

1 Samuel (Sh'mu'el Alef)

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Chapter 3

1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious¹ in those days; there was no open vision.²

2 And it came to pass one day when Eli was lain down in his place, his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;³

3 and before the lamp of God was put out,⁴ Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD,⁵ where the ark of God was;⁶

¹ **H3368**

יקר

ya^h qa^h r

yaw-kawr'

From H3365; valuable (objectively or subjectively): - brightness, clear, costly, excellent, fat, honourable women, precious, reputation. (It was rare, like diamonds.)

² People just plodded along in life, doing their mundane things, living superficial lives, instead of digging deeper into God and experiencing supernatural lives.

³ Wow. It was the very night that God spoke to Samuel, to give him a great rebuke to Eli, that Eli lost his eyesight. He must have had a deep presentiment that losing his eyesight was a judgment from the Lord, for he didn't stir from his place. He just laid still in his bed, probably contemplating his sins and the justice of this condition coming upon him. He saw his sons' sins, but did not DO anything about them; he just complained to them about it. Now he was losing his ability to see altogether.

⁴ This is an indication that the voice of God came to Samuel during the night, before the sunrise, when the lamps will have burnt themselves down, but it is also a prophetic sign that, before Israel could all turn away from the Lord due to be discouraged by Eli's compromising and his sons' wickedness, God raised up Samuel to be a prophet to lead His people. It may have taken some years before the Tabernacle rulers fully recognized the anointing that was on Samuel and placed him in leadership, but this was the start of him hearing the Lord.

⁵ Eli, the high priest, slept in the Tabernacle, to be on hand for emergencies there, and Samuel stayed near him in a separate compartment, within earshot, in case Eli needed anything. He was elderly and moved slow due to age and weight, though it was not until this night that he lost his eyesight.

It may also be that Eli kept Samuel close to him at night to make sure that he wasn't molested, as his sons might have been that wicked that they would do such a thing to a child, particularly if they were jealous of their father's favour towards him. They probably also sensed that, due to how Eli trained Samuel so assiduously, keeping him close to his side, and by how much the people favoured him, Samuel was going to end up being in charge, rather than themselves, and they would not have liked that. Samuel needed to be guarded from their spite.

⁶ Being so close to the beloved articles of the Tabernacle, including the Ark of the Covenant, must have given Samuel a great sense of security. This was his natural environment where he breathed in its holy atmosphere. As a grown man, entering the Tabernacle must have been very comforting to him, having grown up there as a child.

4 and the LORD called Samuel,⁷ and he answered, Here am I.⁸

5 And he ran unto Eli and said, Here am I, for thou didst call me. And he said, I did not call; lie down again.⁹ And he went and lay down.¹⁰

6 And the LORD called Samuel yet again.¹¹ And Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, Here am I, for thou didst call me. And he answered, I did not call, my son; lie down again.

As a boy, every day, Samuel saw the golden and silver articles of the Tabernacle with their exquisite workmanship, polished and bright. He saw the beautiful tapestries. He grew up among the most beautiful articles of Israel, which conveyed to his spirit the beauty and richness of God. He was taught the significance of each item, and received even more insight from the Lord after he learned to hear His Voice. He had these privileges because his parents had surrendered him wholly to God, and because he recognized that he was privileged to live in this environment and receive this training, he surrendered himself to God, as well.

⁷ The Lord called Samuel, and it was softly, so as to not frighten him. He thought it was only Eli calling to him.

I love to picture God looking down on that child, his long hair probably kept all in braids by now, to prevent it from becoming tangled. God looked down on that angelic face with deep affection, deeper than that of doting parents who look upon their sleeping child, and He must have smiled, in spite of the stern rebuke that He was going to tell Samuel to give to Eli.

Samuel's long, dark eyelashes lay against his youthful cheek, his sweet lips in repose. God knew every dream that was passing through Samuel's mind, He saw every corner of his young heart, and knew all about how he missed his parents and the siblings that he got to see only once a year.

He knew how earnestly that boy served Eli and the other priests and Levites who gave him orders, his slender legs running swiftly to do their bidding, the solemnity with which he stood and watched the ceremonies, and assisted, as needed. This was a greatly beloved child, an instrument who was being honed to do all His desire. Yehoshua said that John the Immerser was the greatest of all who were born among women, so we know that Samuel wasn't considered to be the greatest, but I think he was probably pretty high up there in the ranks of those who had great strength of character. He did not let the impure people around him deter or detour him from serving the Lord.

⁸ Instantly, Samuel was awake and ready to attend to Eli, probably not only because he knew his duty, but also because he had a lot of affection for the old man. He was like his Grandpa.

⁹ This is the night that Eli's eyesight began to fail him. The lights of the Tabernacle were growing dimmer, and he could not see the child when he came to his bedside, but he did not say anything to him about his predicament. He just laid still and contemplated his sins of omission, for which he was now being judged, unlike Moses who spent so much time in the Presence of the Lord that it renewed his youth and gave him sharp eyesight at 120 years old.

¹⁰ Samuel is very puzzled. He knew he heard his name called. It had woken him up, but Eli said that he hadn't called. Weird. Maybe it was a dream.

¹¹ Now he's awake, and Samuel knows that someone called his name, and Eli is the only other person there. What does he want? Why didn't he tell him before, instead of sending him back to bed? He hops back up and runs to Eli to see what he wants.

Sometimes we hear the Lord, but don't realize that it is Him who is talking to us. In my own life, when I was trying to figure out what kind of job training I should get, flower arranging kept coming to me, and even a job counsellor, who wasn't a Christian, had the feeling that I had a connection to floral design, but I kept dismissing it as impractical.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD,¹² neither had the word of the LORD yet been revealed unto him.

8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, Here am I, for thou didst call me. Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the child.¹³

9 Therefore, Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down, and it shall be if he calls thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD, for thy slave¹⁴ hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came and stood and called as at the other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy slave hears.¹⁵

After going through the whole program to find out what I should do as a career, it turned out that I should be a Bible teacher, but I had to do something else in the meantime to earn money. It finally dawned on me that God had been telling me to learn floral design. He opened the doors for me to do that, though I would not, at the present time say that I'm very good at it. I'm better at it than people who have never learned how to arrange flowers, but not as good at the designers I have worked with. Nonetheless, it has served a purpose in my life and I have a feeling that God isn't finished with it, yet, though currently I am a secretary.

I kind of went through the same thing as before when another job counsellor, who wasn't a Christian, urged me to take management training. I protested that I didn't like to tell other people what to do; this is mostly because I don't have the sort of personality where people tend to listen to me and do what I tell them to do. It's annoying and I can't be bothered with the hassle, but the job counsellor insisted that I have leadership qualities.

But finally I recognized that God was talking to me when something rose up within my spirit and I knew that I had to jump on the job counsellor's suggestions right away; it related to the timing to get a government grant. God miraculously opened the doors for me to take a year of Business Management at a community college. We have to tune ourselves in to hear God, and recognize that He speaks to us even through unbelievers.

¹² Samuel knew the rituals, but he didn't yet have the relationship with his Creator. It was pretty exciting that, on this night, he actually heard God speak to him, and this is where his relationship with the Lord began.

¹³ The Spirit of the Lord is brooding that night in the Tabernacle. Eli's eyesight is fading, and his little protégé keeps telling him that he hears him calling to him, though he hasn't called. God wants to speak to the child. He doesn't want to speak to Eli directly, though the message is going to be directed to him. Not only has Eli gone blind, but he has also gone deaf to the Lord because of his disobedience.

Eli could only lay on his bed and wonder what the Lord is going to say to the child? Perhaps tell Samuel of his calling? Or something about Israel as a nation? Or a personal word for someone else? In any case, Eli knows that he is being bypassed. The word is coming to a child, instead of to the high priest.

¹⁴ At this point, Samuel only knew that it is our duty to serve the Lord, because He is almighty; His worthiness may have been only a theoretical idea to him. It was an idea that he accepted, but he would eventually learn that God really is worthy, for He is holy and absolutely good, and He CAN NOT do evil. Loving God with all one's heart makes one a slave to Him, and then it is not arduous to serve Him, but rather a joy and always counted as a privilege.

¹⁵ I see this scene as a mother sees it; a cute, little boy laying in his bed, waiting to hear the Lord speak, some fear mixed in with the excitement. Then the voice speaks, and he replies in his piping sweet child's voice that he is the Lord's slave to listen and do as He commands. But God sees inside the heart, and what he has been working into Samuel's heart now begins to spring up like a tender shoot. The child is ready to hear Him, and to begin a ministry of being a powerful prophet to Israel. Even at this very young age, God knows that Samuel can take the difficult word that He requires him to deliver. It will be hard for Samuel, but he will obey and give the word, and he will learn from the example that God is making of Eli to not mess around, but to be firm in standing for righteousness.

11 ¶ And the LORD said unto Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of each one that hears it shall tingle.¹⁶

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all the things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end.¹⁷

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knows of¹⁸ (because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them).¹⁹

14 And therefore, I have sworn unto the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be reconciled, not with sacrifices nor with presents for ever.²⁰

15 And Samuel lay until the morning²¹ and opened the doors of the house of the LORD.²² And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.²³

16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son.²⁴ And he answered, Here am I.

¹⁶ Israel has seen the corruption of the priests. Now they will see the holiness of the Lord.

¹⁷ This isn't going to take long. Judgment will be executed swiftly and so sharply on Eli's wicked sons that, though it will take years to see the misery fulfilled upon the rest of Eli's descendants, everyone will know that God will make an end of all of them.

¹⁸ God didn't hold Eli responsible for the things that he didn't know his sons were doing, but he sure held him responsible for what he heard about. This comment implies that those men were doing more than stealing from the sacrifices and messing around with the women who served at the entrance of the Tabernacle. The people who told Eli what his sons were doing told him only what they knew about.

¹⁹ If Eli had disciplined his sons at the start of their waywardness by demoting them, rather than trying to keep the best jobs for his own family, they might have been stopped in their tracks and behaved themselves better, even if it was only for the sake of the prestige of having the highest positions, rather than a true love for God. What a lesson this story is for people in ministry who have their children and brothers and sisters, etc., involved in helping them, besides it being a lesson about how God expects us to parent our children.

²⁰ The judgment was set. Those men had gone too far, and Eli had let them go too far. God's patience is long, but it is not infinite. Eli had loved himself better than he loved his sons. He avoided having to deal with their anger over being denied what they wanted, and in so doing, his sons lost their souls. What a grief! To know that you aren't ever going to see your children in Heaven.

On top of that, your grandchildren and greatgrandchildren are not going to thrive, and they will possibly become bitter and lose their souls, too. The best that can be hoped for in that situation is that the descendants will decide to trust God and serve Him anyway, in spite of poverty and sickness, and their souls will be saved, even if their lives were a misery.

²¹ Samuel sure didn't sleep after that. He must have had such a heavy heart, pondering what the Lord had said. He loved Eli and knew that he would be very troubled to hear this word. He must have pondered the finality of it, and it probably shook him down to the depths of his belly.

²² Samuel was probably glad to finally be able to get up and let the bright sunshine dispel the gloom of the Tabernacle, but it could not dispel the gloom in his heart.

²³ Good people don't take delight in delivering bad news.

²⁴ These words make me cry. Eli has been awake all night, too. His eyesight has faded and more dread crept over him when he realized that God was speaking to Samuel, instead of directly to him. He was being passed over in his

17 And he said, What is the word that the LORD has spoken unto thee? I pray thee do not hide it from me. God do so to thee and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the word that he spake unto thee.²⁵

18 And Samuel declared all of it to him without hiding any thing. Then he said, It is the LORD; let him do what seems good unto him.²⁶

19 ¶ And Samuel grew,²⁷ and the LORD was with him²⁸ and did not let any of his words fall to the ground.²⁹

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the LORD.³⁰

21 Thus the LORD appeared again in Shiloh,³¹ for the LORD manifested himself to Samuel in Shiloh with the word of the LORD.

office as a priest. As the night wore on, without Samuel coming to tell him what God said, Eli probably realized that the word was about him, and it was not good, but he had to know specifically what it was. He may as well get it over with.

He called to Samuel when he heard him moving around. He called him, "my son," reminding him that he loved him, that he had been nurturing him, that he had hopes and dreams for him, and that he was his elder whom he should obey, to appeal to Samuel to deal truly with him and tell him all that had been said.

²⁵ A curse was added to the appeal to tell him the whole truth, so that Samuel's affection for the old man would not hinder him from doing as he was told. When God gives us a message, we are to deliver the whole message, just as it was told to us. We are not to water it down, or to add to it.

²⁶ In spite of his faults, Eli had this about him: he still recognized that God is totally good, even if He does things, or permits things, that are contrary to what we would like. Eli had weaknesses, but he still had some faith. He submitted to the word of the Lord, and, in so doing, he probably opened the way for at least some of his descendants to be strong in the Lord, in the midst of their trouble and sorrow.

²⁷ Amazingly, though time was passing, Eli STILL DID NOT REMOVE HIS SONS FROM BEING PRIESTS! Perhaps he thought, "Oh well, doing that won't change what's going to happen. The judgment has been set." Yes, but if what his sons were doing vexed the Lord so bad that He pronounced this judgment on them, then Eli should have put a stop to them, just because it was the right thing to do.

²⁸ As He was with Joseph, God was with Samuel. Samuel moved out in faith to obey God, and God moved with him to back him up.

²⁹ The prophetic flow had been released in Samuel, and people noticed that everything this kid said that was going to happen came true.

³⁰ God gave Israel hope, in spite of the wickedness of Hophi and Phinehas, and the spinelessness of Eli. Israel not only could see that Samuel heard from God, but that he obeyed God. He was not like Samson, who had the anointing, but also had a lot of junk in his life. He walked in great integrity.

³¹ Restoration is beginning to come to Israel, even in the midst of its troubles. God has not abandoned His people. He prevented a woman who loved Him from conceiving a child, so that the woman would give her firstborn son to Him (in this way, Samuel is a figure of the Messiah), and He trained that child to hear His voice and obey Him. More trouble is coming, but the Lord will see Israel through it; His instrument is ready. Samuel will help to hold them steady.