

# **1 SAMUEL (1)**

## **Cleaning Up**



**Stephen Gunawan**

## Readings: 1 Samuel 1-7

Let's do a short recap to what we have been studying so far through the books of Judges and Ruth.

The Book of Judges which preceded 1 Samuel gave a very bleak picture; in which the lack of leadership in Israel had caused the people to do what they deemed right, and therefore starting a downward spiral in the trend of morality and spirituality. By the end of the Book of Judges, we were presented a very horrifying picture, in which the behavior of a particular tribe (the Benjamites) had become so similar to the behavior of the Sodomites, which God destroyed. The picture looked hopeless.

But the Book of Ruth presented us with a side story, during the very times of the judges, in which a Moabitess named Ruth showed herself to be more Israel than Israel, indeed doing not only the content of the Law, but also the intent of the Law. This virtue was also shown by Boaz, Ruth's kinsman-redeemer and husband. This story reminded us that God still preserves for Him a remnant of the faithful through whom God will proceed with His plan of salvation. We are given a hopeful picture at the end of the Book of Ruth for a person named David.

The Book of 1 Samuel picks up where we left off from these two books. And the first section that we are going to discuss will be from chapters 1 to 7. As I reflected upon these chapters, what I see is God finally cleaning up the mess the Israelites made in the Book of Judges. He did this in the first 7 chapters by doing the following:

- Breaking the silence
- Replacing an ineffective judge-leader with one raised up by God Himself.
- Punishing wicked administrators of Law as a warning for future administrators of the Law.
- Clarifying the holiness of His name and how His name is not to be misused by "what the people deemed right"
- Declaring His sovereignty and might to His enemies by utterly defeating them

We will discuss these one by one; but here's the comparison between the days of Judges and the time of **1 Samuel 1-7**:

Times of the Judges	1 Sam 1-7
No king	Preparation for a king
The Word of the Lord was rare, and there were not many visions	God breaks the silence as He used Samuel as a prophet-judge.
The judges became rulers over some tribes, and never the whole of Israel; and Israel became increasingly disunited	Samuel is made judge over ALL of Israel
The judges became increasingly self-serving	God punished Eli and his sons very severely and replaced them with Samuel, a good judge
The people did as they deemed right	God punished Israel for doing what they thought was right (eg. taking the Ark into battle for victory, looking into the Ark)

### 1. **Breaking the silence**

One particular comment gives an additional description of the days of the judges. Aside from the common descriptions in the Book of Judges, in which we are told that because there was no king, the people did as they deemed right, it is now revealed also that "*in those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions*" (3:1). And indeed, the people at the beginning of the days of the judges are described in this way: "*another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel*" (Jdg 2:10). Knowledge of God was a rare thing, and God had not been revealing Himself much. Now let us not be mistaken; the Law of Moses in the five books of the Pentateuch had

already been given to them. However, because we see in the days of judges that -people had little regard for the Law; had little interest in keeping the Law; and in fact tried through various ways to manipulate the Law to their own ends – God stopped giving them an understanding of His will. I cannot help but be reminded of this verse: “*where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law*” (**Prov 29:18**, ESV). The solution to the absence of vision is not in seeking the mystical and extraordinary prophetic vision, but rather by showing that we have intent and desire to understand and to keep the Law of God. God has no interest giving pearls to swine (**Matt 7:6**), and He will not reveal His precious will to people who had no intent of obedience. In the next point, note how Eli knew what was right, but had no intention of carrying that out.

What we see at the beginning of 1 Samuel is God raising up a young boy Samuel, who would, for a change, desire to obey his God. His response to a calling, though taught to him, was sincerely that of a servant awaiting the order from his King: “*Here I am*” and then later “*speak, for your servant is listening*” (**3:4, 5, 6, 8, 10**)<sup>i</sup>. See note <sup>(i)</sup> below, and observe how God would call His servants before revealing to them His will and then sending them to do that will. The most striking example would perhaps be Isaiah, after he received a heavenly vision, replied with such words, “*Here am I. Send me!*” And all of these examples of obedience would finally speak of the Word made flesh, the incarnate Christ who came to dwell among men and reveal to us the Father. And he too, said, “*Here I am*” as an indication of His willingness to do the will of the Father (**Heb 10:7, 9**).

God breaks His silence by raising up Samuel, the prophet and the last judge of Israel; a servant who was eager to do His will. Samuel was born from a barren woman; and therefore one among many who are consecrated for the Lord’s purpose<sup>ii</sup>. Even Hannah’s prayer in **1 Sam 2** presented itself not merely as a song of praise for being assisted; but was in fact more like the Magnificat of Mary, and a prophecy for how the child would make way for a blessing that God would bring. This would bring an end to the days of the judges, where people knew not the Lord and desired not His will.

## **2. Replacing an ineffective judge-leader (Eli) with one raised up by God Himself (Samuel)**

Eli was presented to us as a high-priest and judge<sup>iii</sup>. The description given of him showed Eli not to be a particularly wicked judge. In fact, he is shown to be one who was able to tell right from wrong; seeing as how he ① Reprimanded his sons for the wicked thing they had done (**2:23-25**); ② Resigned to his fate as he was punished severely by God, apparently admitting his guilt and professing God’s sovereignty (**3:18**) ③ Was genuinely concerned for the Ark of the Lord perhaps even more than he was with his sons. The ark was what he was primarily feared for, and it was the only thing he asked about (**4:12; 18**).

However, he was also a weak and ineffective leader. He allowed wickedness to thrive ① By allowing his sons to continue in their wicked ways and not using his authority to prevent further vice – and this “*failure to restrain*” (**3:13**) was taken as an act of “*honoring his sons more than he does God*” (**2:29**). ② His resignation to his fate, though at first sight showed submission to God’s supreme authority, was not one which he followed up with genuine repentance and was therefore not a godly sorrow but a worldly one (**2 Cor 7:10**). ③ Despite his apparent concern for the Ark, Eli did not forbid the elders and his sons from taking the Ark to battle, despite the fact that he seemed to know it was wrong – and was therefore fearful for it (**4:13**). Here’s therefore how we can summarize his actions. He knew what exactly went wrong, however did not do anything about it. This was made worse because he was in position of leadership, and therefore of responsibility. Perhaps what was said by Edmund Burke is quite appropriate though not necessarily accurate, that “*All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.*” Why I said it was not entirely accurate is because the Bible never calls the failure to execute evil to be in any sense, good. The principle of the Bible is that “*if anyone knows the good they ought to*

*do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them" (Jam 4:17).* And this was especially so for those in governing authorities, because they wield the sword as God's agents for good, to punish evil (Rom 13:4). And therefore God judged his family forever "because of the sin he knew about" (3:13).

Eli had, under his delegated watch, allowed great evil to exist despite having the knowledge and power to stop it. This was why he was severely punished by God. Both he and (even more so) his sons had used the authority they possessed to their own benefits, and "fatted themselves" which basically equaled to corruption (2:29). They had exhibited what the "compromised judges" from the Book of Judges did<sup>v</sup>, which was using power for self-benefit.

We see in Chapter 3 that God had already established his new leader for Israel. At the lowest point in the history of Israel, when they were most probably at the peak of their disunity; but then for the first time in all of the history of the judges, this new leader, Samuel, was so powerfully anointed by God that his influence was felt throughout the whole nation. "The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and He let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. And all of Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there He revealed Himself to Samuel through His word. And Samuel's word came to all Israel" (3:19-4:1). Samuel was a national leader recognized by all of Israel.

### **3. Punishing the wicked administrators of the Law (Eli, Hophni & Phinehas) as a warning for future administrators of Law.**

We saw a spiraling decline in morality, not only in the people of Israel, but more importantly in the judges who ruled Israel. Whilst Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar and Deborah were generally portrayed as good judges; by the time of Gideon we saw a questionable leader who secretly desired power. And after Gideon, all the judges mentioned had increasingly self-centered intent. Tola, Jair, Jephthah all sounded fishy; and Samson was openly self-centered. (See the previous lessons for more detailed explanation).

As a judge, Eli fattened himself (2:29), corrupted the best part of the offerings, and made himself literally physically fat. And the divine comedy was that this fatness was what killed him (4:18)! I had mentioned that Eli was not an ignorant judge, but he failed in standing up for what was right. And when you have this character in the person of a ruler, you get a wicked generation that the leader cannot lawfully restrain; therefore making the leader ultimately responsible for evil. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas were absolutely wicked. They corrupted the sacrifice offered at the house of the Lord; and God charged them with "treating the Lord's offering with contempt" (2:17) and "blaspheming God" (3:13). But notice how the writer puts this alongside statements like "but Samuel was ministering before the Lord" (2:18) and "meanwhile the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord" (2:21) clearly contrasting his righteousness with the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas; and giving the readers a newfound hope.

How were these leaders punished? Very, very severely. For sinning knowingly and wilfully, God had said that "the guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering" (3:14). And finally, not only did he and his sons pay for this sin by dying very shortly after, but his descendants would also. What were to happen to Hophni and Phinehas were only a sign to Eli (2:34), therefore a statement for Eli that although he wouldn't live to witness it, God's punishment would indeed be carried out on his descendants, and his descendants "would never live to see old age" (2:30-33).

### **4. Clarifying the holiness of His name and how His name is not to be misused by "what the people deemed right"**

God emphasized the holiness of His name in two occasions. His very severe punishment to Eli and his house was to emphasize this, as He said *“Those who honor Me I will honor, but those who despise Me will be disdained”* (2:30). It was because what they did blasphemed God that He punished them.

However, there was another occasion in which God proclaim His name holy. The Israelites were losing in their battles against the Philistines, and concluded that God was not with them in battles (4:1-3). They then reasoned that since the reason for their losing was because God was not with them, they would bring the Ark of the Covenant, which was the very sign of God’s presence with them, to battle. Now, had we not known the end result, I think many of us would actually think this was a good thing. They acted in faith acknowledging that the battle belongs to the Lord. Many of us still do this. We get Pastors to bless our houses, our businesses thinking that by having them pray over those properties that God would be compelled to bless. Now, I am not saying that these actions in themselves are wrong, but I want you to think consequentially. So more examples. Some go further. I know of some churches who teach that they can use anointing oils like some sort of magic charms and anoint their houses with it for protection. I have once seen a church using the Holy Communion as some sort of ritualistic healing and allowed their members to take a whole plastic bags of sealed wine and say that those will heal them of their diseases. But my question is merely this. Do we compel God to act by pushing the right buttons? Is God bound by some sort of magic mantra that we can recite at will? See, these actions are what normally define some people as religious or even spiritual. See a person dedicating his or her businesses by calling a priest, we see a religious man. But as we shall learn further down the book, *“man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”* (16:7). Now does that mean that outward appearances are not important? That a priest of God forget all the rules, not wear his ephod, and casually enter into the sanctuary of God looking like a ruffian? No. As Jesus would teach much further in the New Testament, the problem with hypocrisy is that people clean the outside only. The solution is rather to clean the inside FIRST, and THEN the outside will be clean as well (Mat 23:25-26). So don’t get me wrong. Dedicating our houses or businesses to God is not a wrong act; but only when it is an outward sign of our inward commitment to God. A commitment to please God with what we have, and a prayer of plea for God’s help in doing so.

There was another point which most of us might miss. It was the fact that prior to this incident, God had just undeniably raised Samuel as His prophet and showed that He was with Samuel (Samuel recognized as prophet - 3:19-4:1. The battle against the Philistines - 4:1-11). They had with them someone to whom God was revealing Himself; and therefore the most fitting answer to their question would have been to enquire of the Lord through Samuel; not to take matters into their own hands and “do what they deemed right.” God’s will should take precedence, and their faith should have been based upon His word.

Prior to taking the Ark into battle, Israel lost 4,000 men (4:1-2). When they took the Ark, they lost 30,000 men (4:10). God had begun to rebuke them for doing “what they deemed right,” and thus putting an end of the sins of the days of the judges. God’s name should not be misused, and Israel paid for thinking otherwise! And now that Samuel had brought the word of the Lord into all of Israel (4:1), the people could no longer plead ignorance.

##### **5. *Declaring His sovereignty and might to His enemies by utterly defeating them***

The next portion of the story can be better appreciated if you view it like a progressing movie. Let’s pause the movie at certain portions, and reflect on what it would be like for those people who were not aware of the end of the movie.

We'll begin with the mistake of carrying the Ark. The people only thought of the Ark as some sort of charm they brought into battle; and that with it God was somehow compelled to act. They might think, "surely God would not profane His own name by allowing defeat that now we carry His name into our battles. Surely He is going to fight for us to defend His name!" See if this episode were played like a movie, we would be left dumbfounded by the whole thing. On one hand, we would wish that God would teach these people a painful lesson for even thinking they could manipulate God in such an underhanded way. However, we would also not think that God would sacrifice His reputation by allowing defeat. You know when a child keeps pestering his parents for a toy, even rolling on the ground and not wanting to move until his request is granted him? It's something like that. And I would expect God to do what many parents do. Buy him that toy, but when he gets home, ooh he's so going to get it. Spanking is the least of punishments for causing such embarrassment in public. He may not even get to play with that toy!

But God did not do that. He allowed Israel to be defeated, and the Ark to be captured. In fact, God even allowed the Ark to be taken to Ashdod and to be put in the temple of Dagon, as some sort trophy of war. Let's hit the pause button again. In this scene, we would see the Philistines boasting about winning an impossible battle. They had initially trembled in fear for having to go against the God who defeated all the gods of Egypt and hit all the Egyptians with plagues (**4:6-8**). But they encouraged themselves and fought for their lives (**4:9**) and must have thought that they won because of it. They were celebrating over the fact that the invincible God of Israel were defeated in their hands; an unaccomplished feat in all of history! They must have been so pleased with themselves, as they brought the Ark into the temple of Dagon, placing the Ark beside Dagon as a trophy of war to be remembered for ages to come. Some of them might scoff, "this God of Israel, whom we thought was mighty in battle, He wasn't so great after all! Look at how easily we have captured Him in battle!"

Now, this is a scene of shame for the God of Israel. And the calamity was so pictured in **4:12-22**, as all of Israel mourned for the shame that had befallen them. Eli died in great shock, and Phinehas' wife gave birth to a boy whom she would name Ichabod; as a memorial for the darkest of days that had befallen them. For the first time since they went out of Egypt, the Ark was captured and they were left helpless and hopeless.

See, we need to hit the pause button, because for Eli, Hophni, Phinehas, Phinehas' wife and the thirty thousand foot soldiers that died in battle (**4:10**), the story ended there. They never got to see the restoration that God would bring. Imagine the absolute horror that hit Eli as he witnessed what he feared the most, and died.

But let us continue, for what was to happen next was one of the greatest story of restoration. In chapters 5-7, God is going to prove without the shadow of a doubt that He was the only true and living God. There are certain words that the writer purposely used repetitively; and these were used to convey a message in a very poetic manner.

- **The Word "Take"**. In chapter 5, we are going to see God defeating Dagon, and do it with a twist and a sense of humor. See, when the Ark was placed in the temple of Dagon, everyone would expect that that was the end of the God of Israel.

The writer purposefully used words that illustrated the helplessness of idols in defending themselves. Thinking the Ark of the Covenant to be just like any other idols, the Philistines "*took*" it to Ashdod (**5:1**). Then they "*took*" the Ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon (**5:2**). But the

next morning, the image of Dagon had already fallen over in a posture of worship before the Ark of the Lord; so that they “took” Dagon and put him back on his place. Three times the word “took” were used, to illustrate how the Ark which they thought were helpless actually made Dagon fall and Dagon had to be “taken” up because it apparently could not help itself.

What was this word trying to signify? It showed idol worship for what it truly is: A worshipping of a useless and helpless image made with the people's own minds and hands. And the people who worshipped such gods instinctively knew they were not serving the one true God! They had thought that Yahweh was a similar projection of the mind when they were taking the Ark into the temple, but they were proven dead wrong.

- **The Word “Hand”.** Next the writer used the word “hand” in a repetitive fashion; being used in chapters 5 – 7 some 12 times.

The next day, Dagon again fell on his face in a posture of worship before the Ark of the Lord; but this time with his head and “hands” broken off (5:4). His hands being broken off meant that Dagon was stripped off his power. His head being broken off meant that he was so utterly and completely defeated. Then, the Lord’s “hand” was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity and plagued them with tumors (5:6). By now, they would remember the might of the God of Israel in plaguing Egypt. They admitted that the plague was in fact the Lord’s “hand” which was against them and Dagon (5:7). And wherever the Ark went next, the Lord’s “hand” would be similarly heavy in that place, first at Gath (5:9), then again at Ekron (5:11) - proving the initial plague to be more than mere coincidence. And so, they would plan to return the Ark to Israel, so that the “hand” of the Lord would be lifted from them (6:3). In fact, they were so desperate that they even offered a guilt offering so that the “hand” might be lifted from them (6:5). They would later prove whether it was truly the Lord’s “hand,” or mere coincidences that hit them (6:9). This event was to be a sign, that if Israel would obey the Lord, He would deliver them out of the “hand” of the Philistines (7:3) proving that the Philistines were really an enemy that God used to discipline His people Israel; and that when they finally cried out to the Lord to be delivered from the “hand” of the attacking Philistines (7:8), He did. And not only did God deliver Israel once, He ensured that throughout the lifetime of Samuel, the Lord’s “hand” was always against the Philistine, and they never invaded Israel again (7:13); even restoring to them the cities which they had taken from Israel, and Israel delivered the neighboring territories from the “hand” of the Philistines (7:14).

The word “hand” indicated power and might. That Dagon’s hands had fallen off meant that it was void of might, even to assist himself. That the Lord’s hand was heavy on the Philistines meant that He showed His mighty power as He did with the Egyptians; and He did that during the time when everyone thought He was powerless. That God delivered Israel out of the Philistines’ hand meant that God was the one delivering them from an enemy who was naturally stronger than themselves.

- **The Word “Send”.** Between chapters 5-6, there is also a repetition of the word “send,” using it nine times in two chapters.

First, upon experiencing the hand of God in Ashdod, they “sent” for all the rulers of the Philistines (5:8) to discuss what they were to do with the Ark. After Gath, the “sent” the Ark to Ekron (5:10), where it caused yet similar plagues. So they “sent” for all the leaders again (5:11), who decided to “send” away the Ark back to Israel (5:11). They then “sent” the Ark away (6:3), but “sending” with it a guilt offering (6:3). But here’s a funny reference they made, that they delayed in sending the Ark,

just as the Egyptians refused to “send” the Israelites away by hardening their hearts (6:8). There were two final usages of the word which I will reveal after I explain its intended purpose.

See, two times they sent for the rulers of the Philistines to act as witnesses for what God had done in the land of the Philistines. Twice did the rulers of the Philistines send away the Ark of God. And its final reference was of interest (6:6): they should send away the Ark of God just as Egypt sent away the Israelites, to prevent them from experiencing the plagues any further. Now this final reference is of special interest because this means that they sent the Ark away for a similar reason Egypt sent Israel away: To avoid the plagues. But even then, they would not want to forego the achievement of defeating the supreme God of Israel so soon; not when there was still the slightest chance that the tumors were but plain coincidence. Maybe the weather was bad? Maybe there was poisoning in the water they drank? Maybe there was a common factor linking the similar tumors that was something other than the God of Israel. And they were not ready to throw away the glory they thought they had.

And so when they sent the Ark back to Israel, they had ensured that it would happen in the most impossible way. They hitched two unyoked cows to a cart loaded with the guilt offerings and sent it away to Israel (6:7) to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the calamities they were experiencing were not coincidental in nature but rather was caused by the God of Israel (6:9). It was extremely unlikely for cows that had never been yoked to not struggle back to their calves. But the cows showed a very strange sign. They walked in a straight line to Beth-shemesh whilst lowing all the way; showing unwillingness yet somehow directed there (6:12). Again and again, the Philistines were shown proof of the falsehood of their religion, and the truth of the God of Israel. But it seemed that all they were interested in was escaping the plagues, and returning to their normal ways of life, returning again to the worship of their fallen god, Dagon. It seemed that truth did not matter to them. They missed the fact that when the Egyptians sent the Israelites away, that many of them did go with Israel and probably converted to their faith (Ex 12:38 – the “many other” indicated by this verse<sup>v</sup>). And so they were spared the plagues; just as Egypt was when Israel left; but they were left to their pagan way of idol worship, unto eternal damnation.

The fact that the Philistines chose only to send away the Ark of the Covenant instead of also asking for the way of the Lord to the Israelites was somewhat pitiful. However, the more shocking fact was the very last use of the word “send”. This was to be found further down the line in 6:21. The Ark had miraculously find its way back to Israel; without Israel lifting a single finger to recapture it. They were momentarily glad (6:13) and made sacrifices to the Lord (6:15). But then they did the forbidden; they looked into the Ark (perhaps trying to find more gold in it?) and 70 men were struck dead (6:19)<sup>vi</sup>. Instead of repenting from their act, the Israelites at Beth-Shemesh “sent” messengers to Kiriath Jearim, asking them to take it to their place (6:21).

Apparently, even the Israelites at Beth-Shemesh still refused to worship God for who He truly is. They were more comfortable of the god of their own imagination, and the “way that they deemed right.” But in these few chapters God had proven His infinite superiority over other gods; in fact rendering all of them helpless and useless. And not only that, He also showed that He was sovereign over His people, and they had to worship Him in truth and not worship a god of their own imagination.

As we had discussed, God “cleaned up” the mess that Israel was in by doing these five things:

- Breaking the silence
- Replacing an ineffective judge-leader with one raised up by God Himself.
- Punishing wicked administrators of Law as a warning for future administrators of the Law.
- Clarifying the holiness of His name and how His name is not to be misused by “what the people deemed right”
- Declaring His sovereignty and might to His enemies by utterly defeating them

And after the end of these episodes, after 20 years the Ark was in Kiriath Jearim, we are told that Israel were repentant as “*all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord*” (7:2). Samuel then asked them to put away all their foreign gods and their Astoreths and serve the Lord only; which they did (7:3-4). Samuel then interceded for them as their leader, and they fasted and repented (7:5-6).

As a result of this genuine repentance, God delivered Israel from the Philistines. And He made a fatal blow to the Philistines, so that “*the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israel’s territory again*” (7:13). Not only that, God ensured that the Philistines returned all the cities they took from Israel back to the rightful owner (7:14). It was a total and final victory for Israel, and it was because they repented and God was with them.

In the remaining of chapter 7 we see what seemed like a concluding chapter to a story. It uses words like “*throughout Samuel’s lifetime*” (7:13b), and “*Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life*” (7:15). And it was indeed a fitting close to a topic in which the writer tried to tell us of a period of cleansing which ended in Samuel leading the nation as no previous judge ever did: faithful to God and powerful over all of Israel.

Soli Deo Gloria!

<sup>i</sup> The phrase “here I am” are often used by people who are ready to obey their God.

Call	Response	Command
“Abraham!” (Gen 22:1)	“Here I am”	Called to sacrifice Isaac
“Abraham! Abraham!” (Gen 22:11)	“Here I am”	Asked to withhold the sacrifice
“Jacob!” (Gen 31:11)	“Here I am”	Asked to meet Esau who wanted to kill him
“Jacob! Jacob!” (Gen 46:2)	“Here I am”	Asked to go to Egypt
“Moses! Moses!” (Ex 3:4)	“Here I am”	Asked to lead Israel out of Egypt
“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” (Isa 6:8)	“Here am I. Send me!”	Isaiah after receiving heavenly vision
	“Here I am, I have come – it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart” (Ps 40:7-8)	A call to true worship. (David, but Messianic)
	“Here I am – it is written about Me in the scroll. I have come to do Your will, My God” (Heb 10:7, 9)	Christ, when sent to the world

<sup>ii</sup> Note who were born of barren women. All of the Patriarch’s wives were barren. Abraham’s wife was barren; Isaac’s wife was; and Jacob’s favourite wife was. For the fathers of the promised nation, this seemed to be a test of faith. Samson was born of a barren mother, and later on in the New Testament, John the Baptist was born of a barren mother.

<sup>iii</sup> At his death, we were told that “he had judged Israel forty years” (4:18), following the pattern of language found in the Book of Judges.

<sup>iv</sup> Read my explanations on this from the sessions on the Book of Judges.

<sup>v</sup> See Lesson “Exodus (2): Pharaoh and Egypt” for further explanation.

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<sup>vi</sup> **Num 4:17-20** included the Ark as one of “the most holy things” that even the Kohathites-Levite were not allowed to look into. Looking into the Ark was therefore considered an irreverent act which was punishable by death. Look at **2 Sam 6** to see a similar event.