Zeitschrift: Theologische Zeitschrift
Herausgeber: Theologische Fakultät der Universität Basel
Band: 35 (1979)
Heft: 4

Artikel: Samuel Versus Eli : I Sam. 1-7
Autor: Willis, John T.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-878484

Nutzungsbedingungen
Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Mehr erfahren

Conditions d'utilisation
L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. En savoir plus

Terms of use
The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. Find out more

Download PDF: 28.11.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, https://www.e-periodica.ch

Theologische Zeitschrift

Jahrgang 35 Heft 4 August 1979

Samuel Versus Eli

I Sam. 1–7

An area of research which has drawn a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years is I Sam. 1–7, or more particularly portions of chapter 2 and 4:1b–7:1. Since the present writer's two essays in this area published in 1971 and 1972,[1] four extensive works have appeared, viz., those of Schicklberger, Stoebe, Campbell, and Miller and Roberts.[2]

1.

Actually, the views of *Schicklberger* and *Campbell* do not represent radically different positions to any great extent, which, incidentally, is not necessarily bad. When one scholar does his work carefully and well and reaches conclusions similar to his predecessors, he tends to confirm the correctness of earlier efforts, and the field of Old Testament studies is replete with just such activities and conclusions.

Schicklberger's view is distinctive in two particulars. – (1) He sees I Sam. 4:1b–7:1 as the end product of three stages of tradition history. (a) I Sam. 4:1a(LXX), b, 2–4, 10–12, 13aα (without "Eli was sitting on his chair") $\beta\gamma$b, 14b–18a, 19–21 (without hillāgaḥ in 21b?) is the earliest tradition stratum. It arose in North Israelite circles, possibly residents of Shiloh, who were most deeply shocked by the actual event of the Israelite defeat at the hands of the Philistines and the loss of the ark, and its purpose was to preserve for future generations the amazing account of the unprecedented defeat of Israel before uncircumcised pagans at Aphek.[3] (b) This tradition was handed down in northern circles until the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C., and then was brought to Jerusalem, where a redactor with a distinct theological bias inserted I Sam. 4:5–9; 5:1–6bα, 7–12; 6:1–4 (without the statement about the golden

[1] J. T. Willis, An Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition from a Prophetic Circle at the Ramah Sanctuary. Journ. Bibl. Lit. 90 (1971), pp. 288–308; Cultic Elements in the Story of Samuel's Birth and Dedication: Stud. Th. 26 (1972), pp. 33–61. Extensive notes dealing with scholarly views prior to 1971 are given in these articles.

[2] F. Schicklberger, Die Ladeerzählung des ersten Samuel-Buches. Eine literaturwissenschaftliche und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung, = Forschungen zur Bibel, 7 (1973); H. J. Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuelis (1973); A. F. Campbell, The Ark Narrative (1975); P. D. Miller, Jr., and J. J. M. Roberts, The Hand of the Lord. A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of I Samuel (1977).

[3] Schicklberger (n. 2), pp. 25–42, 70–73, 176–178.

tumors in v. 4), 5aβ–11abαβ, 12–14, 16, in order to emphasize the importance of the ark as the symbol of Yahweh's presence among his people, irrespective of its physical location.[4] (c) Finally, of course (although this is not Schicklberger's concern), this material came to be incorporated into the larger complex of I Sam. 1–7 or the Deuteronomistic Historical Work. This approach is strikingly similar to Nübel's treatment of the Narrative of David's Rise (I Sam. 16–II Sam. 5).[5] – (2) Schicklberger denies that II Sam. 6 was an original part of the Ark Narrative in I Sam. 4:1b–7:1.[6]

Campbell agrees to a great extent with Rost in isolating I Sam. 4:1b–7:1 + II Sam. 6 as the Ark Narrative, differing with him only in including I Sam. 4:22; 6:5–9, 17–18; II Sam. 6:16, 20–23 as original.[7]

Basically then, the present essay is a response to the monograph of *Miller* and *Roberts,* with certain observations concerning Stoebe's treatment of I Sam. 1–7.

Like Schicklberger and Campbell, in reality Miller and Roberts do not break any new ground in the study of the so-called Ark Narrative by including I Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36 in that narrative and excluding II Sam. 6. A comparison of their view of the texts in chapter 2 with that of H. J. Stoebe reveals that basically they adopt his position, and fundamentally defend it in the same way that he does. The present writer is puzzled by the fact that in their treatment of this material in Chapters III and IV (pp. 27–39), they give Stoebe only one very obscure note (Note 17 to Chapter III on p. 99), which has no bearing on these issues. For the crucial lines of reasoning, one may compare the following statements. Miller and Roberts argue: "The destruction of the Elide house as the judgment of God is the whole point of 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36. In this section of ch. 4 (i. e. verses 12 ff.), the fall of that house is also the point . . . The deaths of Hophni, Phinehas, Eli, and Phinehas's wife are not incidental or coincidental. They are the fulfillment of the divine words of 2:27–36."[8] They also reason: ". . . To make the ark narrative a complete, self-contained unit, one must supplement Rost's text with a tradition introducing the main characters and alerting the reader to Yahweh's displeasure toward Israel. The tradition of the wickedness of Eli's sons (I Sam. 12:–17, 22–25) would fill part of that need . . . Considering the major role Samuel plays in the present form of I Sam. 1–3, the total omission of any mention of him in 4:1b–7:1 is certainly striking . . . and suggests that these two sections in their present form could not be an original unity."[9]

Stoebe reasons in basically the same way: "Dieses Gerichtswort 2, 27 ff. ist zwar durch nachträgliche Überarbeitung bzw. Aktualisierung erweitert . . ., kann aber nicht als Ganzes nachträglicher Zusatz zur Samuelgeschichte sein, weil es als Zusatz eine unvorstellbare Ent-

[4] Ibid., pp. 73–129, 168–236, esp. pp. 129, 236.

[5] H.-U. Nübel, Davids Aufstieg in der frühe israelitischer Geschichtsschreibung (1959), pp. 54, 69–70, 73, 74, 85, 88, 94, 126, 147. He isolates an original source or "Grundschrift" as the first stage, argues that it underwent an extensive revision or "Bearbeitung", and this in turn was subjected to the final redaction.

[6] Schicklberger (n. 2), p. 73.

[7] Campbell (n. 2), pp. 166–168.

[8] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), pp. 37–38; cf. also pp. 35, 63, 64, 65, 66, 70.

[9] Ibid., p. 19.

wertung dieser Geschichte wäre. Es muss also so liegen, dass die Samuelgestalt einer schon vorhandenen Überlieferung eingefügt wurde, die zunächst in 2, 27 ff. vorliegt, zu der in Kap. 2 aber auch V. 12–17 und 22–25 gehört haben, weil ohne diese das Drohwort keinen Haftpunkt hatte ... Diese Strafandrohung (i. e., in 2:27–36) verlangt ... notwendig eine Fortsetzung, und diese findet sich, wie zumeist und mit gutem Recht angenommen wird, in Kap. 4, und zwar nicht nur in dem Sinne, dass Kap. 1–3 Kap. 4 voraussetzen, sondern auch umgekehrt, denn die Katastrophe von Kap. 4 musste als Strafhandeln Jahwes verstanden werden. Darüber hinaus ist Kap. 4 mit den zu Kap. 2 herausgestellten Stücken das Interesse an den Söhnen Elis und eine gewisse Vertrautheit mit den Verhältnissen in Silo gemeinsam."[10]

Further, Miller and Roberts insist that the oracle of Samuel concerning the fall of the house of Eli in 3:11–14 does not come from a different source from that which originally included 2:27–36, but is the work of a redactor. "The oracle of the anonymous prophet existed prior to the insertion of the Samuel material and was adapted by the later redactor for the glorification of his boy hero."[11] This reasoning is precisely the opposite of the logic which they use to date their narrative on "the hand of the Lord" before David's victories over the Philistines, viz.: "After David's decisive defeat of the Philistines and the restoration of the ark, there would be little point in formulating the ark material as has been done in I Sam. 2:12 ff; 4–6. The theological problem of Israel's defeat at Ebenezer would no longer have been a real problem."[12] The same logic would lead them to contend that after Eleazar replaced Eli and the priesthood at Kiriath-jearim replaced the Elide priesthood, there would be little point in a redactor repeating the announcement that the house of Eli would fall because the tension between the two priesthoods would no longer have been a live issue. And yet, as a matter of fact they contend that a later redactor is responsible for 3:11–14, who, by their own dating, would have to have inserted this material after David defeated the Philistines (and their implication is that it was inserted a great deal later than this), thus quite a time after the Elide priesthood ceased to play any significant role in Israelite life. But in reality, Miller and Roberts are simply repeating the argument of a number of scholars, among them most recently Stoebe, who says: "Gegenüber dem Spruch in Kap. 2 zeigt V. 11 (of ch. 3) in der Weite der Perspektive, zugleich in der Reflexion auf die Wirkung bei denen, die davon hören, einen späteren Standpunkt."[13]

It is clear, then, that in taking the view that the pericopes in I. Sam. 2 on the sons of Eli belong to the same source or tradition as 4:1b–7:1, Miller and Roberts are doing little more than following Stoebe, although apparently they have accidentally overlooked giving him credit for this view. At the same time, they argue that there are good reasons to believe that I Sam. 4:1b–7:1 once existed in a tradition complex or source separate from II Sam. 6, another view already previously defended by several scholars, some of whom they mention.[14] Like Schicklberger

[10] Stoebe (n. 2), pp. 86–87.
[11] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), p. 21.
[12] Ibid., p. 73.
[13] Stoebe (n. 2), p. 125.
[14] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), pp. 23–25.

and Campbell, then, actually Miller and Roberts have nothing substantially new or different to offer.

Attention now must be turned to a consideration of the arguments which Miller and Roberts advance to include I Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36 in their narrative on "the hand of the Lord", but to exclude Samuel altogether, i.e., to exclude I Sam. 1:1–2:11, 18–21, 26; 3:1–4:1a; and 7:2–17. These may be listed for easy reference.

1. Miller and Roberts reason that the defeat of the Israelites at the hand of the Philistines in I Sam. 4 demands a theological explanation, and that I Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25 supply that explanation, viz., the sins of the sons of Eli.[15] Furthermore, the death of the sons of Eli in 4:10–11 is a fulfilment of the prediction of the man of God in 2:27–36. Yet, they must and do struggle very hard in an attempt to gain this point, because they know that the text of I Sam. 2 and of I Sam. 4 nowhere makes it explicit. Thus, they are forced to argue that this is true because it fits "the familiar pattern of prophecy and fulfillment" and "is apparent from the structure".[16] In other words, it is so because the narrative impresses them in this way. But could not this "familiar pattern", this "structure", have been the work of a later redactor who sought a theological explanation for the Philistine victory over Israel at Aphek? Miller and Roberts deny others the right to connect the statements about the spiritual decline of the sons of Eli and the spiritual rise of Samuel in 2:11–4:1a as belonging to the same tradition on the basis of a "familiar" O. T. "contrast structure", and insist that this obviously is the work of a redactor. But do not others have as much right to believe that this represents a unity because it impresses them in this way, as they have to believe that 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36 were part and parcel of the same tradition as 4:1a–7:1 because it impresses them in that way?

2. Miller and Roberts are very insistent that Samuel has no part in the ark narrative. And yet, Eli is mentioned repeatedly in the story of Samuel's birth, dedication, and rise to prominence in I Sam. 1–3 (cf. 1:3, 9, 12–18, 24–28; 2:11, 20; 3:1–18) in such a way that it is impossible to isolate "Eli material" from this section. Once again, in order to try to carry their point, Miller and Roberts contradict their own principle. On the one hand, they criticize Rost for excising the reference to Eli and Phinehas in 4:19b, 21b ("her father-in-law and her husband") by saying: "Rather than accepting the text and letting it shape his understanding of the narrative, Rost lets his assumption that the passage as a whole concerns the wandering of the ark lead him to excise elements that do not fit that impression."[17] On the other hand, they follow this very procedure in severing the Samuel material from the ark narrative. One gets the distinct impression from reading the text of I Sam. 1–3 that the lives of Eli and Samuel are inseparably intertwined. But Miller and Roberts arbitrarily separate the two in deference to their theory.

[15] Ibid., pp. 18–19.
[16] Ibid., p. 63.
[17] Ibid., p. 39.

Resuming the argumentation of the previous point, it may be suggested that this is quite apparent in their treatment of non-explicit connections in the text of I Sam. 1–4. Chapter 4 does not state that the death of Eli's sons and the loss of the ark are the fulfilment of the prophecy of the man of God in 2:27–36, or that they are the divine punishment for the sins of Eli's sons, but Miller and Roberts insist that this is the case. They write, "Once the wickedness of Eli's sons has been established, there is no need for the account of their punishment to do more than coldly narrate the facts . . . The proximity of the presentation of the fulfillment to the prophecy itself requires no additional comment."[18] But they refuse to recognize Samuel as the apprentice of and successor to Eli as the leading figure in Israelite life because the text does not explicitly state that this is the case. They reason, "we should have expected Samuel to take the place of Eli's house, given the repeated contrast between him and the sons of Eli in the present shape of I Sam. 2; the fact that this passage makes not the slightest reference to him points out that it originally had nothing to do with Samuel."[19] Yet, when 3:11–14 make an explicit reference to 2:27–36, Miller and Roberts conclude that this must be the work of a later redactor, and could not possibly be from the same tradition.[20] Consistency – thou art a jewel! There is as much "connection" between Samuel and Eli and his sons via the contrast principle in 2:11–4:1a as there is between the prophecy of the man of God in 2:27–36 and the fulfilment in the death of the sons of Eli in 4:10–11. By what principle of logic can the exegete include the one in his tradition, and exclude the other?[21]

The subjectivity involved in determining what verses and sections of the biblical text should be included or excluded from an earlier tradition or source is illustrated, ironically, in two diametrically opposed responses to a point made by the present writer in 1971. At that time, the observation was made that scholars have not combined the threads of narrative concerning the Elide priesthood and Michal in I and II Samuel to reconstruct an early "Elide Source or Tradition" or an early "Michal Source or Tradition", and thus a resumption of the vicissitudes of the ark in II Sam. 6 does not necessarily show that this chapter was originally part of the same source or tradition as I Sam. 4:16–7:1.[22] Campbell, who wants to include this chapter in the Ark Narrative, labels this "captious argumentation"[23], while Miller and Roberts, who want to exclude this chapter, declare that these two cases are

[18] Ibid., p. 22.

[19] Ibid., p. 30.

[20] Ibid., p. 21.

[21] Most scholars believe that I Sam. 4–6 + II Sam. 6 composed an early ark narrative, and that I Sam. 1–3 (with or without ch. 7) formed a later legendary account of the birth and rise of Samuel. See A. Weiser, The Old Testament. Its Formation and Development (1966[4]), p. 162. For a brief recent treatment of I Sam. 1–3, which shows an appreciative sensitivity to the contrast motif, cf. R. Peter Contesse, La structure de I Samuel 1–3: The Bible Translator 27 (1976), pp. 312–314.

[22] Willis (n. 1), Narrative Tradition, p. 303.

[23] Campbell (n. 2), p. 177 n. 4.

"cogent analogies".[24] The difference is in the impression which the narrative makes on the mind of the investigator.

3. Miller and Roberts contend that I Sam. 4 assumes that Eli, Hophni and Phinehas have already been introduced. Then, ironically, they reason that this requires the inclusion of I Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36 in the same tradition as 4:1a–7:1, because these pericopes introduce Hophni and Phinehas, and yet they admit that I Sam. 2:12 ff. is not really an adequate introduction to the sons of Eli, and that Eli himself is not properly introduced in this material. "I Sam. 2:12 is not an entirely adequate introduction for the following narrative, but it does not lack much (sic). All that is required is a brief introduction of Eli and perhaps some statement about his age, explaining why his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were now priests of Yahweh at Shilo."[25] They explain this inadequacy by assuming that "the original beginning of the ark narrative has been fragmented and partly lost by the secondary insertion of the traditions about Samuel's childhood".[26] Now this view might have some credence if it were not for the fact that the present text of I Sam. contains a perfectly adequate introduction to Eli and his sons (cf. I Sam. 1:3). That Eli "sits" beside the doorpost of the Shiloh temple (I Sam. 1:9), and that he is impervious to the real significance of Hannah's actions and feelings (I Sam. 1:12–14) and to his sons' adultery with the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting (I Sam. 2:22), all combine to suggest that he is old, and this is why his sons are functioning as priests at Shiloh. But Miller and Roberts cannot accept these passages as part of their narrative of the Hand of the Lord, because by doing so they would have to admit Samuel into their tradition or source, and they have previously decided that this cannot be. Each critic must determine whether such an approach is eisegetical or exegetical.

4. It is worthy of note that Miller and Roberts do not deal with other connections which exist between I Sam. 1:1–4:1a and 4:1b–7:1. Four examples may be cited.

(a) I Sam. 4:3–4 assume that the readers have already been told that the ark was located at Shiloh at the time of the battle of Aphek. But the only previous reference to the ark is in 3:3, and here the ark is introduced. Campbell responds to this by arguing that "the ark and its location scarcely need introduction; the whereabouts of so important a cult symbol can be assumed to be known".[27] This is indeed gratuitous reasoning. It would be true only of an audience that lived rather close to the period in which the ark was located at Shiloh and in the general region of Shiloh, since after the destruction of Shiloh by the Philistines it would not be long until this knowledge would have been forgotten. Furthermore, the same thing could be said of Eli and his sons. Surely Eli was so prominent in Israel at one time that he would not need to be introduced. Furthermore, if Campbell's contention is true, why does a man as prominent as Saul need to be introduced (I Sam. 9:1–2)? And why does David need an introduction (I Sam. 16:1–13)? And on and on we could go. It is significant that Miller and Roberts do not deal with this issue.

[24] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), p. 24.
[25] Ibid., p. 27.
[26] Ibid., p. 19.
[27] Campbell (n. 2), p. 177.

(b) I Sam. 1–4 contain a series of statements regarding Eli's aging, physical blindness and deafness, and spiritual blindness and deafness which are broken by the source or tradition division suggested by Miller and Roberts. Since Campbell doubts this progression,[28] a rather detailed elaboration is in order. (i) When Eli "observed" (Heb. šōmēr) Hannah's mouth, he concluded that she was drunk (1:12–14). When he confronted her with this, she denied that she was drunk, stated that she had been praying, and pleaded with him, "Let your maidservant find favor in your eyes" (Heb. beʿēnēkā) (1:18). (ii) When Eli was "very old," he "heard" (Heb. šmʿ) of the evil deeds which his sons were doing (2:22–24, where this Hebrew root occurs four times), implying that he did not see it with his own eyes, evidently because he was "blind" and "deaf" to his sons' activities. (iii) As a punishment for the sins of Eli's sons and for Eli's failure to discipline them, the man of God tells Eli that there will not be "an old man" in his house (2:21), i.e., he will be the last old man in his priesthood, i.e., the last member of his priesthood to live to a good old age. (iv) During Eli's priesthood at Shiloh, there was no frequent "vision" (Heb. ḥāzōn) (3:1), evidently because of the sins of Eli's sons and Eli's failure to restrain them (cf. 2:22–25, 29–30 – incidentally 3:1 evidently presupposes the background provided by these verses). Eli's "eyesight" (Heb. ʿēnāw) had begun to grow dim, so that he could not "see" (Heb. lirʾōt) (3:2). Accordingly, the Lord had to call Samuel three times before Eli "perceived" (Heb. bīn) what was happening (3:8). The next morning he instructed Samuel not to "hide" (Heb. kāḥad) from him anything that the Lord had told him (3:17–18). Because of Samuel's growth and dedication to the Lord, the Lord "appeared" (Heb. lehērāʾōh) again at Shiloh (3:21). (v) When the messenger came from the battle at Aphek, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road "watching" (Heb. meṣappēh) (4:13), which is ironical, because as an old man of 98 "his eyes" (Heb. ʿēnāw) were set, so that he could not "see" (Heb. lirʾōt) (4:15). The continued references to the "eyes" in 1:18; 3:2; and 4:15, as well as the repetition of lirʾōt in 3:2 and 4:15 argues for a common tradition of sections in this material which the hypothesis of Miller and Roberts tears apart.

(c) The matter-of-fact statement that "Eli was sitting upon his seat" (4:13) presupposes that the reader has already been introduced to this, and 1:9 provides that introduction. The source or tradition division of Miller and Roberts severs this connection.

(d) In 1:16, Hannah denies that she is a bat belīyaʿal, "a daughter of Belial", a base (worthless) woman", whereas 2:12 affirms that the sons of Eli were bene belīyaʿal, "sons of Belial", "base (worthless) men". But this contrast is obliterated by the dissection of the text proposed by Miller and Roberts.

2.

These observations bring out in bold relief *two* fundamentally *different attitudes* toward the biblical text. One, in the literary historical tradition, seeks to *divide* the present text of scripture into earlier, smaller sources or traditions in order to discover a unit or block of material with a certain theological bias at an early level of development. The other acknowledges that the material passed through earlier oral or written stages, but emphasizes the *coherence* of the material as it was used by a redactor, collector, or author to apply to his audience for the purpose of communicating a theological truth. Now both of these tasks have their strengths and weaknesses. The former attitude tends to take the researcher back closer to the event itself, and helps him to uncover earlier theological emphases in the history of the

[28] Ibid, p. 177.

tradition. At the same time, it is very arbitrary in assigning verses and sections of the text to different sources and to a later redactor. Miller and Roberts have a ready answer for any evidence that differs with their view: (a) Connections between 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36 and 4]1b–7:1 demonstrate that all this material comes from the same source or tradition; but (b) connections between 1:1–2:11; 2:18–21, 26; 3:1–4:1a; 7:2–17 and the rest of the material in chaps. 1–7 are due to the work of a redactor.[29] The latter attitude stresses the use of earlier historical events and traditions to meet the religious needs of later audiences. It recognizes the difficulty of making a sharp distinction between the material which a tradent or redactor inherited from the preceding generation and his own contributions to this material. It is based on the general presupposition that the theology of the redactor or tradent was largely shaped by the traditions which he inherited, rather than that he imposed his theology on those traditions, else he would not have preserved the traditions which he did.

[29] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), pp. 18–23. Even omitting 3:12–14 for argument's sake, the connections between 2:11, 18–21, 26; 3:1–4:1a (to say nothing about 1:1–2:10 and 7:2–17) on the one hand, and 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36 (to say nothing of 4:1b–7:1) on the other, are numerous. A few may be cited here. (a) naʿar appears repeatedly in reference to Samuel (2:11, 18, 21, 26; 3:1, 8), Hophni and Phinehas (2:17), and the servants of Eli's sons (2:13, 15). (b) The phraseology in 2:11 and 12 (i.e., 'et yhwh) indicates an intentional contrast between Samuel "ministering to the Lord" and the sons of Eli "having no regard for the Lord". (c) The sin of Hophni and Phinehas is great "before the Lord" ('et pᵉnē yhwh) (2:17), but by way of contrast Samuel is ministering "before the Lord" ('et pᵉnē yhwh) (2:18) (cf. the use of 'et pᵉnē and liphnē of Samuel ministering "before" Eli [2:11; 3:1], and liphnē of the ancestors of Eli functioning as priests "before" the Lord [2:28, 30]). (d) The expression "sacrifice a sacrifice" (zābaḥ zebaḥ) is used of the people coming to Hophni and Phinehas with their sacrifices (2:13), and of Elkanah and his family going to Shiloh each year to offer the annual sacrifice (2:19). (e) When Samuel ministers before the Lord he wears a linen "ephod" (2:18), whereas God reminds Eli that he had chosen the house of his father to wear an "ephod" before him (2:28). (f) Whereas Eli prays that the Lord will give Elkanah and Hannah "seed" (zeraʿ) (2:20), the Lord announces to Eli that he will cut off his "seed" and the "seed" (zeraʿ) of his father's house from the priesthood (2:31 [twice]), according to the LXX and L^{Lg} (the MT has zᵉrōaʿ, "arm, strength", which, if correct, would form a paronomasia). (g) The phrase "in Shiloh" occurs in connection with the selfish treatment of the sacrifices by Eli's sons (2:14), and (in obvious contrast to this) in connection with the Lord's appearing to Samuel (3:21). (h) neʾᵉmān is used in describing the priest which Yahweh declares that he will raise up in place of Eli and his sons (2:35 [twice]), and of the establishment of Samuel as a prophet of the Lord (3:20). (i) The sons of Eli are said not to have "known the Lord" because they spurned his sacrifices (2:12), whereas Samuel is said not to have "known the Lord" as a small lad under Eli at Shiloh prior to God's self-revelation to him (3:7). Such numerous and striking similarities would normally be interpreted to mean that these passages came from the same hand, and not that certain sections (in this case, those dealing with Samuel) were carefully and laboriously composed by a redactor to enhance the (fictitious?) image of his "boy-hero".

If Miller and Roberts were consistent in their treatment of I Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36; 4:1b–7:1, they would have to insist that the concept of "the hand of the Lord" is a theological idea superimposed on the original "Ark Narrative" by a later redactor, because it occurs so often here. The truth of the matter is that "the hand of the Lord" is a very pervasive phrase in the Old Testament, and, although it is important in this narrative, does not have the thematic force that Miller and Roberts attribute to it.

These differences are further exemplified by the view of Miller and Roberts that I Sam. 7:2–17 should be severed from 4:1b–7:1. "I Sam. 5–7:1 has already resolved the crisis presented in ch. 4. Yahweh has already defeated the Philistines without Samuel's help, and to introduce it (i.e., Samuel's name) at this point actually works as an anticlimax. It is possibly this reason as much as historical consideration that moved the redactor to insert 7:2, thus providing a temporal and literary separation between 4:1b–7:1 and the following Samuel story."[30] And they contend, commenting on 6:19–7:1: "The story has come full circle."[31] But this is by no means the case. If the story stops with 7:1, the ark is indeed in Israelite hands, but a man of Eli's stature has not come forward to lead Israel, and the Philistines certainly have not been defeated – as a matter of fact, they still control large Israelite territories.

3.

To be sure, in an attempt to defend their hypothesis, Miller and Roberts argue that Eleazar was Eli's successor.[32] Now it is true that he was consecrated to have charge of the ark (7:1), but this is far from proving that he was Eli's successor. And if he were Eli's successor, one must then explain the obvious view of the present narrative that *Samuel* was *Israel's leader* after Eli's death. It is not acceptable to assume that a later redactor has displaced an older account of Eleazar's leadership of Israel with that of Samuel's. It is highly unlikely that the Israelites would have given Samuel credit for being the key figure whom Yahweh used to deliver Israel from the Philistines alter Eli's death, if Eleazar were the real deliverer. The historical situation was so bad that someone must have done the work which the biblical text ascribes to Samuel. If it was not Samuel who did this work, someone would have had to have done it. But if so, why did the text not ascribe it to that individual rather than to Samuel? The obvious answer is that Samuel actually did this work.

The present writer has dealt at length with Samuel's crucial role in this critical period[33], and little would be gained by repeating the evidence here. Suffice it to say, if the text of the book of I Sam. means that Eleazar succeeded Eli as the leader of Israel, he was a very obscure and insignificant and ineffective successor indeed, because he is mentioned only once in the entire O.T., viz., in I Sam. 7:1. Miller and Roberts assume that at a later stage in the history of this tradition, the Zadokites "squeezed out any further priestly pretensions of Eleazar's kin, or at least any serious rivalry with Abiathar, and freed the early polemic for use by a quite different party, i.e., the Zadokites".[34] But tradition presents Abiathar as an Elide

[30] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), p. 20; also p. 66 and Chart A on p. 69.
[31] Ibid., p. 59.
[32] Ibid., pp. 20, 25–26.
[33] Willis (n. 1), Cultic Elements, pp. 40–54.
[34] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), p. 26.

(I Kings 2:26–27). Why would the Zadokites excise a tradition which originally made Eleazar and his descendants their rivals, and preserve a tradition which depicted Eli and his descendants as at one time functioning as priests side by side? One of the major arguments advanced by Miller and Roberts in favor of Eleazar's being presented as a "priest" is that the verb šmr is used to describe his work. But a much stronger case can be made for Samuel's priestly functions: he "ministered" to or before the Lord (2:11, 18; 3:1), wore a linen ephod (2:18), offered sacrifices to the Lord (7:9–10), built an altar (7:17), etc. But more than this, like Eli (4:18), he "judged" Israel (7:6, 15, 16, 17). There can be no doubt that in the mind of the author or redactor or tradent or collector of I Sam. 1–7, Samuel was Eli's successor as leader of Israel.

Now from the obviously "passing statement" concerning Eleazar at Kiriath-jearim in 7:1, Miller and Roberts draw far-reaching conclusions, viz., that I Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36; 4:1b–7:1 compose a polemic against the Elide priesthood by the new keepers of the ark at Kiriath-jearim,[35] written some time between the fall of the Shiloh temple and before David's victory over the Philistines (II Sam. 5:17–25), after which the theological problem of why Israel was defeated at Ebenezer would have ceased to exist.[36] But if Miller and Roberts are correct in arguing that the problem was solved when the Philistines returned the ark to the Israelites and committed it to the care of Eleazar, why was it still a real concern as late as the time of David? And conversely, if it ceased to be a real theological problem after David defeated the Philistines, why was it preserved by the later redactor of I Sam. 1–7? Miller and Roberts conjecture that that redactor excised the original beginning of their narrative of the Hand of the Lord.[37] Why did he not excise this also?

Again, the fact that wherever the ark goes, the hand of the Lord is heavy on the Philistines, does not indicate that the narrator was trying to leave the impression that the Lord had "defeated" the Philistines. If this were the case, then the divine slaughter of the men of Bethshemesh would mean that the Lord defeated the Israelites. The word "defeat" is too strong to describe that which Yahweh did in the cities of the Philistines and at Bethshemesh. The defeat of the Philistines does not come until the Israelites win a decisive victory at "Ebenezer" (7:12–14), the very place where the Philistines had defeated them earlier (4:1). Then, and not until then, has the story come full circle.

The "Sitz im Leben" of I Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36; 4:1b–7:1 can hardly be Shiloh (since apparently it was overrun by the Philistines not long after the defeat at Aphek) or Jerusalem (if it is to be dated before David's capture of Jerusalem), as Miller and Roberts agree. Yet, Kiriath-jearim has no real prominent place in this section either. It is mentioned only in 6:21 and 7:1, and there simply as the next place where the ark was sent because divine slaughter broke out at Bethshemesh. In other words, it is hardly more prominent than Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, or

[35] Ibid., p. 26.
[36] Ibid., pp. 73, 74, 75.
[37] Ibid., p. 27.

Bethshemesh. The only difference is that nothing disastrous happens as a result of the presence of the ark there (assuming that the account ends with 7:1).

But when one takes I Sam. 1–7 as a coherent unit, *Ramah* is definitely the prominent location, leaving Shiloh aside (1:1, 19; 2:11; 7:17; cf. also the references to Samuel's home where Ramah is not specifically mentioned in these chapters). And if Samuel was Eli's successor as leader of Israel, it is logical that the traditions concerning Shiloh and the ark would have been carried there after Shiloh was overrun and ceased to be the place where the ark was housed. It makes more sense to believe that Samuel returned to his home town when the Philistine crisis made his stay at Shiloh intolerable than that he would have sought out the whereabouts of the ark and gone there. This would explain why he is not mentioned in 4:1b–7:1. As might be expected, he understood the defeat at the hand of the Philistines as a divine punishment for the peoples' apostasy from Yahweh to serve the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and thus called them to repentance if they wished to be relieved of this oppression (7:3–4). The pattern is precisely the same which appears throughout the book of Judges, another argument favoring the view that *Samuel* is construed in this material as *Eli's successor* as Israel's leader.

The links between 4:1b–7:1 and 7:2–17 are too numerous to be attributed to a redactor, especially in view of the fact that they appear very naturally intermittently throughout new material in 7:2–17. (a) 7:2 is not an adequate beginning of a new pericope, as it presupposes that the reader already knows that the ark is at Kiriath-jearim, information which is given in 6:21–7:1. (b) There is no reason to believe that the people would have put away their foreign gods (7:3–4) unless they had suffered such severe affliction that they were convinced of their sin; the Philistine oppression described in 4:1b–7:1 describes that affliction. (c) 7:3 assumes that the reader has already been told that Israel was under Philistine domination, yet this is nowhere mentioned in I Sam. 1:1–2:11, 18–21, 26; 3:1–4:1a, but only in 4:1b–7:1, and the phrase "deliver (save) from the hand of" occurs in 4:8; 7:3 (nāṣal miyyad); 4:3 (yāšaʿ mikkap); and 7:8 (yāšaʿ miyyad). (d) Samuel "judged" Israel (7:6, 15, 16, 17), thus filling the void left by Eli (4:18). (e) The narrator is concerned about what the Philistines "heard" (šāmaʿ) and how they reacted to this both in 4:6–7 and in 7:7. (f) The "lords of the Philistines" are mentioned in such a way in 7:7 as to indicate that the reader had already been introduced to them, but previous references can be found only in 4:1b–7:1 (cf. 5:8, 11; 6:4 [twice], 12, 16, 18). (g) In both battles at Ebenezer, the army that is "afraid" is victorious: the Philistines in 4:7–11, and the Israelites in 7:7–10. (h) 4:3 speaks of the Philistines "routing" (nāgap) Israel, and 7:10 of Israel "routing" (nāgap) the Philistines. (i) Samuel names the place where Israel defeated the Philistines "Ebenezer" (7:12), and it was at Ebenezer that the Philistines had defeated the Israelites (4:1). (j) "The hand of the Lord", which Miller and Roberts consider to be the theological theme of the narrative which they isolate, occurs also in 7:13, where it stands in contrast to "the hand of the Philistines" (7:3, 8, 14).

The emphasis of Miller and Roberts on the "hand of the Lord" in I Sam. 4:1b–7:1 in preference to the "ark" as the central emphasis of this material points in the

right direction, but reflects the prior emphasis of the present writer and Schicklberger.[38] The author of I Sam. 4:1–11 clearly intends to expose the *popular view* of trusting in the *ark* as *invalid.* Although the ark is a symbol of Yahweh's throne (v. 4), it is erroneous to believe that his activity is limited to that place where the ark is located, or to believe that he will deliver or help his people when the ark is present irrespective of their fidelity to him. Thus, the Israelites are defeated by the Philistines because of the *sins of the sons of Eli,* and because Eli did not (2:25, 29; 3:13), and the people could not (2:16), check this. Accordingly, even though the ark is a central concern in this material, it can be misleading to refer to it as The Ark Narrative.

In conclusion, a few remarks may be made concerning the absence of Samuel's "name" in I Sam. 4:1b–7:1. Miller and Roberts insist that Samuel's prominence at Shiloh as depicted in ch. 3 would demand that he be mentioned in 4:1b–7:1 if 1:1–4:1a and 4:1b–7:1 were from the same tradition or source.[39] However, 4:1b–7:1 presents a situation in the midst of the Samuel material which has a striking parallel to I Sam. 31 in the midst of the Narrative of David's Rise. Just as Samuel is not mentioned in 4:1b–7:1, David is not mentioned in ch. 31. But there is good reason for this in both cases, and the reason is basically the same. The narrator is describing the "crisis" by which the former regime was ended as a preparation for the hero to assume his leadership role in Israel's life. The reason that Samuel is not mentioned in the former nor David in the latter is that this is simply not the narrator's concern in that section of the narrative. It would have been unnatural for him to deviate from the natural flow of his account simply to mention his hero by name.

John T. Willis, Abilene, Texas

[38] Schicklberger (n. 2), pp. 188–190; Willis (n. 1), Narrative Tradition, p. 204.
[39] Miller and Roberts (n. 2), pp. 19–20.