leader of Israel is not Saul, the anointed king, but rather the prophet-anointer who had been asked ("Sauled") of God and who had been dedicated ("Sauled") back to God. Some have argued from the puns that the birth story in 1 S. 1 once described the birth of Saul himself. According to the LXX and 4QSama versions of 1 S. 1:11, 22, Samuel was to abstain from alcoholic beverages and was not to cut his hair because he was a Nazirite (cf. the Hebrew fragments of Sir. 46:13). In 1 Ch. 6:28 (MT 13), Samuel is identified as a Levite. Albright (p. 161) suggested that Samuel was from the tribe of Ephraim by birth, but was attached to the tabernacle as a Nazirite and was therefore drawn by Levitical tradition into family attachment to the tribe of Levi.

In a dream theophany Yahweh revealed to the boy Samuel at Shiloh that the priestly house of Eli would come to an end cause of the wickedness of Eli’s two sons, Hophni an Phinehas (I S. 3:11-14; cf. 2:12-17) - a fate announced earlier by an anonymous man of
God (2:27-36). The sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines at Ebenezer (4:11), and Eli died when he heard the news of the loss of the ark of God (4:18). Because Yahweh appeared repeatedly to Samuel at Shiloh and revealed Himself to him, all Israel knew that Samuel was established as a prophet for Yahweh (3:20f.).

Samuel does not play a role in the ark narrative (1 S. 46). His next recorded appearance was at Mizpah, where he led the people to repent and prayed for them while offering up a whole burnt offering, and where Yahweh gave Israel a decisive victory over the Philistines, commemorated by the erection of a stone called Ebenezer (7:3-12). Samuel's duties as judge took him on a yearly circuit of the towns of Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah (7:15-17). Despite the small territory encompassed by these towns, the text designates him as a judge of all Israel. As a judge he may have served as a court of appeal, as a handler of difficult cases, or as a proclaimer of the law in the community assembly. He also judged Israel in his hometown of Ramah, where he had built an altar.

Samuel's own sons, Joel and Abijah, served as judges at Beer-sheba (I S. 8:1-3). When they proved to be corrupt, the elders of Israel requested Samuel to appoint a king for them. Though this displeased Samuel, he was told by Yahweh to grant them their request but to warn them of the taxes and forced conscription for work projects and military service that kingship would bring (8:11-17).

Samuel is connected with three ceremonies in the accounts of Saul's rise to kingship. According to 1 S. 9:1 10:16, he secretly anointed Saul as prince (nagid, 9:16; 10:1; but cf. melek, "king," in 15:1), apparently in the prophet's hometown of Ramah. Saul had been searching in vain for his father's lost asses and was persuaded by his servant to ask for assistance from a local man of God. This led to his encounter with Samuel and his
anointing. Samuel gave Saul three signs to certify his anointing as prince (10:1). Samuel is identified in this account as a "man of God" and a "seer," both of which are titles for prophets elsewhere in the Bible.

After repeating his theological objections to kingship, Samuel also presided at Mizpah over a lot-casting ceremony that pointed to Saul as Yahweh's choice (1 S. 10:17-27). Samuel deposited the law of the kingdom (cf. Dt. 17:14-20) in the sanctuary at the end of this ceremony. After Saul's victory over the Ammonites, Samuel suggested that the people go to Gilgal, where they proclaimed Saul king (1 S. 11:12-15). The notice that they "renewed" the kingship at Gilgal (v. 14) is often viewed as an attempt to harmonize the several accounts of Saul's rise to power.

In his farewell sermon (1 S. 12), Samuel demonstrated his own innocence and Yahweh's righteousness. He warned the people that the king they had inappropriately demanded would be acceptable and would succeed only if they were obedient, and that both they and their king would be swept away if they acted wickedly. Samuel promised to pray for the people and teach them the way they should live.

Samuel rejected any dynastic succession for Saul because of an incident in which the king offered a sacrifice himself instead of waiting for the prophet to come to Gilgal to preside over the sacrifice (1 S. 13:8-14). Saul's action seems to have violated a compromise initiated during the controversial rise of the monarchy (note the positive and negative reactions to kingship in chs. 7-11). According to this compromise, the king would carry out the charismatic military activities of the judges or "saviors" from premonarchic times, while the prophet would communicate to the king Yahweh's authorization for war. Since the sacrifice itself was probably the means by which Yah-
weh's authorization was determined, Saul's impatient performance of the sacrifice may have represented an attempt to manipulate the divine decision to his own advantage. Because of the basic role changes associated with this compromise, Samuel is usually considered Israel's first prophet in the strict sense of the term.

Samuel functioned as such a prophet when he authorized Saul to attack Amalek (1 S. 15:1-3), but he sharply rebuked the king for sparing the Amalekite king Agag and the best of his livestock in violation of the laws (vv. 13-23; cf. vv. 8f.). As a result of this disobedience, Samuel announced that Yahweh had rejected Saul as king (vv. 23, 26). When Saul tore Samuel's robe as he was trying to leave, the prophet informed him that Yahweh had torn the kingdom of Israel from Saul and given it to a "neighbor of yours, who is better than you" (vv. 27f.; cf. 28:17). Samuel himself executed Agag, who had mistakenly expected a reprieve (15:32f.). Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of the latter's death (v. 35; cf. ch. 28 and 19:18-24). Samuel mourned for Saul, and Yahweh was "sorry" that He had ever made Saul king (15:35).

On Yahweh's instructions, Samuel traveled to a private sacrifice at Bethlehem, at which he anointed David, the youngest of Jesse's sons (1 S. 16:1-13; cf. 2 S. 2:4; 5:3). While David was blessed with the gift of the Spirit as a result of this anointing (1 S. 16:13), the Spirit of Yahweh departed from Saul (v. 14; cf. 10:6, 10; 11:6). In the course of his struggles with Saul, David fled to Samuel, who was in the company of a group of ecstatic prophets at Ramah, only 3 km. (2 mi.) N of Saul's own town of Gibeah. Saul's messengers and, finally, the king himself participated in this ecstatic behavior, with the king stripping off his clothes and prophesying before Samuel (19:18-24). In this context the proverb "Is Saul also among the prophets?" apparently has a negative connotation (cf.
10:10-12, where the proverb occurs in a positive context). Saul's wild behavior in
Samuel's presence seems only to have con-firmed the latter's negative judgment of him.
Samuel's assistance to David in his flight from Saul added prestige to the future king.

On Samuel's death he was buried in Ramah and mourned by all Israel (1 S. 25:1; 28:3).
As Saul prepared for his final battle at Gilboa, he decided to visit a necromancer at
Endor, since Yahweh no longer communicated to him through dreams, Urim, or prophets
(28:4-7); by con-trast, David gained ready response to his multiple divine inquiries
(22:10, 13, 15; 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2 S. 2:1; 5:19, 23). The female necromancer brought up
from Sheol the figure of Samuel. When Samuel came up from the underworld wrapped
in a prophetic mantle, his standard garb (2:19;; 15:27), the necromancer thought it was a
divine visitation, but Saul recognized Samuel and prostrated himself before him
(28:13f.). Samuel complained about being disturbed) and announced that Yahweh would
now fulfill His previous threat to deprive Saul of kingship (vv. 15-19; cf. ch., 15). Saul
and his sons would fall on the next day, and the Israelites would be defeated by the
Philistines. Samuel) also confirmed the kingship of David.

Later biblical tradition highlights Samuel's role as intercessor (Jer. 15:1; Ps. 99:6) and
associates him with David I in the establishment of the office of gatekeepers (1 Ch. 9:22).
The reference in I Ch. 29:29 to extrabiblical sources for details of David's reign
apparently led to the tradition that Samuel was the author of I Samuel. According to 2 Ch.
35:18 the Passover of Josiah was the first of its kind since the days of Samuel. The NT
twice refers to Samuel as the first prophet (Acts 3:24; 13:20), and his prophetic career is
includes Samuel among the great heroes of faith (He. 11:32).
Bibliography. - Comms.: See the list of comms. in the Bibliography Of SAMUEL.

BOOKS OF.


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