

1 Samuel 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli.
And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there
was no open vision.

Analysis

The chapter opens with spiritual famine: 'the word of the LORD was precious [rare] in those days; there was no open vision.' Samuel's ministry to Eli occurs amid prophetic silence. The term 'precious' (yaqar) indicates scarcity - prophetic revelation was so unusual that it was treasured when it came. The absence of 'open vision' (chazon niphrats) means God was not breaking through with revelation. This silence was judgment for the corruption described in chapter 2. Yet into this spiritual darkness, God speaks to a child, initiating a new era of prophetic ministry.

Historical Context

Periods of prophetic silence appear throughout Israel's history. The four-hundred-year gap between Malachi and John the Baptist is the most famous. Such silences often indicate divine displeasure, though faithful remnants continue to serve during these periods.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it feel like when God seems silent in your life or community?
2. How does spiritual famine prepare for spiritual awakening?

Interlinear Text

וְבַעֲרֵת	לִפְנֵי	יְהִי הָאָתָה	מִשְׁרָת	שָׁמְאוֹל	וְבַעֲרֵת
And the child	Samuel	ministered	H853	of the LORD	before
H5288	H8050	H8334		H3068	H6440
וְדֹבֵר	יְהִי הָאָתָה	בְּנֵי הָאָתָה	יְצִירָה	בְּמִינֵם	בְּמִינֵם
And the word	of the LORD	H1961	was precious	in those days	H1992
H1697	H3068		H3368	H3117	H369
וְיָמִים	וְיָמִים	וְיָמִים	וְיָמִים	וְיָמִים	וְיָמִים
vision	there was no open				
H2377	H6555				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 74:9 (Parallel theme): We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

1 Samuel 3:21 (Word): And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

1 Samuel 2:11 (References Lord): And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

1 Samuel 2:18 (References Lord): But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.