

SESSION 1

The Story of Eli and Samuel

I. PRAYER/INTRODUCTION

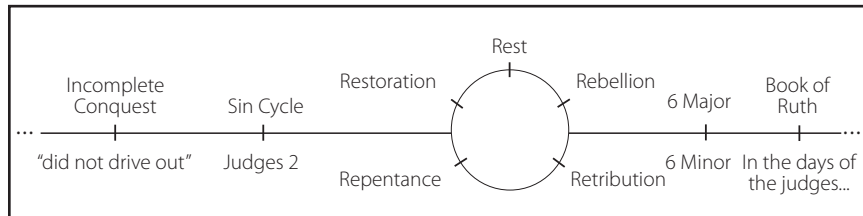
II. PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE

A. MOVEMENTS 1-6

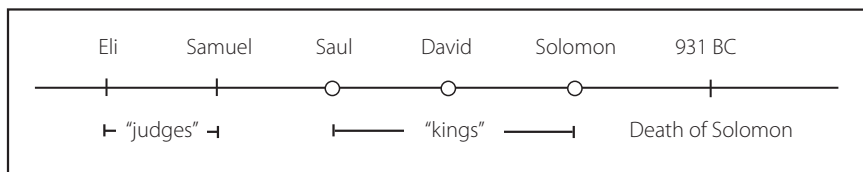
PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE	
Movements	Biblical Books
1. Prologue	Genesis 1-11
2. Patriarchs	Genesis 12-50; Job
3. Redemption Wanderings	Exodus, Leviticus Numbers, Deuteronomy
4. Conquest	Joshua
5. Apostasy	Judges, Ruth
6. Kingship: United Monarchy	1-2 Samuel, 1 Kings (Pss, Prov, Eccl, SS)

B. PANORAMA TIMELINE: MOVEMENTS 5-6

1. Movement 5: Apostasy



2. Movement 6: Kingship: United Monarchy



C. Leadership Context

The Book of Judges concludes, *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit”* (Judg 21:25). One of the theological purposes of the Book of Judges was to demonstrate the fact that the covenant nation needed a king and needed one desperately. But what kind of king? That will be the difficult question addressed in 1 Samuel.

1. Potential types of leadership
 - a. Theocracy

The term is a compound word derived from “theos” (God) and “kratein” (rule). It means God-rule or the rule of God over His realm of authority. In the early context of the Old Testament, God rules through chosen administrators (not kings) such as Adam and Eve.

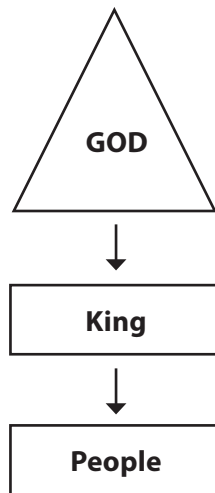
Genesis 1:26-28

*Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they **may rule over** the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” ²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “**Be fruitful and increase** in number; fill the earth and subdue it. **Rule over** the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

After the fall of man from innocence, God continued to rule (express His sovereign will) through select individuals (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) then through the leadership of the twelve tribes, and so forth. With specially-selected Moses, God effected a redemption from bondage to Egypt. As His now-redeemed people, God established the Law (Torah) as His requirements for the covenantal nation, Israel.

b. Theo-monarchy

This compound word combines “theos” (God) with “monos” (one) and “arche” (rule). The word suggests that God rules through a chosen monarch or king.



Often the history of the nation is described, “as goes the king, so goes the nation.” To keep His subjects under His sovereign rule, God often would send prophets to the king or to the nation for repentance and correction.

This was the Biblical model intended for the kings of united Israel. God exercised His rule and reign through administrators of His choosing (kings) who were responsible to uphold His kingdom-rule in righteousness, peace, and justice.

But, as 1 Samuel will narrate, the people will want a king and will demand one to fit their needs.

1 Samuel 8:4-5

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.”

But note the earlier prophetic words of Moses.

Deuteronomy 17:14-15a

*When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,"¹⁵ be sure to appoint over you **a king the LORD your God chooses**. He must be from among your fellow Israelites.*

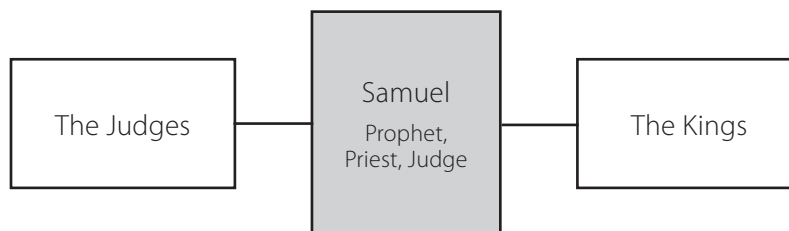
c. Monarchy

"One ruler" is the meaning of the word. This common idea of antiquity (and later) was that one king would rule over one people. Though often the monarch would appeal to the legitimacy of his rule due to his god(s), the practical outworking was a human ruler who led without any "true" accountability. This was not the model desired by God for His people. However, it became the pragmatic style of rule.

d. Chart

LEADERSHIP OF THE ISRAELITES			
Movement	Leader	Role	God
2	Abraham (Isaac) (Jacob/Israel)	Patriarchal Head of Clan	Under God's Direction
2	Twelve Tribes	Loose Confederation, Tribal Heads	Under Jacob's Direction (God?)
3	Moses	Deliverer, Law-Giver, National Leader	Under God's Direction
4	Joshua	Moses' Successor, National Leader	Under God's Direction
5	Twelve Tribes	No National Leader	Ignored God's Direction

3. Diagram: Samuel, a transitional figure



III. PROMINENT PERSONS: KINGSHIP: UNITED MONARCHY

A. Charted: Priest-Judges and Kings

Name	Tribe	Office
Eli	Levi	Priest-Judge
Samuel	Levi	Priest-Judge-Prophet
Saul	Benjamin	King (First)
David	Judah	King (Second)
Solomon	Judah	King (Third)

B. Context: Biblical Books and Three Kings

Saul's Story

- 1 Samuel
- 1 Chronicles

David's Story

- 1-2 Samuel
- 1 Chronicles
- Psalms (selected)

Solomon's Story

- 1 Kings
- 2 Chronicles
- Psalms (selected)
- Proverbs (selected)
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon

IV. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Eli (1 Sam 1-4)

1. Book Content: 1 Samuel

1 Samuel		
Chapters	Key Personalities	Roles
1-7	Eli and Samuel	Transitional Judges
8-15	Samuel and Saul	1 st King Anointed
16-31	Saul and David	2 nd King Anointed

2. Eli: the “first” encounter with Hannah (1 Sam 1)

The book of 1 Samuel begins by introducing the reader to Elkanah (Levite by lineage—1 Chron 6:33-34) and his beloved, but barren wife, Hannah (1:2, 5). Hannah often went to the Tabernacle to pray for a son.

1 Samuel 1:10-11

In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, “LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.”

Eli the high priest (1:9) observed the distressed Hannah in prayer and wrongly supposed her to be in a drunken state.

1 Samuel 1:12-14

As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.

¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

Hannah objects to Eli's accusation and explains that her prayers issue forth from her "great anguish and grief" (1:15-16). Eli then blesses the praying Hannah (which is the only OT passage showing a priest blessing a worshiper at the Tabernacle or Temple).

1 Samuel 1:17

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

3. Eli: the "second" encounter with Hannah (1 Sam 1)

Hannah's prayers for a son were accompanied by her vow to present (dedicate) that son to the Lord. He would be a Nazirite for life (Num 6) and serve the Lord at the Tabernacle. After the child was (miraculously) born and weaned, Hannah brought Samuel ("heard of God" or "God hears") to Eli the priest.

1 Samuel 1:26-28

...and she said to him, "Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

Eli, who had two sons already (Hophni and Phinehas—1:3), now has a young protege to mentor.

4. Eli: the father of wicked sons (1 Sam 2)

a. Declared "wicked"

1 Samuel 2:12

Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD.

- (1) "Wicked" literally means "sons of Belial," a description denoting wickedness and perverseness.
- (2) "Had no regard" literally means "did not know," an ominous note of spiritual deadness and Eli's failure within his own family.

b. Demonstrated "wicked"

1 Samuel 2:13-16

Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled ¹⁴and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. ¹⁵But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw." ¹⁶If the person said to him, "Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."

- (1) These described priestly activities are not found elsewhere in the OT. In fact, they differ from that prescribed in the Torah (cf. Lev 10:14-15; Num 18:18). The necessity of judgment on the wayward Eli line can be traced back to these failures.

- (2) Demanding the priestly portions before the offerings were completed was explicitly prohibited (cf. Lev 7:22-26). The use of “strong arming” or “force” to get what they wanted clearly illustrated the wickedness and lack of priestly piety expected of Tabernacle priests.

1 Samuel 2:17

This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt.

5. Eli: confronting wicked sons (1 Sam 2)

1 Samuel 2:22-25

Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.²³ So he said to them, “Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours.²⁴ No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD's people is not good.²⁵ If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?” His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death.

- a. Canaanite worship often included cultic (ritual) prostitution. Apparently the sons of Eli have adapted the forbidden practice for their use at the Tabernacle. This was expressly forbidden and a repeat of Israel's earlier failure.

Numbers 25:1-6

While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women,² who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods.³ So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.

⁴ The LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD's fierce anger may turn

away from Israel.”⁵ So Moses said to Israel’s judges, “Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor.”⁶ Then an Israelite man brought into the camp a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

- b. Even a father’s rebuke has no effect upon the perverse sons.

Proverbs 15:31

Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise.

Proverbs 27:5

Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

Ecclesiastes 7:5

It is better to heed the rebuke of a wise person than to listen to the song of fools.

- c. The condemnable conduct of Eli’s sons provides a stark contrast to the commendable conduct of young Samuel. This contrast is apparent in the early chapters of 1 Samuel 1-7.

Note the chart that follows: Eli had the potential to highly influence his “charges,” that is, those under his guidance. The chart highlights the significant contrast of these charges.

Eli's Charges: Early Contrasts	
Samuel	Hophni and Phinehas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nazirite vow of separation (from birth) • Heritage: strong mother • Dedicated to Tabernacle service • Hears the call of God as a child • Confirmed as a prophet • Destiny: well-known prophet throughout all Israel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect of the Law's commands (for life) • Heritage: weak father • Desecraters of Tabernacle service • Rejects (by attitudes and actions) any call of God • Condemned as evildoers • Destiny: died in defeat at the hands of the Philistines

- d. The contrast can also be seen in the structured composition of the book of 1 Samuel. The compositional strategy of "alternation" can be seen as the story line alternates from Samuel to Eli's sons to Samuel and so forth. Note the following chart.

Alternation: Compositional Strategy	
Samuel	Eli's Sons
1:1-2:10	2:11-17
2:18-21	2:22-36
3:1-4:1a	4:1b-7:2
7:3-12:25	

(Taken from Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel*, 19)

6. Eli: rebuked by God (by an unnamed prophet)

1 Samuel 2:27-29

Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestor's family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? ²⁸I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your ancestor's family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites. ²⁹Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?'"

Note two key failures of Eli:

- a. He did not appreciate his heritage and role as a priest of Aaronic descent.
- b. He did not discipline his sons for their unlawful (against the Torah) actions.

1 Samuel 2:30

"Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever.' But now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained.'"

7. Eli: rebuked by God (by young Samuel, a prophet of God)

1 Samuel 3:11-12 (God speaks to Samuel)

And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹²At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end."

1 Samuel 3:15-18 (Samuel speaks to Eli)

Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision,¹⁶ but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am."¹⁷ "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you."¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes."

8. Eli: account of his death

The Israelites and the Philistines went to war against each other (1 Sam 4). The ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines and Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed.

That day a Benjamite soldier was fleeing the front lines and defeat, and Eli (ninety-eight years old and blind) questioned the man about the meaning of the uproar heard in the town.

1 Samuel 4:16-18

He told Eli, "I have just come from the battle line; I fled from it this very day." Eli asked, "What happened, my son?"¹⁷ The man who brought the news replied, "Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured."¹⁸ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man, and he was heavy. He had led Israel forty years.

B. Samuel (1 Sam 1-12)

1. Birth (1 Sam 1)

a. Barren mother (Hannah)

1 Samuel 1:4-7

Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters.⁵ But to Hannah

he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. ⁶Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

b. Desperate vow

1 Samuel 1:10-11

In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

c. Grateful dedication

1 Samuel 1:21-22

When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, ²²Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always."

2. Childhood

a. His mentorship

1 Samuel 2:11

Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.

b. His development

1 Samuel 2:26

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people.

GROWTH OF THREE YOUNG BOYS		
Samuel (1 Sam 2:26)	John the Baptist	Jesus (Luke 2:52)
		wisdom
stature	grew	stature
favor with LORD	strong in spirit	favor with God
favor with men		favor with men

c. His calling

1 Samuel 3:1

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

The young boy, Samuel, would hear the voice of the Lord but did not understand. Thinking that the voice was Eli's, Samuel repeatedly went to the aged priest to answer the supposed summons.

1 Samuel 3:8-10

A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

This account confirmed the early calling of Samuel to not only priestly (and judicial) duties but as a prophet as well.

3. Adult ministry: general statement

1 Samuel 3:19-21

The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD.²¹ The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

4. Accomplishments

a. Defeat of the Philistines

(1) Samuel leads

1 Samuel 7:5-6

Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you."⁶ When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah.

(2) People respond

1 Samuel 7:7-9

When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines.⁸ They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines."⁹ Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him.

(3) Philistines defeated

1 Samuel 7:10-13

While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. ¹¹ The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar. ¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." ¹³ So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.

b. Judgeship

1 Samuel 7:15-17

Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life. ¹⁶ From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. ¹⁷ But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.

c. Anointing Saul as King (1 Sam 9)

d. Rebuking Saul the King (1 Sam 13)

e. Rejection of Saul as King (1 Sam 15)

f. Anointing David as King (1 Sam 16)

5. Death (Samuel)

1 Samuel 25:1

Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.

Insight: Importance of Samuel

Samuel ministered as a **judge** (1 Sam 7:6; 15-17; 12:11), as a **priest** (Ps 99:6; a Levite—1 Sam 1:1 with 1 Chron 6:34), and as a **prophet** (1 Sam 3:20; cf. Acts 3:24). He anointed the first two kings over a united empire. As such, he was the transitional figure from the days of the judges to the days of the kings. Josephus noted that Samuel judged (ruled) from Eli's death (for twelve years) and with Saul (for eighteen years). Samuel can be credited with maintaining the theocracy until the times of the theocracies.

V. TAKEAWAYS

A. Prayer

Barren Hannah persistently and consistently prayed for God's help to conceive a child. Others in her day (and ours) might have given up but Hannah illustrates the principle of "importunity" (persistent solicitation) in prayer.

1. Matthew 7:7-12

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

2. Luke 11:1-10

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." ²He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins

against us. And lead us not into temptation.”⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. ⁹“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

B. Godly Heritage

The story of Eli and his wicked sons is tragic. While the Scriptures do not commend the old priest-judge for specific, laudatory actions, his greatest personal and priestly failure was related to his sons. He did not instill personal and priestly piety to his own sons. Rather than pious, they were markedly perverse. Apparently Eli ignored the clear obligation of Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

A.C. Grant (ISBE: Vol. 2:61) concludes:

Eli, while sincere and devout seems to have been lacking in firmness. He appears from the history to have been a good man, full of humility and gentleness but weak and indulgent. He is always overshadowed by some more commanding or interesting figure.

C. Contrasting Lifestyles

Through the “alternation principle” the stories of Samuel and Eli’s sons are placed in alternating contrasts. The result is a clear demarcation of godly vs. ungodly lifestyles. Note the contrast given in the Scriptures.

Psalm 1

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.⁴ Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

D. Growth Template

The description of the growth and development of young Samuel is paralleled by a similar account in the life of Jesus. Note the passages:

1 Samuel 2:26

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people.

Luke 2:52

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.