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**A CHARACTERIZATION OF SAMUEL IN TERMS OF THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF ERIKSON**

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
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MASTER OF ARTS

by

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BA (Hons)

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

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DEDICATION

**I dedicate this thesis in honour of my supervisor,
PROFESSOR YEHOSHUA GITAY,
who retired from the University of Cape Town at the end of 2003.**

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ABSTRACT

The story of Samuel forms an integral part of the Hebrew saga, marking the transition from the period of Judges to the Israelite monarchy. Book I of Samuel is unusual in that it portrays the birth, death and major episodes of the prophet's life. In fact, Samuel, along with Moses and Jeremiah, is one of the few characters whose full life history is documented in the Biblical text: we not only have the significant events which lead up to his birth, but he makes an appearance again after his death. Given this detail, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether a re-reading of the character of Samuel through a psychological model can throw fresh insights on how the Israelites effected the transition from a theocracy to a monarchy.

The choice of Erikson is motivated by two considerations. In the first, Erikson extended the boundaries of Freudian psychoanalysis by describing both normal as well as abnormal development. His ego-psychology, with its eight-stage developmental plan, its theses and antitheses, is particularly suitable in the case of Samuel, whose life-cycle for the most part can be viewed as problematic, a series of crises. In the second, though he wrote prolifically on numerous leading historical figures and literary characters, Erikson himself never analysed a Biblical figure. This work is, however, not confined to a psychological typification of the character of Samuel. It is intended to be an interdisciplinary study: it deals with the text as an integrated literary unit and relies on the insights of classical Biblical scholarship to support many of its conclusions.

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INTRODUCTION

The making of legend is as much part of the scholarly rewriting of history as it is part of the original facts used in the work of scholars

EH Erikson, Young Man Luther, 1958:34

In this study I propose to apply the psychological theory of Erik H Erikson to the character of Samuel as he is depicted in the Hebrew Scriptures. My motivation arose out of two considerations. In the first place, reading through the many psychobiographies written by Erikson and particularly those on religious heroes such as Luther, Kierkegaard and Gandhi, I was struck by the fact that Erikson had never analysed a Biblical figure. I became thoroughly intrigued to see if his ego-psychology could be applied to any of the heroes of the Hebrew Scripture. In discussing the matter with my supervisor, I arrived at the second, the choice of Samuel. Samuel – along with Moses and Jeremiah – is one of the few characters whose full life history is documented in the Biblical text – in fact, we not only have the significant events which lead up to his birth, but he makes an appearance again after his death!

The idea of psychology as a method of critical interpretation of the Biblical narrative is not new. A glance at the bibliography of Kille's *Psychological Biblical Criticism* – eighteen pages – is enough to prove the point (2001:143-161). This work is, however, not confined to a psychological analysis alone. It is intended to be an interdisciplinary study and therefore relies on the insights of classical Biblical scholarship to support many of its conclusions. My aim, like Halperin's is to make a case for the psychological "perception of human nature and for its value as a tool for understanding literary creations of the remote past" (1993:i). This approach is directed, like all Biblical criticism, at arriving at a fresh reading of the text. And, as some of my conclusions may appear somewhat unconventional, I ask, like Zeligs, of "the scholarly reader from other schools of thought (and not familiar with psychological criticism), a temporary suspension of judgment and belief" (1988: xvii). For those scholars not familiar with the field of psychological criticism, I need also to mention that I make occasional references

to Halperin, Feldman and Zeligs, Biblical scholars in the Freudian psychoanalytical field of interpretation. Along with these sources, there are commentators on Erikson – Roazen and Welchman – and psychologists Bateman and Holmes, Bowlby, Evans, Meyer *et al.* and Ryckman. The reader may safely assume that all other scholars cited, though frequently arriving at psychological insights, do so from methodologies other than psychological criticism.

It is a necessary prerequisite of a psychological analysis that I approach my narrative as an integrated organic whole. In this I am not alone. Fokkelman, Eslinger, Polzin and Sternberg, my primary sources of literary Biblical scholarship on Samuel, are important not only because they treat the same subject, but because they, like myself, approach the text as a synchronic unity. Fokkelman, from a structuralist point of view, argues that

it is advisable to grant the text systematic research right from scratch, with a literary independence which is not put off its stroke by apparent signs of discord nor by the clichés of historical-critical commentaries. The point of departure remains the hypothesis that, accompanied by careful listening, the text can make itself clear and that a synchronic reading is sufficient (1993:322).

Eslinger, approaching the text from a close reading (a tool of new criticism), has this to say:

While it is possible for the reader to suggest many events or ‘traditions’ that might fill (a temporal gap) in the narrative, one need not conclude that something has been left out and that the narrative is defective. All literary creations are based upon a selection of events from the sum total of available real or conceivable events ... the reader should respect the narrator’s decision as to what he wishes to represent (1985:337).

On the basis of a rhetorical reading of Books 1 and 2 Samuel and Kings, Gitay actually argues for integral unity of the four books. He concludes that they

are presented, in fact, as the (hi)story of the Ark, from its loss by Eli through to its potential re-establishment at the centre of Israelite life on the release of King Jehoiachin from imprisonment (1992:224-5).

This does not imply, however, that I am unaware of the controversies arising out of a diachronic approach whereby scholars argue that the book is a collage of traditions patched together to form a continuous narrative. Specifically, they contend that it is possible to identify “three originally independent narratives – the Ark Narrative, the History of David’s Rise and the Succession Narrative” (Gordon, 1984:12). Along with this, Gordon goes on to enumerate further identifiable traditions which are also constituted here: “the Shiloh tradition, the beginnings of the monarchy and the reigns of Saul and David”. And, he adds, the resultant historical narrative is clearly underpinned by an overtly theological intention (*ibid*).

While I concur with the majority of Biblical Scholarship that the text was composed with a theological intention, that is, “to justify the ways of God to men” (Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1, line 26), my approach, like Halperin’s, “is entirely nontheistic” (1993:4). I do not approach the text from a theological perspective, but from that of a psychoanalyst investigating the details of a clinical case which will to be formulated through Erikson’s theories. In other words, in line with Zeligs, I want to emphasize that

although it has been assumed as obvious, perhaps it should be stated that these studies are not concerned with the problem of the nature of God in an objective or philosophic fashion. Such an approach lies outside the realm of psychoanalytic exploration (1988:xxiii-xxiv).

I shall, however, adopt two different strategies when dealing with the apparently ‘supernatural’ phenomenon. The first will deal with the “word of the Lord” as heard by Samuel (1 Sam 3:11-14; 8:7-9; 9:16; etc) from a wholly psychological viewpoint, as does Halperin with Ezekiel. Halperin takes “it for granted, that the wrath of Ezekiel’s God is in fact Ezekiel’s own unconscious rage” (1993:4), and I propose to interpret Samuel’s “inner world” in like manner. The second, with the thunder and rain brought on by the Lord (1 Sam 7:10; 12:18), I shall argue from the viewpoint of the omniscient narrator who may utilize such phenomena to comment on the events at hand. In this I rely on Sternberg’s support. In his discussion on the differences and attributes of “fiction and history” he states that:

As a rule of narrative communication, inspiration amounts to omniscience exercised on history: the tale's claim to truth rests on the teller's God-given knowledge ... the storyteller (assumes this stance) implicitly but none the less authoritatively. And its assumption enables him to bring to bear on his world what would elsewhere count as poetic license of invention without paying the price in truth claim (1987:34).

Nevertheless, it is not in the scope of this dissertation to explore the subtleties of narration. I will rely on elementary theory and treat of an authoritative, reliable and omniscient narrator.

The history of Samuel is rather an extraordinary one. The story forms an integral part of the Hebrew saga, marking the transition from the period of Judges to the Israelite monarchy. At this junction in the canon, the land had already been conquered and occupied by the people of Israel. However, throughout Samuel's life the danger of Philistine invasion, like Damocles's sword, remains a constant threat to the people. At first the Philistines bring about the downfall of the Elide priesthood and, by de Vaux's account, the "sacking" of the shrine at Shiloh (1965:304). Later on, the military pressure of the Philistines motivates the people's demand to replace Samuel with a king, that is, to set up a dynasty.

According to Fokkelman

Samuel, as a Nazarite, remains an essentially solitary figure in the history of Israel. His sons are themselves going to become corrupt ... and we are to hear nothing more on any possible continuation of Samuel's line (1993:148-9).

This idea of a "solitary figure" highlights his uniqueness in the Hebrew sagas. Samuel is not raised up charismatically like the judges before him in the Book of Judges, but the announcement of his birth is heralded with all the fanfare of the Biblical convention reserved for the sons of the patriarchs Abraham (Gen 11:30) and Jacob (Gen 29:31) – he is the child of a long barren woman. He is privileged to receive the word of God apparently from the Lord himself (1 Sam 3:10), again unlike the judges before him who, when they did receive divine instructions, it usually came at the behest of an "angel of the

Lord” – as in the cases of Gideon (Judg 6:11) and Samson’s mother (Judg 13:3) – or through the spirit of the Lord – as for Jephthah (Judg 11:29). Thus, Samuel achieves the status of prophet and judge, not unlike Deborah (Judg 4:4). But when, on his death, he departs from the narrative, Israel is under the monarchy.

The question is, how and why did this change come about? In this study, a psychoanalysis of Samuel’s character and motivations based on the theory of Erik Erikson, I hope to throw some fresh light on the role which Samuel played in the setting up of the monarchy. To this end it will be necessary to approach my analysis of Samuel by first outlining, in the following chapter, the essential formulations of Erikson’s theory. I shall end the chapter with a brief summary of the attributes he distinguished in his concept of “greatness”, a concept which Erikson developed out of his psychobiographies of great men. The remaining three chapters constitute the focus of my work, the analysis of Samuel, his character and motivations. Chapter 2, *The Social and Family Order*, discusses the contextual setting and attempts a brief analysis of the family and significant people who impacted on the development of the young Samuel. Chapter 3, *The “Man Child” Samuel*, covers the life of Samuel from infancy to adulthood and Chapter 4, *The Maker of Kings*, his mature years. In the conclusion, I will present a summary of my findings.

In the final analysis, I hope, in line with Halperin, that “this material will permit us to pursue our investigation in a fresh direction” (1993:4).

Chapter 1

ERIK H ERIKSON AND EGO-PSYCHOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this first chapter is to outline the psychological theory of Erik H Erikson, namely ego-psychology, which I employ as my methodology of analysis of the character of Samuel. I shall begin with a brief background of Erikson and the influences which impacted on the development of his theory. Thereafter, I want to present the key concepts of Erikson's ego-psychology, specifically the Life Cycle and the Epigenetic Principle and develop more fully the Eight Stages which he believed formed the ground plan of man's development. Finally, I shall discuss in brief Erikson's concept of greatness.

1.2 Erikson and Ego-Psychology

Erikson belongs to the school of psychoanalysis known as Depth Psychology, of which Freud was the founder. A key feature of Depth Psychology is the emphasis on the unconscious aspects of human functioning (cf. Meyer *et al.* 1989:33). Central to Freud's work is the idea that repressed (unconscious) instincts – mostly sexual – are the cause of neuroses. In order to explain the dynamics of the unconscious, Freud formulated three hypothetical structures – the id, ego and superego – which motivate and monitor human behaviour. In Freudian terms the ego acts solely as the mediating or balancing agency between the primitive but powerful instinctual demands of the id and the moral prescriptions of the superego. Insight into the operational effects of these structures is gained by observation of an individual's outward behaviour and projecting it back to his unconscious desires.

When Erikson began his apprenticeship in 1927 under Anna Freud, Freud was already world renowned and many of his most famous pupils – Rank, Adler, Jung – had deserted the fold to pursue their own directions. Erikson, while remaining a loyal Freudian, nevertheless, shifted behavioural determinants to integrated biological and psychosocial forces, at the same time stressing the cultural and historical context in which behaviour takes place. He extended the functioning of Freud's mediating ego by allowing it to act

independently of id and superego. It became, in his view, the force behind our ability to adapt to a changing environment (cf. Ryckman 1993:184). In Erikson's own words, the ego

makes it possible for man to bind together the two great evolutionary developments, his *inner life* and his *social planning* (and creates in him) a sense of *wholeness*, a sense of *centrality* in time and space, and a sense of *freedom of choice* (1964:148).

In this concept of the ego Erikson differed widely from Freud. According to Meyer *et al.* the difference lay in Freud's

inevitable and continuous conflict between the individual and society because of man's basic nature, but for Erikson the relationship between the individual and society is complementary (1989:149).

This emphasis on an independent ego, operating in conjunction with interpersonal, cultural and historical factors, gave rise to a new school of psychology, namely ego-psychology. Where the Freudian "system was designed specifically to explain the motivations of people in conflict with themselves" (Roazen 1976:18), Erikson sought, through ego-psychology, to describe normal functioning. He is best known outside the field of psychology for his formulation of the adolescent "identity crisis".

1.3 The Life Cycle and the Epigenetic Principle

Erikson follows Freud in maintaining that human development is governed by the "epigenetic principle". By this he means that an individual's emotional and psychological growth is determined by a ground plan of dynamic sequential stages which occur throughout his¹ life cycle. He identified eight stages, each of which is characterised by a psychosocial crisis or turning point. At each crisis point, the individual must make a choice between specific polarities, such as 'trust' versus

¹ I have consciously opted to appropriate "masculine" terminology in this essay. Firstly, because all of Erikson's work was completed before the advent of Feminist Studies, his writings are therefore not sensitive to political correctness. Secondly, because I agree with Anthony Daniels who, in a review of two books on Robert FitzRoy, the captain of Darwin's "Beagle", notes that while one set of authors shows "more understanding of and sympathy for FitzRoy than (the other), even they feel obliged on one occasion to apologise for Darwin's use of the word "man" for the more 'correct' 'humankind'". "This suggests", he goes on, "that there is a kind of intellectual terrorism abroad, authors being afraid of ostracism if they do not use the approved terminology" (New Scientist, February 23, 2003).

'mistrust', which will result in a progression or regression in ego development. Meyer *et al.* describe Erikson's model of human functioning as "dialectical" (1989:154). The polarities encountered in each stage of development, the thesis and antithesis, are not resolved by excluding one or the other, nor by the simple expedient of compromise. Instead, Erikson believes that ego strength is achieved through a synthesis of the two. 'Trust', for example, must be tempered by a healthy degree of 'mistrust'. Optimal functioning, that is, successful synthesis at any given stage, will result in a specific gain or ego strength. Erikson defined these ego strengths as "certain qualities which begin to animate man pervasively during successive stages of his life" (1968:233). Each stage is characterised by its own specific ego strength. In Stage 1, for instance, we find the ego strength of *hope*, in Stage 2, *will-power*, Stage 3, *purpose*, and so on.

Erikson also follows Freud in his concept of "organ modes". This is evident in what he identifies as "behavioural patterns" which characterise the first years of a child's life. These behavioural patterns – sucking, biting, defecating – are associated with particular bodily organs, such as the mouth and anus. Hence, in the first three years of development, the early stages are sometimes referred as the "oral" or "anal" stage, as is found in Freud. It might be more easily understood if we see these behavioural patterns as something the child himself does instinctively, over and above the emotional and environmental effects which define Erikson's 8 Stages. Erikson argues that they are the prototypes for what will become the characteristic style of the adult personality. To quote him: "they have a determining influence on a child's behaviour throughout life – not only on his interaction with other people but also on his intellectual functioning" (Erikson 1963:96). In this sense he moves beyond Freud, who views the malfunctioning individual as being in the grip of, for example, an unresolved "oral" fixation. Erikson is more optimistic. He allows that behaviour based on organ modes can have a positive as well as a negative outcome. The bias, of either the positive or negative, depends entirely on the child's early experience. Hence, Erikson extrapolates the concept and frequently uses the terms "psychosocial behaviour modalities" to describe behaviour based on organ modes. It is necessary here to point out that in the interest of greater clarity, Erikson often utilizes idiomatic language – to hold on, to let go, being on the make – when discussing organ modes. Erikson: "There are no simpler, stronger words to match basic social modalities than those of Basic English" (1968:118).

As these organ modes or psychosocial behaviour modalities are associated essentially only with the first 3 Stages, I shall not deal with them separately but instead integrate them into my description of Erikson's 8-Stage Developmental Model.

1.4 Erikson's Eight Stages of Development

1.4.1 Infancy: Basic Trust versus Mistrust: Hope

In this first stage – year one for the child – the infant is engaged in testing the relationship between inner sensations and the outer physical reality. This forms the basis for “the firm establishment of enduring patterns for the solution of the nuclear conflict (crisis) of basic ‘trust’ versus basic ‘mistrust’ (which) is the first task of the ego” (Erikson 1963:249). ‘Trust’ as described by Erikson,

implies not only that one has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer providers, but also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to cope with urges (1963:248).

Welchman describes it as a state of “being and responding” (2000:52). Inherent in trust, Erikson argues, are the characteristics of naïveté and mutuality, so that the *quality* of maternal care rather than the sense of frustration or deprivation is a crucial factor. The more sensitive and empathetic the principle provider to the infant's individual needs, the more likelihood that the child will develop the required sense of ‘trust’ both in himself and the culture which sustains him. “Ultimately”, says Erikson, “children become neurotic not from frustration but from the lack or loss of societal meaning in these frustrations” (1963:249-50). The development of a rudimentary sense of ego identity is dependent here on achieving Erikson thinks (*sic*),

the recognition that there is an inner population of remembered and anticipated sensations (which) are firmly correlated with an outer population of familiar and predictable things and people (1963:247).

The ego strength achieved here is a sense of *hope*: the belief that enduring wishes and goals can be attained.

Alternatively, where parental care is inadequate and absences occur, ‘trust’ becomes ‘mistrust’. A feeling of being deprived can leave a residue of ‘mistrust’ that continues to have repercussions later on throughout the individual's life cycle. Failure to make the

differentiation of inner from outer self at this early stage, can lead to distortions of reality giving rise to the defence mechanisms of projection and introjection, which Erikson believes are “some of our deepest and most dangerous defence mechanisms” (1963:248). “In introjection, we feel and act as if an outer good or bad has become an inner certainty” (*ibid.*): we turn, for example, our hate of another in on ourselves. “In projection, we experience an inner harm as an outer one: we endow significant people with the evil which actually is in us” (1963:248-9). This concept of projection is particularly important for my thesis. I referred to it earlier when discussing Halperin’s statement “that the wrath of Ezekiel’s God is in fact Ezekiel’s own unconscious rage” (1993:4). I shall argue that Samuel’s voices are a projection of his unconscious desires.

As regards the organ modes, as I said earlier, these are grounded in instinctual behavioural patterns. Sucking and biting, the modes associated to Stage 1, are the patterned precursors for all other forms of “incorporation”. Incorporative behaviour, in the sense of to get, relates not only to the child’s ability to receive and to accept what is given to him “but simultaneously sets the foundation for becoming a ‘giving person’” (Erikson 1963:76). On the positive side, “it forms the foundation for enduring, friendly, captivating behaviour, as well as the absorption of knowledge” (cf. Meyer *et al.* 1989:155). On the negative, the individual learns to control “by duress or fantasy rather than by reciprocity” (Erikson 1963:76).

The relationship between the developmental crisis of this stage (basic ‘trust’ versus ‘mistrust’) and the operative organ mode is best summed up by Meyer: The infant, he argues,

must decide on the basis of experience how far (he) can trust (his) environment to provide (him) with whatever (he) needs to satisfy the demands of (his) incorporative behaviour (Meyer *et al.* 1989:156).

1.4.2 Early Childhood: *Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt: Will-power*

This stage – about the 2nd and 3rd year – is associated with the maturation of muscular control.

The over-all significance of this second stage of early childhood lies in the rapid gains in muscular maturation, in verbalization, and in discrimination and the

consequent ability – and doubly felt inability – to coordinate a number of highly conflicting action patterns characterized by the tendencies of ‘*holding on*’ and ‘*letting go*’ (Erikson 1968:107).

The muscles most significant here, according to Erikson, are the sphincters, those controlling the bladder and bowels, and involved in evacuation. Not surprisingly, Freud characterised it as the “anal” age. The discomfort the child experiences as more solid stools arrive, involves him in some tension until a state of muscle coordination is reached and he is able voluntarily to gain control over his bodily functions (cf. Erikson 1968:107). According to Erikson,

The anal zone lends itself more than any other to the expression of stubborn insistence on conflicting impulses because ... it is the model zone for two contradictory (organ) modes which must become alternating, namely retention and elimination (the *holding on* and *letting go* mentioned above) (1968:108).

Furthermore, these modalities are not only opposing but each of the two opposing modes gives rise to its own behavioural opposition:

... to hold can become a destructive and cruel retaining or restraining, and it can become a pattern of care, to have and to hold. To let go, too, can turn into an inimical letting loose of destructive forces, or it can become a relaxed ‘to let pass’ and ‘to let be’ (Erikson 1963:251).

Reassurance and firmness on the part of providers is again crucial in the face of the infant’s sudden wish to have a choice. At the same time that “his environment encourages him to ‘stand on his own feet’, it must protect him against meaningless and arbitrary experiences of ‘shame’ and early ‘doubt’” (Erikson 1963:252).

Success or failure can influence the child’s expectations and attitudes. Under optimal conditions, success at Stage 2 leads to ‘autonomy’, “the growing ability to control oneself ... with discretion” (Welchman 2000:53), a positive sense of good will and pride. The ego strength achieved here is *will-power*, the determination to exercise free choice sans control by others.

Failure, on the other hand, leads to ‘shame’ and ‘doubt’. Erikson is concerned that we distinguish ‘shame’ from ‘doubt’. Shame is more a matter of naked exposure and self-consciousness, the “impulse to bury one’s face or to sink ... into the ground” (Erikson 1963:252). Erikson believes that unresolved elements of ‘shame’ are reflected in those

adults who govern their lives by the letter rather than the spirit. Furthermore, he stresses that, “if in some respects you have relatively more ‘shame’ than ‘autonomy’ then you feel or act inferior all your life” (Evans 1967:20). ‘Doubt’, as opposed to ‘shame’, is the feeling of being vulnerable from behind and can be a precursor to paranoiac fears.

‘Doubt’ says Erikson, is “first experienced when the child feels singled out by demands whose rationale he does not comprehend” (1958:250). If the child forfeits his own self-control in the face of parental over-control, ‘shame’ and ‘doubt’ will haunt him all his life and leave him with a strong sense of inferiority.

By the same token, Erikson insists that the mutual regulation between parent and child is crucial to this period. Faced with his newly discovered “I” (and an increasing degree of muscle control) the child yo-yos between compliance (to let go) and defiance (to hold on) as the still “highly dependent being discovers his autonomous will” (Erikson 1968:107). Too rigid or too early training will have a deleterious effect. Instead of the child developing at his own pace and experiencing the satisfaction of exercising his own free will,

the sensitive child may turn all his urge to discriminate against himself and thus develop a *precocious conscience*. Instead of wilfully appropriating things in order to test them by repetitive play, he will become obsessed by his own repetitiveness and will want to have everything ‘just so,’ and only in a given sequence and tempo. By such infantile obsessiveness and procrastination, or by becoming a stickler for ritualistic repetitions, the child then learns to gain power over his parents in areas where he could not find large-scale mutual regulation with them. Such hollow victory, then, is the infantile model for an adult compulsion neurosis (Erikson 1968:111).

1.4.3 The Play Age: Initiative versus Guilt: Purpose

A child who has negotiated the first two stages successfully, Erikson argues, knows himself to be a person in his own right. Stage 3 – age 3-6 years – will open to him the kind of person he can become. Stage 3 is the age of initiative – “the quality of undertaking, planning and ‘attacking’ a task for the sake of being active and on the move” (Erikson 1963:255). The child’s newly acquired mastery of locomotion enhances his initiative. He is quick to forget failures and ready to grasp all that appears to him

desirable and even dangerous “with an increased sense of direction” (Erikson 1968:115). Attack and conquest is of the essence. Hence Erikson perceives this action and the learning experience involved as “intrusive”, in that the child is no longer hampered by limitations and can propel himself and his imagination into future possibilities and impossibilities.

By impossibilities, I not only refer to Erikson’s charge that “the intoxication of increased locomotor powers lead(s) to secret fantasies of gigantic and terrifying proportions” (1968:118), but also to the fact that the child can imagine and desire that which he begins to understand is taboo. His sense of the latter develops out of an awakening conscience. As before, Erikson emphasises that sensitive regulation of the child’s exuberance is critical. Out of this will come a sense of moral responsibility and an understanding of “the institutions, functions, and roles which will permit the child’s responsible participation” (Erikson 1963:256). In a nurturing environment, Erikson argues, the child is ready to co-operate and emulate ideal prototypes. Erikson believes that

social institutions ... offer children an *economic ethos* in the form of ideal adults recognisable by their uniforms and functions, and fascinating enough to replace the heroes of picture book and fairy tale (1963:258).

‘Initiative’, Erikson contends, “also brings with it *anticipatory rivalry*” (1968:118). Whereas the earlier stages had resulted in a rage against encroachments of one’s position by younger siblings, Stage 3 is characterised by the jealous jockeying for a privileged position in the environment now directed specifically against those who were there first. Failure to achieve recognition results in resignation, guilt and anxiety.

The problem, again, is one of mutual regulation. The pure *joie de vivre* in the newly discovered independent locomotive and mental ability frequently results in acts of manipulation and coercion which over-extend the child’s discriminatory powers. This behaviour inevitably encounters resistance from the environment in the form of parents and siblings. If mutual regulation between provider and child breaks down, there is the danger of the latter developing a sense of guilt. Moreover, there is also the danger that the child may over-control himself to the point of self-obliteration. Erikson posits that there is an “inner powerhouse of rage which must be submerged at this stage, as some of

the fondest hopes and the wildest phantasies are repressed and inhibited” (1963:257). In this mode of over-control child may become forever divided in himself and the resulting self-righteousness – often the principal reward for goodness – can later be most intolerantly turned against others (including those closest to him) in the form of persistent moralistic surveillance, so that the prohibition rather than the guidance of initiative becomes the dominant endeavour (1963:257).

This is the final stage to which Erikson attributes his organ modes. Again he introduces two opposing modes – inclusion and intrusion, the equivalent of Freud’s “phallic age”. Erikson describes this as a time of “being on the make”, in the sense that the child finds pleasure in competition, goals, conquest and the “secret fantasies of gigantic and terrifying proportions” (1968:118).

The satisfaction experienced in correct manipulation of tools and toys, of caring for younger siblings, results in the ego-strength of *purpose*. Ryckman describes *purpose* as the outcome of parents’ successful attempts to “guide their children into socially desirable activities, resulting in the latter’s setting life goals” (1993:216). Nevertheless, Erikson suggests that the Play Age also “bequeaths to all methodical pursuits a quality of grandiose delusion” (1968:234).

1.4.4 *The School Age: Industry versus Inferiority: Competence*

The years from 6-12 constitute Stage 4 – a time to be “tamed and harnessed to the laws of impersonal things” (Erikson 1963:258). Erikson believes that at this stage all cultures subject the child to some form of systematic instruction. It is a period when the child is weaned, as it were, from the “womb of the family” and discovers a world outside of it. The pleasures of organ and the free movement of limb, give way to the pleasure of production through steady attention and diligent perseverance. As the child applies himself to set tasks and the mastering of skills he develops a sense of ‘industry’. The tools and skills he learns to master become an extension of his ego, and the gain here is *competence*. At the same time, Erikson emphasises that “this is socially a most decisive stage” (1963:260). The learning experience takes place alongside and in conjunction with others, leading to a “sense of division of labour and differential opportunity” (*ibid.*).

It is also a period of relative calm in the child's life. Freud called this the "latency stage" as the violent drives and rages of the earlier periods are dormant.

The downside of Stage 4 is the development of a sense of inadequacy and 'inferiority'. If a child "despairs of his tools and skills or of his status among his tool partners" (Erikson 1963:260), he may find it impossible to identify with either the technology or his peers. This situation could regress into an earlier stage with the result that he may lose *hope* in both his physical self and the physical world. He will come to believe himself both mediocre and inadequate. Erikson, however, feels that there is a further and "more fundamental danger" (1963:260). The individual can identify too completely with his work and value the products of that work as the only criterion of what is worthwhile. In this way he will restrict both himself and his horizons, and "he may become the conformist and thoughtless slave of his technology and those who are in a position to exploit it" (1963:261).

1.4.5 Adolescence: Identity versus Role Confusion: Reliability

This the stage of Erikson's identity crisis, "when the organism is at the height of its vitality and potency" (1970b:750), and marks the end of childhood proper. It covers the years between 12 and 20, this last being variable depending on the expectations of the specific culture. It encompasses the physiological revolution of genital maturation. The partial identifications of the earlier stages must now coalesce into a true ego 'identity'. Success is dependent on the

ego's ability to integrate all identifications with the vicissitudes of the libido (rapid physiological growth), with the aptitudes developed out of endowment, and the opportunities offered in social roles (Erikson 1963:261).

Essential to this is the youth's confidence that the "inner sameness and continuity ... of one's meaning for others" is carried over into the expectation of a career. Nevertheless, Erikson does warn that because young people are especially impressionable, they may try to become exactly what is socially expected of them (cf. Roazen 1976:66). While such a position is not untenable, it can also lead to neurosis. For many adolescents who fail to achieve an integrated identity at this stage, Erikson believes they compensate with *totalism*: "the setting of absolute boundaries in one's values, beliefs, and interpersonal relationships" (Erikson 1964:52). Erikson, however, cautions that

it would be wise to abstain from considering this a merely regressive or infantile mechanism. It is an alternate, if more primitive, way of dealing with experience, and thus has, as least in transitory states, a certain adjustment and survival value. It belongs to normal psychology (1963:93).

Nevertheless, Erikson warns that “a specific rage can be aroused wherever identity development loses the promise of a traditionally assured wholeness” (1970b:733).

Erikson describes the adolescent mind as an “ideological mind”. In the attempt to define an identity, adolescents frequently latch on to one or other ideology for the simple reason that ideologies appear to offer a sense of order and orientation. The danger with any ideology, however, is that adolescents lay themselves open to exploitation by unprincipled creeds “which offer a world view rather than simple commandments” (Welchman 2000:54).

The pressures inherent in this period of rapid change are countered to some extent by what Erikson calls a *moratorium*: “a socially sanctioned period in which the adolescent can be allowed to flounder and explore before settling on a more permanent identity” (Welchman 2000:54). Successful negotiation of this stage leads to the ego strength of *reliability* which includes fidelity. It implies both the attainment of a secure identity and the ability to be loyal and committed to friends and colleagues. Erikson argues that only by

counterbalancing the inner remnants of the original inequalities of childhood, and in thus weakening the dominance of the superego, a positive sense of identity permits the individual to forgo irrational self-repudiation, the total prejudice against themselves which characterises severe neurotics and psychotics, as well as fanatic hate of otherness (1968:89).

Failure of identity formation leads to ‘role confusion’ – confusion with who one is and what one will become. This may, of course, be the result of unresolved issues in earlier stages. However, all things being equal, Erikson believes that the problem arises primarily out of the individual’s inability to choose a career. This often leads to a temporary over-identification “to the point of apparent complete loss of identity, with the heroes of cliques and crowd” (Erikson 1963:262). Falling in love at this stage can also be seen as an attempt to define one’s ‘identity’. The young lover projects his “diffused ego

image” onto the loved object, and in this way it is “reflected and gradually clarified” (*ibid.*).

1.4.6 Early Adulthood: Intimacy versus Isolation: Love

‘Intimacy’ and, in fact, commitment characterises Stage 6, about the years 20-24. If the young adult has successfully negotiated Stage 5, he is ready to risk fusing his identity with others. He is ready and able to commit himself to the tasks and roles, the affiliations and partnerships, he has chosen. Moreover, he now has the ability to be faithful to these commitments, with all the discomfort and compromises they may entail. “The experience and differentiation of ‘adult duty’, ‘competitive encounter’ and ‘sexual embrace’ may lead to that *ethical sense* which is the mark of the adult” (Welchman 2000:55).

Erikson calls this the stage of “true generality” because the intimacy shared here with the loved one is not the immature identity-searching kind. It offers mutual benefits to both partners in the form of “trust ... a willingness to regulate the cycles of work, procreation and recreation” and “to secure to the offspring ... satisfactory development” (Erikson 1963:266). This is also the description of the ego gain of *love*, which is associated with this stage.

The counterpart at this stage is ‘isolation’, the avoidance of intimate commitments for fear of risking the loss of identity and which can “lead to severe character problems” (Erikson 1963:266). When this isolation spills over into the social sphere, there develops what Erikson calls *distantiation* – “the readiness to isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own” (Erikson 1963:264).

1.4.7 Adult: Generativity versus Self-Obsession and Stagnation: Care

Stage 7 covers the years from 25-65. It is a time when the healthy adult has established a career and mature relationships with others. Such an individual, in his ability to lose himself in others, will gradually find his ego-interests expanding. In Erikson’s judgement, this stage is “a central one because it is the crucial link between the

generations” (Welchman 2000:55). By the concept of ‘generativity’, Erikson means “primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (1963:267). Nevertheless, Erikson says that the adult/child relationship is reciprocal: the adult needs to be needed as much as the child needs to be guided. While he allows that the concept of ‘generativity’ does include productivity and creativity, Erikson does not give it the value he gives to the nurturing of children. Out of ‘generativity’ comes the ego gain of *care*, with its concern for the welfare of others.

In contrast to ‘generativity’, Erikson proposes ‘stagnation’. It implies a lack of involvement with the growing generation, non-productivity, personal impoverishment and boredom. Such individuals become wholly self-centred and are not above treating themselves as their own only child.

1.4.8 Maturity: Ego Integrity versus Despair: Wisdom

For Erikson, ‘integrity’ is the “fruit” of successful negotiation through the preceding stages, including the present one. This final stage, beginning about age 65, is a time of intense reflection on the past. The well-functioning individual is able to come to terms with his successes and failures and to accept total responsibility for his life. This also involves acceptance of the significant people who played a role in it – whether constructive or not – “as something that had to be” (Erikson 1957: 98). Over and above this, ‘integrity’ is able to acknowledge the existence of other kinds of lives and other kinds of meaning without diminishing the dignity and value of one’s own choice. In short, the mature adult views his life as having been worth living. Out of ‘integrity’ comes the ego strength of *wisdom*. *Wisdom* is the ability to see one’s life in perspective, to identify unity and meaning in it and know that it was worth living. In its “final consolidation, death loses its sting” (Erikson 1963:268).

On the other hand, Erikson warns that

unsolved identity problems can reach into old age where they may become part of that despair which begrudges to the old person his own recognition of the worthwhileness of his life (1963:95).

The dysfunctional individual despairs in the face of approaching death, in the awareness that there is no second chance to remedy the failures of the past. Erikson claims that this

‘despair’ really masks the individual’s disgust with particular institutions and particular people, which in the final analysis, reflects a contempt with himself (cf. Erikson 1957:98).

1.5 The Integral Operation of the Eight Stages

There are a number of issues that are important to understand here regarding the eight-stage life cycle. Erikson believed that at each crisis point, the developing organism is supported by

a readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with a widening social radius and ... that society, in principle, is (equally) constituted to meet and invite this succession of potentialities for interaction, and attempts to safeguard and to encourage the proper rate and the proper sequence of their unfolding (Erikson 1973:270).

What I believe needs to be emphasised here, is the importance Erikson allots to environmental (social) support.

Then, too, resolution of each stage of development is not a once off achievement.

Erikson insists on an interrelationship and interaction between the various stages:

each item of the vital personality ... is systematically related to all the others ... (and) exists in some form before ‘its’ decisive and critical time normally arrives (1968:93).

In other words, Erikson believes that the thesis and antithesis of each and every stage is latent within the individual from the beginning of the life cycle. Bateman and Holmes circumscribe this idea somewhat by confining its operative periods to crises: the stages “are not superseded ... but remain active as phases or ‘developmental lines’ throughout life which may be activated at times of stress” (1995:51). In the understanding of Meyer *et al.* understanding it implies that “each developmental crisis must be worked through afresh during each stage in terms of the individual’s total development at that point” (1989:157). This interactive evolution from one stage to another has therefore any number of probabilities. For example, an unresolved crisis at one stage will make the resolution of the proceeding stages more complicated. Failure can also undermine the gain made in the preceding stage. By extension, this implies that negative behaviour in

later crises can reasonably be retrodicted² to earlier unresolved conflicts. On the positive side, Erikson has also allowed for “spontaneous recovery”, in that any unresolved crisis at an earlier stage can be satisfactorily resolved at a later.

I have included a chart below which Erikson drew up to emphasize how the interaction between Stages 1 to 8 could be visualized. The reader will notice that it is not a simple left to right configuration, rather a bottom-left to top-right. The spaces above or below are meant to highlight the fact that “each stage is prefigured in and affected by earlier stages and will continue to affect and be modified in later stages” (Welchman 2000:56).

Erikson's Chart of the Eight-Stage Life Cycle:

8								ego integrity Vs despair
7							generativity Vs stagnation	
6						intimacy Vs isolation		
5					identity Vs role confusion			
4				industry Vs inferiority				
3			initiative Vs guilt					
2		autonomy Vs shame, doubt						
1	Basic trust Vs mistrust							

² A specifically psychological term implying that something can be ‘related back to’; the antonym of ‘predicted’.

Erikson contended that the passage through these eight stages, though dynamic, is not without risk:

the strength acquired at any stage is tested by the necessity to transcend it in such a way that the individual can take chances in the next stage with what was most vulnerably precious in the previous one (1963:263).

And, he concluded in *Childhood and Society*,

that only a gradually accruing sense of identity based on the experience of social health and cultural solidarity at the end of each major childhood crisis, promises that periodical balance in human life which – in integration of the ego stages – makes for a sense of humanity. But wherever this sense is lost, wherever integrity yields to despair and disgust, wherever generativity yields to stagnation, intimacy to isolation, and identity to confusion, an array of associated infantile fears are apt to be come mobilized: for only an identity safely anchored in the ‘patrimony’ of a cultural identity can produce a workable psychosocial equilibrium (1963:412).

In simple terms, Erikson believed that an individual enjoying ego integrity will, “as he grows (make) the past part of all future, and every environment, as he once experienced it, part of the present environment” (1958:133).

1.6 Erikson’s Concept of Greatness

As I mentioned at the start, Erikson wrote prolifically on numerous leading historical figures and literary characters, William James, Freud, Jefferson, Hitler, St Augustine, Luther, Gandhi, Kierkegaard, Gorky, Shaw, Hamlet, to name a few. His purpose was twofold: to demonstrate his notion of the adolescent identity crisis and to investigate what it is that constitutes ‘greatness’. An important aspect of Erikson’s concept of greatness, is that it comprehends both the individual and the historical moment. In other words, it appears to involve individual action of one sort or the other within the social context of the time.

I shall attempt first to tease out the attributes Erikson identifies in the individual. This is not so easy a task because Erikson himself held that greatness essentially defied traditional psychological categories. Nevertheless, there are some recurring, if ambiguous themes on the subject in his work. For example, Erikson hypothesized that great men manifest a “precocious conscience” in childhood and have appeared old

already in their early years. It is not always easy to understand what he means by “precocious”. Roazen translates it as “powerful” (1976:75). A dictionary definition offers “prematurely developed” or “gifted” conscience. My own interpretation, in light of other instances where Erikson uses the word, would tend to view it as a premature sensitivity to what is wrong in the world, an ability to penetrate outward appearances and a burning, if naïve, desire that people should behave in an honest and honourable way. Then, too, what are we to make of “appeared old in their early years”? Does this relate to appearance, demeanour or wisdom? With this caution in mind, I can, however, assert that Erikson held that most great men he studied suffered in one way or the other from a severe adolescent identity crisis. Yet, Erikson argues, unlike other men, great individuals recognising their potential originality, are somehow able to manage the very complexes which constrict ordinary individuals. “The chosen young man”, Erikson posits

extends the problem of his identity to the borders of existence in the known universe (whereas) other human beings bend all their efforts to adopt and fulfil the departmentalised identities which they find prepared in their communities (1958:255).

Coupled to this “is an infantile ‘account to settle’, or what they themselves often refer to as a ‘curse’ to be lived with, or to be lived down” (Erikson 1964:202). Thus we find Luther the victim of paternal brutality, Gandhi suffering under the conviction that he failed his father in the final hour, Kierkegaard connecting his own doom with that of his father’s secret depravity. Seemingly these same sons also had fathers who

tied their sons to themselves in such a way that overt rebellion or hate was impossible. By the same token, they had also imposed on their sons a sense of being both needed and chosen by their fathers, and thus of carrying a superior destiny and duty (*ibid.*).

Moreover, this

early sense of being chosen settles in a conviction that in the conduct of their individual lives they carry the responsibility for a segment of mankind, if not for all existence, and they undergo their ‘great renunciation’ (Erikson 1964:203).

Erikson is, however, careful to point out that what separates these distinguishing features from that of a “crank”, is:

an unusual energy of body, a rare concentration of mind, and a total devotion of soul, which carries them through trials and errors and near catastrophes, and

above all, helps them to bide their time, until they find their public even as their public finds and drafts them (*ibid.*).

This public drafting constitutes, in effect, Erikson's "historical moment". Erikson is of the opinion that great innovators arise when society is most needful of a new paradigm. In fact, it is particularly in periods of alienation

that the leaders' deep conflicts and special gifts have found their (arena and they, in turn), have been found and chosen by contemporaries possessed of analogous conflicts and corresponding needs (1964:204).

In simple terms, Erikson proposes that when the individual identity crisis of the leader coincides with that of the identity crisis of the age, a great man can arise and "offer to a whole generation the solution of their own personal crisis" (1968:258). As such, great leaders, says Erikson

are certainly also the ones in whom a divine playfulness is undiminished in its capacity to transcend in new formulae some of the traumatic discrepancies of the times (1970b:751).

Martin Luther, for example, brought hope to a Middle Ages weighed down by a sombre melancholy mood, the everlasting call of *memento mori*, the spiritual decline of the papacy, to name but a few of the problems (cf. Erikson 1958:70-72). As Erikson says of him:

his solution roughly bridged a political and psychological vacuum which history had created in a significant portion of Western Christendom. Such coincidence, if further coinciding with the deployment of highly specific personal gifts, makes for historical 'greatness' (Erikson 1958:13).

I found it interesting that Zeligs, a Freudian analyst, expressed similar sentiments when she noted that every individual hero of ancient Israel "reflects in microcosm the psychic forces potent in the group but does so in his own individual fashion" (1988:xix).

As can be expected, in Erikson's estimation, great men also demonstrate great insight and creativity. While they frequently encounter difficulties in their intimate relationships, as did Gandhi with his sons, Erikson suggests they are acutely tuned to their societies' needs and know exactly how to present themselves. From this he formulates a further criterion of a great leader:

his intuitive grasp of the actualities of the led, that is, of their readiness to act resourcefully in certain directions, and his ability to introduce himself into that actuality as a new, vital factor (personality, image, style) (1964:208).

In the final analysis, Roazen argues for Erikson that:

‘the great adults ... are called great precisely because their sense of identity vastly surpasses the roles foisted upon them, their vision opens up new realities, and their gift for communication revitalizes actuality’ (1976:139).

This brief description of Erikson’s perception of greatness must suffice for the moment. I will address it again at the conclusion to this thesis.

Chapter 2

THE SOCIAL AND FAMILY ORDER

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the contextual background into which Samuel is born, his genealogy and how this breaks with the Biblical convention. The remaining three sections deal with the family into which Samuel is born, specifically the three persons who play a significant role in his infancy and childhood, Hannah, Elkanah and Eli the priest. In Erikson's theory such persons have a decisive impact on an individual's development and subsequent ability to make his way in the world. My analysis of Samuel's mother, Hannah, is quite harsh but is nevertheless supported by my reading of the text through the theory of Erikson. As I noted in Chapter 1, my reading is based on a non-theistic perspective, and ultimately, I am seeking to uncover the motivations behind Samuel's actions in line with Erikson's theory.

2.2 Contextual Background

My analysis of the Samuel narrative does not concern itself with the historical date of the text. I am concerned only with the contextual era in which the text situates Samuel. Erikson is emphatic about the importance of both the contextual era into which an individual is born and the social norms which impact on the development of his personal identity. He contends that

the historical (i.e. contextual) era in which (the individual) lives offers only a limited number of socially meaningful models for workable combinations of identification fragments. Their usefulness depends on the way in which they simultaneously meet the requirements of the organism's maturation stage, the ego's style of synthesis, and the demands of the culture (1968:53).

The Book of Judges, which precedes the Books of Samuel in the Hebrew canon, illustrates a recurring pattern of behaviour which is a direct result of the people's disobedience. "The children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (Judg 2:11) and go awhoring after other gods. This inevitably leads to disaster – mainly war and subjection by the neighbouring people – and Yahweh is obliged to deliver them: "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and saved

them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge” (Judg 2:18). However, towards the end of the Book of Judges the immoral behaviour of the people is impinging even on their dealings with one another, as in the case of the Levite and his concubine (Judg 19). An urgent new refrain is now taken up and repeated: “there was no king in Israel (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), and every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6; 21:25). The result is that “Judges ends in catastrophe, showing us a nation in decay ... anarchy is total” (Fokkelman 1993:1-2).

Samuel enters the picture at this junction in the Hebrew saga and during a period of relative peace with the neighbouring people. Zeligs contends that Samuel “is known as a transitional figure, the last of the judges and the first of the prophets” (1988:92). But he is more than that. His role also marks the transition from the period of Judges to the establishment of a monarchy in the story of the Hebrews. As Polzin posits, “the birth story signals the central role Samuel will play as kingmaker in Israel” (1989:18).

The convention that launches the story of Samuel would make us expect that an unusual child is to be born. It is the convention of the beloved but barren wife. We have come across it before: Abraham and Sarah (Gen 11:30) and Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29:31), two of the three great patriarchal and matriarchal couples of the Hebrew tradition. Samuel is the son of Elkanah and Hannah, a beloved but barren wife. Essentially, then we can expect that Samuel, presaged by this “barren-wife” convention, is destined for greatness. This “greatness” is therefore one of the factors that I mean to address in my analysis.

The family into which Samuel is born carries no particular mark. This is not unexpected. After the patriarchal dynasty, only Moses carries regal status, and that accidentally. Joshua was by default elected, and the judges “raised up by God”, predominantly charismatic¹. Then, like the patriarchs, with whom the convention aligns Samuel, we are presented with a genealogy, which compared with accounts of other individual Biblical genealogies is, however, unusually detailed in the number of forefathers listed². Elkanah

¹ For the concept of “charisma”, consult Weber in Gerth and Mills, 1958:245-266. Also note that De Vaux argues that “the only authority manifest in Israel at (the time of Judges) was charismatic”, 1965:93.

² Further exceptions to the general rule include the Biblical figures of Elihu in Job 32:1, Isaiah in Isa 1:1 and Jeremiah in Jer 1:1 each of whom are given an immediate forefather; Mordecai in Esther 2:5 which lists three forefathers, and Saul’s father, Kish, in 1 Sam 9, who, like Elkanah, is also allotted four forefathers.

is “the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph” (1 Sam 1:1). It is a genealogy peopled by unknown and obscure persons and, in fact, breaks the pattern found in Judges: these figures are thrown up, in the main, on the basis of their charisma³. Yet Samuel’s dedication to the Lord at Shiloh carries the implication, especially in light of the behaviour of Eli’s sons, that he is destined to become the successor of Eli, the priest. This idea is further enhanced by the prophecy of the man-of-God:

And I will raise me up a faithful priest (פֶּהֶן נְאֻמָּן) that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind and I will build him a sure house and he shall walk before mine anointed forever (1 Sam 2:35).

In fact, Polzin is emphatic on this point: “the individual prophesied in (1 Sam 2) verses 33 and 35 is Samuel himself” (1989:41). Fokkelman, too, on the basis of the structural and stylistic construction of verse 2:18⁴, argues that Samuel, in the service of Eli, was in training for the priesthood (cf. 1993:123). In short, therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect that Samuel is destined for priesthood and that his role as a child in the Temple of the Lord (היכל יהוה) prepares him for this function. (I will argue later that Samuel himself may have accepted this concept.) For this assumption to hold true, however, Samuel would have had to have had a priestly heritage, as indeed we find in the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 6:28 which is generally accepted as a later attempt at legitimisation (cf. Eslinger 1985:67; Driver 1913:3⁵). Realizing the problem of Samuel’s obscure birth – he comes from a family with no special status, specifically neither Levite nor Aaronite – Chronicles assigns him to the Levites. In the final analysis, however, the detailed genealogy presented in 1 Sam 1:1 makes no such claim to a Levite ancestor. According to Eslinger, Samuel’s genealogy is fore-fronted by its very unimportance. Furthermore, he argues,

it accomplishes anything but legitimisation. Samuel’s natural lineage grants him no claim to any important rank. If he has or attains any status at all it is not because of his family tree (1985:67).

³ Gitay, Y, 2002: private communication.

⁴ וּשְׂמוּאֵל מִשְׂרַת אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה נֶעַר חֲגוּר אֶפְוֹד בֶּד – “And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.”

⁵ As regards the mention in 1 Chronicles 6:11-13, see the discussion in Driver (1913:4-5), which concludes that “the supposition that Samuel was really of Ephraimite descent, and was only in later times reckoned as a Levite, is the simplest explanation of the divergence”.

2.3 *Hannah the Mother*

I want to begin, as does the narrative, with a description of the parents to whom Samuel was born. This is not to be a thorough psychological analysis of Elkanah and Hannah *per se*, but rather an assessment of their function as parents and consequently, the impact of their parenting styles on the development of the character of Samuel.

Samuel is born into what appears to be the equivalent of a well-to-do family within a tribal society⁶. Along with this, we are told that his father, Elkanah, had two wives: Hannah, who is childless, and Peninnah, who is the mother of many sons and daughters. We also know that Samuel's father was a pious man – together with his entire family, he travelled up to the Temple (היכל) in Shiloh to perform his sacrificial duties with righteous regularity: “And this man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh” (1 Sam 1:3). Nevertheless, this being the story of Samuel, the text does not focus on Elkanah's activities in Shiloh but rather on his wife Hannah's behaviour in light of her barrenness. Erikson is emphatic on the subject of the quality of mothering on the development of the child. Yet what we find on close reading is that there appears to be factors other than motherhood motivating Hannah. We know too, that Erikson is often at pains to point out the impact on the development of a child by a dominating mother. Her “all-pervasive presence and brutal decisiveness of judgement – although her means may be the sweetest – (can) precipitate the child into a fatal struggle for his own identity” (1958:61). I am going to suggest that Hannah was such a woman.

Now the notion of powerful women is not foreign to the Biblical text. We have examples enough – Sarah (Gen 11:29 to 23:2), Rebekah (Gen 25:20 to 27:46), Deborah (Judg 4:4 to 5:31), Bathsheba (1 King 1:11-31) and others. Nevertheless, Hannah appears to lack the heroic qualities often attributed to her Biblical sisters. So where Sarah (Gen 16:2), Rachel (Gen 30:3) and Leah (Gen 30:9) offered their handmaids as surrogate mothers of sons for their husbands, Hannah's failure to do so is thereby underlined. Postgate attests to the universality of the practice when he says that barrenness did not automatically dissolve marriage:

⁶ For more information on the tribal society of the Israelites refer to De Vaux (1965) pp 3-13.

law and custom permitted (a woman) to provide sons for the family by supplying a slave-girl to substitute for her and bear her children (and in such cases) any sons of this union were then treated in all respects as her own (1992:105).

Given the conventional pattern of the Biblical narrative, one might question why Hannah did not offer Elkanah a maidservant following the Biblical pattern. What I want to suggest, here, is that Hannah did not follow the matriarchal example because Hannah's demand for a child of her own was, in psychological terms, egotistical: she had to have full control, not surrogate control. And this description of Hannah's character is amply supported by my reading of the text, as we shall see.

For a start, close analysis reveals that Hannah's barrenness is first and foremost a vexation, not the least of which is the rivalry between the two wives. Her concern, centred as it is on a loss of face, is wholly egocentric. "She is a woman with a large amount of narcissism, whose exaggerated need for self-esteem has been wounded by her barrenness" (Zeligs 1988:97). The very first thing we know about her is that Hannah was angry, *not* that Hannah longed for a child. Hannah was angered (וּכְעִסְתָּהּ) (1 Sam 1:6) by Peninnah's provocation which highlighted her shortcomings as a wife in a society that valued women by the number of offspring, specifically male, they produced. "Sterility", de Vaux argues, "was considered a trial (Gen 16:2; 30:2; 1 Sam 1:5) or a chastisement from God (Gen 20:18), or a disgrace" (1965:41). Without children, I want to suggest that Hannah's status is without conviction, her right to dominate the family in question. And furthermore, that Hannah's anger encompassed Elkanah as she was unable to respond to his kindness neither in word nor deed. Elkanah's love for her is not only marked by his actions – "to Hannah he gave one worthy portion"⁷ (1 Sam 1:5) – but by his words – "am I not better to you than ten sons?" (1 Sam 1:8). Hannah is, however, wholly insensitive to her husband's affections. She simply weeps from anger and frustration, and adopts a defiant attitude in her refusal to eat. "Refusal to eat is a sign of hostility and protest against a parental figure ... (and amounts) to an angry rejection of ... her husband" (Zeligs 1988:95).

⁷ The meaning of וְיָפִיחַ remains obscure. Driver's extensive discussion – cf. 1913:7 – attests to the fact that there have been many, though unsuccessful attempts to decipher this word.

But Hannah, unlike her childless Biblical sisters, is a very determined woman. She goes into action. It is the action of a woman used to taking control. Fokkelman's analysis of Hannah's energy despite her tears depicted in 1 Sam 1:10c (וַיִּבְכֶּה תִּבְכָּה), is equally decisive here: "(Hannah) no longer revolves impotently round her tears, but gives direction to them. The impression of stagnation is gone" (1993:35). Alone, she goes to the Temple because she believes she can make a bargain with God. The text tells us that this woman, who goes to the Temple to pray for a child, is an embittered soul (מֵרַת נֶפֶשׁ) (1 Sam 1:10), not a sorrowful one. Driver supports this interpretation. "The expression", he says, "implies a state of mental embitterment, i.e. disappointment, dissatisfaction, discontent" (1913:12). Hannah's prayer to the Lord does indeed ask him to see her "sorrow". But Hannah is a woman of learning, she knows the conventions. Whenever Israel is beset by enemies and appeals to God, he inevitably responds to her appeal (cf. Judg 3:15, 4:3, 6:8). That Hannah believes she is under the same duress will become clear later in her song of praise (see my discussion below). Hannah is here, I suggest, merely using all the methods and art at her disposal to achieve what she wants from God. Fokkelman makes an interesting observation regarding Hannah's vow which is in line with my analysis. In her affliction, he points out, Hannah unexpectedly borrows the words of Leah (רֵאָה תֵרָאָה) on the birth of Reuben – Leah being, of course, the equivalent of Peninnah here. Fokkelman suggests that this enables her to place the child for whom she prays in the position as the firstborn of Elkanah, as Reuben was to Jacob. "This is a trick", Fokkelman argues, "worthy of Jacob himself: changing places and turning the natural order of 'number one ... upside down'" (1993:36). Furthermore, he believes that "the narrator has contributed to this by failing to mention the names of Peninnah's children" (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless, would a woman who really longed for a child make the unholy bargain she makes? In Hannah's case it simply makes no emotional sense: a barren woman prays for a child only to vow it away in the same instant? For her, the relief from the provocation of Peninnah and the improvement of her status in society is, I want to suggest, the overriding motive. To achieve this, the very child for whom she prays will be sacrificed. This is a very unusual situation in terms of the Biblical narrative, this giving away of a child by his parents. Moses was by default taken up by the Egyptian princess (Exod 2:5), and the banishment of Ismail (Gen 21:10) only confirms the power that a determined

woman can wield over her husband. Even by certain Biblical scholars, Hannah's behaviour is not wholly countenanced. Polzin accuses her of behaving like Jephthah, "who also vowed a vow to ensure the success of his efforts" (1989:23). And he goes further, saying that unlike Jephthah, who inadvertently sacrificed his daughter to God, Hannah sacrificed her son in the full knowledge of her action (cf. 1989:23).

Moreover, Hannah does not ask for a child – any child – she specifically asks for a man child (male seed - זרע אנשים)⁸. This, I want to argue, is not the request of a woman longing for simple motherhood. It is the request of someone who wants that motherhood to enhance her status. It suggests that her appeal is centred on her frustration, in other words, on herself, not on the child she hopes to bear. A child, who in any event is not hers to give away. In this tribal society, the child is the sole property of his father. If such a child is to be the successor of his father, what would be the point of giving him away? Not allowing him to grow up among the people and in the environment he will logically inherit is unreasonable. Yet Hannah makes her bargain with the Lord without recourse to negotiation with Elkanah, knowing that any vow she makes as a married woman is incumbent on her husband's endorsement (cf. Num 30:13). Yet it appears, that negotiation for a woman of Hannah's kind is not even a consideration. She will carry the day. It is pointless to argue that Peninnah's sons were a sufficiency, or that more progeny would have been meaningless to Elkanah. What we do know is that in Biblical tribal society, sons were a matter of pride: the more sons a man produced, the more assured he was of becoming the ancestor of whole clans⁹. But Hannah ignores all this. It appears that it is only of herself that she thinks.

Hannah's promise that Samuel will be a Nazarite is, I suggest, nothing if not manipulation on her part, an added insurance that the bargain will be honoured by her covenantal partner. Here again, Polzin accuses her of believing that God can "be won over with arguments of reciprocity" (1989:24). We know that the status of Nazarite is above that of ordinary men, as Samson attests: "if I be shaven ... I shall become weak, and be like other man (פכל-האדם)" (Judg 16:17). Note, however, that Hannah's

⁸ "Within the family, respect for a wife increased on the birth of her first child, especially if the child were a boy", De Vaux 1965:39.

⁹ The ideal number is represented by Job's sons – seven (Job 1:2). Gitay, Y, 2003: private communication.

promise is circumscribed and confined to Samuel only. It does not discomfort her in any way! Hannah vows that no razor shall come near Samuel's head (1 Sam 1:11). She does not vow, as Samson's mother was enjoined to do by the angel of the Lord (Judg 13:4), that she herself will refrain from strong drink while carrying the child. The narrator himself makes an implied criticism on Hannah's offer of her son as Nazarite. On the one hand, it is never again alluded to in the text, and on the other, he highlights the omission relating to herself in the first words addressed to her by Eli: "How long wilt thou be drunken?" (1 Sam 1:14). Certain it is, however, that the status of Nazarite will elevate the sanctity of the son granted her, and by extension her own.

Eli was in the process of going blind when he noticed Hannah mouthing rather than voicing her vow. This suggests that Hannah had positioned herself near enough to the priest to be noticed. I believe that this was more than accidental and offers us another example of her inflated ego. When Eli reprimands Hannah for speaking silently, her reply focuses not her longing for a child but on her own frustration. "I am a woman of hard spirit (קשת-רוח)" she says (1 Sam 1:15). Driver renders this word as 'obstinate', 'unyielding' (1913:14) In other words, it appears that what she is really saying is that I am a woman driven by determination – not by motherhood. It is "from the abundance of my concern, and my provocation (וכעסי), I have spoken until now" (1 Sam 1:16). Nevertheless, Hannah does not disclose the nature of her petition which must surely have elicited sympathy. I want to suggest this may have been because Hannah understood that barrenness was not so uncommon a problem among women who were found in the Temple sans their menfolk. Certainly, a woman such as Hannah would not wish to be numbered among the "common" supplicants. Neither did she want sympathy. Hannah wanted action. Only later would she admit the nature of her supplication to Eli and this in an attitude of triumph. So sure is Hannah of success, that once her bargain has been sanctioned by Eli, she returns to her household without her – we must assume customary – vexed countenance (ותאכל ופניה לא-היו-לה עוד) (1 Sam 1:18).

Based on the arguments on breast-feeding practices in ancient Israel advanced by Gruber (cf. 1992:69-107), I am going to assume that Hannah weaned Samuel at about age three¹⁰. The text seems to bear this out. When the parents hand over the child to Eli, we

¹⁰ De Vaux also agrees with this late date of weaning, 1965:43.

are told that he “was indeed young” (1 Sam 1:24). Elkanah, however, appears to assume Samuel will be taken up to the Temple (היכל) on the family’s first pilgrimage following his birth. But here again Hannah takes control and assumes the initiative terminating all discussion on the subject. She informs Elkanah that she will not accompany him “until the child is weaned” (עד יגמל הנער) (1 Sam 1:22). Through this syntactical construction, Hannah can be said to expose both herself and her motivations. Such third person language suggests an emotional distance on the part of the mother from her child. She, who had taken such pains in the naming of her son (see below), never addresses him by his name¹¹. And this is followed immediately by “then *I* will bring him”, not “*we* will bring him” – the emphasis is once more on herself as the controlling agent in all these transactions. Elkanah’s rights and Elkanah’s feelings, as we saw before, appear to play no role in Hannah’s calculations. In the following verse, where we can detect some emotion – “So she remained, the woman, and nursed her son” (1 Sam 1:23) – it is ironical that the emotive “her son” (בנה) is expressed in the words of the omniscient narrator and not in those of the mother.

But if this puts Hannah’s affection for the child in question, why does she keep Samuel with her for close on three years? She had vowed that the child would be given to the Lord “all the days of his life” (1 Sam 1:11). Why did she not employ a wet-nurse, as the Egyptian princess had done for Moses, albeit inadvertently his mother (Exod 2:7-8), or go up herself to Shiloh once the child was born and stay there until his weaning? I want to suggest that Hannah’s decision is that of a woman determined to consolidate her position at home. Peninnah had been the source of her vexation for too many years to forfeit this opportunity to do so. Moreover, in light of the above, I want to suggest that this kind of woman needs to demonstrate not only that she can mother a child, but that she could be a better mother than anyone else. Fokkelman concurs. Discussing the time lag between the birth and dedication of Samuel, he concludes that, “this brings us to the slightly subversive option that the Temple gets to see the mother only when it suits her” (1993:61). In effect, Hannah appears to have had no compunction whatsoever in putting her (and her husband’s) vow on hold where her own interests were at stake. *Her* decisions would prevail. The Lord would just have to wait.

¹¹ Gitay, 2003: private communication.

I should mention here that Hannah's naming her son Samuel (שמואל) is meaningful. It is at once arrogant and at the same time self-justifying. Eslinger interprets the name as meaning "his name is God" or "the name of God" (1985:83), hence I want to suggest, Hannah's arrogance. But it makes sense if in giving Samuel such an elevated name, she is trying to justify her later action of abandoning her son to the Temple. Where but in a Temple would someone with a name like this belong? Eslinger appears to be uncomfortable with this action of Hannah's and tries to justify it, concluding that "Elkanah's genealogy, nondescript in the first place, fades into the background in the presence of Samuel's true genealogy" (1985:83), i.e. God!

In summary, Hannah's parental style is acknowledged by Erikson when he says of Luther's father that

the parent ... has selected this one child, because of an inner affinity paired with an insurmountable outer distance, as the particular child who must *justify the parent* (1958:61).

I will return to this in more detail later when I deal with Samuel. Suffice to say here that Hannah must have instilled in Samuel a sense of purpose and uniqueness given that he was to be dedicated to the service of the Lord.

In Shiloh, we once again find Hannah masterminding the situation. In fact, Fokkelman makes a great issue of the "ellipsis" of Elkanah and the predominance of Hannah through fifteen verses – 1 Sam 1:24 to 1 Sam 2:10 (cf. 1993:59-60): "The husband is virtually absent" (1993:3). There is no mention of him from the time the family journey up to Shiloh until their departure. Fokkelman suggests that the "they" who slaughter (וישחטו) the bullock (1 Sam 1:25) could as well be the Temple servants (cf. 1993:60). This is in line with my analysis of a dominant, interfering Hannah directing all the proceedings and confining her husband, who should have been involved here, to the sidelines. Then, too, Hannah's description of herself to Eli illustrates her notion of her own self-importance. It shows no awareness of the time factor which had evolved – 3 years 9 months at the least – and the numerous other persons who must have "stood with you in this (place) to pray to God" (1 Sam 1:26) since her own appeal. Hannah takes it for granted *she* could not have been forgotten. Furthermore, Hannah's initial I will "give him to God" (ונתתיו ליהוה) (1 Sam 1:11), now becomes I will "lend him to God"

(השאלתיהו ליהוה) (1 Sam 1:28). She moves from the absolute “give” to the tentative “lend”: a subtle shift from the child given her by God, to her making a loan to God. She is now the operative force in this contract. She is the one making a generous gesture to God¹².

As I mentioned earlier, Hannah’s attitude at this moment is positively triumphant. Zeligs calls it “the triumphant denouement to the (first) little scene in the Temple” (1988:96). This is surely no traumatic break between mother and son. Not for the mother anyway. Zeligs, too, finds Hannah’s love for her son suspect when she notes that “there is not a single word in the text to indicate feelings of sorrow or loss as the woman leaves her child in the Temple with Eli” (1988:97). What we have here is a woman apparently intent on celebrating her achievement regardless of the feelings her young son, and possibly his father, might be experiencing at this moment. And how does she celebrate, this woman who supposedly did not have the confidence to voice her original petition aloud? By taking centre stage and enunciating one of the celebrated songs in the Biblical text (see below). It is hubris of the first water, for in so doing Hannah is emulating the action of one of the most glorious heroines of the Biblical saga – the prophetess and judge, Deborah. Polzin’s insights, though more literary than psychological, nevertheless bear out this reading. In highlighting the resonance between Hannah’s song and the hymn of praise sung by David (2 Sam 22), he sums up the emotional elements in the latter’s “triumphant tone”:

an impassioned, breathless staccato about the Lord as the speaker’s saviour ...
 deep satisfaction over the defeat of one’s enemies; the speaker’s belief that (she)
 ... merited such deliverance ... and immense exaltation both of God and self
 (1989:32).

In the analysis which follows, I shall show that this is indeed the tone that Hannah adopts. While it may be appropriate for an heroic figure like David, I suggest it shows an inflated self-importance in a woman whose only claim to fame is that she bore a child after many years of barrenness.

¹² I might just point out here, that while Eli accepts Hannah’s presentation of Samuel as a “loan” to God, he does not support her conceit nor the predominant position she assumes for herself. In 1 Sam 2:20, when blessing both parents he specifically addresses himself to Elkanah, not Hannah – “The Lord give *thee* seed of this woman ...”.

The narrator presents Hannah's song more as a prayer of praise than a prayer of thanks¹³. It certainly reveals her true motives. Among her exultations is that God has "opened wide my mouth against my enemy" (1 Sam 2:1). If this were not idiomatic, it would be downright comical coming from a woman who, I have argued, is intent on wielding the control in her family. Despite the stylistic construction of this line, we do not have to guess who it is Hannah had in mind. She makes it perfectly clear herself: "and she who hath many children will languish" (1 Sam 2:5). Does this statement really make any sense in this context? Not really. Not unless you have a specific purpose, or a specific person in mind. I want to argue that neither the idea nor the malicious intention behind the line is suitable material for a song of praise to God. It does, however, support my earlier arguments on the real object of Hannah's frustrations – Peninnah. But there are other more telling solecisms through which Hannah reveals herself. Twice in this universal prayer of praise, Hannah slips into a direct address to God – "*thy* salvation (בישועתך)" and "none beside *thee*" (אין בלתיך) (1 Sam 2:1-2) – implying she enjoys a private relationship with the Lord God. It is the overweening assumption of a woman utterly confident of her own superiority. At this moment of Hannah's self-congratulatory triumph, there is, however, an implied criticism of her behaviour by the narrator. Her "yea, the barren hath borne seven" (1 Sam 2:5), a conventional sign of divine benediction, is undermined by Hannah becoming, at last, the mother of only six offspring (1 Sam 2:21), that is, one short of the number which denoted God's special favour¹⁴.

I want to argue that Eli is sensitive to Hannah's arrogance. There is a textual lacuna from the time she hands over the child to the end of her song. There is a noticeable lack of response from Eli: no word or action of his is alluded to, yet he must have been the presiding figure in this dedication of Samuel to the Temple. Fokkelman, makes a like observation: "The syntax renders him a figure on the sidelines of Hannah's initiative" (1993:34). I want to suggest that this is not only because of Hannah overwhelming the proceedings, but also points to Eli's displeasure at her behaviour which relegates Elkanah, her husband, to an inconsequential secondary status.

¹³ The Prayer as it is, is a subject of scholarly discussion. The main arguments revolve around whether it is an insertion or not. I, however, am going to follow Fokkelman who, after an exhaustive syntactical analysis, concludes that he is "forced to state" that the song "is a well-integrated poem which has been created for this place by the writer of the Books of Samuel", 1993:108.

¹⁴ Gitay, 2001: private communication.

Finally, I want to address the issue of the “little coat” (וּמַעִיל קָטָן) which “his mother” (אִמּוֹ) yearly brought up to Shiloh for Samuel (1 Sam 2:19). These words do indeed carry emotional weight. But again, as argued of 1 Sam 1:23 above, these are not Hannah’s words – or Hannah’s feelings – they are the words of the omniscient narrator. And our attention is drawn to the fact that Hannah’s emotion towards her son, the feelings she should have as a mother, are conveyed in the words of the narrator. On the basis of this forefronting of the third person narrator, I want to suggest that this stylistic device is a means by which the narrator establishes a distance between Hannah’s emotions and the deed itself. But Hannah, as I have shown, is the kind of mother for whom the importance of being seen to do the right thing far outweighs the feelings normally attached to such gestures. (We shall see later, how this garment impacts on her son’s perspective.) At best, 1 Sam 2:19 can be interpreted as a duty to still a guilty conscience which had made an unholy bargain to save face.

2.4 *Elkanah the Father*

Samuel fares no better with his father’s affection than he does with his mother’s. With Elkanah as father, Samuel parts company with the patriarchal convention. Elkanah does not evince the intense love for his son, the first fruit of a beloved and long barren wife, that the Biblical fathers of Isaac and Joseph manifested for their sons in similar circumstances¹⁵. In fact, despite the similar epiphany, he appears to adopt a contrary approach. I want to propose that Samuel was to Elkanah what Ismail was to Abraham: Samuel, like Ismail, was literally cast out of the family circle. And this becomes even more damning when we contrast Elkanah’s apparent lack of concern in giving away his young son with the indulgence Eli extends to his wicked sons.

So what kind of a father did Elkanah make for Samuel? What kind of role model did he offer?

That Elkanah was a pious man we know from his habits – he made regular pilgrimages to the Temple – and his words – “may the Lord establish his word” (1 Sam 1:23). That he

¹⁵ Gitay, 2001: private communication.

is honourable can also be attested: he neither puts away his barren wife nor does he gainsay Hannah's vow. This last quality is further enhanced by Elkanah's love for Hannah. (I earlier noted that it was a love marked by both word and deed (1 Sam 1:5 and 1:8)). Over and above this, Polzin argues, that in contrast to Hannah's vow with "its *du ut des* perspective", Elkanah is the more magnanimous character (cf. 1989:135)¹⁶.

Nevertheless, in terms of Samuel, these few positive qualities appear to manifest as their opposites. Elkanah's qualities impact on his son negatively because Elkanah is also a weak man. Fokkelman refers to him as "respectable but dull" (1993:125). His role is wholly eclipsed by the overweening character of his wife. It is my contention that the narrator supports the idea of Elkanah as ineffectual by giving him so little attention in the narrative, subverting his role to the more dominating one of his wife. In fact, Elkanah is apparently so blindly submissive to Hannah that he has to fall back on his piety (see 1 Sam 1:23 above) to deal with her commands so as not himself to lose face. We must assume therefore that his piety is greater than his parenthood, that Hannah's vow is more sacred to him than his own son. He is ready to give away his son without even being consulted. His notion of honour appears not to extend beyond his wife and what Polzin calls his "God-centred perspective" (1989:30). But this last is to put a good light on the matter. The reality, I want to suggest, is that Elkanah is so totally submissive to his wife, even his face-saving piety is subordinated to her. He knows that Hannah will have her way come what may. It is a submission noted even by Eli, if we follow Polzin. In the blessing extended by Eli to Elkanah – "the Lord give thee seed of this woman" (1 Sam 2:20) – Polzin suggests that this is a gentle castigation of the husband for his submission to his wife (1989:30).

In the one negotiation that we know of between husband and wife, wherein Elkanah expresses his love for Hannah – "am I not better to you than ten sons?" (1 Sam 1:8) – Polzin discovers "an aggrieved tone" and "a bitterness", in effect, "a mild reproach" indicating "feelings of being slighted, undervalued or under-appreciated, the first step perhaps toward feeling rejected" (1989:22). In short, in his relations with Hannah, Elkanah appears to be a defeated man. A man wholly unable to understand the nature

¹⁶ Cf. Fokkelman, who refers to the "you give ... I give" as "the core of the (vow's) centre of gravity" (1993:37).

and motivations of his wife, hence his fatalistic agreement, “Do what seemeth thee good” (1 Sam 1:23), and the mechanical parroting of her decision, “tarry until you thou have weaned him” (*ibid.*). Under the circumstances it is perhaps inevitable that the slighted husband made no objection to giving away the son who has been the cause of his wife’s indifference to him. In defence of his action, Fokkelman argues that Elkanah, unlike Hannah, cannot feel the pain of separation as he has other children by Peninnah (1993:30). This, however, cannot excuse Elkanah from his parental responsibility to Samuel. What Elkanah may not suffer, the child Samuel certainly will.

I had earlier stated that Samuel appears to come from a well-to-do family. My statement was predicated on the following considerations. In contrast to his personal life, Elkanah, as “breadwinner” of the family, was evidently very successful. In the first place we know that Elkanah was able to travel up on a regular basis from Ramah to Shiloh with his entire family. This must have involved some financial implications. In the second, at the time Samuel was entrusted to Eli’s care, Elkanah’s gift to the Temple was generous indeed – “three bullocks, (the anointing of Aaron as high priest in Ex 29:1 and 11 only required one!) and one *ephah* of meal, and a bottle of wine” (1 Sam 24). Cattle, Postgate states were valuable and were not often sacrificed, except in state ceremonies ... Their primary importance was as a source of traction (ploughing) ... there was no point in keeping large herds of cattle, since feeding them would be difficult and their by-products are not so easily processed domestically as wool. Lists of household property often include a flock of sheep, but rarely more than a few cows (1992:163-164).

This offering of three bullocks on the part of Elkanah suggests that he was indeed a man of wealth.

The description of Elkanah as I have presented him, however, need not imply that he was wholly neglectful of, or indifferent to Samuel during the child’s early years with his family. We must assume there were moments of parental joy and parental regret. It will be seen later that Samuel must have imbibed some of his father’s submissive nature. But he would also experience the same feelings of rejection, albeit with a vengeance.

2.5 *Shiloh and Eli the Priest*

A shrine such as Shiloh would naturally attract hordes of people. That it probably was a heavily peopled place we can assume from the Nob episode (1 Sam 21-22), where Doeg is directed by Saul to kill all the priests of Nob after Ahimelech inadvertently assisted in David's escape. We are told that they numbered, the priests of Nob, "fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod" (1 Sam 22:18). And this was a shrine which did not contain the Ark of God! We can reasonably assume therefore that Shiloh, a centre of cultic activity visited by numerous pilgrims, must naturally have had a substantial body of personnel serving there, included in which were servants of the priests (1 Sam 2:13-16) as well as the "women that did service at the door of the tent of meeting" (1 Sam 2:22, also Exod 38:8¹⁷). We can assume, too, that all these attendants had in tow their own family members¹⁸. In short, Samuel was dedicated to a very populous world over which Eli presided. And it is within this populous world that the child Samuel grew to manhood with Eli as a father model.

As the head of such a multitude of Temple followers, it is indeed ironical that Samuel's surrogate father, Eli, mirrors the weakness of his biological father. In this sense it will be impossible to distinguish between the separate effects of Elkanah or Eli on the boy's development.

The overriding attributes of Eli that we can immediately assess are his passivity and gentle nature, this in a man who is both priest of Shiloh and a judge of Israel. McCarter allows him to be "well-intentioned, if clumsy and ineffectual" (1980:84). However, we have to remember that Eli is an old man and that, as Samuel grows up, becomes also a blind one: "Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were set, that he could not see" (1 Sam 4:15). Both these conditions would naturally have taken their toll on his character. Old age generally has the effect of mellowing people, and if Eli was ever dynamic, it was not the impression which Samuel would have experienced of the priest.

As I mentioned earlier, Eli was in the process of going blind when he noticed Hannah mouthing her vow. This tells us that he was an observant man, a man who marked the

¹⁷ Driver suggests that this description "expresses the performance of menial duties by the women", 1913:33.

¹⁸ For further elaboration, see Postgate, 1992:126-135.

people around him closely. Nevertheless, I detect a weariness and disappointment in human nature in Eli's accusation against Hannah's assumed inebriation. But it was not an impulsive accusation, his observation was motivated: "only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken" (1 Sam 1:13). The same attributes of weariness and disappointment are manifest in his dealing with his sons' wicked behaviour, this behaviour no doubt contributing somewhat to his disillusion. All the same, Eli's mechanical blessing of Hannah comes somewhat as an anticlimax. Of course, it is not impossible that Eli's long experience could have inured him to such appeals. But such an explanation, I believe, is untenable in light of the circumstances. The reader/audience would expect a more dynamic response from him, some prescience at least, of the events to follow in the Samuel saga. Moreover, the priest who is to be the surrogate father of this child does not even bother to query the nature of the petition before granting Hannah his blessing. Out of this, I believe we can assume two things: one, we cannot expect Eli to offer Samuel more attention than what was ordinarily due to a subordinate, and two, this detachment was part of his parental style and may account to some extent for his sons' misbehaviour and his inability to curb it.

In the dedication of Samuel to the Temple, again as I mentioned earlier, we hear nothing directly of Eli the priest presiding over the ceremony. Added to this, is the fact that Eli does not query the dedication itself, does not argue against the child being abandoned into what is essentially his care by a family clearly not in distressed circumstances. This appears to indicate that such an occurrence was perhaps not so unusual. It suggests that Samuel might not have been the only child given over to the care of the Temple to serve the Lord and somewhat undermines the idea of him enjoying an exclusive position.

The major indictment against Eli in his role as priest and judge is that he was unable to take decisive corrective action on the issue of his sons' iniquitous behaviour. His tone when addressing his offspring, "Why do you such things" (1 Sam 2:23), is aggrieved and bitter and mirrors that of Elkanah when he addressed Hannah with his series of "Whys?" (1 Sam 1:8). Eli's indulgence of Hophni and Phinehas, however, amounts to a neglect of his position and his duty to the people. Thus, like King David later, whom Nathan castigated (2 Sam 12:7-12), this neglect is severe enough to warrant a visit from a man-of-God who predicts the downfall of his house. Again, Eli is characteristically mum throughout the visitation. He accepts the judgment passively. Like Elkanah, however, he

was an honourable man. He does not try to deny his responsibility despite the severity of the accusation: “and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” (1 Sam 2:29).

Nevertheless, Eli’s unquestioning acceptance of the “Lord’s word”, no doubt intensifies the guilt he experiences in his inability to successfully control his sons. McCarter argues that “there is no wickedness in this pitiable old man, but neither is there the strength to combat wickedness” (1980:100). In Erikson’s calculation, it is an expression of an “old identity failure”, an “unsolved ... pervading guilt” (1964:88), or in other words, Eli’s recognition of his failure as a father. I want to argue that this visitation by the man-of-God consequently leaves Eli in a state of heightened expectation – a not unnatural condition of the superstitious/religious mind of the time – that something portentous was in the air, and which thereby prompts him to believe that Samuel’s “calling”, when it comes, is the word of God. Certainly, he does not suspect Samuel of any delusion as to the voices. I will discuss the import of the prediction in detail later when analysing Samuel. For the moment, I need only highlight the fatalistic way in which Eli accepts his damnation from the boy, ironically with the very same words used by the defeated Elkanah: “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good” (1 Sam 3:18). Or as Gnuse will have it, “with his last shreds of dignity the old man accepts his fate as just” (1984:1).

In arguing for Eli’s emotional detachment in his relations with those near to him, I still have to address the question of his seemingly paternal attitude to Samuel which is manifest in his use of the term “my son” (בְּנִי) (1 Sam 3:16). My contention here is twofold. In the first place, De Vaux tells us that one of the duties of a priest was to teach, in which role he was addressed by his pupils as “father”, and that the priest in turn addressed his charges as “my son” (cf. 1965:49). In the second, it is very likely that Eli would have retained Samuel under his wing to keep him from contamination by his own sons – perhaps a desperate final attempt to succeed in or make right the nurturing of a good son. His sons’ servants, we know, were as wicked as themselves (1 Sam 2:13-16). It is highly likely that such servants were also once youths in the Temple service; after all Eli is very old so we can assume his sons were old enough to have nurtured these very same servants themselves. Thus, as Eli was to be surrogate father to Samuel, so Samuel was to be surrogate son to Eli. All this might help to explain the linen ephod – a

specifically priestly garment – which Samuel is privileged to wear: Eli may have extended to him a special indulgence to distinguish him from the common servants.

On the subject of the ephod, a short digression is in place here. There is the assumption, suggested by the unnamed man-of-God, that “to wear an ephod” (1 Sam 2:28) implies a priestly role. Yet we are told that the child Samuel was “girded with a linen ephod” (אֶפְרוֹד לְבָד) (1 Sam 2:18). This difficulty, however, can be easily resolved. The distinction between the dress of Temple personnel is not so crucial as it was later when the Temple was greatly enlarged under Solomon. (Lev 8:7 is probably a later text which had then to deal with a more complex Temple organization.) I base this argument on the fact that in 2 Sam 6:14, David “danced before the Lord ... girded with a linen ephod”. 1 Chronicles 15:27 also has David similarly apparelled. The standards of priestly dress, then, could not have been as rigid at this time as they were to become later. This argument can be augmented by the royal theme of kingship which Polzin identifies underlying the Deuteronomists’s history of Samuel (1989:45). In the Hebrew Scriptures, Samuel and David are the only non-priests thus arrayed. Consequent on this, Polzin contends that the linen ephod worn by both these two figures has a thematic and narrative dimension mostly overlooked by scholars who have failed “to enquire why the future judge of 1 Sam 2 and the present king of 2 Sam 6 are joined in the narrative by this priestly vestment” (1989:234, note 30).

From a literary perspective, both Eslinger and McCarter argue that the ephod is essentially there to create a contrast between Samuel and Eli’s sons. “When the Elides are misbehaving as priests, Samuel behaves as one both in appearance and conduct” (Eslinger 1985:120). According to McCarter:

By a deliberate selection of terminology Samuel is implicitly characterized as a priest, ministering to Yahweh and clad in sacerdotal garments ... The impact of such a characterization in such a context is unavoidable: the good and the wicked, the chosen and the rejected are set before us in an almost simplistic juxtaposition. We are prepared for the fall of the house of Eli and, with equal certainty, for a corresponding rise in the fortunes of Samuel (1980:85).

As the mention of the ephod follows hard on the description of Eli’s wicked sons and the behaviour of their equally unscrupulous servants, I tend to agree with these scholars that its main function is one of contrast. But there is yet another option. The ephod is only

mentioned once in the whole narrative: “And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with a linen ephod” (1 Sam 2:18). It is never again alluded to in relation to Samuel. Furthermore, Samuel is the only “child” said to wear an ephod. I believe that this may not be accidental. It is very likely that the children of priests wore ephods. I want to suggest therefore, as I did earlier, that this child, given into the care of Eli, and by extension his family, may, very simply, have been clothed as were all the children in the family.

This discussion on the ephod will become clearer later in Chapter 3 where I will argue that the wearing of this garment did, in fact, have an impact on Samuel’s understanding and consequently motivate, to some extent, his behaviour and expectations.

As to Eli and Samuel’s relations, I maintain that we can assume that Samuel, though he may not have received the equivalent of “maternal warmth”, was certainly not subject to any overtly unkind treatment on the part of this elderly caregiver. Nevertheless, in terms of male role models, Samuel is a product of two ineffectual men, and some of it must have affected the boy.

Chapter 3

THE “MAN CHILD” SAMUEL

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focuses on Samuel’s infancy and his growth into middle age. This may appear a rather broad sweep for one chapter, especially as the text itself presents only a limited number of events in Samuel’s childhood and youth, and a single incident in his middle age. My aim here is to try to reconstruct what might have occurred in those periods on which the text is silent. Drawing on the methodology of Erikson’s ego-psychology, it is possible to identify patterns of behaviour from those incidents which are presented and, hence, to reconstruct a fairly accurate account of the influences in childhood which impacted on the man. Thus, while I attempt to follow the growth and development of the child through to adulthood, that is, to reconstruct much of what we do not have in textual evidence, my preliminary investigations were actually undertaken in exactly the opposite direction, from adulthood to childhood. However, I must point out that the sequential approach I employ – from childhood to adulthood – is not absolute.

The chapter begins by introducing Samuel at the moment of his first crisis. The next section will situate him in his infancy – Erikson’s Stages 1 and 2. Before proceeding to Stage 3, I will explore the notion of “separation anxiety”, a childhood trauma more clearly formulated by John Bowlby than by Erikson. Thereafter follows a discussion of Stages 3 to 5. The following section continues the discussion of Stage 5 with a brief comment on the concept of the “prophetic call”. Section seven of this chapter carries the discussion beyond the death of Eli and suggests what was likely to have occurred during Samuel’s long absence. In section eight, and we are now in Erikson’s Stage 7, I consider Samuel’s career as prophet. Finally, Section nine, opens with Samuel’s reappearance in the saga after a long silence and discusses his performance as a “military leader” and his relationship to the priesthood.

3.2 Annunciation

Up to this point we have only heard *about* Samuel, not *from* Samuel: he himself has been silent. Therefore, his first active participation in his own story comes as a surprise. It is nothing short of psychotic: God speaks to him (1 Sam 3:4). From a Biblical story

perspective this is one of the signs of his “greatness”. From a psychological perspective, however, something has surely gone wrong (as I will show below).

Actually, it is an essential part of the Biblical story that Samuel does hear the word of God. Through this revelation, Samuel comes to be known to “all Israel” as “a prophet of the Lord” (1 Sam 3:20). Through this same source of revelation, he will later receive divine sanction to establish the monarchy in Israel. But this forms the basis of legend and theology. We are dealing here with the psychological facts of the case. Samuel’s revelation contains all the elements of a religious psychotic manifestation listed by Erikson (1958:36).

There is a “*degree of unconsciousness*”: Samuel does not recognize the source of the voice as emanating from his own consciousness. A psychological evaluation, however, would recognize it as a classic feature of psychosis, specifically by its religious content.

“*An automatic verbal utterance*”: *Here I am* (הִנְנִי) (1 Sam 3:4), a cry which clearly echoes Moses’ response to God’s call at Horeb (Ex 3:4) and, moreover, is repeated thrice.

“*A command to change the overall direction of effort and aspiration*”: there is in it a demand for recognition, the need to be seen for what one really is.

“*A spiritual revelation*”: it is acknowledged by Eli and then Samuel as a numinous manifestation – “Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child” (1 Sam 3:8).

“*A flash of enlightenment, decisive and pervasive as a rebirth*”: Samuel, as I shall show, identifies himself with the “faithful priest” (כֹּהֵן נֶאֱמָן) foretold by the man-of-God (1 Sam 2:35).

According to Erikson, Samuel is in the throes of an “identity crisis”, the symptoms of which often present as psychotic. The young Samuel was unable to form a coherent and meaningful identity, “to integrate all his earlier identifications, his drives, wishes and expectations, abilities and skills, with the opportunities his society offered him” (Meyer *et al.* 1989:160). In Erikson’s theory, this stems from a dysfunction in the very first relationships in earliest childhood which generally result in a readiness to mistrust and to lose hope in rather fundamental ways throughout life (cf. Roazen 1976:112). What I

want to investigate is, why? What events in Samuel's background, in his development as a child, could have brought on such a reaction?

Before I proceed, however, I need to clarify the psychological concept of "overdetermination" first propounded by Freud. According to Erikson, "any historical and personological item is always determined by many more forces and trends working with and upon each other than a sparing explanation can cover" (1958:48). What he means is that no one single factor underlies an individual psychosis or neurotic behaviour, that all behaviour is the outcome of multiple causes and, furthermore, "even the apparent absence of certain facets of it requires explanation" (Ricoeur 1970:366 note).

3.3 *Samuel's infancy*

Of Samuel's childhood up to the time of his "voices", there are next to no textual facts prior to this "psychotic" manifestation. This, however, need not deter us from piecing together a reasonable scenario. As Erikson argues,

a clinician's training permits, and in fact forces him to recognize major trends even where the facts are not all available; at any point in a treatment he can and must be able to make meaningful predictions as to what will prove to have happened; and he must be able to shift even questionable sources in such a way that a coherent predictive hypothesis emerges (1958:47).

And so, too, is it in biography:

the validity of any relevant theme can only lie in its crucial recurrence in a man's development, and in its relevance to the balance sheet of his victories and defeats (*ibid.*).

This concept of retrodiction, the ability to predict from known behavioural patterns to influences in the development of the child, is a legitimate and proven methodological tool in both psychotherapy and psychobiography. In light of what we know from the text itself regarding Hannah, Elkanah, Eli and Samuel's own adult behaviour, we can certainly make some informed retrodictions on what Samuel may have experienced as a child and youth. With this in mind, I want to develop a picture of Samuel's early childhood such as a psychological reconstruction may present. Obviously, various factors, the overdeterminants, would have impacted on the child. I will discuss each one

separately, keeping in mind the accumulative effect on the boy. Those I have specifically identified for my discussion are: Hannah's ambition for her child and consequently his own expectations versus the actual position in which Samuel finds himself, the development of the superego, separation anxiety, and Eli's behaviour during Samuel's early maturing years.

I have, in my discussion on Hannah, argued that the child Samuel was about three years old when he was dedicated to the Temple (היכל). His achievement of the important ego strength associated with Erikson's Stage 1¹, we must assume was, in the main, successful. In other words, I am assuming he had acquired a reasonable level of the ego-strength of *hope*. This is a period very much dependent on maternal care. Erikson contends that "the establishment of a mutual 'fixation' – of a binding need for mutual recognition between mother and child – is essential" (1958:112). The child's lifelong sense of security is grounded in this mutual recognition between himself and his mother. Erikson argues that on the basis of this first "security ... all subsequent securities" are built (Erikson 1958:113).

Stage 2², however, is another matter. It is only in Stage 2, as the child becomes aware of his own separate existence, that he is able to grasp his dependence on this maternal relationship. Now, for the first time, he undergoes the experience of anxiety. He fears the loss of his "investment on those who are committed to his care" (Erikson 1958:112). Heralding this new "insight" comes the awareness of his own physicality, specifically the discomforts and pleasures of mastering the evacuation processes. Not surprisingly, retention and elimination are the modalities dominant here and determine those behaviours related to the notion of the "holding on" and "letting go" discussed in Chapter 1. This new dimension of approach to things, however, is not restricted to the sphincters. A general ability, indeed, a violent need develops to alternate withholding and expelling at will and, in general, to keep tightly and to throw away wilfully whatever is held. That this is a difficult period for all concerned is confirmed by Erikson:

¹ Stage 1 – Infancy: Basic Trust versus Mistrust: Ego-gain – *Hope*.

² Stage 2 – Early Childhood: Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt: Ego-gain – *Will-power*.

At this time sinister forces are leashed and unleashed, especially in the guerrilla warfare of unequal wills, for the child is often unequal to his own violent will and the parent and child are often unequal to one another (Erikson 1968:107).

It is safe to assume that psychology's emphasis on this "anal stage" is largely driven by the dual horrors of the very recent sophistication of an urbanised population and the notion of Victorian sexuality. Erikson himself admits that "as far as anality proper is concerned, everything depends on whether the cultural environment wants to make something of it" (1968:107). Certainly, Western urbanised society has in the past turned what is politely termed "potty training" into a battle of wills between mother and infant. Tribal and primitive society have no such notion. Erikson reports that in tribal societies parents ignore "anal" behaviour. The young child learns through the observation and imitation of older children who "lead the toddler out to the bushes" (1968:107). These "bushes" appear to be an ideal notion on Erikson's behalf. The more common practice in many rural societies is simply to squat down wherever it is convenient³. Nevertheless, even in tribal society there is "place" for evacuation, in other words, even tribal infants must be housetrained one way or the other, and an appropriate time for formal learning must present itself at some time, for example, before being put to bed at night.

Stage 2 is also that critical period of development involving the infant in the opposing attitudes of 'autonomy' versus 'shame' and 'doubt'. To reiterate briefly from Chapter 1, from a sense of *self-control without loss of self-esteem* comes a lasting sense of autonomy and pride; from a sense of muscular and anal impotence, of loss of self-control and of parental over-control, comes a lasting sense of doubt and shame (Roazen 1976:113-4).

What is interesting here, is Erikson's postulation that over-control, which results in unreasonable shaming, can cause a sensitive child to direct all his energies against himself. He will become obsessed with repetition, wanting everything in a strictly correct order:

³ Nick Danziger reports that in midland China, childrens' pants are left open at the crotch to facilitate immediate evacuation by simply squatting on the ground where they are – everyone simply evacuates wherever they are, *Danziger's Travels*, London: Grafton Books, 1987 p 231.

By such infantile obsessiveness ... and by becoming a stickler for ritualistic repetitions, the child then learns to gain power over his parents in areas where he could not find large-scale mutual regulation with them (1968:111).

This, Erikson reasons, is the basis for the compulsive type of personality which I will later show bedevilled Samuel's relationships with Eli and Saul.

The achievement of this stage is the ego-strength of *will-power*, or in Erikson's formulation of the identity/personality gain, "I am what I can will freely" (1968:114). What I want to examine here, at this point in the child's development, is to what extent does this formulation apply to Samuel?

It is not unreasonable to assume that in the safety of this first environment, the child Samuel enjoyed a privileged position. He was a "first" born son, that is, the first-born son of Hannah. Nevertheless, in this case, on the first-born of the best of mothers lay the onus of being the best of children. Hannah, as I have suggested, was ambitious and egocentric and, as I mentioned before, would be driven to demonstrate that her abilities as a mother were superior to those of Peninnah. She would also have been keen to get some "mileage" out of the sacrifice of her son. Such a woman would need to delude herself and others as to the position her son would occupy at the Temple. She was sure to amplify and enhance its status beyond the reality. She was sure, too, to have impressed it on the son himself. "He was a holy child, set apart from the world around him" (Zeligs 1988:98). And the son, as young as he was, would have, in Erikson's sense of organomodality, incorporated this sense of superiority with his mother's milk. At the same time, Samuel would indubitably have felt some of the deleterious effects of such a controlling woman as Hannah. Certain it is he would have seen his father, his role model, submissive to her. Moreover, the best of mothers would have produced the best of children, a model child in fact, meaning that Hannah would also have demanded the utmost obedience from her son. My contention, here, is that the child, responding to this over-controlling mother and following on the example of his father, would have had little option but to obey. Under the circumstances, 'autonomy', which is the desired goal at this stage of development, would have been severely tempered by 'doubt': "an emotion first experienced when the child feels singled out by demands whose rationale he does not comprehend" (Erikson 1958:250). Erikson warns that "the imposition on the child of outer controls which are not in sufficient accord with his inner control at the time, is apt

to produce in him a cycle of anger and anxiety” (1963:409). The result is that the child, in his attempt to meet the demands of the parent, may over-control himself. The downside is the premature development of his superego, “which hovers over the ego as the inner perpetuation of the child’s subordination to the restraining will of his elders” (Erikson 1964:223). Moreover, this premature development of the superego is compounded by the fact that

the superego thus comes to reflect not only the sternness of the demands and limitations originally imposed by the parents, but also the relative crudeness of the infantile stage during which they were imposed (Erikson 1968:86).

This, I want to suggest, is indeed the case with Samuel who, in the developing narration, never evinces any sign of an evolving conscience as even the ingenuous Saul comes to do. But there is more yet. This early-learned obedience leaves the child with “a residue of an intolerance of being manipulated and coerced beyond the point at which outer control can be experienced as self-control”, and, Erikson argues, it is here that we find the “origins of compulsion and obsession and the concomitant need for the vengeful manipulation and coercion of others” (1963:409). I want to argue that Samuel’s righteousness does indeed become obsessive and all his life he would attempt to impose his own standards of behaviour and adherence to his cult on those around him, not the least of whom is Saul (but more of this later).

In effect, what I am trying to demonstrate is that Stage 2 could not have been a tension-free transition for Samuel. As I said earlier, Erikson emphasises that “from an unavoidable sense of loss of self-control (inevitable in a child) and of parental over-control comes a lasting propensity for ‘doubt’ and ‘shame’” (1968:109) and its concomitant inferiority. I want to contend that Samuel’s attempts to comply with such an over-controlling mother in the face of his developing biological processes would have led him to over-control himself. Such over-control does not lead to the positive formulation “I am what I can will freely”. *Will-power* is here utilized in the suppression of self rather than in the service of a healthy developing autonomy. That the child Samuel does suffer from the negative behavioural patterns associated with ‘shame’ and ‘doubt’, and a “self-doubt (which) would take the form of exaggerated obedience” (Erikson 1958:133), can be easily identified in the adult Samuel, as I shall demonstrate below.

As regards his relationship to his siblings, the children of Peninnah, Samuel was too young a child to be aware of any real rivalry on their part if it existed at this stage. Nevertheless, being for a time at least, the youngest child of Elkanah – the fertile Peninnah very likely produced more children – Samuel would have enjoyed the attention of his half-siblings. The sense of being a special person with eventually, in Samuel's case anyway, a special purpose, albeit aggrandised by his mother's ambitions, is natural to this age. It was unlikely to have undermined his relationships with his siblings as his behaviour would have been indubitably tempered by the obedience early wrought from this child. In the final analysis, I want to suggest that the outcome of this early imposed obedience and the promise of special status would become the very essence of the boy's character. What Erikson says of Luther can aptly be applied to Samuel insofar as it could apply to so young a child:

... when little Martin (Samuel) left the house of his parents, he was heavily weighed down by an overweening superego, which would give him the leeway of a sense of identity only in the obedient employment of his superior gifts, and only as long as he was ... more son than man, more follower than leader (1958:73).

But where Luther eventually became a great reformer and leader, Samuel – as I shall demonstrate later – never developed the charisma or vision of a great leader. And this is particularly apparent after the death of Eli and his sons (1 Sam 4: 11 and 18), when Samuel fails to take over the leadership, and later in his, albeit reluctant, obedience to the elders' wishes to appoint a king (1 Sam 8:5).

Then comes the dedication to God, the handing over of the 3-year-old to Eli's tutelage. Hannah's sense of achievement and triumph must have permeated the family preparations. The child, the centre of attraction, could not have understood the full implications of what lay ahead. The safe, secure, coherent world he knew was about to come crashing down around him.

There is not a single word in the text to indicate feelings of sorrow or loss as the woman leaves her child in the Temple with Eli ... One must indeed wonder how real Hannah's love for Samuel could have been (Zeligs 1988:97).

On the basis of this assessment, I want to suggest that Samuel was nothing more than Hannah's "sacrificial lamb". She had made a bargain, she had got what she wanted and the child had served his purpose. Her dominant position could not now be controverted. In effect, Samuel was Isaac to Hannah's Abraham. Where an angel had stayed the hand

of Abraham from slitting the throat of Isaac (Gen 22:12), there was no one to prevent Hannah from sacrificing Samuel to the service of the Lord (1 Sam 1:28).

3.4 Separation in Shiloh

The trauma a child would experience when handed over into the care of strangers – as Samuel was at the tender age of three – is a condition known as “separation anxiety”. What we know of this condition can be largely attributed to John Bowlby. In the late sixties, Bowlby undertook extensive studies on children and was able to systematize and describe separation anxiety in a coherent and comprehensive form. Essentially, Bowlby described a deteriorating sequence of three stages involving protest, despair and, finally, detachment.

At first (the child) protests vigorously and tries by all the means available to him to recover his mother. Later he seems to despair of recovering her but nonetheless remains preoccupied with her and vigilant for her return. Later still he seems to lose his interest in his mother and to become emotionally detached from her (1973:46).

Bowlby equates despair to a form of grief and mourning and detachment to a form of defence. Moreover, he contends that placing such a child in a strange environment is likely to intensify the anxiety further (cf. 1973:46).

Integral to this process of separation anxiety is the experience of anger. Where the loss of the mother is of no great duration, the function of anger is to reproach her for going away and to discourage her from doing so in future. What interests us here is what Bowlby calls the “anger of despair” where the loss is permanent, and in which the anger can lay dormant only to erupt years later (1973:286). Such a child, he argues, is caught in a double-bind: intense anxiety and intense conflict. Furious with the desertion of the mother, he may not express that anger for fear of further loss. Prolonged or repeated separations, Bowlby warns, can cross “the threshold of intensity and (become) dysfunction” (1973:288). Bowlby and his colleague, James Robertson, are quite emphatic on the long-term deleterious effects of maternal loss:

Our reason for this belief was that the responses and processes observed seemed to be the same as those found to be active in older individuals who are still disturbed by separations they have suffered in early life. These comprise, on the

one hand, a tendency to make intensely strong demands on others and to be anxious and angry when they are not met, a condition common in individuals labelled neurotic; and, on the other, a blockage in the capacity to make deep relationships, such as is present in affectionless and psychopathic personalities (Bowlby 1973:12).

Although the understanding of the processes of separation anxiety was not so fully systematized prior to these findings – Bowlby argues, for instance, that Freud’s understanding was fragmented – Erikson’s own research and conclusions are in line with them. Erikson recognized that the result of early separation of mother and young child was intensely catastrophic when he asserted that maternal estrangement was at the root of every history of infantile schizophrenia (cf. 1963:197). His description of a “centrifugal approach” – away from people – which occurs when a young child is separated from the parent for long periods, presaged Bowlby’s “detachment”. “The child”, Erikson argued, “lapses into sadness and silence, ‘adjusted’ to (the separation) by a permanent pattern of fleeing from all human contact” (*ibid.*). Moreover, in Erikson’s system, the completion of the oral (1st) stage – or at least the conflicts associated with it, specifically the sense of being “left empty” – would have been delayed in a child weaned as late as age three. Only at that point will the child’s hold on ‘trust’ be tested against the possible conflicts of depredation, division and abandonment. If a conflict is to arise it would manifest as a “violent drive to incorporate, appropriate and observe more actively” (Erikson 1968:101). Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that Samuel’s experience of separation anxiety would have been compounded by the fact that he was also newly weaned. “Weaning”, Erikson, argued

should not mean sudden loss of both the breast *and* the mother’s reassuring presence ... a drastic loss of accustomed mother love without proper substitution can lead, under otherwise aggravating conditions, to acute infantile depression or to a mild but chronic state of mourning which may give a depressive undertone to the remainder of one’s life (1968:101).

An undertone of melancholia, in fact, very like the *tristitia* Erikson identified as part of Luther’s character, does appear to weigh upon Samuel throughout the narrative. Certainly we hear of no moments of simple *joie de vive*. This sudden loss of mother and breast would also, Erikson suggests, undermine the *hope* attained in Stage 1 by leaving the infant with the “impressions of having been deprived, of having been divided, and of

having been abandoned” and hence leaving him with “a residue of basic mistrust” (1968:101).

Such an accumulation of shocks as Samuel would have suffered at this time was a recipe for disaster. At the very least, it would have created severe regressions in the boy. As I mentioned above, Samuel was already in an anxiety of over-control – brought about by the child’s attempt to subordinate his will to that of the parents and hence achieve both their recognition and committed investment in him. The sudden abandonment would have jettisoned all previous ego gains for Samuel and created in him a vulnerability to betrayal which we will see would haunt him all his life. From his later behaviour patterns, as I will demonstrate, it can reasonably be maintained that Samuel was the victim of acute separation anxiety. Where and when he most needed to assert himself and his authority, his fragile self-worth, his intense fear of betrayal would make him incapable of doing so, as happened, for example, after the death of Eli and his sons’ (1 Sam 4: 11 and 18).

In line with Bowlby’s findings on prolonged or repeated separations, we can assume that Hannah’s annual visits (1 Sam 2:19) were more disastrous than comforting, especially as she came accompanied with a new brood of his siblings, none of whom did she abandon as she had done Samuel. The mother’s reappearances would reactivate in the child all the horrors of separation. Despite her son’s withdrawal and distance, Hannah’s visits must, on the one hand, have recalled a fragmentary remembrance of his love for her and a fear of losing that love forever and, on the other, have represented a continuous reminder of his mother’s betrayal. Such internal conflict can eventually shift the balance of feeling within the child. What develops is often a hatred contained by a fear and a hopeless longing for the ideal relationship to come back again.

Instead of a strongly rooted affection laced occasionally with ‘hot displeasure’, such as develops in a child brought up by affectionate parents, there grows a deep-running resentment, held in check only partially by an anxious uncertain affection (Bowlby 1973:288).

This was reflected, I suggest, in Samuel’s lifelong attachment to the (little) robe (קֶטָן מֵעֵיל) his mother brought with her on each of her visits (1 Sam 2:19). The robe, I want to suggest, represented the concrete manifestation of Samuel’s inner conflict – Bowlby’s

“anger of despair” (1973:286) – the love and the hate. It was not Joseph’s coat of many colours, a symbol of a father’s love. On the contrary, Samuel’s robe would become, in perpetuity, a symbol of his mother’s betrayal. It was a *memento terrible* which was to become an obsession with Samuel (as I discuss below).

This is not to “place too big a burden” (Erikson 1958:61) on the significance of one item of clothing. The text itself dramatises the robe in relation to Samuel. It is mentioned again twice: 1 Sam 15:27 (I will discuss this later) and 1 Sam 28:14. In the latter, Saul requested the “woman who hath a familiar spirit” (1 Sam 28:7) to describe the man she had called forth from the netherworld. Her reply: “An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe” (מעיל) (1 Sam 28:14). It is this description, this robe, by which Saul is able to identify that the ghost is, indeed, Samuel. A reader versed in Biblical poetics and the rigorous economy of the text will understand the significance of this identification. The text has in no way hinted that anyone other than Samuel may appear and the reader’s expectations do not require proof of his identity beyond “old man”. Yet we are given an additional, seemingly inessential, detail: “he is covered with a robe”. Samuel, we are to understand by this description, was never without a robe, in life or, now, in “death” – implying, of course, the woman’s own knowledge of him, by which she is able to gratify Saul’s enquiry. Psychologically speaking, this tells us that Samuel was never able to resolve the conflict of separation from his mother and family. In an Eriksonian sense, he was never able to “let go”.

While on the subject, I want to discuss another dimension of the robe suggested by Polzin – the robe as symbol of royal, judicial or priestly power (cf. 1989:218). Within the context of his literary analysis of this garment, Polzin refers to a number of instances involving the three main protagonists of 1 Samuel: Samuel, Saul and David. In the case of Samuel, Polzin implies that the robe is not only symbolic of the three illustrious offices – priest, prophet and king – but, in its appearance as an identification of Samuel’s ghost, it also figures as shroud (*ibid.*). From a psychological perspective, his interpretation is interesting. On the one hand, the “royal” interpretation, would again be an indictment against Hannah and her ambition, that is, the status of *her* first-born, which she enforces annually with her gift. Furthermore, it would have inflated Samuel’s own ambition and the sense of superiority nurtured in him from infancy. On the other hand, the “shroud” interpretation, implies that Samuel was entombed within the folds of a

conflict he could not resolve: he was, psychologically speaking, a dead man. By this I mean that it would not be in his power to develop the wisdom and insight Erikson grants to his eighth and final stage. In this assessment, it is not unreasonable to assume that Samuel was never able to achieve the emancipation afforded by Erikson's "spontaneous recovery".

As I said before, the condition of separation anxiety is aggregated by a severe regression in developmental achievement. Yet at this moment, Samuel must also face the challenges of Stages 3 and 4 before the psychotic state of his mind – his identity crisis – becomes manifest.

3.5 *The Servant of the Temple*

Stage 3⁴, with its initiative and exuberance or pure *joie de vivre*, constitutes Erikson's Play Age. But of play we hear nothing. Indeed, what becomes clear is that this is Stage 3 in all its negative aspects. Again, one of the dangers here is that the child may over-control himself which can result in a righteousness that is detrimental to the individual and which

can later be most intolerantly turned against others in the form of persistent moralistic surveillance, so that prohibition rather than guidance of 'initiative' become the dominant endeavour (Erikson 1963:257).

Erikson warns that the pathological consequences of this stage may not show until much later and may be expressed in a *self-restriction* which keeps an individual from living up to his inner capacities or to the powers of his imagination and feeling (cf. 1968:120).

In other words, Samuel's early-learned obedience and tendency to over-control himself have become, in conjunction with the downside of Stage 3, obsessive. And this is mirrored in the repetitive refrain of the narrator which is randomly but incessantly interspersed in events not immediately related to the boy:

And the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest (1 Sam 2:11).

But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with a linen ephod (1 Sam 2:18).

⁴ Stage 3 – The Play Age: Initiative versus Guilt: Ego-gain – Purpose.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men (1 Sam 2:26)

And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli (1 Sam 3:1).

There are two important dimensions related to the negativity of Stage 3 which are especially important in my assessment of Samuel. The first concerns conscience, which Erikson calls “the great governor of initiative” and the second, sibling rivalry which assumes a new dimension at this stage (1968:119). Erikson argues that the development of conscience now brings on a “self-observation, self-guidance and self-punishment which divides (the child) radically within himself” (*ibid.*). The result is that the child may learn to restrict himself in such a way that he develops “an obedience more literal than the one the parent wishes to exact” (*ibid.*), and which can give rise to severe resentments against the parents or guardian. “One of the deepest conflicts in life”, Erikson proposes,

is caused by hate for a parent who served initially as the model and the executor of the conscience, but who was later found (wanting in the very behaviour the child cannot) tolerate in himself (*ibid.*).

Under the circumstances “the child comes to feel that the whole matter is not one of universal goodness but of arbitrary power” (*ibid.*). This is indeed the attitude that Samuel eventually displays towards Eli, as we shall see. Closely tied to this issue is sibling rivalry. The initial jockeying for position with siblings in Stage 1, through jealousy and rage, reaches a climax in Stage 3. The rivalry now becomes

a final contest for a favoured position with one of the parents: the inevitable and necessary failure leads to guilt and anxiety. The child indulges in fantasies of being a giant or a tiger, but in his dreams he runs in terror for dear life (*ibid.*).

Given Samuel’s condition and Erikson’s analysis, it is likely that in an extended family this rivalry would, initially, probably have been focused on the grandchildren of Eli, but as the child Samuel grew it would have comprehended the older children of Eli’s household as well, that is, the priests Hophni and Phinehas. Feldman makes an interesting observation regarding sibling rivalry in the Biblical narrative. She argues that in the latter narrative

the sublimation of the aggressive drive ... is represented not by filial rebellion, as in the Greek (or Shakespearean world), but by sibling rivalry (1989:81).

We can identify this rivalry between Cain and Abel (Gen 4), Jacob and Esau (Gen 27), Joseph and his brothers (Gen 37) and, I want to suggest, Samuel and the two sons of Eli. In any event, their iniquity and Eli's incompetent handling of their severe misbehaviour, suggests a favouring of them and this did not auger well for an obsessively moralistic Samuel.

On the basis of this, I want to argue that a similar situation obtained in Stage 4⁵ where the polarities of 'industry' *versus* 'inferiority' come into play. In Samuel's case, 'inferiority' prevailed over 'industry' as the ego-strength of *competence* had become distorted. Samuel, in Erikson's analysis, has identified "too completely with his work" and had restricted "both himself and his horizons" (1963:261). There is no doubt that these references to the boy – the Biblical verses mentioned earlier – illustrate that he was in the grip of a powerful superego, that structural element of the personality which "hovers over the ego as the inner perpetuation of the child's subordination to the restraining will of his elders" (Erikson 1964:223). But a child in the grip of the superego is equally restrained in the formation of his own identity. In Erikson's account:

The child internalises into the super-ego most of all the prohibitions emanating from the social structure – prohibitions, furthermore, which are perceived and accepted with the limited cognitive means of early childhood and are preserved throughout life with a primitive sadomasochism inherent in man's inborn moralistic proclivities ... Thus internalised infantile moralism becomes isolated from further experience, wherefore man is always ready to regress to and to fall back on a punitive attitude which not only helps him to re-repress his own drives but which also encourages him to treat others with a righteous and often ferocious contempt (1970b:753).

On the basis of this assessment we are to understand that such an individual's moral identity becomes fixated at a very fundamental level even as he matures into adulthood. This will not only inhibit his moral growth and impact generally on his whole personality style, but it will make him intolerant of anyone who does not conform to his own all-or-nothing *Weltanschauung*. That this was the case with Samuel, my analysis, as it progresses, will bear out.

⁵ Stage 4 – The School Age: Industry versus Inferiority: Ego-gain – *Competence*.

It is my contention that the very same superego Hannah had awakened in her child by too rigid a demand for obedience, was bound to deepen and be reinforced by the religious institute to which she abandoned him. The religion in this instance was, of course, the cult of Yahweh. Erikson argues that the historical, religious or actual prototypes presented as models of good and evil “transmit to the human child the outlines of what really counts in his world” (1958:55). And this influence becomes more pronounced in adolescence, the period of Erikson’s identity crisis. Unable to resolve such a crisis, a young mind, Erikson contends, easily becomes ideologically fixated. In acknowledging this influence, Erikson is not without reservations:

The first discipline encountered by a young man is the one he must somehow identify with unless he chooses to remain unidentified in his years of need. The discipline he happens to encounter, however, may turn out to be poor ideological fare; poor in view of what, as an individual, he has not yet derived from his childhood problems, and poor in view of the irreversible decisions which begin to crowd in on him (1958:86).

And this, I want to suggest, is true in Samuel’s case. His absolute devotion to Yahweh combined with a punishing superego would, according to Erikson’s theory, stunt his maturing into anything but an uncompromising and self-destructive adult, as we shall see later.

Nevertheless, religion not only dictates absolute and clear guidelines on behaviour, it also affords powerful consolation. It is also “organised religion which systematizes and socializes the first and deepest conflict in life” because it reaffirms “that first relationship” with the mother (Erikson 1968:87). “At their creative best”, says Erikson, “religions retrace our earliest inner experiences, giving tangible form to vague evils, and reaching back to the earliest individual sources of trust” (1958:257.). “For Erikson ‘trust’ becomes the capacity for *faith*” (Roazen 1976:113). In Erikson’s analysis, however, it also denotes a regression “to a stage in the second part of the first year” when the person is

trying to recover what was then achieved by the concordance of cognitive and emotional maturation – namely, the recognition of the facial features of familiar persons, the joy of feeling recognized (1958:111).

The Temple therefore offered the boy some degree of coherence, some continuity, with his previous world. Perhaps not a very satisfactory one in a child with an overdeveloped

superego, but an adequate one for survival. Moreover, his principle caregiver, Eli, with whom he had a “close identification” (Zeligs 1988:99), was the head of this world, but not such a head as could accommodate the intractable dictates of Samuel’s superego. To reiterate Erikson’s point:

One of the deepest conflicts in life is caused by hate for a parent who served initially as the model and executor of the conscience, but who was later found trying to ‘get away with’ the very transgressions which the child could no longer tolerate in himself. Thus the child comes to feel that the whole matter is not one of universal goodness but of arbitrary power (1968:119).

And we shall see how Samuel reacts against Eli. Thus, like Luther, Samuel, I want to suggest, sought in religion what he could not find in Eli (cf. Erikson 1958:111). The very superego which justifies Zeligs’s assertion that “the boy’s character development, therefore, would have been along the lines of submission and obedience to God (Yahweh)” (1988:99), had, in Samuel’s case, a rigid puritanical righteousness to it. In trying to recreate the perfect world of his first impressions, Samuel demanded of the world in which he found himself equal perfection.

But there are other factors – overdeterminants – to take into account. Though Samuel grows up as a servant to the priest of Shiloh, he is attired in the priestly ephod. The psychological effects on Samuel on being “favoured” in this way, would both have heightened his “deep sense of personal destiny” (Zeligs 1988:100) – the early expectations engendered by his mother of a lofty role in the future – and nurtured his superego further: he would be “more priestly than the priests”. And this more so as he grew to boyhood and like everyone else – except apparently Eli – noted the unpriestly behaviour of Eli’s sons. In this analysis, as I mentioned in my discussion on the ephod, McCarter acquiesces:

By a deliberate selection of terminology Samuel is implicitly characterized as a priest, ministering to Yahweh and clad in sacerdotal garments ... The impact of such a characterization in such a context is unavoidable: the good and the wicked, the chosen and the rejected are set before us in an almost simplistic juxtaposition (1980:85).

I want to contend that it was this awareness, the “good” Samuel versus the “wicked” sons, which played a significant role in bringing about a severe identity crisis in the boy. I want to suggest that Samuel would have developed a severe mistrust in the leadership of

Eli because he failed to take effective action against his wicked sons (he does nothing beyond reprimanding them – 1 Sam 2:23-25), and that this mistrust was aggravated by an obedience so absolute that the boy could not stand its opposite. Under such conditions, Samuel would have been unable to endure inactivity.

This state of acute tension, I want to argue, occurred in Samuel's adolescence, Erikson's Stage 5⁶ – the transition between childhood and adulthood – the most stormy of the stages to negotiate. Out of the myopia of childhood, the individual now becomes aware of the greater community and must try to forge a role for himself within his society. He must either form a clear 'identity' for himself or be faced with 'role confusion'. In the tradition of tribal society, it is customary for the son to follow in the steps of the father and the transition from child to adult is generally a smooth one. But such a path was not open to Samuel. He surely could not follow as son of Elkanah into a pastoral role nor, as surrogate son of Eli, could he pursue the priesthood. Erikson points out that, "when (the individual) is able to make few choices, they have a greater finality because they decide his estate" (1958:109). But for Samuel there was no real choice: he was not allowed to develop his abilities in line with his lofty aspirations of which, in this milieu, the priesthood was the highest office. What I want to suggest is that the boy, brought up under the guidance of Eli in the cult of Yahweh and with great expectations, would naturally aspire to following in his mentor's footsteps as judge and priest. The ambiguity of Samuel's position under Eli, has, as I discussed in Chapter 2 on the subject of the ephod, given rise to a general belief among critics that Samuel was being prepared for priesthood. I, however, want to argue that Samuel was no more than a servant at the Temple of the Lord (היכל יהוה) and that the text predicts for him only the role of prophet (נביא) ("And all Israel ... knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord" – 1 Sam 3:20), not that of priest (כהן). In the first place, the word "ministered" (משרת - 1 Sam 3:1) is given in Holladay as "to be an attendant to, wait on, serve, minister, be in service of God" (1988:384). Polzin, while suggesting that Samuel is "characterized throughout as a priestly figure", also acknowledges that Samuel is "never actually called a priest" (1989:42). In 1 Sam 9:9, he is called a seer and Samuel himself does not argue with this description in his response to Saul: "I am the seer" (1 Sam 9:19). Mowinckel, however, argues that the ancient Israelite seer (חזה or ראה)

⁶ Stage 5 – Adolescence: Identity versus Role Confusion: Ego-gain – Reliability.

was both diviner and priest (cf. 1987:79). He distinguishes only two such elevated seer/priest types: Moses and Samuel. His case for Samuel is based on the latter's location at the Temple in Shiloh since birth, his apprenticeship under Eli and his guardianship of the lamps in the sanctuary, all of which lead to Samuel's assumption of the priesthood after the death of Eli. To this he adds, Samuel's blessing of the sacrificial meal prior to the initiation of Saul (1 Sam 9:13) and the fact that "Samuel, too, stands higher than the *nebiim* who are subject and obedient to him (1 Sam 19:20)" (1987:79). My argument, as it progresses, will illustrate that these incidents can be subject to a different reading.

There is, to begin, the argument of Samuel's offspring. If Samuel was a priest, why were his sons not priests? Samuel's sons are referred to only as judges (1 Sam 8:1). One of Mowinckel's conclusions, in his argument for the role of Moses as priest, is asserted on the basis that "his descendants become priests after him (Judg 18:30)" (1987:80). Indeed, in a tribal society where, as I noted earlier, sons follow in the steps of their fathers, Samuel's sons should therefore have been no different.

In 1 Sam 2:11, 18 and 3:1 we are told that Samuel ministered to the "Lord". I want to argue that "Lord" is a euphemism here for priests. Polzin illustrates that the word *na'ar* (נער - boy) in 1 Sam 2:11 and the term for the priest's servant in 1 Sam 2:15, *na'ar* (נער - servant), are identical in form and meaning and that therefore Samuel was, in fact, no more than a servant to the priests (cf. 1989:41)⁷. Moreover, though we are told that Samuel had been ministering to the "Lord", in 1 Sam 3:7 we read that "Samuel did not yet know the Lord". So who, we must conclude, was he serving if not the priests?

According to the foregoing arguments, I want to suggest that Samuel's position in the Temple was not that of an aspirant priest, rather it was a menial one: he was one of the domestic personnel. Samuel was destined to be no more than a servant of the priests. I believe that the text hints at this by elaborately detailing – four full verses in a text known for its lack of superfluity – the role of the servants of Eli's sons in the performance of their duties (1 Sam 2:12-16). I am going to argue later on that it is Samuel's awareness

⁷ Also cf. Holladay, 1988:241.

of his servile position – not a descendent of the house of Eli, therefore not able to inherit the role of priest – coupled with a punishing superego, that brings on his “voices”.

In consequence of this, I want to argue that Samuel, whose birthright offered great prospects, would during his adolescence have come to recognize that he was already what he was destined to be, a servant of the Temple, of little more significance than the servants of Eli’s sons. In this, the boy’s prospects looked grim. Being dedicated to the service of a Temple which would be under the auspices of two wicked priests after Eli’s death would have been anathema to a youth with a highly developed superego. Therefore, instead of being able to develop a sense of identity, to carve out a desired future role, Samuel would have experienced severe anxiety as the result of his aversion to the role of servant forced on him. And according to Erikson, “where such *role confusion* ... joins a hopelessness of long standing ... psychotic episodes are not uncommon” (1968:131-132). It is during this stormy stage that the man-of-God makes his appearance (1 Sam 2:27) and, I contend, precipitates Samuel’s psychosis. The man-of-God, who predicts the downfall of the Eliads and the rise of a “faithful priest” (כהן נאמן) (1 Sam 2:35), offers Samuel a pattern to emulate, an escape from this inglorious future.

3.6 *The Faithful Priest*

I want to suggest that the very reference to “faithful priest” resonated with Samuel. Samuel’s superego may have seized on the promise and applied it to himself. If Eli’s house is to be cut off forever, then he, Samuel, “more priestly than the priests”, must be that faithful priest whom the Lord will raise up. Indeed, Eslinger makes an argument for Samuel as priestly successor to Eli. On the basis of the “divine intervention” in Samuel’s origin and his priestly clothing (ephod) and apprenticeship, Eslinger concludes that “the juxtaposition of the ‘outgoing’ priests and the growing favour of Samuel in 2.25f foreshadows the succession” (1985:139). Polzin – whose argument for the oracle’s “multivoice” which leads both to Samuel and Zadok – arrives at the same conclusion: “Samuel turns out to be a surer candidate for Eli’s successor than Zadok” (1989:233 n.28). Zeligs, however, is not so sure: “Samuel’s own selection as priest and prophet is not actually voiced in this communication” (1988:101), a statement with which Polzin, as I mentioned earlier, does, in fact, agree (cf. 1989:42). When Samuel’s isolation – psychologically as a result of separation anxiety and physically by the fact that the boy

sleeps alone in the Temple – spills over into the social sphere, there develops what Erikson calls *distantiation* – “the readiness to isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own” (1963:264). I want to suggest, that in this melancholic state, compounded by an unreleased anger, and believing himself to be the chosen of the Lord – the faithful priest – Samuel would have brooded on the words, until he exploded into action and reiterated them back at Eli, a punishment for the latter’s inept attempt to admonish his sons and, moreover, Eli’s blatant inaction even *after* he had been warned by the man-of-God.

I want to argue that Samuel’s call – in psychological parlance his “voices” – came to the young man trying to accommodate Stage 5. Gnuse concludes that Samuel’s voices belong to the category he defines as “message dream”. His discussion on the word חלום (dream) – which he argues is connected to חזון (vision, night dream) – is interesting in terms of Erikson’s Stage 5 when genital maturation predominates. Gnuse argues that the word is anyway debatable, and suggests that it may mean

‘to attain puberty,’ ‘to be strong,’ or ‘to be able to have sexual emission in sleep’ (and that) these meanings imply that time of life when a youth reaches the age of sexual awareness and fantasy (1984:59).

Zeligs is like-minded, albeit from a different perspective: “The call came to him at a youthful age, very likely the period of puberty” (1988:101). In the same way Erikson understood Luther, I suggest we can understand Samuel:

It seems entirely probable that (Samuel’s) life at times approached what today we might call a borderline psychotic state in a young man with prolonged adolescence and reawaked infantile conflicts (1958:143).

In other words, a not unnatural outcome of the crisis associated with this new Stage. Certainly, we cannot recognize any of the characteristics of true hallucination in the voices (cf. Erikson 1958:143). Rather, in psychological terms, Samuel’s voices are a projection of the demands of his own superego. The accumulation of all his unresolved anger during the present and preceding stages and a demand for some kind of justice had become just too compelling and brought on a severe anxiety attack. Eli must be punished for not being as over-scrupulous as Samuel in his conscience. Moreover, comprehended in the need to punish Eli himself, was also the need to punish Eli in place of the father – Elkanah – who had allowed his mother to hand him over to the Temple when he should

have been his guiding force and protector. Erikson frequently emphasises this need for a paternal protector, calling it, in Thomas Wolfe's words, "the deepest search in life",

... to find a father ... the image of strength and wisdom external to (a man's) need and superior to his hunger, to which the belief and power of his own life could be united (1958:119)⁸.

In effect, as "fathers", both Eli and Elkanah had fallen short of Samuel's need.

Samuel's projection, in light of Erikson's notion of the interrelationship and interaction between the various stages, can also be understood as a reflection both of his 'shame' and 'doubt' in himself – 'shame' at what he was, and 'doubt' as to what he would become. It is this same self-doubt that required Eli to sanction the source of his "calling". Polzin would agree here. His image of Samuel is "that of the Lord standing before an ever-reclining Samuel who is not yet able to stand on his own two feet" and finally requires "an almost blind priest to identify the Lord for him" (1989:50). It is my contention that, at this time, Samuel himself was suspicious of his own intentions. He sensed that he himself was the source of these voices, but his rage and anger were simply too overpowering to sanction reason. Hence his hesitation and lack of conviction and the necessity of four callings. So that finally, even Eli's injunction that the boy answer: "Speak, Lord for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam 3:9), is not strictly adhered to by Samuel. The text's, "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him" (1 Sam 3:7) – we know this already – appears superfluous. But as this is a text which does not deal in superfluities, I want to suggest that it is an embarrassed attempt on behalf of the narrator to excuse the youth. But it is of no avail, Samuel's real motivations remain suspect. Samuel is not frightened by the voice, we hear of no fear and trembling. Yet he is alone in the Temple. And in his answer to the call, he neglects to include the word "Lord" as Eli had directed him: "Speak, for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam 3:10). And this despite the fact that this *fourth* time the Lord not only called, he "came and stood, (ויבא יהוה ויתיצב) and called" (1 Sam 3:10). It is as if Samuel himself (and the narrator) still needed a final detail to authenticate his call. The narrator, in the guise of Samuel, is, after all, the only one who could confirm this "came and stood". Fokkelman has an interesting comment regarding 1 Sam 3:10 which in fact

⁸ Erikson's quote is extracted from *The Story of a Novel*, by Thomas Wolfe (Heinemann, 1936). (Erikson supplies no page reference.)

correlates neatly with my analysis of Samuel's voices – and now vision – being a projection of his own subconscious. In arguing for Samuel's naivety, he suggests that from Samuel's perspective “the voice of God was indistinguishable from that of a human being” (1993:169). Moreover, noting that the narrator “does not consign Samuel to a fully-fledged vision of the deity on his throne, surrounded by cherubs or seraphim, such as there is in Isaiah 6 or the first section of Ezekiel” (*ibid.*), he suggests that “God appears to Samuel in a form which, qua exterior or size, differs little from that of a human person” (*ibid.*). Such a representation, I want to suggest, would be exactly in line with the restricted powers of imagination in a young boy with a rigid superego.

But the authenticity of the call is suspect for other reasons. By Gordon's account it does not conform to the traditional “prophetic call narrative”: it is more in the form of an “audition” or interview with Yahweh (cf. 1984:27). In fact, Samuel's prophetic calling does not correlate with the classical Biblical convention in significant ways. On the one hand, the convention usually incorporates the concept of the “reluctant prophet”, an attempt at evasion from the onerous mission (Exod 3:11; 4:1 and 10; Jer 1:6; Jonah 1:3). On the other, the receiver is always called to some action or another, be it like Moses, to deliver the people out of slavery, or to publicly renounce the evil ways of the people with a promise of retribution to come. Neither does it follow the prophetic style which manifests the imperative “go forth and do” command common to the prophetic calling. Gnuse, in an intensive study of 1 Sam 3, is quite emphatic on the genre of the call: “Samuel 3 follows the basic auditory message dream pattern” (1984:79). “It lacks”, he argues, “many of the elements of the prophetic call narrative identified by Norman Habel” (1984:135). Over and above Habel's distinctions, in contrast to the prophetic call narrative, Samuel neither refuses the call, nor does he attempt to argue his unworthiness to receive it. If anything, he embraces it. Polzin suggests that Samuel's revelation to Eli “seems superfluous from Eli's point of view ... (t)he oracle of God given the priest by a man-of-God in chapter 2 could not have been clearer on this point” (1989:51). There is a further telling note by Polzin that is relevant here: “When the omniscient narrator tells us that ‘Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli’ (v.15), the word מראה is used, not the חזון of verse 1” (1989:50). In other words, the narrator is careful to distinguish between the concept of “appearance” (profane) and that of “vision” (sacred). Then too, another revealing factor here in terms of the classic prophetic experience, is that Samuel is never

involved in “visionary reports or trance-like states or experiences” (Petersen 1997:27). Thus, no matter that Eli chooses to believe that it is God who called Samuel, Samuel’s voice does not conform to the conventional “prophetic call” of the genre.

Gnuse’s argument for an “auditory message dream pattern” (1984:79) carries the implication that Samuel may have “dreamed” that he had heard himself called. I, however, want to argue against the possibility of this being a dream on the part of Samuel. In the first place, it is highly unlikely that the child would have returned four times in quick succession to the very same dream that had awakened him in the first place. In the second, the text does not state that any of the other “voices” which he hears during his lifetime occur while he is sleeping (1 Sam 8:7 & 22, 9:15, 15:11, and 16:1 & 7). On the contrary, he appears to have been very much awake during every other occurrence and the only analogous factor in this and the other “callings” appears to be a state of high tension - but this I shall elaborate on as events develop in the narrative.

That Samuel is bent on punishing Eli is clear in what he purports to have heard and reiterates to the old priest. Samuel presents neither the argument nor the appeal presented by the man-of-God –

Did I reveal myself unto the house of thy father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh’s house? (1 Sam 2:27)

And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up unto mine alter, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me?

and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? (1 Sam 1:28).

What Samuel offers is only a repetition of the final denunciation –

Samuel:

... I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from the beginning even unto the end (1 Sam 3:12)

... I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knew because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves and he restrained them not (1 Sam 3:13)

Man-of-God:

... honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? (1 Sam 2:29)

Samuel:

... the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever (1 Sam 3:14).

Man-of-God:

Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering which I have commanded in (my) habitation (1 Sam 2:29).

All of this Eli has already heard from the man-of-God. There is nothing new or original. The only addition to this second denunciation by Samuel is a malicious caveat: "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (1 Sam 3:11). In this, I want to suggest, we hear echoes of the punitive superego I mentioned in Stage 4, which encourages Samuel to treat others with a righteous and often ferocious contempt, a superego which would represent anyone varying from its own strict morality as "those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own" (Erikson 1963:264) and which must hence be destroyed. The irony, of course, is that the servant who began by seeking the sanction of his master for his call uses this very same sanction to castigate his master.

Gnuse's argument -- that the ancient Israelites accepted the idea of "auditory message dreams" which only came at night specifically to patriarchs, prophets, and kings (cf. 1984:59) -- is significant for my case on one level, however: it explains why Eli could accept Samuel's report as authentic. I want to contend that Eli's unquestioning acceptance of both Samuel's call and the chilling judgement he pronounces on Eli actually opens a new horizon for Samuel. Neither Eli, as priest and judge, nor his sons have shown a commitment to the inflexible moral principles demanded by Samuel. But someone else had. The man-of-God! According to Erikson a crisis may force an individual to make radical selections. Within any historical era, his choice of role models is necessarily limited. Nevertheless, within these limitations he must attempt to hew out "socially meaningful models for workable combinations of identification fragments" (1968:53). Inadvertently, it would appear, this condemnation of Eli provided Samuel with a way to "meet the requirements of (his) maturation stage, (his) ego's style of synthesis, and the demands of (his) culture" (*ibid.*). I contend that what follows confirms this interpretation:

And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

ויגדל שמואל ויהוה היה עמו ולא הפיל מפל-דבריו ארצה (1 Sam 3:19)

And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.

וידע כל-ישראל מדין ועד-באר שבע כי-נאמן שמואל לנביא ליהוה (1 Sam 3:20)

And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

ויסף יהוה להראה בשלה פי-נגלה יהוה אל-שמואל בשלו בדבר יהוה (1 Sam 3:21)

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

ויהי דבר-שמואל לכל-ישראל (1 Sam 4:1)

In short, the servant of Eli had found an alternative for himself, a compromise. It was a natural outcome of the ‘role confusion’ Erikson had predicted at Stage 5. When the problem relates to a career choice, the individual can over-identify “to the point of apparent complete loss of identity, with the heroes of cliques and crowd” (1963:262), or in this case, the man-of-God. Thus, Samuel would be a man-of-God, a prophet, as the text labels him. And the narrator has taken a great deal of pain to establish this, four verses following hard on one another. Nevertheless, there is a touch of bathos in the final sentence. Why are we told that Samuel’s word, not the Lord’s word, came to all Israel? As we are never informed of the content of these additional “word(s)”, I want to suggest that this line operates as an implicit hint by the narrator. By setting up an ambiguity as to the source of the word, he calls into question Samuel’s claim to prophethood even at this early period. (This would also be in line with Polzin’s sacred and profane “visions” as mentioned above (1989:50).) Eslinger, when faced with the same dilemma, solves the problem by suggesting that “the word” in 1 Sam 3:19 and 21, and 4:1 (see above) “is the message of doom against the Elides” (1985:161). If we are to accept this interpretation, that all of the subsequent early calls merely reiterated the content of the first call, then we can assume that Samuel received no new “word(s)”, no new revelations from the Lord beyond what we already know, that is, that the house of Eli will fall. Samuel’s reputation as “prophet” is therefore questionable in terms of the narrator’s presentation. But even allowing this, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the new role of prophet is still only an alternative. And I must stress here that this alternative is not an alternative to a priestly role, merely to servanthood. It represented no “spontaneous recovery” on

Samuel's part. Samuel, I want to suggest, never forfeits his ambition for the highest of positions which, in the world in which he grew up, was that of priest.

What Samuel's "calling" does do, however, is confirm Erikson's notion of psychotic⁹. It is not a condition which can be proved, or disproved for that matter, by anyone other than the person who experiences it. So what, we may ask, is the narrator's source for this report? Nothing but Samuel's first report to Eli. Moreover, as I noted above, there is a lacuna here. The narrator does not reveal the substance of the Lord's words to Samuel on any of these early occasions other than the first. If anything, prophesying without words is a negative phenomenon, it represents a psychologically dysfunctional element. Even later when Saul "prophesies", all we are told is that "the spirit of God came mightily upon him" (1 Sam 10:10) or "the spirit of God came upon him" (1 Sam 19:23). We do not hear what it was that Saul prophesied. Similarly, we are informed of neither the words nor the content of Samuel's "prophesying" other than on the first occasion when he reiterated the words of the man-of-God. Yet, we do know what the man-of-God had to say, which suggests at this point that the text makes a very definite distinction between the two roles – man-of-God and ecstatic prophet¹⁰. As to the latter, Samuel is never presented as prophesying in the way Saul "prophesies". This distinction is therefore important as, according to my analysis, Samuel fits neither category, man-of-God – whom I have argued he is bent on emulating – nor ecstatic. My analysis leads me to the conclusion that Samuel was known as a prophet because Samuel was approaching the completion of identity development in adolescence, a time which, according to Erikson, "results in a massive glorification of some of the individual's constituent elements, and repudiation of others" (1958:50). And this glorification Samuel achieves, inadvertently aided and abetted by Eli's belief in his calling – the very man that Samuel is bent on repudiating. In Erikson's terminology, Samuel would be diagnosed on the basis of this manifestation as a "religious and psychiatric borderline case" (1958:21) (see the detail in the introduction to this chapter). In other words, despite Samuel's apparent successes later, his identity crisis is never finally resolved, and each new crisis the adult Samuel has to face will bring on a renewal of all the unresolved earlier ones.

⁹ See glossary.

¹⁰ See Petersen, 1997:24-30, which I discuss briefly below.

The notion of Samuel as prophet, nevertheless, needs some further explanation. Though Samuel comes to be known by all Israel as a prophet (1 Sam 3:20) he is not, as I have earlier suggested in my discussion on the “prophetic call”, a prophet in the classical sense, as were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or the like. Neither, like Saul is he an ecstatic prophet (see above). Strictly speaking, and following Petersen’s discussion on the four categories of “prophet” in the Biblical text – חוזה, ראה, נביא, איש-אלהים (1997:24-29), Samuel appears to be closer to the seer (ראה) in that he performs, in the main, a “consultative role” (and in fact Petersen types him as such) (1997:25). His “prophetic” judgment and damnation of Eli’s house is, as I have shown, a mere reiteration of the man-of-God’s words (1 Sam 2:31-34). For the rest, Samuel’s prior knowledge received from the Lord of Saul’s arrival (1 Sam 9:15-16), his hearing of God’s instructions at the time of the elders’ request for a king (1 Sam 8:7-9 & 22), the Lord’s repenting of appointing Saul king after the offensive against Amalek (1 Sam 15:11) and his instructions from the Lord regarding the appointment of David (1 Sam 16:1-3, 7 & 12), my psychological analysis will show, all emanate from his subconscious.

The engagement with the Philistines, which now follows, and in which Hophni and Phinehas, Eli’s sons, lose their lives, is not a motivated attack as we have seen in Judges, where a lapse into idolatry repeatedly brings on a military defeat for the Israelites and outright victory for their enemies. However, here, as the Philistines win the battle and take the Ark, we can assume, in line with other scholarly consensus (cf. Eslinger 1985:234), it is because of the unscrupulous behaviour of Eli’s sons rather than that of the people, as was the pattern depicted in Judges. Another break with tradition here is the immediate punishment of the Philistines – a plague of haemorrhoids – not for the defeat of the Israelites, I want to suggest, but for the capture and appropriation of the Ark. This suggestion gains support when we discover that on the Ark’s return, the men of Bethshemesh who profaned the Ark by looking into it (1 Sam 6:19) come off even worse: “He (God) smote of the people seventy men and fifty thousand men” (1 Sam 6:19), that is, sixteen thousand and seventy men more than the total number slain by the Philistines in battle! The final destination of the Ark is not a return to Shiloh, but Kiriath-jearim where it is placed in storage under the protection of Abinadab’s son Eleazar, a veritable unknown, hence totally bypassing Samuel, the supposed protagonist of the narrative. Only now are we told that “all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord” (1 Sam 7:2).

Only now can we firmly assume that Israel must have again come under the yolk of the Philistines – some twenty years¹¹ – despite the haemorrhoids! The saviour who now steps into the breach is Samuel.

3.7 Ramah

Eslinger, following Buber argues that Samuel had earlier received the sanction of the Lord to lead the people (see verses 1 Sam 3:19 & 21 – 4:1, quoted above): “the old priestly mediators of revelation, who had become unworthy, are replaced by the new, worthy, prophetic” (1985:158-9). He was assuming that there is now a break not only with the old order but with the tradition of Judges as well. As regards the latter, I find this statement problematic. The only other “old” mediator we know of in Judges is Deborah, and she was not a priest. She was, in fact, a prophet (Judg 4:4). The rest of those raised up to lead were judges only. Samuel, now known as a prophet like Deborah, supposedly follows in this tradition: “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life” (1 Sam 7:15). But there is a distinction. Samuel is not actually raised up at the crucial moment; he does not receive any particular calling or message from the Lord. When the word of the Lord first came to him in the Temple, though the priests were wicked, the people were not under the yoke of oppressors nor were they “awhoring after other gods” (Judg 2:17). Only now, when they are lamenting, Samuel reappears, *sans* divine fanfare. He simply “steps in”, says Eslinger, “after a lengthy period” – “an absence of twenty years” – “of depression” (1985:233; 235), that is, Erikson’s melancholia – a result of separation anxiety.

So where had Samuel been all this time?

The simple answer is, home. When Israel went into battle against the Philistines, Samuel was probably in the latter stage of adolescence, Stage 5, which encompasses the ages 12-24. “Samuel was about twenty-two when the most catastrophic event of his life and of his times occurred” (Zeligs 1988:106). It is notable that Samuel was not appealed to by the people at this crucial moment despite the fact that “the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Sam 3:19). This only confirms my argument

¹¹ I follow Eslinger’s timing, 1985:234, as will become clear later.

regarding Samuel's dubious status of prophet: he was no more important than any other individual in his society. If he had held a higher status we could ask with Gitay whether Samuel will establish himself as the new leader and succeed in establishing the new cultic centre (replacing Shiloh). In fact he does not succeed. He goes from place to place, erecting a local altar only in his home, Ramah (7:16-17), while the ark itself lies neglected in Kiriath-jearim (7:1) (1992:224-5).

I want to suggest, that the complete absence of any reference to Samuel in the Ark narrative, implies that Samuel experienced no real traumatic loss. If anything he was more likely, in his adolescent *totalism*¹², to see everything more clearly than the elders who sent the Ark into battle, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines?" (1 Sam 4:3). For Samuel, the defeat was nothing more than the Lord's retribution foretold by the man-of-God: "And this shall be the sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them" (1 Sam 2:34). With Shiloh lost, Samuel, who had been "given to the Lord all the days of his life", could, as a prophet of the Lord, legitimately return home without breaking his own covenant. (It would also have the merit of escaping the immediate vicinity of the victorious and, very likely, Shiloh-sacking Philistines.) The point here, is that at the very time when Israel did need someone to take over the leadership, Samuel, who from the narrative's perspective, and I might add his own ambition, should have been that leader, fails to rise to the challenge. His absence from the narrative is informative. It tells us that at this critical moment in his history, on the death of his spiritual father, Eli, the defeat of the Israelites and the loss of the Ark, for all his early promise, Samuel was powerless to act.

Zeligs follows the Rabbinic tradition that Samuel himself wrote the first 24 chapters of 1 Samuel and offers a psychoanalytical explanation for his subsequent disappearance:

the long interval of silence could express Samuel's own denial and repression of a traumatic period in his life ... he (was) so overwhelmed by the great disaster that he wished to draw an amnesic veil over the years that followed (1988:107).

¹² *Totalism*: a setting of absolute boundaries in one's values, beliefs and interpersonal relationships (Erikson 1964:92); See also glossary.

Nevertheless, where the narrative is mum regarding Samuel's activity during this period, it is possible through a psychological reconstruction to retrieve the gap. Thus I want to argue that Samuel's return home, in fact, allows him a period of moratorium, a time to prepare himself for the role he will be called upon to fill later in establishing the monarchy. Erikson defines "moratorium" as

a span of time after (young persons) have ceased being children, but before their deeds and works count toward a future identity ... (a) way of postponing the decision as to what one is and is going to be (1958:40).

Erikson argues that this is especially so when a "crisis in such a young man's life (is) reached exactly when he half-realizes that he is fatally overcommitted to what he is not." (1958:40). Samuel was not the priest he desired to be, and, as I argued, his voices were a projection of his own subconscious. His new status of prophet, alias man-of-God, was nevertheless only an alternative, a second choice, albeit he had now achieved a reputation sanctioned by all Israel. But, as I suggested earlier, Samuel himself was equivocal as to the real source of the voices at this point and consequently in a state of uncertainty as to his own authenticity. It is my contention therefore that the defeat of the Israelites at this moment was therefore exactly timed to allow Samuel a period of moratorium. During this time of moratorium, Erikson states that such a person "often balances a temporary lack of inner direction with an almost fanatic concentration on activities which maintain whatever work habits the individual may have preserved" (1958:42). Nevertheless, there is a downside. The individual may withdraw so completely that finally he is never able to access his own potential. All this is true of Samuel. There was, however, one consistent factor in Samuel's world and that was Yahweh. And, in line with his compulsive obsessional drive, he would demand of all Israel that they should follow after the Lord, and he would make that demand his life's work.

From various references in the text, we can construct a history of Samuel's twenty-year absence, the period of Samuel's early adulthood, Stage 6¹³. We know that Samuel went home from 1 Sam 7:17, "And his return was to Ramah¹⁴, for there was his house", to which, moreover, he directly returned after any significant event: for example, after the

¹³ Stage 6 – Early Adulthood: Intimacy versus Isolation: Ego-gain – Love.

¹⁴ In reading Ramathaim-zophim – הרמתים צופים (1:1) and Ramah – הרמתה (1:19; 2:11; 7:17; 8:4; 15:34; 16:13; 19:18; 19:22; 19:23) as the same town, I follow Driver. See his discussion 1913:1-3. Also cf. Fokkelman, 1993:7-10, who arrives at the same conclusion.

Agag affair, “Then Samuel went to Ramah” (1 Sam 15:34), and the anointing of David, “So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah” (1 Sam 16:13). We know that he married during this period as we later hear of his sons. This, however, raises the question as to why no mention whatsoever is made of his wife, perhaps even wives. Despite the text’s tendency to focus only on those events in the protagonist’s life which move the narrative purpose forward, I want to reiterate here that a psychological analysis allows us to shed fresh insight on, as it were, the “unspoken word”. Thus, regarding the question of Samuel’s wife or wives, Zeligs, for example, proposes that

a complete omission of this kind is unusual even though the Bible tends to treat such matters casually, for the most part ... We can assume that this area of Samuel’s life was a conflictful one and therefore subject to repression (1988:106).

But, neither do we hear anything of Elkanah and Hannah or of his siblings. This omission in the text, however, is exactly in line with Erikson’s theory. ‘Intimacy’ and ‘isolation’ are the polarities of Stage 6, but ‘intimacy’, or “true genitality”, as Erikson terms it, can only be shared with the loved one if the individual has achieved a mature identity. It offers mutual benefits to both partners in the form of “trust ... a willingness to regulate the cycles of work, procreation and recreation (and) to secure to the offspring ... satisfactory development” (Erikson 1963:266). This is also the description of the ego gain of *love* which is associated with this stage. But ‘intimacy’ is exactly what Samuel has *not* achieved or, I want to propose, the text would have made some mention of his wife and children, his five siblings in Ramah, or his parents were they still alive. The reader would have expected some rejoicing at his return home and subsequent marriage. In Erikson’s estimation,

the youth who is not sure of his identity shies away from interpersonal intimacy ... or he may settle for highly stereotyped interpersonal relations and come to retain a deep sense of isolation (1968:135-6).

This could reasonably explain the lack of textual support for Samuel’s personal life: he shared a real intimacy with no one. And we must not forget that this ‘isolation’ is an extension of, and compounded by, the *distantiation* and detachment developed early in childhood and sustained throughout his youth. But there is more telling evidence to substantiate my thesis. Erikson argues that:

If the times favour an impersonal kind of interpersonal pattern, a man can go far, very far, in life and yet harbour a severe character problem doubly painful

because he will never feel really himself, although everyone says he is 'somebody' (1968:136).

And the 'somebody' Samuel represents to all Israel is not, I want to suggest, Samuel in himself, but the Samuel whom the narrative celebrates as the man who came to appoint, by whatever means, the first Israelite kings.

Of the ego-strength *love*, like play earlier, we hear nothing. And this despite the fact that the text had begun with a convention equating Samuel to the patriarchal fathers – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – who were famous for their devotion to their wives and their sons. Erikson frequently refers to Freud's description of what a normal person should be able to do well: "*Lieben und arbeiten*" ("to love and to work"). By this, Erikson elaborates, is meant a

generosity of intimacy (and) a general work productiveness which would not preoccupy the individual to the extent that he might lose his right or capacity to be a sexual and a loving being (1968:136).

Apropos this, I want to argue that Samuel continues to be locked in the frantic endeavours of an extended moratorium period. He is all work and no play. Certainly, there is no *love*, which should be the natural outcome of a successful resolution of Stage 6. I surmise therefore that instead of 'intimacy', its opposite, 'isolation', which is found when an identity crisis has not been resolved, continued to plague Samuel. This behaviour with its *distantiation*, as I argued earlier, Samuel had developed as a child and resulted in a "readiness to isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own" (Erikson 1963:264). And Samuel does seem to behave in this way, especially with his sons. In the first place, "he made (וַיַּשֵּׂם) them judges" (1 Sam 8:1). This action breaks with the Biblical convention we have come to expect. They were neither raised up by the Lord nor were they apparently chosen on their charismatic qualities. They were "made" judges by Samuel, not, I want to suggest, out of a deep concern for his sons but more as a result of his own dynastic aspirations. The idea of hereditary succession for the leadership is indeed hubristic in Samuel. As Fokkelman notes:

(it) had been tried once before, in the book of Judges, and rejected (by Gideon), and those Judges who were at the same time deliverers never tried to have children continue their work (1993:326).

This is Samuel's idea entirely. In the second place, when he does appoint his sons as judges, he sets them up miles from his own chosen sphere of operation – in Beer-sheba – where they are unable to be guided by his influence. In the third, when they do go astray, he takes no action to reprimand them. "Eli had at least taken the trouble to call his sons to account" (Fokkelman 1993:329). And Samuel was aware of this. Yet, where his "work", as mouthpiece for Yahweh, is concerned he is quick enough to call the Israelites to account and to demand that they "put away the strange gods and the Ashtaroth" and serve the Lord (1 Sam 7:3). In this, Fokkelman suggests that Samuel shows a "blind spot" towards his sons. But I want to argue that the "blind spot" was not motivated by love. On the contrary, it was the very opposite. In the same way as Erikson accounted for the failure of Gandhi's relationship with his sons so, I suggest, it is possible to account for Samuel's relationship with his sons. Erikson argued that "from his own sons, Gandhi demands the most and expects the worst – that is, he associates his sons with what is worst in himself" (1970a:320). This is what I want to suggest occurred with Samuel and his sons, with the result that

nothing is left for the son(s) to correct or complete, nothing to live out which in the old man's life remained recognizably un-lived as a mourned or abandoned potential – except the old man's negative identity¹⁵, his 'murdered self' (Erikson 1970a:140).

In other words, I postulate that Samuel projected on to his sons what was worst in himself, specifically the inferiority engendered by the 'shame' and 'doubt', a hangover of the unresolved crisis of Stage 2.

3.8 *The Prophet*

Erikson's Adulthood, Stage 7¹⁶, is also comprehended in these unaccounted twenty years. The polarities identified in Adulthood are 'generativity' versus 'self-obsession' and 'stagnation' with, where the maturation crisis has been successful, the achievement of the ego-strength of *care*. 'Generativity' is that crucial link that an individual with an integrated identity is able to establish with the younger generation. Where 'generativity' is not achieved, Erikson argues, such persons are not above treating themselves as their

¹⁵ See Glossary.

¹⁶ Stage 7 – Adult: Generativity versus Self-Obsession and Stagnation: Ego-gain – *Care*.

own child¹⁷. This I want to suggest is the case with Samuel. His obsession to have Israel follow after Yahweh, on the face of it, appears as a concern for the wellbeing of the people. But it is not the “altruistic concern” Erikson believes is attained at this stage (1968:138). In my reading, it is nothing more than self-obsession and self-righteousness as his speech (1 Sam 12:1-15) after the official inauguration of Saul as monarch demonstrates (I will analyse this in detail later). It is wholly inappropriate for the occasion. Instead of celebrating the event and the monarchy, the first part of his speech (1 Sam 12:2-3) focuses, almost childishly, entirely on himself, making an appeal for his advanced years and his overall innocence, despite the fact that no one had questioned his behaviour or his integrity. It also illustrates a ‘stagnation’ in its monotonous repetition of the old conventional formulas – “fear the Lord”, “serve him”, do not “rebel against the commandment of the Lord” (1 Sam 12:14), “if ye do not hearken unto the voice of the Lord” (1 Sam 12:15). And while we can argue that this is precisely what a prophet has to do – continually remind the people of their duty to Yahweh – Samuel shows none of the creative imagination, uses none of the symbolic language we have come to associate with the later great prophets. Certainly, there is no sense here of a real caring for Israel beyond insisting on their behaving in a righteous manner, that is, exactly like himself.

As to Samuel’s work during this period, I want to suggest that he found occupation in an affiliation with the local ecstatic prophets, who were, no doubt, the closest group of persons to his chosen affinity. We know from Saul’s, “what shall we bring the man” and his servant’s response, “a fourth part of a shekel of silver” (1 Sam 9:7-8), how such persons earned their living. Samuel, who had gained the reputation of being a prophet in his youth (“And all Israel ... knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord” – 1 Sam 3:20), would naturally attract followers of the ecstatic kind, the would-be prophets. Clearly, there are a number of instances in the narrative which point to his intimate knowledge of such individuals and even where they may be found: the three encounters with such men he foretells Saul will have on his return home:

two men by Rachel’s sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah (1 Sam 10:2);
at the oak of Tabor, ... three men going up to God to Beth-el (1 Sam 10:3);
and,

¹⁷ See my Chapter on Erikson, p18.

at the hill of God ... a band of prophets coming down from the high place (1 Sam 10:5).

Then, too, when Samuel and David flee Saul's wrath they join the prophets in Naioth where we are told that Samuel was "standing as head over them" (1 Sam 19:20).

And I am not alone in this interpretation. Eslinger when discussing Saul's behaviour with the prophets in 1 Sam 10:11-12, says that "the reader ... at least knows that Samuel was able to predict the movement of these prophets", though, of course, in Eslinger's interpretation it is Yahweh who had "orchestrated the entire meeting" (1985:332).

Nevertheless, Eslinger notes that "subsequent events ... will confirm the reader's suspicion that Samuel is indeed the head of the band of prophets (*ibid.*). Fokkelman, too, concludes likewise: The man who initiates Saul into prophesying "has in common with the irresistible band" the status of prophet (1993:420). Furthermore, Fokkelman argues that

the connection suggests that the band which has a trance experience here in ch.10 is the same group as "the prophets" in "Naioth at Ramah" of ch.19 (and that) they have been situated here by him (Samuel) as a climactic third encounter (for Saul) (*ibid.*).

After the elders' request to Samuel to "make us a king" (1 Sam 8:5) and when Samuel is on the lookout for a suitable royal candidate, we have another clue to Samuel's being part of this sect of prophets. This occurs in the episode with Saul and the asses. Samuel's apparent prescience in this episode is easily explained on the same premise. The asses – remarkable beasts – take their owner's son (more than 50 miles from home!) through the hill country of Ephraim, the lands of Shalishah, Shaalim, the Benjamites and Zuph – that is, into Samuel's area of operation. In this regard, I want to suggest the following scenario. When Samuel is on the lookout for a possible king of Israel, he sends word out to his various devotees to scout the country for a suitable candidate. The candidate is found but the prophet is too rigid a man of habit to vary his circuit, even though now a judge: "And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpah" (1 Sam 7:16) – a very circumscribed area. So the asses are lured away on the good chance that the candidate will be sent after them¹⁸. At the point of abandoning the search

¹⁸ I might add that Polzin, approaching the issue of the lost asses from an entirely different methodology, and in an attempt to explain Samuel's dilatory response to God's agreement that he grant the people a king, comes to the same conclusion: "God is shown as having decided

– Saul and the servant have run out of provisions – the servant, miles from home, suddenly has knowledge that there is a “man-of-God” in the city of whom “all that he saith cometh surely to pass” (1 Sam 9:6). According to Eslinger, “the narrator employs the servant temporarily to divulge this important information at a point when Saul was threatening to turn back” (1985:291). Nevertheless, the narrator does not tell us from whom the servant gets this information. But it is reasonable to assume that, like all good servants, he was a gossip and had been chatting to the very person(s) who had lured away the asses. It is after all in the nature of disciples to believe implicitly in their leader/teacher and to vouch for his superior talents, in this case, his predictive abilities. It is hardly surprising then that the seer not only knows who Saul and his servant are, he knows, too, where the asses are and that Saul will probably need supplies for his journey home!

I want to digress here with an observation. Fokkelman, in his analysis of a ‘first reading’, also discovers an undercover operation in relation to the asses: “What is hidden from Saul’s view ... is that the asses are taken care of by an agent not mentioned by name and that they will return home” (1993:364). His ‘second reading’, like Eslinger, discovers this agent to be God (1993:365). Be that as it may. But it is interesting that both scholars, and my own reading, suggest that “someone” was meddling with the asses! They could never have managed the long journey on their own.

As to Samuel’s role as prophet, this episode with Saul and the asses is equally informative. Neither Saul’s servant, who suggests they seek out the “man-of-God”, nor the young maidens from whom they enquire, appear to be aware of the actual name of “the seer”. The excitement of the girls appears to arise as much from the occasion as from the presence of the seer himself – “make haste now, for he is come today into the city; for the people have a sacrifice today in the high place” (1 Sam 9:12). When Saul enquires after the whereabouts of the seer from Samuel, the latter replies self-importantly, “I am the seer” (1 Sam 9:19). It suggests that he neither relinquishes the role nor holds it of any less importance than that of judge. This is confirmed by an apparently apologetic narrator, who is at pains to explain the notion in a gloss:

that if Samuel will not go to Saul, Saul will have to come to Samuel”(!), 1989:90.

Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was before time called a Seer (1 Sam 9:9) (see more below).

It is clear that the narrator is more concerned with the notion of Samuel as a prophet rather than as a judge-leader. And Samuel, according to Sternberg,

nothing loath to cultivate his image ... goes on to profess (“All that is in thy heart I will tell the”) those very occult powers with which the popular imagination credits him (“Perhaps he will tell us our way”) (1987:96).

At this level, Sternberg continues, the idea of prophet is wholly undermined:

The very term ‘man of God’ has lost its original meaning – as indicated by the wholly secular context, the triviality of the inquiry, the recurrence of the abbreviation ‘man’ – and the stereotype disengages and elevates the man at God’s expense ... To cut the prophet down to size, the narrator brings to bear on him a series of three referring terms, each pointing to a different side or view of the office and the attack escalating in accordance with the liability to ideological abuse (1987:95).

In other words, Sternberg is arguing that even at the level of prophet, the narrator is anxious to keep Samuel’s status within check.

Finally, while on the subject, I need to address the problem of the gloss, which has been subject to much scholarly debate:

Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come and let us go to the seer (רֹאֵה): for he that is now called a Prophet, was beforetime called a seer (1 Sam 9:9).

One explanation Fenton offers is that the

sudden introduction of the word *ro’eh* (רֹאֵה) (by Saul in 1 Sam 9:11) would cause an extreme dislocation of expectation – and growing discomfort as the new term is continually repeated and no further reference made to the man of God (1997:27).

From my perspective the question that Fenton’s explanation does not address is why the narrator bothered to use the term at all. He could as easily have used man-of-God and not discomforted anyone (cf.. Sternberg 1987:95). Though Fenton’s article – a comprehensive scholarly review of the current debate – concludes that this is a gloss, he

does also suggest *a fortiori* that the terms man-of-God and seer are interchangeable: “in ancient traditions (they) reflect individual or local preferences and there is no point in attempting to attribute different ‘prophetic’ functions on the basis of etymology” (1997:31). As Fenton goes on to suggest that the “seer” may be a mere clairvoyant or ecstatic prophet, I believe that the apologetic insertion of the author regarding the appellation “seer”, instead of offering an explanation, only underlines Samuel’s dubious status as prophet.

But this, I want to suggest, is not the only point the narrator is making in terms of the gloss. This is also an indictment against Samuel’s leadership ability. In this assessment, I follow Sternberg’s ironic counteraction argument. It makes “sense in terms of image shattering – a thrust against the inflated figure cut by the prophet in the popular imagination” (1987:95). This episode takes place *after* Samuel’s sacrifice had resulted in the routing of the Philistines, *after* he had set up the memorial stone at Eben-ezer, *after* the consequent peace in the land and now, in Samuel’s term as a judge of Israel. By calling him seer, and an apparently unknown seer at that, the narrator actually undermines Samuel’s authority. Samuel has, we can infer, simply returned to his customary habits. In fact, Samuel should be above and beyond the level of prophesying or divining, now that he is said to judge Israel. Samuel, however, does not manifest the charisma or insight of a judge as we have come to know them in the Book of Judges. This is apparent in his approach to Saul in 1 Sam 9:19-20 which reveals a complete lack of understanding or empathy. Saul’s only desire at this moment is to find the location of the seer, and with his last “fourth part of a shekel” as gift, discover, through divination, the whereabouts of his asses. But his quest is cut short, his request pre-empted. Samuel already knows that he would meet up with Saul. Consequently, he leads immediately into what is foremost on his own mind – “I will ... tell thee all that is in thine heart” (1 Sam 9:19) – sidetracks to a peremptory dismissal of the asses – “As to thine asses ... they are found”, no doubt in the face of Saul’s incomprehension and bewilderment – and returns again to his own concerns – “And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for thee, and for all thy father’s house?” (1 Sam 9:20). In these two questions, Samuel assumes wholly inappropriately that Saul knows exactly why he is there. He assumes, in fact, that the artless Saul knows he is there to be made a king. It is a familiar fault with Samuel – projection, when “we experience an inner harm (or desire) as an outer one: we endow significant people with the evil which actually is in us” (Erikson

1963:248-9). In other words, Samuel's assumption that Saul must be expecting the kingship exposes his own ambition, the ambition that had prompted him to "make" his sons judges and thereby set up his own dynasty.

3.9 Samuel as Military Leader

To return to Samuel's reappearance on the scene after a twenty-year absence, Eslinger says: "No politician could have timed his campaign better than Samuel" (1985:233). However, Samuel's previous and subsequent behaviour does not support such an encomium on his leadership ability. I want to suggest that Samuel, in his obsession for righteousness, dedicated to the particular service of Yahweh, had, during his long period of moratorium, been preaching the putting away of Baalim and Ashtoroth but to no great effect. Else whence the continual presence of the Baalim and Ashtoroth when Samuel does break his long silence? (1 Sam 7:3) Eslinger concurs, if for different reasons:

Though the narrator does not himself tell us when Israel turned to these substitute deities, he does confirm (v.4) the fact that Israel did turn to other gods. Given their unstinting devotion to Yahweh, even after the disaster in ch. 4/4/, it seems that they turned to these other gods out of desperation (1985:234).

It is only now when the Israelites are at the limit of their endurance that they finally listen to Samuel: "then the children of Israel did put away the Baalim and Ashtoroth, and served the Lord *only*" (italics mine) (1 Sam 7:4). It is Samuel's proposal of a general gathering, not a call for military action, which animates the Philistines into action. Israel's reaction to the Philistine mobilisation is not one of defiance but one of fear: "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam 7:8). Such a cry suggests that they had no faith in Samuel as a military leader. And they were not unjustified. Samuel's action was indeed reckless. A massed congregation of a subject people to solicit the help of their God is asking for trouble. The ruling power is sure to react. We know from the last engagement that the Philistines were nervous of the Israelites' "mighty gods" (1 Sam 4:8). (Recall, they had first-hand experience with the Ark! – 1 Sam 6.) The thunderstorm which occurs during the sacrifice is, I want to suggest, a veritable *deus ex machina*, introduced by the narrator to legitimise Samuel's action in this affair which, as I have shown, was not that of a leader with any real military insight. This suggestion is not as implausible as it seems. Eslinger points out that thunder (רעם) – 1

Sam 7:10) is common to theophanies (1985:413), that is, to a superstitious people. In a superstitious age, it is not surprising that thunder, supposedly brought on as a result of a sacrificial offering to a powerful God would have routed the Philistines. Equally, it is not surprising that the Israelites, under the same misconception, were inspired to pursue their oppressors and hence inadvertently win the day.¹⁹

3.10 *The Question of Samuel's Role as Priest and Judge*

Samuel's role on this day does point to other ideas. My analysis has argued that his original ambition was to be that of priest, the faithful one, in fact, raised up to assume the role of Eli. Now for the first time he gets the opportunity to "act out" that role with, apparently, the Lord's sanction – the thundering! It is he who before the assembled masses plays the central role in the offering up of the "whole burnt offering" (1 Sam 7:9), it is he who becomes, according to Eslinger, "the new intermediary" between the people and their God (1985:237). Nevertheless, on the subject of sacrifice, Eslinger will later quote Wildberger's note that "sacrificial duties are not the usual province of a seer, or even a prophet (1957:462)"²⁰ (1985:300). For my argument, I also want to point out that Samuel, in fact, was not the only non-priest who had offered sacrifice. De Vaux, in his discussion on sacrifice in Israel, notes that Gideon (Judg 6:21 and 25), Samson's father, Manoah, (Judg 13:16), Elkanah (1 Sam 1:3), the people of Israel when celebrating Saul's first victory (1 Sam 11:15) and Saul (1 Sam 13:8), all offered sacrifice, specifically burnt offerings (עֹלֹת) and none of them were priests (cf. 1965:355). The priesthood, De Vaux argues

was not a vocation but an office. The texts speak of a man being called or chosen by God to be a king or a prophet, but they never use the term of a priest (1965:346).

Furthermore, he states that

¹⁹ I might just mention here that Erikson, in his psychobiography of Luther, also had to deal with a thunderstorm that sent Luther into the monastery. Erikson's conclusion: "Martin can claim for his conversion only ordinary psychological attributes, *except for his professed conviction that it was God who had directed an otherwise ordinary thunderstorm straight toward him*" (my italics) (1958:90). And these psychological attributes amounted to "an excessive expectation of catastrophe (and) an all-too-anxious wish to be ready for the judgment" (1958:56).

²⁰ Wildberger, H (1957). "Samuel und die Entstehung des israelitischen Königtums." TZ 13:442-69.

the priest Eli seems to be the guardian of the sanctuary (1 Sam 1:9) (and) the ‘priest’s right’, against which his sons offended, refers only to the right the priests had to a part of the victims (1 Sam 2:12-17) (1965:355).

Yet Samuel cannot be said to be a “guardian of the sanctuary” despite his subsequent erection of an altar at Ramah (1 Sam 7:17) because he now becomes too peripatetic, “he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah” (1 Sam 7:16). It is reasonable to assume that it was Samuel’s role as judge, and not that of priest, which took him on circuit. If he participated in any “priestly” activity at any of the four sanctuaries²¹, I want to suggest it was circumscribed to “blessing” the sacrifice as he had done in the unnamed city in which he encountered Saul (1 Sam 9:6). Logically, therefore Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah must have had their own resident priest even if the priestly guardian at Ramah had been installed by Samuel himself.

Thus, for all its moment of glory, this sacrifice yet does not make Samuel the priest of his ambition. In fact, my analysis of Samuel’s family relationships has pointed to the fact that Samuel’s character is so wholly crippled by his childhood betrayal that his period of moratorium is never transcended. He remained locked into this cycle with its “fanatic concentration on activities which maintain whatever work habits the individual may have preserved” (Erikson 1958:42), which in Samuel’s case is that of proselytising prophet. He is fixated in Erikson’s Stage 5 – Adolescence. This will explain why, after this resounding success, Samuel returns to his regular employment, not offering sacrifices but only blessing them as we are shown in the Saul *cum* seer episode (1 Sam 9:13). In Fenton’s interpretation, the maidens’ excited explanation to Saul with its “unnecessary detail”, allows the narrator to “linger over the detail of the human situation beyond the requirements of his lofty purpose” (1997:24-25). Clearly Fenton’s obvious delight in the charm of this literary exchange confuses the issue for him. Actually, the “unnecessary detail”, I believe, reveals a lot. As I said, Samuel is here, in 1 Sam 9:13, presented not as the one who is sacrificing, but only as the one who is blessing the sacrifice. In other words, being the one who sacrificed was not his usual role, as the exchange reveals. As to the question of the “altar (built) unto the Lord in Ramah” (1 Sam 7:17), this appears to occur only now after the defeat of the Philistines, and even Saul was to do the same after success in battle (1 Sam 14:35). And as I argued above, neither are we given any

²¹ See De Vaux, 1965:303, who confirms the existence of sanctuaries at these sites.

indication that Samuel, rather than a priest, officiated at Ramah. Certainly, we can infer from the subsequent Saul adventures that Saul is usually accompanied by a priest, to wit Ahijah (1 Sam 14:3 & 18). Thus, in Chapter 13, when Samuel fails to appear at the appointed time, we can assume a priest rather than Saul actually performed the sacrifice (but more of this episode later). However, at this time Samuel does receive a distinction peculiar to the Biblical convention. On the assumption that it was through his intervention with Yahweh that Israel was able to rout the Philistines, Samuel, like others before him, is made judge. Only now, following on the event, do we read: “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life” (1 Sam 7:15). Eslinger, quoting Weiser²², concurs that this “judging” was little more than reprimanding and proselytising:

‘And Samuel judged all Israel in Mizpah’ (1 Sam 7:5-6), is part of the author’s presentation of Samuel going about the business of reordering Israel’s disturbed relationship with Yahweh (1962:15; cf.. Budde 1902:49²³) (1985:237).

Eslinger also finds it of interest that after the battle with the Philistines Samuel, when erecting a stone to the Israeli victory, should name the place Eben-ezer – the name of the place where the Israelites were defeated and the Ark lost (cf. 1985:243). In my reading, this could be interpreted as Samuel trying to pick up from where he left off twenty years earlier, hardly a sign of ego growth on his part!

I must, however, digress for a moment and discuss the statement, “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life” (1 Sam 7:15), in more detail, as it is somewhat problematic. The Book of Judges does create the impression that the judge was the chief leader of the community. If this was the case, Samuel could not have judged Israel “all his life”. In the first place, Eli, who was both priest and judge, I have suggested only died when Samuel was in his early twenties. In the second, if Samuel circumscribes his own area of operation, who judged the rest of Israel? Are we to assume that the people from beyond this triangle had necessarily to make a pilgrimage, as it were, to Beth-el, Gilgal or Mizpah for arbitration? In the third, we are told “when Samuel was old” (1 Sam 8:1), he made both his sons judges over Israel. Does this imply that Samuel himself, because of

²² Weiser, A (1962). *Samuel: seine geschichtliche Aufgabe und religiöse Bedeutung. Traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen zu 1. Samuel 7-12.* FRLANT 81. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

²³ Budde, K (1902). *Die Bücher Richter und Samuel: Ihre Quellen und ihr Aufbau.* Giessen: J Ricker.

his age, ceased to judge and if so, why base his sons in Beer-sheba, 80 km outside of his own established circuit? In the fourth, how is it that the sole judge of Israel is mistaken for a common seer by Saul and the young maidens? In the fifth, if Samuel is sole judge of Israel, there being no priest or king, then surely his sons' misbehaviour – perverting the office of judge – would have brought God's wrath on their father who fails to control them, as it had brought divine destruction on Eli for “honouring thy sons above me”? (1 Sam 2:29). And finally, I would have to ask, in view of my suggestion of a period of moratorium, who judged Israel from the death of Eli until the position was assumed by Samuel? The logical conclusion here, is that there must have been many “judges” in Israel – it was no small area to govern. In light of this, when we are informed, after the successful routing of the Philistines, that Samuel judged Israel “all the days of his life”, it becomes difficult to assume that Samuel achieved a singular distinction by this announcement.

Nevertheless, the text does appear to privilege the Biblical convention. When the elders seek a king (1 Sam 8:5), it is Samuel to whom they make their application, implying that he does enjoy some special national status. Conversely, in acknowledging the primacy of the Biblical convention, Samuel's consequent action simultaneously undermines it. He, who received his appointment through his intervention with the Lord – had been “raised up judge” in line with the Biblical convention – now presumes to appoint judges himself. It harkens back to Samuel's youthful belief in a “deep sense of personal destiny” (Zeligs 1988:100), which his term as judge, despite being singularly uneventful, had confirmed. But it also exposes a weakness of which his rigid righteousness was the first intimation. Samuel, the righteous of the righteous, the servant of the Lord, now takes it upon himself to usurp divine authority and appoint those judges whom, for the most part, the Lord himself had “raised up”. Now Samuel breaks with this divine order, and the judges he does appoint are not even chosen from the most righteous of the people, they are his own sons, his heirs! And again, defying the Biblical convention, they are appointed simultaneously. It is my contention that the coincidence of this situation with that of Eli – two sons, both of whom are appointed judges, as I said simultaneously, and both of whom are corrupt – is not accidental. It not only exposes in Samuel a stubborn ambition, but is also an implicit criticism by the narrator of such an hubristic presumption. It was a disaster for Eli, and yet he was justified in the appointment of sons, they were a family of priests. It has to be a disaster for Samuel. He was not justified in this appointment.

It comes as no surprise then that Samuel's "dynastic instinct" (Polzin 1989:79) should eventually precipitate a crisis. When Samuel is old, "all the elders of Israel" approach him to "make us a king" because "thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways" (1 Sam 8:5).

Chapter 4

THE MAKER OF KINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we encounter Samuel in Erikson's Stage 8, Maturity. I shall begin my analysis by attempting to unpack Samuel's personal reaction to the elders' request for a king. I shall then endeavour to proffer an explanation as to his means and motives for effecting such an appointment. In section two, "An Ill-fated Alliance", I go on to explore the relationship and subsequent conflicts that arise between Saul, the newly appointed king, and Samuel, specifically as a result of Saul's first success against the Ammonites. Sections four and five continue this investigation through an examination the next two significant offensives mounted by Saul against the Philistines and Amalek and Samuel's reaction after each of these battles.

4.2 Insurrection

I want first to explore just how "old" Samuel could have been at the time of the elders' request for king. We are told that the Philistines were vanquished and that there was peace with the Amorites during Samuel's period of judgement (1 Sam 7:13 & 14). These verses, Eslinger argues,

summarize Samuel's 'military' career in a formulaic pattern known from the book of Judges ... (a) summary designed to convey the impression of a lengthy period of peaceful existence in Israel (1985:244).

I want to suggest – to maintain the pattern of silence established earlier – that this was a second period of twenty years. As the narrative has nothing to report on Samuel's activities during this period, we can assume that the only significant change to his habits now was that of judging Israel (1 Sam 7:15). What this designation implied is ambiguous. De Vaux's exhaustive study concludes that in the Book of Judges, "the 'Judges' were 'saviours' marked out by God to set his people free" (1965:215). "Nothing is said about their actually functioning as rulers; only their military achievements are recorded" (De Vaux 1965:93). I must conclude therefore that Samuel's activity as judge, like the judges in Judges and Eli before him, was of no uncommon import or we should have heard something of it. (I noted earlier in my discussion on the "gloss" – 1 Sam 9:9 – that the narrator appears to privilege Samuel's status as prophet (seer) over that of judge.) In my estimation, then, Samuel would now be about the age of 60-65 – we know

that he is old (1 Sam 8:1 and 12:2), and that his two sons are mature. This would place him in Erikson's Stage 8¹ – Maturity – with its polarities of 'integrity' versus 'despair' and the ego gain of *wisdom*. By Erikson's account, integrity comprehends the total acceptance of the responsibility for one's own life, enabling one to acknowledge the existence of other kinds of lives and other kinds of meaning without diminishing the dignity and value of one's own choice. In this description, we are not to conflate Samuel's righteousness with Erikson's integrity. Righteousness is not integrity. Righteousness is absolute: it objurgates the very notion of relativity, admitting of only one meaning or interpretation. Unfortunately for the righteous Samuel, this period, which should have been a time of resting on one's laurels, of reviewing the past and accepting one's life "as something that had to be" (Erikson 1968:139), erupts into a crisis of catastrophic proportion. In Stage 8, which should represent the culmination of one's life achievements, Samuel has to deal with the people's rejection of himself, the appointment of the first Israelite king, the latter's disobedience to him, and finally, the appointment of a replacement monarch in David. According to Erikson's thesis an individual with an accrued ego integration over the preceding years would be able to deal with such upheavals with insight and *wisdom*. *Wisdom*, Erikson contends, is that strength which "takes the form of that detached yet active concern with life bounded by death" (1968:140). But this is not the case with Samuel.

I have been arguing that Samuel was never able to transcend his moratorium period, that he was fixated in the stage of adolescence. Samuel's transition into maturity therefore is equally dysfunctional, as had been all his crisis-point transitions. In Stage 8, then, Samuel's psyche appears to be dominated by the negative polarity, in this case, 'despair', the awareness that there is no second chance to remedy the failures of the past. Erikson claims "despair is often hidden behind a show of disgust, a misanthropy, or a chronic contemptuous displeasure which ... signifies the individual's contempt of himself" (1968:140). This becomes evident if we analyse Samuel's post-mortem visitation to Saul at En-dor in Chapter 28. This is an ideal point to assess Erikson's statement as there are no other variables, that is crisis events, operating simultaneously. In everything Samuel has to say in this interview there is disgust, misanthropy and contemptuous displeasure. There is no greeting or acknowledgement of Saul, only an irritated complaint from

¹ Stage 8 – Maturity: Ego Integrity versus Despair: Ego-gain – *Wisdom*.

Samuel: “Why has thou disquieted me, to bring me up?” (1 Sam 28:15). In fact, even Samuel’s announcement of the impending death of Saul and his sons is hardly a surprise to the reader. It is exactly the same denunciation as Eli had received from the man-of-God regarding the fate of his house. Saul, as we know, had heard all the rest before in the same angry, bitter and resentful tone – “And the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand ... because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord” (1 Sam 28:17-18). Had Samuel achieved the *wisdom* associated with this stage, there was still the possibility of a “spontaneous recovery” during his lifetime. But, in what follows in my analysis, we will see no such occurrence. Samuel failed to achieve an integrated identity and, if anything, disintegrates further in the face of the new challenges associated with Stage 8.

To return to the elders’ appeal for a king. The narrator tells us that the elders of Israel came to Samuel and said: “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5). Nothing in the last twenty years or so could have prepared Samuel for so thorough and crushing a threefold rejection. In the first place, there was the insult of age; in the second, the rejection of one of the key principles in the ideology which underpinned the very meaning of his existence – the replacement of God with a king; in the third, the rejection of himself as judge in favour of another. (The corruption of his sons, I have earlier argued, Samuel is unable to acknowledge in his scheme of things – “his sons’ failure is too distressing a thing for him to face up to” (Fokkelman 1993:333).)

For a man whose very birth had been predicated on the basis of Biblical convention, the very notion of someone being rejected on the basis of his advanced age represents a wholly unexpected break with convention. The Biblical narrative does not retire its heroes, it buries them!² The shock of this insult is incalculable to a man like Samuel. Fokkelman’s assessment of Samuel’s response to the request is explicit: “the old man goes up the wall all of a sudden” (1993:326). There had been no prior warning. Samuel’s dynasty-building suggests that he assumed that not only would he judge Israel until death, but that his offspring would continue his work thereafter. Thus, Samuel could hardly have been aware of any dissatisfaction among the people. I want to suggest that we must look to the omniscient narrator for an explanation. In 1 Sam 8:1 the

² Gitay, Y 2003, to whom I am indebted for this observation.

narrator reports that Samuel was “old”. The fact is established. There is, I contend, no need to incorporate it into the elders’ request unless the narrator was trying to make a particular point. I want to argue that the narrator means not only to undermine the position of Samuel with the reader, but to rap the prophet over the knuckles for his hubris. Though Samuel has appeared to play the dominant role in this narrative, the narrator, by breaking the convention, is making it clear to his audience that his protagonist is deluded as to his self-importance. He does not have real leadership qualities and must therefore make way for another. We never hear of Samuel’s reaction to this particular statement (though a reference to its insulting nature will be amplified by him later in Chapter 12 after the official investment of Saul). Nevertheless, Samuel could not have been unaware of the insult. He must have known the old stories – he was nurtured in the bosom of the cult! The narrator, however, immediately waylays us into believing that it was the request for a king that “was evil in the eyes of Samuel” (1 Sam 8:6) – but, as I hope to demonstrate, the rage and confusion that follow the request suggest that it is was more than that.

The first insult having been delivered, the next two follow hard on: “now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5). On the surface, the elders’ request is not unreasonable: Samuel is old, his sons are corrupt. Eslinger argues that

the elders’ request seems entirely appropriate ... Recall, that this is a response, not simply to one instance but to recurring instances of corrupt leadership leading Israel to disaster and an apparent end to the covenant³ (cf. 4:22; 7:12) (1985: 257).

Fokkelman concurs, highlighting the impatience in the word הנה (1 Sam 8:5), which he translates as “now”:

The speakers want to be rid of the corruption at last, and probably they are especially fearful of the terrible divine consequences: the previous time the nation suffered grievously from (divine) wrath, once this was provoked by the sons of Eli (1993:330).

Eslinger concludes that Samuel, “is unable to see the justice and necessity of the elders’ request as an attempt to prevent a repetition of the previous disaster” (1985:261). And this is the point in my estimation. The “justice” alluded to, is nothing to Samuel. Samuel

³ I will discuss the covenantal relationship briefly below.

is far more concerned with his own rejection. As prophet and judge, he wielded great power and the stick with which he wielded that power was the fear of Yahweh. Without that stick he was nothing. Now, at the elders' request – effectively a separation of the powers of Church and State – his own position would be undermined and the place of Yahweh usurped by a king. It was a request that struck at the heart of his own self-doubt. A man of integrity, a true charismatic judge, could easily have countered the elders' request. It had been done before. Samuel could have referred to Gideon, who in a similar situation, opposed the people's request (Judg 8:23). (In fact, he eventually does use this argument at the time of renewing Saul's kingship in Gilgal (1 Sam 12:12).) By the same token, he could have referred to Abimelech, Gideon's son by his concubine, who does become king, albeit by foul means, and comes to a sticky end (Judg 9:6). Indeed, later in the text Samuel does appeal *a fortiori* that "God was your king" (1 Sam 12:12).

I want to argue that Samuel's silence at this crucial moment, in the face of the triple insult, reflects the beginning of a breakdown of his fragile unintegrated ego. In Erikson's estimation:

It opened the floodgate of infantile urges which (were) so rigidly held in abeyance. For in all his rigidity only part of his personality had genuinely matured, while another part has been supported by the very props which now collapsed (1963:43).

Those props, I want to suggest, were his righteousness and, consequently, the people's unquestioning acceptance of him as prophet and judge, which deluded Samuel into a belief of his own power and self-importance. But it was an obdurate delusion rather than one based on a solid foundation. There always remained the possibility of exposure. The "dialogue" with the Lord which follows – the very first "words of the Lord" the reader is privy to since his childhood – suggest that something momentous is taking place.

According to Zeligs, Samuel behaves

as though he were the only source of knowledge available to God himself concerning what the people said. The grandiosity implied here can be understood as compensatory for Samuel's sense of wounded self-esteem (1988:111).

Fokkelman argues in the same vein: "Samuel lets his Lord know (that is, his subconscious in my reading) about distress, shock, disappointment, indignation, and perhaps even fury concerning the political demand" (1993:333). I have noted that this is

a crucial crisis point for Samuel. It is not only a crisis of Stage 8 where ‘ego-integrity’ contends against ‘despair’, it is an accumulation of lifelong unresolved crises. In the people’s rejection of him, there is also the trauma of ‘separation anxiety’ which would have manifested at this moment. I want to argue that, in an Eriksonian sense, Samuel is once again propelled into the same situation of betrayal and lack of appropriate recognition as he had experienced in childhood. In the crisis that erupts, a state of borderline psychosis is again manifest. The boundary between “servant of the Lord” and “the Lord” (never very clear to Samuel) begins to unravel in his mind. Hence, at the onset, “God-Samuel, in a state of confusion and fury, does the unexpected – he apparently agrees to the request: “Harken unto the voice of the people”. It is the initial reaction of an individual, who inherently feels himself insecure and powerless, to give way in order to retain favour and acceptance. Nevertheless, the compulsive side of Samuel also comes into action here, always a palliative to his anxiety, and he harks back to the old tried formulas. God-Samuel reiterates the conventional divine complaint against Israel:

they have rejected me ... According to all the works which they had done since the day that I brought them out of Egypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods (1 Sam 8:7-8).

In the final phrase of verse 8, however, the balance again shifts. The truth Samuel is trying so hard to suppress, by projecting guilt on to the people for the evil of rejecting the Lord, surfaces: “so do they also unto thee”, that is, they reject you, Samuel. But even in this, there is grandiosity. He equates the people’s betrayal of the Lord with their betrayal of himself. I want to argue that it is in this realization – of a personal rejection – that God-Samuel’s “Hearken unto their voice” is now followed by the addition of, “Howbeit, thou shalt indeed bear witness against them” (1 Sam 8:9), that is, castigate them for this outrage against myself. It is only in his righteousness that Samuel had any security and authority.

Before I proceed, I want to call attention to Fokkelman’s structural analysis on this first part of Samuel’s dialogue with God – his subconscious in my interpretation – which is in line with the above. In his overview of 1 Sam 8:7-9, Fokkelman argues that what we encounter here is “a speech the logic of which is hardly valid” (1993:335), this lack of logic brought on by what I have identified as Samuel’s psychosis. Later again, Fokkelman states that the speech, “is chock full of tension (and) betrays how agitated the

speaker in actual fact is ... because he feels rejected” (1993:339). Moreover, he argues that in 1 Sam 8:7, God

goes into the emotional desperation of his spokesman, before introducing historical depth (in verse 8) and subsequently puts a weapon into Samuel’s hands, and incites him to be troublesome (*ibid.*).

The weapon he refers to is, of course, “the manner of the king that shall reign over them” (1 Sam 8:9). Finally, Fokkelman notes the contradiction between 1 Sam 8:7 and 8. In verse 7, God reassures Samuel that “they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me”. In verse 8, he makes an about turn: “so do they also unto thee”. “This”, Fokkelman argues “brings Samuel back to square one, although (verse) 7c was an attempt to prevent this” (1993:340). Nevertheless, Fokkelman specifically does not try to “harmonize” the contradiction, preferring instead to view it as “another sign of tension in the speaker” (1993:341). Eslinger, also finds “God” somewhat suspect here: “The simple act of attention to the question ‘Who says what?’ soon reveals who the real antimonarchist is in Ch. 8, and he is definitely not the narrator” (1985:260). He concludes:

Yahweh may voice antimonarchic sentiments in v.8, but his views, because they are subordinate to the narrator’s, are to be regarded as expressions of personal opinion, not statements of fact (1985:267).

They are Samuel’s opinion, I want to suggest.

Eslinger has an interesting argument here regarding the role of God, in which his “Yahweh” correlates perfectly with my notion of Samuel’s subconscious. I shall summarise briefly. Eslinger agrees with McCarthy who states that, “the fundamental thing threatened by Israel’s action (the elders’ request) was the covenant relationship” (1973:412). What the elders are really requesting, Eslinger argues, is a replacement of the system of judges with that of a king because the existing covenantal constitution was found wanting and unjust. There had been “recurring instances of corrupt leadership” which had inevitably led to disaster and the fault, Eslinger suggests, lies “wholly on the side of Yahweh and his chosen mediators” (1985:255). The elders therefore take the initiative by proposing a new form of government which may avert a repetition of the past. God’s response, however, is anything but favourable. According to Eslinger, Yahweh

leaves out any mention of his own part in the disaster ... because he has no one to answer to ... Yahweh's self-quotation becomes the sarcastic response of an unmoving, all powerful God who will not admit his mistakes /34a/ ... and the fact that he gives in even halfway to the request indicates that its justice requires (him) to recognize it (1985:307).

This is a fair portrait of Samuel, I want to suggest.

Polzin calls the manner-of-the-king speech (1 Sam 8:11-17) that follows, by "the imperceptive lad of chapter 3", that of a now "stubborn, self-interested" man (1989:83). It does not address the responsibilities of kingship, only the inherent evils, "and one can only conclude that (Samuel's) speech is to be understood as an attempt to delay, if not also to subvert, the Lord's decision" (1989:86.). Moreover, he argues that

What is missing ... is precisely what the context clearly calls for – appropriate prophetic and judicial witness or admonition about past sins or future obligations (*ibid.*).

By context, he refers to the phrase "protest solemnly unto them" (העיד תעיד ביהם) (1 Sam 8:9), which is always followed by such protestations in all other occurrences in the Bible (*ibid.*). Polzin's argument supports my psychological reading of the situation: Samuel is more concerned with the diminishing ("rejection") of himself if such a request is granted (cf. 1989:87). Fokkelman, in a similar argument on the same phrase, concludes that it

sharply illustrates how difficult and bitter it is for Samuel to be replaced by someone who is 'desired' (by the people), whilst he himself was destined to be 'desired' on God's part for a lifetime (1993:346).

Or at least he believes himself to be so. Hence Samuel's manner-of-the-king speech is an attempt to dissuade the elders from their purpose and postpone the decision. "Moreover", Polzin argues

Samuel's words in verses 11-18 are full of self-interest, and this understanding of them corresponds both to the people's subsequent reaction and Samuel's own lack of action at the end of the chapter (1989:87).

Under the circumstances, the depiction of only the negative aspects – essentially the tithing practices necessary to maintain a monarchy – by a man, moreover, whose sons had no such justification for their own corrupt behaviour, was not geared to persuade. The devastating "allusion to Judges, especially to the cyclic scheme of historiography

there” which Fokkelman points out (1993:352), succeeds no better. The people, deaf to Samuel’s threat that “ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not answer you” (1 Sam 8:18), only become more insistent. His, “Harken unto their voice, and make them a king” (1 Sam 8:22), an internalised injunction he now pronounces for the third time, again illustrates the underlying tension. In the emotional confusion of his crisis, Samuel is oblivious of the fact that he has all along been conducting a mental dialogue, oblivious to the fact that the people themselves are not aware of the “Harken unto their voice, and make them a king”. They receive no further response from Samuel beyond a dictatorial, “Go ye every man unto his city” (1 Sam 8:22). “The reader develops a picture of a judge whose words and inaction show him to be obstructive in a self-interested way” (Polzin 1989:84).

Fokkelman calls Samuel’s dismissal of the people “obscure” and suggests that it “invites guesswork” (1993:354). In my analysis, however, it is quite clear. The question why Samuel does not take action at this point on the appointment of a king relates to his own present labile, that is, unstable condition. Samuel simply does not yet know who or how! In this I am not far off Eslinger’s conclusion:

Samuel does not immediately make the king because he does not know what kind of king Yahweh has in mind, and he refuses to make the kind of king that the people have in mind (1985:282).

Fokkelman makes an interesting comment regarding the situation, which I quote in full:

What goes on in the character of Samuel after the people’s request for a king is kept secret in this story. But it is not likely that suddenly, from one day to the next, he has lost all his inhibitions after so much unwillingness, protest and thorough warning against exploitation plus the causing of postponement. Viewed psychologically, it is more balanced to assess his situation in such a way that in this phase he makes a start at getting used to the idea that God allows kingship and to suspect that within the scope of the ‘yes’ of his Lord there is plenty of room to manoeuvre and manipulate both people and candidate for the throne (1993:424).

In other words, Fokkelman is suggesting that from the very outset, Samuel has Machiavellian motives in mind.

4.3 *An Ill-fated Alliance*

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, from the very beginning of his relationship with Saul, Samuel's behaviour to the king he himself appointed was jealously coercive and tyrannical. I want to suggest that Saul's own account of himself, "Am I not ... of the smallest of the tribes of Israel ... and the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin" (1 Sam 9:21), reflects Samuel's exact description to his disciples in their search for a royal candidate, and this for two reasons. In the first, in his directions regarding the "ideal" candidate, I want to argue, Samuel had a precedent to guide his selection – Gideon (who is the first in the list of judges that Samuel presents to the people in his anti-king speech - 1 Sam 12:11). Samuel sought a man, with a similar background to this first man whom the Israelites had asked to rule over them: "my family is forsaken (הודל) in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judg 6:15). In the second, only a man drawn from the humblest of the humble would satisfy Samuel's unbending sense of righteousness and his need to command. That Saul was at the same time "goodly" and stood "from his shoulders and upward ... higher than any of the people" (1 Sam 9:2), no doubt accounted for the choice of him over any of his immediate brethren. The king supposedly chosen by the Lord, though weak and under Samuel's control, must at least look the part, and Samuel will drive home this illusion: "See ye him who the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" (1 Sam 10:24). Eslinger reaches a similar conclusion in his analysis:

That Yahweh had Saul's attractive size in mind from the very start of his operation to subvert the proposed monarchy is evident from 9.2 ... the size of the giant is the bait that, when taken by the people, will spring the trap of the *nagîd* on the unsuspecting victims (1985:349).

And Fokkelman concurs:

The crown has already been manipulated so much through the steps which have just been made in Mizpah (see below), and through it (the people) are so sure of God's conducting the meeting that, without a moment's hesitation, they observe the large frame of Saul to be the proof of his destiny (1993:448).

The criticism frequently levelled against Samuel for being gulled by "appearances" is not so valid in my analysis. In fact, I want to suggest it was a vital part of Samuel's plan.

Saul is Yahweh and Samuel's dupe; the success of their operation depends on their total control of him ... as soon as Saul shows signs of going his own way (ch.15) he is rejected as unfit for office" (Eslinger 1985:312).

Once he had identified the candidate, all that remained for Samuel to do, was to persuade the people that the king was of the Lord's choosing. We know that Saul was duly primed – “communed with ... upon the housetop” (1 Sam 9:25) – regarding the kingship and sworn to secrecy, as the text later tells us that “concerning the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, (Saul) told (his uncle) not” (1 Sam 10:16). Eslinger is in concert with this interpretation: “Saul makes no mention of the kingdom because Samuel told him to keep quiet about it” (1985:336). Even the anointing takes place covertly, only after the servant had been sent on ahead. Finally, after receiving examples of Samuel's powers of prescience in what is to immediately befall him – “Samuel's ... displays of prophetic power were meant to install awe of himself as well as of God in both Saul and the people” (Polzin 1989:130) – Saul is given instructions as to where to meet Samuel for a public inauguration.

Not content with the humblest of the humble, Samuel also appears to take prodigious care to ensure Saul's submission to him, “to (mould him) to his own power-driven specifications” (Polzin 1989:154). Aware, in the first place, of his gullibility – Saul having exposed his lack of self-worth in the account of his origins, nevertheless, does not dispute the improbability of so lowly a man as himself being chosen king by God – and in the second, of his suggestibility – years of being in the company of ecstatic prophets must have given Samuel an insight as to who was vulnerable to suggestion and who not – he sends Saul to meet with a band of the same prophets where “thou shalt prophesy with them and be turned into another man” (1 Sam 10:6). Another man or not, this action serves to undermine Saul in the estimation of many of the people. Saul will be the only king who ever prophesied and Samuel well knows the ambiguous role of the ecstatic prophets in Israel. Hence, what Eslinger prefers to read as “dramatic irony” (1985:333), can quite feasibly be viewed as a satirical refrain: “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Sam 10:11). Polzin makes an ominous observation on Samuel's behaviour in this manipulation of Saul:

We ... realize what Samuel had failed then to point out to Saul the harm ... the spirit of God that causes the king to prophesy is invariably evil, and the king upon whom it rushes does not have God with him whatever Samuel asserts (1989:179).

And Polzin drives the point home when he argues that Samuel “managed double control over Saul by persuading the timid man to experience the heady power of prophecy

(10:6)” (1989:130). Finally, in his arrangements to meet Saul, Samuel sends him to Gilgal (1 Sam 10:8), yet he calls the people together in Mizpah! (1 Sam 10:17)⁴. Is it a wonder then that Saul is found among the baggage? (1 Sam 10:22). In a state of utter confusion as to the preceding events, rendered submissive to Samuel, and arriving in Gilgal within the allotted seven days, he hears that Samuel is to address a gathering in Mizpah. I want to suggest that Saul, bewildered by the preceding events, believing himself to be at fault regarding the meeting place, and overwhelmed by curiosity, must have rushed south to Mizpah, anxious to see but afraid to be seen in the wrong place. Moreover, what he heard there was not propitious to a future king. Samuel’s address was nothing if not an indictment against that king: “Ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto Him, but set a king over us” (1 Sam 10:19). Fokkelman, commenting on the internal logic of verses 18-19, concurs: “Samuel ... suggests that the appointment of king Saul is a punishment of the people” (1993:443). To be elected king in the place of a rejected God and as punishment of the people is baggage indeed! Fokkelman expresses somewhat similar sentiments when he argues that

Saul’s behaviour may and must be read as a signal of his character or mental constitution (and therefore) defending the proposition that his destiny was too great for him is not difficult, certainly if the judgement is correct that as king he had to do with the impossible demands of the prophet and his sender (1993:447 & n.13).

I want to argue that it is fortunate for Samuel that Saul at this time is confused and docile or he may have queried why, having been chosen king, he is now to be drawn by lot (1 Sam 10:21), as the reader, too, may well ask. To answer this question we must return to Samuel’s first meeting with Saul and, what scholars call, the “flashback” – the third revelation of Samuel’s voices:

Now the Lord had revealed unto Samuel a day before Saul came, saying (1 Sam 9:15)

Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel, and he shall save my

⁴ I am aware of Eslinger’s (among others’) assignment of this geographical confusion to the question of different traditions, 1985:337. But, as I stated earlier, this is not the present concern of this reading.

people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me (1 Sam 9:16).

This of course, is pure sophistry on Samuel's part. He knows from his disciples that the candidate is already in the vicinity. And I want to suggest that the narrator, in reporting the "word of the Lord" as a mere afterthought, wants purposefully to alert the reader to the dubious nature of Samuel's voices. In Samuel's calculation, nevertheless, if he is to demonstrate that the king was chosen by the Lord, this can only be achieved through divination. "The lottery", Eslinger argues, is staged

solely for the benefit of the unsuspecting Israelites, who are led to believe that the divine will is being formulated and made manifest before their very eyes, and in response to their request for a replacement for Yahweh /28/ (1985:344).

Many scholars point to the inappropriateness of this method. Polzin, citing the Achan and the Jonathan incidents, notes it is used

only in situations where an unknown person needs to be singled out (נלכד) because of some kind of covenantal transgression, shameful thing or sin (1 Sam 14:38; Josh 7:20) (1989:103-104).

And that is exactly the point. The very method by which Samuel chooses the king, undermines that king's position from the start. And, in my analysis, is geared to keep him subservient to Samuel.

Having singled out Saul through divine intervention, Samuel, as I mentioned earlier, nevertheless still finds it necessary to drive home the conviction to the people by highlighting Saul's appearance – "there is none like him among all the people" (1 Sam 10:24). Fokkelman labels this speech "highly manipulative" and detects "a note of sarcasm in lines 24bc". Through it, he argues, Samuel "subtly dissociates himself from the choice of king by stating: there you have the man 'whom the Lord – and *not I* – has chosen'" (1993:449). I want to argue that the omniscient narrator also has something to say about Samuel's behaviour here. What the reader would expect at this point is some kind of inauguration ceremony. But no, the text rushes breathlessly on and the narrator tells us instead that "Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom and wrote it up in a book and laid it before the Lord" (1 Sam 10:25). This is a lot of ground to cover in one single verse even in an economical text. As we are not told here what this manner of the kingdom is, I want to suggest that the narrator is being dismissive of Samuel's hubris: Samuel has taken it upon himself to dictate nothing less than the rules of the new Israelite

monarchy! Saul and the people are never consulted. (And we can guess where he “laid it up” – in Ramah!) Furthermore, having earlier allowed Samuel to dictate at length – eight verses – on “the manner of the king” (משפט המלך) (1 Sam 8:11-18), the narrator now allows him no speech at all on “the manner of the kingdom” (משפט המלכה) (1 Sam 10:25), the new constitution, which must surely be of more importance and interest to Israel than the “the manner of the king” (1 Sam 8:11). As to Saul and the people, all Samuel does – at this important milestone in the history of Israel, the appointment of her first king – is again to dismiss them in a peremptory manner: “And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house” (1 Sam 10:25). But this time not without some muttering from some of their number. Eslinger makes an interesting comment here on the new constitution and this undertone of dissatisfaction:

since everyone (כל-העם) – 1 Sam 10:24) accepted Saul before mention of the משפט, one must conclude that it is the monarchic constitution and not Saul *per se* that has upset these particular people (1985:353).

These people being, of course, the “sons of Belial” (בני בליעל) (1 Sam 10:27).

Ackerman is much in concert with Eslinger’s interpretation regarding these “sons of Belial”: “the group is comprised of disgruntled advocates of the pure theocratic ideal who resent this partial accommodation toward Canaanite kingship” (1991:13).

Fokkelman, in contrast, argues that their dissatisfaction with the appointment of the king “is little different” from the frustration experienced by God and his prophet in 1 Sam 8:6-8 and 1 Sam 10:19. And he concludes:

Supposing that the points of view of God and these ‘worthless fellows’ are in fact far apart on the narrator’s scale of values, I consider destructive elements more likely, whose political and moral position can be typified by the key clause of the finale of Judges, ‘everyone did what was right in his own eyes’ (Fokkelman 1993:453 n.24).

In short, Fokkelman is suggesting that these בני בליעל, which he translates as “worthless rabble”, were not against kingship because “God was (their) king” (1 Sam 12:12), but rather against any form of leadership, or particular leader, who would curtail their freedom to behave as they pleased.

I want here to make a further comment on Samuel regarding the appointment of a king. In his inability to understand both himself and the people, Samuel also underestimates the

sincerity and dedication of the man he chooses. It is not the Philistines who incite Saul into his first action, as Samuel had predicted on the latter's advent (1 Sam 9:16), but Nahash and his Ammonites (1 Sam 11:1). In fact, the 'Lord's utterance' at this time conforms with the pattern of Samuel's voices as a projection of his subconscious. In this case, the conventional refrain "and the prince shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people because their cry is come unto me" (1 Sam 9:16) reveals more about Samuel. In the first place, Samuel's use of "prince" (נָגִיד) instead of "king" is telling. The word נָגִיד translates not to "king" but more correctly to "chief; leader of Israel appointed by Yahweh" (Holladay 1988:226), or "one in front, leader" (Driver 1913:73). This implies that, at the end of the day, Samuel was still unable to grant Saul the ultimate position of kingship. In the second place, it demonstrates that Samuel's predictive powers are by no means infallible. Polzin is in agreement when he refers to

the narrator's focusing ... upon Samuel's failures as a prophet ... whose continual lack of insight in the midst of repeatedly self-serving actions has largely eluded commentators, ancient and modern alike (1989:129-130).

In the third, it exposes the underlying tension experienced by Samuel on Saul's appointment. The people were not then under the yolk of the Philistines, nor were they crying out for deliverance. If Israel were in this situation, Saul's massing of the tribes to go against the Ammonites would have brought down Philistine wrath as it had on Samuel's gathering of the people, as I argued in discussing 1 Sam 7:7. Moreover, when the Israelites do eventually go into battle with the Philistines, it is not the Philistines who initiate the war, it is Jonathan's attack on a Philistine garrison which sparks the confrontation (1 Sam 13:3). The people, in fact, had simply requested the appointment of a successor to Samuel in light of his sons' misconduct which might once more have brought down on them possible divine retribution as it had done in Eli's case. Samuel's projection of the Lord's communication of Saul's arrival (1 Sam 9:16), I want to argue, was an attempt to justify the kingship in order to suppress, in line with my argument, his old ghosts – self-doubt and the fear of rejection. And it appears to work: it masks the tension.

4.4 *A Regal Wrangle*

As I mentioned earlier, there was no ceremony when Saul was chosen king. It is only after the success of Saul's first battle against the Ammonites that Samuel is compelled to initiate a proper ceremony of kingship, and in the proper place finally (1 Sam 11:14)⁵. Gilgal was not only the meeting place he had originally sent Saul for his inauguration, it was also the place where the Israelites first entered the promised land, "the place of the twelve stones, set up as permanent reminder of the Exodus (Josh 4:19-24)" (Eslinger 1985:379). It is my contention that Samuel's formal recognition of Saul at Gilgal was motivated by the Nahash incident and the people's response to it. When the men of Jabesh obtain a seven-day respite from Nahash's ultimatum to "send messengers unto all the borders of Israel" (1 Sam 11:3), they head, not to "all the borders of Israel", but directly for Gibeah of Saul (1 Sam 11:4). In arguing for this direct path, I am following both Fokkelman and Long. Fokkelman maintains this stance on the basis of a stylistic analysis which concludes that:

The fact that the messengers go purposefully and directly to the city of Saul, is implied in a proleptic aspect of the designation of place ... By using the designation 'Gibeah of Saul' the narrator suggests that when the messengers departed they had no other finishing post in mind than that of the king's residence (1993:465-6).

Long, on the other hand, argues for not reading the waw-imperfect (וַיָּבֵאוּ) which immediately follows in 1 Sam 11:4, in a temporal sense. In other words, replace the "when the messengers came" – which may give the impression that the messengers had traversed all Israel *before* arriving at Gilbeah – with "and the messengers came". This would obviate arguments to the contrary as "the (economic) narrative records no actual dispersal of messengers through the territory" (cf. 1989:220-1). Over and above this, Long points out that seven days would have been insufficient time for the messengers to traverse all of Israel and for Saul, in turn, to be sure that all Israel had affirmed his own call to arms before he could send an affirmative answer to the people of Jabesh (cf. 1989:222): they must therefore have headed directly to Saul. My argument for this direct path relates to Samuel. Had the messengers also gone to Ramah, the city of Samuel, the narrator, we might expect, would have mentioned this and informed us of

⁵ As I am reading the narrative synchronically, and making a psychological evaluation of Samuel, I shall not attempt to deal here with the historical discourse of two traditions for the appointment of a king. Cf. Cross, 1973:230 n.4 and Mettinger, 1976:180, n. 73, who gives a list of subscribers to this view.

Samuel's reaction, even if that reaction were nothing more than an appeal to Saul. What I suggest we can assume is that Samuel had become aware that, when faced with a crisis, the people now turn directly to Saul rather than to him and that Saul is able to command their unqualified support. Saul's rally cry to the people brings them "out as one man" (1 Sam 11:7), "the children of Israel ... and the men of Judah" (1 Sam 11:8). This is indeed a greater rate of success than even Deborah and Barak attained. They battled their enemies *sans* the tribes of Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher! (Judg 5:15-17). And this for an untried king who subsequently succeeds in defeating the Ammonites!

I want to argue that Samuel's notion of himself as controller of the king suffered a blow in the face of the above events and, in fact, infuriated him. He had been by-passed by the people. And so had the God he represented: there was no pre-battle sacrifice offered to ensure victory. Saul and the people had proceeded under their own steam. Once the forces had been mustered Saul had rushed headlong into battle, and vanquished the enemy despite the omission of an intercessory offering (1 Sam 11:11). Samuel could not, however, implicate Saul in the displacement of himself. Saul's rallying cry was proof of his obedience – he would not act in his own name alone: "Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul *and after Samuel*" (italics mine) (1 Sam 11:7)⁶. Neither, in a sense could Samuel really blame the people. They had asked for a king to "fight our battles" yet, in this moment of triumph, they still appeal to him, Samuel, in his role as judge:

And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us?
Bring the men, that we may put them to death (1 Sam 11:12).

Unfortunately, it is not Samuel but Saul, who immediately responds with a magnanimous pardon and judicial wisdom: "There shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the Lord hath wrought deliverance in Israel" (1 Sam 11:13). I want to suggest that Samuel is thoroughly taken aback by this sudden turn of events, this unexpected loss of control, and in a concerted effort to retrieve his position and retain the favour of the people, calls for a renewal of the kingship. His use of the word "renew" (וּנְחַדֵּשׁ - 1 Sam 11:14), is suspect. Why on earth would Israel need to "renew" such a very "new" and

⁶ I am aware, following Fokkelman, that certain scholars advocate that the Samuel phrase is an insertion, a notion he convincingly undermines. Fokkelman adds, much to my amusement, "He who deletes is a criticaster"(!) 1993:469 and n.48. In the same vein, see also Long's argument 1989:224-8.

now successful monarchy?⁷ In my analysis, Samuel's immediate, and apparently positive, reaction to "renew the kingship" is exactly in line with his immediate response to the elders' request for a king – "Harken to their voice and make them a king". His confusion and fury are tempered by his innate insecurity, and for the moment, his feeling of powerlessness, and he gives way in order to retain favour and acceptance. Only this time there is no emotional crisis, there are no voices, there is only righteous wrath. Now he is playing for time. He can hardly go against a king at the height of his triumph. But this does not placate his rage against the ability and independence Saul has demonstrated nor the capricious nature of the people. At the height of their rejoicing, Samuel makes his move.

An initial reading of his appeal to the people leaves one sympathetic with the character and suffering of Samuel. Closer examination, however, reveals that there are other factors operating here. It is, in fact, an indictment against the people, in that they have gone against an innocent man on account of his age, and consequently also against the tradition of Yahweh-appointed judges, specifically himself. Fokkelman declares that Samuel means

to give the people a piece of his mind ... (and) nowhere does the tone of his speech in 12:1-25 reveal joy ... On the contrary, the prophet is still as sour as in ch.8; we shall see that he has lost none of his strictures (1993:485).

Indeed, in this oration Samuel's sense of grandiosity also prevails. And a defiance too:

And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day (1 Sam12:2).

He begins his speech with a demand for recognition on account both of his conceding to the people's request and, moreover, I want to suggest, of his having the power to be able to do so and hence to "make a king over you" (1 Sam 12:1). Samuel then goes on to compare himself with the new king, pointing out that as the king now "walketh before you", so did he, Samuel, from his "youth unto this day". This last alludes first to the "elevated" status that Samuel had enjoyed from early childhood, whereas in Saul's case his appointment had come at a time when he is obviously not so young – he had, we know, a grown son, Jonathan, who is able to mount his own battles – and second, implies

⁷ Cf. Eslinger, 1985:377 for a list of scholars who hold the view that this "second" inauguration is the work of a redactor.

that Samuel will not relinquish his position of power even under the new dispensation. Samuel may be vindicated in his appeal but he is also angry and vindictive. There is revenge and accusation in his reference to the elders' reason for requesting a king, that he, Samuel, was "old" (זקן), and the people's guilt is amplified by his expanding the "old" into "old *and grey*" (זקנתי ושבתי). Unlike Eli, he shows no awareness of his sons' behaviour, suggesting instead the very opposite: "my sons are with you" (1 Sam 12:2). I have argued previously that Samuel was blind to their faults, but shall use Fokkelman here to carry my argument further:

there is repression as soon as (Samuel's) sons are brought up ... He clearly avoids, in v.2c, going into their corruption; it would be a great inconvenience to him in his argument on the merits of the/his judgeship and he is apparently too hurt by their failure to be able to deal with it properly (1993:496).

Nevertheless, allowing that Samuel's meaning may be literal, it is ironical, implying that his sons, whom he himself had dedicated to the service of the people, were among those who now support the king. On the other hand, read figuratively, it may imply that the guilt of his sons is no different from that of the people's in requesting a king. (This would also coincide with my argument for Samuel's sons being the vessels for his negative identity as I suggested earlier in the discussion on his reasons for making his sons judges.) Samuel's accusation is then expanded into the moral rhetorical questions posed in 1 Sam 12:3:

Whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded?
Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith?

From the point of structural analysis, Fokkelman argues that these "factual data ... are dripping with emotions: anger and grief, which together form the deadly chemistry of resentment (and) self-pity" (1993:496), an argument which is exactly in line with my evaluation of the character of Samuel. But this is also obviously a reiteration of the "manner of the king" speech in Chapter 8 and, I want to suggest, is meant therefore to demonstrate Samuel's integrity compared to that which the people will experience under the rule of a king. "A sharp rhetorical contrast arises between the king who does not stop taking and the judge who has never taken anything" (Fokkelman 1993:500).

Nevertheless, I want to suggest, it is a premature comparison if Samuel meant to gain any ground by it. Saul has hardly had the time to set up the "manner of the king" and the

people have consequently no comparison to make between the Saul and Samuel mode of operation. Not content with having persuaded the people of his innocence and got them to acquiesce – Fokkelman suggests, to the words and not the content of his speech (1993:501) – Samuel continues to press home his point, spelling out the inequity of the people: they are also guilty of undermining their own ancient tradition.

Actually, Fokkelman, allowing for the theocratic subtlety of his structuralist analysis, comes to very much the same conclusions as I have arrived at above. In 1 Sam 12:2, he argues, Samuel “falls back on harping on his own excellence and the barely concealed airing of his own dissatisfaction” (1993:497). Furthermore, the pattern of the verse, he contends

enables the speaker to link great age with integrity, whilst the first king gets to be next to the sons who have already made themselves impossible – truly not good company for the new leader (*ibid.*),

and that:

Samuel praises himself to the skies. As soon as he has formulated his life-long excellence – something by means of which he tries to fool his audience into feeling guilty – his language becomes provocative (*ibid.*).

Fokkelman also notes that through the entire verse, Samuel succeeds in avoiding both the name of Saul and that of God, acting

as though the matter of the monarchy is an interaction between himself and the people ... and insinuates that accommodating the people is his own idea and deserts (1993:497-8).

Fokkelman argues that 1 Sam 12:2 “complies with a careful and strongly rhetorical design” (1993:497), and at this level “the aggrieved old man who feels passed over, gets at least some kind of satisfaction” (1993:503).

I want to argue that there is indeed rhetorical manipulation in the enumeration of the Biblical heroes Samuel introduces in 1 Sam 12: 6 and 11. Fokkelman suggests that “Moses and Aaron get the unthought-of capacity of being the forerunners of Gideon, Jephthah and Samuel” (1992:493). But there is method behind this connection. The Moses/Aaron reference allows Samuel, first, to emphasize the antiquity of the tradition of Yahweh-appointed judges, second to justify the dual nature (Samuel/Saul) of the kingship he had invested, and third, as both Moses and Aaron were also priests, to imply

that his is a divinely sanctioned priestly status, his dearest aspiration, as I have argued. When we come to the mention of judges, Samuel has carefully chosen his heroes to drive home his point. First he cites Jerubbaal (Gideon – Judg 7:1), who broke down the altars of Baal and, by hand, killed Zebah and Zalmunna when his son hesitated (Judg 8:21) (as Saul will hesitate in the slaughter of Agag? – 1 Sam 15:9). That Samuel incorporated this aspect of Gideon into his psyche will become even clearer in the Agag affair.) Furthermore, Gideon *refused* the kingship arguing instead that “the Lord shall rule over you” (Judg 8:23), a subtle reminder to the people of their guilt in rejecting the Lord and his chosen instrument, that is, Samuel. At the same time, I want to suggest, it also highlights the fact that the people did not ask Samuel himself to be king. The second citation is Bedan, of whom, unfortunately, scholars appear to know nothing. Thirdly, Samuel cites Jephthah, who was super-righteous in that he sacrificed his only beloved child in his fidelity to his God (Judg 11:39). (Ironically, he, like Samuel, sticks to the letter rather than the spirit of the law.) And finally he cites himself, “Samuel” (1 Sam 12:11)⁸. Through these connections, I suggest, Samuel is able to link himself to the ancient Israelite tradition and establish himself as part of the chain of God-chosen leaders.

It is not surprising that this historical redemptive picture, with its emphasis on the people’s cry for Yahweh’s help against their oppressors, should naturally lead to a similar situation in the present. Samuel has all along, through his rhetoric, been leading them in that direction. Hence his chronological distortion of the Nahash incident. Through his enumeration of the ancient judges and the reason for their existence, he is able to completely subsume the original insulting reason given by the people for requesting a king under another guise. He now presents it as an outcome of the Nahash offensive:

And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king (1 Sam 12:12).

He inexorably implicates the people in this casuistic distortion of the facts, this “rewriting of history in a suspect way” (Fokkelman 1993:514). He implies, following on from the examples above, that when they should have cried to the Lord as their predecessors had –

⁸ I am aware that numerous scholars have argued that this inclusion is a later emendation. But such an argument, as I have stated before, is of no moment here.

and hence relied on his chosen judge Samuel – they had instead demanded a king! In short, through this rhetorical “rewriting of history”, Fokkelman suggests, Samuel is able to arrange the “data so that the request for a king signifies negative things; not learning the lesson of history, not coming to repentance, and ignoring God” (1993:515). And thereby, I want to suggest, Samuel is able successfully to project the liability for his own ‘doubt’ and ‘shame’ on to the people. Having thus assuaged his own doubts and shifted the blame, Samuel is free to resort to his compulsive sermonizing – “fear the Lord (Yahweh) and serve him, and hearken unto his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord” (1 Sam 12:14). In this he comprehends both the people and their king, meaning of course that Saul should put himself under the guidance of Samuel, the prior-chosen of the Lord and not go his own way. Polzin’s deliberations on the authorial “voice” in Chapter 12 is in line with this:

The literary context in which the author places these words of Samuel causes them to reverberate with self-serving and highly manipulative accents ... a desire for personal power at the expense of communal welfare seem to underlie his actions (1989:119).

Furthermore, he argues that Samuel

diverts (the people’s) attention away from his central failures by speciously concentrating on areas of responsibility unrelated to his actual failures in leadership (*ibid.*).

In other words, from start to finish, Samuel has been careful to present himself as a paragon of blameless virtue and at the same time to “reemphasize the people’s guilt” (*ibid.*).

We now have the occurrence of another “miraculous” thunderstorm (1 Sam 12:17-18), as we did when Samuel was first recognized by the people in Chapter 7. Again it can be read as a *deus ex machina*. From a literary perspective, it enables the narrator to achieve a fine sense of balance in the depiction of his protagonist. I argued in the previous chapter that the narrator used the device to elevate Samuel’s status to that of judge and thereby sanction his appointment of “a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:6). He now utilises the same device to undermine the position of that very judge who obstinately refuses to relinquish the control he enjoys to the new monarch whom he himself had been instrumental in appointing. Hence this time it is not just thunder (רעם),

munificently bestowed in support of Samuel, it is thunder *and* rain (קלות ומטר - 1 Sam 12:17), specifically called down by Samuel as a punishment on the people, ruining the wheat harvest, a fundamental staple of their existence! In this, Samuel behaves with the same malice against the people as he had used against Eli in his youth when he appended to the man-of-God speech the vicious, and certainly superfluous, "I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (1 Sam 3:11). It was not an action geared to ingratiate him with the people. The great "wickedness" to which Samuel attributed the cause of the thunderstorm was "in asking you a king" (1 Sam 12:17). But this assertion does not fool the people heady with victory. Their reaction shows more insight than that enjoyed by Samuel. The narrator's, "and all the people greatly feared the Lord *and* Samuel" (my italics) (1 Sam 12:18), is, I want to suggest, wholly ironical. Why place Samuel on an equivalent level with the Lord unless to expose his hubris, his grandiosity? Furthermore, as Eslinger points out "the covenant (between the people and the Lord) has not been broken since chapter. 7, when it was last renewed" (1985:421). Hence, I want to argue, the people had no reason to fear the Lord at this time. Israel had not since the last encounter with the Philistines, been under the yolk of any foreign power. Moreover, this last battle against the Ammonites under the leadership of Saul had been completely successful, suggesting, on the contrary, that the Lord was fully behind, not only the people, but their king as well.

As to Samuel, in the way of the world, he had outlived his usefulness. It was time for him to move over. What the people did have to fear, was that this irascible, endlessly sermonizing old man would not go! The second "thy", which occurs in "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord *thy* God" (1 Sam 12:19), is, I want to suggest, again ironical, merely their way of humouring the old judge. This "thy God" can be read as the people's recognition of Samuel's interpretation of God, which did not correspond to their own. They were not rejecting the Lord, they were simply requesting a separation of Church and State, the sacred divorced from the secular, exactly what Samuel, in his rigid adherence to dogma and in the fear of loss of control, could not comprehend or consent to. Certain it is that the people were successful in their purpose of quieting the old man: regarding them we hear nothing more of him (though the Bethlehemites (1 Sam 16:4) and Saul (1 Sam 13:13-14 and 15:28) still have a problem, as we shall see). Samuel's reply, however, to the "Pray for *thy* servants", again illustrates his inability to understand the people and glorify himself. "Threatened with retirement", he responds to this request as

if it constituted “a celebration of personal victory (and by) electing himself to the task of directing Israel in the good and upright path” (Eslinger 1985:422): “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way” (1 Sam 12:23). In other words, Samuel continues to uphold the status quo – he will retain control over both the people and their king – completely oblivious to the changing conditions brought about by the institution of the monarchy. “It is almost,” Eslinger contends, “as though the request (for a king) had never been made” (1985:423).

There are yet a number of instances to support my argument for Samuel’s morbid irascibility and Israel’s justified lack of faith in him. That Samuel’s irascibility was generally recognised is clearly reflected in the Bethelmites’ response when Samuel appears, uncharacteristically, out of his routine arena of operation – Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah – on his covert mission to anoint David king. “And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably?” (1 Sam 16:4). Why fear a man who, on his own admission, was coming simply to offer sacrifice if he did not already have a reputation for being difficult? Roberts, in his article, “*The Legal Basis for Saul’s Slaughter of the Priests of Nob*”, suggests that Samuel’s appearance in Bethlehem is analogous to that of David’s appearance at Nob when escaping from Saul (1 Sam 21-22) (1999:23). Essentially, his argument is based on the extrapolation of the Zimri-Lim loyalty oath to the Hebrew tale. The oath swore to silence diviners who received information from the spiritual world which may, in the wrong hands, be detrimental to the monarch. As such, it acknowledged the power of diviners and prophets to affect public support for the king. On the basis of this, Roberts argues that from the elders’ point of view, Samuel *sans* Saul (ironically, as it turns out) was understood to be up to no good. In his position as diviner and prophet, Samuel could be plotting against the king, and hence place the elders in a compromising position. Roberts’s argument is indeed a good one. It does, however, rely on the relentless antagonism of Saul towards David being public knowledge. Contrarily, I want to argue that Samuel’s opposition to Saul – even after the Agag affair – was not so well advertised. The finale of the affair is nothing if not a total truce: “Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the Lord” (1 Sam 15:31). Moreover, if Roberts’s argument did obtain, why did not David’s brethren also “tremble with fear” when Samuel anointed their brother as king in their presence? I want to repeat therefore that the elders’ fear can only be based on Samuel’s

reputation for unrelenting righteousness and irascibility and that the elders, along with Jesse and his sons, were doing exactly what the people did when Samuel appealed to them after Saul's official inauguration: they, too, were humouring the petulant old judge! Certainly no Bethlehemite thereafter bruted it abroad that one of their number had been made king. Neither are we advised – as we might reasonably expect to be – of any sibling rivalry among the brothers in the face of the youngest being favoured above the elder. Finally, Saul, though told such a man exists (1 Sam 13:14) is never actually informed who this “prince” is until he calls up Samuel's ghost (1 Sam 28:17). Saul's rivalry with David therefore is based solely on the latter's success and general popularity – “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam 18:7) which occurs later. Nevertheless, Roberts's argument does have an uncanny validity in that Samuel, in coming to Bethlehem to anoint another king while Saul was regnant, was, in fact, setting up the conditions for civil war! And I want to argue that Samuel is not unaware of the enormity of his betrayal. When David flees to him in Ramah in the face of Saul's wrath, Samuel's joining David in an escape to Naioth, can only be attributed to his own sense of fear and guilt (1 Sam 19:20). He knows that the only way to neutralise Saul is to get him “among the prophets” where he will once again fall under their spell and prophecy! (1 Sam 19:24).

I also have Saul's experience of Samuel on which to base my argument for the latter's being irascible. I have already discussed the significance of the robe in the episode with Saul and the woman “that hath a familiar spirit” (1 Sam 28:7). However, the appearance of Samuel's ghost (1 Sam 28:12), as seen from Saul's perspective, is informative. This, I want to argue, constitutes another situation of projection. As with Samuel's voices, I read Saul's ghost as a projection of Saul's projected subconscious. Saul does not even “see” what the woman sees. He has to enquire of her what it is she sees – “An old man cometh up and he is covered with a robe” (1 Sam 28:14). Only on the basis of this description does Saul “know” (יָדָע) it to be Samuel, though apparently he does not see him. Samuel's counsel, for which Saul applies, offers him no more than the dour predictions Samuel had offered him in life and what he himself already suspects – that another (David, he is now informed) will be the next king and that he will soon die – not an unexpected response given Saul's state of deepening depression. What I want to argue here, is that Saul's projection of Samuel – the dour predictions and the irritated greeting, “Why hast thou disquieted me?” (1 Sam 28:15) – is exactly on a par with what he

experienced of Samuel in life. And finally, I want to argue that this is the essence of Samuel's whole character: a disappointed, irascible, unbending and resentful old man with an underlying need to destroy those different from himself.

4.5 *The Offensive Against the Philistines*

But back to where I left off, at the end of chapter 12 with Saul now accepted by the people as king and leader.

In ch.13 a heartrending conflict breaks out between Samuel and Saul which pushes the king over the edge and inexorably takes him down the long road to doom and ruin (Fokkelman 1993:423).

It is a conflict, I suggest, brought about by Samuel's fear of Saul's emergent abilities and independence. In fact, the more successful the king becomes militarily, the more his relations with Samuel disintegrate. What I imply by this is that Samuel, at this late stage when he should have withdrawn from the arena and made way for Saul, is still bent on control.

After Jonathan's attack on the Philistine garrison at Geba in Chapter 13, the Philistines retaliated by assembling a superior force to attack the Israelites – "thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude" (1 Sam 13:5). The Israelites, overwhelmed at the sight, began deserting Saul *en masse*. Yet Samuel had commanded that Saul tarry seven days at Gilgal until his arrival (1 Sam 13:8). Samuel's insistence on a seven-day waiting period is a further sign of his compulsive nature, specifically the ritualistic repetition by which "the child learns to gain power over his parents in areas where he could not find large-scale mutual regulation with them" (Erikson 1968:111) – for "parents" here, read "Saul". Certainly, Samuel shows no understanding of the gravity of the situation confronting Saul. However, as Samuel did not arrive within the appointed time, Saul was faced with ever-diminishing support from the Israelites. It is certainly to his credit that he grasps the military situation and proceeds, *sans* Samuel, with the customary pre-battle sacrifice. Fokkelman offers an interesting insight in line with my interpretation. He proposes that in 1 Sam 10:7c, after the secret anointing, Samuel had given Saul "more or less *carte blanche*" to take the initiative – "do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee" (1993:423). Nevertheless, the 'more or less', Fokkelman suggests, "does not mean

unlimited power and only states ‘act in the particular situation according to your military capability’” (*ibid.*). This is surely what Saul does. I want to argue that Samuel’s hesitation in joining Saul was based on his dependence on receiving “divine guidance” from his voices. But Samuel, like the people, was frozen into inaction in the face of the might of the Philistines. He could foresee no solution, hence he could not project a solution on to God as I have argued he had done on previous occasions. Polzin actually goes so far as to quibble with Samuel’s prophetic ability in regard to this incident. The fact that Samuel did not appear at the appointed time, he contends, meant, by extension, that Samuel’s prophetic word *did not come to pass* (לֹא בָא) ... Verses 1-15 of chapter 13 are thus about Samuel’s present failure as prophet (and) allows us to see how ... the author can turn the condemnatory words (see below) of Samuel against the prophet himself (1989:130-131).

Which is to say that it was Samuel and not Saul who had broken his word, it was Samuel who had not arrived at the appointed time.

I want to suggest that the reason Samuel finally appears on the scene is because he had been advised by his followers that Saul has again had the temerity to act alone, *sans* his direction. Saul, for his part, appears more fearful of Samuel than he ever appears of the Philistines! And for good reason. Samuel’s condemnation of the king is vicious – the old pattern – and unwarranted, another instance of his grandiosity: Samuel equates breaking an appointment with him to that of not observing God’s commandment (cf. Polzin 1989:127, 131), and we must not forget who wrote up this particular commandment in the book of the “manner of the kingdom”! (1 Sam 10:25). “It is not difficult to see Samuel’s subsequent accusation of the king as a trumped-up charge to keep Saul on the defensive and under his prophetic control” (Polzin 1989:129). Consequently, in Samuel’s judgment, Saul, because of his “disobedience”, must forfeit his kingship – essentially at the very moment he acts like a true leader by demonstrating initiative and an advanced understanding of the military situation – and be told another has been appointed in his place. This last was a downright lie on the part of Samuel and, I want to suggest, at this stage it was an empty threat to keep Saul under his control. After all, we know that Samuel will only “hear” the Lord direct him to another much later, after Saul and his remaining six hundred men, with “neither sword nor spear” (1 Sam 13:22), had routed the Philistines (1 Sam 14:22), and gone on to defeat Moab, Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah (1 Sam 14:47) and, at Samuel’s command, Amalek

(1 Sam 15:3). This was no ordinary king! Moreover, there is reason to believe that the Lord at the time of this particular battle with the Philistines, contrary to Samuel's judgement, appeared to favour Saul. The reader learns, to his surprise, that the Ark of God has been restored (1 Sam 14:18). And, moreover, it is not in the care of Samuel, it is with Saul, under the care of the priest Ahijah, the grandson of Phinehas and great-grandson of Eli (1 Sam 14:3 & 18). Yet unlike Hophni and Phinehas, who also took the Ark on to the battlefield, Saul has not been overcome by the Philistines. On the contrary, he has overcome them, albeit with some help from Jonathan.

There is a fine point to be noted here in terms of Polzin's "trumped-up charge", and I suggest that the dialogue between the two antagonists spells it out clearly:

And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou comest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines assembled themselves together at Michmash (1 Sam 13:11)

Therefore said I, Now will the Philistines come down upon me to Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favour of the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered the burnt offering (1 Sam 13:12)

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God (1 Sam 13:13).

Samuel's "What has thou done?" does not necessarily mean anything other than "why did you go ahead without me?". I suggest this is all Samuel could legitimately accuse Saul of doing. With Ahijah accompanying him, Saul must have had every right to offer sacrifice under the circumstances. The Lord has surely not commanded that all sacrifices could be offered only in the presence of Samuel! Neither does the text state that Samuel's request that Saul tarry was for the sole purpose that Samuel should offer the sacrifice (1 Sam 13:8). It is Saul's fear of Samuel, in my interpretation that excites him to race ahead in his reply and misinterpret Samuel's reprimand as one against sacrificing instead of one against biding his time. And Samuel, as I illustrated above, picks up on Saul's final statement – "I forced myself therefore, and offered the burnt offering" – and, makes the most of it:

thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath appointed him to be prince over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee (1 Sam 13:14).

Having achieved what the Philistines could not – demolish Saul – Samuel now heads for Gibeah, Saul’s headquarters. This is out of his customary circuit and, I want to argue, his purpose now is to be in a position where he can keep a tighter reign on Saul. Polzin concurs:

Having Saul completely under his thumb, Samuel travels to the city of sin that from the beginning has stood for Saul’s tragic reign. Why else does the narrator have Samuel go up to Gibeah? (1989:131).

But there is perhaps another reason. Samuel had learnt from the Nahash incident, that this is where the people head first in the event of anything untoward arising. In other words, this is where the action is.

4.6 *The Offensive Against Amalek*

That Samuel’s charge against Saul was indeed “trumped-up” is again borne out in his next exchange with the king. If, in Samuel’s judgment, the king had been rejected by God and replaced by another, why then does Samuel direct Saul to launch an offensive against Amalek? And especially at a time when the king was already under pressure militarily, a time when “there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul” (1 Sam 14:52). That Samuel operates strictly according to the *lex talionis* and sees the world in terms of the letter rather than the spirit of the law is obvious enough. But why choose a man he himself had condemned to undertake this sacred task?⁹ Why not wait

⁹ I have opted, in terms of my analysis, not to deal in any further detail related to the concept of “sacred war” with Amalek as I find the Biblical text problematic on the subject. In Exod 17:14, after Moses’ miraculous victory over Amalek, the Lord promises that he, God (מחה), “will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven”. Moses in turn reports in Exod 17:16, two verses later, that “the Lord hast sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation”. Logically, verse 16 does not follow on from verse 14: The Lord’s vow to blot out Amalek does not necessarily translate into generations of war with Amalek. Then we discover in Deut 25:19 that Moses is reported as commanding, on the instruction from God, that:

when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget”.

Again, this does not follow logically from what God vowed in Exod 17:14. In my interpretation, God has sworn to bring about the destruction of Amalek himself. He never requested that the people were required to get involved. That idea appears to be Moses’ interpretation.

Regarding “holy wars”, De Vaux argues that Israel in the earliest periods, unlike other nations did not fight for its faith, but for its existence. This means that war is a sacred action (1965:259) ... During battle, it was Yahweh who fought for Israel (1965:260) ... It was Yahweh and not Israel who emerged victorious (1965:261). (*Footnote continues on next page.*)

for the new king to wreak the required retribution on Amalek? Aside from the obvious reason that he has no other candidate in mind for king at this moment, I want to argue that Samuel still believed that he was in the driving seat, and that the people needed to see that it was he who exerted control over the very militarily successful Saul. “Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (1 Sam 15:3). Is this the notion of a “generational” righteous man in the Eriksonian sense? Surely not. Samuel is still fixated in the old codes of his youth. In contrast to Samuel’s view, I want to argue that the Israelites had moved beyond the old formulas. They had already effected an epochal change by electing a king, by separating, as I said earlier, Church and State. For them, there was no going back. And this conflict between the old and the new, pits Samuel against Saul in a final battle which is fatal for both prophet and king.

After Saul’s victory over the Amalekites, Samuel, no doubt appraised of the situation and Saul’s failure to carry out the command to the letter (1 Sam 15:15), once again hears “the word of the Lord” (1 Sam 15:10). Samuel’s outrage at Saul’s disobedience again precipitates the delusion of the Samuel/God alignment. But this time there is no ambiguity of persons. The projected “hearing”, in the first-person entirely, is Samuel’s fury, pronounced not by God, but in the words of the person who himself choose Saul as king, pronounced, in short, by Samuel: “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments” (1 Sam 15:11). These are certainly not the sentiments Samuel attributes to God in 1 Sam 15:29, who “will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent”. Erikson recognizes this inability to compromise in unresolved “generational” man where for them, “their law is ‘all or none’; they take the dictum, ‘If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out’” (1963:201). Furthermore, Samuel is neither honest nor generous. He plays cruelly with the simple Saul who, in mortal fear of Samuel, is blithely unaware of

However, I follow De Vaux’s analysis regarding the “evolutionary” nature of the holy war, specifically in this incident. I quote:

One could say that (the) strictly sacred character of war disappeared with the advent of the monarchy and the establishment of a professional army. It is no longer Yahweh who marches ahead of his people to fight the Wars of Yahweh, but the king who leads his people out and fights its wars (1 Sam 8:20). The combatants are no longer warriors who volunteer to fight, but professionals in the pay of the king ... This transformation was obviously going to precipitate a crisis: the ground was prepared for it under Saul, who transgressed the ritual laid down for a holy war (1 Sam 15) ... War became, of necessity, the state’s concern; it was ‘profaned’, 1965:263.

his fault. Saul's greeting, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (1 Sam 15:13), is rejoined with devastating sarcasm, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (1 Sam 15:14). Is it any wonder that the cowed king initially tries to shift the blame only to get himself deeper and deeper into trouble. But he has a greatness yet.

His triple recognition that he had sinned (vv 24, 25, 30) includes also a turning away from his attempted concealment of this sin from Samuel. Saul is doubly repentant: of his sin and of his attempt to conceal that sin from Samuel (Polzin 1989:142-3).

In effect, the rejected Saul shows himself to be a better man than Samuel. He had shown some compassion where the inflexible Samuel was without any. Saul had, after all, not only allowed the Kenites to remove themselves from the arena of slaughter, but spared Agag, the Amalekite king, and the choicest of the animals. Yet, after he repents this omission, Samuel, in the name of God, does not have compassion on, and neither does he spare Saul. Essentially, Polzin comes to a similar conclusion when he argues that

Human repentance so pervades this chapter (15) that any apprehension of its powers as a cure-all for the ravages of divine wrath turns out to be the greater disease (1989:142).

The question of Saul's disobedience can, however, admit of other interpretations. Sternberg, for example, points out that it was not the weak and the helpless that were spared, but "the best". To wit, "there is no question here of any humanitarian motives whatsoever: sparing (*kh-m-l*) is nothing but an ironic euphemism for greed (*kh-m-d*)" (1987:490). It is no great wonder, I want to argue, to spare "the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs" (1 Sam 15:9) in a people whose main livelihood was rooted in a pastoral and agricultural economy. And it is not the first time that Saul had shown such magnanimity. He had, the reader will recall, at the very start of his success spared the "sons of Belial" who had questioned his regal legitimacy and whom the people wanted to put to death after his defeat of Nahash (1 Sam 11:12).

It is tempting to want to read Samuel's, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:22), as enlightened thinking on his part. However, this would not correlate with the character I have drawn thus far. I have argued that Samuel's ambition was to follow in the footsteps of Eli, that is to be a priest and offer sacrifice. As this role has been denied him, it is not surprising that he would undermine the role of

sacrifice in favour of the one attribute that had determined his whole life, for which he is compulsively obsessive – obedience. The pain and anger of repressed ambition is given full vent to in his ferocious denunciation of Saul:

rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (divination - **וִּיחַד**), and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king (1 Sam 15:23).

But who used divination in the first place to appoint the king publicly? Who sent the diffident king-elect, knowing his penchant for suggestibility, after the teraphim? And who encouraged him to prophesy with the prophets if not Samuel? And for this weakness, in effect, this obedience, the same Samuel now condemns him! Polzin is of the same mind when he argues that “nothing condemns Samuel more than his progressive prophetization of Saul in an attempt to increase his own waning power over Israel” (1989:217).

Saul’s first appeal for forgiveness in this incident incites Samuel to a repetition of the earlier denunciation: “thou has rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king” (1 Sam 15:26). In this Samuel emulates Eli’s man-of-God who condemned the Elide house to destruction. Saul, feeling the force of the condemnation, makes a desperate attempt to prevent Samuel from leaving. He grasped and “rent the skirt of his robe”. (1 Sam 15:27). (I have noted on a number of occasions the significant role this robe plays in Samuel’s psyche.) This action of Saul’s, though inadvertent, I want to suggest, reactivates all the unresolved childhood trauma in Samuel. Saul’s action solicits a repetition of Samuel’s first vindictive rejection of Saul: “The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou” (1 Sam 15:28). Saul hears for the second time, not only that he is to lose the kingship to another but that, that other is “better than thou”. It is again a lie, of course. But Samuel has never had any problem with deception, as the reader by now knows. Nevertheless, it is a statement pregnant with revenge and in uttering it, Samuel, I suggest, discovers how to effect that revenge with a vengeance: he surely will appoint a new king! Thus, while his next statement is ironical in light of his own dishonesty, it is made, I suggest, with righteous satisfaction and cruel intent: “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent” (1 Sam 15:29). There will be no mercy for Saul. Saul’s response to this double condemnation is indeed poignant:

I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people and before Israel and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God (1 Sam 15:30).

Saul is a crushed man. And Samuel turns to Saul not in forgiveness, I want to argue, but in recognition of Saul's defeat. Saul has appealed not to let him lose face in front of his followers, to present, at least, the appearance of his still being king. Samuel's satisfaction at this supplication nevertheless belies his inner fury. After "Saul worshipped the Lord" (1 Sam 15:31) – and note it is Saul alone who worships, we hear nothing of Samuel participating – Samuel turns his inner rage on the pathetic Agag. The narrator reports that this man-of-God, this old greyhaired judge of Israel, who had never to the reader's knowledge lifted a sword in his life, single-handedly "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal"! (1 Sam 15:33). It is akin, I want to argue, to Halperin's description of Ezekiel's behaviour: "I take for granted that the wrath of Ezekiel's God is in fact Ezekiel's own unconscious rage" (1993:4). The wrath of Samuel, in this hewing to pieces of Agag, is, in my analysis, a manifestation of Samuel's own unconscious rage for a lifetime of unresolved personal crises.

Nevertheless, Samuel had not yet done with Saul. Saul, though psychologically beaten, remained king yet. In the final recognition of his loss of control over Saul, Samuel understands at last that he has lost even the semblance of control over Israel. This understanding, I suggest once again, finds him in a situation of tension calculated to 'bring on his voices'. And with much the same effect. Samuel's behaviour in seeking to replace Saul follows the exact pattern as the installation of Saul. First there are the divine voices, his subconscious projection whereby he is able to justify his actions; second, the young man was chosen from the Bethlehemites – yet another small tribe; third, there is the semi-covert nature of the anointing: it is confined probably to the elders of Bethlehem and Jesse's immediate family circle, and finally, there is the "appearance" criterion in the choice of David. This is all classically compulsive. At the same time, Samuel experiences the same delusion he experienced when the people first asked that he "make a king over us". He confuses his own wishes with that of the Lord, hence, "the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel" (1 Sam 15:35), which is to say, as I did earlier, that it was Samuel who repented. And again as Polzin also points out, Samuel himself had earlier emphasised that God "will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent" (1 Sam 15:29) (1989:47). Moreover, when Samuel enquires

of the Lord how he should proceed without alerting Saul's suspicion, this supposedly same Lord goes on to encourage him to dissemble!: "take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord" (1 Sam 16:2). Are we seriously to believe that this is the advice of an extremely righteous Being? I doubt it. This is more a reflection of Samuel's own behaviour in line with what I have been contending thus far: Samuel's projection providing him with the motivation for his own decisions in the name of the Lord! Samuel, as I have tried to show, had no conscience when it came to duping the people into believing that Saul was chosen by God. It stands to reason he would have even less in his relations with Saul, who in his perception, is a disobedient king who could not, in the final analysis, be "moulded to his own power-driven specifications" (Polzin 1989:154). As Polzin concludes:

Once the narrator removes the idealized garb with which Samuel has been clothed up through chapter 7, the portrait of Samuel from chapter 8 onward is remarkably and consistently unflattering – so much so, in fact, that the author is now able to complete the sorry story of Samuel's career in a particularly explicit manner in chapter 16. Having forgiven the neophyte for his first faltering prophetic steps, the reader has come to recognize that Samuel's frequent stumbling is characteristic of the man himself rather than the youth (1989:153).

In other words, Samuel has been the instrument of his own demise.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes men come by the name of genius in the same way that certain insects come by the name of centipede; not because they have a hundred feet, but because most people cannot count above fourteen

GC Lichtenberg, 1742-1799

I want to acknowledge that while this has been a psychoanalysis of Samuel, it has, nevertheless, not been a very flattering portrait of the prophet. Like Halperin's Ezekiel, Samuel was "very far from being a lovable person" (1993:5). This does not mean that the man, and the young boy especially, do not warrant the reader's sympathy. For all the auspicious portents of his birth, I have shown that Samuel was disabled psychologically from his early childhood by the people closest to him – an ambitious self-serving mother and two ineffectual "fathers". And we can conclude up front that Samuel, whose beginning had promised greatness, was defeated almost before he began.

A question therefore arose: Why did the narrator begin the history of Samuel by assigning him so favoured a status as the Biblical convention? With such a beginning, why was Samuel himself not made king? I have argued that the narrator needed such a birth to give credence to Samuel's role as kingmaker. Gideon had famously undermined the position of a secular king in Judges when he refused the position and insisted that, "The Lord shall rule over you" (8:23). Only someone clearly sanctioned by God and set above the common people could possibly override this sacred caveat. And we must remember that the appointment of a king, which Samuel anyhow initiated rather reluctantly, was not about Saul but was leading up to the roles that David and Solomon would play in the Hebrew saga. Samuel is merely the instrument that carries the saga through from Judges to Kings. Therefore, I have shown that it was the narrator's intention, as it often is throughout the story, to counteract this auspicious beginning by ensuring that the credit is placed where it is due, that the greatness was in the king, not in the instrument. And furthermore, that Saul is a victim of this insurance on the part of the narrator, as it is largely through him that Samuel's real character is exposed, the expectation of greatness set up by the birth convention finally undermined. In essence, then, it has been my contention that the convention is related to function and not person.

This functionality results in the formation of a character very much at odds with himself and consequently with the people with whom he interacts. In the special status of the patriarchal birth convention and his mother's consequent ambitions for him, Samuel not unnaturally developed delusions of grandeur, which were reinforced by an obsessive compulsive personality which, in turn, demanded absolute obedience to the doctrines of his cult. I have argued that the subsequent tension gave rise to his "voices", by which he earned the status of prophet. I have also shown that his status as judge comes about not because of his charisma, as is the case in the Book of Judges, but because the recklessness of his righteousness leads him in Chapter 7, when the Israelites are under the Philistine yolk, to call a gathering and where the narrator has to resort to the device of thunder, a *deus ex machina*, to achieve a victory over the Philistines (1 Sam 7:10). Samuel's grandiosity and obsessive compulsion are also operative in the appointment of his sons as heirs implying the setting up of a dynasty in direct defiance of any Biblical precedent in the Book of Judges. And again we see the effects of these two characteristics in the appointment of, and in his relationship with Saul, where Samuel's manipulations of the king contribute, in the end, to the latter's downfall.

Nevertheless, throughout Samuel's life these two strong characteristics – grandiosity and obsessive compulsion – are held in check by the deleterious effects of 'separation anxiety'. Thus, underlying Samuel's character and motivations was the ever-present fear of rejection. It is this fear which brings Samuel, in spite of his dynastic ambitions, to concede to the elders' request and appoint a king. In another sense, I have shown that it is through these negative attributes that the narrator is able to progressively undermine the character of his protagonist and hence justify the appointment of another in the role of king.

All that remains to accomplish now is to provide a brief summary of Samuel as I have presented him through Erikson's ego-psychology. I shall do this primarily through an assessment of whether he can be classed among Erikson's great men.

I have argued that though Samuel traverses Erikson's Stages 1 and 2 with success, all the gains he achieved here are reversed by the trauma of 'separation anxiety'. This also impacts on his progress through all the following stages which were negotiated largely through dysfunctional accommodations, 'trust' becomes 'mistrust', and so forth. The cumulative unresolved crises, in turn, resulted in a total identity failure, and although Samuel never developed an accrued ego

integration, he was able to accommodate this failure by resorting to defence mechanisms – neurotic survival tactics – such as *totalism*, *distantiation* and *projection*. Confounding this immature identity was an overweening superego which resulted in an unbending righteousness, and any variation from the rigid structure Samuel had built up would unravel the whole and put his identity, not to say his normal functioning, at risk. By the same token, anyone not conforming to his standards of righteousness would become a target of his wrath. Thus Samuel's righteousness, as I previously pointed out, was dogmatic, it bears no relation to Erikson's "precocious conscience" as I interpreted it.¹

There are two marked influences in Samuel's very early childhood which underpin this righteousness – a sense of destiny and a too early-learned obedience. Of the latter, we saw that this led to a self-restriction which undermined his ability to be creative and tended towards compulsive personality traits. Furthermore, a sense of inferiority brought about by a loss of hope, and coupled with his sense of destiny, created a lifelong tension and anxiety in the prophet. It is germane to note here that Samuel's conviction of his 'special destiny', the sense of being chosen, conferred on him by his mother, as opposed to the father as identified by Erikson (1964:202), was not the only source of his delusions of grandiosity. I have earlier suggested that Samuel was "all work and no play". By Erikson's account, this distorted sense of 'initiative', this strict "methodical pursuit", would have enhanced the delusion.

Samuel's special sense of destiny, I have shown, degenerated into nothing but frustrated ambition on his part. Erikson, I mentioned in Chapter 1, proposes that for great men an early sense of being chosen settles in a conviction that in the conduct of their individual lives they carry the responsibility for a segment of mankind, if not for all existence, and they undergo their 'great renunciation' (1964:203).

While Samuel could be said to conform to the first half of this description, he did not experience the latter, the "great renunciation". Instead he became trapped in the dogma of his cult, and Erikson argues

dogma, given total power, reinstates what once was to be warded off and brings back ancient barbaric ambiguities as cold and over-defined legalisms so unconvincing that,

¹ See my Chapter on Erikson, pp 21-22.

where once faith reigned, the law must take over and be enforced by spiritual and political terror (1958:136).

This may be an exaggeration in Samuel's case, but, as I have tried to show, Samuel's ultra-conservatism did not suit the Israelites, who in requesting a king were unconsciously moving forward in time. They never asked for a divinely elected king. That was Samuel's idea. Theirs' was, in fact, an embryonic idea which Western civilization would yet take thousands of years to achieve: the separation of Church and State. Samuel, on the other hand, as far as it was within his power, did all he could to hinder this advance.

I cannot therefore argue that Samuel's identity crisis coincided with the identity crisis of the time. If anything, this is not one of those periods of "marked transition" that Erikson proposes throw up great innovators (1968:32). It was, no doubt, a period of transition in the Biblical sense, in that there was a move from Judges to a time of kings, but Samuel's lifespan was for the most part a period of peace. And in the one period the Israelites were under the Philistines – after the Elide downfall to the time of Samuel's somewhat dubious victory over them in Chapter 7 – no one appeared to be complaining about it, no one was crying out to the Lord for redemption as was the case in Judges. The wars that did occur between the Israelites and their enemies under Saul were, in my appraisal, no more than the common tribal warfare of the time. In fact, I want to suggest, it could be feasibly argued that, with a king now to lead them, the Israelites were at last beginning to find strength in their unity and were rather looking to conquer those around them as they had done in the days of Joshua. In the final analysis, I can detect no recognisable epochal angst during the period under discussion.

Samuel's identity crisis does not conform to the crises of great men in other ways. Despite the debilitating effects of an identity crisis, Erikson argued, great individuals, unlike other men, recognising their potential originality, are somehow able to manage the very complexes which constrict ordinary mortals. Samuel was not able to achieve this, he was not able to extend "the problem of his identity to the borders of existence in the known universe" (Erikson 1958:255). He was completely crippled by the inability to form a coherent identity and, as I have shown, resorted to defence mechanisms. Where he should have rebelled, he "bends all his efforts to adopt and fulfil the departmentalised identities" which his society offered him (*ibid.*). Samuel harboured only the negative aspect which Erikson coupled to this ability of great men to extend

their identities: the ‘curse’, the “infantile ‘account to settle’” (Erikson 1964:202), was turned against Eli and subsequently, Saul.

Another criterion of a great leader we may look for in Samuel, is

his intuitive grasp of the actualities of the led, that is, of their readiness to act resourcefully in certain directions, and his ability to introduce himself into that actuality as a new, vital factor (personality, image, style) (Erikson 1964:208).

Though this may be true of Saul, it is obviously not so of Samuel. Samuel was too self-obsessed to gauge the mood of the people, too self-restricted to have the vision to present himself in a dynamic guise. He was opposed to change of any sort, in himself as much as in anyone else. I have demonstrated that he did not have the charisma to contest the people’s request for a king – indeed, if he had, they would surely not have made such a request in the first place. His acquiescence was a compromise grounded in the hubristic assumption that he could manipulate all the actions of that king, and in this, he brings down disaster on both himself and Saul –

Saul’s abortive reign, as well as Samuel’s flawed career are to be understood as intimately connected with the tragic admixture of royal and prophetic activity first prophesied and encouraged by Samuel (Polzin 1989:179).

His eventual appointment of David, I have argued, was nothing more than vindictiveness in the face of Saul’s unexpected success and growing independence. Certainly, once he had achieved his purpose to destroy Saul by selecting a “better” (הַטוֹב) king, Samuel shows no further interest in David other than fleeing with him to Naioth to escape Saul’s anger (1 Sam 19:18).

While Samuel does not fulfil any of the criteria Erikson identifies as illustrative of a great leader, he nevertheless, does attain immortality: for a brief part of the narrative in 1 Samuel, he is the protagonist in one of the greatest pieces of Western literature, the Hebrew Scriptures. He comes very close to Hamlet, whom Erikson called “an abortive ideological leader” (1968:258), a man destroyed in the end by his own self-doubt. It is a moot point as to whether Samuel would have been a better man for fulfilling his ambition. But I leave the last word again to Polzin:

a condemnation of Samuel for not living up to his prophetic potential is a question probably not susceptible of definitive answer. Certainly, Samuel stands condemned for many of the manipulative, self-serving turns in his career, as our reading of the text has been intent upon underlining (1989:154).

GLOSSARY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS

act out:

at the extreme end of the continuum, it involves engaging in antisocial or excessive behaviour without regard to negative consequences as a way of dealing with emotional stress (*Carson RC & Butcher JN, Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life, 9th Edition (1992:69)*)

distantiation:

the counterpart of intimacy; the readiness to repudiate, isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own" (Erikson 1968:136)

generativity:

primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation (Erikson 1963:267); the productivity of middle-aged adults, including the production of children and guidance of the younger generation as well as the production of ideas, art, books, and so forth, with the implication that this legacy will 'live on' and benefit the next generation (Ryckman 1993:215)

introjection:

in *introjection*, we feel and act as if an outer good or bad has become an inner certainty; when we turn, for example, our hate of another in on ourselves

moratorium:

a socially sanctioned period in which the adolescent can be allowed to flounder and explore before settling on a more permanent identity (Welchman 2000:54)

negative identity:

commitment to values and roles that are unacceptable to society (Ryckman 1993:216); youths who have not adequately resolved their conflicts may develop a *negative identity*, in which they act in scornful and hostile ways toward roles offered as proper and desirable by the community (Ryckman 1993: 194); we will call all self-images, even those of a highly idealistic nature, which are diametrically opposed to the dominant values of an individual's upbringing, parts of a *negative identity* - meaning an identity which he has been warned *not* to become, which he can become only with a divided heart, but which he nevertheless finds himself compelled to become, protesting his wholeheartedness (Erikson 1958:98); "... a negative identity fragment, i.e. an identity a family wishes to live down - even though it may sentimentalise it at moments - the mere hint of which it tries to suppress in its children" (Erikson, 1958:48)

projection:

in *projection*, we experience an inner harm as an outer one: we endow significant people with the evil which actually is in us" (Erikson 1963:248-9); a defence mechanism which unconsciously attributes to others that which is unacceptable to the self; these qualities, however, are real to the self and influence the person's behaviour accordingly (Zelig)

1988:337)

psychohistorical analysis:

technique whereby Erikson uses his theory of ego development to analyse the lives of historical figures (Ryckman 1993:216)

psychosis (psychotic behaviour):

the loss of contact with reality to the extent that a person harbours delusional beliefs or reports bizarre perceptions (hallucinations) (Carson RC & Butcher JN, *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 9th Edition (1992:382); we do find in potentially psychotic people that the very first relationships in earliest childhood seem to have been severely disturbed. We could speak here of a psychosocial weakness which consists of a readiness to mistrust and to lose hope in rather fundamental ways (Evans 1967:17); psychotics suffer from ego weakness, from deficiency rather than excess" (Roazen 1976:185)

retrodict:

a specifically psychological term implying that something can be related, or tracked back to; the antonym of 'predicted'

role confusion:

failure of identity formation leads to 'role confusion' - confusion with who one is and what one will become

superego:

that part of the psyche out of which conscience develops; formed in early childhood by identification with the standards and wishes of the parents and other significant adults, as the child perceives these to be; the self-criticising aspect of the personality which, under certain conditions, can become overly severe and even sadistic, causing guilt and anxiety (Zeligs 1988:338)

totalism:

a setting of absolute boundaries in one's values, beliefs and interpersonal relationships (Erikson 1964:92); *totalism* in youth is a primitive and incomplete form of identity that Erikson distinguishes from wholeness. Wholeness is a sense of 'inner identity'" which is expressed in terms like 'wholehearted', etc; in *totalism* 'an absolute boundary is emphasized ... nothing that belongs inside must be left outside, nothing that must be outside can be tolerated inside (Welchman 2000:75); it is a matter of 'to be or not to be', which makes every matter of differences a matter of mutually exclusive essences; every question mark a matter of forfeited existence; every error or oversight, eternal treason, etc (Erikson 1958:99)

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