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Samuel's Farewell

First Samuel 12: 1-25

Samuel's farewell speech DIG: What do verses 1-5 reveal about Samuel's character and faith? Why does he want the Israelites to agree that he is blameless? What is the purpose of Samuel's history lesson in verses 6-17? How much faith do you suppose Samuel had in Isra'el's ability to do what was "good and right (12:23)? How much confidence did Isra'el have? What did Samuel hope to achieve by praying for thunder and rain in the dry season? What, in fact, happened? When is failure to pray, a sin against God? What incentives, positive or negative, does he offer for loyal covenant living?

REFLECT: On the basis of the farewell speeches of the great men of the bible, how do you envision your own farewell speech? Do you think you will be more guilt-free, or guilt-ridden? How can you make sure you are blameless at the end of your life? How do you respond when you really blow it before the Lord? What is the biblical response? What "great things" has God done for you this past year? How have you been faithful since then? In what areas of your life has ADONAI continually proven faithful, yet you remain reluctant to trust him in those very areas? Who can you help this week?

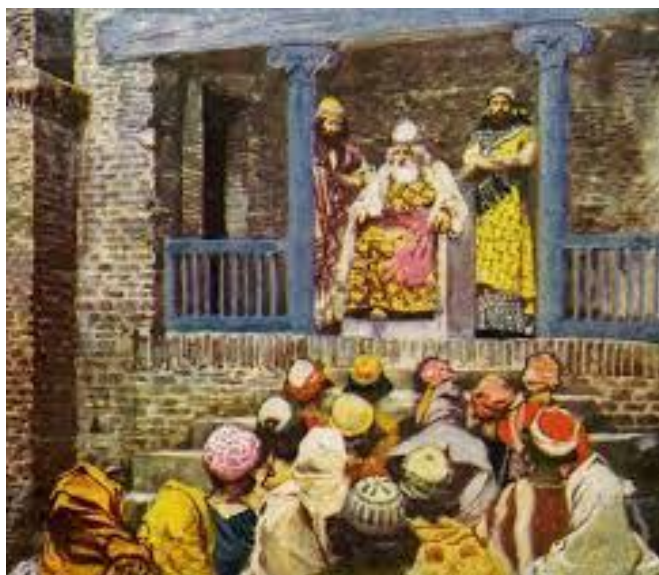
**Samuel wouldn't continue as Isra'el's judge,
but he would continue as the nation's priest and prophet.**

Whenever a great leader comes to the end of his career, his final words to his followers are usually extremely important. This was especially true for the great leaders of the Bible. In **Deuteronomy**, **Moshe's** final words to **Isra'el** prior to **him** climbing up Mount Nebo to look upon the Promised Land and then die. **His** successor, **Joshua**, gathered all **Isra'el** to issue a challenge that still rings in our ears today: **Choose this day whom you will serve**, whether the false gods of **their** fathers or **ADONAI**, the **God of Isra'el**. **But as for me and my house**, **Joshua** concluded, **we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15)**. When **Paul** passed through **Ephesus** for what **he** knew would be the last time, **he** gathered **the elders** to meet with **him**. The apostle reminded them what a true ministry is like . . . **I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)** . . . and warned

them against **wolves** that would enter **the flock** and **tear apart the sheep** (Acts 20:29-30). Most important is the final address of **the Lord** to **His apostles** at the last Seder. There, **Yeshua** drew attention to the work **He** was about to do in shedding **His blood** on the cross for our sins (see **The Life of Christ, to see link click Kk - The Third Cup of Redemption**), and **He** gave them instructions to guide **them** after **His** ascension.

Considering these examples, we can see a general pattern to the farewell addresses of the great men of the Bible. Most of them seek to recap and summarize their ministries, which they also vindicate as faithful to the **LORD**. Not only themselves, but those who remain to carry on in faithfulness in their own ministry. In response, it is also common for the people to express some sorrow at the loss of their leader, and to express a need for intercession with **ADONAI** that can ultimately be met only by **Yeshua Messiah Himself**. This is the very pattern reflected in the final address of the great **prophet** and **judge Samuel**, as **he** prepared to hand over the leadership of **Isra'el** to the newly confirmed **King Sha'ul**.

Samuel's ministry vindicated (12:1-5): Now that all **Isra'el** had accepted **Sha'ul** as **their king**, **Samuel** had to withdraw as the leader of the nation, though **he** continued to exercise **his** prophetic ministry - although restricted, to some extent, in that **the king** could choose to ignore **his** advice. But first, **he** wanted to set the record straight, and point out that under **his** leadership, **Isra'el** had had just and effective administration, in keeping with the covenant, without any undue demands made upon **their** personal liberty.²⁵⁶



Samuel said to all **Isra'el**, “Here, I have done everything you asked me to do - I have made a king over you. Even though **he** considered the request for a **king** to be an insult

to **himself**, and even more importantly an insult to **God**, and though **he** warned **the people** about what a disaster **their** request would bring (see [Br - Samuel's Warnings](#)), **he** was willing to do **his** best to make it work. Not only that, when **the LORD** commanded **Samuel** to anoint **Sha'ul** as **king**, an action that **Samuel** probably found distasteful, the great **judge** and **prophet** did not hesitate to act in obedience. In fact, **Samuel's** role in enthroning **King Sha'ul** showed just how disinterested **he** was in personal gain, for **Sha'ul** was **his** own replacement!²⁵⁷ **Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray-headed and my sons are here with you**, both of the reasons **the people** had asked for a king. **I have been your leader from my youth until this day (12:1-2).**

Samuel challenged **the people**, saying: **Here I stand. Samuel**, like **Yeshua**, stood before **the people** and asked: **Which of you convicts Me of sin (John 8:46). Now is the time to witness against me before ADONAI and his anointed king.** In the Near-East, it is expected that civil officials would use their offices to make money. But **Samuel** hadn't done that. **He** obeyed **the Torah** and kept **his hands clean (Exodus 20:17; Lev 19:13; Deut 16:19).**²⁵⁸ **Does any of you think I have taken your ox or donkey, cheated or oppressed you, or accepted a bribe to deprive you of justice? Tell me, and I will restore it to you."** The failure of anyone to come forward with a charge against **him** testified to **his** extraordinary godliness.²⁵⁹ **Samuel** was on sure ground. In response to **Samuel's** plea, **the people** had no option but to respond positively. **They answered, "You haven't cheated or oppressed us, and you have accepted nothing from anyone."** **They** fully affirmed what **Samuel** had said about **his righteousness**. Then **Samuel** pressed **his** case, calling on both **YHVH** and **the** newly appointed **king** to be a witness to **his** faithfulness. **He** declared, **"ADONAI and His anointed king are my witness today,"** **Samuel** declared, **"that my hands are clean."** **And the people replied, "Yes, He is a witness" (12:3-5).** If **the people** ever changed **their** mind, **they** would have to deal with **YHVH** and **His** appointed king!

Samuel pleads ADONAI's case (12:6-17): The purpose behind **Samuel's** vindication was not so much about **his** own legacy or reputation. Rather, **Samuel** set forth **his** own trustworthiness as a preamble for **his** main concern: **he** wanted **the people** to remember what a great and **faithful God** **they** served. This was another purpose in citing **YHVH** as a witness to **his** own integrity; having spoken of **the LORD** as **witness**, **Samuel** elaborates on **the LORD's** faithfulness to **Isra'el**.²⁶⁰ **Samuel** said to the people, **"It was ADONAI who appointed Moshe and Aaron and who brought your ancestors up from the land of Egypt.** The point was that **God** was quite capable of delivering the right leaders at the right time to deliver **Isra'el**. **He** didn't need **a king** then, and **He** certainly didn't need **a king** now!"²⁶¹ This was more than a lecture on history; **Samuel** used the

language of a courtroom trial and intended for **the people** to stand before the bar of **God's** justice. **Now, stand still; because I am going to confront you with evidence before ADONAI regarding all the righteous acts of ADONAI that He did for you and your ancestors (12:6-7).** These verses summarize the history of **Isra'el** from the time of **Moses** and **the exodus** through the period of **the judges** and **their** request for **a king**. Such historical prologues are common features of the suzerain-vassal documents throughout the Near East (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Ah - The Treaty of the Great King**).²⁶²

After Jacob had entered Egypt, your ancestors cried to ADONAI; and ADONAI sent Moshe and Aaron, who brought your ancestors out of Egypt and had them live here in this place (12:8). The language of **verses 9-11** is heavily dependent on terminology characteristic of the book of **Judges**. The dreary cycle of rebellion, retribution, repentance, and restoration described throughout that book (see the commentary on **Judges At - Twelve Cycles**) is repeated here. Rebellion: **But they forgot ADONAI their God;** retribution: **so he handed them over to Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor (Judges 4:2), and to the Philistines (Judges 3:31, 10:7 and 13:1), and to the king of Mo'av (Judges 3:12-14); and they fought against them.** Repentance: **But they cried out to ADONAI and said: We sinned by abandoning ADONAI and serving the Ba'al's (the male Canaanite gods) and the Ashtoreths (the female Canaanite gods). But now, if you rescue us from the power of our enemies, we will serve you.** And restoration: **So ADONAI sent Jerub-Ba'al (another name for Gideon), Barak, Jephthah and, mentioning himself in the third person to retain the courtroom scene, Samuel and rescued you from the hands of our enemies on every side, so that you lived securely (12:9a-11).** All this was accomplished without the use of **kings**.²⁶³

How should **Isra'el** have responded to this kind of national history? **They** should have expressed gratitude to **the LORD** and trusted **Him** for **His** continued care. **They** should have confessed the sin of unbelief and trusted **Him** alone. But what did **they** do?²⁶⁴ **When you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites was attacking you, you said to me, "No, we want a king to rule over us" - even though ADONAI your God was your King. Now, humanly speaking, here's the king you have chosen, the one you asked for. But, in God's permissive will, ADONAI has set a king over you (12:12-13).** Serving as the hinge of this chapter, this verse focuses once again on the gracious, permissive will of **God** who had given **His people the king they had asked for. God's** eventual rejection of the very **king the people** demanded is eerily echoed later in a similar situation in **Hosea** where **God** declared: **In my anger I gave you a king, and in My wrath I took him away (Hosea 13:10-11).**²⁶⁵

These verses represent the **blessings** and **curses** that were part of the ancient suzerain-vassal covenants. **If you will fear ADONAI, serve him, obey what he says and not rebel against His commands - if both you and the king ruling over you remain followers of ADONAI your God -** then things will go well for **you**. Even though it was a sin to ask for a **king**, the reality was **they** now had one. **But they** were still obligated to obey **the Torah**. **If you refused to obey what God says and rebel against His commands, then ADONAI will oppress both you as it was against your fathers (12:14-15).**

Now then, stand still; and see the great thing that ADONAI is about to do before your very eyes. This would authenticate all of **Samuel's** words. **Samuel** reminded **the people** that it was **the time** of year **for the wheat harvest** (mid-May to mid-June), which was usually the dry season. Then **he** promised a miracle that would convince them that they needed to repent. **He** declared: **I am going to call on ADONAI to send thunder and rain**, which would be extremely unusual in May and June. **And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of ADONAI when you asked for a king (12:16-17).** This miracle reminds us of the authenticating signs **Moshe** and **Aaron** accomplished in **Egypt**. **Samuel** was proving to **the people** that **YHVH** could do anything for **them** if **they** obeyed and trusted in **Him**, and that a mere **king** was helpless apart from **God**. When **the Jews** begged **Samuel** for deliverance, **they** sounded like **Pharaoh** confessing **his sin** and begging **Moses** for relief (**Exodus 8:8, 9:27-28, and 10:16-17**), and **their** repentance was probably just as sincere.²⁶⁶



Samuel's mediation sought (12:18-25): Terrified, **the people** responded by asking **Samuel** to mediate, intercede for **them**. **Then Samuel called upon ADONAI, and He sent lightning and rain that very day.** Totally a miracle of timing, authenticating the message of **Samuel**. **Then all the people became very much afraid of**

ADONAI and Samuel. The words of **Samuel**, reinforced by the storm, brought **the people** to repentance. **All the people said to Samuel, "Pray to ADONAI your God for your servants** (practically a quote from the lips of Pharaoh), **so that we won't die; because to all our other sins now we've added this evil as well, asking for a king over us."** **Samuel** reassured **the people** of **God's chesed** (see the commentary on [Ruth Af - The Concept of Chesed](#)), and **answered the people, "Don't be afraid. You have indeed done all this evil** in asking for a **king**, but it would not cause **their** destruction. **Samuel** not only acknowledged **their** sin, but also pointed **them** to its remedy. **Just don't turn away from following ADONAI; but serve ADONAI with all your heart. Don't turn to the side and go after useless idols that can neither help nor rescue because they are so useless (12:18-21).**

For the sake of his great Name, ADONAI will not abandon His people; because it has pleased ADONAI to make you a people for Himself. As for me, far be it from me to sin against ADONAI by ceasing to pray for you as a priest! Rather, I will continue to teach you as a prophet in the way that is good and right.²⁶⁷ But **he** would not continue as **their judge**; that meant that the period of **the judges** had officially ended, and the period of the monarchy had begun. **Samuel** felt obliged to remind **them**, however, that pursuing **their** inclination for **evil** would surely result in godly discipline: **Only fear ADONAI, and serving Him faithfully with all your heart and thinking about what great things He has done for you! However, if you insist on doing evil, you will be swept away** (Hebrew: *saphah*) - **both you and your king (12:22-25)!** The verbal root is *sph*, which appears again in **26:10**, where **David** predicts that **Ha'Shem** will cause **Sha'ul's** demise, that perhaps **Sha'ul will go into battle and perish** (Hebrew: *saphah*) . . . and so it happened (see [Dk - Sha'ul Takes His Own Life](#)). Thus, the final words of **Samuel's** speech, and the final days of **Sha'ul's kingship**, passages that frame the description of **Sha'ul's** reign (**Chapters 13 to 31**), are soaked with the stench of death.²⁶⁸

Samuel was the last of **the judges**, and the first of **the prophets**; **he** had both civil and religious functions, but from this time on **the kings** would function as civil authorities and **the priesthood** continued to function as the religious authority. Lastly, **God's** rule over **Isra'el** began with **Moshe** at Mount Sinai with the Mosaic Covenant as **their** constitution, now **Isra'el** would enter the monarchy period from **the House of David** through to **Zedekiah**, with **Sha'ul** merely being a transitional **king** from the human chosen **king** to the divine chosen **king**. With the death of **Zedekiah**, the times of the Gentiles began (see [Revelation An - The Times of the Gentiles](#)), and will continue until **the Lord Himself** will return and set up **His Kingdom** from **Jerusalem** and from the throne of **David** (see [Isaiah Db - The Nine Missing Articles in the Messiah's Coming Temple](#)).²⁶⁹

Our true Mediator: As Richard Phillips relates in **his** commentary in **1 Samuel**, with these words, the narrative of **First Samuel** changes from its focus on **Samuel** to a new focus on **King Sha'ul**. **Samuel** had been a faithful servant of **ADONAI**, as **the people** had affirmed, and a truly great man of **God**. When **the Ammonite** horde began pouring into the eastern region of **Isra'el**, **the elders of Isra'el** looked on an aged **Samuel**, and on **his** unruly **sons**, and decided **they** needed to look elsewhere for salvation, demanding **the king** whom God had now given in **Sha'ul**. We might honor **Samuel's** legacy by recounting all the things that made **him** great. But a better way to honor **him** would be to look through **him** to see the reasons why **Yeshua Messiah** is an even better **Savior, King, and Mediator** in whom we may find all that we need for the eternal salvation of our souls.

First, while **the people** asked **Samuel** to **mediate** on **their** behalf with **God**, we have the better privilege of approaching **God's** throne through **the mediation** of **Yeshua**. For all **his** righteousness, **Samuel** remained a sinner, even he could not ultimately stand before **YHVH** on **his** own merits. In the end, like **Isra'el** and like us, **Samuel** would have to take up the words that the evil **Pharaoh** begged **Moshe**, "**Would you please bless me and intercede for me with God?**" **Yeshua** is no mere holy man; **He is the God-man, Immanuel**, which means, "**God with us,**" **God the Son** who took on flesh to bring **His people** to **YHVH** (**Isaiah 7:14** and **Hebrews 2:14-17**). By virtue of who **Messiah** is and what **He** has done, **Paul** states: **There is one mediator between God and mankind, the man Messiah Yeshua (First Timothy 2:5)**. **Yeshua** is the one completely sinless **man**, who does not need **His** own **Savior**, and who as **the Son of God** is therefore able to offer **His** death for the forgiveness of everyone who believes in **Him** and calls on **ADONAI's** Name for salvation.

Second, **Yeshua** is a better mediator than **Samuel** because **He** never grows old or feeble. Under **Isra'el's** monarchy, even the best of kings grew old and ultimately died, so that **the people** had to tremble at what awaited **them** under a new regime. But **the Kingdom of God** knows no such anxiety. **Yeshua** our **King**, who died for our sins, has risen from the grave to **eternal** resurrection life. The writer of **Hebrews** thus praises **Yeshua's** eternal **priesthood**, and the same is true of **His** office as **Prophet** and **King**. **Because Yeshua lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. Therefore He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf (Hebrews 7:24-25).**

Finally, while **Samuel** displayed a powerful prophetic preaching that stirred the souls of **the people**, and even backed it up with a striking miracle that awed **his** hearers (**12:16-17a**), yet **his** words lacked the power in themselves to change the heart. How different is our

Lord Yeshua Messiah, who speaks and preaches with the power and persuasion of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. **Yeshua** alone can say: **My words . . . are spirit and life (John 6:63)**. If we will call on **His Name - the Name of God's one-and-only Son and Savior of the world** - if we will enter into **His Kingdom** through faith, and if we will open our hearts to **His** living and eternal words, **Yeshua** says that we will have **eternal life** (see **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). Faithful **Samuel** pointed us to **the LORD**, saying: **Fear ADONAI, and serve Him faithfully with all your heart (12:24)**. **Yeshua**, the very **Lord** to whom **Samuel** pointed, calls to us, saying: **I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12)**.²⁷⁰