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Samuel's Call
First Samuel 3: 1-14

Samuel's call DIG: What was the time of young Samuel like? What was the major problem at that time? What does it mean that "The lamp of God had not yet gone out?" Describe God's call on Samuel. What is young Samuel's attitude toward God? Toward 'Eli? Why would ADONAI call a young boy to be a prophet?

REFLECT: What do you think about the spiritual condition of your nation? What is similar and dissimilar to Samuel's day (Judges 21:25)? Were you listening when the Lord called you? Did you respond immediately or did it take time for you to recognize Him? How do you listen to God now? How have you responded?

Hearing God's voice.

Once again we see the contrast between the wickedness of **'Eli's** family and the faithfulness of **the boy Samuel**. **He** ministered before **the LORD** under the guidance of **'Eli** at a time when **Ha'Shem rarely spoke** to **His people**. The spiritual leaders were corrupt, and **God's people** were not obedient to the Torah, so **He** was pretty much silent. It was a sad day for the nation of **Isra'el** when the living **God** no longer sent **His people** signs and prophetic messages to **them (Psalm 74:9; Ezeki'el 7:26; Amos 8:11;** and **Micah 3:6)**. The silence of **ADONAI** was the judgment of **ADONAI**. But **YHVH** was about to change the situation and speak **His** precious **word** to **a** young **boy** who would listen and obey.[91]



The circumstance of the call (3:1-3): The boy Samuel was still a young apprentice**, ministering to ADONAI under 'Eli's supervision. According to Josephus, he was twelve years old. Now, in those days ADONAI rarely spoke, and visions were few (3:1).** The frequency of divine revelation during the Mosaic, **Joshua** era had ended. And furthermore, the prophetic era had not begun. So this was a transitional period, in which the appearance of **the Word of God** was very **rare**. But with **Samuel**, all this was about to change. It was night, and there was spiritual darkness in the Land. **'Eli had gone to bed – his eyes had begun to grow dim, so that it was hard for him to see (3:2).** This not only emphasized **'Eli's** physical condition, but also the spiritual condition of **Isra'el (Judges 21:25)**.[92] **The Menorah of God had not yet gone out** (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Fn – The Menorah in the Sanctuary: Christ, the Light of the World**)**. The cups** on **the Menorah** were filled with **olive oil** and lit **at twilight (Exodus 30:8)**. **The priests** were **to keep the olive oil burning before ADONAI from evening until morning (Exodus 20:21b; Leviticus 24:2-4; 2 Chronicles 13:11).** As an apprentice **priest**, **Samuel** slept in **the Holy Place** to make sure the **light** of **the Menorah** did not go out.

> **Samuel's call (3:4-11): ADONAI called to Samuel four times**.
> It was early in the morning, when **ADONAI called the first time,** saying, **"Samuel!" and the boy answered, "Here I am"** (Hebrew: *hinneh*). Young **Samuel's** response to **God's** call gives us some early insight into **his** character. As **he** grew into **his** role as a prophet, **he** learned to listen for **the LORD's** voice and was always quick to respond. **Then he ran to 'Eli**, who was

sleeping in **the Tabernacle** compound, just outside of the courtyard (see **Ae – The Tabernacle at Shiloh**), and said: **Here I am – for you called me? Samuel's** quick response and humble attitude demonstrate **he** had a true **servant's** spirit. **But he** said: **I didn't call you; go back, and lie down. So he went and lay down (3:4-5).**

ADONAI called a second time. In this passage, we gain some insight into the character of **God** as well. **YHVH** is not an overbearing **Master** who is quick to punish **a servant** who does not respond perfectly to **His call**. **He** recognized **Samuel's** willing spirit and continued to **call him** even though **Samuel** misunderstood what was happening.[93] **The LORD called, "Samuel!" Samuel got up** again**, went to 'Eli and** said: **Here I am – you called me. He** answered: **I didn't call, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel didn't yet know ADONAI; the Word of ADONAI had not yet been revealed to him (3:6-7). The boy** didn't have a relationship with **ADONAI** and had never heard **His** voice, so **he** didn't recognize it. **He** wasn't a prophet yet either**.** But all that was about to change.

ADONAI called again a third time, "Samuel!" He got up, went to 'Eli and said: **Here I am – you called me. 'Eli's** failure to teach others about **God** was probably a result of **his** own failure to walk closely with **Him**. **'Eli** was slow to recognize **God's call** of **Samuel** because **he** had grown unfamiliar with **His** voice. However, **at last 'Eli realized it was ADONAI** who was **calling the child. So 'Eli said to Samuel, "Go, and lie down. If you are called again,** say: **Speak, ADONAI; your servant hears." Samuel went and lay down in his place (3:8-9). He** wasn't a prophet yet either**.** But all that was about to change.

ADONAI came a fourth time as before, but this time **He** also **stood** before **him** (a theophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of **Messiah**)**, and called, "Samuel! Samuel!"** This time the name is doubled, and was common when **God called** someone to ministry. This happened only eight times in the Bible: **Abraham (Gen 22:11-13); Jacob (Gen 46:1-4); Moses (Ex 3:1-10); Samuel (First Samuel 3:1-10); Martha (Lk 10:38-42); Simon Peter (Lk 22:31-32); the Father (Mt 27:46** and **Mk 15:34);** and **Sha'ul (Acts 9:4).**

So, becoming visible as well as speaking, **Samuel** received both **word** and **vision**. The almighty **God**, **Creator** of the universe, humbled **Himself** to come into the presence of **His servant** – something no earthly king would ever do.

> What is even more amazing is that **He** just **stood** there, patiently waiting for **Samuel** to recognize **His** presence.[94] **Then Samuel,** repeating **'Eli's** words, said: **Speak; your servant hears. ADONAI said to Samuel, "Look! I am going to do something in Isra'el that will make both ears of everyone who hears about it tingle" (3:10-11).** This is an expression which is used when a specifically severe **judgment** is pronounced and **its** effect on those hearing **it**. It is used in **Second Kings 21:12** and **Jeremiah 19:3** in reference to the Babylonian Captivity.[95]

'Eli's judgment (3:12-14): Then **ADONAI** reminded **Samuel** of the earlier prophecy **He** had made against **'Eli**. **On that day I will do against 'Eli everything I have said with regard to his family, from beginning to end** (see **Au – God's Rejection of 'Eli's House**)**. For I have told him that I will execute judgment against his family forever, because of his wickedness in not rebuking his sons, even though he knew that they had brought a curse on themselves. Thus, I have sworn to the family of 'Eli that the wickedness of 'Eli's family will never be atoned for by any sacrifice or offering (3:12-14).** Provision was made in the Torah for **sacrifice** on behalf of the **sin** of **the priests**, but such **sacrifice** only covered unwitting **sin (Lev 4:2, 13, 22)**. But **their sins** were deliberate and defiant, and for such **sins** no **sacrifice** could be **offered (Num 15:30)**. Not only had **they** defiled **themselves**, but **they** had also defiled **the priesthood**. God had been longsuffering toward **the house of 'Eli**, but **they** hadn't repented and turned from **their sins**. Now it was too late.[96] When **'Eli** failed to fulfill the duty of **the high priest** by replacing **his** wicked **sons** as **priests**, **he** brought that curse on **his** own head as well.

Because **Samuel** was obedient to **God** and to **'Eli**, **he** heard the message of **Ha'Shem's judgment** against **the house of 'Eli**. This was certainly a weighty message to give to such **a** young **boy**, but in doing so, perhaps **ADONAI** was rebuking the spiritual laziness of the adults at that time, for to which of them could **God** give this message? When **YHVH** can't find an obedient adult, **He** sometimes **calls** a **child, "I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them" (Isaiah 3:4).**[97] And **the boy Samuel**, as painful as it might have been for **him**, was faithful to prophesy against **his** beloved mentor (see **Ax – Samuel's First Prophecy**).

Responding to God's Word: Some of us may be a little embarrassed by **Samuel's** response when **God called him** because **the boy** responded so quickly

and without any hesitation. In his commentary on **1** and **2 Samuel**, Bill Arnold rightly comments that "**First Samuel 3** is meant to arouse us out of our lethargy, as it aroused **Samuel** from **his** early-morning sleep." When **ADONAI** calls us, let us answer in the same way that **Samuel** spoke to **YHVH, "Here I am, for You called me" (3:5)**. There are callings that every believer shares: the calling to believe in **Messiah**, to grow in godliness, to study **God's Word**, and to speak **God's Word** to the world. But **the LORD** has particular **callings** for different people: to evangelize, to disciple another, to minister to children, to serve as an elder or deacon, and to make financial sacrifices for the support of a Kingdom cause. Such **calling** constitutes decisive moments in our lives, and our fruitfulness in life is largely determined by our willingness to repeat **Samuel's** answer: **Here I am – you called me.**[98]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that though **You** who are Almighty and All-Powerful, **You** knew that **Isra'el** would need a strong **prophet** and **judge**. **Samuel** was faithful to that calling, and would be bold in judging **Isra'el** and to always trust in **You** for **his** wisdom; rather than following **Eli's** wrong example of not discipling **his sons**. It must have been hard for **Samuel** to hear that **You** would **punish Eli's house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God (First Samuel 3:13). You** use hard times to prepare **Your** children for the future so they will know how to handle hard situations. **You** wisely prepared **Samuel** to know how to judge with discernment so **he** would understand that spiritual leaders are also accountable to follow **Your Word**. **You** give no exemption for them from obeying **Your** mitzvot **(Matthew 23:1-3),** in fact you say that **teachers will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1).** Thank **You** for preparing **Your** servants to be wise leaders by allowing hard times in their lives to draw them closer to you. Thank you for molding **Samuel**, **Moses** and **David** to be great leaders who trusted in **You** for **their** strength and **their** wisdom. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and Power of **His** Resurrection. Amen*