

stands between them and Jehovah is recognized.

It is important that we appreciate fully this characteristic of the early heroes of Israel. We look in vain in the books of Judges, of Ruth and of Samuel for evidences of the existence of the Mosaic Law. This was not then known; it was an enactment yet to be made.

First were the prophets, and the judges were the incipient prophets. They (as doubtless did all the early prophets) recognized the existence of other gods, but Jehovah was to them the Lord of Lords, ruling over the whole universe and excluding all others from the homage of his people.

Samuel may be taken as the culminating type of the judges, the connecting link between the judge and the prophets. He was called by both names in the Scriptures, and a study of his character will make clear the mission of both judge and prophet.

The date of Samuel's career is about 1000 B. C. He seems to have been of the tribe of Ephraim, one of the southern tribes, whose territory bordered upon that of the Philistines, and with the Philistines the Israelites were in almost constant war. At a certain battle in the northwestern part of Judah, which had been so hotly contested that the Israelites had brought from Shiloh the ark of the Lord to aid in securing the victory to them, the Philistines were triumphant and the ark was captured. There could be but one reason assigned for this:—Israel had sinned against Jehovah. 1st Samuel, ii, 27-35, gives a specific sin in the house of Eli, but Samuel himself, vii., 3, puts it on the broader ground that Israel had forsaken the Lord and had served "the strange gods and the A'htoroth," *i. e.*, the gods of the Sidonians. For twenty years the Israelites were slaves to the Philistines, in a servitude the most abject. They were forced to surrender all their weapons of war, and their smiths were carried away captive by

the Philistines to prevent their forging new weapons. Israel sorely needed the help of Jehovah; their religious zeal was quickened, and the long struggle for freedom purified and deepened their faith in the Lord. It was natural that they should turn to Samuel. Was he not 'a man of God,' an interpreter of Jehovah's will? "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us," they said, "that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines." Thus drawn into allegiance to Jehovah, and brought into unity of feeling by a common devotion, Israel became a mighty power; "the Philistines were subdued and came no more within the border of Israel." *"And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life."*

We cannot believe the last statement to be correct, if by the term "judged" we understand Samuel to have been to the people, during his life, what Gideon, Jephtha or Jehovah was, *viz.*, their political leader. This Samuel was not, nor did he desire to be, although bearing on this matter we have several historical narratives that are not only not consistent, but are indeed contradictory. The account which comes earliest in the book of Samuel, but which is much the more recent than the one which follows, says of Samuel (1 Sam. viii.) that as he grew old and desired to install his sons as his successors, the people demurred and demanded instead that he select a king to rule over them. This displeased Samuel, and he represented to them that a king would make slaves of them and would confiscate their property, but his words were without influence in changing the people's will. Following this narrative, which jumps from viii., 22, to x. 17. (being entire as follows: viii., 1-22; x. 17-27; xii., 1-25.) We find Samuel calls the people together at Mispah and there reproaches them for their rejection of the will of God, but summons the tribes before him and chooses by lot. (first the tribe, then the family, and then the man), for them a king: