

We learn from 1 Sam. viii. 2 that the first-born of Samuel was Joel, and the second Abiah; and the 33rd verse of this chapter speaks also of Joel, the son of Samuel. Therefore the name Vashni, as the first-born, in the above verse, has always been rather a puzzle, and the only explanation was that offered in the margin of our Authorised Version, that Vashni must have been another name for Joel. To the English reader this may seem a fairly plausible explanation; but let him take this short Hebrew lesson before making up his mind:—

v is the Hebrew conjunction “and.”

SHNI means “the second.”

Therefore VSHNI = “and the second.”

Now, the Hebrew manuscripts read thus:—

AND THE SONS OF SAMUEL
THE FIRSTBORN VSHNI ABIAH.

i.e., AND THE SONS OF SAMUEL
. . . THE FIRSTBORN, AND THE
SECOND ABIAH.

After reading the name Joel in the other passages as the first-born, does it not at once occur to the reader to suspect that the word JOEL has by some accidental slip of a copyist dropped out of the text, and that the copyist consequently, puzzled by the Hebrew word VSHNI (“and the second”), where no first had been mentioned, has vocalised it as a proper name, V₁SHNI, as though it were the name of Samuel’s first-born? Supply the word JOEL in the blank space above, and the whole difficulty disappears.