

Thoughts on Samuel, Saul and David



Poor Saul has been judged harshly. He had massive issues to deal with. The Philistines held a major dominance in the land and he had to deal with that. On top of that he was the first king in a land with no administration and not even a proper army. His people were poorly equipped, as iron was controlled by the Philistines. There was no palace, probably not any taxes – so plenty of cuts, well austerity at least! Also Samuel seems to have been quite tough with him. Even a strong healthy mind would have struggled with all he had – and he surely did struggle. After a 2 mistakes (not that serious, certainly not as bad as adultery and murder) he is told he will not be king for long but someone else will take over.

Next, David comes along and takes all the glory! Saul's son Jonathan loves David more than himself and his daughter Michal falls in love with him. Saul must have been pretty sure that if someone was going to take over it would be David. One big recipe for jealousy!


Samuel? There seems to be a big time gap between the destruction of Israel's army and the capture of the Ark, and Saul coming along. What did Samuel do in this time? He didn't help get rid of the Philistines did he? There was an incidence of a sacrifice and subsequent victory but it seems the people needed a warrior more than a prophet.

David. One thing that really strikes me about David is that he really had it tough in his early years. He needed to be because he was the one who finally dealt with the Philistines. It was David also who finally completed the conquest started by Joshua all those years before.

Unlike Saul, David made some obvious changes to Israel. He chose a new capital: Jerusalem that was neither originally part of the north or the south. Neither did it belong to any particular tribe. For this reason it was supposed to help bring unity. David also brought in taxes and a proper army.

Samuel and Saul: A Negative Symbiosis



 This article by Moshe Reiss challenges the orthodox view that would consider Samuel an upright man beyond reproach and Saul as a failure of a king.

Saul's faults?

It asks some interesting questions that are worth considering: What command did Saul break when he sacrificed before the Lord in chapter 13? David and Solomon both sacrificed animals, so why was it wrong for Saul (2 Samuel 6:13; 1 Kings 3:15). Also was Saul wrong to leave some of the best animals for sacrifice in chapter 15? Reiss points out that in Hebrew the commandment Samuel gave was rather ambiguous: "Samuel mandates a sequence; first put the Amalekites in *herem* , then kill them."

Early on in an account of Saul seeking the donkeys we see that his servant is more knowledgeable and decisive than he is. The servant knows of Samuel; Saul doesn't. The servant has some money; Saul doesn't. The servant has a plan; Saul doesn't.

Samuels's faults?

After the "disaster" with Saul – whose chief qualifications were that he was tall, dark and handsome – Samuel nearly picks David's eldest brother for the very same reason.

'When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"' (2 Samuel 16:6-7).

Note that Samuel who sacrificed offerings was not himself from the priestly tribe of Levi.

Is Samuel hard on Saul because he is angry that he and his sons have been rejected, and a king chosen instead? Why did he not manage to bring his sons up well?



Thoughts on “Samson: A Tragedy in Three Acts” by Shimon Bakon

✖ [Article available here](#)

Things that were new to me:

There is mention of God moving Samson in his early life and one has to consider how it was that he became a judge, so perhaps he had a golden age that the Bible doesn't mention.

“and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.”

Judges 13:25

Hadn't picked up about taking the honey from a carcass – Nazirites (of whom Samson was made one before birth) were not meant to come into contact with dead bodies (Num 6:6).

The festival Samson held [Hebrew *mishteh*] in 14:10 would include alcoholic drinks – again forbidden for Nazirites (Num 6:3).

It is only at the end of his life that he seems to really acknowledge that it is God who has given him his mighty strength. And it is only at the end of his life that he really starts to accomplish the purpose of his life, namely, “he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hand of the philistines” (13:5).

7 Mighty Acts of Samson

1. Lion 14:6
2. 30 men Ashkelon (14:19).
3. 300 Foxes (15:4)
4. Viscous Slaughter (15:7)
5. 1,000 men with jawbone (15:15)
6. Posts up hill (16:3)
7. Destruction of Temple (16:30)

[Review of “Gideon and the Ephraimites” by Josiah Derby](#)

[Link to article](#)



I found this very interesting article on Google. It highlighted a very interesting point I had not noted when I read the passage on Gideon (Judges 6 – 8). In Judges, Chapter 8 we read

“Now the Ephraimites asked Gideon, “Why have you treated us like this? Why didn’t you call us when you went to fight Midian?” And they challenged him vigorously.”

Remember that Gideon was from the clan of Manasseh – an important point. Ephraim and Manasseh were both children of Joseph and even though Manasseh was the oldest, Jacob blessed Ephraim before Manasseh and said that Ephraim would be the more dominant.

Genesis 48:17-20:

‘When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to him, “No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.”

¹⁹ But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.” ²⁰ He blessed them that day and said,

*"In your^[c] name will Israel pronounce this blessing:
'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'"*

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.'

It would seem that these Ephraimites took this very much to their head. Later in Judges 12 they get angry with Jephthah accusing him of not involving them.

Ephraim continued to be arrogant. In the schismatic division of the nation Ephraim became the dominant tribe in the north. This can be seen by the fact that the prophets often refer to the northern tribes as Ephraim:

Jeremiah 31:19-20:

*After I strayed,
I repented;
after I came to understand,
I beat my breast.
I was ashamed and humiliated
because I bore the disgrace of my youth.'*

*²⁰ Is not Ephraim my dear son,
the child in whom I delight?
Though I often speak against him,
I still remember him.
Therefore my heart yearns for him;
I have great compassion for him,"
declares the Lord.*

One final remark from the paper is worth considering:

Is it due to the arrogance of Ephraim that they failed to listen to the prophets and were eventually evicted from their land by Assyria in 722BCE, never to be heard from again?

[The Judges: an overview](#)

Judge: Othniel
Tribe: Judah
Ref: 3:7 – 11
Oppressor: Aram Naharaim
Years of oppression: 8
Years of peace: 40

Judge: Ehud
Tribe: Benjamin
Ref: 3:12 – 30

Oppressor: Moab, Amalek, Ammon
Years of oppression: 18
Years of peace: 80

Judge: Deborah/ Barak
Tribe: Naphtali
Ref: Chs 4,5
Oppressor: Jabin/ Canaan
Years of oppression: 20
Years of peace: 40

Judge: Gideon
Tribe: Manasseh
Ref: Chs 6,7,8
Oppressor: Midian, Amalek, Peoples of the East
Years of oppression: 7
Years of peace: 40

Judge: Jephthah
Tribe: Gilead (Gad, Reuban, Manasseh)
Ref: Chs 10, 11, 12
Oppressor: Philistines and Ammonites
Years of oppression: 18
Years of peace: 6

Judge: Samson
Tribe: Dan
Ref: Chs 13 – 16
Oppressor: Philistines
Years of oppression: 40
Years of peace: 20