

## Where did the book of Samuel originate?

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The author of Samuel<sup>1</sup> uses unnamed sources otherwise unknown elsewhere in the book,<sup>2</sup> and also named sources.<sup>3</sup> Kings also names some of its sources,<sup>4</sup> as does Chronicles.<sup>5</sup> This is a large list of named sources, and may also include many other unnamed sources. The book of Samuel often refers to events from the distant past,<sup>6</sup> so it was likely produced long after the reign of David.

No words in the book of Samuel identify its author, date of composition, or how its sources were collected or used. It appears that it was not placed in its final form immediately contemporary to the dates of the events described. It does appear that it used other sources, perhaps some sources that were contemporaneous to the actual events.

Therefore, Samuel itself claims to be an edited work by an unknown and unidentified author or authors, combining information from various sources at some later date. It is unlikely that the prophet Samuel himself composed the work.<sup>7</sup> The book of Samuel is about Samuel, Saul, and principally David, but it is not a work produced by them. The book of Samuel comes from a period considerably later than the time of David. The work likely utilized both narratives commonly known, official sources, and other public and private records. The author and editors may have included their own commentary on the events described, but they knew about them from other written sources which are no longer available.

1. The works known as 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel are a single work. Their later division into two works is almost certainly related to the length of scrolls, and says nothing about the original development of the single narrative.
2. For example, Saul's genocide of the Gibeonites is introduced as a known fact (2 Samuel 21:1), without any previous mention. The Gibeonites were residents of a non-Israelite city in Benjamin (Joshua 9:1-27), the tribe of Saul. Apparently Saul tried to exterminate them from his region, and later David attempted to reconcile with them (2 Kings 21:1-14).
3. For example, 'David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, ... it is written in *the Book of Jashar*' (2 Samuel 1:18), known elsewhere (Joshua 10:13).
4. For example, 'the annals of Solomon' (1 Kings 11:41), 'the annals of the kings of Israel' (1 Kings 14:19), and 'the annals of the kings of Judah' (1 Kings 14:29, 2 Kings 20:34). It makes sense that royal monarchies and other institutions would keep extensive and detailed records of events and proceedings, which were publicly available then, but are now lost.
5. For example, 'the book of the kings of Israel' (1 Chronicles 9:1, 2 Chronicles 20:34, 33:18), 'the annals of king David' (1 Chronicles 27:24), 'the book of the kings of Judah and Israel' (2 Chronicles 6:11, 25:26, 27:7, 28:26, 32:32, 35:27, 36:8), 'the annotations on the book of the kings' (2 Chronicles 24:27), the writings of 'Samuel the seer' (1 Chronicles 29:29), 'Nathan the prophet' (1 Chronicles 29:29, 2 Chronicles 9:29), 'Gad the seer' (1 Chronicles 29:29), 'Ahijah the Shilonite' (2 Chronicles 9:29), 'Iddo the seer' (2 Chronicles 9:29, 12:15, 13:22), 'Shemaiah the prophet' (2 Chronicles 12:15), 'the prophet Isaiah' (2 Chronicles 26:22), and 'the seers' (2 Chronicles 33:19).
6. For example, 'word from the Lord was rare *in those days*' (1 Samuel 3:1), '*to this very day*, neither Dagon's priests nor anyone else who enters Dagon's temple step on Dagon's threshold in Ashdod' (1 Samuel 5:5), 'they positioned the ark of the Lord *until this very day* in the field of Joshua' (1 Samuel 6:18), 'Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah *until this very day*' (1 Samuel 27:6), 'he called that place Perez Uzzah, which remains its name *to this very day*' (2 Samuel 6:8), 'he named the monument after himself, and *to this day* it is known as Absalom's Memorial' (2 Samuel 18:18).
7. Samuel dies (1 Samuel 25:1) and Saul speaks to his dead spirit (1 Samuel 28:11-14) early in the book.