

Adult Bible Class

The Book of First Samuel

Lesson 1 - April 17, 2022

Introduction

The book of 1 Samuel is the ninth book of the Old Testament. It continues the books of the history of the nation of Israel which began with Joshua and continued through Judges and Ruth.

The author of 1 Samuel is not named in the book, but probably Samuel was a contributor since it covers his life and ministry until his death. The authorship of the rest of the book (after Samuel's death) cannot be determined for sure. The book covers a period of about 150 years from the birth of Samuel at about 1170 B.C. to the death of Israel's first king, Saul, at about 1015 B.C.

We learn from this book that God is at work in human history. Israel went through a transformation in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. There, the Ten Commandments were given to Israel as well as other laws for the new nation. Then under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites were able to conquer the land of Canaan that had been promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However over the next 300 years, during the time of the judges, the people of Israel sank very low. We read in the book of Judges that the people followed a cycle of serving the Lord then forsaking him to serve the idol gods of Canaan. God would send a nation to harass or enslave them so that they would cry out to the Lord. Then God would raise up a judge to deliver them. The cycle continued over and over throughout this period. During the time of the Judges we read almost nothing about the Tabernacle and the priests. But even through all of this, God has a plan for Israel. We will see this unfold as we study 1 Samuel.

First Samuel Chapter 1

1 Samuel 1:1 (NKJV) Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

Elkanah (who will be the father of Samuel) was from Ramathaim Zophim. This is the same as Ramah, which will be Samuel's headquarters city. By the way, this is the same as Arimathea of the New Testament (remember, Joseph of Arimathea was the Pharisee who begged the body of Jesus and placed Him in his own tomb, Mark 15:42-47).

Elkanah was a Levite who lived in one of the Levitical cities in Ephraim.

2 And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Polygamy was a fact of life in the ancient world. Though the Israelites practiced polygamy (or bigamy), it was not God's will from the beginning, and it resulted in family trouble every time. It caused trouble in Abraham's family, in

Jacob's family, and once again, here in Elkanah's home. We can guess that perhaps Elkanah married Hannah first and had no children, then he married Peninnah and had many children by her. But, this brought vexation to his home. The situation was similar to that of Jacob's home where the beloved wife was Rachel who had no children, and the other wife who was not favored bore many children.

1 Samuel 1:3 This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, *were* there.

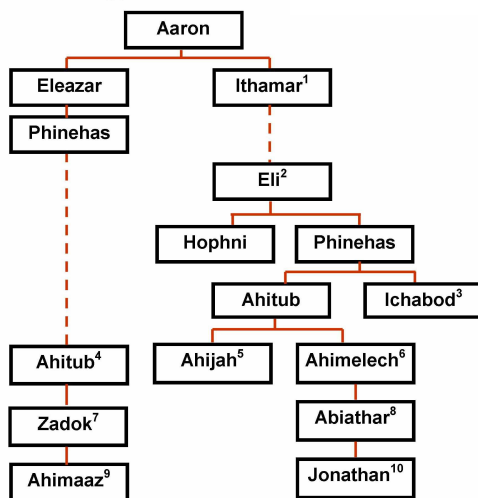
The original command of God was that all Israelites should offer up sacrifice at the Tabernacle three times a year (Exodus 23:14-16). However, for some reason Elkanah went yearly.

The above verse is the first time we read the phrase, *"the Lord of hosts"* which occurs about 261 times in the Scripture (the modern translations render it *"the Lord of Heaven's armies"*). The "hosts" refers to the angels. In a time when there was worship of the sun, moon, and stars, this phrase put God above it all and ruler of all. His armies are the angels of heaven who do His bidding.

We are also introduced to the high priest of this era - Eli, and to his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Eli held the position of judge in Israel at the time, and he had given the duties of priest to his two sons.

Eli was not a descendant of Phinehas, but he was a descendant of Ithamar.

Genealogy of the Priests



4 And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. **5** But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb. **6** And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb. **7** So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.

Here we see family trouble in a home with two wives. Though Peninnah has many children, she does not have her husband's love, and as a result she is cruel to Hannah.

In the beginning, God blessed marriage between one man and one woman:

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

God even warned future kings of Israel about polygamy:

Deuteronomy 17:17 The king must not take many wives for himself, because they will turn his heart away from the Lord.

For years the torment continued in Hannah's life. Yet, Scripture says, "*the Lord had closed her womb.*" God does not allow trouble in order to hurt His people. It is all for a purpose and a blessing for the future. God sees all that happens.

Hannah's Vow

1 Samuel 1:8 (NKJV) Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? *Am* I not better to you than ten sons?"

Elkanah, as a good husband, consoles his beloved wife. Yet, there is something within most women that craves motherhood. Though Elkanah is good to Hannah, yet Hannah's desire for children drives her to seek the Lord in prayer.

9 So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord. **10** And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. **11** Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

Hannah's trouble causes her to go to God in prayer to make a vow to Him. Hannah goes to the entrance of the Tabernacle where the high priest has his seat, and she prays a silent prayer of the soul to God. Her vow is that if God will give her a child, she will give him to God's service all of his life. He will be a Nazarite unto God. Remember, a Nazarite wears the symbol of uncut hair on his head, does not drink wine or touch anything from the vine, and does not go near a dead body.

12 And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth. **13** Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. **14** So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!" **15** But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I *am* a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. **16** "Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now." **17** Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him." **18** And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Apparently in those days, heartfelt silent prayer was not something that was very common on feast day at the entrance to the Tabernacle. At any rate, the high priest did not recognize it in Hannah. But when she explained herself, Eli quickly gave her a greeting of peace and asked God to grant her request.

It is a sad day when the spiritual leader does not recognize true spirituality. However, Eli was quick to speak for Hannah.

Hannah's prayer was powerful and effective because:

1) Her prayer came about because of her trouble and affliction and the sorrow that came into her life because of it. Instead of bitterness, sorrow drove her to prayer. "*Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7).

2) Her prayer was made in her heart and not aloud. This is the first silent prayer recorded in the Scripture. It was not made to be heard by men (although it

was seen by the high priest), but through this type of praying, Hannah could be totally honest and sincere with God and tell Him her deepest desires.

3) Her prayer was full of desire for an answer from God. This is because of her great need. Great need can bring about great prayer.

4) Her prayer was full of faith that God is great and that God can do anything. *Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them* (Mark 11:24).

5) Her prayer was made in surrender to God. Not only did she give herself to God, but she was willing to give her future son to the Lord for His service. She was “the handmaid of the Lord,” and her son was to be a Nazarite unto God.

6) Her prayer was continued. She prayed, then she prayed some more. It wasn't a one time thought that quickly left, but it was the desire of her soul.

7) Her prayer was confirmed and blessed by the priest. Eli recognized her heartfelt prayer and added, “*and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him.*”

Samuel Is Born and Dedicated

1 Samuel 1:19 Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her.

20 So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, “Because I have asked for him from the Lord.”

The name Samuel means, “God has heard,” or, “name of God.” God heard Hannah's prayer for a son, and He answered.

21 Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow. **22** But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “*Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever.*”

23 So Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the Lord establish His word.” Then the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

It may seem unusual and ungrateful for Hannah to not want to go to the house of God at the prescribed time. However, Hannah's situation was different. She had promised her son to the Lord for His service, and she was going to bring him to the house of God when the time came to surrender him to the Lord.

24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. **25** Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli. **26** And she said, “O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I *am* the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord. **27** For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. **28** Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord.” So they worshiped the Lord there.

At last the time came. Samuel was probably about three years old (or a little older). He was a special child and would not be any trouble in the Tabernacle. She triumphs in her answer to prayer as she testifies to Eli.

When we read the account we picture Eli left with the care of the child, but there were many Levites that helped with the Tabernacle service and there were women who, no doubt, helped to care for the child.

The next chapter is a song of praise and prophecy by Hannah when she is at the Tabernacle giving her son to God's service there. What a difference between her first prayer there and this one!

1 Samuel Chapter 2

1 Samuel 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said:

"My heart rejoices in the Lord;
My horn is exalted in the Lord.
I smile at my enemies,
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

Hannah prayed, and her prayer was a time of thanksgiving and praise to God. She took time to let the Lord and others know how thankful she was for answered prayer, yet she focuses here on the greatness of God. Her first prayer was silent, but this prayer was aloud for all to hear.

2 "No one is holy like the Lord,
For *there is* none besides You,
Nor *is there* any rock like our God.

Hannah's prayer exalts God as being the greatest of all - there is none like our God!

3 "Talk no more so very proudly;
Let no arrogance come from your mouth,
For the Lord *is* the God of knowledge;
And by Him actions are weighed.

No doubt Hannah was thinking about how much she suffered from the unkind words of Peninnah, day in and day out, when she was barren and Peninnah had one child after another. The Lord saw it all.

4 "The bows of the mighty men *are* broken,
And those who stumbled are girded with strength.
5 *Those who were* full have hired themselves out for bread,
And the hungry have ceased *to hunger*.
Even the barren has borne seven,
And she who has many children has become feeble.

God can turn circumstances around very quickly.

6 "The Lord kills and makes alive;
He brings down to the grave and brings up.
7 The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
He brings low and lifts up.
8 He raises the poor from the dust
And lifts the beggar from the ash heap,
To set *them* among princes
And make them inherit the throne of glory.
"For the pillars of the earth *are* the Lord's,
And He has set the world upon them.
9 He will guard the feet of His saints,
But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.
"For by strength no man shall prevail.

1 Samuel 2:10 The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces;
From heaven He will thunder against them.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.
"He will give strength to His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed."

"*His anointed*" is the first mention of Messiah. The Hebrew word *Messiah* is "Christ" in Greek and "anointed" in English. Hannah is the first one to use the title, Messiah.

11 Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest.

Samuel was about three years old when he was left at the Tabernacle to minister. His father was a Levite, and Levites were born to serve in the Tabernacle, yet Samuel was going to live there and serve continually. His service started out with simple things that Samuel could do as a young child. Every age has a level of service, and every child should be given the opportunity to serve in some way.

As Samuel grew, his level of service became more skilled and mature.

The Wicked Sons of Eli

12 Now the sons of Eli *were* corrupt; they did not know the Lord. **13** And the priests' custom with the people *was that* when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. **14** Then he would thrust *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. **15** Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw."

16 And *if* the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; *then* you may take *as much* as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give *it* now; and if not, I will take *it* by force."

17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.

It appears that Eli was a good man, yet his sons were wicked men. "*They knew not the Lord.*" Eli was the high priest in Israel, and his sons were born to be priests as well. Yet the good character of Eli was not transmitted to his sons.

The great sin of Eli's sons (as stated above) is that they profited by the offerings of the Lord. They treated the Lord's offerings with great disrespect. There was a certain procedure for the handling of the peace offerings. First, the fat went on the altar to the Lord, then a certain portion was given to the priests, and the rest went to the offerer and his family to eat. Eli's sons disregarded this, taking meat from the people and not giving the fat to the Lord first as His just due. Their mishandling of the offerings made the Lord very angry with them.

Samuel's Childhood Ministry

18 But Samuel ministered before the Lord, *even as* a child, wearing a linen ephod. **19** Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring *it* to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. **20** And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the Lord." Then they would go to their own home.

21 And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

What a contrast between Eli's sons and Samuel. Hannah brought a little coat to Samuel each year as he grew - and the Lord blessed her with five more children! It is impossible to "out give" God.

Prophecy Against Eli's Household

1 Samuel 2:22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. **23** So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. **24** No, my sons! For *it is* not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. **25** If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them.

There are times in Scripture when people go too far, and God must act. This is such a time. The sons of Eli, who were given the great responsibility of acting as priests before the Lord and the people, sinned in two ways. First, they disrespected the offerings of the Lord, and second, they were immoral in the house of the Lord. Hophni and Phinehas both had wives of their own, but they committed terrible sin - not with harlots, but with the good women of God who came to worship at the Tabernacle. This was doubly wicked. Such things should never be spoken of God's priests. Eli spoke out about it, but his admonition was ignored. As we will learn in the next verses, Eli did not speak out about the abuse of the sacred offerings. If he had started earlier to admonish his sons, would things have been different?

26 And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men.

Again, in contrast, we see Samuel pleasing both the Lord and the people.

27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? **28** Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? **29** Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded *in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings* of Israel My people?'

We don't know who this man of God was - he is one of the anonymous prophets that we read about from time to time in Scripture. God raised him up to speak to Eli and his sons.

Though Eli was a good priest, it is evident that he did not reprove his sons early enough and sufficiently enough. Eli and his sons grew fat because the sons stole the meat from the people.

Because they were priests unto God, and because they knew better, the Lord sent His prophet to speak the harsh words that Eli should have spoken to his sons long ago. Though *the sons* did wickedly, Eli is involved in it because he did not correct the problem - all he did was talk. God said, you "*honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings.*" They were all guilty. Eli should never have eaten the roast meat that was obtained wickedly.

30 Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: 'I said indeed *that* your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the Lord says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will

honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. **31** Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. **32** And you will see an enemy *in My dwelling place, despite* all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. **33** But any of your men *whom* I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. **34** Now this *shall be* a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them.

The house of Eli would be left powerless. The priestly line would not stay with Eli and his descendants. This was fulfilled later in Solomon's day - *So Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest to the Lord, that he might fulfill the word of the Lord which He spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh* (1 Kings 2:27). The priestly line continued with Zadok - from the line of another of Aaron's sons (see chart, page 2).

The fulfillment of the prophecy would take place in Solomon's day, but God gave Eli a sign that the word was true - both of his sons will die in one day.

35 Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. **36** And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come *and* bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, "Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.""

The prophecy was partially fulfilled in Zadok in the days of Solomon, but this prophecy is ultimately speaking of the Messiah who would be many things - including High Priest unto God. The New Testament book of Hebrews gives much teaching on Jesus as our High Priest forever.

The descendants of Eli's sons (who stole meat from the house of God) will themselves be begging for food.