

# Children of the Bible

## Week 3



### Boys who became leaders in the Hebrew Scriptures

Arguably there are more boys than girls mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, that is just the reality of a hierarchical, patriarchal culture. Almost without exception, each boy grew into significant a leader within the traditions of Israel and Judah.

There are two ways to view the leadership of these boys, one is through a strictly Biblical narrative, the other through archaeological evidence. The further back into we go in time, the more difficult it is to decide if these were stories of actual people, stories of an amalgamation of people, or simply stories of folk heroes.

Of the boys under consideration in this week's study, only David and Josiah have any archeological evidence of their existence, and only one item for each. Josiah's is second hand, belonging to his possible scribe rather than himself. This is why is it important to hold the Literal and Literary in balance. Narrative has its own truth, and archeology is still making discoveries. Whether verified through extra-biblical sources or not, these boys who became leaders had profound effects on the development of the Hebrew people.

#### MOSES

From humility to leadership

#### SAMUEL

Answered the call of God

#### DAVID

Youngest son became king

#### JOSIAH

A child who became king

#### DANIEL

Willing to stand by his faith

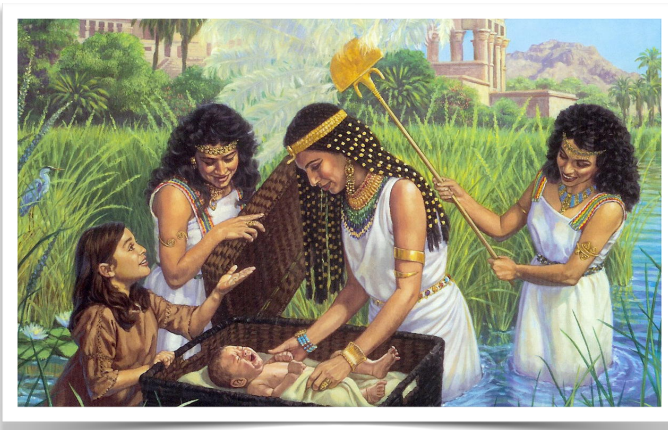
# Moses

## Exodus 2:1

The story of Moses begins before he was born. We read in the first chapter of Exodus that many generations after Joseph brought the people of Israel to Egypt, the Pharaoh forgot that relationship and the Egyptians were abusing the Hebrew people. Fearing an uprising, the Pharaoh ordered all infant boys to be killed. It is at this point we read the wonderful story of the midwives, Shiphrah and Pugh refusing to kill the boys they helped bring into the world, and told the Pharaoh that the Hebrew women were too fast and too strong with their deliveries.

That set the stage for the birth of Moses and the oversight provided by his older sister, Miriam.

Immediately in Moses' story we read that he is from the tribe of Levi, which might not mean anything to the average Christian reader, but the average Jewish reader would recognize that the Levitical tribe was known as the priestly tribe. When the 12 tribes of Israel were given their historic lands, those who identified as being from the Levites did not receive any. Instead they had a few ancient cities and the city of Jerusalem as their place to live. That Moses was considered from the tribe of Levi meant that he was already set to be a significant leader of the Hebrew people.



After Moses' birth, which interestingly enough is more Miriam's story than that of Moses, we don't read anything about his childhood. Aside from Moses, none of the others have a name.

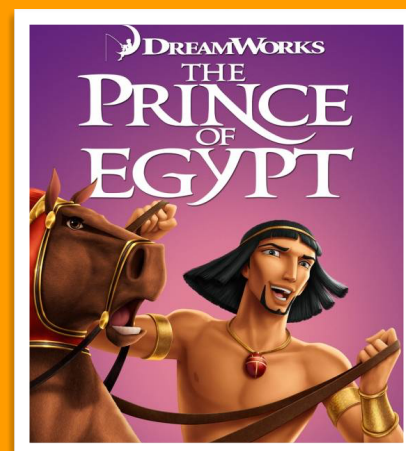
We read that he was raised in the palace of the Pharaoh and was considered to be the adopted child of the daughter of the king, but that is it. The next story we read is Moses as a young man who kills one of the Egyptian overseers, sees the cruelty to the Hebrew people and takes exception to it, then runs away when the Pharaoh finds out what Moses had done.

Most of Moses' story will happen to him as an old man, but none of that would have been possible without first being that baby in the basket saved from the order of death by his mother and the midwives.

## PRINCE OF EGYPT

Cartoons of Biblical stories are hit or miss. Some of them are quite embellished, adding parts to the story that were never in the Bible, which only confuses children and adults alike when they turn to the Scriptures for the same story.

One of the best version of the story of Moses was made by DreamWorks and released in 1998. A number of Christian and Jewish biblical and historical scholars were part of the research and writing team for the script, and great attention to ethnic and location details were included in the artwork.





## Samuel

1 Samuel 1:19 - 2:11, 18-21, 3:1-18

Samuel, like many sons in the Hebrew Scriptures, was the son of the favoured wife. His mother, Hannah, prayed constantly for him, and when he was born he was given the name Samuel which means “Someone of God” or “The name of God”.

In her prayers Hannah promised that she would give Samuel back to God in service, and told her husband that as soon as Samuel was able to eat solid foods, she would be taking him to Shiloh and the Lord’s House (a large tent with an outdoor altar, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, c. 12th and 11th centuries BCE, until its destruction by the Philistines c. 1050 BCE) and giving him to the priest, Eli to raise.

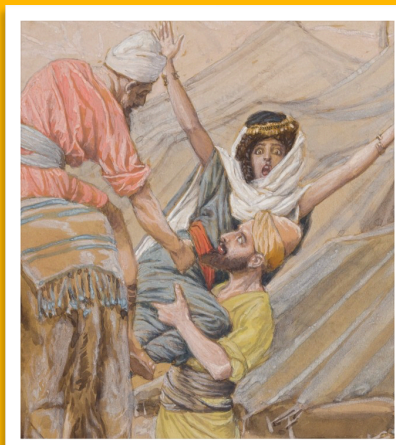
Weening at that time in history would have meant Samuel was roughly 4 years old when Hannah took him to live with Eli. Hannah visited yearly and eventually had more children.

The most well known part of Samuel’s story is that as a child asleep when he hears his name called and then runs to Eli to ask what he wanted. Eli tells Samuel he didn’t call him. When this happens for the third time Eli finally realizes what is happening and tells Samuel that God is trying to get his attention, and that when Samuel hears his name called again to simply tell God “I am here and I am listening”.

The message was the destruction of Eli and his sons, all were priests who had disrespected the worship of God. Instead of correcting his sons or dismissing them, Eli ignored the warnings he had received from God. Therefore Eli was included in the punishment that God was going to inflict.

Samuel was scared to tell Eli what God had said, but eventually did. Eli accepted it as the will of God.

Samuel would grow and be known as one of the most significant prophets and leaders in Israel. He was never king but he was know as the “King maker”. The people wanted a king, and God allowed it. First Samuel found Saul, and then he found David.



## DESPERATION FOR A SON

A frequent theme in the Hebrew Scriptures is that of women who are the favoured wives of their husbands being unable to conceive. Three of the four Matriarchs had issues: Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel until their husbands had encounters with, or offered prayers to God requesting children. Sons were born shortly thereafter.

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, has a similar story. Barren for much of her marriage, it is only through extensive prayers on her own behalf that the Eli, the priest at Shiloh, assured her that her prayers would be answered.

# David

## 1 Samuel 16:1 - 18:5

David was known as the greatest king of the Hebrews, and has a fairly extensive story as a child.

We first meet David when Samuel is sent by God to collect one of the sons of Jesse to be the next king. After going through seven sons, Jesse says his youngest was tending sheep. Samuel told him to call for David, and when David arrived God told Samuel this was the one.

Next is the story of David playing for Saul, who had the 'spirit of evil' since God had taken the 'Spirit of the Lord' away from Saul. At this point Saul does not realize he has been replaced by the child David, and asks David to play his harp whenever Saul was feeling deeply bothered.

Following that is perhaps the most well known story in the life of David, when he as a young teenager is the only one willing to go against the giant Goliath of the Philistines, a nation neighbouring on the southwest of Judah, including today's Gaza city. The two nations, Israel and Philistia, had been warring for some time and Israel has exhausted.



Jesse had told David to take food to his three brothers fighting against the Philistines. Once there David couldn't figure out why his people were not fighting. Then when Goliath came out to issue his daily threat and insult, David decided to do something about it.

Too small for the armour given to him, David went out onto the battle field and informed Goliath that God was on David's side. He then picked up a rock and put it in his slingshot, and when Goliath ran towards David, David whipped the rock into Goliath's forehead, killing him.

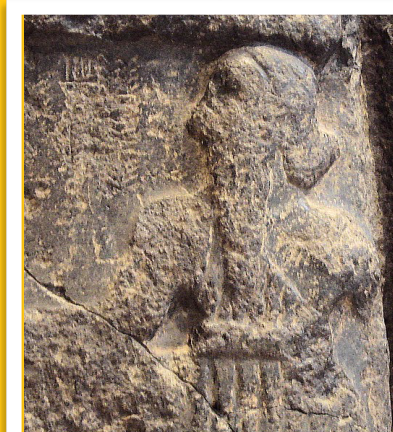
Recognizing that they had lost, the Philistines ran away from the battle leaving Israel as the victors.

Eventually David joins the house of Saul and develops a relationship with Saul's oldest son, Jonathan.

## UNITED LANDS

By the time Biblical history matches with extra-biblical history, the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah are divided. That divide is even more pronounced when the Assyrians take over Israel but not Judah, then the Babylonians reach further and take over Judah along with their conquering of Assyria.

The kingdom David ruled over, according to the Bible, was a united Israel and Judah, but archeology suggests it was much smaller and probably only the northern land of Israel. Evidence of a "House of David" was not found until 1993, dating around c. 1100-960 BCE.





## Josiah

### 2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34

Amon, King of Judah, only served for two years before his assassination. The people of Judah were not in favour of his turning from God and encouraging the worship of Baal.

Upon his death, eight year old Josiah assumed the throne. 2 Chronicles 34 tells us he followed the path of David and worshiped God. At sixteen he decided to tear down all the shrines, alters, and poles associated with the worship of Baal and Asherah throughout the lands of Judah. This destruction took place over two years. After eighteen years as ruler, Josiah gave instructions to repair the Temple in Jerusalem.

The story continues that the scroll of the Laws of Moses was found, and when Josiah heard it he was distraught that the laws had not been obeyed. He called for his officials to visit the prophet Huldah, and she told him that Judah would be destroyed for its worship of idols, but not until Josiah had died. Since this was written after the fact, this prophecy was interpreted as the Babylonian exile.

In 2 Kings 22 tells the same story as 2 Chronicles 34 with the exception that it includes the name of Josiah's mother, Jedidah, and omits the destruction of idols, alters and shrines and poles.

The reigns of Josiah is placed c. 640 BCE, following the disintegration of the Assyrian Empire and before the rise of the Babylonian Empire. Although there is no extra-biblical references to the reign of Josiah, there is evidence of one of his advisers.

A seal known in archeology as the Seal of Asaiah was discovered dating to the mid-7th century BCE. Asaiah is mentioned in both 2 Kings 22:12 and 2 Chronicles 34:20, as being Josiah's 'servant', sent to confer with the prophet Huldah. Scholars are in general agreement this is the Asaiah to whom the seal would have belonged, also suggesting that he was literate, meaning he could write as well as read, and was possibly responsible for the king's correspondence.



## HISTORICAL BOOKS OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

For centuries the Bible was treated as entirely historical. Modern scholarship shows that is not the case. However, there are several books in the Bible that are considered books of history, and they divide along the lines of Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom).

1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Kings tells the history from the point of view of Israel, while 1&2 Chronicles tells the history from the point of view of Judah. Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the return to Judah from Babylonian exile. Several names mentioned are found in other sources such as scrolls, seals, or engravings.

# Daniel

## Daniel 1-6

Like the Book of Esther, the Book of Daniel is considered a novel beginning during the reign of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (605 - 562 BCE), and was known as Nebuchadnezzar the Great. He was responsible for incredible military campaigns and accredited with creating the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

In the story of Daniel, we read that Daniel was one of the sons of the elite houses of Judah. This is significant because while the Assyrian exile took almost all the people from the lands of Israel, the Babylonian exile limited the exile to those of the wealthy or political families. Daniel would not have been born in Judah, but the family would still identify as from that tribe and land.

The first six chapters in the novel talk about teenage Daniel and his friends, who would eventually be given the more well known Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were picked to learn how to read and write in Akkadian, the official language of Babylon. They were chosen because they were well educated and attractive young men with a royal pedigree.



When the king ordered the death of every wiseman in Babylon when they couldn't interpret the king's dream, Daniel intervened and was able to give an interpretation that satisfied the king. As a response the king recognize the God of the Hebrews more significant than any other god, and Daniel was able to ensure his three friends were well placed in the king's palace.

Eventually the kingdom passed to King Darius of Persia, known as Darius the Great (522 - 489 BCE). This is the king who ordered Daniel into the lion's den, because he would not pray to Darius as a god. When Darius found he had been tricked into passing that law as a way to remove Daniel, he went to the pit and found Daniel had not died but had befriended the lions.

## APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

One of the genres in the Bible is Apocalyptic Literature. It was popular for several centuries between the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile, and the decades after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans. The Book of Revelation is an example of Apocalyptic literature, as is the Book of Daniel.

The intent of the genre is to give people hope that the oppressed will finally get justice and that the oppressors will be destroyed. It gives a sense that God is working on their behalf behind the scenes and will bring about the time of freedom and renewal soon.

