

## 91—I AM LOANING HIM TO JEHOVAH

(1 Samuel 1–2)

In the days of the judges, there was a Levite from Ramah in Mount Ephraim named Elkanah<sup>1</sup> who went up to the house of the Lord at Shiloh with his family every year to offer sacrifices. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had both sons and daughters, but Hannah had no children because she was barren.

Elkanah loved Hannah, but she was unhappy with the lot that God had given her. Year after year she went up to Shiloh, but when Peninnah tormented her because she was childless, Hannah wept and was unable to eat. When Elkanah saw her weeping, he asked, “Why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart so grieved because you have no children? Am I not better to you than ten sons?”

While at Shiloh, Hannah went to the temple<sup>2</sup> where she wept bitterly and poured out her heart to God. In her prayer she vowed that if God would give her a son, she would give that son to him all the days of his life. She vowed that her son would be dedicated to God with the lifelong vow of a Nazarite.<sup>3</sup>

Eli the priest was sitting by a post of the temple watching Hannah pray. As he observed her mouth, he saw that her lips moved but he could not hear her voice. Because of this, Eli thought Hannah was drunk. And after a while, he said to her, “How long will you be drunken? You must put away your wine.”

“I am not drunk, my lord,” answered Hannah, “but I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink but have poured out my soul before God. Count me not worthless, for out of the abundance of my grief I have spoken to God.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Elkanah was a descendant of Levi’s son Kohath, as detailed in 1 Chronicles 6.

<sup>2</sup> The temple referred to here was the portable tabernacle the children of Israel built in the wilderness at Sinai. It had remained in Shiloh since the time of Joshua.

<sup>3</sup> The word Nazarite means “separate” or “set apart.” The vows of a Nazarite might be either for a short period or lifelong. The person who took those vows was, among other things, bound to abstain from wine, from contact with the dead, and from any cutting of the hair.



*Hannah leaves her son Samuel in Eli’s care*

“Go in peace then,” said Eli. “And you will find grace in God’s sight.” So Hannah went her way and was no longer sad. The following day, Elkanah and his family rose early, worshipped at the temple, and then returned to their home at Ramah.

Once they were back home, Jehovah remembered Hannah and blessed her. She conceived and in due time bore a son whom she named Samuel<sup>4</sup> because she had pleaded with Jehovah for him.

The next time Elkanah and his family went up to Shiloh to make their yearly sacrifice, Hannah did not go. “I will not go up again until the child is weaned,” she told her husband. “Then I will take him with me that he may appear before Jehovah and abide there forever.”

When Samuel was weaned, Hannah took him with her to the house of the Lord. She also took three bullocks, an ephah of flour,<sup>5</sup> and a bottle<sup>6</sup> of wine. When a bullock had been killed for the sacrifice, she took her son Samuel and gave him to Eli. “My lord,” said Hannah to Eli, “as your soul lives, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to Jehovah. It was for this child that I prayed, and Jehovah has given me that which I sought. I am now loaning him

---

<sup>4</sup> Samuel means “name of God.”

<sup>5</sup> An ephah is about eight gallons (30.28 liters).

<sup>6</sup> A bottle might be better called a water skin. Bottles were the skins of animals and were used as containers for both water and wine.

to Jehovah, and he shall be on loan to Jehovah for as long as he lives.”

Hannah’s heart rejoiced for the blessing she had received, and Elkanah and his family returned to their home in Ramah. The boy Samuel, however, remained at the temple in Shiloh with Eli.