

## The Sanctuary at Shiloh, and Samuel's Sleeping therein.

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THAT Samuel slept in the temple at Shiloh is placed beyond doubt by the express language of 1 Sam. 3<sup>2f</sup>. The literal translation of the Hebrew is as follows: "And it was at that time that Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyes had begun to grow dim; he was unable to see; and the lamp of God had not yet gone out), and Samuel was lying down in the temple of Jahweh, where the ark of God was." The Greek texts are in close agreement with the Hebrew. The *Cod. Vat.* lacks the name of God after sanctuary, and the *Cod. Alex.* weakens the sense a little by rendering "in the house of the Lord." It thus here, as in so many other places, betrays the influences of a later age.

The King James version gets rid of the difficulty of this passage by transposing the clauses: "And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep." It is scarcely necessary to say that such a rendering is quite inadmissible. But the massoretic points held out the bait to the English translators. The pointing shows that the massorettes separated "was lying" from "in the temple." The Revised version has restored the proper order of the clauses, but still wrongly follows the Hebrew pointing, placing a comma after "was laid down to sleep." This leaves the meaning of the translators quite uncertain.

The older commentators generally explained the passage on the supposition that the sanctuary named was the tabernacle of the Priests' Code, and that Samuel slept in one of the rooms surrounding the sanctuary proper. The Cambridge Bible is absolutely silent about the passage, not even correcting the grievously wrong translation of its text. Driver expresses doubt about the real meaning of the passage. "Evidently Samuel was sleeping," he says,<sup>1</sup> "in close prox-

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Samuel*, p. 34.

imity to the ark, perhaps in a chamber contiguous to the **היכל** in which it was, if not, as the Hebrew taken strictly would imply, actually in the **היכל** itself."

It is difficult to see any ground for Driver's alternative. The Hebrew can scarcely be taken otherwise than strictly; and it not only implies, but expressly asserts, that Samuel did sleep in the **היכל** itself. But what does the *hékál* here mean? Did Samuel sleep in the holy of holies, as some have asserted, or is the *hékál* used in a larger sense, so as to include rooms adjoining the sanctuary? Those who urge that the holy of holies is meant take the qualifying clause "where the ark of God was" as further defining the place where Samuel slept. This can scarcely be correct. The clause qualifies "the temple of Jahweh," and we know from the passage only that Samuel and the ark of God were both, on the night in question, in the "temple of Jahweh"; but there is nothing to suggest that he was sleeping "in close proximity to the ark,"<sup>2</sup> further than that they were both in the *hékál*. Still less is there any reason to suppose that he slept in the holy of holies. The real question, therefore, is whether Samuel slept in the sanctuary proper, or in some adjoining room included under the term *hékál*. We must see what kind of a structure this *hékál* was.

Wellhausen has shown conclusively (see his *History of Israel*, p. 38 ff.) that it was not the tabernacle or tent of meeting. The term *hékál* is never used of the tabernacle, nor of any tent. Moreover, the tabernacle is never mentioned in the books of Judges and Samuel.<sup>3</sup> We find the parallel term, "house of Jahweh," applied to this sanctuary in Shiloh (1<sup>7</sup>.<sup>24</sup> 3<sup>15</sup>) another name not used of the tabernacle. This structure had *doors* (3<sup>15</sup>) and *doorposts* (1<sup>9</sup>) terms which are never used of the flaps of a tent.<sup>4</sup> The indications point, therefore, to a wooden structure. It is otherwise difficult to see how it could be said that "Samuel opened the doors of the house of Jahweh," or that "Eli the priest was sitting upon the seat by the doorpost of the temple of Jahweh."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Nowack makes the same mistake when he says that the "Ephraimite Samuel sleeps every night by the ark of Jahweh in the sanctuary," *Heb. Archaeologie*, II. 92.

<sup>3</sup> In 1 Sam. 2<sup>22</sup> we find the term, but the text is more than suspicious. The clause is lacking in the best Mss. of the LXX, and is unknown to Josephus. It is rejected by Wellhausen (*Bücher Samuëls, in loc.*).

<sup>4</sup> דלת means a "door of wood or metal moving upon hinges." The word rendered "door" of a tent is פתח, literally "opening."

<sup>5</sup> So we read in Judg. 18<sup>31</sup>, "So they set them up Micah's graven image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh."

That Shiloh was a sacred place with a temple, rather than the temporary abiding-place of the tabernacle, appears also from Jeremiah. In 7<sup>12</sup> we read: "Go now unto my place which is in Shiloh, where I placed my name formerly, and see what I have done to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel" (see also v.<sup>14</sup>, and the parallel expression in 26<sup>6, 9</sup>). Jerusalem is here compared to Shiloh, whose sanctuary did not save it from destruction.<sup>6</sup>

The data for the determination of the character of this temple are quite insufficient for decisive results. But there are certain points which we can determine. There is no probability that this temple was built on the later model with a holy of holies where the ark was kept. That the people should take the ark into battle shows that they had no idea that it must be kept in a place so sacred that no one but the high priest might enter it. It is clear further that Samuel and Eli were sleeping on this eventful night in their accustomed places,<sup>7</sup> and that those places were not in the same room.<sup>8</sup> If Samuel slept in the sanctuary proper, Eli's place was either in another chamber of the temple, or in another building.<sup>9</sup> But it is highly probable that this temple had various rooms for different purposes, and the whole scene described with such graphic details finds its most natural explanation in the supposition that Eli and his minister slept in different apartments of the same building. If this is true, may it not be that Samuel also slept in a chamber of the temple rather than in the sanctuary itself?

We have already seen that the clause "where the ark of God was" does not define the place where Samuel slept. It is said that Samuel opened the doors of the temple in the morning, which could have been done at least as well from the outside as from the inside, the object being to open the temple for the visits of worshippers. The term *hēkal* would cover perfectly well the whole of such a structure, though in the temple of Solomon this word is generally used of the

<sup>6</sup> It is true that we are told in Josh. 18<sup>1</sup> that "all the company of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh, and set up there the tent of meeting"; but this is a late source (P), and would be this writer's natural way of stating the fact that there was a sanctuary at Shiloh.

<sup>7</sup> "Eli was lying in his place" (3<sup>2</sup>); "and Samuel went and lay down in his place" (3<sup>9</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> Samuel would not have mistaken the voice for Eli's if he had been in the same room. We read that Samuel "ran unto Eli" (3<sup>6</sup>); that he "got up and went unto Eli" (3<sup>8</sup>), an act which would be quite unnecessary if Eli were in the same room. In the morning Samuel went about his work, avoiding the priest until summoned into his presence (3<sup>15f</sup>). <sup>9</sup> This is Stade's view, *GV. I.* p. 201.

main body or nave outside the holy of holies. Moreover, one wonders whether sleeping in the sanctuary proper would not have been repugnant even to the people of Samuel's time. The extreme care which the later priests used to keep men out of the holiest parts of the temple,<sup>10</sup> may indeed be a late notion; but on the other hand, these late conceptions are often but the full development of the ideas of an earlier time. Among all the Semitic peoples there was great reverence for the sanctuary.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, it must be admitted that there are forcible reasons for the belief that Samuel slept in the sanctuary, as many modern scholars hold.<sup>12</sup> There is a passage in the older narrative<sup>13</sup> of Exodus which throws much light on this obscure situation. The custom of Moses in repairing to the tent of meeting is described in detail, the passage closing with these words: "But his (Moses') minister, Joshua the son of Nun, a servant, departed not from the tent" (33<sup>11</sup>). Joshua was minister to Moses as Samuel was to Eli (2<sup>11</sup>), the same term being used in each case; Joshua is called a *servant*, and the same term is applied to Samuel (2<sup>18</sup>).<sup>14</sup> The statement

<sup>10</sup> It is evident that the peculiar sanctity of the holy of holies was a growth, for the distinction between the two parts of the temple is less marked in Ezekiel than in the Priests' Code.

<sup>11</sup> I know of but one parallel in Semitic customs. Herodotus in describing the temple of Bel at Babylon says: "Inside the temple stands a couch of unusual size, richly adorned, with a golden table by its side." We are not left in doubt about the purpose of this couch: "Nor is the chamber occupied of nights by any one but a single native woman, who, as the Chaldeans, the priests of this god, affirm, is chosen for himself by the deity out of all the women of the land." The same writer tells us that a woman, debarred from all intercourse with men, passes the night in the temple of the Theban Jupiter (Amon); and that at Patara in Lycia the priestess who delivers the oracles is shut up in the temple every night. Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, I. pp. 181, 182.

<sup>12</sup> W. R. Smith, *OTJC*<sup>2</sup>, p. 270; Stade, *GVI*, I. p. 201; Nowack, *Heb. Arch.* II. p. 92; Reuss, *Das alte Testament, in loc.*; Wellhausen, *History of Israel*, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup> Generally ascribed to E.

<sup>14</sup> The term used is נָשֵׂר, which may mean a youth, as generally rendered in these passages; but the term is also applied to a servant, like the French *garçon* or the English 'boy,' especially in the Southern States; see 1 Sam. 2<sup>18</sup> "the servant of the priest," *ib.* 25<sup>14</sup> of the servants of Nabal. In 1<sup>24</sup> we have the familiar expression וְהַיְלֵד נָשֵׂר rendered in our versions, "and the child was young." Driver rightly says that this is incorrect, and that the words can only mean, "and the lad was a lad"; but he prefers to correct the text by changing the order, and adopting a hint of the LXX, reading thus: "and the mother of the lad came unto Eli; and the lad was with her." Wellhausen reached essentially the same conclusion. If the Hebrew text is correct, the passage is misplaced, and means "and the lad was a servant."

makes it plain that Joshua remained in the tent of meeting, even sleeping there, and that he acted as a guard or warder. Now it is but natural to suppose that Samuel's function at Shiloh was much the same, if not identical.<sup>15</sup> Samuel slept in the temple as a guard or warder, and so it is appropriately said that "he ministered to Jahweh" or literally "served the face of J." (2<sup>11</sup> 3<sup>1</sup>). Eli went to the temple where the people were likely to come. He was sitting on "the seat," the regular place for the priest, when Hannah came into the temple to pray (1<sup>9</sup>).

The natural place for Jahweh to appear was in the sanctuary, not in one of the adjoining chambers; so we read that "Jahweh came in and took his place and called" (3<sup>10</sup>). When Eli perceived that the Lord was calling his servant, he directed him to go back to his place and answer when he was called again. If Samuel had slept in a chamber distinct from the sanctuary, it would have been natural for Eli to send him to the holy place supposing that Jahweh was calling for him to come into his presence.

Finally, the term used in *Cod. Vat.* (*ναός*) means "the sanctuary proper"; the editor of the *Cod. Alex.* perceived the difficulty and rendered by the comprehensive term "house." It was certainly the understanding of the Greek translators that Samuel slept in the sanctuary.

<sup>15</sup> See Wellhausen, *Hist. Isr.* p. 39. According to Josephus, *Antiq. V.* 10. 4, Samuel was twelve years old at the time of this vision.