

of the judges was now perpetual until the long, sad period between Malachi and the Baptist (Psa. 74, 9). To mark the importance of the functions assumed by the order the old names "Seer" and "Gazer" were superseded by a higher title ("Nabi," comp. Bar-nabas) which described the divine inspiration swelling within the representative of God to men; the prophet was the "mouth" of God (Exod. 7, 1). The narrative of this great change in the national life is fitly called after Samuel, the Moses of the new period of Israel's history. He was probably (comp. 1 Chron. 29, 29) the chief authority for the events of his own life, and the annals were continued by members of the prophetic schools which he founded. The date of the compilation must have been after the disruption, but there is no evidence to bring it down much later.

VER. 1. Like Moses, Samuel was a Levite, but he was reckoned with the tribe of Ephraim, in which his family dwelt. Comp. 1 Chron. 6, 22, 23 with chap. 1, 1. His consecration to a life-long Nazirite, like that of Samson and the Baptist, has been described, and we now read of his call to prophetic duties. *Child*. Josephus says he was twelve years old, the age at which Jesus was found "in his Father's house" (Luke 2, 49; comp. also 52 with chap. 2, 26). *Ministered*. A word emphasizing the dignity of the service of Him "whose slaves are kings." *Here* (margin). The religious declension of the Judge's period involved an almost complete cessation of prophecy or intimation of divine will. *Vision*. The same conception as in the title "gazer" (see above). VER. 2. *Time*. Rather day, the day of his ministration. *Now*, etc. This explains the lad's assumption that he had been called by Eli to do something for the helpless old man. VER. 3. The lamp is the golden stand with seven branches. We may suppose that the lamps were burning dim soon before sunrise, as they were lighted at the evening sacrifice. *Temple*. The phrase probably denotes the chambers built round the tabernacle, for the priests and Levites on duty, and for stores; but it is clearly borrowed from the language of the compiler's own day. *Where*. The mistranslation of the Authorized Version attempts to avoid the difficulty of Samuel's apparently sleeping in the sanctuary itself. The ark may, however, be mentioned simply as the place from which the divine Presence called to Samuel as he slept outside the veil. VER. 4. The LXX. (and comp. ver. 10) suggests that we should read "Jehovah called, Samuel." *Here*. Literally, "Behold, I;" the usual formula of assent. VER. 6. Samuel's words to Eli are exactly the same each time; Eli first adds the affectionate address which he omitted when first roused from sleep, then realizes the meaning of what he had supposed to be only a fragment of the boy's dreams. VER. 7. This explains Samuel's not recognizing the Voice; his call to the prophet's office had not come before. *Did not know*. The innocent ignorance of the child is contrasted with the guilty ignorance of the grown men (chap. 2, 12). The second clause here interprets the first. VER. 9. *If he call*. Eli does not name the Speaker. *Heareth*. An allusion to Samuel's own name, "heard of God." VER. 10. *Stood*. Implying a Presence as well as a Voice (comp. ver. 15, "vision.") *Speak*. Note the omission of "Jehovah;" it would seem that Samuel shrunk from using that Name of awe to the benign Angel who stood before him. Throughout the narrative the perfect fearlessness of the child is most striking. With simple obedience he lies down, perhaps even sleeps, and then looks up into his Father's face without a sign of awe. For the pure in heart, the child and the child-like, see God and fear not. (Comp. Exod. 24, 11 and our notes, July 1, 1888). The New Testament

shows us that it was "God Only-begotten" (John 1, 18; margin) who manifested Jehovah's presence. VER. 11. As in the case of Isaiah (see Isa. 6, Rev. Ver.) the message accompanying the prophet's call is one of unrelieved judgment. I. *Emphatic*. *Will do*. Literally, "am doing," and so ver. 13, "I am judging." There is no future with God. *At which*. Literally, "in which whosoever heareth, both his ears shall tingle," as in 2 Kings 21, 12, and Jer. 19, 3. The latter passage seems an intentional reminiscence of this. The judgment is that related in chap. 4. VER. 12. *Spoken*. By the unnamed prophet of chap. 2, 27. VER. 13. *I have told*. The Hebrew is ambiguous, and there is much in favor of Klostermann's suggestion to read "thou shalt tell," by omitting one letter. Clearly Samuel was sent to bring Eli the divine message. *Upon themselves*. The LXX. (see margin) almost certainly preserves the right text, and it is supported by a Jewish tradition attributing the change to mistaken reverence. *Restrained*. He had been content with remonstrance (chap. 2, 23-25), though his authority as priest and as father (Deut. 17, 12; 21, 18) might have been exercised to check them. VER. 14. *Purged*. Literally, "covered," the word used for "atonement." *Sacrifice*, etc. That is, bloody and unbloody offerings, an exhaustive description. *Forever*. Comp. Isa. 22, 14. The phrase in the Old Testament is necessarily confined to time, the conception of eternity being so shadowy as hardly to color it at all. The Law provided no expiation for wilful sin, and Eli's house was to be while it lasted a continual object-lesson of the temporal penalties of wickedness. Nothing is said against the personal forgiveness of individuals. Eli himself and his daughter-in-law showed by their grief for the ark that their hearts were right with God.

### The Lesson Council.

#### Question 1. How did God speak to Samuel?

God called him in a manner that seemed to him natural, real, and audible. He thought Eli had called. There was no vision, no apparition, but a voice, speaking in his soul, which made known God's purpose against Eli and his house. God spoke to him as he did to Noah, when called into the ark, or to Saul on his way to Damascus. He spoke to him, as in nature, revelation, and providence he speaks to every soul, in words that are louder and more impressive than any that break against the tympanum of the ear.—Rev. A. E. P. Albert, D.D., New Orleans, La.

In an audible voice, which was mistaken for a human voice three times. The very natural mistake of Samuel is explained. 1. By his partly stupefied and drowsy state; 2. By his inexperience in matters of divine communication; 3. By his loyal recognition of his relation to Eli as one who had the right to call and command.—Rev. H. M. Simpson, Paterson, N. J.

Directly and orally, Samuel's failures to apprehend the Speaker's divinity were natural. For (1) as the Lord had not yet spoken to him he could not identify the voice from personal experience, and (2) as there was no publicly accredited prophet then receiving such messages from God, Samuel could not expect one on general principles.—Rev. W. A. Dickson, New York City.

### Lesson Word-Picture.

BY REV. E. A. RAND.

Night about Shiloh, hushing all noises, bringing rest. Night, too, in the sanctuary; no priest in his vestments