

# **THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY**

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Chris Katulka, An Audible Call, Part 2

1 Samuel

We've been looking at the life of Samuel in our series An Audible Call, and last week we looked at how God audibly called Samuel to be a priest to the people of Israel.

Now if you didn't get a chance to listen to the last message you can go to FOIRadio.org, and there you'll find previous broadcasts you can listen to as well as blogs that you can read. And don't forget, if you're an avid podcast listener you can subscribe to our Friends of Israel today podcast as well, and again you can do all of that at FOIRadio.org

I said that last week we looked at how Samuel was called to be a priest but this week we're going to look at how God audibly called Samuel to be a judge to Israel.

Samuel served the Lord during a crucial transition in Israel's history. He is often referred to as one of Israel's last judges... because he stood on the cusp of Israel transitioning from the Lord being King of Israel and the Judges being the ones who monitored Israel's spiritual pulse, to a human King to rule over Israel. And i'll

tell you, you can sense from the Scriptures that Samuel the priest, judge, and prophet was not happy about this change.

Today we are going to look at how Samuel was called to Judge Israel... and put the Israelites back on track to serving God, and God alone..

First lets go back, Israel was spiritually bankrupt during the days of the Judges. The book of Judges is full of stories of men and women called by God to judge Israel because the Israelites continually chased after false gods and worshiped idols. The saying from the book of Judges was, “they did what was right in their own eyes.” That means that Israelites made their own decisions on what they considered to be truth, and left the truth of God and His word behind. It’s amazing how to see how relevant the Scriptures are today as well, because the attitude of the Israelites from 3200 years ago, sounds a lot like our culture today, men and woman deciding what is their own personal truth, denying the truth of God from his Word.

Now, let me say this about the Israelites and their worship of false God’s... the Israelites didn’t forgot about Yahweh their God. FYI, Yahweh is the personal name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

What it does mean is that they put God in a box and welcomed and worshipped other false gods. We know this because archaeologists have dug up in ancient Israelite cities shrines to false gods in addition to elements of worshiping Yahweh, their God. And there are passages in the Bible that allude to Yahweh worship and the worship of other gods happening simultaneously, like in our story here in 1 Samuel 4.

Now I said earlier that Samuel is considered one of Israel's last judges. He knew that Israelites were co-mingling worship of the Lord with other false gods, and he knew it was wrong in the eyes of the Lord.

This is something that makes Samuel stand out in the Bible. See, Samuel saw things the way God sees things.

When I lived in Dallas I lead a bible study for a group of young men who are in junior high, and there was a saying we had that we would repeat over and over to one another, it was "Yahweh grid". I know it sounds weird, but I was trying to teach these young men to see the world the way Lord sees it. I challenged them to process the world around them through the Yahweh grid, which meant to value the things that God values, and turn away from the things that God hates, love the way God loves, and to show compassion the way God has shown us compassion.

Samuel had the Yahweh grid, he had the view of the Lord in mind as he ministered to the people of Israel. He grieved over Israel's waywardness, He wished the Israelites would value the authority of God in their lives, He wanted them to notice the Lord's graciousness and loving kindness toward them, it's what made him a good judge but instead the Israelites did what was right in their own eyes.

The first time Samuel judged Israel, he judged them for using God as they seemed fit. In 1 Samuel 4 the Israelites went to battle with the Philistines and they lost. The Israelites were perplexed as to how God could let them lose to the Philistines? They said, "Why did the LORD let us be defeated today by the Philistines?"

As the elders of Israel met over their loss they decided to take with them the Ark of the Covenant into the next battle with the Philistines. The Ark of the Covenant is where the Ten Commandments were kept, but even more significant it's the throne of the Lord. The Lord's presence rested between the two cherubim, the angels, on the top of Ark. The elders didn't come up with this brilliant idea out of thin air, I'm sure they remembered how earlier in Israel's history, from the book of Joshua, the Israelites marched the Ark of the Covenant around the Jericho and

eventually the wall came tumbling down. So why wouldn't it work for them in battle against the Philistines.

The elders said, "Let's take with us the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. When it is with us, it will save us from the hand of our enemies."

So the Israelites took the Ark with them into battle against the Philistines, and with an unrestrained confidence now that they had the Ark, they marched right into battle. Even the Philistines recognized and feared the presence of the Ark and they recalled how the Lord struck down the Egyptians. Yet, even with the Ark present the Israelites lost the battle, and to add insult to injury, the Ark was captured and taken by the Philistines.

This story is so fascinating to me because you can see how the Lord was teaching the Israelites a valuable lesson in all of this.

The Israelites were using God as a talisman carrying the ark around like a lucky charm. Instead of trusting in God all the time, they put God in a box and decided to use Him when they saw fit... like in battle against the Philistines.

Folks, God doesn't want to be our second thought in life, and then when the going gets tough we call on him. He wants us to trust Him with all our heart all of the time.

I believe it's in our human nature to want a good luck charm to have around when we enter into unknown territories of our life, when we are unsure of the outcome. Why? I think deep down we think it brings some type of comfort and support.

The Israelites were only concerned with the power the Ark of the Covenant had in battle. They too found comfort and support in the Ark of the Covenant, not the God who sat on the Ark of the Covenant.

This is a great reminder to not stuff God in the emergency box of life. But to allow him to be the God over everything in our lives, the good, the bad, the ups and the downs.

The Israelites felt as though they had lost everything, and 1 Samuel 7:1 says that all of the house of Israel longed for the Lord. That's when Samuel stepped up and judged Israel. He told them to "put away the foreign gods" (1 Sam 7:3), and "return to the Lord with all your hearts, and serve Him only!"

The people of Israel listened to Samuel, they admitted their sins and served the Lord only! This time the Israelites went back to battle with the Philistines with reliance only on the Lord, and this time they defeated their enemy.

Samuel judged Israel all his life, and what made him such a great judge was that he had the Yahweh grid, he saw the world through the eyes of God.

Do you have the Yahweh grid, are you valuing the things that God values, and are you turning away from the things that God hates, loving the way God loves, and showing compassion the way God has shown us compassion. This attitude will give you wisdom to properly judge the world around you and to see the world through the eyes of God.