

THE SUSAN & ROGER HERTOG EDITION OF SAMUEL

תנ"ך קורן ארץ ישראל

THE KOREN
TANAKH
OF THE LAND
OF ISRAEL

SAMUEL • שמואל

EDITOR IN CHIEF

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KOREN PUBLISHERS JERUSALEM

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel
Samuel
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Dedication

Dear Reader,

We are honored to lend our name to this magnificent new volume of the book of Samuel, among the most dramatic and moving stories in the Tanakh.

“For man sees what the eyes see, but the Lord sees into the heart.” I Samuel 16:7.

The divine wisdom of the heart is the unifying theme of the book of Samuel and forms the prism through which we see Hana and her son, Shmuel, the tragic fall of Sha’ul, and the ascendance of David as king. As God’s consecrated servant, Shmuel becomes the vehicle through which God teaches humanity that the stature of a man is not the essence of his worth. The unimpressive physique of David belies his righteousness and courage. An iconic visionary and statesman, David, through his unyielding belief and trust in God, is destined to lead his people toward the fulfillment of God’s promise to Avraham of creating a great nation.

The message of Samuel seems to resonate through time. It is as relevant to our 21st century lives as it was to the ancient Israelites. Yet, like many of our generation born during World War II and its aftermath, who came of age in the nihilism of the 1960s, our journey toward understanding the meaning of our Jewish heritage was painfully slow. As the children of Central European immigrants whose parents and grandparents were savagely uprooted in the years leading up to the Holocaust, we were grateful for the good fortune of being born in America. Yet as Jews, our American identity was rife with challenges. We prospered in a land of freedom and plenty far from flagrant anti-Semitism but, sadly, we lived as Jews in name only.

Without a collective history or memory to define who we were, we wondered why, in the course of melting into the American mainstream, our parents had shed their Jewish identity. Untethered from our past, we nonetheless understood that Israel, as a political entity formed out of the ashes of the Holocaust, was indispensable to the survival of our people. However, as we began to raise our three children, and our children started asking questions, we concluded that Zionism was not enough.

Our ignorance of the teachings of the Torah impeded our search for identity. We asked ourselves: What did it mean to be a Jew? As citizens of America, blessed with freedom in the Diaspora, why bother to continue to observe the ancient traditions and rituals of our ancestors?

In short, why be a Jew at all?

Slowly, and with the help of many, we fashioned our lives to reflect our new-found Jewish beliefs. When we were given the opportunity to support Koren in creating these unique editions of the Tanakh, we felt blessed that our participation might help others retrieve their birthright.

These volumes preserve all that is sacred and eternal in Judaism, gloriously enhanced by historical, archaeological, and cultural scholarship. Exciting to the senses, satisfying to the intellect, and igniting a deeper search for meaning, these books, had they existed earlier, might have accelerated our journey; but, more importantly, they render Judaism more accessible to new generations on a similar path.

We dedicate this volume to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks *zt”l* (HaRav Ya’akov Zvi ben David Arie), a righteous man, extraordinary Jewish thinker, and inspiring rabbi who was instrumental in the publication of these volumes.

Susan and Roger Hertog

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Publisher's Preface

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel

The Vision

The messages of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, have always been universal. From the Church Fathers of Rome to the early Muslims of Arabia, from the medieval Christians of Europe to the Pilgrims to America – the Tanakh has resonated across lands and throughout history, a voice for people's struggles, an expression of their dreams.

Yet despite the Tanakh's universal message, it is also deeply grounded in the Land. The events it chronicles took place in Israel and its neighboring kingdoms; the region is littered with inscriptions and archaeology that attest the events behind its dramas – the Merenptah Stele, the Mesha Stele, the Tel Dan Stele, the excavations of the City of David are but a few examples. Its language, and the cultural background against which it reacts reflect its background in the ancient Near East, and in that sense, the Tanakh is a product of its time and place. The geography, architecture, politics, culture, technology, and poetry of the Tanakh are, fundamentally, those of the land of Israel.

The use of Tanakh's ancient Near Eastern background as a basis for interpreting Tanakh has a long history in Jewish thought. The most salient example of this is the famous statement of Maimonides, who thought that Sabian texts might reflect practices of the ancient Near East:

I say that my knowledge of the belief, practice, and worship of the Sabians [i.e., an ancient idolatrous nation] has given me an insight into many of the divine precepts, and has led me to know their reason... I will mention to you the works from which you may learn all that I know of the religion and the opinions of the Sabians; you will thereby obtain a true knowledge of my theory as regards the purpose of the divine precepts... **The knowledge of these theories and practices is of great importance in explaining the reasons of the precepts. For it is the principal object of the Law and the axis round which it turns, to blot out these opinions from man's heart and make the existence of idolatry impossible.** (*Guide of the Perplexed* III:29)

◀ To understand

To understand the text, we must understand its context. This is true of any work, but is particularly true of the Tanakh, whose laws and narrative can only be appreciated against the backdrop of its socio-political realities. Thus, the significance of the Ninth Plague cannot be fully grasped unless we know that, in Egyptian theology, the sun god Re was reborn every morning. Throwing Egypt into perpetual darkness, God was essentially “killing off” the principle deity of ancient Egypt.

One also cannot begin to comprehend the radical ethical revolution of the Torah without knowledge of the reality into which it entered. While the rest of the world, then and for thousands of years thereafter, treated slaves as expendable merchandise, the Torah speaks of their rights; while neighboring nations made women fully subservient to their husbands, the Torah is explicit in delineating their prerogatives; and while kings were considered above the rule of law, the Torah firmly subjects them to it. Human rights and dignity of all people have their very origins in the Torah.

Acknowledgments

A project of this scope and depth could not have been undertaken without the support of those who shared in our vision and enabled its realization. Susan and Roger Hertog, who have supported the project's first volumes, have been enthusiastic and creative partners, especially with their concrete suggestions for the design in the earliest stages. We thank you both, not only on behalf of the scholars, artists, and editors who created this groundbreaking work, but also on behalf of the generations of readers who will benefit from using it.

We thank our rabbinic authority and *posek*, Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb *Shlita*, for his profound knowledge and wisdom. In a project with such great potential for error, we are so grateful for his understanding of the world of Torah. Further we thank Rabbi Dr. Jeremiah Unterman, academic editor for this volume, for his unique insights, guidance, and commitment to religious and academic integrity.

Our editor in chief, David Arnovitz, is uniquely qualified to have led this project. In the best tradition of the Renaissance Man, he combines a love of Tanakh with a love of the land of Israel, and possesses the experience and abilities to get things done. From the get-go, David understood the vision of this project, and together with his assembled team, worked tirelessly to implement it.

A project of this uniquely multidisciplinary nature required the cooperation of over a dozen academic, religious, and specialized institutions. We thank our partners for their invaluable cooperation and contributions.

Matthew Miller
December, 2021

Introduction to the Series

What is the Tanakh?

The word Tanakh is an acronym comprised of the Hebrew letters *t n kh*, referring to the fundamental collection of writings on which Judaism is based: *Torah* (the Five Books of Moses), *Nevi'im* (the Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (the Writings). The Tanakh is a literary collection composed over the course of a millennium. It has had more influence on humankind than any other work – and it has had more interpretation, commentary, analysis, and scholarship written about it than any other piece of literature. Originally written in Hebrew, with some portions in Aramaic (notably in Daniel and Ezra), the text we have today has been translated over the centuries into many hundreds of languages.

Contrary to modern scholarship that posits that the first part of the Tanakh, the Torah, was edited from multiple ancient sources by a later “redactor,” Jewish tradition holds that the Torah is a unified text from a single Divine author. The Torah itself (Deut. 31:10–13) describes the importance of transmitting this text to future generations.

One anecdote which describes the process of transmission of the text of the Torah appears in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Ta’anit, chapter 4) and in other rabbinic works (Avot de-Rabbi Natan chapter 46 and Tractate Soferim 6:4). It speaks of three scrolls found in the Temple courtyard that differed from each other in three separate places in the text. A master copy was then created by taking the majority text in each of those three places (i.e., two against one), thereby creating a fourth text which was promulgated to all of Israel.

The traditional Jewish rabbinic text of the Tanakh is called the Masoretic Text, codified between the 7th and 10th centuries CE by a group called the Masoretes, who added vocalization markers (*nikkud*) and punctuation markers (*te’amim*) to the consonantal text. It is well known that alternate versions of some of the books of Tanakh exist: the Septuagint, for example, attests a text of Jeremiah that is substantially shorter than that of the Masoretic Text. But it is the Masoretic Text that achieved the status of “authorized version,” both by virtue of rabbinic support for the Masoretes’ work and by the use of this text in Jewish communities.

The Koren Jerusalem Hebrew Tanakh version of the Masoretic Text was published in 1962, based on printed Hebrew Bibles and discussions of generations of Masoretic

◀ scholars

scholars. Eliyahu Koren designed a new font and painstakingly prepared the text with the assistance of A. M. Habermann, D. Goldschmidt and M. Medan. The Koren Tanakh text is considered one of the most reliable in the Jewish world. The text itself, its layout and custom-designed font, are used in a myriad of Koren publications.

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel includes the original texts with a new English translation that is designed to be accurate and loyal to the Hebrew, yet still flows smoothly using modern conventions, idioms, and vocabulary.

Why is Koren publishing this series?

An endless sea of literature is derived from, and related to, the Tanakh. In the last two centuries, modern scholarship in multiple fields has developed new perspectives in allowing the Tanakh to be viewed in its historic, literary, religious, social, legal, political, and geographical contexts. We aim to allow our readers to access new insights on the text from this scholarship.

The events and geography of Tanakh (like those of nearly every narrative) are set in specific places and times, and its text uses the literary techniques of long-lost cultures. But few works, particularly those written for an English-speaking Jewish audience, have tried to relate the Tanakh to its milieu – comparing its history, literary style, geography, cultural interactions, and political relationships to those that existed at the time.

The empires of Egypt, Sumer, Assyria, Hatti, Babylonia, and Persia – as well as the smaller surrounding civilizations of Moav, Edom, Midyan, Amon, Phoenicia, Philistia, Aram, Ugarit, Canaan, and others – all interacted with, ruled over, influenced, or had conflicts with the Israelites. In the last two hundred years, scholarship about those civilizations, based upon archaeological discoveries and ancient texts, have revolutionized the way that the Tanakh is studied. We have attempted to popularize and summarize this recent scholarship to help the lay reader better understand the Tanakh.

Who is the series for?

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel does not assume any background on the part of its readers, although readers may be familiar with many of the biblical stories and may have heard of the major personalities.

The series is written from a Jewish perspective and is consistent with an Orthodox Jewish worldview. Yet, the series has relevance for everyone, irrespective of whether the reader knows the Tanakh as the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible – or calls it by another name.

All scholars would admit that modern knowledge about the ancient world is limited; we have only a tiny fraction of the material culture and literature of that world, and what we do not know far surpasses what we do know. New discoveries and reevaluations take place constantly. This series strives to present the most up-to-date scholarship in order to connect the Tanakh and its events, concepts, language, and cultural interactions to the ancient Near East – in a way that is accessible to a contemporary audience.

◀ How to

How to read the series

The books in the series are meant for browsing and surveying. By no means is this a series of books that must be read cover to cover. The articles are self-contained, allowing readers to look through the topics, images, and sections and focus on whatever is of interest. For your convenience, there is a graphic “How to read this book” introduction on the following pages.

The articles are related to a specific verse or sequence of verses, while the section introductions explain topics that are related to a larger section of the biblical text. For example, the Philistines are the antagonists in much of the book of Samuel. Over the last 100 years, archaeologists have dug extensively in four of the five major Philistine cities mentioned in the Tanakh. The introduction before the first appearance of the Philistines in I Samuel chapter 4, written by Professor Aren Maeir – the archaeologist who has led the excavations at Tell es-Safi, ancient Gat, for the past 25 years – provides background and context to Philistine material culture, religion, and military prowess.

This book is visually appealing, with photographs, reconstructions, and maps that complement the text to help readers understand and visualize concepts from surrounding societies, geographic relationships, and physical objects.

The series draws on previous Koren publications, incorporating images that appear in other Koren works – such as images that help readers visualize the Tabernacle, and pictures of the plants, animals, and precious stones that were used in the Tabernacle and Temple service.

The Tanakh and contemporary scholarship

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel discusses the text’s relationship to its time and milieu – from early recorded history until the beginning of the Second Temple period (approximately the 5th century BCE). Where parallels between the descriptions in the Tanakh and contemporary religion and culture exist, the series highlights them; when there is a clear conflict between current knowledge and some element in the text, the series notes the conflict and leaves the question open.

The multidisciplinary academic research that surrounds the Tanakh is a constantly moving target, reflecting Rashbam’s quote of a conversation he had with his grandfather, Rashi, in which the latter “acknowledged to me that if he had more time, he would need to produce more commentaries in accord with the new meanings that are uncovered every day” (commentary to Genesis 37:2). This is particularly true in an era of intense archaeological, literary, and historical research. Debates about the Tanakh arouse passions among scholars in so many disciplines, and it is fascinating to watch issues rise, fall, and reemerge as academic research and archaeology continue to reveal new finds. In this series, Koren is proud to present a window into some of the key questions that are debated in academic circles, sharing these issues and new understanding with a more general audience.

Religious orientation

Koren Publishers Jerusalem is an Orthodox Jewish publishing house, having produced texts for over fifty years. *The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel* is a

◀ delicate

delicate balance between the scholarship of academia over the last two centuries and the traditions of the Jewish Sages that have come down to us over the last two millennia.

As a series that is consistent with the beliefs and traditions of Orthodox Judaism, Koren Publishers Jerusalem assumes that the Tanakh is a testament to God's providence over the history of the Jewish people, from the creation of the world to return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and the building of the Second Temple. As the first Jewish edition of the Tanakh which approaches the biblical text with a keen interest in the historical reality of its events, it is essential to articulate the series' religious and scholarly points of departure:

- The series assumes the Divine authorship of the Torah, rejecting theories of multiple authorship which disregard its fundamental unity.
- The series assumes Divine inspiration of the Prophets and Writings.
- The series does not address questions of biblical chronology, which cannot be resolved and, more importantly, are not required for understanding and appreciating the meaning of the text.
- Certain idiomatic elements of biblical language, such as some numbers, cannot be read literally. They must be considered through the lens of contemporaneous literary usages, which the series attempts to explain.
- The series does not justify, explain, deny, or rationalize the presence of miracles in the Tanakh. While presenting the historical circumstances of biblical events, the articles in the series recognize the reality of miracles as God's intervention in human affairs. In the words of British physicist Sir Colin Humphreys: "I can only stand back in amazement at [the Tanakh's] accuracy and consistency, down to the tiny points of detail... The real meaning of the text is frequently more dramatic than the traditional interpretation."

It is our hope that the new understandings of the Tanakh gained by reading it in the context of our current understanding of the surrounding civilizations at the time will give the reader new insights into the meaning of the text as it would have been understood by an ancient Israelite or Judahite reader. We also hope that this approach will draw an entirely new audience of readers into the Tanakh's timeless messages.

Translation, transliteration, and terminology

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel series uses a new translation of the entire Tanakh, produced by a team of scholars who remained true to the original text while also being consistent with modern language, idioms, and readability expectations. Any translation is a commentary, and the Koren translation is no exception. The translations of the books of the Tanakh used in this series attempt to be true to the initial Hebrew text and also present the Tanakh in a form that flows and is accessible to the modern reader. The late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks was the primary contributor to the Torah translation, while other scholars and professional translators produced the translations of the Prophets and the Writings.

◀ Transliterations

Transliterations in this series follow conventions designed to make them easy to read. The emphasis is placed on modern Hebrew pronunciation of the words of the text rather than on the spelling of the original Hebrew words.

Each book contains a glossary of common vocabulary, including terms from the biblical text as well as terms, sources, and scholars that are referenced in the articles. The maps and timelines at the front of the book provide easy reference to locations and time periods. A bibliography appendix includes both general topic bibliographies on biblical commentaries, ancient Near East material, and the Philistines as well as bibliographical references used to compose the individual articles. Image credits are listed in a separate appendix.

David Arnovitz, Editor in Chief
Jeremiah Unterman, Academic Editor

Introduction to the Book of Samuel

Throughout most of history, Jewish tradition did not divide the book of Samuel into two books (called I and II Samuel) as is currently done – that division is a Christian practice based upon the Jewish translation into Greek (known as the Septuagint; see below). Therefore, we refer to it simply as “the book of Samuel,” or just “Samuel”, although verse references follow the conventional style (e.g., I Sam. 1:1).

Samuel describes the end of the period of the Judges, represented by the prophet Samuel (Shmuel in Hebrew), and the transition to the united monarchy established under the first kings, Sha’ul and David. The book covers the major events of that tumultuous period, and includes military confrontations and conquests written in historical narrative prose, poetry praising God and mourning the fallen in battle, as well as political and ethical criticism.

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel series sets the text of the Tanakh in the context of the time and place where its events took place. In the case of the book of Samuel, this means the ancient Near East during the Israelite periods known in archaeological terms as Iron Age I and IIA – the 11th and 10th centuries BCE. At this time, the earlier empires based in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia had collapsed and the later empires of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia had not yet ascended.

This introduction gives an overview of Samuel’s ancient Near Eastern literary, cultural, and historical context, describes how it relates to the geography of the land of Israel, and introduces the relationship of the text to contemporary archaeological research – all topics that will be dealt with in detail in the articles accompanying the text. The introduction also gives an overview of the major literary units and themes of the book.

Title

Even though most of the book is about David, it is known as “Samuel” for several reasons. First, the opening chapters discuss Shmuel’s life. Similarly, the book of Leviticus is also called “*Torat Hakohanim*” because its beginning chapters refer to priestly issues, and Numbers is called “*Sefer Hapekudim*” because the opening chapters deal primarily with the census of the tribes. Second, Shmuel’s anointing of both Sha’ul and David influenced the events of the rest of the book. And finally,

Jewish tradition attributes authorship of the book to Shmuel (Bava Batra 14b; see below), even though his death is recorded in I Samuel 25:1.

Overview

Major topics and outline of the book of Samuel

After describing the civil war that nearly caused the complete destruction of the tribe of Binyamin, the book of Judges ends with the statement, “In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25, compare 17:6, 18:1, 19:1). This condemnation of anarchy, represented by the horrific events described in the final chapters of the book (Judges 19–21), is a perfect segue to the major subject of Samuel: the transition from a loose confederation of tribes under the ad hoc leadership of Judges to the establishment of a united monarchy. Indeed, Shmuel’s life spans the end of the period of the Judges, the people’s demand for a monarchy, and his divinely ordained anointments of the first king, Sha’ul, and his successor, David. After noting Shmuel’s death, the book continues with the portrayal of David’s rise to power and his reign. It closes with the establishment of the altar in Jerusalem – presaging the building of the Temple by Shlomo.

Throughout the book, the dominant theme is that, regardless of the identity of the human leader, God is the ultimate ruler – whether or not the people recognize this fact. It is God who metes out both justice and mercy, reward and punishment. To succeed, people must be obedient to God.

Outline

Samuel contains the following literary units:

- *Shmuel’s Life and the Decline of the Period of the Judges* (I Sam. 1:1–8:3): the birth and dedication of Shmuel to the Lord, and the role of Hana; the sins of Eli’s sons and the prophecy of the Man of God against Eli’s “house”; the Lord’s call of Shmuel to prophecy; the Philistine defeat of Israel, the capture of the Ark of the Covenant, and the death of Eli and his sons; God’s punishment against the Philistines and the return of the Ark; Shmuel’s judgeship and God’s defeat of the Philistines at Even HaEzer (Help Stone); the sins of Shmuel’s sons in his old age.
- *The Transition to Monarchy and the Crowning of Sha’ul* (8:4–12:25): the people’s demand for a king due to the unsuitability of Shmuel’s sons for leadership; God’s acquiescence; Shmuel’s warning regarding a king’s rights and power, and the people’s obstinacy; the introduction of Sha’ul and his meeting with Shmuel; God’s revelation to Shmuel about Sha’ul; Shmuel’s divinely-ordained anointment of Sha’ul; Shmuel’s prophecy to Sha’ul and its fulfillment; the public appointment of Sha’ul as king at Mizpa and the formal “rules of kingship”; Sha’ul’s first war and ensuing victory over Nahash and the Amonites, saving Yavesh Gilad; the coronation of Sha’ul at Gilgal; Shmuel’s final public speech, pleading with the people to obey God.
- *The First Battles of Sha’ul against the Philistines and his Failure against Amalek* (13:1–15:35): Sha’ul’s stand at Gilgal and his sin of the sacrifice; Yehonatan’s

◀ victory

victory at Mikhmas; God's salvation of Israel; the rescue of Yehonatan from Sha'ul's oath; summary of Sha'ul's wars and family; God's command to Sha'ul to utterly destroy Amalek; Sha'ul's victory over Amalek, sparing of Agag and allowing the people to take the livestock; God's rejection of Sha'ul; Shmuel's rebuke of Sha'ul and communication of God's decision; Shmuel's killing of Agag and permanent disengagement from Sha'ul.

- *The Decline of Sha'ul and the Rise of David* (16:1–31:13): Shmuel's divinely-ordained anointing of David; David's service to Sha'ul with his music; David's defeat of Golyat; Yehonatan's pact with David; Sha'ul's jealousy and enmity towards David, his attempts to kill him, and David's marriage to Mikhal; David's salvation by Mikhal and then Shmuel; Yehonatan's advice to David; David's escape, with the unwitting help of the priest Ahimelekh at Nov; Sha'ul massacre of Nov's priests and families; David's escape with his men in the Wilderness of Yehuda; David's sparing of Sha'ul at Ein Gedi; Shmuel's death; the story of David and Avigayil; David sparing of Sha'ul a second time at the Heights of Hakhila; David's escape to the Philistines, and settlement at Tziklag; David's raids in the south and deception of Akhish, king of Gat; the story of the necromancer of Ein Dor, Sha'ul and the spirit of Shmuel; the Philistines' preparation for the final battle against Sha'ul, during which the other rulers forced Akhish to send David away; the Amalekites' raid of Tziklag, pursuit and defeat by David and his saving of the captives; the legal precedent set by David by commanding the fighters to share the spoils with those who protected the baggage, and the gifts he gave to the elders of Yehuda; the Philistines rout of Israel, killing of Yehonatan and Sha'ul on Mount Gilboa, and despoiling the bodies of Sha'ul and his sons; the recovery and burial of the bodies by the men of Yavesh Gilad.
- *The Reign of David – the Rebuilding and Expansion of the United Monarchy* (II Sam. 1:1–12:31): the report of Sha'ul's and Yehonatan's death; David's mourning and lamentation; David's coronation over Yehuda in Hebron; the coronation of Sha'ul's son, Ish Boshet, over Israel in the north; the war between the House of Sha'ul (led by Avner) and David (led by Yoav); Yoav's murder of Avner and David's mourning; the murder of Ish Boshet and David's execution of the murderers; David coronation over all of Israel in Hebron; David's capture of Jerusalem; His victories over the Philistines at Baal Peratzim and the Refaim Valley; The transporting of the Ark to the City of David; Natan's prophecy of God's promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty; David's conquest of the Philistines, Moabites, Arameans, and Edom; David's kindness to Mefivoshet; the war with the Amonites; David's adultery with Batsheva and the killing of Uriya; Natan's parable and God's judgment against David and his "house"; the death of David's illegitimate child, and the birth of Shlomo; the conquest of Amon.
- *The Execution of God's Judgment against David – The Revolt of Avshalom and its Aftermath* (13:1–20:22): Amnon's rape of Tamar, and Avshalom's revenge; Yoav's successful efforts to convince David to permit Avshalom's return; Avshalom's sedition; The escape of David and his army

◀ from Jerusalem

from Jerusalem; Hushai's warning to David; the escape of David and his men across the Jordan to Maḥanayim; the death of Avshalom in the battle in the forest of Efrayim; David's inconsolable mourning for Avshalom; Yoav's rebuke of David and his greeting the victorious soldiers; the Judahites' and Israelites' reaffirmation of their loyalty to David; the new Israelite revolt against David declared by Sheva the son of Bikhri; Yoav's murder of Amasa and pursuit of Sheva to Avel of Beit Maakha, where the latter is killed; the return of Yoav and his men to Jerusalem.

- *Addenda – a Collection of Religious Poetry, Narratives, and Lists, Ending with an Allusion to the Future Temple* (20:23–24:25): A list of David's chief officers; the Gibeonites' revenge upon the descendants of Sha'ul, and their burial; episodes of specific men of David heroically killing Philistine giants; David's thanksgiving hymn to the Lord (II Sam. 22 = Psalm 18); the last words of David; heroic incidents involving David's warriors; a list of "the Thirty"; the Lord's anger, the census, and the plague; David's confession of guilt and then, following Gad's divinely-given instructions, his purchase of Aravna's threshing floor in Jerusalem, building an altar, and sacrifices to the Lord; God's acceptance of David's offerings, resulting in the cessation of the plague.

Topics relating the text to its ancient Near Eastern context

Many articles in this book discuss the relationship between verses in Samuel and topics, themes, and motifs that appear in general ancient Near Eastern literature, or that are tied to the cultural history of the immediate vicinity of the land of Israel. Among the literary topics and themes included here are: literature written to justify a successor to the crown (I Sam. 1:1, "Royal apologetics"), the idea of the deity as monarch (I Sam. 8:7, "God as king"), the concept of an eternal dynasty (II Sam. 7:4–16, "God's promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty") and an eternal covenant (II Sam. 23:5), leadership and ethics (I Sam. 2:12–17, "Priestly corruption in temples in the ancient Near East"; 2:13–17, "Priestly portion and greed"; 12:3, "Bribery"; II Sam. 8:15, "True justice and righteousness"; 11:1–27, "David's adultery and illicit killing of Uriya"), prophecy (I Sam. 2:32, "A Jewish prophet's concerns"; 8:1, "To whom do prophets speak?"; 10:5, "Ecstatic prophecy"; 12:19, "The prophet as intercessor"; 12:23, "Prophet as teacher"; II Samuel 12:1–14, "Prophets rebuking kings for immorality"), and the significance of the lists found in Samuel (II Sam. 23:9–39, "Lists in the Tanakh within their ancient Near Eastern context").

A large number of articles deal with religious practices and concepts in the ancient Near East in comparison and contrast with Samuel, such as divination, the underworld, cultic objects, sacrifices, and imagery associated with divinity. At the same time, we present the fruits of scholarly research on a wide range of topics relevant to Samuel: from Golyat's armor to David's sling, from the king's rights in pre-Israelite Canaan to the treatment of diplomatic emissaries, and from grasping the hem of a garment to blowing the shofar (ram's horn).

Geography

The book of Samuel displays great familiarity with the land of Israel, including

elements that were in existence only in the 11th and 10th centuries BCE, when the events described in the book took place. Specifically, the war stories reflect an understanding of strategic considerations in the battles between combatants, taking into account the territories they controlled, access between locations, and the physical terrain. For example, the battle of Even HaEzer (Help Stone, I Sam. 4) is consistent with the ascent of the road leading from Afek to Shilo. The Battle of Mikhmas (I Sam. 13–14) is also completely consistent with topography, including the geographical elements of the cliffs at Seneh and Botzetz. The battle in the Valley of the Terebinth (I Sam. 17) fits the locations of the Ela Valley as can be seen today, the riverbed where David picked up the stones, Azeka, Sokho, and the two-gated stronghold at Shaarayim (see “Khirbet Qeiyafa and the United Monarchy” on pages 146–7), whose only significant archaeology layer was from the 10th century BCE.

In the articles in this book, we have used archaeological finds, when available, to attempt to identify various locations mentioned in the stories of Samuel on the map of modern Israel.

Archaeology

The historicity of the events of the book, and particularly that of its main protagonists, is the subject of spirited debate in the archaeological community. The question of the chronology of the book is addressed in the introduction to David’s conquest of Jerusalem (see “Jerusalem at the time of King David” on pages 248–9). The issue of whether or not archaeological discoveries are consistent with the text is also hotly contested in scholarly circles. This debate continues to rage as new discoveries challenge or adjust existing theories, corroborating or invalidating previously held scholarly positions.

As with the book of Exodus, there is no way to prove or disprove every historical detail of the narrative. However, many archaeological finds confirm the general stories told in the book. For example, excavations show that the Philistine royal city of Gat, depicted as prominent in the Tanakh only in Samuel, was destroyed by the Aramean king Hazael near the end of the 9th century BCE (II Kings 12:18). Some settlements in the Negev Highlands mentioned in the book are known to have been destroyed by the invasion of the Egyptian king Shoshenq I (known in Tanakh by the Hebrew name Shishak) in the 10th century BCE, as inscribed in the Bubastite Portal in Karnak and as recorded in I Kings 14:25–26; II Chronicles 12:2–9. These places, mentioned in Samuel, do not appear later in the Tanakh. The kingdoms mentioned in Samuel – Philistines, Arameans, Ammonites, Edomites, and others – are also all known to have been active during the time of Samuel.

Although in Jerusalem itself there is little archaeological evidence of the capital that David is reported to have established, the monumental architecture revealed at Khirbet Qeiyafa, and perhaps some of the finds in the City of David suggest that a powerful political entity did control the area of Yehuda at the time. Excavations also show that settlements in the region were going through a process of transition from a village-based society to towns and cities, suggesting the emergence of a more developed social structure that indicates the rise of a monarchy or other strong central government.

◀ This book

This book provides a snapshot of archaeological and historical knowledge at the time of publication. Our understanding of the period is constantly changing, and as more data becomes available, the dialog with the text will persist, and scholars will continue to debate the confluence of findings with the text that has come down to us.

Authorship

The first attribution of authorship of the book occurs already in the Tanakh itself. I Chronicles 29:29–30 states, “The earlier and later deeds of King David are recorded in the chronicles of the seer Shmuel, the chronicles of the prophet Natan, and the chronicles of the seer Gad, along with all the accounts of his rule, his might, and the events that befell him and Israel and all the kingdoms of the land.” A famous *baraita* (a Tannaitic statement which does not appear in the Mishnah but is quoted in the Gemara) on the placement and authorship of the books of the Tanakh appears in Bava Batra 14b–15a, together with the Gemara’s comments. In 14b, the *baraita* states “Shmuel wrote his own book,” but the Gemara in 15a asks, “But isn’t it written: ‘And Samuel died’ (I Samuel 28:3)?” The Gemara then answers, “Gad the seer and Natan the prophet finished it.” As Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel states, “I am surprised at how our sages did not bring this verse (I Chr. 29:29) to strengthen their opinion” (Abarbanel’s Introduction to the Former Prophets).

In any case, Chronicles is the first text to state the idea that the prophets wrote about the events of their times in books: aside from the quote above, see the historical writings attributed to prophets in II Chronicles 9:29, 12:15, 13:22, 20:34, 26:22, 32:32. It is interesting that Samuel does mention one external source – the Book of the Upright (II Sam. 1:18) – from which David’s lament over Sha’ul and Yehonatan was drawn, but we do not know its author.

In his introduction to his commentary on the Former Prophets (mentioned above) Abarbanel refers to several verses in Samuel which he adduces could not have been written by Shmuel, Natan, or Gad. These verses – I Samuel 5:5, 6:18, 27:6; II Samuel 6:8 – all use the phrase “to this day” (Hebrew, *ad hayom hazeh*), which, Abarbanel states, “definitely indicates that it was written a long time after the events occurred” (he makes a comparable argument concerning similar passages in Joshua). Abarbanel additionally points to I Samuel 9:9, “Formerly in Israel, when someone went to inquire of God, he would say, ‘Let us go to the seer,’ for today’s prophet was then referred to as a seer,” as proof that this verse also could only have been written at a much later time, after conventions had changed. Abarbanel therefore concludes that the writings of Shmuel, Natan, and Gad were gathered together, combined, and placed in their final order by the prophet Yirmeyahu, who “without a doubt added material to elucidate the compositions as he saw best.” Indeed, Abarbanel calls Yirmeyahu “the editor and the compiler” (*hametaken vehamekabetz*) of Samuel. Additionally, in his commentary on I Samuel 9:9, he suggests that, if not by Yirmeyahu, this verse was added by some other later prophet or, possibly, by Ezra. Abarbanel’s reasoning and perspective foreshadow those of many modern academic scholars who contend that the final redaction of Samuel took place centuries after the reign of David.

The “book” of Samuel and its placement

The earliest evidence that Samuel was originally one book comes from fragments of a single scroll found in Qumran, cave 1 (1QSam), which contains material from both I and II Samuel. The idea that Samuel is one book is, of course, also supported by the *baraita* in Bava Batra 14b, which states, “Shmuel wrote his *book*.” As mentioned above, the first indication of the division into two books is the Jewish translation into Greek, known as the Septuagint (see below) –because of the need to use far more words in Greek to properly translate Hebrew, the translation was too long for a single scroll. Despite this precedent, the Hebrew Bibles used in Jewish tradition did not divide Samuel into two until the end of the Middle Ages (under Christianity’s influence). According to this division, the first book of Samuel ends with the death of Sha’ul, which follows a pattern of ending a book with the passing of a major figure (other examples of this pattern include Yosef at the end of Genesis, Moshe at the end of Deuteronomy, and Yehoshua at the end of Joshua).

In the order of the books of the Prophets, Samuel was placed after Judges and before Kings. The *baraita* in Bava Batra 14b suggests the closer relationship of Samuel to Kings, while Judges is closer to Joshua, “The Sages taught: The order of the books of the Prophets: Joshua and Judges, Samuel and Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and the Twelve.” That relationship is also apparent in the predominant focus of Samuel on the monarchy rather than the rule of the judges.

The text of Samuel and ancient versions: The Masoretic Text; The Septuagint; The Dead Sea Scrolls

We have no way of knowing when exactly the final editing of Samuel took place, or when the final verses were added, although the process suggested by Abarbanel (see above) is reasonable. The oldest traditional Hebrew text of the entire book of Samuel that we have in our possession dates no earlier than the 10th century CE. This text is known as the Masoretic Text (MT). What we do know is that when we compare that text with the parallel texts in I Chronicles and in Psalms 18 (parallel to II Sam. 22), many differences in spelling, words, phrases, and even sentences are revealed – some of which are noted in this book.

Additional Samuel material comes from the Septuagint or Old Greek version – a Jewish translation from a Hebrew text done in Alexandria, Egypt (ca. 200 BCE) – which also has many variants from the MT. Further, our oldest Hebrew documents of Samuel come from the Dead Sea Scrolls (also known as the Judean Desert Scrolls, which are limited to portions and fragments of three different scrolls, dated 3rd–1st century BCE). Occasional references to these texts will also be found in the articles that follow.

Article categories



ARCHAEOLOGY

Highlights archaeological evidence in the form of ancient objects that support or explain the text – the Merenptah Stele is the first mention of “Israel” outside of the Tanakh.



NEAR EAST

Provides background on the surrounding civilizations – Mesopotamia (Iraq and Iran) the Levant (Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia), and the Hittite empire (Turkey) – that give new insights into the Tanakh's meaning and message.



LANGUAGE

Explores the linguistic connections between the Tanakh's Hebrew and the languages of surrounding civilizations, such as Ugaritic and Akkadian.



FLORA AND FAUNA

Identifies the plants and animals mentioned in the text using modern-day scholarship and analysis – did Moshe turn his staff into a snake or a into a crocodile?



EGYPTOLOGY

Explains the cultural, social, and religious trends, as well as the political structure, of ancient Egyptian society – as relates to the biblical text. For example, Egyptian reliefs praise Pharaoh's “mighty arm.”



MISHKAN

Helps readers visualize what the Tabernacle might have looked like, and utilizes information about ancient Near Eastern holy sites to provide a greater understanding of the Mishkan's appearance, activity, and role.



GEOGRAPHY

Identifies the locations (for example, Mount Sinai) referenced in the Torah based on contemporary knowledge of the region and its history.



HALAKHA

Links modern Jewish law to the text that is the basis for contemporary Jewish ritual or practice. For example, II Samuel 22:51 appears in the Grace after Meals.

How to read this book

Page headers indicate book name and chapter number in Hebrew and in English

Articles are divided into color-coded categories with corresponding icons

Hebrew Tanakh text, in clear Koren font with vowels, punctuation, and cantillation marks

Article verse number(s) and article title

Vibrant color images help bring the narrative to life



New English translation

Author's initials appear after each article (see List of Contributors appendix)

Tanakh pages are read right to left honoring the authenticity of original Hebrew texts

Tanakh page

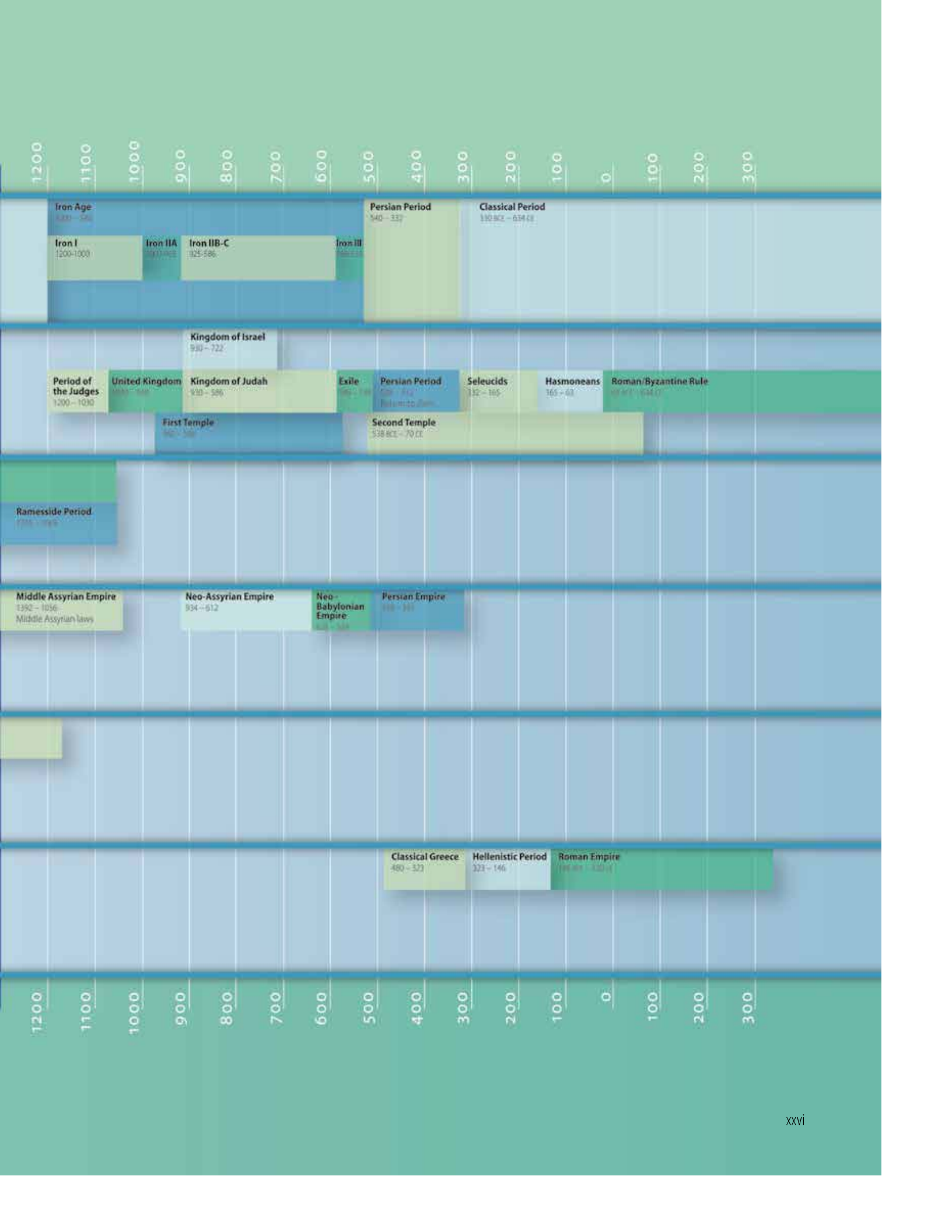
Section introductions indicate significant themes in the biblical narrative



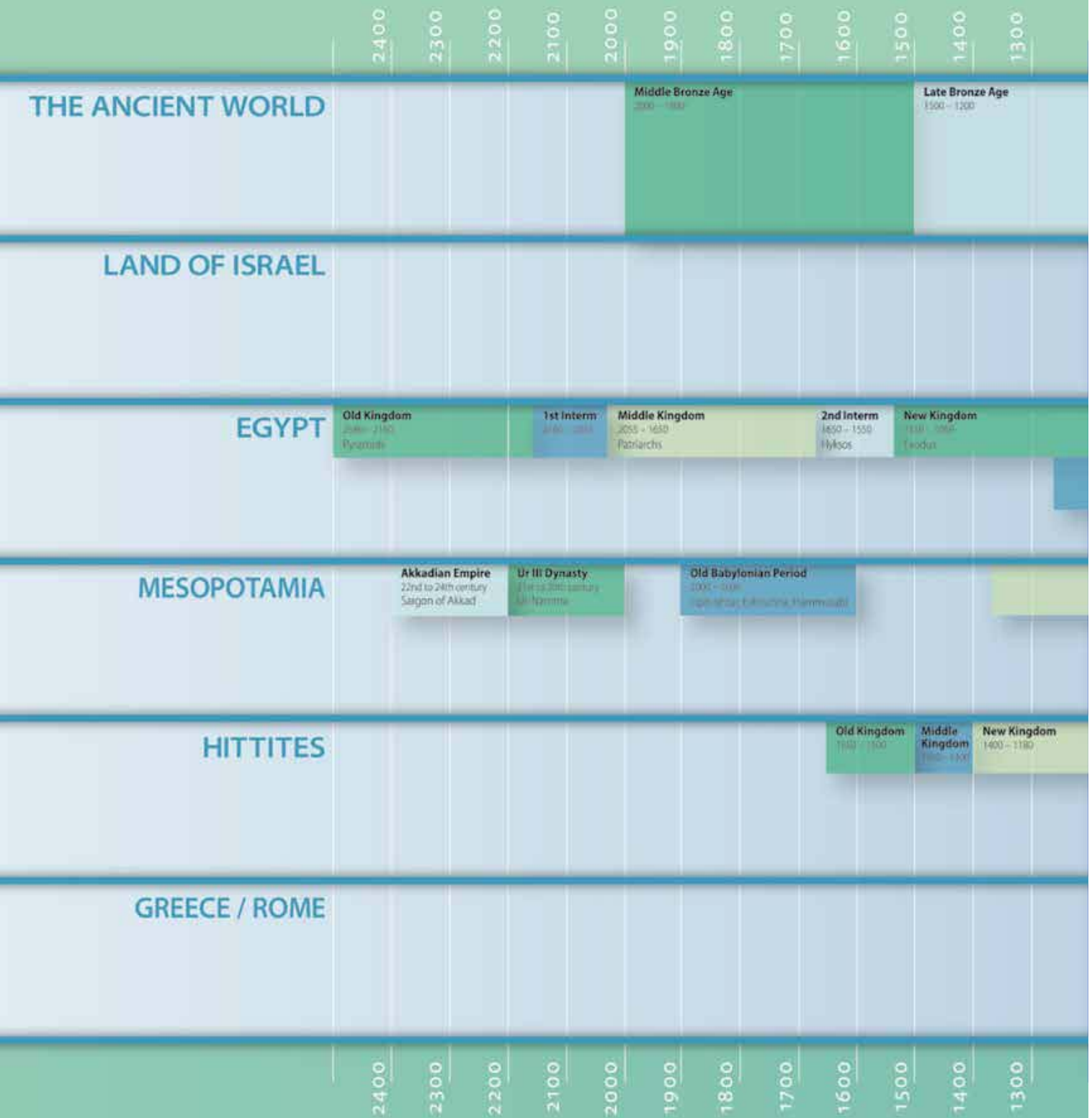
Highlighted text helps the reader understand a main point made in the section introduction

Section introduction page

A section introduction occupies a full-page spread. The text reads from left to right across the spread, even though the page numbers go from right to left.



Ancient Near East Timeline





• Karkemish

• Haran

Nineveh

Erbil

Kalah

Assyria

Ashur

• Tadmor

Babylonia

Babylon

Map of the Ancient Near East



Cyprus

Neo-Hittites

Arameans

Sidonians

Philistines

Amalek

Edom

Amon

Moav

Israel

Egypt

Memphis (Mof)

Mount Sinai

xxix

Tell Tayinat

Aleppo

Hamath

Levo Hamath

Damascus

Sidon

Tyre

Dan

Hatzor

Megiddo

Jerusalem

Raba

Gaza

Be'er Sheva

Kadesh Barne'a

Timna

Eilat

Khirbet Nahash

Map of the Land of Israel



שמואל

SAMUEL



➤ Triumph of King David, Hendrick van Balen, 1575–1632

One genre of ancient Near Eastern literature that helps us specifically to understand large parts of the book of Samuel is that of the “royal apology.”

royal apologetics, one can see how the biblical texts employ elements of an established literary genre.

There are two royal apologies embedded in the longer David narrative (I Sam. 16–I Kings 2). The first is that of David himself. The stories of David’s rise tell how a shepherd boy from Beit Lehem came to assume the throne following the death of Sha’ul, the first king of Israel, and his heir apparent, Yehonatan. A close reading

of the books of Samuel reveals that the text is arguing against anti-Davidic claims. The books defend David, whose path to the throne was irregular and accompanied by the deaths of quite a few potential rivals. As in other royal apologies, the Davidic one presents its protagonist as both innocent of the claims made against him and as a guiltless victim, drawing attention to the sins of his antagonist (namely, Sha’ul) against both God and David. Also following the established pattern, David is the beloved of God, who watches over him and ensures his success.

These themes are continued in the second royal apology in II Samuel 10–I Kings 2, which tell of David’s decline. During

this period, David slowly loses his grip on power while his sons and other rivals fight amongst themselves and against him. More importantly, these chapters explain how Shlomo, fourth in line for the throne, became king. Once again, several convenient deaths clear the path for Shlomo’s accession to rule. The text goes to great lengths to absolve Shlomo of any responsibility for these deaths; the king is innocent of any wrongdoing. And as is indicated by his alternate name in II Samuel 12:25, Shlomo was also the “beloved of the Lord” (Yedidya).

Understanding that these chapters present Shlomo’s royal apology allows us to comprehend why the image of David presented at the end of his life is so different from the heroic one presented in earlier chapters. The focus of the text has changed. It is no longer concerned with David and his rise, which included his most consequential acts – the conquest of Jerusalem, and its establishment as Israel’s governmental and religious capital (this last was achieved by bringing the Ark there). Rather, the narrative now presents the case for Shlomo’s apparently unorthodox claim to the throne. In this manner, the ancient Near Eastern royal apologies allow us to understand the Tanakh’s own apologetic aims in a manner that may not have been possible beforehand. ■ CSE



➤
Lion Gate,
Hattusa
(capital of
the Hittite
empire),
13th century
BCE



Royal apologetics

Literature from the world of the Tanakh allows us to gain insight into how the Tanakh shares many of the concerns of its time period, even though its theology and history set it apart. One genre of ancient Near Eastern literature that helps us specifically to understand large parts of the book of Samuel is that of the “royal apology.”

The “royal apology” is an apologetic genre consisting of texts that attempt to justify the rule of a sovereign in cases in which there is some question about the order of succession. The conceptual ideal of the ancient world – as it still is in most contemporary monarchies – was to have the eldest son of a king follow him on the throne. However, in many instances this general rule was breached, whether because of palace intrigue, usurpation, or infighting among the sons of one father or one or more of the mothers. The royal apology, usually written at the instigation of the ruler, was meant to justify his irregular assumption of rule.

The following are two famous examples of royal apologies from the ancient Near East:

First is the so-called *Apology of Hattushili III*, who reigned as king of the Hittite empire in the 13th century BCE. As the youngest of the three sons of the previous king, Hattushili was not originally in line for the throne and subsequently entered into the service of the goddess Ishtar as a priest. Following the deaths of his father and eldest brother, Hattushili’s middle brother became king. When this brother also died, Hattushili’s nephew became king and apparently turned against him. Nevertheless,

with the supposed help of his goddess Ishtar, Hattushili was able to prevail against his rival and become the Great King of the Hittite Empire. In so doing, Hattushili justified his ascent to the throne, even though he was not technically in line for it.

Second is the *Apology of* (the Assyrian king) *Esar Hadon*, who reigned in the 7th century BCE. In his apology, Esar Hadon explained how he, the youngest son of his father Sanheriv, became king of the mighty Neo-Assyrian empire. He claimed that his father chose him to be his successor as per divine request. However, in order to block him from becoming king, his brothers plotted against their father, assassinated him (II Kings 19:36–37), and then tried to seize the throne. In spite of their treachery, Esar Hadon was able to claim what was rightfully his, again thanks to his supposed divine support. As in the case of Hattushili, this text

explains how the youngest son became king with the help of the gods despite the treachery of his rivals.

While not strictly speaking an apology, another well-known text with a similar motif is the *Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad* (ca. 2300 BCE). This inscription has most often been compared to the Moshe birth narrative (Ex. 2:1–10), but its main theme has parallels to the David story: justification of the rule of someone from a humble background who became king with divine help.

The examination and analysis of these and similar texts foster a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the aims of the biblical authors, in particular, of the stories of David’s rise (I Sam. 16–II Sam. 9) and of his (and Shlomo’s) “succession narrative” (II Sam. 10–I Kings 2). By comparing these biblical narratives to ancient Near Eastern



➤ King Hattushili III pouring a libation to the storm god, relief, Firaktin, Turkey, 13th century BCE



GEOGRAPHY

1:1 Haramatayim Tzofim

I Samuel refers many times to the town of Rama. In this verse, Elkana is said to be from Ramatayim (*Haramatayim* in the Hebrew, the only time that this name is used) "in the hill country of Efrayim," which appears to be another name for Rama.

The hill country of Efrayim is a broad regional term that does not always relate directly to Efrayim's tribal allotment (see Josh. 17:15 where both Efrayim and Menashe's allotments are referred to as "the hill country of Efrayim"). In this case, the hill country of Efrayim actually included part of the allocation of the tribe of Binyamin, as Joshua 16:5–10 defines the southern border of the tribe of Efrayim as running just to the north of Beit El (modern-day Beitfn).

וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִן־הַרְמָתַיִם צוֹפִים מֵהַר אֶפְרַיִם וּשְׁמוֹ אֶלְקָנָה א

1 • 1 There was once a man from Ramatayim, of the Zufite clan in the hill country of Efrayim, whose name was Elkana son of Yeroḥam son of Elihu son of Toḥu son of Zuf of Efrayim.

Judges 4:5 notes that Devora's seat of power was situated between "Rama and Beit El in the hill country of Efrayim." Since Beit El was on the border between Efrayim and Binyamin's allotment according to the borders specified in Joshua (16:1–2, 18:13), the territory south of Beit El, which would include Rama, was actually in Binyamin's allotment.

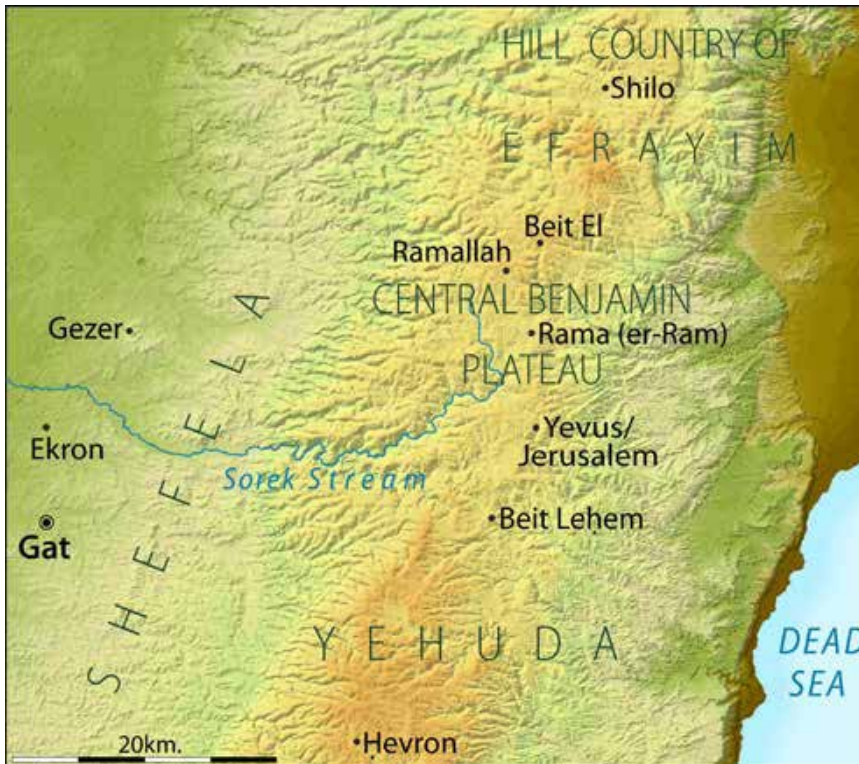
Most scholars identify the modern-day village of er-Ram as Rama. Although er-Ram has never been excavated, archaeological surveys of the area have revealed remains from the Iron I and Iron II periods (when the events of the book of Samuel would have happened), as well as the Persian

period (6th to 4th century BCE), all in an area of just 30 dunams (7.4 acres). Other scholars identify Ramatayim not as er-Ram but rather in the vicinity of Ramallah.

The Tanakh sometimes uses two slightly different names for one place, as it does in this case with Rama and Ramatayim. The *ayim* suffix in the Hebrew place name *Haramatayim* in this verse, that also appears in other place names such as *Shaarayim* (I Sam. 17:52), might indicate that a site includes a dual aspect – er-Ram is situated on two hills that are separated by a narrow, dry riverbed.

The word *Tzofim*, which appears in this verse after *Haramatayim*, is translated here as "the Zufite clan." Other translations combine the two words into a single place name, *Haramatayim-Tzofim*. Either way, it is a reference to Tzuf, an ancestor of Elkana (I Chr. 6:20), who gave his name either to the region (I Sam. 9:5) or to the family unit.

■ CMcK



➤ Haramatayim Tzofim, the hill country of Efrayim, and Shilo

בְּיָדָם בְּנֵי-אֵלֶיהָ וּבְנֵי-תַחֲוֵי בְּנֵי-צִוָּה אֶפְרָתָי: וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים
שֵׁם אַחַת חַנָּה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פְּנִינָה וַיְהִי לַפְּנִינָה יְלָדִים וּלְחַנָּה אֵין

He had two wives: the first was named Hana, and the second 2 •



NEAR EAST

1:2 Polygamy

Polygamy – more precisely, polygyny, meaning the marriage of one man with multiple women – is found in biblical narratives. But it is mentioned in only one legal source, which prohibits a man from transferring firstborn status from the son of a “hated” wife to the son of a “loved” wife (Deut. 21:15–17).

Ancient Near Eastern legal sources have somewhat more to say about the prac-

tice, both about financial matters and about relations between the two wives. Hammurabi Law 138 deals with a situation in which a man intends to divorce his “first-ranking” wife. The term “first-ranking” denotes a wife of equal status with that of her husband.

Legal documents from the Old Babylonian period describe two possible relationships between a man’s two wives: one of sisterhood, where the second wife is adopted as the sister of the first, and one of mistress and slave, where the second wife acts as a servant to the primary wife.

In Old Babylonian texts, the word *tzerretu* simply means “a second wife,” but this changed in time: in Standard Babylonian,

the same term was used to mean “a rival wife.” Penina is termed *tzarata*, the cognate Hebrew word in verse 6 of our story.

Interestingly, ancient Near Eastern sources describe five possible scenarios in which a man might take a second wife: 1. if the original couple is childless; 2. if the first wife is ill; 3. if the first wife does not conduct herself properly; 4. where one or both of the wives were one or another kind of priestess (a situation that is not well understood); and 5. where the original wife consents.

The text does not tell us why Elkana had two wives. Based on ancient Near Eastern practice and our understanding that Hana is childless, it is possible that she was the original wife – i.e., that Elkana took Penina as a second wife due to Hana’s childlessness. While verse 2 may imply that chronologically Hana was his first wife – with its statement that “the first was named Hana, and the second Penina” (compare Gen. 4:19 and Ruth 1:4) – the reasons for Elkana’s polygyny are unstated. ■ MC



➤ Sarah presenting Hagar to Abraham, Joseph-Marie Vien, 1749



— ARCHAEOLOGY —

1:3 Annual sacrifices in the ancient Near East

Elkana’s practice of bringing an annual family sacrifice apparently is the result of a vow he had once made, which is mentioned later in this chapter (verse 21): “The man Elkana and all his household went up to offer the yearly sacrifice to the Lord and fulfill his vow.”

Elkana’s family sacrifice does not appear to have been connected to the annual “festival of the Lord” in Shilo which is mentioned in Judges 21:19. Perhaps the concept of a periodic family sacrifice was not unusual, as a similar practice is described with regard to David’s family, who were celebrating “the yearly sacrificial feast for the entire clan” (1 Sam. 20:6).

The concept of regular sacrifices existed elsewhere in the ancient Near East, as well. For example, there was an annual sacrifice that was made by the *awilum*, one of the upper classes, in the Old Babylonian period (2000–1600 BCE). In one Old Babylonian letter, we read that Ardum – a man who was a *mushkenum*, which was a lower class than the *awilum* – pleads with the god Amurru (the chief god of the Western-Semitic Amorites) to raise him from his sick-bed. He states, “Every year I prepare a sacrifice and offer it to your great divinity;” and promises that if the god will help him, “I shall prepare an abundant sacrifice and come before your divinity.” Similarly, we have records that monthly royal family sacrifices occurred in Ugarit.

Based on our knowledge of ancient Near East practices, it is possible that Elkana’s vow to bring an annual family sacrifice was similar – an expression of thanksgiving to God for helping him in some crucial way.

▪ JU

יְלָדִים: וְעֵלָה הָאִישׁ הָהוּא מְעִירוֹ מִיָּמִים וַיִּמְזֶה לְהַשְׁתַּחֲוֹת א
וְלִזְבֹּחַ לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּשִׁלָּה וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי בְנֵי-עֲלִי חֲפְנִי וּפְנִיָּהִם

3 Penina. Penina had children, but Hana had none. Year after year, that man would make a pilgrimage from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts in Shilo, where the two sons of Eli, Hofni and Pinhas, were priests to the LORD.



— NEAR EAST —

1:3 The Lord of Hosts

In Hebrew, it is unusual to have a construct in which a name is followed by a descriptive term, such as “Lord of Hosts.” One notable exception is in Genesis 11:28, which refers to “Ur Kasdim.”

The phrase “Lord [YHWH] of Hosts” is similar to Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud in northeast Sinai dating to ca. 800 BCE that include references to “YHWH of Shomron” (in the north) and “YHWH of Teiman” (in the south), apparently referring to the same deity who is worshipped in both these locations by the Israelites and others. It is interesting to have this parallel both because of the appearance of the same name of YHWH and because the construction is identical, i.e., a name followed by a descriptive term.

The term “Hosts” that appears in this phrase, at first glance, seems to describe YHWH as commander of the stars. However, in 1 Samuel 17:45, David confronts the Philistines – using this same phrase, but in reference to the ranks of Israel – in a brazen statement: “You come at me with sword and spear and javelin. But I come at you in the name of the Lord [YHWH] of Hosts, the God of the ranks of Israel!”

It seems “Lord of Hosts” has a military connotation and implies the presence of many people. This phrase is found in many books of Tanakh; it is concentrated in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and especially in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Thus, it is possible that Israelites of different eras understood it in various ways as reflecting God’s power. ▪ MC



➤ Hebrew inscription that includes “Yahweh of Teiman,” Kuntillet Ajrud, 9th to 8th century BCE



EGYPTOLOGY

1:3 Egyptian names of Hofni and Pinhas

The names Hofni and Pinhas have no known meaning in Hebrew. It is possible, however, that both derive from the ancient Egyptian language.

The name Hofni may be related to the Egyptian *Hefener*, an Egyptian personal name meaning "tadpole." Another possibility is that Hofni is the Egyptian name *Hefen*, common in the time of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, whose possible meaning is "to dash ahead" or "to smite." In this case, Hofni may well mean "The Smiter."

The name Pinhas (Phinehas) is probably derived from the Egyptian personal name *Pa-Nehesy*, *Pi Nehesy*, "The Nubian," which was a common personal name in the Egyptian New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE).

I Samuel 2:27 clearly states that Eli's family came from Egypt, as did all the Israelites. The use of Egyptian names may echo their origins. ■ RSH



ARCHAEOLOGY

1:3 The Tabernacle in Shilo

Shilo's location in the central hills of Shomron has been well documented throughout history. In the 4th century, the famous historian of Christianity Eusebius determined that Shilo was 19 kilometers (12 miles) from Neapolis or Shekhem (see *Onomasticon* 156.20). In the 14th century, Jewish explorer Ishtori HaParhi knew of Shilo's location, while in the 19th century American scholar Edward Robinson established it as the site of Khirbet Seilun – a determination based on the Arabic retention of biblical names and on the geographic details in Judges 21:19: "Shilo – north of Beit El, east of the highway leading from Beit El to Shekhem, and south of Levona."

Shilo's religious character may have pre-dated the arrival of the Israelites. Excavations at the beginning of the 20th century revealed a large tell of 7.5 acres from the Middle Bronze Age (2055–1650 BCE) – i.e., a time prior to the arrival of the Israelites – that had a large quantity of cult objects.

The period when the *mishkan* ("Tabernacle") was in Shilo, described in the Tanakh, likely corresponds to Iron Age I (1200–1000

BCE). The archaeological layer from this period is predominant, significant for connecting this site to the events described in the book of Samuel. Finds from this layer support the existence of Israelite settlement include typical Israelite silos and large storage containers with collared rims and religious objects such as a cultic stand with reliefs of animals.

It is unclear exactly where, within the area of Shilo, the Tabernacle was set up – an event described in Joshua 18:1. In Jerusalem, Hazor, Shekhem, and other places, cultic structures were located at the highest point of the city, but the space at the highest point of Shilo does not fit the dimensions of the Tabernacle outlined in Exodus 26–27. Perhaps the mobile structure was modified to fit the space. Alternatively, Iron Age I remains have been found in the north, below the tell; and a small Iron Age four-horned incense altar was identified in the south of the tell – an altar that was reused as a building block for a Byzantine church complex on the site. It is possible that the Tabernacle was set up in one of these locations or moved to different places over time.

The demolition of the Tabernacle in Shilo is not explicitly described in Samuel. It is likely that it was destroyed following the dramatic battle between the Israelites and the Philistines recorded in I Samuel 4:10–11: "And oh, the Philistines fought, and Israel was routed, and every man fled back to his tent. The defeat was devastating; thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the Ark of God was captured, and both of Eli's sons died – Hofni and Pinhas." However, Psalm 78:60 does allude to the Tabernacle's destruction, "He abandoned the Tabernacle of Shilo, the tent He had placed among men."

Archaeological records show a fiery destruction in Shilo in the mid-11th century BCE. This may be the destruction by God mentioned by Jeremiah in 7:12: "But go now to My place which was in Shilo where I first made a dwelling for My name. Observe what I did to it on account of the wickedness of My people in Israel." Shilo's destruction also is mentioned in Jeremiah 7:14 and 26:6, 9. ■ CMcK



➤ Model of the Tabernacle, aerial view from the east, Timna Park

➤
Cultic pedestal, statue in the form of a woman, Hatzeva stronghold, Iron Age II



NEAR EAST

1:5 Barrenness in the ancient Near East

Barrenness was known throughout ancient Near East cultures, which routinely had prayers and blessings that women would conceive many children.

In the Tanakh, Sara, Rivka, Raḥel, and Shimshon's mother were all described as barren. Yet Ḥana's barrenness is described uniquely as, "the Lord had closed her womb" (verses 5, 6).

A similar image appears in Akkadian concerning a divinely ordained pestilence, "the womb was constricted and could not give birth to a child." This phrase is reminiscent of the description in Genesis 20:18: "For the Lord had shut every womb of Avimelekh's household, because of Sara, Avraham's wife."

In the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat (ca. 1350 BCE), the king and sage Dan'el prays at the shrine of his gods for a son. He is sent home by the great god El to his wife, and in due course she gives birth to a son. ■ JU

כֹּהֲנִים לַיהוָה: וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיִּזְבַּח אֶלְקָנָה וַנְּתֵן לַפְּנֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ
 • וְלִכְל־בְּנֵיהָ וּבִנּוֹתֶיהָ מְנוּחַ: וּלְחָנָה יָתֵן מִנְהָ אַחַת אֶפְסִים כִּי אֶת־
 חָנָה אָהֵב וַיְהוּה סֹגֵר רַחֲמָהּ: וּכְעִסְתָּהּ עָרְתָהּ גַם־לְעַם בְּעִבּוֹר
 הָרַעְמָה כִּי־סֹגֵר יְהוּה בְּעַד רַחֲמָהּ: וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה מִדֵּי
 עֲלֹתָהּ בְּבַיִת יְהוָה כִּן תִּכְעַסְנָהּ וּתִבְכֶּה וְלֹא תֹאכַל: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ
 אֶלְקָנָה אִישׁוּהָ חָנָה לָמָּה תִּבְכִּי וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי וְלָמָּה יִרְעַ
 לְבַבְךָ הַלּוֹא אֲנִכִּי טוֹב לְךָ מֵעֲשָׂרָה בָּנִים: וַתִּקַּם חָנָה אַחֲרָי
 • אָכְלָה בְּשִׁלָּה וְאַחֲרָי שָׁתָה וְעָלִי הַפֶּהֶן יֵשֵׁב עַל־הַכִּסֵּא עַל־
 מְזוֹזֹת הַיֵּכָל יְהוָה: וְהִיא מֵרַת נַפֶּשׁ וַתִּתְפַּלֵּל עַל־יְהוָה וּבְכָה

4 On the day of Elkana's sacrifice, he would give portions to
 • 5 his wife Penina and all her sons and daughters. And to Ḥana he would give a single portion, but choice, for it was Ḥana whom he loved, though the LORD had closed her womb.
 6 Then her rival, to provoke her, would taunt her fiercely, for
 7 the LORD had closed up her womb. The same thing would happen year in, year out – whenever she went up to the LORD's House, Penina would torment her, and she wept and
 8 would not eat. One year, her husband, Elkana, said to her, "Ḥana, why do you weep? Why do you never eat, and why are you so heartsore? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"
 • 9 Ḥana rose after the meal at Shilo and after the drinking. Eli the priest sat stationed by the doorpost of the LORD's Sanctuary.
 10 Wretched and bitter, she prayed to the LORD, weeping all the



NEAR EAST

1:9 Eli's chair

This verse tells us that Eli the priest had a *kiseh*, "throne," which was located by the doorpost of the Lord's Sanctuary. It seems that the Jewish High Priest in the early Second Temple period also had a throne (Zech. 6:13). Apparently, this was not unusual in the ancient Near East, for the high priestess of Emar, a biblical-era city on the Euphrates River in Syria, was also known to have a throne.

Later in the book of Samuel, we find Eli sitting on a throne by the road or by "the gate" (1 Sam. 4:13, 18). It is not clear whether this is the same location as the Sanctuary's doorpost, or the throne was moved, or Eli had more than one throne. In any case, on the latter occasion Eli falls off his throne backward (verse 18), which might indicate that it is a backless seat. This helps explain how the Ark of the Covenant, which was box-shaped (Ex. 25:12; Deut. 10:1), was seen by some as the Lord's throne (Jer. 3:16–17).

■ RE

10 •• תִּבְכֶּה: וְתִדְרֹךְ נְדָר וְתֹאמַר יְהוָה עֲבָאוֹת אֶסְדָּרָה תִרְאֶה וּ
 בְעֵינַי אֲמַתְךָ וּזְכַרְתִּנִּי וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּח אֶת־אֲמַתְךָ וְנִתְּתָה לְאֲמַתְךָ
 זֶרַע אֲנָשִׁים וְנִתְּתִיו לַיהוָה כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּיו וּמִזֶּדֶה לֹא־יֵעָלֶה עַל־
 11 רֹאשׁוֹ: וְהָיָה כִּי הִרְבִּיתָה לְהִתְפַּלֵּל לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְעָלִי שָׁמַר אֶת־
 12 פִּיהָ: וְחִנָּה הִיא מְדַבֶּרֶת עַל־לִפְתָּהּ רַק שְׁפִתֶיהָ נִעֹת וּקוֹלָהּ

while. She then swore a vow: “LORD of Hosts, if You look 11 ••
 down with sympathy on the misery of Your handmaid and
 recognize me; if You do not forget Your handmaid and grant
 Your handmaid a son, I will then give him to the LORD all the 12
 days of his life, and a razor will never pass over his head.” As
 she prayed on and on before the LORD, Eli was watching her
 mouth. Hana was speaking in her heart; only her lips were 13



NEAR EAST

1:11 Vows

There are two ways that a person from the ancient world would try to get a god to act on his behalf: either he would act – “I do so that you will do,” or he would make a vow – a promise to the deity on condition that the deity grants something to the worshipper first.

An Egyptian stele from the 13th century BCE dedicated to Amen-Re, for example, is labeled as the fulfillment of a vow made by a man named Nebre, who had promised to erect such a stele if the god saved his desperately ill son Nachtamu: “Now, behold, I do what I have said.” Bir-Hadad, a king of Aram, also set up such a stele in fulfillment of a vow, probably in the 9th century BCE; it was found incorporated into a Roman wall near Aleppo.

In the narrative of I Samuel, Hana’s commitment is similar: If God grants her request, she vows to actually give her child back to God, i.e., she promises that he will serve Him in the Tabernacle, all of his days – “I will then give him to the Lord all the days of his life.” ■ MC



NEAR EAST

1:11 Votive individuals

In the ancient Near East, certain people were set apart, or dedicated to the deity – chosen specifically because they express or represent a vow, wish, or desire.

In this verse, Hana vows to dedicate her unborn son to God for life. By promising to never cut his hair, she seems to express the wish that her son will be a lifetime nazirite (see Num. 6:1–21) – though she does not mention the other requirements of a nazirite, i.e., abstention from grape products and avoidance of ritual impurity.

Hana’s vow – as well as Avshalom’s vow described in II Samuel 15:7–8, where he states, “If the Lord will bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord” – are similar in form to the Ugarit Kirta Epic from the 14th to 12th century BCE. In the Kirta Epic, King Kirta stops at a shrine of the goddess of the sea. There, he promises to give the goddess a great tribute in gold and silver if he succeeds in his military endeavor to take the daughter of the king of the city of Udum, who had been promised to him, by force.

In Hana’s vow, she expresses a decision that reflects the Israelite practice of setting apart a person to have a special relationship with God. However, with her promise, she introduces two innovations – she makes a vow about how her son will behave and, rather than mentioning the word “nazirite,” she forbids the cutting of his hair. ■ DAA.



Stele dedicated to the god Khonsu by the draftsman Nebre, limestone, Deir el-Medina, 1292–1190 BCE



NEAR EAST

1:14 Wine and sacrifices

The Torah permits Israelites to drink wine and strong drink on festive occasions to create an atmosphere of celebration and happiness (Deut. 14:26), but drunkenness in the Tabernacle, in the presence of holiness, was forbidden. In fact, a biblical injunction forbids priests from serving in the Tabernacle after consuming wine or strong drink (Lev. 10:9). It is in this context that Eli the High Priest accuses Hana of drunkenness, presumably in the compound of the Tabernacle at Shilo, telling her to “Deny yourself wine!”

In the ancient Near East, beer was considered semi-divine; heavier drinks were apparently used to request a divine oracle from the gods. The ancients believed that the gods partook of vast quantities of wine and beer at their banquets. Thus, for example, when the Hittites described their festivals, they often mentioned the consumption of beer as part of their ceremonial and religious activities.

In contrast, the Israelite custom of rejoicing with wine described in Deuteronomy was meant to increase one’s level of enjoyment of the special occasion – not to propitiate God in any way. The Israelites believed that God had no need of food and drink; the wine used in libations were simply a thanksgiving offering to God (see “Water libation” at on page 62).

Perhaps Eli, whose sons wantonly abused their status as priests (2:12-17), was particularly sensitive to drunken behavior. ■ DAA

◀ Hannah brings Samuel to Eli, chromolithograph on card stock, Anton Robert Leinweber, ca. 1915.

לֹא יִשְׁמַע וַיַּחֲשֹׁבָה עָלָי לְשׂוֹכְרָהּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ עַד־מָתַי
 תִּשְׁתַּכְּרִין הַסִּירִי אֶת־יַיִנְךָ מֵעַלֶיךָ: וַתֵּעַן חַנָּה וַתֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲדֹנָי
 אִשָּׁה קִשְׁת־רוּחַ אֲנֹכִי וַיַּיִן וְשִׁכָר לֹא שָׁתִיתִי וְאִשְׁפֹךְ אֶת־נַפְשִׁי
 לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: אֲל־תִּתֵּן אֶת־אִמְתְּךָ לִפְנֵי בַת־בְּלִיעֵל בְּיַמְרֹב שִׁחִי
 וְכַעֲסִי דִבַּרְתִּי עַד־הַנָּה: וַיַּעַן עָלָי וַיֹּאמֶר לְבִי לְשָׁלוֹם וְאֱלֹהֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתֵּן אֶת־שְׁלַתְךָ אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתְּ מֵעַמּוֹ: וַתֹּאמֶר תַּמְצֵא
 שְׂפַחְתְּךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתֵּלֶךְ הָאִשָּׁה לְדָרְכָהּ וַתֹּאכַל וּפְנִיָהּ לֹא־
 הָיְלָה עוֹד: וַיִּשְׁכַּמוּ בַבֶּקֶר וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ
 אֶל־בֵּיתֵם הַרְמַתָּה וַיִּדַע אֱלֹקָנָה אֶת־חַנָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּזְכְּרָהּ יְהוָה:

moving, and her voice could not be heard, so Eli thought
 • 14 her drunk. “How long will you act the drunkard?” he said to
 15 her. “Deny yourself wine!” “No, sir,” Hana answered, “I am a
 woman of troubled spirit. Neither wine nor beer have I drunk,
 • 16 but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not
 think your handmaid depraved, for it was my overwhelming
 worry and my torment that moved me to pray just now.”
 17 “Go in peace,” Eli answered, “and may the God of Israel
 18 grant what you seek of Him.” “May I, your servant, find favor
 in your eyes,” she said. And the woman went on her way,
 19 and ate, and was downcast no longer. They rose early in the
 morning and bowed down before the LORD, then headed
 back and arrived home in Rama. Elkana was intimate with



NEAR EAST

1:16 Daughter of Belyaal

This mysterious Hebrew word appears twenty-seven times in the Tanakh, ten of them in Samuel; in I Samuel 2:12 the narrator calls Eli’s own sons “sons of *Belyaal*.” In later Jewish sources, it came to be used to refer to the forces of evil or their leader. That is how it is used some seventy-seven times in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The word is not found in other ancient Near East sources.

Folk etymology seems to have played a large role in the word’s development. The combination of the word *bal* (meaning the negation of something) with *yaal* (meaning “worth” – that is, “worthless”) or *alah* (meaning “rise” – that is, “incapable of rising”), plus its similar sound to the word *Baal*, the Canaanite god, made this a powerful word of condemnation. ■ MC