

A Bible Adventure

Edition 18
July 1st, 2022

Samuel—A Child from Heaven

A retelling of 1 Samuel 1

About three hundred years after the children of Israel had conquered the Promised Land, the Tabernacle—which Moses had built in the wilderness—was at the city of Shiloh, about forty kilometers north of Jerusalem. The city was still the center of worship for the people of Israel, and every year, the faithful would come from all over the land, bringing their bulls, goats, and lambs to sacrifice on the altar of the Lord.

In the nearby hill country village of Ramah, there lived a man named Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and

Peninnah. Peninnah had several sons and daughters, but Hannah had no children.

Once a year, Elkanah and his family would travel from Ramah to worship and sacrifice to the Lord at Shiloh. After sacrificing a young bull, Elkanah would leave it on the altar fire until all the fat was burned off, as was the Jewish custom. Then he would take the meat and boil it in the Tabernacle's cooking pots. Most of the meat was then given to the poor, but the choice portions were always given to the priests of the Lord. The family that had offered the

sacrifice would also take as much meat as they needed for their meals of the day.

On one such day, Elkanah's wives and children were sitting down near the Tabernacle and had spread out their meal when Elkanah brought their meat over in a big steaming brass pot. Eating the meat dedicated to the Lord was a special event, for it symbolized their partaking of His rich blessings.

As Elkanah had done every year, he gave a portion of the meat to his wife Peninnah and a portion to each of

her sons and daughters. Everyone knew that children were the greatest of all the blessings of the Lord, so this was always Peninnah's moment of glory.

Hannah had borne Elkanah no children, yet he deeply loved her. So rather than giving her just one portion of meat, Elkanah would always give her a double portion.

Peninnah, jealous of such displays of Elkanah's affection, looked disdainfully at Hannah. When Elkanah left to return the brass pot to the Tabernacle, Peninnah's remarks began.

“I think it is such a shame that the Lord gave you no children, Hannah,” she said in a sweet voice that belied her true feelings. “But in His infinite wisdom, He must have known you would not be especially gifted for motherhood.”

“Please, Peninnah, let’s not get into that again this year,” said Hannah.

“Oh, pardon me. I did not mean to hurt your feelings. I am just grateful to God for how He’s blessed me with so many children.”

Hannah, looking dejectedly at the ground, responded, “But Elkanah loves me just as much as he loves you.”

“Are you sure?” said Peninnah, feigning confusion. “Maybe, like me, he merely pities you because you’ll never know the fulfillment of motherhood—to have children adore and respect you. Just as I would never know what it must be like to be, sorry to put it so bluntly ... *barren*.”

Hannah had been sitting with tears flowing down her cheeks, but at Peninnah’s final statement, she let out a cry, rose to her feet, and ran away. Elkanah was returning from the tent of the Tabernacle, and seeing Hannah running away crying, he raced after her.

Catching up with her, he took her in his arms.

“Hannah, why are you weeping?” he tenderly asked. “Why don’t you eat?”

“Every year it’s the same!” Hannah answered.

“Peninnah keeps provoking me and makes it a constant reproach that the Lord has left me childless!”

“But Hannah,” Elkanah said. “I love you dearly! Is that not enough? Don’t I mean more to you than *ten* sons?”

Elkanah tried to persuade Hannah to return to eat, but her stomach was in knots. Instead, she excused herself and went to the tent of the Tabernacle. No one was there except for the priest of the Lord, an old man named

Eli, sitting in a chair by the doorpost of the great tent.

Because Hannah’s heart was aching so much that she could not even speak aloud, she made this vow in her heart. “O Lord, if You will only look upon my misery and give me a son, then I will give him back to You for as long as he lives!”

After Hannah had been praying for a long time, Eli noticed that she wasn’t speaking, yet her mouth was moving and her face was contorted in anguish.

“How long will you make a drunken show of yourself?” he said. “Sober up from your wine!”

“It isn’t that, my lord,” Hannah said, turning to Eli with tears streaming down her face. “I have not been drinking wine. I am deeply troubled, and I was pouring out my soul to the Lord in my grief.”

Ashamed of his harsh words, Eli comforted her, “Go in peace, and may God grant you what you have asked of Him.”

Hannah thanked the old priest and returned to where Elkanah, Peninnah, and their children were eating. Cheerfully she sat down and ate—her face no longer downcast.

The next morning, they returned to their home at Ramah.

Before long, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son whom she named “Samuel,” meaning “asked of the Lord.” How happy she was to have a child!

When Elkanah went up with his family to offer the next annual sacrifice to the Lord, Hannah did not go. “After the boy is weaned,” she said, “I will take him and give him to the Lord, and he will live there always.”

“Do what seems best to you,” Elkanah answered. “Only

be sure to fulfill your good intentions.”

So Hannah stayed at home and cared for her son. When he was about four years old, she took him to Shiloh. There she presented him to Eli.

“I prayed for this child, and the Lord gave him to me,” she told him. “So I now, in turn, give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be dedicated to the Lord.”

Then Eli blessed Elkanah and Hannah, saying, “May the Lord give you children by this woman to take the place of the one you gave to the Lord.”

And the Lord was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters.

Then Hannah returned to Ramah, but little Samuel remained with Eli in the Tabernacle.

Each year, his mother Hannah made him a new coat and brought it to him when she came with her husband for the annual sacrifice.

Samuel grew up serving the Lord and became one of the greatest prophets and judges in the history of Israel.