

## **THE CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT OF THE ISRAELITES IN THE LAND OF CANAAN**

After Moses' death the one who had began the military expeditions for conquering the land of Canaan, Joshua was made his successor.

Therefore, the Israelites reached the Promised Land under the direction of Joshua and other leaders.

Conquering the land of Canaan was not easy. It was slow and difficult. It involved challenges whereby the Israelites had to fight and some parts suffered violent destruction during the attack.

Many Israelites lost their lives before they finally settled in the Promised Land. The strongest Canaanite city, Jerusalem did not become possession of Israel until king David's time in the 10<sup>th</sup> century although the attack began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC.

### **THE COVENANT RENEWAL AT SHECHEM (JOSHUA 24:1FF).**

Before his death, Joshua called for a meeting at Shechem. All the Israelites converged together to listen to Joshua.

This meeting was to renew the covenant with God. Joshua challenged the Israelites whether they would worship God the almighty or the gods of the Canaanites.

He reminded them to stirk to the covenant faith.

He wanted the Israelites to be guarded against pagan practices like idolatry, apostasy, syncretism etc.

He wanted the Israelites to remain faithful despite the challenges they were bound to face in the newly acquired land.

At Shechem he made a covenant for the people that day and he gave them laws and rules to follow. The laws were written in the book of the law of God.

### **RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM IN ISRAEL**

Syncretism refers to mixing of a true religion with a false religion. In the case of the Israelites, they were mixing their true Jewish religion with the Canaanite religion. For example they believed in God the Almighty and at the same time they believed in the Canaanite gods.

## **FACTORS WHICH LED THE ISRAELITES INTO PRACTISING SYNCRETISM.**

### **The following factors led the Israelites into practicing syncretism;**

Poor leadership; the leaders by then led the people into syncretism. They were weak and not interested in the spiritual development of the people for example the sons of Eli.

The Canaanites imposed a lot of influence over the Israelites since they mixed with them and with time this caused syncretism.

The change of their mode of work led to syncretism. On reaching the Promised Land, they changed from pastoralism to land cultivation. Then they were convinced by the Canaanites that, they had to worship the God of fertility as the Canaanites were doing since that god had influence over the Canaanite land unlike Yahweh.

The Israelites had greed for material gains, this compelled them into syncretism. They were convinced that if they were to get a lot of wealth, they had to worship the Canaanite gods.

Lack of faith led to syncretism. Many Israelites lost ultimate faith in God the almighty. They resorted to double standards, believing in God the almighty and the Canaanite gods.

The search for physical gods led to syncretism. The Israelites were demoralized by the invisible nature of Yahweh and they started looking for the visible Canaanite gods.

The presence of the young generation at the time of entering Canaan led to syncretism. The young people did not know the greatness of Yahweh, therefore, they were easily convinced by the Canaanites and they turned to syncretism.

The intermarriages led to syncretism. On reaching the Land of Canaan, many Israelites intermarried with the Canaanites which made them to succumb to the culture of their partners.

The Israelites found God's demands too difficult to fulfill yet when they compared with the demands of the pagan gods they were a bit light, therefore, they resorted to syncretism.

Lack of biological knowledge led to syncretism. The Israelites were convinced by the Canaanites that they had to worship the gods of fertility in case they were to produce children. Therefore, they resorted to syncretism.

They practiced syncretism because God used to take long to answer their prayers forgetting that they had to pray to Yahweh with a lot of patience. The Canaanite gods used to answer people's prayers within a short time which led the Israelites into practicing syncretism.

Outright disobedience led to syncretism. The Israelites just disobeyed God's laws and commandments because they were forbidden from worshipping pagan gods.

God's visions had disappeared from the people. When He took long without appearing before the Israelites they resorted to syncretism.

There was moral decay; the religious leaders by then were not exemplary. Therefore, they did not mind whether people sinned or not. They did not regularly warn the people against their wickedness which promoted syncretism.

The failure of the Israelites to obey the Act of Herem led to syncretism. Since they did not completely destroy the Canaanites, they befriended them and some Israelites were compelled to practice syncretism.

The Israelites were led into syncretism because of the presence of the false prophets. These prophets misguided God's people and influenced them into paganism alongside the true worship of God.

The prosperity and military strength of the pagan nations led the Israelites into syncretism. They were convinced that once they followed the pagan gods, they would be strong.

The two religions had some similarities and the Israelites looked at them as more or less the same. Therefore, they practiced syncretism.

### **THE MANIFESTATIONS OF SYNCRETISM IN ISRAEL (THE FORMS OF SYNCRETISM IN ISRAEL)**

**The following are the forms of syncretism in Israel or the manifestations of syncretism among the Israelites:**

The Israelites worshiped God the Almighty and at the same time they worshipped the Canaanite gods.

The Israelites were sacrificing to Yahweh and at the same time they sacrificed to the pagan gods who at times demanded human sacrifices.

The Israelites were having Jewish names and at the same time they were having Canaanite names and names belonging to the Canaanite gods.

They used to celebrate Jewish festivals like the Passover, the day of atonement etc and at the same time, they would celebrate Canaanite festivals.

They used to consult the true prophets of God and at the same time they consulted the false prophets. For example King Ahab consulted Zedekiah the false prophet and Micaiah the true prophet of God.- Kings 22:1ff.

The Israelites constructed worshipping places for God the Almighty and at the same time they constructed worshipping places for the pagan gods. For example King Solomon constructed the Jerusalem temple for Yahweh and at the same time he constructed worshipping places for the pagan gods 1 Kings 6:1ff and 1 Kings 11:7-8.

They used to perform miracles using God's powers and they believed in God's miraculous powers and at the same time they believed in the powers of magic. At times they would even challenge God using magic.

They trusted and had confidence in God and therefore prayed to Him. And at the same time they trusted and also had confidence in the pagan gods and therefore prayed to them.

They believed in God the Almighty and had faith in Him and at the same time, they believed in pagan gods and had faith in them.

In case of trouble they used to seek for protection from Yahweh and at the same time they sought protection from the pagan gods.

### **THE FORMS OF SYNCRETISM TODAY**

**Today syncretism is manifested in the following ways;**

Christians worship God the Almighty and at the same time they worship the pagan gods.

Some people have Christian names and at the same time they have names belonging to the gods for example John Mukasa, Ddungu Joseph, Kiwanuka Simon etc.

Some people sacrifice to God for example they give tithe in church and at the same time they sacrifice to the pagan gods, give "bigali" etc.

Some people consult God's prophets that is to say the religious leaders and at the same time they consult the mediums, fortune tellers, witch doctors etc.

Some people pray to God the Almighty and at the same time they pray to the pagan gods for example Jjaja Mukasa, Kiwanuka, Musoke among the Bagandas.

Some people seek protection from God the Almighty and at the same time, they seek protection from watchmen, dogs, fences and they believe that without such they can't survive.

Some people construct worshipping places for God the Almighty while others contribute towards the construction of churches and the same time they build shrines at home where they worship the pagan gods.

Some people bare external signs to prove that they are Christians for example the bibles, rosaries, medals etc and at the same time, they have sticks, bangles, banners of certain colours etc.

Some people pray to God before eating anything and at the same time they give libation to the ancestors to enjoy.

Some people accept sacraments like Baptism, Confirmation etc and at the same time they get involved in funeral rites, rituals of twins etc which involve pagan practices.

Some people believe in God's miraculous powers and at the same time they believe in magical powers.

Some people have body cuttings where charms are fixed and at the same time they believe in God the Almighty.

Some people dedicate their children, houses, to God the Almighty and at the same time they dedicate them to the pagan gods.

## **COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ISRAELITE AND THE CANAANITE RELIGION.**

The two religions have both differences and similarities. **The differences are as follows:**

The Israelite religion emphasized monotheism that is to say worshiping of one God while the Canaanite religion emphasized polytheism that is to say worshipping of many gods.

The God of the Israelites was not easily manipulated because he was only divine while the Canaanite gods would easily be manipulated.

The Canaanite religion was natural and it emphasized physical needs while the Israelite religion was beyond the natural needs because God the Almighty aimed at spiritual perfection.

The Canaanite gods were invisible. Most of them were in form of human beings who would even marry and have children while the Israelite God was invisible because He was believed to be a spirit.

The Israelite religion was historical that is to say it had an origin for example it originated from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob while the Canaanite religion had no origin because it had never been traced by the Canaanites.

The Israelite religion emphasized faith in God the Almighty while the Canaanite religion didn't emphasize faith after all it aimed at physical needs.

The Israelite God was associated with many strange miracles which revealed His powers while the Canaanite gods had no strange miracles though the Canaanites used magic to perform the same miracles.

The Israelite God was associated with the making of covenants. For example the Abrahamic covenant, sinaitic covenant while there were no covenants among the Canaanites.

The Canaanite religion was cyclic in nature, that is to say the Canaanites followed seasons while worshipping their gods for example during the sunny seasons they would worship the god of the sun, in case they wanted fertility, they would worship the god of fertility etc

while the Israelite religion on the other hand wasn't cyclic, whereby God the Almighty would be worshipped all the time and He used to fulfill people's needs regardless of the season.

The Canaanite religion demanded sacrifices to be made from anywhere for example under shades of big trees, near mountains, hills etc while the Israelite religion demanded sacrifices to be made from holy places chosen by God.

The leaders of the Canaanites were above the law. Therefore, they had the powers over the law and over human life hence they were free to kill, grab property etc while among the Israelites no one was above the law of God. They all had to respect it.

Among the Israelites, the religious leaders were chosen by God for example the priests, the prophets etc while in the Canaanite religion, the leaders were self appointed.

### **The similarities were as follows;**

Both religions involved sacrifices, that is to say both demanded sacrifices from the people which were made to God the Almighty and the Canaanite gods respectively.

In both religions, forgiveness was expected from God the Almighty and the Canaanite gods in case one repented.

In both, disobedience would bring about punishment and curses from God to the Israelites and to the Canaanites from their gods.

In both religions, obedience would yield blessings from God to the Israelites and from the Canaanite gods to the Canaanites.

In both, people were expected to repent for the sins committed and ask for forgiveness from God and the gods respectively.

Both religions had prophets. The Israelite religion emphasized the true prophets of God who ensured that the Israelites lived according to God's expectations while in the Canaanite religion, there were the false prophets who promoted the Canaanite religion.

Both religions involved worshipping a super natural being for example the Israelites worshipped Yahweh and also the Canaanites had their super natural beings they worshipped.

Both religions emphasized prayers. That is to say to God the almighty and to the Canaanite gods respectively.

In both religions, festivals were common and emphasized. For example the Israelites celebrated the day of atonement, the Passover festival etc and the Canaanites had different festivals.

## **THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ISRAELITES IN THE LAND OF CANAAN [ EFFECTS OF THEIR SETTLEMENT]**

The Israelites faced the following problems in the land of Canaan;

They failed to get organized leadership in the new land. Most of the leaders were not exemplary and they misled the people. For example, the sons of Eli who acted as judges.

The Israelites were not united as members of one family. They would only unite whenever they were attacked by a common enemy and after fighting the enemy, they would disunite.

Many Israelites were misguided and turned to the pagan gods because they believed that they owned the land of Canaan. In order to be successful in the land of Canaan, they had to worship the Canaanite gods.

The Israelites found God's demands too difficult to abide by as compared to the demands of the Canaanite gods. For example the Israelite religion emphasized worshiping of one God, marrying fellow Israelites while the Canaanite religion never had such restrictions.

The Israelites were often attacked by foreigners which kept them on the run, therefore, they weren't settled at all for example they were attacked by the philistines, Amalekites etc.

Many Israelites lost their lives as a result of fighting with the Canaanites, philistines, Amalekites, while others died due to the new changes experienced in the newly acquired land.

On reaching the Promised Land, they experienced serious drought which resulted into famine.

Immorality set in, whereby many Israelites became immoral for example they were involved in cult prostitution, whereby they used to have sexual intercourse while praying to God. Even the priests like Eli's sons used to practice cult prostitution.

The Canaanites influenced the Israelites to the extent of carrying out child sacrifice which was against the Mosaic Law.

The Israelites married foreign women (Canaanites) which was against the Law of Moses because no Israelites were expected to associate or to marry Canaanites.

The Israelites lacked faith in God the Almighty and they resorted to the Canaanite gods whom they worshipped.

The Israelites rejected theocracy that is to say God's leadership yet they were supposed to be led by God the Almighty. They rejected God's leadership and demanded for a human king whom they thought to be more powerful than Yahweh.

They appointed their own priests, which was against the covenant way of life because the priests were supposed to be appointed by God.

The Israelites started consulting the false prophets instead of consulting the true prophets of God. According to the Mosaic Law, they were not expected to associate with false prophets.

The Israelites started dedicating their children and property to the pagan gods which was against the covenant way of life.

Many Israelites turned to Baal worship because Baal was believed to be the owner of the land of Canaan.

God the Almighty used to take long to answer their prayers. They felt abandoned, became impatient and turned to pagan gods who seemed to respond very fast to people's problems.

## **HOW THE ISRAELITES DISAPPOINTED GOD WHEN THEY REACHED THE PROMISED LAND**

### **The Israelites disappointed God in the following ways;**

They worshipped the pagan gods like Baal, Asherah etc therefore, practicing polytheism which was against the covenant way of life.

They made illegal sacrifices. For example they carried out human sacrifices which were against God's expectations.

They became immoral and began getting involved in cult prostitution which was against God's expectations.

They violated the act of Herem. On reaching Canaan they were supposed to destroy the Canaanites but they did not completely destroy them, they spared some of them, hence disappointing God.

They neglected the covenant faith and put their trust in other gods and wealth, hence disappointing God.

The leaders were not exemplary. Instead of showing a good example to the Israelites by guiding them towards the covenant faith, they misguided them.

They forgot the mighty acts of God, rejected Him and began showing no signs of appreciation. They turned to the pagan gods.

The Israelites rejected theocracy that is to say God's leadership and demanded for an earthly king (human king).



The Israelites began enslaving fellow country men which was against the covenant way of life.

The Israelites began making political alliances with pagan nations yet they were not supposed to associate with pagan people or even to depend on them. For example King David made an alliance with Hiram the King of Tyre.

The people of Israel began refusing to listen to God's prophets. They even conflicted on many occasions. For example Amos conflicted with Amaziah (Amos 7:10ff).

God's land was sold which was against God's expectations. This was done by King Solomon who gave 20 towns of Israel to Hiram as payment for the debt he incurred during the construction of the temple.

The Israelites built worshipping places for the pagan gods on God's land (Canaan). For example 1 Kings 11:1ff Solomon built worshipping places for the pagan gods of his wives. The Israelites married pagan women yet the law didn't allow them to do so for example Solomon.

The Israelites especially in the Northern region began appointing priests yet the priests were supposed to be from the tribe of Levi (the Levites were special people chosen by God to serve as priests).

Syncretism became the order of the day. The Israelites began worshipping pagan gods alongside Yahweh which was a disappointment to God. (Yahweh was known to be a jealousy God who never wanted to be mixed with other gods).

## **HOW THE CHRISTIANS DISAPPOINT GOD TODAY**

Whenever the Christians do what is contrary to God's expectations, they disappoint Him. Therefore, in this case we look at all the evils committed by the Christians. Whenever the Christians sin, they disappoint God.

**Hence, below are the ways through which Christians disappoint God;**

- Murder
- Telling lies
- Divisions in church
- Discrimination
- Corruption and bribery
- Selfishness and individualism
- Robbery
- Sex abuse e.g. fornication, adultery, incest etc
- Pagan worship
- Syncretism
- Lack of love for one another
- Immorality
- Misuse of the tongue

- Lack of respect for God and authority

## **THE REIGN OF JUDGES**

Judges were God's representatives. They were chosen by God and they used to deliver God's message to the people and people's response back to God.

The judges were chosen by God to act on his behalf in organizing the people of Israel when they had just entered the Promised Land.

The office of judgeship was not supposed to be hereditary but to depend on God's choice. Examples of judges include; Samson, Gideon, Deborah, Eli and Samuel the last of the great judges etc.

### **THE ROLES OF JUDGES.**

**The judges played the following roles in Israel;**

They ensured that people practiced monotheism. In other words they made sure that all people worshipped Yahweh the sovereign Lord.

They led the Israelites into National repentance. Wherever people sinned against God, the judges would organize them for repentance such that their sins would be forgiven.

They led people into prayers. It was their duty to ensure that people prayed to God the Almighty by leading the prayers themselves.

They acted as seers. They used to predict the future or fore tell which assisted people to plan accordingly.

They provided counseling services to the Israelites. In case people had problems they would go to the judges for counseling and guidance.

They acted as king makers e.g. the first king Saul was anointed by Samuel and when he was rejected Samuel anointed David as his successor.

The judges were instruments of harmony and co-operation among the Israelites. They used to move from place to place settling disputes among the Israelites.

They offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the Israelites. Whenever people wanted to sacrifice, they would present their sacrifices to the judge / priest at the same time who would present them to God.

They acted as priests of God. They ensured that people lived according to the covenant way of life.

They acted as military commanders. They led the Israelites into war and ensured that they gained victory in wars.

The judges acted as intercessors. They used to plead to God wherever he was determined to destroy the Israelites, and in most cases He listened to their prayers and granted their requests.

They promoted Unity in Israel. They tried to ensure that the Israelites lived as one people (in unity) since they belonged to one God.

## **SAMUEL**

Samuel was a son of Elkanah and Hannah from the tribe of Ephraim, who lived in the town of Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. He was a prophet and also remembered as the last of the great judges. He is the one who introduced a monarchy in Israel by anointing the first king i.e. Saul.

### **FACTORS THAT LED TO THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL**

#### **The following factors led to the birth of Samuel:**

Hannah's faith led to Samuel's birth. Hannah believed that God would provide her with a child and that's why she prayed to him desperately and later he granted her prayers.

Hannah's prayer led to Samuel's birth. When she went to Shiloh, she cried to God bitterly while praying and Eli thought that she was drunk yet she was only desperate. Therefore God granted her prayer because of the way she prayed.

Eli's blessings led to Samuel's birth. When Hannah told Eli that she wasn't drunk but she was only pouring her problems onto God, Eli blessed her and said, "...may the God of Israel give you that you have asked Him for" (1 Samuel 1:17).

The need for a military commander led to Samuel's birth. The Israelites were always under constant attacks by the Philistines, Midianites etc. therefore, Samuel was born to act as a military commander to lead the Israelites into wars.

There was a lot of moral decay among the Israelites because they had no righteous leaders. Therefore, Samuel was born to bring about religious sanity in Israel.

There were no righteous leaders. The sons of Eli who were judges by then were immoral and sinful. Therefore they promoted unrighteousness among the Israelites. Therefore the need for a righteous leader who would lead people towards the covenant way of life led to Samuel's birth.

The situation in Elkanah's family led to Samuel's birth. Elkanah had two wives i.e. Peninah and Hannah. Peninah used to provoke Hannah who cried all the time because she had no children. She led a miserable life. Therefore Samuel was born bring comfort to Hannah.

The need to pave way for a monarchy led to the birth of Samuel. Samuel was responsible for anointing the first king (Saul).

The need for someone to settle disputes honestly. Samuel was born to act as a fair judge, priest and prophet. All in all, he was born to settle disputes replacing the dishonest judges, the sons of Eli who were corrupt and interested in making money.

There was need for God's servant. The sons of Eli who were meant to be God's servants were wicked, so Samuel was born to replace the sons of Eli who were acting as God's servants. After some time God appeared to him and he began acting as his true servant.

God's visions were scarce which led to the birth of Samuel. The religious leaders by then were not righteous therefore God's visions had become rare because there was no one God would talk to since He does not associate with unholy people. Therefore, Samuel was born such that God would have some one righteous He would appear to.

Samuel was born to provide a solution to Hannah's problem of bareness. Hannah was childless and miserable, therefore, God decided to bring an end to Hannah's misery by giving her a son.

During that time the false prophets were common. They used to mislead God's people. Therefore Samuel was born at the right time he was most needed because he had to rectify the spiritual situation.

Hannah's promise led to Samuel's birth. She had promised that, if God gave her a son she would dedicate him to Yahweh. Therefore, Samuel was born to test Hannah's faith.

There was no recognized leader. Therefore Samuel was born to replace the sons of Eli who had failed to act as judges because they were not exemplary. Samuel was to act as a leader of the Israelites who would re-organize the administration of Israel.

## **ELI'S FAMILY**

When Eli grew old, he appointed his sons to act as judges. Therefore he made judgeship hereditary yet the judges were supposed to be appointed by God.

On top of that, the sons of Eli were wicked and therefore failed to follow their father's example. Because of being wicked the family was rejected.

## **FACTORS THAT LED TO THE REJECTION OF ELI'S FAMILY (1 SAMUEL 2:12 FF)**

Eli's family was rejected because of the following reasons;

Eli's sons violated the regulations governing God's sacrifices as they were laid down in the book of Leviticus. They would get their share of the sacrifice before God would get his share which was against God's expectations.

The sons of Eli were greedy; they ate the fatty parts which were meant for God. Thus, they had contempt for God. (1 Sam 2:15ff)

They treated God's sacrifices with disrespect. They used to get the meat by force before the fats meant for God would be burnt. (1 Samuel 2:16-17.)

The sons of Eli treated the worshippers badly. They were so arrogant and rude to the people. They sent servants to grab the meat by force from worshippers.

They practiced sexual immorality. They had sexual intercourse with the women who worked at the entrance to the tent of the Lord's presence. (1Samuel 2:22.)

The sons of Eli did not respect their father. They did not listen to his advice, however much he talked to them about their wickedness.

The sons of Eli were blasphemous i.e. they spoke evil things against the Lord (1 Samuel 3:13.)

Eli did not stop his sons from speaking evil things against Yahweh which led to his rejection. (1 Sam 3:13.)

Eli honoured his sons more than God. That is why he even let them father themselves on God's sacrifices Eli was supposed to honour God alone. (1 Samuel 2;29 )

Eli appointed his sons to act as judges, therefore, making judgeship hereditary yet the judges were supposed to be appointed by God.

Eli as a father failed to control his family. He did not rebuke his sons in strong terms, therefore calling for God's rejection.

The sons of Eli failed to uphold the covenant law. They had no respect for the worshiping place, that is why they had sexual intercourse from the Lord's presence.

They never listened to God's prophet. God sent prophets to warn the whole family of Eli but they did not change.

The sons of Eli were unrepentant despite their wickedness, they did not repent and ask for forgiveness from God.

The sons of Eli showed a bad example to the people. Being judges, they were expected to be exemplary but instead they were wicked and sinful.

The sons of Eli were corrupt. As judges, they were expected to be honest and judge cases honestly but instead they were interested in making money. Therefore they asked for bribes.

## **THE LESSONS RELIGIOUS LEADERS LEARN FROM ELI'S FAMILY.**

### **The religious leaders learn the following lessons from Eli's family:-**

Religious leaders should honour God's sacrifices / offertory unlike the sons of Eli who treated God's sacrifices with disrespect.

Religious leaders should respect the holy places of worship unlike the sons of Eli who disrespected God's worshiping place unlike they had sexual intercourse from.

Religious leaders should have faith in God unlike the sons of Eli who were unfaithful.

Religious leaders should have trust in God unlike Eli's sons who never trusted God

They should be exemplary unlike Eli's sons who showed a bad example to the Israelites by grabbing God's sacrifices.

They should have respect for the elders unlike the sons of Eli who disrespected their father and failed to take up his advice.

They should repent wherever they sin against God unlike Eli's sons who failed to repent however sinful they were.

They should promote justice and unlike Eli's sons who were dishonest while judging cases because of corruption.

They should be obedient unlike Eli's sons who were disobedient to the laws governing God's sacrifices.

They should seek for God's guidance unlike Eli's sons who were not guided by God.

They should be contented with what they have unlike the sons of Eli who were entitled to a share of God's sacrifice but they also looked with greed and envy at God's sacrifices.

## **CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH RELIGIOUS LEADERS SHOULD BE REJECTED TODAY**

The religious leader should be rejected under the following circumstances;

In case they become immoral and commit evils like homosexuality, adultery, fornication etc which don't glorify God's name.

If they just appoint their favourites to serve as God's messengers without considering merit.

In case they swindle church funds for their personal interests which are not in line with God's expectations.

If they use their positions to divide their followers, which may cause chaos in church.

In case they don't show love to the poor and discriminate them forgetting that all people were created in God's image.

If they use the church to cheat the people, then they should be rejected, especially those who demand for money in order to pray for people.

When they become corrupt and ask for money in exchange for their services, which are supposed to be free or voluntary.

If they breach their vocational vows e.g. the catholic priests marrying when it is against their faith.

If they become money minded instead of assisting people to know God they should be rejected.

If they begin misguiding God's people, instead of guiding them towards the covenant way of life.

### **THE PROPHECY PASSED ON TO ELI'S FAMILY IN 1 SAMUEL 2: 27- 36**

An unnamed prophet came to Eli with a message from God and it was as follows;

In the prophesy, God remarked that sometime back, he chose Aaron's family to be his priests.

The prophet said that the family of Aaron was given a right to be in charge of God's sacrificial system.

The prophet asked Eli's family why they looked with greed at the sacrifices God required from his people.

In the prophesy, Eli was accused of honoring his sons more than God by letting them fatten themselves on the best parts of all the sacrifices people offered to God.

The prophet added that, Eli's family will no longer serve as God's priests because of dishonoring God.

The prophet said that God will honour those who honour him and treat with contempt those who despise him.

The prophet said that, God would kill all the young men in Eli's family and no man will live to old age.

He said that Eli's family will be troubled and look with envy on all the blessings God would give to the other people of Israel.

He promised to keep one of Eli's descendants alive and he would serve him as a priest. However, he would become blind and lose all hope.

He said that, Eli's other descendants will die a violent death.

The prophet said that when Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas die on the same day that is when Eli will prove that whatever God had said would come true.

He said that God will choose a priest who will be faithful to him and who will serve his people.

He said that Eli's surviving descendants will become beggars before the chosen priest and they would ask for money and food and beg to be allowed to help the priests in order to have something to eat.

### **THE CALL OF SAMUEL (1 SAMUEL 3:1FF)**

In those days when Samuel was serving the Lord under the direction of priest Eli, there were very few messages from the Lord.

One night, Eli was sleeping and Samuel was also sleeping in the sanctuary, where the covenant box was kept.

The Lord called Samuel, and he answered, "Yes sir." And ran to Eli and said, you called me and here I am sir. Eli told him to go back to bed because he hadn't called him.

Samuel slept, again he heard the voice and ran to Eli, but still Eli told him to go back and sleep.

The third time when he went to Eli on hearing the voice calling him, Eli realized that it was the Lord calling Samuel.

Eli told him to go back to bed and if he heard the voice again, he was to respond that, "speak, Lord, your servant is listening". So Samuel went back to bed.

The Lord came again and called, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel responded that, "speak, Lord, your servant is listening".

The Lord told him that, some day He was going to do something terrible to the people of Israel that everyone who hears about it would be stunned.

He promised to carry out all His threats against Eli's family, from beginning to end.

He told him that he had already told Eli that He was going to punish his family forever because his sons had spoken evil things against Him.

He told Samuel that Eli knew what his sons were doing but he never stopped them.



God declared to the family of Eli that, no sacrifice or offering will ever be able to remove the consequences of their terrible sin.

After that, Samuel slept again. The following day, he was scared of delivering the message to Eli.

On waking up, Eli asked Samuel what the Lord had told him but Samuel was hesitant to deliver the message to Eli.

Eli scared him that God would punish him if he kept anything. It was on that note that Samuel told Eli everything.

In response, Eli said, "He is the Lord; he will do whatever seems best to him".

### **THE LESSONS CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM THE CALL OF SAMUEL**

The Christians learn the following lessons from the call of Samuel:

The Christians should respond positively to God's call likewise Samuel responded positively to God's call.

The Christians should be obedient just as Samuel was obedient to God's instructions and Eli whereby he delivered the message to Eli.

The Christians should condemn evil likewise Samuel condemned evils of Eli's sons.

They should be exemplary likewise Samuel showed a good example when he carried out God's mission.

They should live a righteous life likewise Samuel was righteous, that is why God appeared to him during the call.

They should deliver God's message without fear or favour unlike Samuel who had feared to deliver God's message to priest Eli.

They should live a holy life just as Samuel lived a holy life that is why himself revealed to him.

They should listen to the advice of the elders just as Samuel listened to Eli's advice and delivered all the message without keeping anything back.

They should be humble especially when they are called just as Samuel responded with humility when he heard the voice calling him.

They should have respect for God's house just as Samuel respected the sanctuary.

## **COMPARISON BETWEEN THE CALL OF SAMUEL AND MOSES.**

The two calls have both **Similarities** and **Differences**.

### **The similarities are as follows:**

Both Samuel and Moses were to act as God's spokesmen. In other words, they were to speak on God's behalf.

Both Samuel and Moses were faithful to God's call. They carried out God's mission. Samuel delivered the message to priest Eli while Moses delivered the Israelites from Egypt.

Both received the calls directly from God. God appeared to Samuel directly without using a mediator and he also appeared to Moses directly.

Both received the calls while in foreign places. Moses was in Midian while Samuel was a foreigner in Eli's family.

Both Samuel and Moses had received some knowledge of priesthood. Moses had gained the skills from Jethro who was acting as a priest in Midian and also Samuel had gained the skills from priest Eli.

Both calls were vassal in nature. They were between a superior party and inferior parties i.e. Samuel and Moses were inferior while God was superior.

Both calls were initiated by God the Almighty. Therefore, it was out of God's initiative that both Moses and Samuel were called. In other words, it was God's will that both were called

Both Samuel and Moses were addressed by their names. In the burning bush, when God saw Moses getting closer, he called "Moses, Moses" (Exodus 3:4) and while Samuel was sleeping he called him "Samuel, Samuel" (1 Samuel 3:10.)

Both Moses and Samuel had never experienced God's call / vision before. Therefore, it was their first experience, that is why they had not realized God's call.

Both Moses and Samuel were hesitant to deliver God's message. Samuel was afraid to deliver the message to Eli and also Moses was afraid to deliver the Israelites from slavery.

Both Moses and Samuel received their calls from holy places. Moses received the call from the holy mountain of God, Mt. Sinai while Samuel received the call from the sanctuary.

Both Moses and Samuel heard God's voice. Moses heard the voice from the burning bush calling him and also Samuel heard the voice calling him when he was sleeping.

### **The Differences are as follows.**

Moses was called during day while he was taking care of Jethro's flock while Samuel was called during the night when he was sleeping.

Moses asked for God's name which God revealed later as "I am who I am" while Samuel never asked for God's name because he knew that it was God speaking to him as told by Eli.

Moses covered his face because he feared to look at God while Samuel remained as he was because he was clean.

Moses was told to remove his sandals because he was standing on a holy ground. This clearly showed that God does not associated with unholy people while Samuel remained the way he was.

Moses was given powers to perform miracles while Samuel was not because he did not doubt God and didn't ask for any miracle.

Moses received his call in form of a burning bush while Samuel just heard God's voice calling his name, "Samuel, Samuel".

During Moses' call, God described his background as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob while during the call of Samuel he did not, because Samuel did not ask many questions.

Moses was mature by the time he received his call. In fact he had children and a wife while Samuel was a young boy serving God under Eli's direction.

Moses was not clean by the time God called him because he had committed murder while in Egypt (exodus 2:12), while Samuel was holy and righteous without any sin.

Samuel received his call in the sanctuary while Moses received his call at Mt. Sinai, the holy mountain of God.

By the time Moses received his call, he was acting as a shepherd taking care of the flock while Samuel was working as a young priest (God's servant) under Eli's direction.

Moses asked for a spokesman and was given his brother Aaron while Samuel was to speak by himself.

Moses was sent to Egypt to save the Israelites who were suffering (to liberate them) while Samuel was sent to deliver a message of destruction and rejection to the family of Eli.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF SAMUEL IN THE ISRAELITES' HISTORY**

Samuel was a very important figure in the history of the Israelites in the following ways;

Samuel acted as a prophet. He used to foretell and whatever he prophesized would come true. Therefore he was a true prophet of God.

Samuel acted as a priest. He served the people of Israel, prayed to God and led the people of Israel into prayers. (1 Samuel 8; 6, 1 Samuel 7:5.)

Samuel sacrificed to God on behalf of the people of Israel. Wherever the people wanted to sacrifice, they would present their sacrifices to Samuel who would offer them to God.

Samuel acted as a judge. He settled disputes among the Israelites. He used to move from Ramah to Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah settling disputes. (1 Samuel 7:16-17.)

Samuel acted as a ruler of Israel. He ruled Israel for many years, in fact as long as he lived. (1 Samuel 7:15.)

Samuel organized the Israelites for national repentance. Wherever the people sinned against God, they would converge and Samuel would lead them into national repentance. (1 Samuel 7:1ff.)

Samuel acted as a military leader. He tried to fight and defeated the enemies of the Israelites e.g. the philistines (1 Samuel 7:13.)

He acted as a mediator between God and the Israelites e.g. when the Israelites demanded for a king, Samuel presented their request to God and later he delivered God's response to the people. (1 Samuel 8:1ff.)

Samuel acted as a king maker. e.g. when the Israelites demanded for a king, Samuel anointed king Saul as the first king and when Saul was rejected by God, Samuel anointed David as his successor. (1 Samuel 10:1, 1 Samuel 16:1ff.)

Samuel acted as a counselor. Many people used to approach him wherever they had problems and he guided them on how to overcome the problems by providing counseling services.

Samuel guided the people towards the covenant faith. He ensured that the Israelites followed the 10 commandments and other laws. i.e. he ensured that they lived according to God's expectations.

Samuel promoted monotheism. It was his duty to ensure that people worshipped one God and therefore, they abandoned the pagan gods. (1 Samuel 7:3-4.)

He acted as a seer. He used to predict the future e.g. He foretold that the kings were going to mistreat the people which was later fulfilled by Kingship. He predicted about the lost donkeys (1 Samuel 10:2.)

Samuel acted as a spokesman of God e.g. He delivered the message about the rejection of Eli's family which was from God.

Samuel acted as an intercessor. Whenever God wanted to punish the Israelites, Samuel would plead for them through prayers.

**However, Samuel was remembered with regrets (because of the negative roles or weakness he had which were as follows:**

Samuel identified the covenant box which had been captured by the philistines but he never endeavoured to bring it back to Israel.

Samuel used to delay sacrifices e.g. when king Saul and the Israelites were going to fight the philistines, Samuel delayed to come and officiate the sacrifice. Therefore, Saul became impatient and offered the sacrifice which was against God's expectations. (1 Samuel 13: 1ff).

Samuel led people into sin e.g. Saul sacrificed to God in 1 Samuel 13 just because Samuel delayed to arrive to officiate the sacrifice as they had agreed.

Samuel made judgeship hereditary (1 Samuel 8:1) by appointing his sons Joel and Abijah to act as judges yet the judges were supposed to be appointed by God.

Samuel was power hungry e.g. when the Israelites demanded for a king, he was displeased because he had appointed his sons as judges and the demand for a king meant the Israelites were rejecting his sons and also disregarding him as their leader, yet he never wanted to lose the office of judgeship. (1 Samuel 8:1ff.)

Samuel was uncompromising in character e.g. He could not forgive. When King Saul disobeyed God, he asked Samuel to pray for him such that, he would be forgiven but Samuel didn't respond positively. (1 Samuel 15:24ff).

Samuel failed to bring up good children. His sons Joel and Abijah were as bad as Eli's sons and that is why they were rejected by the Israelites who later demanded for a king.

### **REVISION QUESTIONS.**

1. *a) Examine the role of judges in Israel.*  
*b) What are the challenges of judges today?*
2. *a) Discuss the factors which led to Samuel's birth.*  
*b) What lessons do Christians learn from Samuel's birth?*
3. *To what extent was the birth of Samuel a turning point in the history of Israel?*
4. *a) Examine the encounter between God and Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:1ff.*  
*b) What is the relevance of Samuel's call to the religious leaders today?*
5. *a) "The rejection of Eli's family was not accidental". Justify the statement.*

- b) Examine the ground on which religious leaders today should be rejected.*
6. *a) Examine the prophesy passed onto Eli's family in (1 Samuel 2:27-35.)*
- b) Discuss the effects of Eli's rejection to the people of Israel.*
7. *"If one man sins against another, God can defend him but who can defend a man who sins against God?" Eli remarked (1 Samuel 2:25).*
- a) What prompted Eli to make the above statement?*
- b) What lessons do present Christians learn from Eli's concern?*
8. *Examine the importance of Samuel in the life of the Israelites.*
9. *Compare the call of Moses and the call of Samuel.*