

# 1 Samuel 3 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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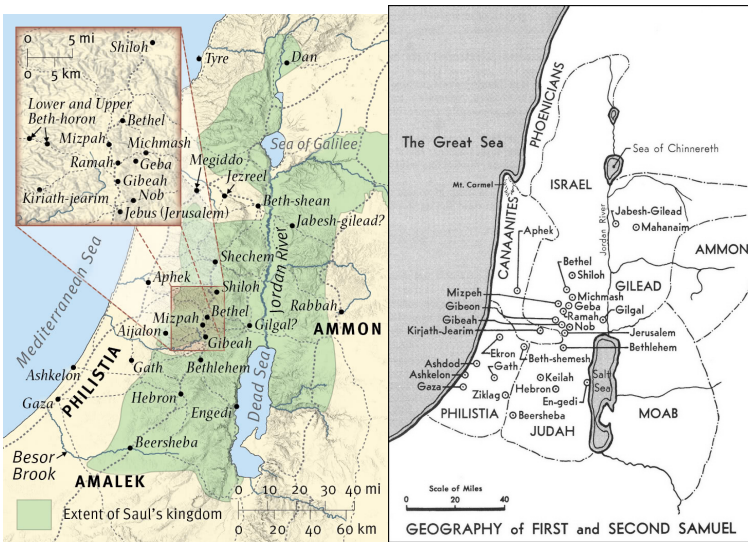
**CLICK VERSE**  
To go directly to that verse

- [1 Samuel 3:1](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:2](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:3](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:4](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:5](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:6](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:7](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:8](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:9](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:10](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:11](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:12](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:13](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:14](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:15](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:16](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:17](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:18](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:19](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:20](#)
- [1 Samuel 3:21](#)

Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission  
1 Samuel Chart, from Charles Swindoll

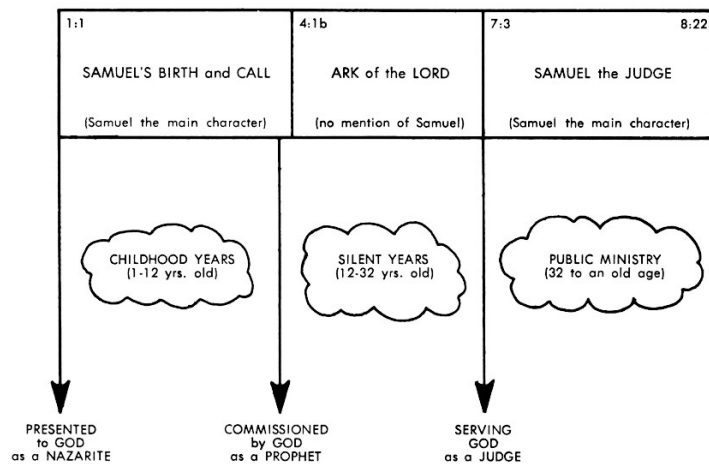
TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1Chr 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

**Legend:** B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.



Map on Left [ESV Global Study Bible](#), on right [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#)  
 CLICK TO ENLARGE

### The Man Samuel in 1 Samuel 1-8



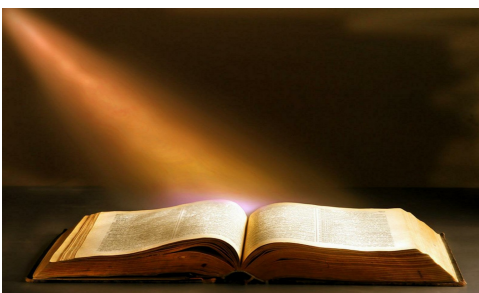
**1 Samuel 3:1** Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent.

- Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli 1Sa 3:15 2:11,18
- And word from the LORD was rare in those days 1Sa 3:21 Ps 74:9 Isa 13:12 Am 8:11,12
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

2 Chronicles 15:3 "For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law.

Amos 8:11 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.



"20/20 VISION"

## GOD'S PRECIOUS WORD RARE

**Now the boy ([na'ar](#)) Samuel was ministering ([sharath](#);Lxx = [leitourgeo](#)) to the LORD before Eli** - Samuel has previously been described as ministering to the LORD, even as a young boy (1Sa 2:11,18) and once again he is given this wonderful description "ministering to the LORD" (**THOUGHT** - Would it true of each of us dear reader that we could be described as continually ministering to the LORD! Let it be so LORD. Amen!). Although the source is extra-Biblical, the Jewish historian Josephus described Samuel writing that even as a young child at age 12 y.o., was "placed in the temple, and "ministered to the Lord before Eli." Of course, we cannot know the exact age of Samuel because the Bible does not state his age.

Short Summary of Samuel - It was while ministering to the LORD in the Temple that he received his first prophetic call (1Sa 3:1-18). Samuel next appears briefly in 1Sa 4:1 probably some twenty years later, but then not again Samuel until chapter 7 (1Sa 7:3-4), suddenly appearing among the people and warning them regarding the idols in their hearts (THAT'S WHERE I IDOLS LIVE SPIRITUALLY AND EXERT THEIR NEFARIOUS INFLUENCE) (1Sa 7:3, 4). Then followed Samuel's military achievement in 1Sa 7:5-12, his last "military achievement" being this hacking of King Agag (1Sa 15:33).

**Samuel** was a [sharath](#) (Lxx = [leitourgeo](#) = describes the performance of religious duties), a title that speaks of subservience (willingness to obey others unquestioningly) and of submission to authority. Joshua was called the "**sharath**" of Moses and spent 40 years under Moses' leadership learning how to obey as a servant, before he could lead as a general. The pattern is first a servant, and then a servant-leader. While Joshua was called a **sharath** of Moses, Samuel is three times referred to as a **sharath** to the LORD!

[David Guzik](#) adds Samuel was ministering "just as Aaron and his sons did at their consecration as priests (Exodus 29:1+) and just like Paul and Barnabas did before they were sent out as missionaries (Acts 13:1-2+)."

**THOUGHT** - When you were born again you too entered into a lifelong (and even eternal) ministry to the Lord. From that moment you were no longer your own, for Jesus has purchased you with His blood (Rev 5:9+, 1Cor 6:19+, Titus 2:14+), and the goal of your life to glorify God in your body (1Cor 6:20; cf question 1 in Westminster Confession). How are you doing priest \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in your name). 1 Peter 2:9+ affirms that now "you are A CHOSEN RACE, A **royal PRIESTHOOD**, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (cf Col 1:13+, Acts 26:18+) As an aside, a clerical outfit does not a priest make!

**And Word** (Lxx = [rhema](#) = spoken word) **from the LORD was rare**([yaqar](#)) **in those days, visions** ([chazown/chazon](#)) **were infrequent** (literally "were not breaking forth" Lxx = Greek word for "not" [ouk] preceding the verb [diastello](#) = "a vision continually giving commands or instruction") - **Word** and **visions** are parallel. **Rare** ([yaqar](#)) is translated precious in 2/3's of the OT uses (35 uses total) which is certainly what the Word of the LORD is (OR SHOULD BE) to us - **PRECIOUS!** The Septuagint translates **rare** with [timios](#) which means valuable, precious, costly, of great worth or value, held in honor, respected. Why was revelation from God **rare**? Clearly this was a form of judgment on the nation. For one thing the nation of Israel was in the final days of the dark time of the Judges characterized by repeated cycles of apostasy and idolatry (God is jealous and will not tolerate other "gods!" Ex 34:14+). Secondly, the current priestly leadership (using that term very loosely) was polluted by the sins of the worthless sons of Eli who functioned as Israel's priests. And what was one function of the priests? To teach the Word of God (Dt 24:8+, cf 2Ki 12:2, Mic 3:11), but they did not even know the God of the Word (1Sa 2:12+)! Yahweh clearly stated that "the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts." (Mal 2:7+) **Note** the first use of **visions** ([chazown/chazon](#)) in Scripture is found here in 1Sa 3:1. Could this have anything to do with the fact that 1 Samuel historically immediately follows the 300 year period described in the book of Judges (Jdg 21:25+)?

**THOUGHT** - When God's Word is "rare" and "visions" are infrequent, a society (AND AN INDIVIDUAL) is in grave danger as indicated by Proverbs 29:18+ which says "Where there is no **vision** (same word as in 1Sa 3:1 - [chazown/chazon](#))(PROPHETIC WORD FROM GOD), the people are unrestrained ("run wild"; Hebrew = [para](#)' means to let go, to let loose literally used of hair that was "loose" or unkempt), But happy (blessed) is he who keeps the law." This "truism" proved true in Judges which ends on a low note as expressed by the "theme verse" - "In those days there was no king in Israel; **everyone did what was right in his own eyes**" (Jdg 21:25+) Evil leaders cause a drought of revelation (i.e., Ezek. 7:26; Micah 3:6). America 2022, are you listening? Dear teacher or preacher of the Word of God, please heed Paul's dying words "**preach**" (NOTE 5 "STACCATO-LIKE" [arist imperatives](#) [LIKE THE NIKE COMMERCIAL = '**JUST DO IT!**'] calling for continual dependence on the filling/enabling of [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the Word (NOT OTHER MEN'S WORDS/SERMONS, NOT FUNNY STORIES, NOT "DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS," ETC, BUT THE PURE MILK

OF THE WORD, BECAUSE SAINTS WILL GROW IN RESPECT TO SALVATION NO OTHER WAY! - 1Pe 2:2+); **be ready** in season and out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort**, with great patience and instruction." (2Ti 4:2+, and 2Ti 4:3-4+ explains why this is ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL!)

**Wiersbe** - God wasn't speaking to His people very often. The spiritual leaders were corrupt, and God's people weren't obeying His law anyway, so why should God say anything new to them? It was a tragic day in the nation of Israel when the living God no longer sent His people signs and prophetic messages (Ps. 74:9; Ezek. 7:26; Amos 8:11-12; Micah 3:6). The silence of God was the judgment of God. But God was about to change the situation and speak His precious Word to a young boy who would listen and obey. (From [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Wiersbe** outlines this chapter as follows - An attentive ear (1 Sam. 3:1-9) An obedient will (1 Sam. 3:10-14). A humble heart (1 Sam. 3:15-18). A godly walk (1 Sam. 3:19-21) (From [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**David Guzik** - The only word of the Lord we read of in the first two chapters of 1 Samuel is the word of judgment brought by the man of God against Eli. God didn't speak often, and when He did, it was a word of judgment. The word of the Lord rare in those days because of the hardness of heart among the people of Israel and the corruption of the priesthood. God will speak, and guide, when His people seek Him, and when His ministers seek to serve Him diligently.

**THOUGHT:** Guzik's comment reminds me of Pr 8:17 where God says "I love those who love me; and **those who diligently seek me will find me.**" Could it be said of you/me "I love You LORD and I am diligently seeking you every day?" Let the words of this following spiritual song spur you on to "Seek the LORD and His strength. Seek His face continually." - 1Chr 16:11. Think of young Samuel as you listen to the words of this song, for he was laying near the LORD in the Temple and he cried out "Speak for Your servant is listening." (Hint you might open the song in one window so you can read the Scriptures in another window as you seek His face).

## **I WILL SEEK YOU**

([play song](#))

Hide me in the place where Your glory dwells, (Ps 17:8, 27:5)

Speak to me as I wait. (1Sa 3:10)

All that I want is Your presence Lord. (Ps 73:25)

To meet with you face to face. (Ex 33:11, Jdg 22:6, 1Jn 3:2)

Just one glimpse of Your glory (Ex 33:18)

Just one, and I know I'll be undone (Isa 6:1-4,5, Rev 1:17)

To the ends of the earth. (Ps 22:27, 2:8)

From the depths of my heart, (Ps 27:8)

I will seek You, I will seek You. (Ps 63:1, 9:10, 1Chr 16:11)

Like a child I will run (1Sa 3:5, Ps 119:32)

To wherever You are (Ps 139:7)

And You'll catch me in Your arms. (Isa 40:11, Ps 89:13, 21)

Falling to my knees here on holy ground (Lk 5:8, Josh 5:14,15, Ex 3:4,5)

In awe of Your love for me. (Zeph 3:17)

My life is transformed by Your presence Lord (2Co 3:18)

You've opened my eyes to see (Ps 119:18, Lk 24:31, 45)

One thing I ask, One thing I need (Ps 27:4, Lk 10:42, Php 3:13)

To be in Your presence (Ps 16:11, 41:12, 140:13)

To lay at Your feet (1Sa 3:2, Lk 7:37, 38, 8:41, 10:39, 17:16)

"Seek the LORD and His strength. Seek His face continually."

- 1Chr 16:11.

**Utley** points out that "YHWH manifested Himself to humans in several ways. (1) physical encounters (i.e., the Angel of the Lord, Exodus 3), (2) dreams (i.e., Gen. 15:12; 28:12; 31:10,11,24; 37:5,9) and (3) visions (i.e., Ezekiel, Daniel)"

**THOUGHT** - Heb 1:1-2+ says "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets **in many portions and in many ways**, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things, through Whom also He made the world." This begs the question are you in the Word of Christ daily, obeying Paul's command to "Let the word of Christ richly dwell **WITHIN** you" (Col 3:16+)? As Paul's command implies,

is the Word truly **IN** you (planted firmly in your heart - are you Memorizing it, Meditating on it)? If not, could this be the explanation of why your fallen flesh seems to occasionally "run wild?" Not trying to meddle, but just asking, as I have to look in the mirror every morning to answer that same question!

**Walter Kaiser** - Israel endured times when the prophetic word was silent. When Samuel was a young boy, "in those days the word of the LORD was rare" (1 Sam 3:1). For all the times Israel rejected the word, God sent a famine on the earth; not a famine of food and water, but an even more damaging famine: a famine of the word of God (Amos 8:12; see also 2 Chron 15:3; Ps 74:9).

**Spurgeon** - Samuel was but a child, yet he was a faithful servant of God up to the light he had received. The grown-up sons of Eli were rebelling against God, but "the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord." It is a great aggravation of sin for ungodly men to persist in it when even little children rebuke them by their careful walk and conversation; it made the sin of Eli's sons all the worse. Because "the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli"...God spoke with very few, and his speech to them was private: "There was no open vision." What was spoken was very rich and rare, but there was little of it. The Lord, in anger at the sin of Eli's sons, took away the spirit of prophecy from the land.

#### Related Resource:

- [What does it mean that there will be a famine of hearing the words of the Lord \(Amos 8:11\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How do I hear from God? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Boy** (05288)(**na'ar** means boy (Ge 19:4), infant (Ex 2:6, 2Sa 12:16), lad, servant (Zebah in 2Sa 16:1), youth, young man, mature young man (Absalom - 2Sa 14:21, 18:5). The basic meaning of na'ar is "youth," over against an older man. At times it may signify a very young child (Isa 7:16). It can be one old enough to serve in battle (Ge 14:24, 1Sa 21:2, 30:13, 17). A helper carrying armor (1Sa 14:1). Young male servant (Ge 18:7, 22:3). In Esther 2:2 it referred to attendant of the king. A young man, a lad, a young boy was not capable of ruling a land (Eccl. 10:16). Na'ar figuratively describes Israel in its formative early years (Hos. 11:1). In 1Sa 3:1 the Septuagint translates with paidarion (diminutive of pais) which refers to a little boy, a young slave, a child, but even a youth who is no longer a child (Ge 37:30)

**Vine** says "**Na'ar** occurs 235 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. Its use is predominant in the Pentateuch and in the historical books."...We must keep in mind the opposition of youth and old age, so that we can better understand that Jeremiah, while claiming to be only a "youth," was not necessarily a youngster. In truth, he argued that he did not have the experience of the older men, when he said: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6). Absalom was considered a na'ar, even though he was old enough to lead the troops in rebellion against David (1Sa 14:1) The na'ar ("servant") addressed his employer as "master" (Jdg 19:11)...The Septuagint gives the following translation(s): **paidarion** ("little boy; boy; child; young slave"); **neos** ("novice"); **neaniskos** ("youth; young man; servant"); **paidion** ("infant; child"); **pais** ("child"); and **neanias** ("youth; young man"). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Gilbrant** - A masculine noun, na'ar occurs about 240 times in the OT, with the heaviest concentration in Samuel, Kings and Genesis. No consensus exists as to its etymology. Cognates exist in Egyptian and Ugaritic. In general, the noun can refer to a "young man" or "child," with a range of age all the way from an infant to a youth of marriageable age. It also denotes a "servant."

**Na'ar** speaks of a baby, whether one about to be born (Jdg. 13:5, 7f, 12); recently born (1 Sam. 4:21; Exo. 2:6); not weaned (1 Sam. 1:22); or just weaned (1 Sam. 1:24f, 27). The word is also used of Ishmael (Gen. 21:12), Isaac (Gen. 22:5, 12), Joseph (Gen. 37:2) and Benjamin (Gen. 43:8; 44:22) as young men. In fact, Joseph is called a na'ar at age seventeen (Gen. 37:2) and at thirty (Gen. 41:12, 46). The sixteen-year-old Josiah is also referred to by na'ar (2 Chr. 34:3). At times, **na'ar** suggests the concept of immaturity or inexperience often associated with youth. Solomon is "young and tender" according to 1 Chr. 22:5 and 29:1 (see also 2 Chr. 13:7; 34:3; Prov. 7:7). Gideon refuses to draw his sword in Jdg. 8:20 "because he was still a youth." David's inexperience as a youth is likewise noted as he contemplated fighting Goliath (1 Sam. 17:33, 42). Conversely, **na'ar** may also suggest the notion of a vigorous, mature strength possessed by a young man. **David's young men** (1Sa 25:9, 12, 14) and Absalom, his son (2 Sam. 18:5, 12), were battle-tested warriors; yet this noun denotes them and others like them. Isaiah's point in Isa. 40:30 is that even youths, that is, those in their prime, grow weary and tired. Shechem, as he made preparations for marriage, was a youth (Ge. 34:19).

The inclusive nature of this noun referring to a wide spectrum of young men is evident in the narrative describing Samuel as he grew from an infant to a mature attendant of Eli (1 Sam. 1:22, 24f, 27; 2:11, 18, 21, 26; 3:1, 8). Na'ar appears with zāqfin (HED #2292), "old," in the phrase "young to old" (Gen. 19:4; Josh. 6:21), and in "young and old" (Exo. 10:9; Isa. 20:4; Lam. 2:21), indicating that these two terms are exclusive of each other. Whoever na'ar denotes cannot be considered old.

Na'ar can also denote a servant (Gen. 18:7; 22:3, 5, 19; Num. 22:22; Jdg. 7:10f; 1 Sam. 9:3; 2 Ki. 4:12, 25) or, in a more general sense, a follower or attendant (Gen. 14:24; 2 Sam. 2:14).

Prominent synonyms of na'ar are yeledh (HED #3315) and bāchūr (HED #1005). Like na'ar, yeledh refers to boys from newborns to teens to mature young men. Its overlapping meaning with na'ar appears in Gen. 21 where both words describe Ishmael: na'ar in vv. 12, 17f (used by God and the angel) and yeledh in vv. 8, 14 and 16. Bāchūr is often used to refer to chosen or choice young men (Lam. 1:18f; 2:21f).

This semantic picture of na'ar as a broad, inclusive term proves valuable in understanding several key texts in the OT. For example, the forty-two lads who mocked Elisha only to meet the bears were not small children pulling an innocent prank (2 Ki. 2:23f). The hesitancy of Solomon (1 Ki. 3:7) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6) stemming from their youth grew out of their realization of their own inexperience. Important proverbial sayings involving na'ar must also be understood in light of its wide range of meaning (see Prov. 20:11; 22:6, 15; 23:13). Israel's youth prompted the Lord's fatherly instruction and guidance (Hos. 11:1). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Na'ar - 220v - attendants(1), boy(19), boy's(1), boys(1), child(12), children(4), lad(36), lad's(2), lads(3), servant(34), servant's(1), servants(23), young(12), young man(33), young men(38), young people(1), youth(14), youths(2).** Gen. 14:24; Gen. 18:7; Gen. 19:4; Gen. 21:12; Gen. 21:17; Gen. 21:18; Gen. 21:19; Gen. 21:20; Gen. 22:3; Gen. 22:5; Gen. 22:12; Gen. 22:19; Gen. 25:27; Gen. 34:19; Gen. 37:2; Gen. 41:12; Gen. 43:8; Gen. 44:22; Gen. 44:30; Gen. 44:31; Gen. 44:32; Gen. 44:33; Gen. 44:34; Gen. 48:16; Exod. 2:6; Exod. 10:9; Exod. 24:5; Exod. 33:11; Num. 11:27; Num. 22:22; Deut. 28:50; Jos. 6:21; Jos. 6:23; Jdg. 7:10; Jdg. 7:11; Jdg. 8:14; Jdg. 8:20; Jdg. 9:54; Jdg. 13:5; Jdg. 13:7; Jdg. 13:8; Jdg. 13:12; Jdg. 13:24; Jdg. 16:26; Jdg. 17:7; Jdg. 17:11; Jdg. 17:12; Jdg. 18:3; Jdg. 18:15; Jdg. 19:3; Jdg. 19:9; Jdg. 19:11; Jdg. 19:13; Jdg. 19:19; Ruth 2:5; Ruth 2:6; Ruth 2:9; Ruth 2:15; Ruth 2:21; 1 Sam. 1:22; 1 Sam. 1:24; 1 Sam. 1:25; 1 Sam. 1:27; 1 Sam. 2:11; 1 Sam. 2:13; 1 Sam. 2:15; 1 Sam. 2:17; 1 Sam. 2:18; 1 Sam. 2:21; 1 Sam. 2:26; 1 Sam. 3:1; 1 Sam. 3:8; 1 Sam. 4:21; 1 Sam. 9:3; 1 Sam. 9:5; 1 Sam. 9:7; 1 Sam. 9:8; 1 Sam. 9:10; 1 Sam. 9:22; 1 Sam. 9:27; 1 Sam. 10:14; 1 Sam. 14:1; 1 Sam. 14:6; 1 Sam. 16:11; 1 Sam. 16:18; 1 Sam. 17:42; 1 Sam. 17:55; 1 Sam. 17:58; 1 Sam. 20:21; 1 Sam. 20:35; 1 Sam. 20:36; 1 Sam. 20:37; 1 Sam. 20:38; 1 Sam. 20:39; 1 Sam. 20:40; 1 Sam. 20:41; 1 Sam. 21:2; 1 Sam. 21:4; 1 Sam. 21:5; 1 Sam. 25:5; 1 Sam. 25:8; 1 Sam. 25:9; 1 Sam. 25:12; 1 Sam. 25:14; 1 Sam. 25:19; 1 Sam. 25:25; 1 Sam. 25:27; 1 Sam. 26:22; 1 Sam. 30:13; 1 Sam. 30:17; 2 Sam. 1:5; 2 Sam. 1:6; 2 Sam. 1:13; 2 Sam. 1:15; 2 Sam. 2:14; 2 Sam. 2:21; 2 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 9:9; 2 Sam. 12:16; 2 Sam. 13:17; 2 Sam. 13:28; 2 Sam. 13:29; 2 Sam. 13:32; 2 Sam. 13:34; 2 Sam. 14:21; 2 Sam. 16:1; 2 Sam. 16:2; 2 Sam. 17:18; 2 Sam. 18:5; 2 Sam. 18:12; 2 Sam. 18:15; 2 Sam. 18:29; 2 Sam. 18:32; 2 Sam. 19:17; 2 Sam. 20:11; 1 Ki. 3:7; 1 Ki. 11:17; 1 Ki. 11:28; 1 Ki. 14:3; 1 Ki. 14:17; 1 Ki. 18:43; 1 Ki. 19:3; 1 Ki. 20:14; 1 Ki. 20:15; 1 Ki. 20:17; 1 Ki. 20:19; 2 Ki. 2:23; 2 Ki. 4:12; 2 Ki. 4:19; 2 Ki. 4:22; 2 Ki. 4:24; 2 Ki. 4:25; 2 Ki. 4:29; 2 Ki. 4:30; 2 Ki. 4:31; 2 Ki. 4:32; 2 Ki. 4:35; 2 Ki. 4:38; 2 Ki. 5:14; 2 Ki. 5:20; 2 Ki. 5:22; 2 Ki. 5:23; 2 Ki. 6:15; 2 Ki. 6:17; 2 Ki. 8:4; 2 Ki. 9:4; 2 Ki. 19:6; 1 Chr. 12:28; 1 Chr. 22:5; 1 Chr. 29:1; 2 Chr. 13:7; 2 Chr. 34:3; Neh. 4:16; Neh. 4:22; Neh. 4:23; Neh. 5:10; Neh. 5:15; Neh. 5:16; Neh. 6:5; Neh. 13:19; Est. 2:2; Est. 3:13; Est. 6:3; Est. 6:5; Job 1:15; Job 1:16; Job 1:17; Job 1:19; Job 24:5; Job 29:5; Job 29:8; Ps. 37:25; Ps. 119:9; Ps. 148:12; Prov. 1:4; Prov. 7:7; Prov. 20:11; Prov. 22:6; Prov. 22:15; Prov. 23:13; Prov. 29:15; Eccl. 10:16; Isa. 3:4; Isa. 3:5; Isa. 7:16; Isa. 8:4; Isa. 10:19; Isa. 11:6; Isa. 13:18; Isa. 20:4; Isa. 37:6; Isa. 40:30; Isa. 65:20; Jer. 1:6; Jer. 1:7; Jer. 51:22; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 5:13; Hos. 11:1; Zech. 2:4

**Ministering (08334) sharath** basically means to minister to or wait on another, human or divine. Those who so minister are usually human beings, but may include the heavenly host (Ps 103:21) or even the nonhuman (pS 104:4). (1) personal service rendered to important person, usually ruler - Joseph to imprisoned officials (Gen 39:4; 40:4); Joshua to Moses (Ex 24:13; Josh 1:1); Elisha to Elijah and the youth to Elisha (1Ki 19:21; 2Ki 4:43; 6:15); the Levites to Aaron (Num 3:6; 13:2) and the congregation of Israel (16:9) and (2) ministry of worship of those in special relationship to God, eg priests (2/3's of uses are in this category). In royal contexts, sharath has reference to personal attendants (2 Sa 13:17-18; 1 Kgs 1:4; 10:5; 2Chr 22:8; Xerxes in Esther 1:10; 2:2; 6:3; cf. Ps 101:6). Occasionally, the word is used of political or military officials (1 Chron 27:1; 28:1; 2 Chron 17:19; cf. Prov 29:12). The verb, therefore, has to do with serving a superior by one of lower rank. The service is continuous but limited in duration. It is the service of free people, not slaves. The first two uses describe Joseph as servant, first to Potiphar (Ge 39:4) and then over other prisoners (including the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt - Ge 40:4).

**Rare (03368) yaqar** (from verb **yaqar** = to be precious, prized or appraised) is an adjective meaning precious, rare, splendid, weighty, valuable. Describes God's Word in 1Sa 3:1, God's lovingkindness in Ps 36:7, God's wisdom in 3:15. Note first use in 1Sa 3:1 and KJV says "the word of the LORD was **precious**." Describes precious and costly stones (2Sa 12:30; 1Ki. 10:2, 10, 11), the valuable foundation stones (1 Ki. 5:17), expensive building stones or materials (1Ki. 7:9-11). IN Jer 15:19 yaqar describes what is valuable, noble, moral, ethical, or worthy compared to what is worthless.

**Gilbrant** - It is exclusively coupled with stones (gemstones and foundation stones) and with life, instructing us regarding its

precious value. The Temple was financed with precious stones (1 Chr. 29:2) and had precious stones laid in it (2 Chr. 3:6). The Queen of Sheba gave King Solomon gifts, including precious stones (2 Chr. 9:1, 9f). By extension, the adjective is used to describe a variety of valuable objects, including speech (Jer. 15:19) and the moon (Job 31:26). In 2 Sam. 12:30, yāqār emphasizes value over weight or volume: "And he took the crown from off their king's head. Its weight was a talent of gold, with a precious stone in it. And [he] set it on David's head." In the same way, the solid foundation stone laid by Yahweh in Zion is called a precious cornerstone (Isa. 28:16). The cornerstone is the most valued and important, for it rests on bedrock. Since most every edifice in Jerusalem is built on steep hills, only one corner, side or portion rests on bedrock. Literally, the cornerstone is the most stable of the entire structure. One recently discovered foundation stone of the Jerusalem Temple complex weighs an estimated 600 tons, and beside it is another one weighing over 400 tons. If these two stones were to shift, the entire complex would collapse. To hew out, square and transport such stones was not cheap. Certain stones in Solomon's Temple were known as "great stones, costly stones" (1 Ki. 5:17). Peter applies this passage and concept to Christ as the most precious in the sight of God (1 Pet. 2:4-8) as does Paul (Eph. 2:20f), who implies that our entire lives are built on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ himself. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Yaqar** - costly(6), glory(1), luminaries(1), noble(1), precious(23), rare(1), splendor(1), weightier(1). 1 Sam. 3:1; 2 Sam. 12:30; 1 Ki. 5:17; 1 Ki. 7:9; 1 Ki. 7:10; 1 Ki. 7:11; 1 Ki. 10:2; 1 Ki. 10:10; 1 Ki. 10:11; 1 Chr. 20:2; 1 Chr. 29:2; 2 Chr. 3:6; 2 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr. 9:9; 2 Chr. 9:10; 2 Chr. 32:27; Job 28:16; Job 31:26; Ps. 36:7; Ps. 37:20; Ps. 45:9; Ps. 116:15; Prov. 1:13; Prov. 3:15; Prov. 6:26; Prov. 12:27; Prov. 24:4; Eccl. 10:1; Isa. 28:16; Jer. 15:19; Lam. 4:2; Ezek. 27:22; Ezek. 28:13; Dan. 11:38; Zech. 14:6

**Vision** (02377) ([chazown/chazon](#)) describes a divine revelation by means of an oracle, a vision or a word from God (as to His prophets). The meaning is not so much the means (vision, oracle) but the end achieved (the message). This word speaks of God's direct revelation to people via His prophets, His "mouth pieces" as it were. Notice that in this passage "vision" is paralleled with the **law**, which further supports that the writer intends "vision" to mean a divine word or a word from God and, not someone's personal vision or dream.

**Chazon** - 35x in 34v - vision(31), visions(4) - 1 Sa 3:1; 1 Chr. 17:15; 2 Chr. 32:32; Ps. 89:19; Prov. 29:18; Isa. 1:1; Isa. 29:7; Jer. 14:14; Jer. 23:16; Lam. 2:9; Ezek. 7:13; Ezek. 7:26; Ezek. 12:22; Ezek. 12:23; Ezek. 12:24; Ezek. 12:27; Ezek. 13:16; Dan. 1:17; Dan. 8:1; Dan. 8:2; Dan. 8:13; Dan. 8:15; Dan. 8:17; Dan. 8:26; Dan. 9:21; Dan. 9:24; Dan. 10:14; Dan. 11:14; Hos. 12:10; Obad. 1:1; Mic. 3:6; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 2:2; Hab. 2:3

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### James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE CALL OF SAMUEL 1 Samuel 3

“Often through my heart is pealing  
Many another voice than Thine;  
Many an unwilling echo stealing  
From the walls of this Thy shrine.  
Let Thy longed-for accents fall:  
MASTER, speak, and silence all.”

—F. R. HAVERGAL.

“The Word of the Lord was precious (rare) in those days; there was no open vision.” Why? The spiritual heavens were shut up, because of the unbelief and unrighteousness of God’s professing people (chap. 2:12–17). In these degenerate days God takes the child Samuel and sets him in the midst, that out of the mouth of this babe He might ordain strength (Psa. 8:2). God hath chosen the weak things to confound the mighty (1 Cor. 1:27). Samuel was “lent unto the Lord” (chap. 1:28). Now the Lord takes the loan of him that He might through him speak to all Israel. We may learn here—

#### I. That the Call of God may Come very Early in Life.

Samuel must have been quite a child when the Lord spoke to him, perhaps about six years of age. Is it not wonderful that the Almighty, the “Ancient of Days,” can make His will known to a child? “They that seek Me early shall find Me” (Prov. 8:17). “The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity” dwells with the humble spirit (Isa. 57:15).

**II. That the Call of God may come, although we may have had no Personal Experience of God.** “Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord” (v. 7). He believed in Him, but as yet he had had no personal dealings with Him. The existence of God was known to him, but the Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed unto him. He earnestly worshipped the Lord, according to the traditional faith (chap. 1:28), but as yet he had received no definite message from Him. What a difference it makes in one’s religious life when His Word has been heard, and His will concerning us as individuals has been clearly revealed. This is eternal life, to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Those who honestly seek like Samuel shall surely find.

### **III. That the Call of God Comes at an Opportune Time.** “Ere the lamp of God went out” (1Sa 3:3).

There is something melancholy in the very idea of the lamp of God going out. Had He not expressly commanded that the light of the holy lamp-stand was to burn continually (Lev. 24:2). Does it not reveal the backslidden condition of the priesthood, that the lamp of God was allowed to go out? It is suggestive of the watchful grace of God that He spoke to Samuel ere the sacred light had died away into midnight darkness. How fares it with the lamp of God in our own hearts? Is our testimony dying down for the lack of fresh oil?

### **IV. That the Call of God may Come in a very Natural Way.** “The Lord called Samuel, and he ran unto Eli” (1Sa 3:4, 5).

The voice was so humanlike that he thought it was the voice of Eli. Let us take care that those calls or rebukes that come to us in familiar forms may not be the very voice of God to our own souls. The Lord had a purpose in speaking to Samuel as He did. He wished Eli, the priest, to know at the lips of the child that the Lord had spoken. Samuel’s instantaneous obedience to the call reveals what manner of spirit he was of.

### **V. That the Call of God Demands an Answer to God** “Speak, for Thy servant heareth” (1Sa 3:10).

Eli could give Samuel no answer to the call of God. Those called of Him must respond to Him for themselves. It is so in the matter of salvation. Every one who has gone astray from God must turn back to Him, and with a willing ear hear what God the Lord will speak. It is so in the matter of consecration and service. No man can do this for us. We must yield ourselves unto God (Rom. 6:13). It is with Him we have to do. The mighty God, the Lord hath spoken. Hear Him.

### **VI. That the Call of God may Involve Painful Testimony.** “Samuel feared to show Eli the vision” (1Sa 3:15).

It was a solemn and humiliating message that he had received for Eli. He and his house were to be set aside as unworthy of the priesthood. But the truth must be told, and let it be said to the credit of the old weak-kneed priest that he was prepared to hear all that God had spoken, and to acquiesce in His will (vv. 17, 18). There be many who say, “Prophecy unto us smooth things,” and who would be sorely offended if the whole counsel of God was told out in their ears. But the Lord will fulfil all His purposes, whether men will bear or forbear. When the learned and honoured Eli prove unfaithful, then the Lord will speak to some consecrated boy and make him a preacher of righteousness.

### **VII. That the Call of God Insures Fellowship and Victory.** “The Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground” (1Sa 3:19).

He never sends us a warfare on our own charges. When the Word of God is brought home to our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit it is that it might be fulfilled in our own experience. His presence with us, in the preaching of His Word, is the guarantee that He will bring it to pass. “If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken” (Deut. 18:22). The word was not Samuel’s, but the Lord’s, so it will not return unto Him void. The secret of success in the Lord’s work always lies in the doing of His will. “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5). “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

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## **James Smith - A CONSECRATED LIFE 1 SAMUEL 3**

In looking over the facts recorded regarding the early years of Samuel’s life, they seem suggestive of the experiences of a soul that has been born of God, and wholly devoted to Him. We see him—

**I. ASKED OF THE LORD (1Sa 1:20).**—Hannah looked upon Samuel as one given from God in answer to many tears and much bitterness of soul (v. 10), after being mocked and misunderstood by him who should have sympathised and helped (v. 14). How much do we owe to Christ, to His tears and prayers, and bitterness of soul, for our life from above. How little we think of our being given to Christ by the Father in answer to His prayers. “Born from above” is true of every child of God. We must believe that we are the “given” of God. One of the “All that the Father hath given Me.” Our citizenship made sure.

**II. CONSECRATED TO THE LORD (1Sa 1:28).**—He is now given back to the Lord, to belong to Him, “as long as he liveth.” That which is truly God’s ought not to be withheld from Him. “I live, yet not I, but Christ in Me.” This life, then, should be given back to God “as long as he liveth.” “Ye are not your own.” Keep not back part of the price. Hannah’s conduct with her first and much loved child might seem hard to the carnally minded, but she could say, “My heart rejoiceth” (chap. 2:1). Those who surrender all to God can always rejoice. Every child of God ought to be wholly God’s. If we are the gifts of the Father to His Son Jesus Christ, for what purpose is it?

**III. MINISTERING BEFORE THE LORD (1Sa 2:18).**—He was but a young minister (being a child). It was but little he could do. It was but little he knew, for the Lord had not yet revealed Himself to him (1Sa 3:7). But although he was both weak and ignorant, that



did not hinder him from doing what he could. He believed although he understood little. Jeremiah said, “Ah, Lord God. I cannot speak, for I am a child” (Jer. 1:6). God wants us to be children first, before we are men in service (child-like spirit). But the willing child will become the wise man. It is in our weakness we must come. He gives power to the weak.

**IV. WAITING ON THE LORD (1Sa 3:10).**—The Lord had spoken twice to Samuel, and he ran to Eli. He is not the only one who has run to man at the voice of the Lord. Paul says, “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” To know His will, we must wait on Him with open ears. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. It is a good point gained when we are willing to know what the will of the Lord is, but waiting is willingness in practice. How natural for us to run out and in and serve man, but how different to be silent before the Lord.

**V. TAUGHT BY THE LORD (1Sa 3:11–14).**—While waiting Samuel learned what the will of the Lord was. Those who are taught in the deep things of God are those who wait much on God. To be unwilling to wait is to be unwilling to be taught, and just to do our own will. When God teacheth, the ear shall tingle that hears the tidings. The word of the Lord will not be in vain. Paul’s preaching was “in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.” The divinely commissioned will be divinely taught, the Bible is a dry book to those who wait not

**VI. WITNESSING FOR THE LORD (1Sa 3:18).**—Though he at first feared (1Sa 3:15) to shew the truth to Eli, yet afterwards he told him every whit, and hid nothing. Could he be a faithful servant and keep back part of the truth? Many Gospel hearers might justly complain that the half has not been told them. The preachers either have no vision (v. 15) or else they fear to shew it. How can a man be a witness if he has had no vision. He is like a servant out of work; he may busy himself here and there, but he has no reward from his labour. The faithful will know God’s counsel, and will declare it all (Acts 4:20).

**VII. WALKING WITH THE LORD (1Sa 3:19).**—“The Lord was with him, and did let none of His words fall to the ground.” If we are faithful to God He will prove Himself faithful to us. “He dwells with the humble and the contrite” (Isa. 57:15). We cannot climb to abiding fellowship with God. It is not the result of our efforts, but the flowing forth of great grace into the depths of the broken spirit. As the waters abide in the deep so will God dwell with the humble.

**VIII. ACKNOWLEDGED AS OF THE LORD (1Sa 3:20).**—“And all Israel knew that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord.” How did they know? Just because he declared the truth of God. And God was with him. The one that lives in the presence of God will be acknowledged as belonging to God. “They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13), when they saw their power and boldness (see margin, 1Sa 3:20). Faithfulness to God is what all expect from a servant of God. If the world sees not this, the conclusion must be either we are hypocrites, or else there is no God.

**IX. PRIVILEGED BY THE WORD OF THE LORD (1Sa 3:21).**—“The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel by the Word of the Lord. The Word is the instrument through which we must know Him. It is the Christian’s telephone, and our ear must be attentive to His Word if we would know His mind and will. We cannot know Himself apart from this. In shutting out His Word we shut the appointed means of communication between our souls and God.

“They have rejected the Word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?”

-- Jeremiah. 8:8–9

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## THE FIRST COMPONENT OF FAITH - Charles Stanley 1 SAMUEL 3:1–10

1 SAMUEL 3:10 Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel answered, “Speak, for Your servant hears.”

Our desire to walk by faith, stepping solely within the will of God for our lives, begins with a desire to hear what He is saying. When we have no idea where God is leading us or what He wants to change in our hearts, listening is the first and most crucial component to a greater faith.

Samuel was a young boy when he first heard God speak to him. The first sounds of God’s voice were difficult for him to discern. Yet through some gentle guidance from Eli, Samuel’s faith began to blossom. Listening for God’s voice became a pattern for Samuel’s life. Countless times throughout his leadership in Israel he heard and obeyed the voice of the Lord.

As we deepen our relationship with the Lord, we can improve our hearing in relation to God’s voice through the following:

- Meditate upon God’s Word. If we know the Word of God already spoken, discerning His voice clearly will be easier.
- Establish a time to listen to God. Our prayers become more effective when we are willing to hear God’s heart.
- Expect God to speak. If we don’t believe that God does and desires to communicate to us today, we won’t be as inclined to listen. However, when we do believe the truth—that He does want to speak to us—we hear Him loud and clear.

Lord, open my heart to discern Your voice. Give me the discipline to listen for You and the faith to believe You want to speak to me.

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## Are You Listening? By Drew Wilkerson

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 3:1–10

INTRODUCTION: Some people question whether or not God really speaks. In this familiar Old Testament story we are reminded that God speaks to anyone who is willing to listen. The key is knowing how to tune into God's voice. The boy Samuel shows us how.

1. Believe God wants to speak. We can't hear God if we don't have faith.
2. Believe God wants to speak to you. God desires a personal relationship with us.
3. Believe God wants a response. It is overwhelming but true. God wants to use us.

CONCLUSION: God's voice is not dead. It's our hearing that we need to work on. God is always looking for people, children and adults, who are willing to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

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## A Word From The Lord

The word of the Lord was rare in those days. — 1 Samuel 3:1

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Noted preacher and theologian Helmut Thielicke (1908–1986) endured great opposition from the Nazi regime in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. Yet he remained committed to proclaiming God's presence and power in Jesus Christ during a difficult and perplexing time. Scholar Robert Smith said that as Thielicke addressed modern issues and problems in his sermons, "he sought to answer the question, 'Is there any word from the Lord?'"

Isn't that what each of us is seeking today? What has God said that will strengthen and guide us through the difficulties and opportunities we face?

First Samuel 3 describes a time when "the word of the Lord was rare" (v.1). When God spoke to young Samuel, the boy mistakenly thought it was the aging priest Eli calling him. Eli told the boy to respond to God's voice by saying, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears" (v.9). Samuel listened, and he became known as a man who lived faithfully and fearlessly, "for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (v.21).

Whenever we open the Bible, listen to a sermon, or pause to pray, it's a wonderful practice to say, "Lord Jesus, speak to me. I'm ready to listen and eager to obey." By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God who formed worlds by the power of His word  
Speaks through the Scriptures His truth to be heard  
And if we read with the will to obey  
He by His Spirit will show us His way.  
—D. De Haan

God speaks through His Word to those who listen with their heart.

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## SANCTIFY

A godly life can develop in spite of ungodly influences surrounding it. So it was with Moses in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, and our Lord in Nazareth. Samuel was not isolated, but he was separated. He belonged to the Lord. Daily, he was in contact with sin, and yet he was not contaminated by it. He was a "living sacrifice" and experienced God's transforming power (Ro 12:1,2).

Authority.

Even though Eli was not the most godly example or mentor, young Samuel submitted to his authority. We submit to man's authority "for the Lord's sake" (1Pe 2:13-25), for we serve God, not men. We trust Him to protect us and work out His will even in the lives of ungodly people.

Fidelity.

God gave His message to Samuel because He knew Samuel was faithful. The lad was accustomed to being alert to Eli's voice and to obeying immediately, so when God spoke, Samuel was ready. Being faithful in a few small things prepares you for bigger things

(Mt 25:21). Hearing the voice of God did not keep Samuel from doing the work of God (v15); he went right back to the old tasks. The nation would now listen to Samuel's words, for they knew he was God's spokesman.

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**Matthew Henry Concise - Verses 1-10.** The call which Divine grace designs shall be made effectual; will be repeated till it is so, till we come to the call. Eli, perceiving that it was the voice of God that Samuel heard, instructed him what to say. Though it was a disgrace to Eli, for God's call to be directed to Samuel, yet he told him how to meet it. Thus the elder should do their utmost to assist and improve the younger that are rising up. Let us never fail to teach those who are coming after us, even such as will soon be preferred before us, John 1:30. Good words should be put into children's mouths betimes, by which they may be prepared to learn Divine things, and be trained up to regard them.

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**ILLUSTRATION OF NO WORD FROM THE LORD** - October 7, 1969 the Montreal, Canada police force went on strike. Because of what resulted, the day has been called **Black Tuesday**. A burglar and a policeman were slain. Forty-nine persons were wounded or injured in rioting. Nine bank holdups were committed (almost a tenth of the total number of holdups that occurred the previous year) along with 17 robberies at gunpoint. Usually disciplined, peaceful citizens joined the ruffraff and went wild, smashing some 1,000 plate glass windows in a stretch of 21 business blocks in the heart of the city, hauling away stereo units, radios, TVs and wearing apparel. While looters stripped windows of valuable merchandise, professional burglars entered stores by doors and made off with truckloads of goods. A smartly dressed man scampered down a street with a fur coat over each arm. With no police around to reign in crime, anarchy reigned! (A modern day picture of the book of Judges!)

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### **Walter Kaiser - An Illustration of Preaching a Narrative Text: 1 Samuel 3:1-4:1a - from "Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament"**

The text is 1 Samuel 3:1-4:1a. It is entitled, "The Power of the Word of God." This title comes from the focal point found in 1 Samuel 3:19—"[God] let none of his words fall to the ground." Our major points will follow the four scenes that were mentioned above: (1) The Previous Days, v. 1; (2) One Night, vv. 2-14; (3) Next Morning, vv. 15-18; and (4) Subsequent Days, vv. 19-4:1a. I believe that this text informs us as to what (the interrogative for our message) are the characteristics (our homiletical key word) that demonstrate the power of the Word of God to this very day.

Let us examine the exposition of this text as a typical Sunday audience would hear it.

✧

The motto of Geneva, Switzerland in the early 1500s was "After darkness, light!" It was a bold affirmation of Calvin and his generation that "light" came to God's people through the preaching of God's Word. Therefore, in order for the darkness of that town to be dispelled, six sermons from the Bible were mandated for each citizen each week. One sermon was to come at dawn on Sunday and another at the usual hour of 9 A.M. that day. Catechism for the children followed at noon with another sermon at 3 P.M. (Apparently there was no NFL football on Sunday afternoons back then!) On the working days, additional sermons came on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The argument of Calvin and the city fathers of Geneva was the same as that of Proverbs 29:18. It warned that "Where there is no vision [the Hebrew word stood for "divine revelation"], the people perish [or, as translated in Exodus 32:25, "the people run wild" or "become ungovernable"]" (KJV). Can we in our day and generation recognize that the very same results come from biblical and theological illiteracy? Surely, there is deep concern about a society that seems to have lost its moorings. Our cities and towns have become more like human jungles in which we devour each other for little or no apparent reason. Only a word from God can save us from the path of self-destruction that we seem to be on.

But how does such a transformed state of affairs come about? The answer is this: It happens just as it did in Samuel's day. It happens when God shows us the first characteristic of his powerful word, or message, namely, God can make that word just as scarce for us as he did for those in Samuel's day (v. 1). God can withdraw his teachers from the scene so that the hearing of his Word becomes a rare commodity. And when he does, society seems to come unglued, and all the fury of evil breaks loose. The cohesive bonding of our relationships gives way with such force that we are astounded at how brutish human beings can act. Schools suddenly become just as unsafe as the killing fields of Vietnam. Much of this takes place because we have decided we can make it on our own without God's revelation or his help. Second only to the gift of God's Son was the gift of his Word. But that is all too easily forfeited in life and in the pulpit for some other substitute.

Individuals cannot substitute anything in place of the basic necessity of living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We cannot manipulate that word, manufacture another form of it, or duplicate it. It is unique; it is life-giving. Only the Lord can give it. Therefore, we say, that word can become scarce and rare in its exposure to people with the result that we, along with previous cultures, witness what we have seen in recent days.

Our Lord can also make that word scarce in its effects on us and our times. Amos 8:11–12 warns of a time when the Lord will send a famine, not of bread and water, but “a famine of hearing the word of God.” Therefore, when God grows silent, the darkness thickens, and often the depths of our gloom and sadness become almost unbearable.

The second characteristic of the powerful word of God can be seen in the ways in which God can make that word startling to us (vv. 2–14). We can be startled by the way that word calls us, as it did Samuel. Eleven times in verses 4–10, some form of the word “call” appears as our Lord tries to get the attention of young Samuel.

Meanwhile, Eli was losing his physical eyesight, if not, more seriously, his spiritual vision. It was Samuel who was needed to make sure the lamp of God did not go out in the tabernacle. God had providentially provided Samuel through Hannah’s earlier agonizing petitions to our heavenly Father.

It took four calls from God to get through to Samuel. Was it that Samuel was a little dull and somewhat dim-witted here? I doubt it, for in explaining his response, verse 7 does not seem to blame Samuel. The point is that such was the state of religious affections at this time that a boy raised in the house of God was ignorant of the person and work of God. Before we castigate those men and their times, consider the state of biblical illiteracy in our day for people who have grown up in the center of our evangelical churches! That is not the case with all, mind you, but it is common enough to sound the same warnings found in this text for our day as well.

But note the kindness and gentleness of the Lord. He does not heap piles of scorn on Samuel; rather, he “stands there” as at other times, calling Samuel. There is no tirade such as, “Boy, you never get anything right.” Instead, we see a Savior who is patient, tender, and kind!

Our Lord can make his word startling not only in its call, but also in its content. In fact, so startling were the contents of Samuel’s call that it would make the ears of all that heard it tingle. Judgment would visit the house of Eli because he too had failed to act on the word that God had sent to him in 1 Samuel 2:27–29. Eli had done nothing to restrain the wickedness of his two priestly sons. Trivializing the holiness of God is serious business indeed. His sons had literally “blasphemed” the Lord (v. 13 in the Greek version of this Hebrew text). So severe was the sin and guilt that it could never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering!

It is this dual nature of the message that we hear from Scripture that is sometimes troubling. The message both attracts and repels. Dale Ralph Davis’s book on this passage has an illustration from Andrew Bonar.<sup>16</sup> The story is about a Grecian artist who painted a picture of a boy carrying a basket of grapes on his head. So glorious was the painting that all demanded that the artist place it on display in the Grecian forum. So graphic and real were the grapes in the basket that the birds flew up to the canvas and tried to peck at the grapes. The citizens of the city heaped volumes of praise on the artist, for they said even the birds were fooled by the depictions represented on the canvas. But the artist declined all their praise, saying, “No, I should have done a great deal more. I should have painted the boy so true to life that the birds would not have dared to come near.” He thought it should have been both attractive and repelling at the same time. Therein lies precisely the tension found in the Word of God. To smother people with the comfort of the gospel while never telling them about their sin is lopsided. But to preach angrily and focus only on judgment with no encouragement or care for persons is likewise missing the point of revelation. God’s messengers must hold high the truth of God in both its judgment and its comfort. We must afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted as teachers and ministers of the gospel.

A third characteristic of the powerful word of God is that it is sovereign over us (vv. 15–18). Our Lord is sovereign over the speaker. That sovereignty rules over all, for most speakers have a natural tendency to fear announcing judgment. Clearly, Samuel shared this fear (v. 15), but when Eli called Samuel to learn what God had said, Samuel “told him everything” (v. 18). Why should we hide the word God has spoken, for it is true and it will come to pass whether we are faithful in announcing it or not. In fact, the text suggests that if we as God’s messengers hold back the truth, then the guilt that falls on the audience also falls on us for failing to sound the warning so that they would have a chance to change and avoid the threatened calamity.

But God is sovereign over the audience as well. Eli did not reject, argue, or dispute the validity of the message Samuel gave to him. To his credit, he simply said, “He is the LORD” (v. 18). God’s people are taught to say “Amen” to the judgments of God as well as to the blessings from above. He is Lord indeed.

The reason is fairly straightforward: If God did not judge evil, then the good and the righteous would be discouraged. God is not a paper tiger who threatens but never carries out his threats. Should the pulpit pull punches, as it were, the moment it did so would be the very moment that God would despise the pulpit and give it no standing before a watching world or even before his church.

The final characteristic of the powerful word of God found in this passage is that God’s word secures and accredits the servants he sends to us. It is no secret that many pulpit ministries are lightly regarded by both friends and foes alike. That is why even the word preach is used in a pejorative way. For example, people say, “Don’t preach to me,” or “Don’t get preachy with me.” But there is no need for worrying about such opinions if one is focusing the message on the Word of God.

Nothing spoken from the revelation of God by his servants will fall to the ground (v. 19). It will no more fail in its task than the snow

and rain will fail in the task they are sent to do from heaven (Isa. 55:10–11). The question is this: Is our confidence in the Word of God that strong? Do we think that God in his revelation centuries ago will be a match for the crises we face here today? Is it adequate to reach our own young people, the unreached peoples of the earth, or even the modern cynic that feels no one has the right to tell another what is right or wrong, true or false?

Despite all the odds of our day and that day in Israel, everyone knew that Samuel's work and message were accredited by God. This raises the whole question, What really validates our ministries as teachers and preachers of the gospel? Is it growth in the physical plant? Is it growth in the number of attendees? Is it growth in income dollars? Or are we best validated, as this text teaches, by the words taught and the ability those words evidence to effect change in persons' lives to the glory of God? One thing is for sure: When such authoritative announcements come from the Word of God, its power will be seen by all. A by-product of such effective preaching is that its relevancy and effectiveness will be apparent to all (4:1a).

So what shall we say to all of this? Can the light of revelation shine through the present darkness? And if it can, as we are bound to say, how else can it break out except through the faithful preaching of the Word of God?

The truth is, where there is no vision [i.e., input of the revelation of God], the people go wild (Prov. 29:18). And the price for allowing a famine of the word of God to fester is that an outbreak of evil appears in almost all the other areas of life.

It is high time that teachers and preachers return to the basics once again. Whereas many had thought that the teaching of the Word in a straightforward exposition was now too dated to be effective, it is time to repent and change the menu on the table of the teachings that we spread for the general populace, as well as for the people of God. Let us covenant before God that we will be faithful to the Word of God, longing only to see in evidence the power that Word promises. Let us determine not to cater merely to the current appetites of the pew or join the fashions of the day with what is in vogue as far as proclamation methods are concerned. Instead, let us form a whole new cadre of men and women: "Proclaimer-Keepers" to the glory of God. Only then will a new and unique power be seen in the church as God shows us anew the power of himself in his Word!

**1 Samuel 3:2 It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well),**

- his eyes: 1Sa 2:22 4:15 Ge 27:1 48:19 Ps 90:10 Ec 12:3
- [1 Samuel 3:2 The Child Samuel's Prayer](#) - Spurgeon
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## IN THE PROVIDENCE OF JEHOVAH

**It happened at that time** - Nothing "just happens!" The Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient God of glory is in full control of all happenings that happen, all the time! As Ripley said "Believe it or not!" The truth of God's sovereignty (and providence) can be either very disturbing or very comforting, depending on your perspective.

**THOUGHT-** The word "**providence**" ([pronoia](#)) is found only once in the Bible in a context which refers to human providence (Acts 24:2+), and yet **Divine Providence** permeates the pages of Holy Writ from Genesis to Revelation! This great truth ought to cause all of God's children to shout "Hallelujah! Our God Reigns!" Amen. Indeed a healthy understanding of God's providences should produce praise from His people (and assurance of the promise in Ro 8:28+), for as John Piper rightly said "In all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is plotting for your joy." And certainly this proved true in Hannah's life as it would in Samuel's life. See The Providence of God.

**As Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well)**- As a physician, my diagnosis of his physical eye disease is that he most likely had cataracts (at 77 I am in need of cataract surgery!) But as with every soul created in the image of God, he also had spiritual vision, but sadly his spiritual vision had also begun to **grow dim** and he could not see well enough to see the incredible harm the unholy acts of his worthless sons, Israel's "priests," were committing against the Holy One of Israel. And it was just as true then as it is now that Eli (and all of us) do well to "not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. **For** (A VITAL TERM OF EXPLANATION - DON'T MISS IT! WHAT'S PAUL EXPLAINING?) the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." (Gal 6:7-8+) Eli's spiritual blurring prevented him from seeing that there would be a reaping in his own house and on the nation, because of the sowing of corruption in the priesthood!

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, how is your vision? I'm not speaking of your physical vision, but your spiritual vision. Is it "20/20"? Or is it blurred by unconfessed sin, sin that you are covering over, but which will surely bring corruption to your soul? Confession is the remedy and is to be a believer's lifestyle for the verb "confess" ([homologeo](#)) in 1Jn 1:9+ (cf Jas 4:8+, Pr 28:13+) is in the present tense (calling for continual, habitual confession, an act that fallen flesh continually resists and which therefore calls for continual reliance, submission to and sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to accomplish confession daily. And the active voice calls for us to make a choice of our will, even that choice being energized by the Spirit, to confess). As an aside, a great preventative and/or antidote for "blurred spiritual vision", is maintenance of "**Vertical Vision**," and a "**Maranatha Mindset**," for this quality of looking and thinking will function to produce the **Expulsive Power of a New Affection**" which will (should) radically affect your daily living. If your spiritual vision is dim, then like David, the man after God's own heart, beseech the Almighty God to "**Search** me, O God, and **know** my heart. **Try** me and **know** my anxious thoughts; and **see** if there be any hurtful way in me, and **lead** me in the everlasting way." (Note the 6 "**commands**" - not that puny man can command the Almighty to do anything, but in context surely reflecting David's intense desire and desperate need for God to carry out these acts. Do it LORD! PLEASE!) (Psalm 139:23-24)

**Spurgeon** on Eli - He was a good old man, but he was almost worn out, and he had been unfaithful to God in not keeping his family right. He must have found some comfort in having such a sweet and dear companion and servant as little Samuel was.

**1 Samuel 3:3 and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was,**

- **the lamp:** Ex 27:20,21 30:7,8 Lev 24:2-4 2Ch 13:11
- **the temple:** 1Sa 1:6 Ps 5:7 27:4 29:9
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries



A Menorah

## SAMUEL SLEEPING IN THE TEMPLE

**and the lamp of God had not yet gone out** - This refers to physical light in the Temple, not spiritual light, for it is probable the Temple lamps were extinguished before the rising of the sun.

**Wiersbe** - The "lamp of God" was the seven-branched golden candlestick that stood in the holy place before the veil, to the left of the golden altar of incense (Ex. 25:31–40; 27:20–21; 37:17–24). It was the only source of light in the holy place, and the priests were ordered to keep it burning always (27:20) and to trim the wicks when they offered the incense each morning and evening (30:7–8). The lamp was a symbol of the light of God's truth given to the world through His people Israel. Alas, the light of God's Word was burning dimly in those days, and God's high priest was barely able to see! The Ark was there, containing the law of God (25:10–22; 37:1–9; Heb. 9:1–5), but the law was not honored by God's people. (From [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Walton** - The menorah in the tabernacle was to remain lit all night (Ex 27:21; Lev 24:1–4), but it was never supposed to be extinguished, so the comment that it had not yet gone out would be pointless. On the other hand, we have seen that the practices at Shiloh did not necessarily follow what was stipulated in the Law. The phrase "lamp of God" is also used to refer to hope (2Sa21:17; 1Ki 11:36; 2 Kings 8:19), and that would also make sense in this context. ([IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#)) (See also [image of Lamp, Lampstand](#))

**David Guzik** - As a figure of speech, this simply means "before dawn." But it is also suggestive of the dark spiritual times of Israel – it is dark, and will probably get darker. Exodus 27:21+ refers to the responsibility of the priests to tend the lamps until sunrise, or just before dawn.

**THOUGHT** - Without taking the text too far, in "light" of the fact that Ps 119:105+ says "Thy word is a lamp to

my feet and a light to my path," there could be a spiritual implication that figuratively **the lamp of God** had gone out to a large degree and certainly 1Sa 3:1 supports this thought. Later in the 400 year intertestamental period, there was no revelation from God in Israel until Jesus' day.

**And Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was** -Talk about a safe, "soft pillow" for your head -- next to the Holy One's presence in the Holy of holies (cf Ps 4:8 and the beautiful promises in Ps 121:1-8+, Pr 3:24, 6:22)! **Samuel's** sleeping in the Temple reminds me of Anna the Prophetess in Luke 2:36+ "And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. **She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers."**

**Utlej** writes that "It is uncertain where Eli slept. Samuel slept in the inner shrine of the tabernacle (i.e., "the holy place"). It was his job to make sure the lights on the menorah did not go out."

**THOUGHT** - Support for Utlej's comment that Samuel was literally inside the Temple proper is that that is where the menorah was and had to be serviced and secondly the Septuagint translates Temple with [naos](#) which refers in the NT, not to the entire Temple complex, but to the inner aspect of the Temple, especially the Holy of holies. Of course Samuel could not have been in the Holy of holies, so by default he most likely slept in the Holy Place, as close physically as a human being could be to God's manifest presence, the [Shekinah glory cloud](#) over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of holies [the exception of course is the Day of Atonement when the High Priest went in [Lev 16:15-17+], however, there is no record of Israel keeping the Day of Atonement during this time and certainly it would not have been kept by the corrupt priests, Hophni and Phinehas, who would have been struck down had they even entered the Holy of holies! - see Ex 28:33,34, 35+)

In these early days of Samuel, the [LORD of hosts](#) was believed uniquely to be enthroned upon the ark of the covenant at Shiloh (cf. 1Sa 4:4 and manifest by the [Shekinah glory cloud](#)), which was the military and religious center for the tribes. Shiloh was located approximately 20 miles north of Jerusalem.. Shiloh, which was the center of the confederation of the 12 tribes. The Temple at Shiloh may have had some kind of permanent structure rather than just a tabernacle/tent structure. Note also the references to doorposts (1Sa 1:9) and doors (1Sa 3:15 - door is *deleth* a word not found in description of the Tabernacle).

**Henry Morris** - By this time, the original tabernacle, or tent, would certainly have worn out **ED: NOW WAIT A MOMENT! GOD WAS ABLE TO KEEP THE ISRAELITES' SHOES INTACT FOR 40 YEARS!** Dt 8:4, Dt 29:5+), for the Israelites had been in Canaan for several centuries at least (ED: THIS IS TRUE - OVER 300 YEARS). Evidently, since it had been established at Shiloh at what was assumed to be a permanent home, the tent had been replaced by a permanent structure of some kind, which was called a temple (ED: THIS IS POSSIBLE BUT SOMEWHAT CONJECTURAL AS WE HAVE NO FIRM BIBLICAL OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS PREMISE). The structure housed the ark of the covenant and the tables of the law. This was not the later temple built by Solomon at Jerusalem.

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**Incubation dreams in the ancient Near East.** In the ancient world it was believed that a person sleeping in the temple or its precincts may become privy to divine plans. Some would perform sacrificial rituals and spend the night in the temple in order to receive such revelation. This process is referred to as incubation. In early literature kings such as Naram-Sin and Gudea sought information through incubation. In the Judges period this practice is observable in the Ugaritic epics of Aqhat (where Daniel is requesting a son) and Keret (where Keret is requesting a son). Though Samuel is simply performing his regular duties and clearly has no expectation of revelation, his experience would be understood in light of the common association between temple and revelation. There are no known examples in the ancient Near Eastern literature of such unintentional incubation dreams. ([IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#))

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**LAMP, LAMPSTAND** ([Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#)) - Lamps were used in Palestine from at least the seventeenth century B.C. Biblical writers mention them p 486 in homey contexts, giving the impression that they are a fixture of domestic life. The wealthy woman who equipped Elisha's guest room provided it with a bed, table, chair and lamp (2 Kings 4:10). In Proverbs 31 a lamp symbolized the efficient domestic management of the righteous woman whose "lamp does not go out at night" (Prov 31:18 NIV).

The majority of the references to lamps are to their religious or symbolic use. Lamps are most frequently mentioned in relation to the tabernacle and temple (Ex 25:31-40; 27:20; 1 Kings 7:49; 1 Chron 28:15). The connection between lamps and the central sanctuary is very strong. Perhaps all but two of the literal references to lamps (2 Kings 8:19; Dan 5:5) are to lamps in the central sanctuary. The golden lampstand in the tabernacle, with its vertical shaft, its three branches on each side and its cups "shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms" (Ex 25:34 NIV) gives the impression of a stylized tree (Ex 25:31-40; see Meyers). It is very likely that this lamp symbolized the tree of life in the garden of Eden, which is otherwise evoked in features of the tabernacle and in the

inner courts of Solomon's temple (see ADAM).

### **Figurative Uses.**

Lamps and light are positive images in Scripture. When used to convey a negative message, it is generally through negation ("the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out" [Prov 13:9 NIV]) or being used to accomplish something undesired by the readers ("I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent" [Zeph 1:12 NIV]).

**Associated with worship.** The lamp in the shrine at Shiloh is called "the lamp of God" in 1 Samuel 3:3; this suggests that its light symbolized God's presence. The lamp for the tabernacle was to be trimmed night and morning to give constant light (Ex 30:7–8). The material and deliberate style of these lamps (sevenfold gold lamps) no doubt were intended to symbolize God's perfection, splendor and holiness.

### **Guidance.**

The guidance of parents is a lamp for children (Prov 6:23), but regarding those who fail to respect father or mother, "[their] lamp will go out in utter darkness" (Prov 20:20 NRSV). In Proverbs 20:27 the image of a lamp carried from room to room may refer to the conscience: "The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD, searching every innermost part" (NRSV). The Word of God is extolled in Psalm 119 as "a lamp to my feet" (Ps 119:105). The lamp gives enough light to see one step ahead, indicating the traveler's constant need of God's Word. Peter wrote similarly of the prophetic message, "You will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place" (2 Pet 1:19 NIV). Keeping the lamp lit or keeping the home fires burning are metaphors for responsibility or diligence (cf. the lamps of the wise and foolish virgins in Mt 25:1–13).

### **Blessing/Presence of God.**

A different lamp metaphor occurs in connection with God's oath that the Davidic dynasty would endure (2 Sam 7:16). Solomon's son and grandson failed to keep the covenant. "Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him" (1 Kings 15:4 NIV). Similarly, "I have prepared a lamp for my anointed one [David]" (Ps 132:17 NRSV). Since David's men had referred to him as the lamp of Israel, the psalmist must expect another king with David's charisma. The Lord was the source of that charisma, "Indeed, you are my lamp, O LORD, the LORD lightens my darkness" (2 Sam 22:29 NRSV), and he was to come in the person of Jesus (Jn 8:12). At the end of the Bible, when the new Jerusalem is seen coming down from heaven, lamps are no longer needed because "its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev 21:23 NRSV) and "the Lord God will be their light" (Rev 22:5 NRSV). The lamps in the opening chapter of Revelation symbolize the divine presence with the seven churches. Christ's warning that the lamp could be withdrawn connotes God's removing his active presence from them (Rev 1–3).

### **Witness/Proclamation.**

When Jesus astonished the disciples by telling them they were the light of the world, his emphasis was on allowing their lamps to shine (Mt 5:15). Of John the Baptist he said, "He was a burning and shining lamp" (Jn 5:35 NRSV). John was fearless in his exposure of wrongdoing and was noted for pointing others to Jesus, who called his followers to be equally faithful and courageous. The enigmatic saying of Jesus, "The eye is the lamp of the body" (Mt 6:22), suggests that just as a defective eye distorts an image, so divided loyalties will distort God's truth, causing it to appear as darkness—a terrifying warning. The lamps can also symbolize the good works of the righteous, whose light shines into the surrounding spiritual darkness and prompts others to glorify God (Mt 5:15–16).

When the temple was being rebuilt after the exile, Zechariah saw a vision of a bowl holding seven small lamps, each with seven wicks in a miniature candelabra (Zech 4:2). Two olive trees fed the lamps by pouring oil out of themselves: a vivid picture of the two leaders at that time, Joshua and Zerubbabel. Through them God equips his people to complete the rebuilding, despite shortages. The key message is p 487 "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech 4:6 NRSV).

### **Illumination.**

Zephaniah depicted the Lord searching every corner of Jerusalem with lamps to expose the complacent (Zeph 1:12). Jesus tells of a woman with a lamp searching for a lost coin to show how persevering is God's search for the lost (Lk 15:8).

### **Life.**

"The light is dark in their tent and the lamp above them is put out" (Job 18:6 NRSV). The extinguished lamp signifies the declining vitality of those who do evil; though they are still alive, their light has become darkness, the symbol of death. The lamp, by contrast, is the symbol of life, prosperity and blessing that Job had once experienced and longed to have restored (Job 29:2–3).

### **Domestic life.**



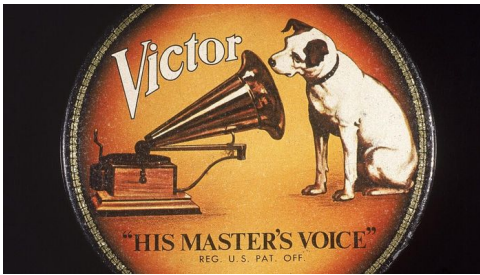
For Jeremiah the warm glow of the lamp was a symbol of the homes God was about to destroy because of his people's disobedience (Jer 25:10). Even the righteous can find themselves in darkness, yet remain within God's total purpose (cf. Mk 15:33).

See also FIRE; LIGHT; OIL; TABERNACLE; TREE OF LIFE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. C. Meyers, **BORROW** -[The tabernacle menorah : a synthetic study of a symbol from the Biblical cult](#) (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976).

## 1 Smuel 3:4 that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."

- called Samuel: Ge 22:1 Ex 3:4 Ps 99:6 Ac 9:4 1Co 12:6-11,28 Ga 1:15,16
- [1 Samuel 3:4 Here I Am](#) - Spurgeon
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries



## YAHWEH'S FIRST CALL TO SAMUEL

Are you a good listener like the famous RCA Dog above (adapted from [Francis Barraud's 1898 painting](#))? Are you listening for your "Master's voice?"

**That the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."** Samuel was lying down and presumably asleep. Was this "call" in a vision or dream? We cannot be dogmatic. Regardless, Samuel detected an audible voice, which evoked an audible answer. Recall **Samuel's** may mean something like "heard of God," (**ED**: THE EXACT MEANING IS DEBATED), and if true, would reflect Hannah's prayer as having been "heard by God" and thus naming her son, who then himself "heard God."

It is worth noting and probably more than coincidence that another of Israel's greatest prophets had a similar response to Yahweh declaring "Here am I." (Isaiah 6:8+) This answer from the young prophet and the older prophet implies that both were what we might today characterize by the acronym "F.A.T.", **F**aithful, **A**vailable, **T**eachable. **THOUGHT** - Are you (am I) "F.A.T."?

**David Guzik** - This leads us to believe God spoke to Samuel in an audible voice, instead of in an "inner voice," though this is not certain. But Samuel was so impressed by what he heard, he responded by saying, "Here I am!" This is a beautiful way to respond to God's Word. It isn't that God does not know where we are, but it tells God and it reminds us we are simply before Him as servants, asking what He wants us to do. Samuel is among several others who also said, "Here I am" when the Lord spoke to them: Abraham (Genesis 22:1), Jacob (Genesis 46:2), Moses (Exodus 3:4), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8), and Ananias (Acts 9:10).

**Here I am** has some other notable speakers including Abraham (thrice), Esau, Isaac, Jacob (twice), Moses ...

Genesis 22:1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "**Here I am.**"

Genesis 22:7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "**Here I am**, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Genesis 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "**Here I am.**"

Genesis 27:1 Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "**Here I am.**"

Genesis 27:18 Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "**Here I am.** Who are you, my son?"

Genesis 31:11 “Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, **Here I am.**’

Genesis 46:2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, **Here I am.**”

Exodus 3:4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, **Here I am.**”

Here are the remainder of the 22 uses of Here I am - 1Sa 3:4; 1Sa 3:5; 1Sa 3:6; 1Sa 3:8; 1Sa 3:16; 1Sa 12:3; 1Sa 14:7; 1Sa 14:43; 1Sa 22:12; 2Sa 1:7; 2Sa 15:26; Isa. 52:6; Isa. 58:9; Acts 9:10

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#### **QUESTION - [How do I hear from God?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Every Christian has probably wondered at one time or another, “How do I hear from God?” The question is natural because we want to know what God has in store for us, and we are eager to please our heavenly Father. The range of answers, however, has caused much confusion and controversy. We need to be biblical when we answer the question *how can I hear from God?*

The Bible tells us how we hear from God: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Hebrews 1:1–2ESV).

Before the Incarnation of God the Son, God spoke through the prophets. We heard from God through men such as Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Malachi, and the other prophets. They relayed messages from God, and often their words were written down and preserved so we would always know His promises, His law, and His redemptive plans.

There were times when God spoke directly to people. Abraham and Joshua, for example, conversed with God directly at times (Genesis 12:1; 17:1; Joshua 5:13–15). Others, such as Jacob, heard from God through dreams (Genesis 28:12–13). Ezekiel saw visions (Ezekiel 1:1). Saul began to hear from God and spoke for Him when “the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him” (1 Samuel 10:10).

But, in most cases, people did not hear from God directly; rather, they were responsible to read God’s written Word or seek out God’s chosen mouthpiece. On at least two occasions, King Jehoshaphat asked to hear from a prophet of God (1 Kings 22:7; 2 Kings 3:11). Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, sought to hear from God through the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 8:7–8). Isaiah told the people of Judah they had a responsibility to “consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning” (Isaiah 8:20); that is, they were to read the written Word of God already delivered to them.

With the birth of Jesus, things changed. John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets. Through the ministry of Jesus, God spoke directly to us. Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon on the Plain, and the Olivet Discourse; and His pronouncements of being the Bread of Life, the True Vine, and the Good Shepherd are God’s direct revelation of who He is. Jesus’ words “are full of the Spirit and life” (John 6:63).

The writer to the Hebrews says, “In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” The “last days” are the current dispensation—the church age. Jesus Christ was the pinnacle of God’s revelation; He is the Final Word to us. In the Bible Jesus’ words are recorded for us. When Jesus ascended back into heaven, He left behind hand-picked apostles who were given the special task of recording what Jesus had said and done. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these men were authorized by God to speak and record God’s words to His church so that all of the church can truly hear from God. We now hear from God through His written Word, which is the Bible.

So, basically, we hear from God by reading our Bibles and hearing it preached.

For many people who want to hear from God, hearing, “Read your Bible,” is not very satisfying. They desire a more “direct” and “personal” communication. There are many problems with such a desire, starting with the fact that neglecting or rejecting the Bible in order to seek a “new” word from God is spiritually dangerous. It is arrogant for someone to think that he is so special as to receive direct revelation from God, especially when God said in the first century that He has spoken through His Son, who is “appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe” (Hebrews 1:2). We can’t top Jesus. There are no modern-day apostles or prophets who function in the same manner as the biblical apostles and prophets.

God does speak to people today, but the means He uses always include the Bible. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer and gives gifts to them as He chooses. Some are given gifts to teach, correct, admonish, and encourage other Christians. There is no new revelation being given (see Revelation 22:18), but God has gifted people in the church to be able to speak into the lives of other Christians. Exhortation and the offering of biblical advice are important within the community of believers.

A pastor's instruction from God's Word is one way we hear from God today. A friend's advice, tied to Scripture, is another way we hear from God. A directive issued by a God-ordained authority figure is another way we hear from God.

We should never neglect praying and meditating on God's Word. As we meditate on a passage of Scripture, and we pray for God's direction and understanding, we hear from God. When we feed daily on the Bible, the Holy Spirit points us to truths that we know are from God because they come directly from His Word. What a privilege it is to have God's Word readily available to us! [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

"I meditate on your precepts  
and consider your ways.  
I delight in your decrees;  
I will not neglect your word"  
(Psalm 119:15–16)

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#### QUESTION - [What is the key to hearing God's voice?](#)

**ANSWER** - Most people want to hear God's voice when they are facing a decision. If only God would speak to them and tell them which choice to make or which direction to embark upon. Many people will claim to have heard God's voice, saying, "God led me to do this," when in fact it was simply their own thoughts and desires that led them in a particular direction.

The primary way that God speaks to us today is through His revealed, written Word. When we want to hear God's voice, the Bible is where we should look. Most of the will of God for our lives is already fully revealed in its pages, and it is simply a matter of our obedience to it. All of Scripture is the will of God, but there are a few places in Scripture that specifically use the term *will of God*, which may be especially interesting to a person who wants to hear God's voice:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:3: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
- 1 Peter 2:12–15: "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people."

Other passages also let us hear God's voice, even if they don't use the phrase *the will of God*. But, just taking the three above passages, we know that a Christian should always give thanks in every circumstance, avoid sexual immorality, and live an exemplary life. If a Christian does not follow these clear dictates given directly by God through inspired Scripture, why should he or she expect to hear more information from God? If you want further direction from God, obey what He has already told you. A heart willing to listen and obey is the key to hearing from God.

The primary way that a Christian hears God's voice is through reading and studying Scripture and then obeying and applying what the Scripture says. People often rely upon "the leading of the Holy Spirit," which is spoken of in Romans 8:14. In context, the passage speaks of the Spirit's leading us away from sinful activity and into a confidence in our relationship with God as Father. The Holy Spirit will never lead contrary to Scripture. If a person is considering having an affair, the Spirit will only lead in one direction—toward marital fidelity. The Spirit might very well bring a verse like 1 Thessalonians 4:3 to mind for the person being tempted. When the Spirit leads, He is not imparting "new" information as much as He is impressing on our hearts the truth God has already revealed in Scripture and applying it to our situation. If a person says, "God told me" or "The Spirit led me to do such and such," and the action taken is contrary to Scripture, we can be sure the person is mistaken.

We can also hear God's voice as God speaks through other people. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22). Good counselors or advisers can help us see a situation with new eyes. Again, the Bible is key. Biblical preaching and biblically sound Christian material can be put in the "advisers" category. The Word of God is the control. If a bunch of counselors advise a person to do something contrary to Scripture, then they are all wrong, no matter what their credentials; however, if the advisers help an individual understand and apply Scripture, then they can be helpful. Godly advisers can often see areas that an individual is blind to. A group of advisers may discern that the person seeking to hear God's voice concerning a particular plan is in reality seeking approval of his own personal agenda.

Another way to hear God's voice is to pray and ask for wisdom: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives

generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5). When a Christian is facing difficult circumstances and needs to hear from God, the Christian should ask for the wisdom that God promises to give. This wisdom will ultimately come from God, but it may come through the word of a friend; through a sermon, article, or book; or from the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit. Once again, the written Word of God is the standard by which all thoughts, actions, ideas, and feelings must be judged.

In this day of self-proclaimed prophets and the promotion of "new revelations" from God, people often mistake the voice of God for their own thoughts or the suggestions of other people. If you are hearing God's voice, then the message will *always* be in accord with Scripture. We should all take great care not to misrepresent God. Instead of saying, "God told me this," a better approach would be to say, "I think God may be saying this—what do you think?"

People often want to hear a specific word from God when He has already spoken in a general sense. For instance, a person may be deliberating the choice of whether to take the family on a [short-term mission trip](#) or on a [vacation](#) to the beach. Perhaps a specific word from God is unnecessary. What is really called for is wisdom. Which trip will most benefit the family? Which trip will most benefit the kingdom of God? The family will benefit by building the kingdom. The kingdom will benefit from a strong family. Either one could be a good choice. Other factors such as expense and the current state of the family should be considered. (Are the kids selfish and entitled so they need to see how other people live? Has the family been under a lot of stress and needs to get away and relax? Are the costs comparable? If not, which can they afford?) If they go to the beach, they look for opportunities to share their faith and be an encouragement to other believers. If they go on the mission trip, they look for ways to build bonds with each other and enjoy themselves as a family. Both options are good. Neither is inherently sinful. In the end, the husband and wife come to some agreement and throw themselves into it wholeheartedly, trusting that, if the decision is wrong, God will somehow make it clear to them that they should do something different. How will He do this? Probably not through an audible voice but through a combination of circumstances, advice from other people, evaluation of their priorities based on God's Word, and a lack of inner peace from the Holy Spirit. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resource:

- [Are You Listening?](#) by Bruce Hurt - In Depth article - includes multiple devotionals
- [How can I know if I am hearing God, hearing Satan, or hearing my own thoughts? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I know if I am hearing God, hearing Satan, or hearing my own thoughts? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I get to know God better? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I have a closer relationship with God? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### The Vision of God (1 SAMUEL 3)

Oh! give me Samuel's mind,  
A sweet, un murmuring faith,  
Obedient and resigned  
To Thee in life and death;  
That I may read with child-like eyes  
Truths that are hidden from the wise.

—J. D. BURNS.

IT is very touching to notice the various references to the child Samuel as they recur during the progress of the narrative, especially those in which an evident contrast is intended between his gentle innocence and the wild licence of Eli's sons—it is like a peal of sweet bells ringing on amid the crash of a storm.

Hannah said, "... I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever." "And she ... brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh; and the child was young." "As long as he liveth he is lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there." "And the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the Priest." "Now the sons of Eli were wicked men; they knew not the Lord: ... and the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord; but Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child." "Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons did unto all Israel ... Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them. And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour with the Lord, and also with men." "And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, ... Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering?... And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli." "And the Lord said, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle ... And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground; and all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." "The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord, and the word of Samuel came to all Israel."

His life seems to have been one unbroken record of blameless purity, integrity, and righteousness. One purpose ran through all his

years, threading them together in an unbroken series. There were no gaps nor breaks; no lapses into sensuality or selfishness; no lawless deeds in that wild, lawless age. Towards the end of a long life he was able to appeal to the verdict of the people in memorable words, which attested his consciousness of unsullied rectitude: "I am old and gray-headed, ... and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day. Here I am; witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe?" And they said, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand."

It was a beautiful life—strong in its faculty of administration, wise in steering the nation from the rule of the judges into the royal state of the kings, unimpeachably just, but blamelessly pure, towering above his contemporaries like a peak of glistening chrysolite, on which the sunlight plays, while all the valleys beneath are wrapped in scudding clouds and sweeping rain.

Samuel was not a prophet in the sense of foretelling the long future, and was not possessed of Isaiah's genius and eloquence; his only contribution to his age was a saintly character, which reminds us of that of James, the brother of our Lord, whose pure white robe was emblematic of his spotless character. Samuel was the James of the Old Testament; and it was by the saintliness, the moral grandeur of his character, that he arrested the ruin of his people.

We too may be called to face an era of change; our eyes may have to witness the passing of the old and the coming of the new; it may be that in our time also the Lord will shake once more, not earth only, but heaven, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain; in our time also ancient landmarks may be removed, as familiar and sacred as the tabernacle of Shiloh, and the Ark of the Covenant to Israel; but there is one property within our reach which need never pass away, which shall remain unimpaired and radiant through the years—and that is an unblemished character, a soul stainlessly arrayed, and the holy life in which these shall be embodied. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it."

The noblest gift that any of us can make to our fatherland or age is an undefiled character and a stainless life. Let us live our best in the power of the Spirit of God, and prove that the God of Pentecost is living still.

**I. THE TRANSITION OF A YOUNG SOUL.**—For Samuel, however, a great change was necessary and imminent. Up to this moment he had lived largely in the energy and motive-power of his mother's intense, religious life. It was needful that he should EXCHANGE THE TRADITIONAL FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL. His faith must rest, not on the assertions of another's testimony, but because for himself he had seen, and tasted, and handled the Word of Life. Not at second-hand, but at first, the Word of the Lord must come to him, and be passed on to all Israel. Probably this change comes to everyone who desires and seeks after the best and richest life. You may be the child of a pious home, where from boyhood or girlhood you were trained in the traditions of Evangelical religion, you were expected to pray and to serve God, you have been borne along by a blessed momentum; but suppose for a minute that that momentum should fail you, have you come to apprehend Christ as a living Reality for yourself? It may be that God, out of mercy to you, will break up and destroy the traditions and forms on which you have been relying; that the eternal and divine may stand forth apparent to your spiritual apprehension, and be apprehended by yourself for yourself, as though they were meant for you alone. It is a great hour in the history of the soul when the traditional, to which it has become habituated by long wont and use, is suddenly exchanged for the open vision of God; when we say with Job, "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee"; when we say with the apostle, "Leaving the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before, I press toward the mark."

Will you believe then that God may be coming very near you, and is about to reveal Himself to you in the Lord Jesus, as not unto the world? He is about to transform your life, and lift it to an altogether new level, so that though you may have to face the old circumstances, it shall be from a higher standpoint, as the spiral staircase is always returning to the same view-point, though always at the elevation of some few additional feet.

## **II. THE VISION OF THE YOUNG EYES.—**

(1) When God came near his young servant, it seemed as though He placed his seal upon his faithfulness. Hitherto but small services had been required of him. To close and open the doors of the Tabernacle; to light the seven-branched candlestick in the late afternoon, and supply it with pure olive oil every morning; to render little services to the aged priest, whether by day or night—such were the duties assigned to him and performed with punctilious care. It was meet that he who had shown himself faithful in a very little should have a larger and wider sphere assigned to him.

(2) The vision came as night was beginning to yield to dawn; but "the lamp had not yet gone out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was." Thrice the boy was startled from his innocent slumbers on his little bed in the chamber he occupied adjacent to the sacred building. He heard his name called softly, tenderly, lovingly, and made sure that Eli needed him, and thrice sped across the intervening space to report himself. Once, and again, and yet again, he ran unto Eli, and said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me."

When God approaches us to reveal his Son in us, the tendency is always to speed with all haste to some place, or some spiritual

adviser, where we suppose that the interpretation of the vision will be given. Young converts, for instance, are apt to say, "If only I could have my questions answered by such a man of God, I am sure I should get blessing." And thus they are kept in constant perturbation, running backwards and forwards, repeating Samuel's vain experience—running to Eli and saying, "Surely you called me, and can interpret for me the vision and the voice."

(3) Eli was very wise in his treatment of the lad. He might have posed as the sole depository of the Divine secrets, might have warned the lad against listening to vain delusions, might have given way to ungoverned jealousy and suspicion, might have stood on the dignity and pride of office. But instead of any of these, without the slightest trace of hurt pride, he took the boy's hand in his, and, so to speak, led him into the Divine Presence, knowing full well that the seals of sacred office, which had been taken from himself, were about to be laid on those youthful palms.

If Eli had inherited the traditions of the priesthood merely, he would stand between that young soul and God, hearing its confession, wielding over it a terrorising influence, and directing it, as in the place of God. Instead of this, however, the old man said sweetly, "Go and lie down again, and it shall be when He shall call thee, that thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' "

It is not the business of the Christian minister to lord it over the eager and aroused disciple, to demand confession, or offer absolution, but to say in effect: "Thou needest more than we can give. God, and God only, can suffice thee. Go, and lie down again. Be quiet. Let thy soul be still before God. Wait, for He will assuredly come again. And it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' "

As Thomas à Kempis puts it, " 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' "Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets, but rather do Thou speak, O Lord God, the Inspirer and Enlightener of all the prophets; for Thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me, but they without Thee can profit nothing. "Speak Thou unto me, to the comfort, however imperfect, of my soul, and to the amendment of my whole life, and to Thy praise, and glory, and honour everlasting."

(4) The message entrusted to the lad was a very terrible one. We cannot wonder that he feared to show Eli the vision. With a beautiful modesty and reticence he set about the duties of the day, and opened, as usual, the doors of the house of the Lord. It was not for him to blurt out the full thunder which had burst on him. This was another lovely trait in the boy's character. But he had misread Eli's character; he did not realise that men like him will die, but not murmur—will resign themselves without a word of expostulation or defence, determined to know the worst, and when they know it, meekly answering, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

(5) It is well to notice that the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word of the Lord. Let us not seek for revelations through dreams or visions, but by the Word of God. Nothing is more harmful than to contract the habit of listening for voices, and sleeping to dream. All manner of vagaries come in by that door. It is best to take in hand and read the Scriptures reverently, carefully, thoughtfully, crying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." And in response there will come one clear, defined, and repeated message, asseverated and accentuated with growing distinctness from every part of the inspired volume. "This is the way—walk in it; this is my will—do it; this is my word—speak it." Let us hear what God the Lord shall speak.

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## David Jeremiah - PLUGGED IN

1 SAMUEL 3:4 The LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"

Ernest Hemingway once lamented, "I live in a vacuum that is as lonely as a radio tube when the batteries are dead and there is no current to plug into."

Not so the Christian. We have a mission and a message. God has placed us on earth for a brief time to do an urgent work. Our lives have purpose, and all our days are scheduled in His perfect will. We travel an appointed way. What is the burning vision for your life? What does God want you to do?

Ask Him to show you. Read His Word, seeking His will for your life. Tell Him you're available. Say, like Samuel, "Here I am." Find something to do and begin doing it. Find a need and begin filling it.

Perhaps it's visiting someone in the hospital or nursing home or working with children in the church nursery. Perhaps it's singing in the choir, making visits for your church, or serving as an usher or greeter on Sunday morning.

Be faithful in that smaller thing, and the Lord will give you more work to do, and more and more—all for His glory. He wants to use you. He has a purpose for your life, and He alone can give you a vision of His will. (Borrow [Sanctuary : finding moments of refuge in the presence of God](#))

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1 Samuel 3:5 Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he

## went and lay down.

- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

### SAMUEL RUNS WHEN CALLED

**Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me."**- That Samuel ran to Eli implies Eli was nearby, but not inside the Holy Place like Samuel, or otherwise he presumably would have heard the LORD's call (assuming it was indeed an audible sound) and Samuel would hardly have needed to run to him. What do we learn about young Samuel? **"He ran...for you called me"** clearly indicates that Samuel was obedient even as a youth (a time when many are far from obedient! - I have raised 4 children so speak from experience - none were named "Samuel" or responded like Samuel!), even though he did not discern it was the LORD Who called to him.

**But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down-** The implication is that this was a divine call during the night because Eli tells him in essence "Go back to bed and get a good night's sleep." (And quit bothering me!)

**1 Samuel 3:6 The LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again."**

- 1Sa 4:16 Ge 43:29 2Sa 18:22 Mt 9:2
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

### YAHWEH'S SECOND CALL TO SAMUEL

**The LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again."** - Eli still did not grasp what was transpiring, another "symptom" of the dulling of aged Eli's "spiritual eyesight." We have to give Eli some credit however because at least he did not say "Quit bothering me and let me get some sleep!" Had he done so obedient Samuel may not have come the third time (just postulating)!

#### Calling You

The Lord called yet again, "Samuel!" — 1 Samuel 3:6

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

A couple of co-workers and I had just gone through airport security and were walking to our gate when I heard my name: "Paging Anne Cetas. Paging Anne Cetas." It's not a common name, so we knew it had to be mine. I assumed I had absent-mindedly left something at the check-in point. I checked with an airline agent, who told me to pick up a red phone, give my name, and ask why I was being paged. I searched for a phone and called, but the operator said, "No, we didn't page you." I said, "It was definitely my name." He replied twice, "No, we did not page you." I never did find out why I had been called that day.

A young boy named Samuel heard his name being "paged" long ago (1 Sam. 3:4). The Scriptures say that he "did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him" (v.7), so the temple priest Eli had to help him understand who was calling him (vv.8-9). God then revealed His plan for Samuel's life.

The Lord has a plan for us as well, and He calls to our hearts: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). That's His call to us to receive the gift of His salvation, rest, and peace.

The Savior is calling us to come to Him. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jesus calls me—I must follow,  
Follow Him today;  
When His tender voice is pleading,  
How can I delay?  
—Brown

Christ calls the restless ones to find their rest in Him.

**1 Samuel 3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him.**

- **did not yet:** Jer 9:24 Ac 19:2
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Jer 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but **let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me**, that I am the LORD Who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

### SAMUEL DID NOT YET KNOW YAHWEH

**Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD - Know** is the Hebrew verb [yada](#) (Lxx = [ginosko](#) = speaks of knowing by experience) and thus speaks of intimate knowing (cf 1Sa 1:19+ = Heb = "Elkanah **knew** his wife." cf "the man had relations [[yada](#)] with his wife Eve" Ge 4:1+). The second use of [yada](#) (Lxx = [ginosko](#)) is 1Sa 2:12 "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not **know** ([yada](#); Lxx = [ginosko](#)) the LORD." So neither Samuel nor Eli's sons knew the Lord, but there are four significant differences. One, Samuel was young, they were older, presumably more "mature" and were the priests who were to serve as the go between for the people and God. Two, Samuel stayed close to the LORD, sleeping in the Holy Place, while they "slept" with the women who helped take care of the Temple (1Sa 2:22+). Third, Samuel was clearly obedient to Eli, while the sons rejected Eli's counsel. Fourth, and most significant, is the fact that Samuel did come to truly **know the LORD** and eternal life, whereas the two sons of Eli did not know the LORD and ended their life entering into eternal death!

**THOUGHT** - There is an interesting lesson in this section. Samuel was not destitute of the knowledge of God, even as Eli's sons were not destitute of divine knowledge. Samuel knew about God and served Him faithfully, even sleeping in His Temple. But Samuel did not know God personally at this time. That would soon change! In this sense Samuel was like those today (in and out of church) who know Who God is, may even be able to quote Scriptures, may worship in church every Sunday, may give money to God's work, etc, but sadly are devoid of knowing Who God is personally in Jesus Christ. As Jesus prayed "This is eternal life, that they **MAY KNOW** ([ginosko](#)) You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent." (Jn 17:3) This begs the question one must address "Do I truly know the LORD, or do I just know about the LORD? Your answer to the most important question you will ever be asked will determine your destiny in time and for all eternity. (cf those who profess "Lord, Lord" in Mt 7:21-23+).

**Nor had the Word of the LORD yet been revealed** ([galah](#); Lxx = [apokalupto](#)) **to him** - Note **not yet** functions as a time phrase, indicating not yet, with the implication it would eventually be revealed to Samuel, just as it came to pass! **Been revealed** is translated in the Septuagint with [apokalupto](#) ([apó](#) = from + [kalúpto](#) = cover, conceal, Eng = apocalypse) literally means to remove the cover from and thus figuratively means to remove that which conceals something, in this case the Word of the LORD. Almost all of the NT uses of [apokalupto](#) have a figurative sense, especially to describing some aspect of spiritual truth that had heretofore hidden but now has had the "lid removed" so that it could be seen (understood). We are continually in desperate need for God to remove the lid from His Word, the Bible, so that we might see and understand and obey! Samuel had presumably heard the Word of the LORD (albeit, such a Word was rare in those days). We know that Moses had recorded God's Word because Joshua 1:8+ says "**This book of the law** shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to **all that is written in it**; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

**THOUGHT** - Note the important principle. Supernatural revelation can only transpire by supernatural means! One can know what the Bible says (e.g., most football fans have seen the "John 3:16" signs at games), but have no saving knowledge of Him, because it has not yet been revealed by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.

**Spurgeon** - There was the Beginning of the work of grace in his heart, he was well-intentioned; but as yet God had not revealed himself to him: "Samuel did not yet know the Lord," We do not blame Samuel, for he was but a child, and spiritual understanding had not yet fully come to him; but what shall I say of some to whom God has spoken for years till their hair is grey, and yet they have not understood the voice of the Lord even to this hour? I pray God that he may call them yet again The Lord did not disdain to call



Samuel four times, for when he means effectually to call, if one call is not sufficient, he will call again and again and again: "The Lord called Samuel again the third time."

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**Revealed** (01540)(galah) means to uncover (sadly the first use = Noah uncovering himself after becoming drunk! - Ge 9:21, cp Lev 18:6 prohibiting "uncover nakedness" ~ sexual relations), to reveal (God revealed Himself to Jacob at Bethel, and thus the name El-Bethel - Ge 35:7. 2Sa 2:27), expose (Ex 20:26), open (God opened the eyes of Balaam to see the Angel of the LORD - Nu 22:31), reveal (Dt 29:29). Galah is used of not yet revealing the Word of the LORD to Samuel (1Sa 3:7) and of revealing Himself to Samuel (1Sa 3:21).

Moses uses galah to describe the opening of Balaam's eyes to spiritual realities! = "Then the LORD **opened** (galah; Lxx = **apokalupto**) the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the [Angel of the LORD](#) standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground." (Nu 22:31+) While I would not advocate following most of Balaam's example, his bowing down when the truth was revealed (I think he saw the pre-incarnate Christ - [Angel of the LORD](#)) is a good practice for God's children to imitate. We don't worship the word revealed but we do bow down to the God Who is the Word (Jn 1:1-3+)!

**Galah in 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles** - 1 Sam. 2:27; 1 Sam. 3:7; 1 Sam. 3:21; 1 Sam. 4:21; 1 Sam. 4:22; 1 Sam. 9:15; 1 Sam. 14:8; 1 Sam. 14:11; 1 Sam. 20:2; 1 Sam. 20:12; 1 Sam. 20:13; 1 Sam. 22:8; 1 Sam. 22:17; 2 Sam. 6:20; 2 Sam. 7:27; 2 Sam. 15:19; 2 Sam. 22:16; 2 Ki. 15:29; 2 Ki. 16:9; 2 Ki. 17:6; 2 Ki. 17:11; 2 Ki. 17:23; 2 Ki. 17:26; 2 Ki. 17:27; 2 Ki. 17:28; 2 Ki. 17:33; 2 Ki. 18:11; 2 Ki. 24:14; 2 Ki. 24:15; 2 Ki. 25:11; 2 Ki. 25:21; 1 Chr. 5:6; 1 Chr. 5:26; 1 Chr. 6:15; 1 Chr. 8:6; 1 Chr. 8:7; 1 Chr. 9:1; 1 Chr. 17:25; 2 Chr. 36:20;

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### Henry Blackaby - Learning to Hear from God

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. 1 Samuel 3:7-8

Samuel grew into one of the greatest spiritual leaders the Israelites ever had. He was a fearless spokesman for God. When the people needed direction, Samuel brought a word from God. When the king needed to hear from God, Samuel was his man. Samuel walked so closely with God that he never had to wonder what God wanted him to do; God gave him clear guidance every step of the way.

Perhaps you know a man or woman who, like Samuel, seems to have an inside track with God. Do you wish you knew God like that? The Christian life is such that everyone begins at the same place. Think of the most godly Christians you know. They started out just like everyone else—as strangers to God. Every Christian starts out completely disoriented to God. Samuel was no exception. When God first called out to him, Samuel didn't even recognize who was speaking! He assumed it was the priest Eli. Samuel had to learn how to recognize God's voice and to understand what God was saying to him, just like everyone else. After years of spending time with God, Samuel came to recognize his voice instantly.

There is no other way to learn how to identify God's voice than to spend time talking with him. The exciting thing is that you have the same opportunity as the greatest spiritual giants you know. God will speak to you just as he speaks to them. Samuel took advantage of every opportunity he had to get to know God. As a result, God did great things through Samuel's life. You may not always recognize God's voice now, but continue spending time with him. The day will come when you won't have to wonder if it's God speaking. You'll know who it is. (Borrow [The experience : a devotional and journal : day by day with God](#))

**1 Samuel 3:8 So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy.**

- **the third:** Job 33:14,15 Although Samuel did not apprehend the way in which God reveals himself to his servants the prophets--by the "still small voice"- (1Ki 19:12)-yet when this direct communication from the Almighty was made the third time, in a way altogether new and strange to him.
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

**THE THIRD TIME  
IS THE CHARM**

[The third time is the charm](#) is an English idiom which is used to say that two efforts at something have already failed but perhaps the third will be successful. Of course, God could have revealed Himself the first time had He chosen to do so. Perhaps part of the reason for the repetition was to demonstrate to old Eli that the "baton was being passed" to young Samuel!

**So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time-** If Samuel had been playing baseball, we would have said "[Three strikes and you're out.](#)" but he was playing "*prophet in preparation,*" and so we soon discover that it's "Three strikes and you're **IN**" (**IN** the Spirit as God's prophet)!

**And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me."**- Once again see young Samuel's obedient heart, a truth he would echo later to disobedient Saul declaring "**Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,** and to heed than the fat of rams." (1Sa 15:22+). It would have been easy for Samuel to ignore this third call, to roll over and fall back asleep. Not so with Samuel whose actions and words to Eli indicated his persistently willing, obedient spirit.

**Then Eli discerned ([bin/biyn](#)) that the LORD was calling the boy-** Note Samuel is still referred to as a **boy**, indicating he was relatively young when the call of God first came on his life. Another notable example of the powerful call of God was God's call to a boy named [C H Spurgeon at age 15](#) ([Read Spurgeon's own description of this "providential" event](#)), a call which led him to burn brightly for the next 43 years (died at age 58) as the greatest preacher in the English language!

**Then** is a time sensitive word as it marks progression, in this case progression in the insight of Eli. Eli was old and clearly had some spiritual weaknesses (especially failure to properly discipline his sons, the spiritual leaders of Israel), he was spiritually astute enough that he **discerned** ([bin/biyn](#)) this was Yahweh speaking to young Samuel. Obviously the Spirit of God also opened Eli's understanding to this truth, for in his natural state he could still not have perceived this was the voice of Yahweh. Notice he does not "guess" that it was Yahweh, but clearly understood it was Yahweh, indicating it had been spiritually revealed to him (cf comments on "revealed" in 1Sa 3:7). And so we must give Eli some credit, because he did tell young Samuel to go back to sleep, or tell him something like "You must have eaten a bad batch of matzoh bread causing you indigestion and making you think you are hearing things."

**Discerned** ([bin/biyn](#)) is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [sophizo](#) (used in 2Ti 3:15 = "give wisdom") which means to make one wise and here in the middle voice means to reason out something. Old Eli reasoned it out - the third time was the charm!

[David Guzik](#) has an interesting application of God's repetitive speaking to Samuel - When speaking to us, God almost always confirms His word again and again. It is generally wrong to do something dramatic in response to a single "inner voice" from the Lord. If God speaks He will confirm, and often in a variety of ways.

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**Discerned** (understood) ([0995](#)) [bin/biyn](#) means basically to distinguish, to separate, to understand or to perceive. From this is derived the common meaning, "to discern, to see distinctions, to perceive." The verb refers to knowledge which is superior to the mere gathering of data. **Bin/biyn** conveys the same idea as our word discrimination. It entails the idea of making a distinction as in 1Ki 3:9 where Solomon ask God for the ability "to **discern** ([bin/biyn](#)) between good and evil". Many of the OT uses of **bin/biyn** are translated "**understanding**," an understanding which is the result of comparative "study" or "mental separation". can perceive by means of their senses: eyes (Prov. 7:7); ears (Prov. 29:19); touch (Ps. 58:9[10]); taste (Job 6:30). But actual discerning is not assured. Those who hear do not always understand (Dan. 12:8). In the final analysis, only God gives and conceals understanding (Isa. 29:14). The verb [yada](#) can also mean "understanding" in the sense of ability (e.g. Esau as a skilful hunter), but [yada](#) generally describes the process whereby one gains knowledge through experience with objects and circumstances, while [bin/biyn](#) is a power of judgment and perceptive insight and is demonstrated in the use of knowledge.

**1 Samuel 3:9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his place.**

- **Speak:** Ex 20:19 Ps 85:8 Isa 6:8 Da 10:19 Ac 9:6
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## **ELI GIVES DEFINITIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

**And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, **Speak, LORD, for Your servant** ([ebed](#); Lxx = [doulos](#) see [note below](#)) **is listening** ([shama](#); Lxx = [akouo](#) in present tense = continually).'** Recognizing the call of God is not always easy. Here Eli performed faithfully as a witness, and Samuel was instructed to return and indicate his willingness to

hear whatever God would say. It is notable that Eli saw Samuel as the **servant** of Yahweh, indicating that he had clearly perceived something different about the demeanor of Samuel in contrast to his worthless sons.

**Spurgeon** - It was a chastisement to Eli that God did not speak directly to him, but sent him a message by another; and it must have been very humiliating to the aged man of God that God should select a little child to be his messenger to him. Yet, as Eli had not been faithful, it was great mercy on God's part to speak to him at all; and no doubt the old man did not resent the fact that God, instead of speaking to one of his sons, or to himself, spoke by this little child. Eli loved Samuel, and finding that the Lord intended to use this child, he did not grow jealous and angry, and begin to damp the child's spirit; but he gave him wise directions how to act in case God should speak to him again.

**Eli's instructions are significant.** **First**, he encourages Samuel to seek the LORD to speak to him, where the verb **speak** is a command, not in the sense of demanding God speak, but expressive of such a willingness to hear that he uses the imperative mood. It would be something like "Please speak LORD, because I need to hear Your voice and know Your will." **Second**, Eli tells Samuel to identify himself as Yahweh's servant, something undoubtedly Samuel had evidenced to Eli as he faithfully served in the Temple. This is something Eli could never have told his sons, so there must have been some [bittersweet](#) joy that he could confidently say this to Samuel. **Thirdly**, Eli says to tell Yahweh that he was **listening**. At first glance, **listening** does not sound that significant, for in fact Samuel had already heard Yahweh voice three times. But Eli is clearly indicating a different type of **listening** than when one simply hears audible sounds. This is the picture of hearing with an open, receptive heart that is ready and willing to obey what Yahweh says. **Listening** conveys the sense of "I am ready to obey what I hear You say." Eli speaks something to young Samuel he could never have spoken with any positive effect to his disobedient sons.

**David Guzik** adds that "Eli gave Samuel wise counsel. Eli told Samuel to: (1) Make himself available for God to speak (Go, lie down) (2) Not be presumptuous about God speaking (if He calls you) (3) Respond to the word of God (Speak, Lord) (3) Humble himself before God and His word (Your servant hears)

**THOUGHT** - This is the type of listening every believer should practice. How easy it is to listen to the Bible digitally or hear a stirring from one of God's men, and yet walk away, allowing God's Words to "[go in one ear and out the other](#)." We must avoid this [deluding](#) type of listening. And so James commands us to **'prove yourselves doers** of the word, and not merely **hearers** who delude ([paralogizomai](#) in present tense = continually) themselves. **For** (term of explanation - why we must TRULY "listen") if anyone is a **hearer** ([akroates](#)) of the Word and not a **doer** ([poietes](#)), he is like ([term of comparison = simile](#)) a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for (term of explanation) **once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten** ([epilanthanomai](#)) **what kind of person he was**. But (THE DESIRED CONTRAST) one who **looks intently** ([parakupto](#)) at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and **abides by it**, not having become a **forgetful hearer** but an **effectual doer**, (HERE IS THE PROMISE OF TRUST AND OBEY!) this man will be blessed ([makarios](#)) in what he does. " (James 1:22-25+)

**EXCURSUS ON DOULOS** - [Doulos](#) is used in this verse in the Septuagint to translate **servant** - A *doulos* is one bound to another in servitude and conveys the idea of the servant's close, binding ties with his master, belonging to him, obligated to and desiring to do his will and in a permanent relation of servitude. In sum, the will of the **doulos** is consumed in the will of the master. *Doulos* speaks of submission to one's master The *doulos* had no life of his own, no will of his own, no purpose of his own and no plan of his own. All was subject to his master. The bondservant's every thought, breath, and effort was subject to the will of his master. In sum, the picture of a bondservant is one who is absolutely surrendered and totally devoted to his master.

**THOUGHT**- Based on this description, would you classify yourself as a *doulos* of the Lord Jesus Christ?

**So Samuel went and lay down in his place** - Don't miss the phrase **So Samuel**, for this speaks of his unquestioning, unhesitating obedience (As a general rule to hesitate is to disobey when the command or call is clear. Stated another way "delayed obedience is disobedience!"). Samuel would prove true those great words in the hymn [Trust and Obey](#), for he did listen and he did obey and he was blessed, as God made him into one of the greatest prophets and greatest men of the Bible!

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will, He abides with us still  
And with all who will trust and obey

Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey

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**Servant** ([05650](#)) 'ebed from 'abad = work in any sense) means a slave or bondservant. Slavery in Israel amounted to indentured

servitude. A fellow Israelite could not be held indefinitely against his will. In fact, his time of service was limited to 6 yr (Ex 21:2). The master could be punished if evil intent against the slave was proven (Ex 21:14) or if the slave died (Ex 21:20). These types of servants held a position of honor (Ge 24:2ff; 41:12, 15:2).

**Listening** (obey, understand)(08085) **shama** means to hear (Adam and Eve hearing God = Ge 3:8, 10, Ge 18:10 = "overheard"), to listen (Ge 3:17, Ge 16:2 [= this was a big mistake and was the origin of Jews and Arabs!] Ex 6:9,16:20, 18:19, Webster's 1828 on "listen" = to hearken; to give ear; to attend closely with a view to hear. To obey; to yield to advice; to follow admonition) and since hearing/listening are often closely linked to obedience, shama is translated obey (1 Sa 15:22, Ge 22:18, 26:5, 39:10, Ex 19:5, disobedience = Lev 26:14, 18, 21, 27) or to understand. KJV translates shama "hearken" (196x) a word which means to give respectful attention. Of God's hearing in general or hearing our prayers (Hab 1:2, Ps 66:18, click here for more in the Psalms, cf God's hearing in Zeph 2:8, Ge 16:11, 17:20, 30:17, 22, Ge 21:17, 29:33, 30:6, 17, 22; Ex 2:24, Ex 16:8, 9, 12, Nu 11:1, 12:2). Shama means "to hear intelligently and attentively and respond appropriately." In other words to hear does not convey the idea of "in one ear and out the other!"

The greatest significance of the use of **shama** is that of relation of man to God, especially where the context speaks of obedience. Obedience is the supreme test of faith and reverence for God. The Old Testament conception of obedience was vital. It was the one important relationship which must not be broken. While sometimes this relation may have been formal and cold, it nevertheless was the one strong tie which held the people close to God. The significant spiritual relation is expressed by Samuel when he asks the question, "Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying (shama) the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey (shama) is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sa 15:22). It was the condition without which no right relation might be sustained to Yahweh. This is most clearly stated in the relation between Abraham and Yahweh when he is assured "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed (shama) my voice" (Ge 22:18).

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**Spurgeon** - Come, Lord, my God. My soul invites you earnestly and waits for you eagerly. Come to me, Jesus, my Well Beloved, and plant fresh flowers in my garden such as I see blooming in such perfection in Your matchless character! Come, my Father, who is the Husbandman, and deal with me in your tenderness and prudence! Come, Holy Spirit, and bedew my whole nature, as the herbs are now moistened with the evening dews. Oh, that God would speak to me! "Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:9). Oh, that He would walk with me; I am ready to give up my whole heart and mind to Him. I am only asking what He delights to give. (Daily Help)

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## Hearing Aid

It shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears." — 1 Samuel 3:9

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Joshua, a precocious 2-year-old, watched his mother baking cookies. "Please, may I have one?" he asked hopefully. "Not before supper," his mother replied. Joshua ran tearfully to his room, then reappeared with this message: "Jesus just told me it's okay to have a cookie now." "Jesus didn't tell me," his mother retorted. Joshua replied, "You must not have been listening!"

Joshua's motivation was wrong, but he was absolutely right about two things: God longs to speak to us, and we need to listen.

In 1 Samuel 3, another young boy learned those same ageless principles. When Samuel followed Eli's counsel and prayed, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears," he was open to receiving God's powerful message (v.9). Like Samuel, we long to hear God speaking to us but often fail to discern His voice.

God spoke audibly to Samuel. Today He speaks to us by His Spirit through the Scriptures, other people, and our circumstances. But as a result of neglect and nonstop activity, some of us have become "hard of hearing." We need a "spiritual hearing aid" like the one in Samuel's prayer: "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears" (v.9). This humble attitude is a real help for the spiritually hard of hearing. By: Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

## Adjusting Your Hearing Aid

Set a specific time to read God's Word each day.

Meditate on what you have read.

Make prayer a priority throughout the day.

God speaks through His Word—take time to listen.

**1 Samuel 3:10 Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."**

- **the Lord came:** This seems to imply a visible appearance, as well as an audible voice.
- **as at other:** 1Sa 3:4-6,8
- [1 Samuel 3:10 Speak Lord](#) - Spurgeon
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## **THE VOICE OF THE LORD REVEALED TO THE MAN OF GOD**

**Then** - Marks progression in the narrative.

**The LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"** - Note the time phrase as **at other times**. Which times? Surely the 3 previous occasions of calling out to young Samuel. This fourth time was like the **other times** and here we learn Yahweh **came and stood**. This implies Yahweh's personal presence, even as the [Angel of the LORD](#) had stood before other Old Testament saints. If that is the case, then why did Samuel not see Him as well as hear Him. We can only surmise that he was supernaturally prevented from seeing Him, if in fact Yahweh was visibly present the 3 previous occasions.

Note also the repetition of his name which in Scripture always indicates a message of special importance. Study these other examples: Abraham (Ge 22:11); Moses (Ex 3:4); Jerusalem (Mt 23:37) Martha (Lu 10:41) Simon (Lu 22:31), Saul (Acts 9:4 Actus 22:7 Acts 26:14)

**And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."** - It is interesting that Samuel did not say **Speak Lord**, and yet for Samuel to call himself **Your servant** clearly implies he recognized and accepted the Speaker as His Lord and Master. As noted above the Hebrew word **listening** means "to hear with a view to obeying." Samuel was listening to God's Word and was determined to obey it.

**Wiersbe** - Samuel's response was, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam. 3:10, niv), and he left out the word, "Lord" (see v. 9). Why? Samuel didn't yet have a personal knowledge of the Lord (v. 7), so he couldn't know whose voice it was that had spoken to him. Perhaps he was being careful not to accept it as the voice of Jehovah when he had no way to be sure. (From [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**David Guzik** admonishes that "We must hear from God. The preacher may speak, our parents may speak, our friends may speak, our teachers may speak, those on the radio or television may speak. That is all fine, but their voices mean nothing for eternity unless God speaks through them."

**R W DeHaan** wrote "Thomas ^ Kempis (1379-1471) summed it: "Blessed indeed are those ears which listen not for the voice sounding without, but for the truth teaching inwardly. Blessed are the eyes that are shut to outward things but intent on things inward. Blessed are they who are glad to have time to spare for God, and who shake off all worldly hindrances. Consider these things, O my soul, and hear what the Lord your God speaks." How long has it been since you've asked the Lord to make your heart receptive to His Word? He wants to hear you say, "Speak, Lord, I'm listening."

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,  
While I wait on Thee;  
Hushed my heart to listen  
In expectancy. --Grimes

God speaks to those who take time to listen.

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**Spurgeon** - From which we learn that there was some hind of appearance to Samuel such as that which was manifested to others. Some spiritual being was before him, though he could not make out the form thereof: "Jehovah came, and stood," —

This time the child's name was spoken twice, as though God would say to him, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine? It was no doubt to make a deeper impression upon the child's mind that his name was twice called by the Lord.

You observe that he did not say, "Lord;" perhaps he hardly dared to take that sacred name upon his lips. He was impressed with such solemn awe at the name of God, that he said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." I wish that some Christian men of my acquaintance would leave out the Lord's name a little in their prayers, for we may take the name of the Lord in vain even in our

supplications. When the heathen are addressing their gods, they are accustomed to repeat their names over and over again. "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!" or, as the Hindoos do when they cry, "Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!" "repeating the name of their god; but as for us, when we think of the infinitely-glorious One, we dare not needlessly repeat his name.

Do you ever get alone and sit still and say, as Samuel did, in the dead of night, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? If you never do that, the little child Samuel may well rebuke you. He was willing that God should speak to him. But, oh, we are so busy! So busy! So sadly busy!

Samuel was asleep, yet he heard God's voice. But I know some people who are awake, yet have not heard it.

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### **The devotion of hearing - Oswald Chambers**

Speak; for Thy servant heareth. 1 Samuel 3:10.

Because I have listened definitely to one thing from God, it does not follow that I will listen to everything He says. The way in which I show God that I neither love nor respect Him is by the obtuseness of my heart and mind towards what He says. If I love my friend, I intuitively detect what he wants, and Jesus says, "Ye are My friends." Have I disobeyed some command of my Lord's this week? If I had realized that it was a command of Jesus, I would not consciously have disobeyed it; but most of us show such disrespect to God that we do not even hear what He says, He might never have spoken.

The destiny of my spiritual life is such identification with Jesus Christ that I always hear God, and I know that God always hears me (John 11:41). If I am united with Jesus Christ, I hear God by the devotion of hearing all the time. A lily, or a tree, or a servant of God, may convey God's message to me. What hinders me from hearing is that I am taken up with other things. It is not that I will not hear God, but that I am not devoted in the right place. I am devoted to things, to service, to convictions, and God may say what He likes but I do not hear Him. The child attitude is always "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." If I have not cultivated this devotion of hearing, I can only hear God's voice at certain times; at other times I am taken up with things—things which I say I must do, and I become deaf to Him, I am not living the life of a child. Have I heard God's voice to-day? (Borrow [My utmost for His Highest : selections for the year : the golden book of Oswald Chambers](#))

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### **A W Tozer - ANSWERING GOD'S CALL**

The Lord...called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. 1 Samuel 3:10

When will men and women realize that when God calls us out, He is completely faithful to call us into something better?

In his faith Abraham was against idolatry and idol making, but that was not his crusade. Because of his faith, God led him into a promised land, into possessions and into the lineage that brought forth the Messiah. The call of God is always to something better—keep that in mind!

God calls us into the joys and reality of eternal life. He calls us into purity of life and spirit, so that we may acceptably walk with Him. He calls us into a life of service and usefulness that brings glory to Himself as God. He calls us into the sweetest fellowship possible on this earth—the fellowship of the family of God!

If God takes away from us the old, wrinkled, beat-up dollar bill we clutch so desperately, it is only because He wants to exchange it for the whole federal mint, the entire treasury! He is saying, "I have in store for you all the resources of heaven. Help yourself!"

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### **R C Sproul - Samuel Meets God 1 SAMUEL 3:1-14**

Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Sam. 3:10).

In 1 Samuel 2, God sent a prophet, a "man of God," to convey a message to Eli. Here in 1 Samuel 3, He sends another messenger—Samuel, a "boy of God," as it were—with another communication for the priest. Samuel does not yet know the Lord (v. 7); although he loves God, he has not been used as His conduit of revelation before. That is about to change. God is about to make Samuel His prophet. The God of Israel is about to end His silence.

It is late in Eli's life—he is old and nearly blind. And it is late one night—Eli has gone to bed and Samuel is sleeping nearby, apparently within the tabernacle itself. We are told that the lamp of God in the tabernacle has not gone out. This may be a comment about the time of day—the lamp is to be kept burning continually, but perhaps the priests have become inattentive to this command and typically let it burn overnight. Or the author may be setting this incident in its historical context, indicating that the tabernacle is still functioning and has not yet been destroyed by Israel's enemies. In any case, Samuel is pulled from his bed by the sound of

someone calling his name. As far as he knows, Eli is the only person who would call, so he goes to the old man's bed to see what he needs. But Eli denies that he called and sends Samuel back to bed. Three times this happens, and only then does Eli realize what is happening, that God is calling the boy. Perhaps it is humiliating to him, the high priest, to be bypassed by God in favor of a small boy, and yet he willingly instructs Samuel as to what to do should the call come again. Eli seems to know that the word of God is more important than its channel.

God Himself then comes and stands, perhaps in visible form, within the tabernacle, and repeats His call, doubling it for emphasis: " 'Samuel! Samuel!' " And Samuel, summoning his courage, replies as Eli suggested: " 'Speak, for Your servant hears.' " The message he then hears is that Eli should prepare himself, for the judgment of God on his house is near at hand. As we have seen, it is a judgment against Eli's sons, who have " 'made themselves vile,' " and against Eli for not restraining them. God already has passed judgment and is prepared to execute His sentence. And when He does, " 'both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle,' " for His hand will be evident.

CORAM DEO Samuel did not yet know God when God first came to him. But God knew him even before Hannah asked for him, and He knew the future that lay ahead of Samuel. God our Creator knows us all, and if we know Him it is because He has revealed Himself to us. If you know Him, thank Him that He has graciously made that possible.

For further study: 1 Sam. 28:6 • Pss. 74:9; 119:20 • Jer. 29:11 • Amos 8:11–12

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### **1 Samuel 3:10 A Clear Call**

When George Washington Carver was a student at Iowa Agricultural College (now Iowa State University), he and a friend planned to go as missionaries to Africa. But as his agricultural studies progressed, Carver, a devout Christian, began to sense a different calling from God.

When Booker T. Washington asked him to join the faculty of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Carver made it a matter of earnest prayer. In 1896, Carver wrote to Washington: "It has been the one ideal of my life to be of the greatest good to the greatest number of my people possible, and to this end I have been preparing myself for these many years." He pledged to do all he could through the power of Christ to better the conditions of African-Americans in the racially segregated South.

Carver's sensitive heart and willing obedience to God bring to mind the experience of Samuel. Under the guidance of Eli the priest, Samuel responded to God's voice by saying, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10).

During a lifetime of service, the distinguished African-American scientist George Washington Carver honored God by obeying His call. He has left a rich legacy and lasting example for us all. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Oh, make me, Lord, so much like Thee,  
My life controlled by power divine,  
That I a shining light may be  
From which Thy grace may ever shine.  
—Robertson

**A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.**

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### **The Lure Of A Message**

Speak, for Your servant hears. — 1 Samuel 3:10

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

You're sitting in a darkened theater enjoying a concert, a play, or a film, when suddenly a smartphone screen lights up as a person reads an incoming text and perhaps takes time to reply. In his book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, Nicholas Carr says that in our connected world, "The sense that there might be a message out there for us" is increasingly difficult to resist.

Samuel was a young boy when he heard a voice call his name and thought it was Eli the priest in the tabernacle where he served the Lord (1 Sam. 3:1-7). When Eli realized that God was calling Samuel, he told the boy how to respond. When God called his name a fourth time, "Samuel answered, 'Speak, for Your servant hears'" (v.10). This attentiveness to God's voice became the pattern of Samuel's life as "the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (v.21).

Are we listening for God's voice in our lives today? Are we more drawn by the vibration of a smartphone than the still, small voice of the Lord through His Word and His Spirit?

May we, like Samuel, learn to discern God's voice and say, "Speak, Lord. I'm listening." By: David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread](#).  
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May we listen, Lord, to You  
As You speak to us today  
Through Your Spirit and Your Word—  
Help us follow and obey.  
—Sper

Don't let the noise of the world keep you from hearing the voice of the Lord.

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### **God Is Talking**

Years ago, an annoyed senior citizen from Richmond Heights, Missouri, hung up on President Reagan, who was trying to call him. This happened not just once, but half a dozen times! He didn't believe the operator when she insisted that the White House was calling. He was so sure it was a prank that he didn't stay on the line. But the Southwestern Bell operator and a neighbor finally convinced him it was for real. As a result, the man had the privilege of chatting with President Reagan for about 15 minutes.

That incident reminded me of a call received centuries ago by a young Israelite named Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-15). He didn't realize who was calling--even after the call was repeated. It came from one greater than a president. It was from God Himself. At first Samuel was perplexed, but when Eli told him who was trying to get through to him, he listened.

Have you ever heard the Lord speaking to you? God speaks to us today through His written Word, the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and indwells us in the person of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to hear His voice (1 Cor. 2:9-16).

God is always trying to get through to us! The important question is this: Are we taking the time to listen? —Mart De Haan [Our Daily Bread](#).  
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We need to take the time each day  
To read God's Word and pray,  
And listen for what He might say  
To guide us on our way.  
--Sper

**God speaks through His Word to those who listen with their heart.**

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### **Do You Have Your Ears On?**

Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." — 1 Samuel 3:10

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Pagers seem to be everywhere these days. People who have one of these devices clipped to their belt receive a signal when they are needed. Being able to stay in touch with their home or office can give them great peace of mind. They know that if someone wants to contact them, they can be reached anywhere and at any time.

That's the kind of open line we need to maintain with heaven. Whatever peace of mind we get from carrying a pager or cell phone is minimal compared with the confidence of knowing that when God wants to speak to us through His Word, we're in a position to hear Him.

In chapters 2 and 3 of 1 Samuel, we learn that Eli was apparently no longer in that position. He had lost his spiritual receptivity because he had tolerated evil by not restraining his two sons for their wickedness. But Samuel had been dedicated to the Lord from his childhood, and in his innocence and openness he was able to hear heaven's message.

Check the "ears" of your heart. Are they dull because you are disobeying the Lord? You can regain the confidence of a clear conscience by confessing your sin. Then you will be able to say, "Speak, for Your servant hears." By: Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread](#).  
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**F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily -**

1 Samuel 3:10 And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel!



See the urgency of God! Four times He came, and stood, and called. Mark how He stands at the door to knock. At first He was content to call the lad once by name; but after three unsuccessful attempts to attract him to Himself, He uttered the name twice, with strong urgency in the appeal, Samuel! Samuel! This has been called God's double knock. There are seven or eight of these double knocks in Scripture: Simon, Simon; Saul, Saul; Abraham, Abraham.

How may we be sure of a Divine call?

We may know God's call when it grows in intensity.—If an impression comes into your soul, and you are not quite sure of its origin, pray over it; above all, act on it so far as possible, follow in the direction in which it leads—and as you lift up your soul before God, it will wax or wane. If it wanes at all, abandon it. If it waxes, follow it, though all hell attempt to stay you.

We may test God's call by the assistance of godly friends.—The aged Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, and gave him good advice as to the manner in which he should respond to it. Our special gifts and the drift of our circumstances will also assuredly concur in one of God's calls.

We may test God's call by its effect on us.— Does it lead to self-denial? Does it induce us to leave the comfortable bed and step into the cold? Does it drive us forth to minister to others? Does it make us more unselfish, loving, tender, modest, humble? Whatever is to the humbling of our pride, and the glory of God, may be truly deemed God's call. Be quick to respond, and fearlessly deliver the message the Lord has given you.

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### Keep Your Ears Open

Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." — 1 Samuel 3:10

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

When our family lived in Florida, I would often awaken in the morning to the cheerful sounds of a mockingbird outside my window. The first time I heard him, I was thrilled by the beauty of his melody. But soon my ears became accustomed to his songs and I began taking his sunrise concerts for granted. In time I was no longer "hearing" him. This was my own fault. Mr. Mockingbird was still there singing every morning, but I was no longer listening.

A similar thing happens if we stop "hearing" God speak to us through the Scriptures. When we first become Christians, it's a joy to read and study the Bible. Its words speak to our heart. They are like music to our ears. We thrill as we see God's plan unfold throughout its pages. But in time, reading the Bible can become routine, and before long we may neglect it entirely. As a result, we no longer "hear" God speak to us. The negative effects of this pattern go unnoticed, until one day we wake up and realize what we've been missing.

How much better to have the attitude of Samuel, who said, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10).

God speaks to us through His Word. The question is, are we keeping our ears open? —Richard De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,  
While I wait on Thee;  
Hushed my heart to listen  
In expectancy.  
—Grimes

The more we read the sacred pages, the better we know the Rock of Ages.

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### Hearing God

Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:10

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 3:1–10

I felt like I was underwater, sounds muffled and muted by a cold and allergies. For weeks I struggled to hear clearly. My condition made me realize how much I take my hearing for granted.

Young Samuel in the temple must have wondered what he was hearing as he struggled out of sleep at the summons of his name (1 Sam. 3:4). Three times he presented himself before Eli, the high priest. Only the third time did Eli realize it was the Lord speaking to Samuel. The word of the Lord had been rare at that time (v. 1), and the people were not in tune with His voice. But Eli instructed

Samuel how to respond (v. 9).

The Lord speaks much more now than in the days of Samuel. The letter to the Hebrews tells us, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets . . . but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (1:1–2). And in Acts 2 we read of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (vv. 1–4), who guides us in the things Christ taught us (John 16:13). But we need to learn to hear His voice and respond in obedience. Like me with my cold, we may hear as if underwater. We need to test what we think is the Lord's guidance with the Bible and with other mature Christians. As God's beloved children, we do hear His voice. He loves to speak life into us. By: Amy Boucher Pye ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Open our eyes, Lord, that we might see You.

Open our ears, that we may hear You.

Open our mouths, that we might speak Your praise.

The Lord speaks to His children, but we need to discern His voice.

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## ARE YOU LISTENING?

"Speak, for Your servant hears."-- 1 Samuel 3:10

One of the happiest memories of my childhood is that of my mother reading Bible stories to me at

bedtime. Many of them made a great impression on me, especially the incident in the life of Samuel described in 1 Samuel 3. I can still hear my mother reciting the young boy's response to the call of God: "Speak, for Your servant hears" (v. 10).

We need to be like Samuel, willing to pause in the midst of life's turmoil to hear the voice of the Lord. And we have this opportunity if we prayerfully read and study the Bible regularly. You see, God's Spirit communicates to us through the Word.

Thomas a' Kempis (1379-1471) summed it up well when he wrote:

"Blessed indeed are those ears which listen not for the voice sounding without, but for the truth teaching inwardly. Blessed are the eyes that shut to outward things but intent on things inward. Blessed are they who are glad to have time to spare for God, and who shake off all worldly hindrances. Consider these things, O my soul, and hear what the Lord your God speaks."

How long has it been since you've asked the Lord to make your heart receptive to His Word? He wants to hear you say, "Speak, Lord, I'm listening." -- R W De Haan

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,

While I wait on Thee;

Hushed my heart to listen

In expectancy.

God speaks to those who take time to listen.

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**1 Samuel 3:11 The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.**

- **I am about to do:** Isa 29:14 Am 3:6,7 Hab 1:5 Ac 13:41
- both the ears: 2Ki 21:12 Isa 28:19 Jer 19:3 Lu 21:26
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## SAMUEL FIRST PROPHECY WILL CAUSE "DIVINE TINNITUS"!

**Tinnitus** - While often described as a ringing, it may also sound like a clicking, buzzing, hiss, or roaring. The sound may be soft or loud, low or high pitched, and often appears to be coming from one or both ears or from the head itself. In some people, the sound may interfere with concentration and in some cases it is associated with anxiety and depression. This case of **divine tinnitus** would likely cause both of these reactions!

**The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold,** - As always this word calls for close attention to the message, and what a message it was!

**Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle**([tsalal](#)) - As a physician I would encounter folks with tinnitus, ringing of the ears. This is far worse, for it is a case of "divine tinnitus." Samuel's first test as a prophet was to bring an ear-tingling message of doom to Eli. The Hebrew word **tingle** ([tsalal](#)) gives rise to Hebrew word for "cymbal", a good "picture" of what might transpire in the ears of those who heard these words of divine judgment. Imagine someone clanging a cymbal in your ears! Woe! That would shake you up, which is what God's acts would do to Israel and to Eli when he hears the prophecy against his house! As discussed in the definition of "tingle" below messages that tingled ears usually predicted an especially severe judgment.

**Spurgeon** - "The Lord sends him a word of threatening by a child; for God has many messengers."

**Wiersbe** - This was certainly a weighty message to give to a young boy, but in so doing, perhaps God was rebuking the spiritual lethargy of the adults, for to which of them could God give this message? When God can't find an obedient adult, He sometimes calls a child. "And I will make mere lads their princes" (Isa. 3:4). Samuel didn't know the message the unknown prophet had delivered to Eli, but the message God gave him confirmed it. (From [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

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**Tingle** (06750)([tsalal](#)) means to tingle, quiver, shake, then to be stunned and even confused. All 4 uses are in the context of prophecies in which God will bring calamity on His Chosen People! The Hebrew verb לָלַץ, meaning quiver, shake, is used only in Hab 3:16 of lips quivering and in 1 Sam 3:11; 2 Kgs 21:12; Jer 19:3 of ears tingling, in all cases describing involuntary physiological response to bad news!

The **Septuagint** translates **tsalal** in 1Sa 3:11 with the verb [echeo](#) which described something as sounding or ringing out; (1) of brass gonglike instruments that boom out, resound and used metaphorically in 1Co 13.1 resounding cymbal, clanging brass or of the sea roar (Lk 21.25)

Used 4x in Scripture - 1Sa 3:11; 2Ki 21:12; Jer 19:3; Hab 3:16.

2 Kings 21:12 therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am bringing such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears **will tingle**.

Jeremiah 19:3 and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it **will tingle**.

Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips**quivered**. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us.

**1 Samuel 3:12 "In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.**

- I will perform: 1Sa 2:27-36 Nu 23:19 Jos 23:15 Zec 1:6 Lu 21:33
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## **SPECIFIC PROPHECY AGAINST ELI AND HIS HOUSE**

**In that day** - Other versions have the time phrase "**ON that day**," which implies the timing would occur on a specific day and not in a time in general. Indeed, Eli's house was devastated in a single day as the story unfolds.

**I will carry out** ("fulfill") **against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end**(NET - "start to finish") - **I will carry out** implies Yahweh is personally involved in bringing this prophecy to fruition. He would use people (the Philistines), but as the LORD of Hosts, He is in control of armies in Heaven and on earth. **Carry out** conveys the sense that this would be fulfilled (ESV = "I will fulfill"). **All that I have spoken** refers to 1Sa 2:27-36 (see comments there). **Beginning to end**

speaks of the degree of completeness of this prophecy. Yahweh would leave no stone unturned! What He began, He would bring to an end. There is no "wiggle room" in this prophecy, no escape from the heavy hand of the LORD for Eli and his house!

The Septuagint renders "**I will carry out**" with the rare verb epegeiro (Acts 13:40 "aroused," Acts 14:2 "stirred up"; Isa 19:2 "I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians") which means to stir up against one, to raise against, to cause an activity to begin through provocation. The implication is that God Himself (the verb in 1Sa 3:12 is first person singular) bring judgment that would stir or shake up Eli and in a sense that proved literally true, for when he heard the judgment, he clearly was shaken, fell backwards, broke his neck and died! (1Sa 4:18+)

**Henry Morris** - God had told Eli that he and his sons had forfeited their right to the priest's office (1Sa 2:30-33). Hophni, Phinehas and Eli all died the same day (1Sa 4:11,18). Later, Saul slew Ahimelech, grandson of Phinehas, who had continued to serve as priest (1Sa 22:16-20), but his son Abiathar escaped and served as priest under David. Abiathar was in turn deposed by Solomon (1Ki 2:26-27), finally completing the prophecy. Thereafter Zadok and his descendants held the priests' office. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**1 Samuel 3:13 "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them.**

- **For I have told him.** 1Sa 2:27-30,31-36
- **I am about to judge:** 2Ch 20:12 Eze 7:3 18:30 Joe 3:12
- **which he knew:** 1Ki 2:44 Ec 7:22 1Jn 3:20
- **his sons:** 1Sa 2:12,17,22,23-26
- **he did not rebuke them** - Heb. frowned not upon them, 1Sa 2:23-25 1Ki 1:6 Pr 19:18 Pr 23:13,14 Pr 29:15 Mt 10:37
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## **GOD'S RETRIBUTION IS RIGHTEOUS AND JUST**

**For** - Term of explanation. Yahweh explains to Samuel why He would carry out such a complete destruction against Eli's house. God did not need to explain this to justify His actions. The explanation is that all generations might read and understand that intractable, egregious sin will reap a sure reward of righteous judgment! One is reminded of Paul's warnings in 1 Cor 10:6-12+

Now these things happened as examples for us, **so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.** (cf HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS) 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." 8 **Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did** (cf HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS), and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands **take heed** that he does not fall.

**I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity** ([avon](#); Lxx - [adikia](#) = what is not right, disregard for divine law, unrighteousness) **which he knew** - Yahweh tells his young prophet that He has already told Eli that judgment was imminent for Eli had heard from the man of God in 1Sa 2:27-36+! Most people do not believe God is serious when He says judgment is imminent. And sometimes forewarned is forearmed, but not in this case, because who can stand against our God Who is a **consuming fire** (Heb 12:29+)? **Forever** leaves no doubt about the verdict and in turn leaves no room for appeal or parole (so to speak). Why so severe? The **iniquity** was flagrant and so it was fully known by Eli. The gross evil of his sons did not occur in a corner, but in the sight of all Israel (undoubtedly corrupting them as they saw the evil in their priestly leaders), undoubtedly making their ears "**tingle**" with rumors (that were true) throughout the land!...A man said to me, one day, "I never laid my hand upon my children;" and I answered, "Then I think it is very likely that God will lay his hand upon you." "Oh!" he said, "I have not even spoken sharply to them." "Then," I replied, "it is highly probable that God will speak very sharply to you; for it is not God's will that parents should leave their children unrestrained in their sin."

**Spurgeon** - What a striking expression,—"the iniquity which he knew." There is a good deal of iniquity about us which we do not know; that is a sin of ignorance. But deep down in his heart Eli knew that he had been afraid to speak to his sons about their sins, and that, when he had spoken, it had been in such lenient terms that they made light of them. Possibly, he had never chastened them when they were young, and he had not spoken to them sharply when they were older. Remember that he was a judge, he

washing priest, and he ought not to have allowed his sons to remain priests is all if they were behaving themselves filthily at the door of the tabernacle. He ought to have dealt with them as he would have dealt with anybody else; he did not, so God said, "I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth;"-

**Because** (Term of explanation) **his sons brought a curse (galal) on themselves and he did not rebuke** (Lxx = [noutheteo](#) = admonish, warn, counsel to avoid or cease improper conduct - imperfect tense indicates over and over he missed his opportunity) **them** - Note God did not proactively **curse** them. The **curse** they would experience was self-wrought and fully deserved. They sowed iniquity and now would reap not just corruption but a **curse!** The family had no one to blame for the coming judgment. They had made themselves a **curse**. Eli, although aged, nevertheless contributed to the **curse**, because he [shirked](#) his duty and responsibility as the head priest (and father) and thus blew his only chance to hold back God's wrath when he failed to **rebuke** his worthless sons and punish them. If he had followed the letter of the Law of Moses, it certainly seems like what should have happened is that they be stoned to death (executed) as described in Deuteronomy 21:18-21+ instructed...

"If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father (ELI HAD 2 OF THEM!) or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them (PERFECT DESCRIPTION OF HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS in 1Sa 2:25), 19 then (THIS NOTES PROGRESSION - WHAT THEORETICALLY SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS!) his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown (PRESUMABLY THIS WOULD BE SHILOH). 20 "They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton (CERTAINLY TRUE OF THESE TWO SONS!) and a drunkard.' 21 **Then** (AGAIN THIS NOTES PROGRESSION - WHAT SHOULD HAVE OCCURRED NEXT) **all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.**

Had Eli acted according to the instruction from Moses, (1) evil would have been removed from the land (these corrupt priest as spiritual leaders were polluting the entire land of Israel!) and (2) the secondary result is that Israel would hear and fear Yahweh and realize that He was serious about sins (regardless of their high position as priests) and holds people accountable. Repeatedly Scripture clearly gives us the principle that a **holy fear** (reverential yes, but also including a little shaking and dread of His righteous punishment for sin) is a powerful antidote impeding or holding back wanton, willful **sin and evil**. For example in Job 1:1 we read "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, **fearing God and turning away from evil.**" Note the juxtaposition of **fear** and **turning from evil**. That is not accidental but by divine design! Ponder this timeless principle in these passages - Pr 8:13, Pr 14:27 Pr 16:16, Ne 5:15 Job 28:28 Ps 34:11-14 Eccl 12:13 2Co 7:1).

**THOUGHT** - This truth of fear of the LORD (see in depth discussion of this **all too often neglected** Biblical truth! When was the last time you heard a sermon on the fear of the Lord?) prompting one to turn away from evil begs the simple question -- Do you have a reverential (with a little element of "shaking") fear of Jehovah? When you commit sin willfully, do you have a renewed sense of the fear that He might discipline you with scourging (which He may in fact carry out, "FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE **SCOURGES** (present tense - [mastigoo](#) = whips, flogs, beats with a lash, figuratively = punishes severely - I can personally attest that this is not fun and is a strong impediment to not willfully sin against Yahweh!) EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." (Heb 12:6+) Great God in Heaven, by Thy Holy Spirit and Thy Holy Word so work in our (my) hearts that we (I) would not be numbered among those in Pr 1:29 who hated knowledge and **did not choose the fear of the LORD** For Thy glory and possible in the Redeemer's Name. Amen.

**Henry Morris** - It was completely inexcusable for those who would be priests to behave as Eli's sons were doing (1 Samuel 2:12-17; 22), and it was Eli's duty to force them to behave responsibly. Their crimes were actually capital crimes and, if unrepented and uncorrected, it would have been his responsibility even to have them executed (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Eli rebuked his sons verbally (1 Samuel 2:22-25), but they ignored him, and Eli allowed them to continue. God therefore sharply rebuked Eli himself (not just his sons) for honoring his sons more than the Lord (1 Samuel 2:29). Eli's descendants were eventually to be banned from the priesthood as a result. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Ryrie** adds "The epitome of a tragic family situation: rebellious children and failure in the area of parental discipline." (WOE!)

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**Curse** (despise) [07043](#) [galal](#) means first of all to be slight, to be trivial, to be trifling, to be swift. There are a number of nuances of this verb but most reflect somehow upon the main idea of slightness or lightness and thus the first use of galal in Ge 8:8, 11 refer to the flood waters being **abated** (receding, becoming "slight" if you will). In Ge 8:21 in the third use of galal God promises to "never again **curse** the ground on account of man." Over 1/2 of the uses of galal are rendered as some variation of to curse. One of the more famous uses is in Ge 12:3 where Jehovah promises "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who **curse** ([qalal](#)) you I will curse ([arar](#))." Sarah "**despised** (considered slight so to speak)" Hagar when the latter became pregnant with Abram's child

Ishmael (Ge 16:4, 5). Moses would receive help judging the people so it would "be **easier** for" him (Ex 18:22).

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### Norman Geisler - 1 SAMUEL 3:13—Did Eli correct his sons or not?

PROBLEM: This text informs us that Eli's sons "made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them." However, in the previous chapter, Eli rebuked his sons for their evil deeds (2:23–24).

SOLUTION: Eli may have reprimanded his sons too leniently or not soon enough. At any rate, they became so hardened that his attempt here was futile. Whatever efforts he made at discipline here were not effective. (Borrow [WHEN CRITICS ASK : A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe](#))

**1 Samuel 3:14 "Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."**

- **the iniquity:** 1Sa 2:25 Nu 15:30,31 Ps 51:16 Isa 22:14 Jer 7:16 15:1 Eze 24:13 Heb 10:4-10,26-31
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Numbers 15:30+ 'But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, **that one is blaspheming the LORD**; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.

### YAHWEH'S FINAL TERRIFYING JUDGMENT: NO ATONEMENT AVAILABLE!

**Therefore** - God's sums up the prior prophetic statements and comes to His final conclusion! Woe! No escape possible! Repentance is no longer possible!

**I have sworn** ([shaba](#); Lxx = [omnuo](#)) **to the house of Eli that the iniquity** ([avon](#); Lxx - [adikia](#)) **of Eli's house shall not be atoned for** ([kapar](#); Lxx - [exilaskomai](#) - appease, propitiate) **by sacrifice or offering forever.**" When God Himself takes an oath, rest assured it will be fulfilled! God told Samuel that no atonement can cover continued, willful, deliberate sin. The sacrificial system was never meant to cover the sins of a "high hand", that is, sins committed knowingly in flagrant disobedience to God. If such sins were ever to be forgiven, it could only be by the grace of God. All forgiveness of sins provided for in the offering of sacrifices ultimately came through the grace of God, not the sacrifices themselves. The sacrificial system was simply the method God provided for the people to follow in seeking forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins only comes from God, and only to those who are repentant, approaching God in a sincere quest for forgiveness. That was what the sons of Eli apparently lacked. Note repetition of the frightening word **forever!** Their fate is sealed! It is especially bad when the ones who are supposed to offer sacrifices (priests) cannot even offer one for themselves!

**THOUGHT - Shall not be atoned for** makes one think of the unforgivable sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which Jesus describes, the meaning of which is debated by scholars. However what is the only sin that cannot be forgiven? Ultimately it is refusal to believe in Jesus Christ. And what role does the Spirit play? He convicts men of their sin. He grants them repentance. He causes them to be born again. But if a man **refuses these gracious acts/actions of the Spirit**, surely he has committed the ultimate unforgivable sin.

[David Guzik's](#) comment is similar - Do we ever come to a place where our sin cannot be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever? Only if we reject the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin. As Hebrews 10:26 says, if we reject the work of Jesus for us, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

Eli's family was guilty of [presumptuous sins](#) and for such defiant sin, there was no atonement and the death penalty could be immediately applied (Nu 15:30, 31; Heb 10:26, Ex 21:14 Cf to Presumptuous sins in Dt 1:43; Dt 17:12,13, 1Sa 3:14, Ex 21:14 Such sins also excluded the individual from sanctuary in the cities of refuge (Dt 19:11-13).

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**Iniquity** (05771) '[avon](#) from verb '[avah](#) = to bend, twist, distort) describes the iniquity, evil, punishment or guilt which is associated with a twisting of the standard or deviation from it. Since there is a deliberate twisting or perverting, '[avon](#) describes sin that is particularly evil. It may also describe the punishment or disaster that befalls those who practice wickedness. '[Avon](#) also describes a conscious twisting or distorting as implied by the fact that David says "I kept myself from my iniquity." (2Sa 22:24) Israel made a choice to return to the sins of her ancestors (Jer. 11:10; 13:22). The punishment that goes with this deliberate act as a consequence

is indicated by the word also (Ge 4:13; Isa 53:11).

In Pr 5:22 Solomon warns (and sadly failed to heed his own warning - see 1Ki 11:1-11) of the captivating power of **avon** - "His own iniquities (**'avon**) will capture (Heb - **lakad** = catch in a net, trap or pit, figuratively of entrapment of men caught in snares laid by enemies as in Jer 5:26; 18:22; Ps 35:8; Lxx translates lakad with verb **agreuo** used in " hunting or fishing = to take, catch; figuratively of taking advantage of someone in an unguarded moment, seeking to catch them in a mistake, try to get them to make a wrong statement as in Mk 12:13) the wicked, and he will be held (Heb = **tamak** = basic idea = "grasping securely"! ) with the cords of his **sin** (**chattat/chattath**)."

The **Lxx** often translates **avon** in with **adikia** which means a condition of not being right, whether with God, according to the standard of His holiness and righteousness or with man, according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience.

**'Avon in 1 Samuel-2 Chronicles** - 1 Sam. 3:13; 1 Sam. 3:14; 1 Sam. 20:1; 1 Sam. 20:8; 1 Sam. 25:24; 1 Sam. 28:10; 2 Sam. 3:8; 2 Sam. 14:9; 2 Sam. 14:32; 2 Sam. 19:19; 2 Sam. 22:24; 2 Sam. 24:10; 1 Ki. 17:18; 2 Ki. 7:9; 1 Chr. 21:8

**Atoned** (forgiven, appease) ([03722](#)) **kapar** means to make atonement, to make reconciliation (to reconcile), to purge, to make propitiation (to propitiate), to pacify, to cancel. There are two main ideas regarding the meaning of **kapar** - (1) **Kapar** means to cover over sin (2) A number of resources however favor the idea that **kapar** means to wipe away. **Richards** notes that "It is often said that the idea expressed (in **kapar**) is one found in a possibly related Arabic root that means "to cover or conceal." **Atonement** would then denote a *covering* that *conceals* a person's sin and makes it possible for him to approach God. Although this relationship is possible, the language link is not at all certain. What is certain is the role that atonement played in the religion of Israel—a role given to atonement by God to carry a vital message about our faith." As might be surmised the verb **kapar** is found most often in the Pentateuch, especially in Leviticus. In Leviticus, **kapar** is especially prominent in Leviticus 16, occurring 16 times in the great chapter that describes the annual Day of Atonement. **Vine** writes that "Most uses of **kapar** involve the theological meaning of "**covering over**," often with the blood of a sacrifice, in order to atone for some sin. It is not clear whether this means that the "**covering over**" hides the sin from God's sight or implies that the sin is **wiped away** in this process."

**1 Samuel 3:15 So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.**

- **opened:** 1Sa 1:9 Mal 1:10
- **afraid:** Jer 1:6-8 1Co 16:10,11
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## OPENING THE DOORS OF THE TEMPLE

**So Samuel lay down until morning - Until morning** would suggest that the prophetic revelation from Yahweh was given at night. It is amazing that Samuel would even be able to **lay down**, implying that he might have even been able to sleep! Others suggest surely this incredible event would keep him away all night!

**Spurgeon** - I wonder whether he went to sleep; I should think not. After such visitation and revelation, it is a marvel that the child could lie still. One wonders that he did not go at once to Eli, but then the message was so heavy that he could not be in a hurry to deliver it: "And Samuel lay until the morning," — Dear child! There are some of us who, if God had spoken to us as he had spoken to Samuel, would feel a deal too big to go and open doors any more. If God were to come, and speak to some who are poor, they would run away from their trade. If God were to speak to some who are young, they would give themselves mighty sirs. But Samuel meekly accepted the high honor God had conferred upon him; and when he rose in the morning, he went about his usual duties: "He opened the doors of the house of the Lord." The old man must have felt that it was nothing very pleasant; still, he wanted to know the Lord's messages. I hope he was in such a frame of mind that he could say, "Lord, show me the worst of my case! Let me know all thy mind about it, and let me not go on with my eyes bandaged, in ignorance of thy will concerning me." Samuel loved his foster father, and for him to mention the tremendous doom pronounced on Eli's house must have caused him great grief of spirit. But he bravely repeated the dread words of the Most High. There are certain truths in God's Word which we tremble to think on. Do you dream that we have any pleasure in the doctrine of eternal punishment? We speak of the wrath to come with fear and trembling, but we speak of it because we cannot escape from the conviction that it is taught in the Word of God. As Samuel was compelled to tell Eli of the unalterable curse that God had pronounced on his household, so must God's faithful servants speak of the doom of the

wicked and never flinch from warning them. We must speak all the gospel, or else the blood of souls will stain our skirts at the last great day. However painful a duty it may be, it is nonetheless binding on us.

**Then** - This time sensitive word marks progression in the narrative.

**He opened the doors (deleth) of the house of the LORD** - Even after the incredible encounter Samuel remained faithful to carry out his usual tasks! This action indicates Samuel had attained a position of some responsibility and trust. You wouldn't trust just anyone with the "keys" to the holy dwelling of the LORD!. This description would also support the assumption by many writers that the structure of the Temple was more than just a tent as it was in the wilderness Tabernacle because this Hebrew word for **doors (deleth)** is not used in the description of the "doorway" (pethach) of the Tabernacle in Exodus. On the other hand for completeness we must note that the Septuagint uses the same Greek word (thura = door) here in 1Sa 3:15 and multiple times in Exodus in the description of the doorway of the Tabernacle. In short, we will have to wait until we get to Heaven to find out if the Shiloh Temple was more substantial than a tent!

**Wiersbe on he opened the doors** points out that "Samuel would have a ministry of "opening doors" for others. He opened the doors of kingship to Saul, who failed to use it for God's glory, and also to David, who used his position to serve God and the people. Samuel established a school of the prophets and opened doors of ministry to the men God sent to him. He opened the doors to a new beginning for the nation of Israel that was at low ebb both spiritually and politically."...(That he still opened the doors) shows remarkable maturity on the part of a young boy. Most youths would have been proud of their experience with the Lord, rushed around delivering the message, and would not have stooped to open doors. (From [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**But Samuel was afraid (yare) to tell the vision (marah; Lxx = horasis) to Eli** - While Samuel now would seem to officially be a prophet ("mouthpiece") of Jehovah, he is reluctant to pass on this devastating prophecy to aged Eli, who undoubtedly had been like father and a mentor to him and had been kind to him in his matriculation as a Temple servant of Yahweh. It is notable that Yahweh did not command Samuel to speak this prophecy to Eli. The use of the word **vision (marah; Lxx = horasis)** does not mean Samuel did not see Yahweh standing before him, but just emphasizes the supernatural aspect of the encounter.

Not only did he not want to tell Eli, he clearly did not go broadcasting this to the townfolk of Shiloh - "Guess what happened to me? I heard prophetic words from Jehovah! I had a mystical experience with Him!" Samuel herein reveals his modesty and self-effacing, humble demeanor, a God honoring trait and example for saints of all ages.

**THOUGHT** - Have you had an unusual encounter with God? I am not speaking of raising someone from the dead, but of a special time of communion with Him that left no doubt He was speaking to you through His Spirit and His Word? And it was so special that you were tempted to tell someone? Samuel sets the standard. The bar is high, for none of us will hear direct revelation such as Samuel heard. And in spite of this experience with the LORD Himself, he retained his composure and a humble spirit! The principle is that our times of special, secret communion with God need to remain secret and not be proclaimed from the house-tops! Amen? Amen! I am preaching to myself beloved, as there have been times when I did not follow this principle but proclaimed it from the house-top! Why? It made me look spiritual! And what is that all about? The old root sin that took Satan down, pride with a capital "I" (pride)

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**Door** (01817)(deleth) is a masculine noun designating a door and also a gate. It is used figuratively in the Psalms to refer to the door of the psalmist's lips (Ps. 141:3). **Deteth** does not seem to describe the "doorway" of the wilderness Tabernacle (that Hebrew word is pethach which means opening, doorway, entrance). One gets a sense of the difference between deleth and pethach in Genesis 19:6 where both words are used "But Lot went out to them at the **doorway** (pethach), and shut the **door** (deleth) behind him." In this passage the former describes the "opening" and the latter the "door" to close the opening. In 1 Samuel 3:15 the verb for opened is pathach, which obviously is related to the noun pethach (doorway). The point of this detail is that the use of deleth in describing the Temple at Shiloh supports the premise that it was an edifice of some substance (it had "doors") and not simply a tent (like the wilderness tabernacle).

**Victor Hamilton - Deleth** is used eighty-six times in the OT and in all but one passage it refers to the door on a house, a room of the house, a temple, or the gates of a city. Sometimes it is used metaphorically (Song 8:9; Job 3:10; Job 38:8; Job 41:14 [H 6]; Psalm 78:23). In one passage, Jeremiah 36:23, it seems to describe some kind of tablet on which Baruch took dictation from Jeremiah. This latter meaning of delet is now confirmed by evidence from Ugaritic and Phoenician in which qlt may mean both "door" and "tablet." Also in the Lachish letters (in Hebrew, sixth century b.c.), letter no. 4, line 3, is the phrase ktbt 'l hdl "I have written upon the tablet." One can also compare the Greek word deltos writing tablet."

Doors in biblical times were made of strips or planks of wood bounded by metal strips, usually bronze or iron. Actually the door was an assemblage including beside the door itself the following: two doorposts (mezûzâ) which are the door's vertical sides; a lintel (mashqôp), the door's upper horizontal side; and a sill or a threshold (sap), the door's lower horizontal side. Wider doorways



such as those used in city gates or large buildings had a third vertical column on which two doorleaves, one attached to each of the doorposts, converged when shut. This is implied by the number of times *delet* is used in the dual in the Bible. The door, which usually opened inward, did not have hinges like ours. The butt edge of the door consisted of an upright post which swung in sockets. The lower socket was usually a hollowed stone. The upper socket consisted of a metal frame or a hollow made in the lintel.

**Deleth** is to be differentiated from other words of approximately the same meaning. In relation to *sha'ar* gate," *delet* represents only the swinging door, while *sha'ar* denotes the entire structure of the gate (Neh. 3:1, 6, 13-15). In relation to *petah* "door, entrance," *petah* is the entrance to the house. *delet* is a device for closing and opening the entrance. Also, *delet* is used only in connection with a built house. Thus compare God's word to Cain, "Sin is crouching at the door (*petah*," Genesis 4:7). "And the Lord appeared to Abraham . . . as he sat by the door (*petah*) of his tent" (Genesis 18:1).

One will recall that God told his people, just before the exodus from Egypt, to smear the doorposts (*mezûzâ*) and the lintel (*mashqôp*), but not the door itself, with blood (Exodus 12:7). The death angel would pass over those houses in which such steps had been taken.

In Deut. 6:4ff. and Deut. 11:20 there is a reference to the ancient and still prevailing custom of hanging the *mezûzâ* to the doorpost. In contemporary Judaism the *mezûzâ* refers not to the doorpost itself but to the parchment scroll which is affixed to the doorpost. On one side of the scroll is the appropriate words from Deuteronomy. On the back of the parchment is the Hebrew word *shadday*, which is not only a name for God, "Almighty," but is also an acronym for *shômêr daltôt yisrâ'el* Guardian of the doors of Israel." How appropriate it is then in the NT for Jesus to say, "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7). (See [TWOT](#) online)

**Deleth - 76v - columns(1), door(21), door and leaves(1), doors(45), doors had leaves(1), gates(11), gateway(1), leaves(1), lid(1), opening(1).** Gen. 19:6; Gen. 19:9; Gen. 19:10; Exod. 21:6; Deut. 3:5; Deut. 15:17; Jos. 2:19; Jos. 6:26; Jdg. 3:23; Jdg. 3:24; Jdg. 3:25; Jdg. 11:31; Jdg. 16:3; Jdg. 19:22; Jdg. 19:27; 1 Sam. 3:15; 1 Sam. 21:13; 1 Sam. 23:7; 2 Sam. 13:17; 2 Sam. 13:18; 1 Ki. 6:31; 1 Ki. 6:32; 1 Ki. 6:34; 1 Ki. 7:50; 1 Ki. 16:34; 2 Ki. 4:4; 2 Ki. 4:5; 2 Ki. 4:33; 2 Ki. 6:32; 2 Ki. 9:3; 2 Ki. 9:10; 2 Ki. 12:9; 2 Ki. 18:16; 1 Chr. 22:3; 2 Chr. 3:7; 2 Chr. 4:9; 2 Chr. 4:22; 2 Chr. 8:5; 2 Chr. 14:7; 2 Chr. 28:24; 2 Chr. 29:3; 2 Chr. 29:7; Neh. 3:1; Neh. 3:3; Neh. 3:6; Neh. 3:13; Neh. 3:14; Neh. 3:15; Neh. 6:1; Neh. 6:10; Neh. 7:1; Neh. 7:3; Neh. 13:19; Job 3:10; Job 31:32; Job 38:8; Job 38:10; Job 41:14; Ps. 78:23; Ps. 107:16; Prov. 8:34; Prov. 26:14; Eccl. 12:4; Cant. 8:9; Isa. 45:1; Isa. 45:2; Isa. 57:8; Jer. 36:23; Jer. 49:31; Ezek. 26:2; Ezek. 38:11; Ezek. 41:23; Ezek. 41:24; Ezek. 41:25; Zech. 11:1; Mal. 1:10

**Vision** (04759)(**marah** from **raah** = to see) describes a supernatural vision as the means of divine revelation (Ge 46:2, Nu 12:6). One use in Ex 38:8 means "mirror."

**Marah** - Gen. 46:2; Num. 12:6; 1Sa 3:15; Ezek. 1:1; Ezek. 8:3; Ezek. 40:2; Ezek. 43:3; Dan. 10:7; Dan. 10:8; Dan. 10:16

Genesis 46:2 God spoke to Israel (JACOB) in **visions** of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."

Numbers 12:6 He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a **vision**. I shall speak with him in a dream.

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## QUESTION - [How did God use dreams and visions in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - God used dreams and visions (visions are "waking dreams"; see Numbers 24:4) several times in the Bible to communicate with people. Visions seem to have been common enough that their lack was sorely noted. An absence of visions was due at times to a dearth of prophets (1 Samuel 3:1) and other times due to the disobedience of God's people (1 Samuel 28:6).

### Old Testament Dreams and Visions

God used visions in the Old Testament to reveal His plan, to further His plan, and to put His people in places of influence.

*Abraham* (Genesis 15:1): God used a vision to restate the [Abrahamic Covenant](#), reminding Abram that he would have a son and be the father of many nations.

*Abimelech* (Genesis 20:1-7): Abraham's wife, Sarah, was beautiful—so beautiful that when Abraham came into a new area he occasionally feared that the local ruler would kill him and take Sarah for himself. Abraham told Abimelech king of Gerar that Sarah was his sister (she was his half-sister). Abimelech took Sarah into his harem, but God sent him a dream telling him not to touch Sarah because she was Abraham's wife. The king returned Sarah to her husband the next morning; the dream had protected Sarah and safeguarded God's plan for Sarah to be the mother of His chosen people.

*Jacob* (Genesis 28:10-17): Jacob, with his mother's help, stole Esau's firstborn inheritance. Jacob then fled Esau's anger, and on his journey he had his famous dream of a ladder reaching to heaven on which angels ascended and descended. In this dream Jacob received God's promise that Abraham's blessing would be carried on through him.

*Joseph* (Genesis 37:1-11): Joseph is one of the most famous dreamers, and one of the most famous dream-interpreters, in the Bible. His first recorded dreams are found in Genesis 37. They showed through easily deciphered symbols that Joseph's family would one day bow to him in respect. His brothers didn't appreciate the dream and in their hatred sold Joseph into slavery. Eventually, Joseph ended up in prison in Egypt.

*Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker* (Genesis 40): While in prison Joseph interpreted some dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. With God's guidance, he explained that the cupbearer would return to Pharaoh's service, but the baker would be killed.

*Pharaoh* (Genesis 41): Two years later, Pharaoh himself had a dream which Joseph interpreted. God's purpose was to raise Joseph to second-in-command over Egypt and to save the Egyptians and the Israelites from a horrible famine.

*Samuel* (1 Samuel 3): Samuel had his first vision as a young boy. God told him that judgment was coming upon the sons of Samuel's mentor, Eli. The young Samuel was faithful to relay the information, and God continued to speak to Samuel through the rest of his life.

*The Midianite and Amalekite armies* (Judges 7:12-15): The pagan enemies of Israel had a divinely inspired dream. God told Gideon to sneak into the enemy camp at night, and there in the outposts of the camp, Gideon overheard an enemy soldier relate a dream he had just had. The interpretation, from another enemy soldier, mentioned Gideon by name and predicted that Israel would win the battle. Gideon was greatly encouraged by this revelation.

*Solomon* (1 Kings 3:5): It was in a dream that God gave Solomon the famous offer: "Ask what you wish Me to give you." Solomon chose wisdom.

*Daniel* (Daniel 2; 4): As He had done for Joseph, God placed Daniel in a position of power and influence by allowing him to interpret a foreign ruler's dream. This is consistent with God's propensity to use miracles to identify His messengers. Daniel himself had many dreams and visions, mostly related to future kingdoms of the world and the nation of Israel.

## **New Testament Dreams and Visions**

Visions in the New Testament also served to provide information that was unavailable elsewhere. Specifically, God used visions and dreams to identify Jesus and to establish His church.

*Zacharias* (Luke 1:5-23): God used a vision to tell Zacharias, an old priest, that he would soon have an important son. Not long after, Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, had John the Baptist.

*Joseph* (Matthew 1:20; 2:13): Joseph would have divorced Mary when he found out she was pregnant, but God sent an angel to him in a dream, convincing him that the pregnancy was of God. Joseph went ahead with the marriage. After Jesus was born, God sent two more dreams, one to tell Joseph to take his family to Egypt so Herod could not kill Jesus and another to tell him Herod was dead and that he could return home.

*Pilate's wife* (Matthew 27:19): During Jesus' trial, Pilate's wife sent an urgent message to the governor encouraging him to free Jesus. Her message was prompted by a dream she had—a nightmare, really—that convinced her that Jesus was innocent and that Pilate should have nothing to do with His case.

*Ananias* (Acts 9:10): It would have taken nothing less than a vision from God to convince Ananias, a Christian in Damascus, to visit Paul, the persecutor of Christians. But because Ananias was obedient to God's leading, Paul regained his sight and found the truth about those he was trying to kill.

*Cornelius* (Acts 10:1-6): God spoke to an Italian centurion named Cornelius who feared the God of the Jews. In his vision, Cornelius saw an angel who told him where to find Simon Peter and to send for him and listen to his message. Cornelius obeyed the vision, Peter came and preached, and Cornelius and his household full of Gentiles were saved by the grace of God.

*Peter* (Acts 10:9-15): While Peter was praying on the rooftop of a house in Joppa, God gave him a vision of animals lowered in something like a sheet. A voice from heaven told Peter to kill the animals (some of which were unclean) and eat them. The vision served to show that Christians are not bound by kosher law and that God had pronounced Gentiles "clean"; that is, heaven is open to all who follow Jesus.

*Paul*: Paul had several visions in his missionary career. One sent him to preach in Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). Another encouraged

him to keep preaching in Corinth (Acts 18:9-11). God also gave him a vision of heaven ([2 Corinthians 12:1-6](#)).

*John* (Revelation): Nearly the entire book of Revelation is a vision John had while exiled on the island of Patmos. John's vision explains in more detail some of the events that God had shown Daniel.

### Today's Dreams and Visions

With the completion of the Bible, God does not have to use dreams and visions as much as He did before. That is not to say that He cannot or does not; God can communicate with us however He chooses. But when we have a decision to make, our first stop should always be the Bible, not a dream. (SEE [Does God still give visions to people today?](#) [GotQuestions.org](#))

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### INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA - VISION ([Nave's concordance has a long list of visions](#))

**VISION** - vizh'-un (chazon, chizzayon, mar'ah; horama, optasia): Psychologists find that man is prevailingly and persistently "eye-minded." That is, in his waking life he is likely to think, imagine and remember in terms of vision. Naturally then, his dreaming is predominantly visual; so strongly visual, we are told, that it is not rare to find dreams defined as "trains of fantastic images." Whether man was made this way in order that God might communicate with him through dreams and visions is hardly worth debating; if the records of human life, in the Bible and out of it, are to be trusted at all, there is nothing better certified than that God has communicated with man in this way (Ps 89:19; Prov 29:18; compare Am 8:11,12; Hos 12:10). If one is disposed to regard the method as suited only to primitive peoples and superstitious natures, it still remains true that the experience is one associated with lives and characters of the most saintly and exalted kind (1 Sam 3:1; Jer 1:11; Ezek 1:1; Dan 2:19; Acts 9:10; 10:3; 16:9).

The vision may come in one's waking moments (Dan 10:7; Acts 9:7); by day (Cornelius, Acts 10:3; Peter, Acts 10:9 ff; compare Nu 24:4,16) or night (Jacob, Gen 46:2); but commonly under conditions of dreaming (Nu 12:6; Job 4:13; Dan 4:9). The objects of vision, diverse and in some instances strange as they are, have usually their points of contact with experiences of the daily life. Thus Isaiah's vision of the seraphim (Isa 6:2) was doubtless suggested by familiar figures used in the decoration of the temple at Jerusalem; Paul's "man of Macedonia" (Acts 16:9) had its origin in some poor helot whom Paul had seen on the streets of Troas and who embodied for him the pitiful misery of the regions across the sea; and "Jacob's ladder" (Gen 28:12) was but a fanciful development of the terraced land which he saw sun-glorified before him as he went to sleep. Among the recurring objects of vision are natural objects--rivers, mountains, trees, animals--with which man has daily and hourly association.

The character of the revelation through vision has a double aspect in the Biblical narrative. In one aspect it proposes a revelation for immediate direction, as in the ease of Abram (Gen 15:2 and frequently); Lot (Gen 19:15); Balaam (Nu 22:22), and Peter (Acts 12:7). In another aspect it deals with the development of the Kingdom of God as conditioned by the moral ideals of the people; such are the prophetic visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Micah, and the apocalypses of Daniel and John. The revelation for immediate direction has many correspondences in the life of the devout in all ages; the prophetic vision, dealing in a penetrating way with the sources of national growth and decay, has its nearest approach in the deliverances of publicists and statesmen who are persuaded that the laws of God, as expressed in self-control, truth, justice, and brotherly love, are supreme, and that the nations which disregard them are marked for ultimate and speedy extinction.

From the nature of the vision as an instrument of divine communication, the seeing of visions is naturally associated with revivals of religion (Ezek 12:21-25; Joel 2:28; compare Acts 2:17), and the absence of visions with spiritual decline (Isa 29:11,12; Lam 2:9; Ezek 7:26; Mic 3:6).

One may see visions without being visionary in the bad sense of that word. The outstanding characters to whom visions were vouchsafed in the history of Israel--Abraham, Moses, Jacob, David, Isaiah, Jesus and Paul--were all men of action as well as sentiment, and it is manifest from any fair reading of their lives that their work was helped and not hindered by this aspect of their fellowship with God. For always the vision emphasizes the play of a spiritual world; the response of a man's spirit to the appeal of that world; and the ordering of both worlds by an "intelligent and compelling Power able to communicate Himself to man and apparently supremely interested in the welfare of man. Charles M. Stuart

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### [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (free for use online - an outstanding resource!) - **DREAMS, VISIONS**

Dreams and their uses and images are an integral part of the oldest stories both within the Bible and without. The ancients recognized both dreams and visions but frequently used the terms interchangeably. Scripture mentions night visions (Dan 2:19; 7:2, 7, 13; Micah 3:6; Acts 18:9) and visions of the night (Gen 46:2; Job 4:13; 20:8; 33:15; Is 29:7). Just as with visions, so also the text often specifies that dreams happen at night (Gen 20:3; 31:24; 40:5; 41:11; 1 Kings 3:5). In poetic passages especially, dreams occur parallel to visions (Job 33:15; Is 29:7; Dan 7:1-2). Given this usage it would be unwise to attempt any distinction, other than the obvious, that visions are usually daytime events while dreams seem confined to the night. God breaks into the human experience through both dreams and visions.

Dreams as the Voice of God in the Night. The frequency and significance of dreams mentioned in Scripture stems from their import as divine revelation to a particular individual. All dreams in antiquity were not necessarily considered divine, but with few exceptions (see below) ordinary dreams and nightmares play little or no part in the plot of most biblical narratives. The text repeatedly mentions dreams as one of the common means of “inquiring of the Lord” (a technical term for seeking an oracle), raising the possibility that dream seeking is the method of inquiry when no method is specified, especially when the word of the Lord comes by night (1 Sam 3, esp. v. 15; 2 Sam 7:4, 17).

At times divine messages receive indirect mention (i.e., cryptic to us as foreigners) when the context or situation imply the medium of a dream. The “word of the Lord” need not be overtly labeled a dream to be one. The text sometimes mentions such revelatory encounters without using the word dream. Perhaps many more “inquirings of God” actually refer to dreams even without directly mentioning them. The word of the Lord comes at night to Nathan (2 Sam 7:4, 17 par. 1 Chron 17:3, 15) and to Gideon (Judges 6:25; 7:9). Isaiah says, “My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you” (Is 26:9 NRSV). Hosea observes that prophets in particular stumble by night (Hos 4:4). Micah describes the absence of revelation as a night without a vision (Micah 3:6). When the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, he relates, “In the night I saw ...” (Zech 1:8 NRSV). Night is the expected time to hear the voice of God or witness his revelation. Even so the OT also sets the precedent for even daytime visions accompanied by deep sleep (Gen 15:12), and the NT follows (Acts 10:10; 22:17).

Dreams as Transparent or Obscure. In some dreams the narrative is streamlined or God speaks directly (Gen 31:24); others are symbolic, yet still obvious. Joseph’s brothers need no interpreter to understand the standard symbolism in his dreams (Gen 37:8). Even his doting father wearies of their transparent meanings. The dream of Gideon’s enemy needs no explanation (Judg 7:13). Other dreams couch their truth in metaphor so obscure that a skilled wise man (such as Joseph or Daniel) is required to render them intelligible. Pharaoh’s cows do require explanation (Gen 41), and so do the baker’s and the butler’s dreams (Gen 40:5–19). (Pharaoh’s dream is given twice to mark it as sure; Peter’s vision [Acts 10:16] occurs three times to p 218 mark its significance, but he doesn’t understand it until later [v. 17].) Nebuchadnezzar’s dream ups the ante, requiring not only interpretation but recall as well (Dan 2). Some dream revelations are so difficult for humanity to understand that to do so is like trying to read a sealed scroll (Is 29:11). In his allusion to Isaiah’s metaphor, John observes that humanity is unworthy to open the scroll (Rev 5:1–2), implying that if revelatory dreams are obscure, it is because God has no people worth talking to.

Dreams as Oracles (Answers Sought from God). The very common OT phrase “inquired of the Lord” indicates consultation of the divine oracle, often by dreams. In most ancient societies, people sought out divine oracles by sleeping in sacred precincts that would inspire a dream, so called incubation dreams. The pharaohs record that they slept in temples seeking dreams, as did the royalty at Ugarit. The Assyrian monarch, as chief of the oracle priests, received dreams at night in the temple. Greek suppliants learned how to be cured through dreams given in the temple of Asclepius.

The Bible mentions that pagan deities communicated in this way (Is 65:4), but some of the OT heroes seem to have contacted God in a similar fashion. Jacob, because of a dream, anoints his stone pillow and gives it the name Beth-El, “sanctuary” or “god-house” (Gen 28). Samuel, when the word of the Lord and visions had become infrequent, slept not in his own quarters as did his mentor Eli, but in the sanctuary instead (1 Sam 3:1–3), probably seeking his initial oracular dream (1 Sam 3:7). The vividness of the voice in his dream vision (1 Sam 3:15) seems to have awakened Samuel, disrupted the oracle and astonished him; but it did not astonish the experienced Eli. (The career of Samuel as God’s mouthpiece is bracketed by the voice incident of 1 Sam 3:1, which establishes him as prophet [1 Sam 3:20], and the Endor incident of 1 Sam 28:14, marking his final oracular insight into the future. In each case once for his predecessor and once for his replacement, the oracle forebodes ominous consequences.) Solomon slept at the great high place in Gibeon for his dream from God (1 Kings 3:4, 5). When this expected channel is shut down, Saul complains that God no longer answers him by dreams (1 Sam 28:15).

Like the technique of incubation dreams in the OT, in the NT visions come to those who pray: Zechariah (Lk 1:10–11), Jesus at the Transfiguration (Lk 9:29), Cornelius (Acts 10:2–3), Peter (Acts 10:9–10; 11:5), Paul (Acts 9:11–12; 22:17; 23:11).

God uses dreams to reveal his message; however, some forms of oracular inquiry are off limits. Necromancy (consulting the spirits of the departed) is strictly prohibited as an abomination (Lev 19:31; 20:6; Deut 18:11), yet the lure of predictions from the dead kept the practice alive. Passages in Isaiah refer to incubation dreams in tombs to obtain revelations from nether-world deities and spirits (Is 8:19–20; 28:15–22; 65:4). In the ancient world the belief was prevalent that spirits of the departed could impart their dim understanding of the future to those in this world through dreams. As in other cases (see ORACLES) it is not the oracular technique that is unacceptable, but service to any spirit other than God (Ex 20:5).

Dreams as Oracles. Dreams, then, are clearly a large subset of oracles. Just as oracles from God can come through pagan prophets (Balaam), so too the dreams of the enemy can be omens from God (Judg 7:13–15). God does not hesitate to send dreams to non-Israelites (Gen 20:3; Mt 27:19). In response to Jacob’s financial concerns, God sends a dream to Jacob in order to inform him that his attempts at animal husbandry had nothing to do with the amazing increase of the flocks for which he had contracted with

Laban as his wages (Gen 31:10–12). This God-given insight to Jacob, the supplanter (his Hebrew name means “Heel” or “Crook”), parallels the figure of wily Odysseus and his divine gift of craftiness.

Dreams as Spirits or Angels: Angels as Dreams. Underlying the use of dreams as revelation is the tacit belief that spirits bring the dream. Such a view is nearly universal in cultures which value dreams. The OT states both that the Lord and the angel of the Lord appears or speaks in dreams: “God said in a dream” (Gen 20:6), “God came in a dream by night and said” (Gen 31:24), but also “the angel of God said in a dream” (Gen 31:11). Angels debate and explain Daniel’s vision (Dan 8:13–16). The Hebrew and Greek words translated “angel” mean “messenger.” Angels naturally accompany the dream messages they carry. Based on such OT precedents all the angel appearances that Matthew narrates occur “during a dream” (Mt 1:20, 24; 2:12, 13, 19, 22). In fact, visions and angels coincided so often that the appearance of an angel suggests to Peter an “unreal” state of mind (Acts 12:9). An angel brings John’s apocalyptic vision (Rev 1:1).

As a dark parallel to God’s use of dreams, God’s enemies also manipulate humanity’s thoughts. The people of antiquity reasoned that if angels were the messengers that brought God’s message in dream form, bad angels, messengers of Satan, could bring bad dreams. For Job, as for his contemporaries in Mesopotamia and Greece, the dream “amid visions of the night” is carried by a “spirit,” an “indiscernible form” and a “voice” that “glides past the face,” producing “chills,” uttering “a stealthy word” that “the ear receives as a whisper” (Job 4:12–16). Outside of Scripture the phrase “terrors of the night” designates nightmares, and it appears in a list of spiritual evils in Psalm 91:5. The amulets and incantations (see MAGIC) written by contemporary exorcists focused on preventing nightmares by adjuring demons not to return. Sexual dreams were viewed as demonic rape (cf. Tobit 6:14). Texts such as Psalm 91 and 121 provide comfort and allay such very real fears by assuring God’s sleepless protection.

Dreams as Deception from Evil Sources. Some dreams are not merely benign. Some scare and terrify (Job 7:14). When a prophet misinterpreted his vision, it came from a lying spirit (1 Kings 22:22–23) p 219 or was faked (Jer 23:16, 27, 32). “The teraphim utter nonsense, the diviners see lies, the dreamers tell false dreams” (Zech 10:2 NRSV). Against this background, dreaming indicates self-delusion (Jude 8).

Dreams as Unreal, Nothing or Ephemeral. While God may speak through dreams, not all dreams are from God. Many are simply an annoying distraction. The people of the Bible did not insist on shoehorning all dreams into a supernatural category. Their metaphors equating dreams with phantoms and nothing betray such an understanding. Joseph’s brothers mock “the dreamer” and attempt to short circuit his dreams, suspecting they are the product of Joseph’s ego (Gen 37:19–20). Israel’s enemies are not to be feared; they are like dreams (Is 29:7). The restoration of Zion made the people feel like “those who dream” (Ps 126:1). After envying the prosperity of the wicked, the psalmist comes to see that their transitory success ending in sudden ruin makes them as insubstantial “as a dream when one awakes” and “as fantasies” (Ps 73:20). Sirach disparages dreams: Divinations and omens and dreams are folly; and like a woman in travail, the mind has fancies (Sir 24:5).

Dreams as the Human Condition. There are hints in the Bible of dreams much more like those of today. Isaiah’s metaphor, “As when the hungry dream of eating and awake unsatisfied” alludes to recurrent nightmares or Sisyphean dreams (Is 29:8). In the apocrypha, Sirach mentions one “troubled by the visions of his mind like one who has escaped from the battle front” (posttraumatic stress disorder, Sir 40:6). In his pragmatism the Preacher expresses his frustration with dreams as unreliable and difficult to interpret: “A dream comes with much business” (Eccles 5:3 RSV). His observation that “when dreams increase, empty words grow many” (Eccles 5:7 RSV) also suggests a surfeit of dream interpretations. For Job, who has become the Almighty’s target, even sleep provides no comfort because “then thou dost scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions” (Job 7:14 RSV). Yet even these most human of dreams could provide counsel (Ps 16:7).

Dreams as Spiritual Health. The observation that “the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision” comments on the moral decay of Israel (1 Sam 3:1 RSV). Sin in the camp prevents the dream oracle from functioning (1 Sam 14:37–38). The loss of oracles and dreams signifies abandonment by God (Mic 3:6–7). The country’s spiritual ruin becomes real ruin as “her prophets obtain no vision from the LORD” (Lam 2:9 RSV). The Lord promises to replace Ezekiel’s proverb, “Every vision comes to nought,” with the “fulfillment of every vision” (Ezek 12:22, 23 RSV). The prophecy that dreams and visions will return assumes as a prerequisite the purifying of the nation and a pouring out of God’s spirit (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17).

See also ANGEL; APOCALYPSE, GENRE OF; CHEAT THE ORACLE; DANIEL, BOOK OF; JOSEPH THE PATRIARCH; ORACLE; PROPHECY, GENRE OF; PROPHET, PROPHETESS.

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### **R C Sproul - God’s Word Comes 1 SAMUEL 3:15–4:1A**

So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground (1 Sam. 3:19).

The author of 1 Samuel tells us that, having heard the words of God Himself, the boy Samuel lies down until morning. He lies down, but we can hardly imagine that he sleeps. What a whirl of emotions he must be experiencing—fear at having been in God’s

presence, stunned amazement that God would speak to him, and certainly great distress that judgment against the family of his mentor is fast approaching. Quite understandably, he is afraid to tell Eli what God has revealed to him. At dawn, he goes about his regular tasks, opening the doors and such, probably hoping to avoid Eli and his questions. But it is not to be. Eli calls Samuel to him, addressing the boy as “ ‘my son’ ” and politely asking him to reveal what God said. But he also adds a common Hebrew oath: “ ‘God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you.’ ” He is calling on God to judge Samuel if he fails to reveal all that God has revealed to him. There is no indication that Samuel has thoughts of doing otherwise before Eli adds the oath, and he tells Eli all that God told him. Eli’s response is one of acceptance and submission: “ ‘It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him.’ ” With these words, the high priest implicitly acknowledges his sin and admits that he has no grounds to quarrel with God’s judgment.

Having told Eli the word of God, Samuel’s first prophetic assignment is complete. It is only the first of many. The closing words of chapter 3 give us a sense of the changes that come about because of Samuel’s call. It becomes clear that God is with the boy as he grows, for He begins to reveal Himself to Samuel at Shiloh with some regularity. Presumably these are words of revelation to the Israelites as a people, for we are told that “the word of Samuel came to all Israel.” Moreover, God does not let Samuel’s utterances “fall to the ground.” In other words, his prophecies prove accurate, which is the test of a prophet (Deut. 18:21–22). Slowly the realization spreads across the nation that there is a true prophet in Shiloh. God is speaking to His people once again; the drought of revelation is over. It is as if God Himself has returned to Shiloh after an absence. No doubt this is a time of great joy for the faithful remnant in Israel, for they recognize divine revelation as the mighty blessing it is.

CORAM DEO We are blessed to live at a point in redemptive history when the completed revelation of God has been collected in the canon of Scripture. We will look more closely at the subject of revelation and Scripture next week. For now, make it a point to thank God for His Word and ask Him to make you more attentive and obedient to it. For further study: Deut. 29:29 • Prov. 29:18 • Eph. 3:3–5

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### **The Making of a Prophet SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 3**

INTRODUCTION: God wants to use each person, and when we bring our children to Jesus and to church, He has a head start, as we see with the boy Samuel. In this chapter, we see:

1. A Boy Who Ministered Before the Lord (v. 1). What did he do? Simple tasks, such as opening the gates of the tabernacle (v. 15). But he learned in childhood to be faithful in little things.
2. A Youth Who Listened to the Lord (v. 10). Eli taught him a vital prayer: “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.”
3. A Man Who Spoke for the Lord (vv. 19–21). God let none of his words “fall to the ground.”

CONCLUSION: The Lord can use us, beginning right where we are.

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### **The dilemma of obedience - Oswald Chambers**

And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision. 1 Samuel 3:15.

God seldom speaks to us in startling ways, but in ways that are easy to misunderstand, and we say, ‘I wonder if that is God’s voice?’ Isaiah said that the Lord spake to him “with a strong hand,” that is, by the pressure of circumstances. Nothing touches our lives but it is God Himself speaking. Do we discern His hand or only mere occurrence?

Get into the habit of saying, “Speak, Lord,” and life will become a romance. Every time circumstances press, say, “Speak, Lord”; make time to listen. Chastening is more than a means of discipline, it is meant to get me to the place of saying, “Speak, Lord.” Recall the time when God did speak to you. Have you forgotten what He said? Was it Luke 11:13, or was it 1 Thess. 5:23? As we listen, our ear gets acute, and, like Jesus, we shall hear God all the time.

Shall I tell my ‘Eli’ what God has shown to me? That is where the dilemma of obedience comes in. We disobey God by becoming amateur providences—I must shield ‘Eli’, the best people we know. God did not tell Samuel to tell Eli; he had to decide that for himself. God’s call to you may hurt your ‘Eli’; but if you try to prevent the suffering in another life, it will prove an obstruction between your soul and God. It is at your own peril that you prevent the cutting off of the right hand or the plucking out of the eye.

Never ask the advice of another about anything God makes you decide before Him. If you ask advice, you will nearly always side with Satan: “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” (Borrow [My utmost for His Highest : selections for the year : the golden book of Oswald Chambers](#))

## 1 Samuel 3:16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am."

- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

**Then** - Note progression of events in the narrative.

**Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son."** - Notice Eli calls Samuel his son, surely expressive of his love and affection for this young priestly pupil. This must have tugged at Samuel's heart for he knew the fate that awaited Eli.

**And he said, "Here I am."** - In spite of his visionary encounter with God, young Samuel remains humble and submissive, just as he was before the life-changing encounter with God, again giving all saints a model to imitate.

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**Resignation- Robert Morgan** (Borrow [From this verse : 365 inspiring stories about the power of God's word](#))

And he said, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him." 1 Samuel 3:18

**Whenever our wishes contradict the Father's will, it is wise to yield.**

- ...nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will—Matthew 26:39
- ...we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done"—Acts 21:14
- ...and if I perish, I perish—Esther 4:16
- Though He slay me, yet will I trust him—Job 14:15
- Teach me to do your will—Psalm 143:10
- I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father—John 5:30

Consider also Eli's words in 1 Samuel 3:18, for they once helped Robert Moffat through a bitter disappointment. He had fallen in love with his employer's daughter, Mary Smith. He wanted to propose, and she wanted to accept. They dreamed of serving the Lord together in South Africa. But they lived in the days when missionaries regularly fell in distant, unmarked graves. Robert's parents, though apprehensive, were willing to let him go. But Mary's parents refused. They could not relinquish their daughter, they said, nor bring themselves to give consent.

Robert's heart was rent. Should he marry his beloved and remain in Scotland? Or should he surrender to God's will? He wrote his parents with the answer: From the clearest indications of His Providence, He bids me go out alone, and He who appoints crosses and disappointments also imparts resignation and grace sufficient unto the day. So I am bold to adopt the language of Eli and say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." \*

So on October 18, 1816, Robert and Mary tore themselves apart, and Robert boarded ship, alone and grief-stricken.

But the story ends happily. Three years later, Mary's parents surrendered her to the Lord's keeping and allowed her to join Robert in Africa. The two were married at last, and walked hand-in-hand in remarkable missionary service for the next fifty years.

Today's Suggested Reading 1 Samuel 3:1–19

## 1 Samuel 3:17 He said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you."

- **Please do not hide it from me:** Ps 141:5 Da 4:19 Mic 2:7
- **May God:** 1Sa 20:13 Ru 1:17 2Sa 3:35 19:13 1Ki 22:16 Mt 26:63
- [1 Samuel 3:17 A Private Enquiry](#) - Spurgeon
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

### ELI'S REQUEST AND ADMONISHMENT

**He said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me-** Recall the "word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent." Eli was eager to hear a Word from the LORD. He knew enough about Jehovah, that the LORD's triple call of young Samuel had some significance.

**May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you-** Eli gives Samuel a little "motivation" to tell him the Word from Yahweh. **NET** - "God will judge you severely if you conceal from me anything that he said to you!" Whether it is true or not that God would judge Samuel, this pointed statement surely put some "holy fear" in the heart of young Samuel, for he knew the tenor of **all the words** God had spoken! There is a hint in Eli's warning that he senses that the words God **spoke** to Samuel may not be good news. Keep in mind that he had heard "bad news" from the man of God in 1Sa 2:27-36 and likely feared that Samuel would confirm it.

**NET NOTE** - Heb "So God will do to you and thus he will add." The verbal forms in this pronouncement are imperfects, not jussives (COMMANDS), but the statement has the force of a curse or warning. One could translate, "May God do to you and thus may he add."

**May God do so to you** is a familiar oath formula as in Ru 1:17; 1Sa 14:44; 1Sa 20:13; 1Sa 25:22; 2Sa 3:9, 35; 2Sa 19:13; 1Ki 2:23; 2Ki 6:31. Eli (or whoever speaks these words) calls for a terrible fate to befall one if the oath is not fulfilled.

**1 Samuel 3:18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him."**

- **It is the Lord:** Ge 18:25 Jdg 10:15 2Sa 16:10-12 Job 1:21 2:10 Ps 39:9 Isa 39:8 La 3:39 1Pe 5:6
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## **THE YOUNG PROPHET SPEAKS GOD'S WORDS**

**So** - Term of conclusion. Samuel deduces it is best to speak up!

**Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him** - Samuel functioned as God's mouthpiece and told all, neither adding to or taking away from what Yahweh had told him. This was his first "trial run" as the prophet of Jehovah. Undoubtedly this first prophetic announcement would have been one of his most difficult because of his relationship with Eli who had been like a father to him.

**THOUGHT**- Bringing a message of judgment is never easy! Believers have the ultimate message of judgment that failure to believe in Jesus will result in eternal punishment in hell. This is a very hard message. Little wonder that some well-known evangelical writers have sought to lessen the intent of Jesus' words on hell (words He warned with frequently - cf twice in one verse - Jn 8:24). This message is one that should bring us to the point of tears when warn people of this horrible (but just) judgment!

**And he said, "It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him-** To old Eli's credit, here he seems to receive the severe rod of discipline with grace, although some suggest he was simply fatalistic. I prefer the former interpretation. He had somewhat of a Job-like response " The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)

**Wiersbe** - God had chosen Samuel to be judge, priest, and prophet, so the light of truth would keep burning in Israel. All the old man could do was to wait patiently for the sword to fall. Eli had his faults as we all do, and we must appreciate his positive attitude toward young Samuel, his successor as the spiritual leader in Israel. It isn't every veteran servant who can graciously lay down his tools and let the young apprentice take over. Until the very end of his life, Eli at least had a concern for the Ark of God and the future of the nation; and the news of Israel's defeat and the capture of the Ark caused his death. If Eli had shown some of this concern when his sons were young like Samuel, things would have been different. (From [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Walton** - The message given to Samuel is virtually the same as that pronounced by the man of God in chapter 2 (1Sa 2:27-31). The repetition of the message indicates its importance and verifies its truth. It also serves to provide affirmation of Samuel's prophetic calling. ([IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#))

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**Streams in the Desert - Borrow [Streams in the desert](#) by Mrs Charles Cowman**

"It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam. 3:18.)

SEE God in everything, and God will calm and color all that thou dost see!" It may be that the circumstances of our sorrows will not be removed, their condition will remain unchanged; but if Christ, as Lord and Master of our life, is brought into our grief and gloom, "HE will compass us about with songs of deliverance." To see HIM, and to be sure that His wisdom cannot err, His power cannot fail, His love can never change; to know that even His direst dealings with us are for our deepest spiritual gain, is to be able to say, in



the midst of bereavement, sorrow, pain, and loss, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Nothing else but seeing God in everything will make us loving and patient with those who annoy and trouble us. They will be to us then only instruments for accomplishing His tender and wise purposes toward us, and we shall even find ourselves at last inwardly thanking them for the blessings they bring us. Nothing else will completely put an end to all murmuring or rebelling thoughts.—H. W. Smith.

"Give me a new idea," I said,  
While musing on a sleepless bed;  
"A new idea that'll bring to earth  
A balm for souls of priceless worth;  
That'll give men thoughts of things above,  
And teach them how to serve and love,  
That'll banish every selfish thought,  
And rid men of the sins they've fought."

The new thought came, just how, I'll tell:  
'Twas when on bended knee I fell,  
And sought from HIM who knows full well  
The way our sorrow to expel.  
SEE GOD IN ALL THINGS, great and small,  
And give HIM praise whate'er befall,  
In life or death, in pain or woe,  
See God, and overcome thy foe.

I saw HIM in the morning light,  
HE made the day shine clear and bright;  
I saw HIM in the noontide hour,  
And gained from HIM refreshing shower.  
At eventide, when worn and sad,  
HE gave me help, and made me glad.  
At midnight, when on tossing bed  
My weary soul to sleep HE led.

I saw HIM when great losses came,  
And found HE loved me just the same.  
When heavy loads I had to bear,  
I found HE lightened every care.  
By sickness, sorrow, sore distress,  
HE calmed my mind and gave me rest.  
HE'S filled my heart with gladsome praise  
Since I gave HIM the upward gaze.

'Twas new to me, yet old to some,  
This thought that to me has become  
A revelation of the way  
We all should live throughout the day;  
For as each day unfolds its light,  
We'll walk by faith and not by sight.  
Life will, indeed, a blessing bring,  
If we SEE GOD IN EVERYTHING."

—A. E. Finn.

**1 Samuel 3:19 Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail.**

- **grew:** 1Sa 2:21 Jdg 13:24 Lu 1:80 2:40,52
- **the Lord:** 1Sa 18:14 Ge 39:2,21-23 Isa 43:2 Mt 1:23 Lu 1:28 2Co 13:11,14 2Ti 4:22
- **let none:** 1Sa 9:6 1Ki 8:56 Isa 44:26

- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## **SAMUEL'S GROWTH AS THE PROPHET OF JEHOVAH**

**Thus** - The narrative moves on to the next encouraging scene.

**Samuel grew** - This is the second time we see this facet (1Sa 2:21) but this time is added "the LORD was with him." Yes, Samuel grew older and thus physically, but more important, he was growing spiritually. Samuel also grew in esteem and reputation among men (cf Josh 4:14).

**THOUGHT** - There is a vital principle here. All our increase in wisdom and grace is owing to the presence of God with us; this is all in all to our growth. He grew famous; all that came up to Shiloh to worship took notice of him, and admired him, and talked of him when they returned home.

**And the LORD was with him** - This statement will also be made about youthful David (1Sa 16:18; 18:12, 14). Here is the secret of Samuel's success and of every saint before or after Samuel! **The LORD was with him** conveys the truth that God was supernaturally energizing His young prophet (and I believe He did so by His Holy Spirit). Recall God's great Name [Emmanuel-Immanuel](#), God with us! He was with Samuel and He is with us! This truth was the key to Samuel's success as a prophet and is the key to any success we experience for our Lord Jesus' promised His disciples in Mt 28:19-20

Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and **lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**"

**Bergen** - "The Lord was with Samuel" (v19). The drumbeat of the writer is that the Lord was at work in Samuel's life—from the moment of his conception (1Sa 1:19-20), through his early development (1Sa 2:21, 26), into his entrance into the prophetic ministry (1Sa 3:4, 6, 8, 10), and now in the maturation of that ministry. The Lord did not let Samuel's prophetic pronouncements "fall to the ground"; the young man's words, like those of any authentic prophet, were authoritative and trustworthy because they were the Lord's words. Samuel's success was in fact the Lord's success. The New American Commentary

**And let none of his words fail** - **KJV** = "fall to the ground." **NET** = "fell to the ground unfulfilled." Words not falling to the ground is an idiomatic way of saying all that Samuel spoke when he spoke in the sense of "Thus saith the LORD," proved true and proved him to be a true prophet of Jehovah. By fulfilling what he spoke by him God did let none of his words **fail**. This recalls the Mosaic test of a prophet

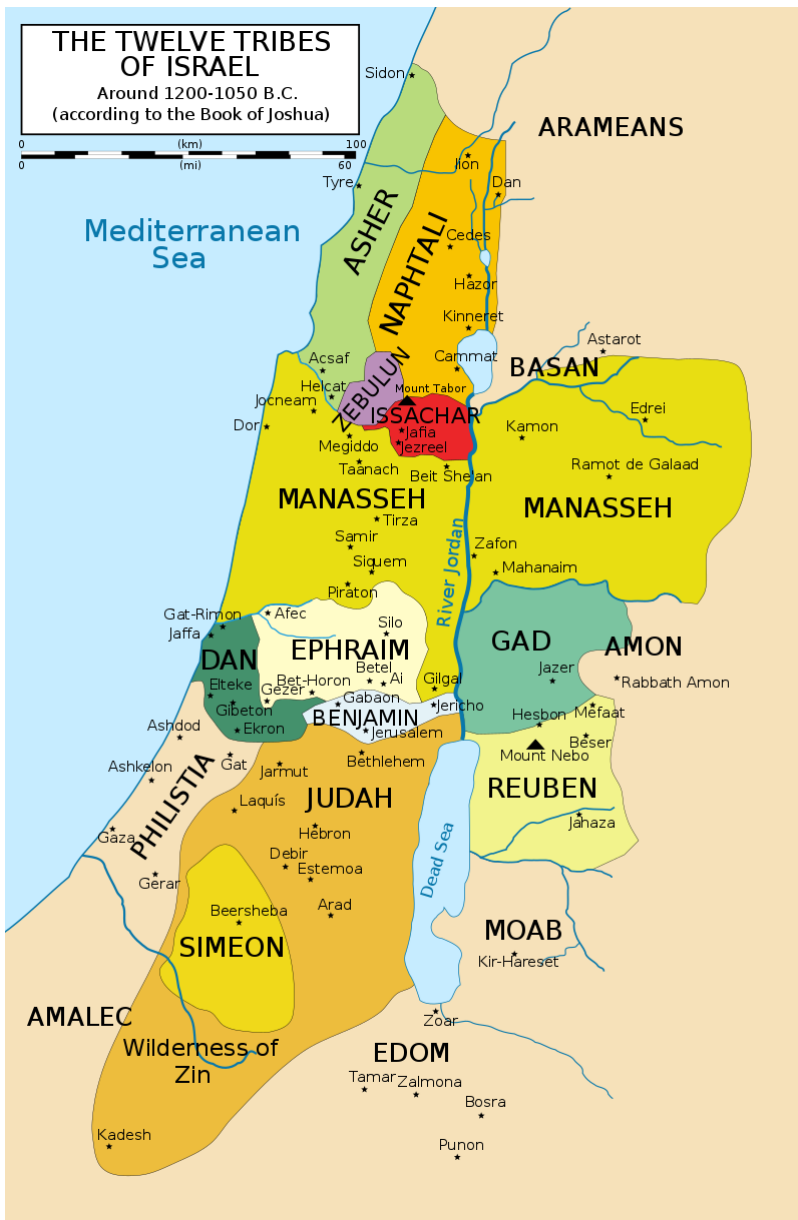
"You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' 22 "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (Dt 18:21-22+)

Luke 1:37ASV describes the Word of God "For no word from God shall be void of power." Whatever Samuel said, as a prophet, it proved true, and was accomplished in its season. God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers (Isa 44:26), and will do what he has prophesied and promised He will do.

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Verses 19-21. All increase in wisdom and grace, is owing to the presence of God with us. God will graciously repeat his visits to those who receive them aright. Early piety will be the greatest honour of young people. Those who honour God he will honour. Let young people consider the piety of Samuel, and from him they will learn to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Young children are capable of religion. Samuel is a proof that their waiting upon the Lord will be pleasing to him. He is a pattern of all those amiable tempers, which are the brightest ornament of youth, and a sure source of happiness.

**1 Samuel 3:20 All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD.**

- **Dan**: Jdg 20:1 2Sa 3:10 17:11
- **confirmed** 1Ti 1:12
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries



Dan north in the land of Naphtali <-> Beersheba south in the land of Simeon

### SAMUEL ATTESTED TO BE A TRUE PROPHET OF JEHOVAH

All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew ([yada](#); Lxx = [ginosko](#) = speaks of fact that they knew by experience) that Samuel was confirmed ([aman](#); Lxx = [pistos](#) = trustworthy) as a prophet ([nabiy](#); Lxx = [prophetes](#) - one who speaks for God) of the LORD - This distance is about 150 miles (241 km) encompassing the entire land (all 12 tribes) from North (Dan) to South (Beersheba). (cf. Jdg 20:1). Samuel's status as a spokesman of God's message was acknowledged by all throughout Israel. This truth makes it amazing that they did not seek him when they were defeated in battle in (1Sa 4:2), but also suggests the degree of spiritually anemic condition that had set in amongst the people of Israel. While Samuel's role as a judge was likely limited to the central region of Israel around Shiloh (Silo on map above in land of Ephraim) and his hometown of Ramah (not on map above). However, his prophetic ministry was not restricted. How did they know from North to South without email, iphones, etc? Undoubtedly his faithful and prophetic service at Shiloh (Israel's central sanctuary) caused the visitors to the annual feasts (and any other pilgrimages to the Temple) to spread his reputation as a true prophet of Jehovah.

**Was confirmed** means Samuel was established, attested, found "trustworthy. The Hebrew word for **confirmed** is [aman](#) is related to our familiar word "amen" (Mt 5:18) meaning in essence "so be it." In that sense God had made Samuel a prophet and the people of Israel said "AMEN!" The Septuagint renders **confirmed** with the adjective [pistos](#) meaning faithful (cf "faithful men" in 2Ti 2:2+), trustworthy, dependable and reliable. These were excellent qualities to have in a time when everyone had been doing what was right in their own eyes for the previous 300 years (Jdg 21:25)! And so for the first time since Moses, Israel had a national prophet. The last prophet God had sent during the dark 350 years of Judges was an unnamed prophet in Jdg 6:8+, but he was not a national prophet in the same way as Samuel.

**David Guzik** - Coming in this place in Israel's history, Samuel is rightly seen as Israel's last judge and first prophet. Samuel bridges the gap between the time of the judges, and the time of the monarchy when prophets (such as Nathan, Elijah, and Isaiah) influenced the nation.

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**Confirmed (0539) aman** conveys the basic idea of providing stability and confidence. To be steady, firm and thus trustworthy. Aman speaks of certainty and thus can mean to confirm or to affirm. Some sources consider the primary root meaning of **aman** to be "to prop" or "to support", a meaning which is literally portrayed in the use in 2Ki 18:16 where **aman** is used to depict the **doorposts**, clearly emphasizing the ideas stability or support. Another picture of the meaning of '**aman** is seen in the related (derivative) noun '**emunah** in Ex 17:12 "But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were **steady (emunah** derived from '**aman**) until the sun set. The use of **aman** in Genesis 15:6 provides the key to how a man or woman was saved in Old Testament and that key is by grace through faith just as in the New Testament. OT saints were not saved by works of "righteousness"

**Prophet (05030)(nabiy)** conveys the essential idea of an authorized spokesman, of a person authorized to speak for another. He functions in essence as another's mouthpiece (cf same word used of Aaron as Moses' mouthpiece in Ex 7:1+). In the OT a true prophet spoke or proclaimed the message of Yahweh, neither adding to nor taking away from the message. Moses was the greatest prophet of the Old Testament (Dt. 34:10) and only Abraham is called a prophet before Moses (Gen. 20:7). In Nu 11:29+ Moses said "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" Moses predicted Jesus the greatest Prophet in Dt 18:15, 18+. [Bible dictionary discussion](#) of prophet.

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**PROPHET, PROPHETESS** - [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (free for use online - outstanding resource) -

The prophet is a strong figure in the OT. There are vast differences in the personalities and particular ministries of individual figures: Elijah, wild and somewhat isolated (1 Kings 17–19); Elisha, pastorally sensitive (2 Kings 4); Amos, possessing a strong social conscience; Deborah, the wise governor (Judg 4–5); Huldah, a noted theologian (2 Kings 22); Isaiah, the distinguished courtier; Jeremiah, the sad visionary; Ezekiel, the exiled priest, to name but a few. Nevertheless, behind these differences is a clear awareness of what it means to be a prophet. Prophets such as Elijah and Elisha cut bold figures in the narrative texts that they occupy. But even the classical "writing prophets" are not anonymous, and though we learn fewer details of their lives, their individuality is apparent in varying degrees. It is interesting that although there are many, many more male prophets than there are female, gender is never raised as an issue. The female prophets are not seen as unacceptable or inferior, rather their existence is taken for granted alongside their ability to hear from God and p 671 to speak for God.

**A prophet is somebody who is close to God. He or she is expected to be able to discern what God thinks about a given situation, what his attitude is toward their behavior in the past, what he requires of them in the present and how will he act in their future. A prophet is a living example of insight, dedication, holiness and commitment (Deut 18:15–22; 2 Kings 4:9). A prophet is a person with a particular calling to see or hear what God is saying, live it out in their own lives and proclaim it to the people round about. The prophet is set apart, called and sent by God himself (Jer 1:5; 7:25; Heb 1:1).**

Prophets can be described as anointed and there is often a sense of unstoppable urgency about their messages, they feel so strongly about their message or their mission that it just cannot be held in. The prophet thus stands as a reminder that God has a will for the people, that God makes demands on the people, that God cares about what they do and perhaps most of all that God genuinely wants to communicate to them.

The persons we broadly classify as "prophets" were given various titles at various times and places in Israel's history: "seer" (rō'eh, e.g., 1 Sam 9:9, 11, 19; Amos 7:12), "prophet" (nābī', e.g., Gen 20:7; Deut 34:10; Hos 6:5), "visionary" (hōzeh, e.g., 2 Chron 19:2; 33:18), "Servant of the LORD" (Is 20:3; 42:19; 49:5; 50:10), "Man of God" (1 Sam 2:27; 1 Kings 13; 20:28), "Son of Man" (Ezek 2:1, 3, 6, 8, etc.). The Hebrew terms rō'eh, nābī' and hōzeh are sometimes used with apparent discrimination (1 Chron 29:29) and sometimes in overlapping senses. The underlying historical reality and social setting of these various titles and roles is complex and has been the subject of extensive investigation. In this article we will look at the prominent images associated with this general class of figure we call "prophet" or "prophetess."

### **Prophets Called.**

Prophets sometime record call narratives to provide evidence that they are genuine, that there really has been an encounter with God which validates the prophet's credentials. Amos describes himself as one who was minding his own business when God interrupted: "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel' " (Amos 7:14–15 NIV).

Isaiah's call narrative is one of the most memorable, for it reminds us that some prophets are best pictured as spokespersons for

the heavenly court. Isaiah's call takes place in the temple, but it transports him to the heavenly throne:

I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory."

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. (Is 6:1–4 NIV)

The heavenly king deliberates before his council, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Isaiah answers, "Here am I. Send me!" (Is 6:8 NIV). He is then sent on a mission to a hardened Israel; "Go ..." (Is 6:9–13).

Jeremiah's does not record so visionary a call. A voice comes to him,

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, ... I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.... Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jer 1:5, 9–10 NIV; cf. Is 49:1, 5)

It is Ezekiel's encounter with the king of heaven that is most startling and even bizarre to modern readers. The description is given in imagery forged on the anvil of similitude. By the Kebar River in Babylon, "the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (Ezek 1:1):

I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. (NIV)

Here begins a language-stretching description of a vehicle borne about by angelic creatures, by wheels within wheels, a sort of throne chariot that would capture the aspirations of later Jewish mystics who wished to ascend to the heavens, walk the heavenly plain and stand before the throne of God. The wings of the heavenly creatures beat out a sound like "the roar of rushing waters ... like the tumult of an army" (Ezek 1:24 NIV). Ezekiel sees someone who has "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD" (Ezek 1:28 NIV) and falls face-down before him. The sonorous voice from the throne then commissions him: "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.... Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day" (Ezek 2:1–3 NIV).

In the NT, Paul experiences a summons from the heavenly Lord that resonates with the grandeur of these classical prophetic calls. On the Damascus Road he is intercepted by a "flashing light," a voice from heaven and a commissioning as a servant and a witness to the nations (Acts 9:1–6; 22:4–16; 26:9–18). Echoing Jeremiah's call narrative, Paul says, "God who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:15–16 NIV).

### **Prophets of the Spirit.**

The prophets are people p 672 who experience unusual workings of God's Spirit. Saul demonstrates dervishlike behavior that was apparently expected of prophets in his day. At Gibeah, Saul meets a procession of prophets, the Spirit comes upon him, and he prophesies. But observers wonder, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam 10:10–11). Later we read: "The Spirit of God came even upon him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. He stripped off his robes and also prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay that way all that day and night. This is why people say, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' " (1 Sam 19:23–24 NIV). Elisha calls for a harpist to play for him, and while he is playing, the "hand of the LORD comes upon Elisha and he prophesies" (2 Kings 3:15). This image of the prophet as one who is overcome by the Spirit is variously expressed: "the power of the LORD came upon Elijah" (1 Kings 18:46); Isaiah says God placed his "strong hand upon me" (Is 8:11); and for Ezekiel "the hand of the LORD was upon him" (Ezek 1:3; 3:14). Even more dramatically, the Spirit transports Ezekiel from place to place. "The Spirit lifted me up" (Ezek 3:12 NIV), or he "took me by the hair of my head" (Ezek 8:3). More sedately, Isaiah says, "the Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me" (Is 61:1 NIV; cf. Lk. 4:18, 21).

### **Prophets of Vision.**

Perhaps the image most commonly associated with a prophet is that of a visionary, a seer, a dreamer of dreams, a foreteller of the future. The foreign prophet Balaam, whose prophetic powers are taken over by Yahweh as he is employed by Balak to curse Israel, captures a facet of the prophet as seer. Introducing his oracle, he says:

The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,  
the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly,

the oracle of one who hears the words of God,  
who sees a vision from the Almighty,  
who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened.  
(Num 24:3–4 NIV)

References to visions may be found in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Micah and Nahum, usually in introducing their entire written prophecy. But among the OT prophets it is Daniel and Zechariah who have the most striking visions, earning them the adjective apocalyptic. These latter visions are highly symbolic. Daniel's vision of four dreadful composite beasts (see MONSTERS) arising from the sea and "one like a son of man" coming on the clouds of heaven (Dan 7:1–14) demands the aid of an angelic interpreter (Dan 7:15–27). It is a story of four evil and beastly empires and the vindication of the people of God, Israel, the true humanity. Along with his visionary gift, Daniel is also given the divine gift of interpreting dreams, a characteristic of Israel's wise men (Dan 2; 4). Zechariah has highly symbolic visions in the night that center around the restoration of Jerusalem and its temple after the exile (Zech 1–4). In the NT, Jesus the prophet speaks of a vision of Satan falling "like lightning from heaven" (Lk 10:18 NIV; see SATAN CAST DOWN) as the Seventy successfully deploy their mission. This profile of the prophet as visionary suggests an extraordinary gift and calling that sees the world and its events in a different dimension, far transcending the ordinary human experience of seeing and even dreaming. But Jeremiah would remind us that the claim of a vision is not such an elite category as some might think!

"Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the LORD. "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jer 23:28–29 NIV)

### **Prophets of the Word.**

As Jeremiah would remind us, prophets are figures closely associated with the word of God. Moses is one with whom God spoke "face to face, clearly, and not in riddles" (Num 12:8 NIV), and God promises that when he raises up a prophet like Moses, "I will put my words in his mouth" (Deut 18:15–18). The classic introduction to the words of the prophet is "Thus saith the Lord." Amos is to introduce his message with, "Now then, hear the word of the LORD" (Amos 7:16 NIV). God tells Jeremiah to "say whatever I command you," and God then reaches out this hand and touches his mouth and says, "Now I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer 1:7, 9 NIV). Later, Jeremiah says, "when your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight." (Jer 15:16 NIV). We read of Jeremiah and Ezekiel that "the word of the LORD came" to them (e.g., Jer 1:2, 4; Ezek 1:3). When a prophet proclaims an "oracle," or "declaration," it is a "lifting up [of the voice]" (e.g., Is 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; KJV: "burden"). With such emphasis on the word of the Lord, the prophets are among the finest wordsmiths of the Bible. They are as much poets as are the psalmists, and their use of imagery is second to none. Amos snaps us to attention with his opening prophetic words:

The LORD roars from Zion  
and thunders from Jerusalem;  
the pastures of the shepherds dry up,  
and the top of Carmel withers. (Amos 1:2 NIV)

And Isaiah's panorama of the new creation enlivens our imagination:

"The wolf and the lamb will feed together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,  
but dust will be the serpent's food.  
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,"  
says the LORD. (Is 65:25 NIV)

### **Prophets of Falsehood.**

False prophets, both male and female, and lying prophets are found in abundance in the Bible (Jer 23:9–40; Mic 2:6–11). These are not prophets of alien or false gods, which also exist, but those who purport to speak for and on behalf of the God of Israel and yet do not speak his word or reflect his character. They stand as representatives of all those in Israel who seek to treat God as if he can be manipulated or controlled, of all those who wish to find a way of providing religious support for their own greed and immorality. We find some colorful images of these false prophets. They are those who would be happy to say, "I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer" (Mic 2:11 NIV). They "tell fortunes for money" (Mic 3:11), "if one feeds them, they proclaim 'peace'; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him" (Mic 3:5 NIV). And Isaiah knows well the "prophet that teaches lies" (Is 9:15 NIV).

### **Prophets of Symbolic Action.**

The prophets are sometimes called upon to embody their message or carry out symbolic actions. Hosea's marriage to the unfaithful Gomer illustrates God's covenant relationship with unfaithful Israel. Even his children carry symbolic names: Lo-Ruhamah, "Not

Loved,” and Lo-Ammi, “Not My People” (Hos 1:6, 9). Isaiah has a son named Shear-Jashub, “A Remnant Will Return” (Is 7:3), and another named Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, “Quick to the Plunder, Swift to the Spoil” (Is 8:1–4). Isaiah goes about Jerusalem “stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush” (Is 20:3NIV). Jeremiah buys a plot of land as a sign of confidence that God will restore Israel to the land after exile (Jer 32:6–15). And Ezekiel is instructed to erect a model of Jerusalem under siege and lie down on his side behind the wall, on his left side for 390 days and then on his right side for 40 days, for the sins of the house of Israel and the house of Judah respectively. He is to cook food symbolic of the food of a city under siege (Ezek 4:1–13). On another occasion he enacts Jerusalem’s departure for exile (Ezek 12:1–7). It is in this prophetic tradition that we should understand Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree and his action in the temple, symbolizing the coming destruction of the temple (Mk 11:12–21). Paul, who identifies himself as being in the prophetic tradition (see above), no doubt sees his afflictions and trials as an apostle as a physical expression of his theology of the cross (e.g., 2 Cor 4:8–9; 6:4–5; 11:23–29; 12:10). He is “persecuted for the cross of Christ” and bears on his body “the marks of Jesus” (Gal 6:12, 17 NIV), by which he may mean the scars of his punishments and afflictions for the sake of the gospel.

### **Prophets Rejected.**

True prophets stand as a challenge to the people, a reminder of their need to hear God and to obey God. Many times the challenge of the prophets is deeply resented, the people do not like to be reminded of their own failure. They want to feel that God is on their side. But the prophets make it more difficult for them to believe that they and their behavior are approved by God. The reaction is to prevent the prophets from speaking at all, or worse, to persecute them or kill them (1 Kings 18:4, 13; Neh 9:26; Jer 11:21; Mic 2:6). Thus we find images of one hundred prophets hidden in caves from the wicked Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4, 13) and of Jeremiah placed in a cistern, sinking down in the mud (Jer 38:6). It is no wonder that prophets advise, “do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us” (Mic 2:6 NIV). Prophets who will prophesy victory for a king intent on going to war are numbered four hundred to the one Micaiah son of Imlah who will boldly speak the truth, “who never prophesies anything good” about the king “but only bad” (1 Kings 22:18 NIV). Hebrews 11:32–38 includes prophets among those “who ... were tortured and refused to be released, ... faced jeers and flogging, ... were chained and put in prison ... were stoned ... were sawed in two ... were put to death by the sword ... went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated ... wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground” (NIV).

The imagery of the rejected prophet appears at several places in the Gospels. Jesus, speaking of Israel’s rejection of his followers, recalls “how their fathers treated the prophets” (Lk 6:23 NIV; Mt 5:12). He laments, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you” (Lk 13:24 NIV). Jesus’ woes against the Pharisees unleashes a series of images of Israel’s crimes against the prophets: prophets killed and then honored by tombs, prophets sent by God and then killed or persecuted, prophets who have arisen since the beginning of the world and for whose blood they will be held responsible (Lk 11:47–50). The cumulative effect is that a true prophet who visits Israel is destined to be spurned. So it is no surprise that we find stories of Jesus, who in many ways fits the mold of a prophet (Lk 24:19), rejected at Nazareth (Lk 4:24) in accord with the saying “no prophet is accepted in his own hometown” (Lk 4:24), and exclaiming, “surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!” (Lk 13:33 NIV).

### **Prophets of Kingship and Warfare.**

We find prophets as friends and foes of the kingly court, involved in warfare and international affairs. The prophets in Israel arise with the advent of the monarchy. It is as if a king on Zion demands an independent voice from the heavenly court who will speak the will of the heavenly king and keep Israel’s monarch faithful to his calling, or redirect him when he fails. But prophets are associated with the royal court elsewhere in the ancient Near East. They function as advisers to kings and serve in other ways, such as the foreign prophet Balaam, who is called upon by the Moabite king to curse Israel. The classical prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah have access to the royal court and audiences with the king. Isaiah in particular is a courtly figure, though he may address king Ahaz “at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman’s Field” (Is 7:3 NIV). There he calms the shaken king regarding the threatened invasion by Israel and Aram: “Be careful, keep calm and don’t be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood” (Is 7:4 NIV; cf. Jer 21:10; 37:16–21).

Even more revealing is the scene of 1 Kings 22, where the kings of Israel and Judah are inquiring of the prophets whether they should attack Ramoth Gilead. Four hundred prophets advise attack. Only one, Micaiah son of Imlah, will say “only what the LORD tells me” (1 Kings 22:14). His truth-telling gains the reward of imprisonment and a diet of bread and water-until the king returns safely! (Alas, the king dies in battle.) Earlier still, the prophets Elijah and Elisha are portrayed as figures closely associated with warfare. Elijah is swept up to heaven in a fiery chariot, with Elisha exclaiming, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” (2 Kings 2:12 NIV). These words are uttered again by King Jehoshaphat as Elisha is dying (2 Kings 13:14). The implication seems to be that these prophetic figures are closely associated with the divine warrior and his heavenly army’s defense of Israel. It is Elisha who repeatedly warns the king of Israel of the designs of the king of Aram, so that it is said of Elisha that he “tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom” (2 Kings 6:12 NIV). In the face of Aramaeans surrounding the city of Dothan, Elisha is boldly confident that “those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then the eyes of Elisha’s servant are

opened to see what Elisha sees: “the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17 NIV).

The classical prophets strike the image of experts in international affairs. This is fitting, of course, if they are spokespersons for the heavenly king, who is Lord not only of Israel but of the entire creation. Thus we find in the prophets numerous oracles against the nations that reflect the international climate and affairs of the day. Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Cush, Tyre and Moab are some of the nations that occupy the prophetic sights in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Amos reads off judgments against Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab before turning his attention to the domestic sins of Judah and Israel (Amos 1–2). This role of the prophets gives them a transcendent stature as figures who occupy a high turret from which they can view the nations surrounding Israel and Judah. It is fitting that Isaiah employs the image of the prophet as a watchman who has no developments to report at the moment, but must persist at his post:

Someone calls to me from Seir,  
“Watchman, what is left of the night?  
Watchman, what is left of the night?”  
The watchman replies,  
“Morning is coming, but also the night.  
If you would ask, then ask;  
and come back yet again.” (Is 21:11–12 NIV)

Later we read of the watchmen of Israel lifting up their voices, for they have spotted on the horizon the Lord returning to Zion (Is 52:8).

### **Prophetic Schools.**

The image of the prophet as a lonely figure, a “voice crying in the wilderness,” is not quite accurate. Saul, for example, falls in with a procession of prophets (1 Sam 10:10). Elijah, who in scene after scene is as bold and stark figure as we might expect to find, has his disciple Elisha, who calls Elijah “My father! My father!” (2 Kings 2:12 NIV). But more striking is that both Elijah and Elisha are leading figures in a “company of the prophets” (2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15, etc. NIV; “sons of the prophets” KJV) that numbers no less than fifty members (2 Kings 2:7). Isaiah speaks of binding up the testimony and sealing up the law “among my disciples” (Is 8:16). John the Baptist, a prophet in the tradition of Elijah, has his disciples (Mk 2:18; 6:29; Jn 1:35, 37; 3:22, 25), and Jesus, who presents himself as a prophet (among other roles), calls disciples to himself.

### **Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophesy.**

It is clear that God’s sending of prophets to Israel is a privilege, the special provision of an extra opportunity for the people to hear what should already have been understood because of its inclusion in the law. The failure to respond to this privilege in the end leads to its removal (Mic 6:8; Ps 74:6; 1 Sam 28:6; Zech 13:3–5). The last prophet in this tradition, John the Baptist, concludes a period when prophecy appears to have died out completely. John is symbolically linked with Elijah (Mt 17:9–13). Together these two remind us of the way in which the prophets stand in the messianic tradition. There was a hope that just as the prophets of old spoke out for God and told of his intervention in human history, so in the future there would be a “prophet like Moses” who would be the precursor of the supreme intervention of God in his world, and perhaps even a prophet who could reflect God with no possibility of dilution or distortion (Deut 18:15; Mt 16:14; Jn 1:21). We might say that the entire story of the prophets, beginning with the death of Moses, is in search of another “prophet like Moses.” This role is fulfilled by Jesus.

In the early church the situation appears to be slightly different. It is still important that the people should hear and heed God’s word and we find again those who are specially called or gifted with prophetic skills or ministry. Acts 21:9 tells of Philip’s four daughters who prophesy, and 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 speaks in some detail about the exercise of prophetic gifts. However, God has now revealed himself perfectly in Christ, and the OT vision that all would be able to hear from God and speak for God in prophetic ways (Num 11:29; Joel 2:28–32) is now assumed to have been fulfilled (Acts 2:17). Every Christian is thus potentially a prophet in a way that was not true for OT believers.

See also APOCALYPSE, GENRE OF; APOCALYPTIC VISIONS OF THE FUTURE; CHEAT THE ORACLE; DREAMS, VISIONS; END TIMES; JONAH THE PROPHET; PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT; PROPHECY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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- **appeared:** Ge 12:7 15:1 Nu 12:6; Amos 3:7 Heb 1:1
- **the word:** 1Sa 3:1,4
- 1 Samuel 3 Resources - multiple sermons and commentaries

## YAHWEH APPEARS TO SAMUEL AGAIN

**And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh** - Yahweh continued to reveal Himself to Samuel at Shiloh.

**Because** - Term of explanation - explaining how and why the LORD appeared.

**The LORD revealed** ([galah](#); Lxx = [apokalupto](#)) **Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD** God was preparing His prophet for some difficult days that would soon come on the nation of Israel. Samuel had faithfully delivered the message he was entrusted with, and therefore God employed him again in his service. God will graciously repeat his visits to those that receive them aright.

This passage reminds me of the prayer in Col 1:9-10 "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and **increasing in the knowledge of God.**" Samuel was walking worthy and bearing fruit and as a result he was increasing in the knowledge of Jehovah!

**TECHNICAL NOTE** - The Septuagint adds to the Hebrew "LXE And the Lord manifested himself again in Selom, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel; and Samuel was accredited to all Israel as a prophet to the Lord from one end of the land to the other: and Heli was very old, and his sons kept advancing in wickedness, and their way was evil before the Lord." Remember the modern English versions utilize the Hebrew Masoretic text to translate into English. The Septuagint was translated from another Hebrew manuscript.