



HtRtB:

1 and 2 Samuel

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Where are we?

The Former Prophets

'Act 2: God's faithfulness and our forgetfulness: covenant and disobedience' (from week 1 of HRTB)

...in order to make sense of what comes in between

We need to know the beginning of the story...

...and the end of the story...

Where are we?

The Former Prophets

“The prophetic canon is a literature that articulates Israel’s faith and practice in the rough-and-tumble of historical reality. The prophetic canon is an exercise in rereading the history of Israel and the history of the world according to the gifts and requirements of the God of the Torah.”

(Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the OT*, 130)

Where are we?

The Former Prophets

“First and Second Samuel surely represent one of the greatest works of literature to come to us from the ancient world. [They bring] together a hard-nosed view of social and political realities, psychologically realistic characters, and a subtle claim for God’s providential role in history...”

(Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the OT*, 163)

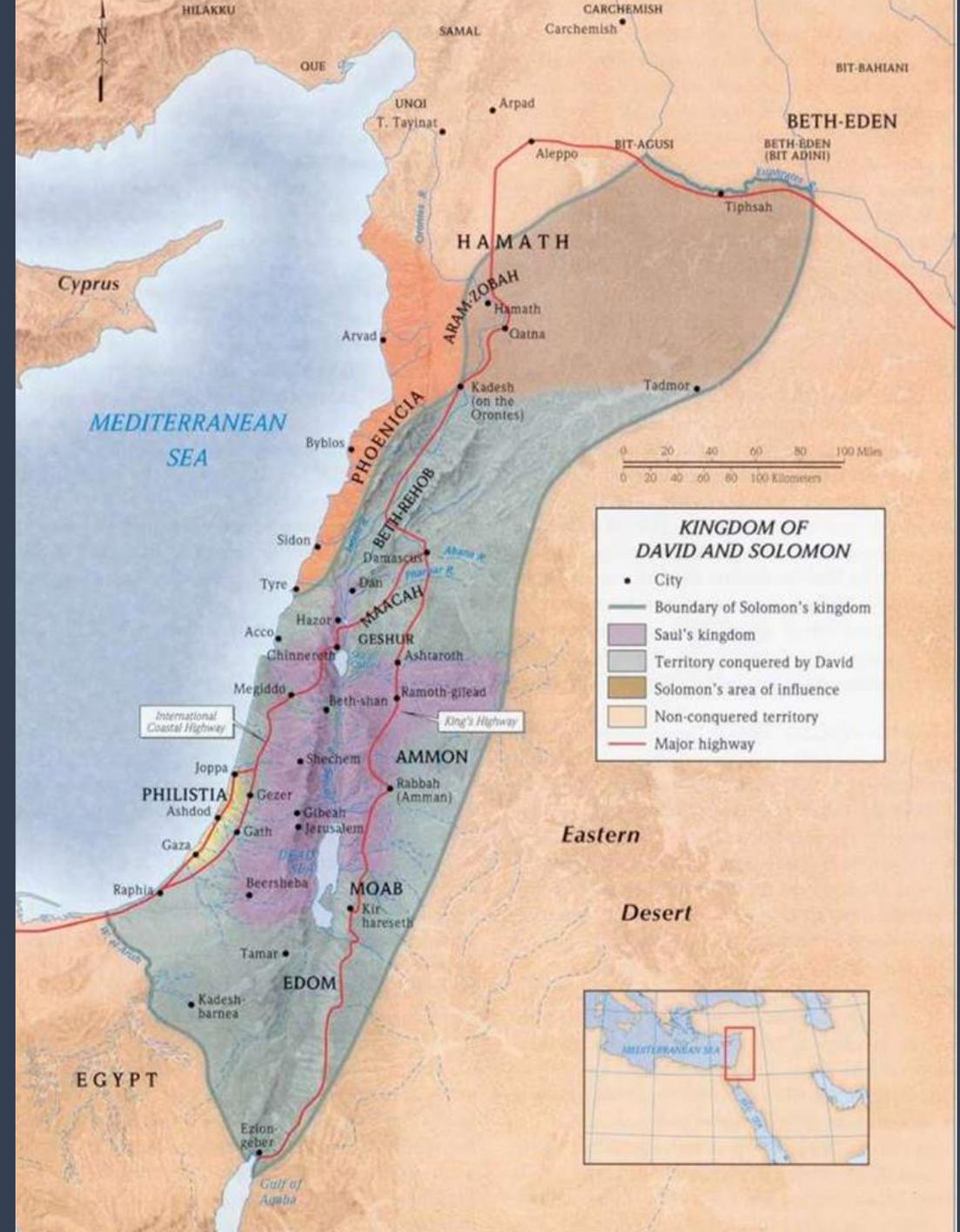
Where are we?

The promised land
c.1000 BC



Where are we?

*The promised land
c.1000 BC*



How did we get here?

YHWH's agency in Genesis – Judges

- initiates covenants: Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic
- here: Davidic (2 Sam 7)

How did we get here?

Israel's response in Genesis – Judges

- sometimes obedient, sometimes not
- tribal society, warring and trying to be monotheistic
- here: monarchical society, still warring and trying to be monotheistic

Samuel

“And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.” (1 Sam 1.1b)

“O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.” (Hannah, 1 Sam 1.11)

Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man.
(1 Sam 2.26)

Saul

1 Sam 9-10: chosen by God and anointed king

10.1: 'Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies....'

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." (1 Sam 13.8-14)

(Rembrandt, David plays his harp to Saul, Stadel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany)



David

1 Sam 16: Samuel anoints David

“And Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward... Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul...” (vv13-14)

“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me. Your throne shall be established for ever.” (2 Sam 7.16)

(Academia Gallery, Florence)

Hunt, J. (2017, October 18). David by Michelangelo. Ancient History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/image/7451/>

What happens?

- **1 Sam 1 – 7**: A faithful priest, prophet and final judge in Israel: Samuel
- **1 Sam 8 – 14**: Israel's demand for a king and the rise of tall Saul
- **1 Sam 15 – 31**: The long, slow demise of Israel's first king...
- **1 Sam 16 – 2 Sam 10**: ...alongside the long, slow rise of chosen David
- **2 Sam 11 – 20**: The sad, dramatic failings of David and his familial fallout
- **2 Sam 21 – 24**: A reflective epilogue, just to tidy things up a bit!

Why does any of this matter?

Themes to consider

1 and 2 Samuel further reveal who YHWH is

- greater than the gods of surrounding nations (Dagon)
- worthy of worship and obedience
- almighty
- proactive
- faithful
- attentive to the humble, challenging the proud

Why does any of this matter?

Themes to consider

1 and 2 Samuel trace significant transitions for Israel

- from judges to kings
- from tribes to a (delicately!) unified kingdom
- from a 'wannabe' ancient Near Eastern king to a faithful-to-YHWH king

Why does any of this matter?

Themes to consider

The narrator presents “not *whether* Israel has a king, but *what kind of king* they will have. Key to this is whether the king will both be *faithful* to Yahweh and display Yahweh’s *character*, since whatever else is true about Israel’s king, he is to be the earthly representative of Yahweh’s own kingship over Israel.”

(Fee and Stuart, *How to...Book by Book*, 84)

Why does any of this matter?

Themes to consider

1 and 2 Samuel trace significant transitions for Israel

- from judges to kings
- from tribes to a (delicately!) unified kingdom
- from a 'wannabe' ancient Near Eastern king to a faithful-to-YHWH king
- from a temporary worship tent (Shiloh) to a permanent worship centre (Zion)

Why does any of this matter?

Themes to consider

1 and 2 Samuel record the promise of an unending dynasty

- David doesn't build a house for YHWH (Solomon will), but YHWH promises a 'forever' house to David (2 Sam 7)

Why does any of this matter?

Themes to consider

1 and 2 Samuel establish the singular significance of King David

- for Israel and the OT
- for the NT and our understanding of Jesus

Additional resources

- *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: '1 and 2 Samuel'*, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *Men Behaving Badly*, John Goldingay
- The Psalms of David
- commentaries in series already mentioned, e.g. *NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Samuel*, Bill T. Arnold
- 1 and 2 Samuel short videos in The Bible Project



If you could ask God any question at all about 1 and 2 Samuel, what would it be?

What do you think about this?

Compare Hannah's prayer in 1 Sam 2.1-10 with Mary's song in Luke 1.46-56. What do you notice that is similar in these two women's stories? How might each of these songs help us interpret what God is doing in 1 and 2 Samuel and also what he is doing in the life of Jesus? Be as specific as possible.

Note also the 'barren woman' motif of Scripture alongside stories such as Sarah (Gen 18.11-12), Rebekah (Gen 25.21), and Rachel (Gen 29.31). What is a common theme in these accounts?





What do you think about this?

David was hardly as pure as the driven snow, yet 2 Sam 23.1-7 skates over his less praiseworthy qualities. Why might this be, given this scroll's role in the broader OT narrative?

YHWH's word to and about David in 2 Sam 7.4-17 likewise seems to ignore his sins. Yet read the text again: who is this really about? Who is the main actor and what are his actions? What does David do to merit or accomplish these things? Again: why might this be, given 1 and 2 Samuel's place in the broader OT narrative?

What do you think about this?

Consider David's song in 2 Sam 22 alongside Moses's song in Ex 15. What similarities do you notice? Any differences? What has Israel learned about YHWH in the years since they left Egypt? How have they learned these things – learned who YHWH is?

