

Born to Win

The Book of Samuel #1

by Ronald L. Dart

It's been said over and over again that those who cannot learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. Now, I've come to the conclusion that *hardly anyone* believes that statement, because so few have any interest whatsoever in history. Eyes glaze over when history is mentioned. You may even have started to reach for the button on your radio when I mentioned it. But if you're still listening, consider this: It is entirely the fault of your *teachers* that you never acquired a taste for history. I'll confess, I came to my interest in history late in life, and I blame my teachers for that. History is a set of *fascinating* stories, and who is it that doesn't like a good story? But good stories have to be well told. And more than that, these excellent stories *go a long way* toward explaining what's going on around us in the world.

Great leaders *always* are students of history. If they weren't, they would find themselves *utterly lost* in understanding what's going on in the world around them. They are able to lead people because *they* understand what is happening. Their decisions are based upon a *knowledge* that those who never hit the books can never understand. Now, notice also, I call them "students" of history. The teachers of history rarely attain to leadership roles, and that's probably just as well. Now, if you happen to be a history teacher and you take exception to what I'm saying, I would be *more* than happy to hear from you. And if you are really good at your profession, I can only say I'm really sorry I didn't meet you sooner.

Now, why am I on a tear about history today? Because I'm about to launch on a new series of programs looking at one of the most pivotal times in *all* of history. When Israel came out of Egypt, they were a people *exceptionally* well led. Moses (even if he wasn't Charlton Heston) was a *great* leader. And before he died, he publicly invested the leadership of Israel in one Joshua, the son of Nun. Joshua, too, was a great man; and a great general, as well. He was the Tommy Franks of his day. *Everyone* knows that "Joshua fit the battle of Jericho". But Joshua also led Israel all through the conquest of Canaan with *very* few hitches along the way. It was one of those hitches that would haunt them, though, for generations to come...and *may do so to this day*. The children of Israel first became aware of this hitch when an angel showed up at their camp. He said,

Judges 2

KJ2000

¹ [...] I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

² And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall throw down their altars: but you have not obeyed my voice: why have you done this?

³ Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

⁴ And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spoke these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

⁵ And they called the name of that place Bochim [*Which means "the weepers"*]: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

Now, I won't go so far as to identify the Palestinians with this statement, but it's *true* of them. They *are* a thorn in Israel's side, and their God is the reason for it.

Judges 2

AKJV

⁶ And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man to his inheritance to possess the land.

The land of Israel was divided up among them by lot [**Numbers 26**], and they all split up and went off in their different direction. Now comes a *profound* statement about leadership and education. Judges 2, verse 7:

Judges 2

AKJV

⁷ And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

Now, you can hear it coming. All during the days of the good, solid leadership—when they had a man like Joshua and the elders that had been his companions, all these people who had seen the great works of God—all the people served the Lord all those days.

Judges 2

AKJV

⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

⁹ And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

¹⁰ And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers [*Which means they all died.*]: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

Now, the *only* way this could have been true is for the generation of Joshua to *fail* to properly educate their children. Moses had warned them about this *long* before this. God, through Moses, told them that they were to teach their children *diligently* about these things. They were to talk about them sitting at the table. They were to talk about them when they got up in the morning. They should talk about them when they go to bed at night. They talk about them walking along the road together with their kids [**Deuteronomy 6, 11**]. The only way we could have come to this pass: if they had ignored the education of their children in the matters of *faith*.

Now, what follows on this is the chaotic period of the judges. There were a few great leaders at this time, and some *true* heroes; but it was a painful time for Israel because they forgot God, and they suffered *terribly* for it. What they did was to stop teaching their children about the Lord and all his works that he had done for them. A lot of good people died during the period of judges—people who need not have died at all. They died because they lost touch with their faith. They lost touch with their protector, with their guide. It's a situation that we seem to be hell-bent for going down that same road today.

During the period of the judges there was no central government. Four times in the book a point is made of the simple fact there was no king in Israel. And the book ends with this summary statement (Judges 21:25):

Judges 21

AKJV

²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Taken by itself, that statement is not negative. The reason I say that is because it was never God's *intent* for Israel to have a king. And there's nothing in the world wrong with people doing what's "right" in their own eyes, if it's *right*. God seems to have followed the principle that he who is governed best is governed least. That said, the Israelites forgot who *gave* them their liberty. And there is to follow in this story one of the greatest lessons about *government* in all of the history of man.

Samuel begins his story by saying there was a man who had two wives. But the man, Elkanah, leaves the scene quickly and we don't hear from him again.

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

² And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Now, this was a much bigger deal in those days than in these, where women *get rid* of their babies before they're born. Hannah would faint *dead away* if she were to know about the 40 million or so abortions we have done in the modern world. She wouldn't understand it at all. People assumed in those days that, if a married woman had no children, that there was something morally wrong with her. And children were also very *important* to take care of an aging mother in years to come, because we're living in a time when there was nothing like Social Security or welfare. In First Samuel 1, verse 3, this man Elkanah...

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

³ [...] went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.

Now, this was long before Jerusalem was the place to worship God. The tabernacle was in Shiloh. It's an unassuming place in the gentle hills, some 20 miles north of Jerusalem. A man named Eli was the high priest. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests as well.

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

⁴ And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

⁵ But to Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

It's an interesting statement. He seems to be saying here that it was *God* who did not allow Hannah, up to this time, to have children. Now, Hannah was Elkanah's favorite. He tried *really* hard to make it up to her. But the other wife, whom Samuel calls...

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

⁶ [...] her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

⁷ And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

You know, when a woman really does want children, it's a great pain not to have them. And here, to have someone who is actually continually *provoking* you on the issue, it's just a little bit much. Elkanah tried to encourage her.

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

⁸ Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weep you? and why eat you not? and why is your heart grieved? am not I better to you than ten sons?

⁹ So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat on a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

¹⁰ And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD, and wept sore.

¹¹ And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your handmaid, and remember me, and not forget your handmaid, but will give to your handmaid a man child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come on his head.

Now, as strange as this sounds to us, it wasn't strange at all to Hannah. What she was saying was that the child would be a Nazarite—one who served God continually, who never drank alcohol, who never cut his hair. That's what people who took the Nazarite vow do [Numbers 6]. Of course, her son was not going to take that vow; she was making it *for him*. Well, she was there standing there praying...

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

¹² And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

¹³ Now Hannah, she spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

¹⁴ And Eli said to her, How long will you be drunken? put away your wine from you.

¹⁵ And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

¹⁶ Count not your handmaid for a daughter of Belial [*a worthless woman*]: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken till now.

¹⁷ Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have asked of him.

¹⁸ And she said, Let your handmaid find grace in your sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

It meant a *great deal* to her, in fact, that the high priest—the high priest of God—had said, “Go in peace, the God of Israel grant your petition.” He didn't even know what the petition *was*, but he actually granted it to her in God's stead, and she accepted that.

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

¹⁹ And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

²⁰ Why it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

One of the most striking things about this incident to me is the way God honored the blessing of the high priest in this case, *in spite* of the fact (we will learn) he was *mortally* displeased with this priest. God

looked down upon Eli, watched the way he and his sons had ministered in the office, and he was furious with them. And yet, when Eli, in his office, blessed this woman, the blessing was observed and the blessing was honored; because Eli still carried the symbolic office of the high priest of God. Well, Elkanah, her husband, continued to go up to the Lord year by year.

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

²¹ And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

²² But Hannah went not up; for she said to her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever [*from now on*].

Now, I will make a note here that children were weaned considerably later at this time than women do today. This was a little bit older child.

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

²³ And Elkanah her husband said to her, Do what seems you good; tarry until you have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman stayed, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

²⁴ And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young.

Again, there's no doubt that he was quite young, just weaned; although there's every reason to believe children were weaned much later.

1 Samuel 1

AKJV

²⁵ And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

²⁶ And she said, Oh my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman that stood by you here, praying to the LORD.

²⁷ For this child I prayed; and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of him:

²⁸ Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD. And he [*that is, Samuel*] worshipped [*did obeisance to*] the LORD there.

Which, I presume, he was upright, walking, and able to do so. This man who came to the temple as *just a boy* turns out to be one of the most *powerful* figures in the history of the Bible, one of the most *influential* in the history of the Bible; and he lived and worked for God a *long* time, having started as just a boy. At this point, the story records Hannah's prayer on this occasion. She began,

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

¹ [...] My heart rejoices in the LORD, my horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies; because I rejoice in your salvation.

² There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside you: neither is there any rock like our God.

She is a woman exalted. She talks about her “horn” being exalted. The horn is a symbol of *power*. Her mouth is enlarged, which again suggests power. She then says,

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

³ Talk no more so exceeding proudly; [...]

I expect this is directed at Peninnah.

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

³ [...] let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

⁴ The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

⁵ They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren has born seven; and she that has many children is waxed feeble.

This is an interesting case in contrasts. You know, all the big guys, they are broken. The poor are the ones now that are lifted up. The poor are now the winners. And, of course, all this is directed at this *hard time* she had gone through of no children, being put down, being made fun of. And now she says, “Who’s laughing now?” She continued,

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

⁶ The LORD kills, and makes alive: he brings down to the grave, and brings up.

⁷ The LORD makes poor, and makes rich: he brings low, and lifts up.

⁸ He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he has set the world on them.

This is a *great* exaltation in the power of God, and I guess there’s not much like a *major* answer to prayer that enables a person to praise God as never before.

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

⁹ He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

¹⁰ The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder on them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength to his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

¹¹ And Elkanah [*and his wife*] went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister to the LORD before Eli the priest.

Now, the sons of Eli—Hophni and Phineas—were a pair of *worthless bullies*. They did not know God. Now, I can understand why someone might ask, “Wait a minute, wait a minute. How could they be *priests* and not even know God?” Well, you have to understand: the office of the priesthood (historically) has been both hereditary and political. It really is not a question of knowing God; it’s a question of knowing who the civil leaders are or the important people.

Well, the priest's custom with the people was that when some fellow came up to offer a sacrifice *to God*... Now, what is not often understood is that sacrifices, when offered, involved *food*. There were parts of the animal, as it was killed, that had to be offered to God; part of it had to be burned on the altar. But you *cooked your food* as a result of the sacrifice; you killed the animal, you got meat. Okay...

1 Samuel 2

KJ2000

¹³ And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was boiling, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;

¹⁴ And he thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came there.

Now, you can think about this: You're a person *very* sincere. Your sacrifice you're offering to God is to glorify God, to honor God. Or it may be because of some sin you have committed and you want to get your life made right with God. And you come there with a *full heart* of worship. And these idiots come in and command that they be given certain types of meat that you have prepared. It says in verse 15,

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

¹⁵ Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of you, but raw.

¹⁶ And if any man said to him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as your soul desires; then he would answer him, No; but you shall give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.

Now, you can see what I mean when I say these two men were *worthless bullies*. They just walked right over people. Because the Law of God was really quite explicit: you can't do that, you must *burn the fat* [Leviticus 3, 7]. (I suppose in a way it was a health law; they shouldn't have had the problems that we have.) Now, along with this it turns out that Eli was a very, *very* fat man. Well, verse 17 says,

1 Samuel 2

KJ2000

¹⁷ Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

Now, that is *so* sad. It made people come to the place to where they no longer wanted to even go to the temple *at all*. They did not want to make offerings at all. These men left such a *bad* taste in their mouth that it turned them off from the worship of God.

Out of this incident that we read here comes a great principle: If you're a man of God (be you preacher, priest, teacher, whatever)...if, in the way you do your office and the way you carry out your features, you cause people to turn away from God because of your behavior, that's a very heavy burden for any man to bear. So they did what they did...

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

¹⁸ But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.

A priestly garment. It was a simple, little thing—a linen garment that had almost like a poncho: it had a hole in the center; and it was draped over both shoulders; and came down as a rectangular garment a

little below the waist, a little below the hips. So here's this little boy, girded with his linen ephod, doing work around the temple suitable for a child—probably kind of like a cute, little, miniature priest.

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

¹⁹ Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

It's so *touching* to think of this: this little fellow serving God in the temple; and his mother made him, not just a coat, but a *little* coat (which, again, tells you he was *very small* when he came here).

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

²⁰ And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give you seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went to their own home.

²¹ And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

And strikingly, even though displeased as he was with Eli, his blessing upon Elkanah God honored.

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

²² Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did to all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

I mean, there's nothing new under the sun. Men have used religious office *down through time* to sleep with somebody else's wife or to molest little boys.

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

²³ And he said to them, Why do you such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

²⁴ No, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: you make the LORD's people to transgress.

²⁵ If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they listened not to the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

You know, you come to a place where God slams the door shut on you; and it had already happened with these two worthless louts. God had said, "No", and did not even allow them to listen to their father or grant them repentance.

1 Samuel 2

AKJV

²⁶ And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men.