

## Old Testament Stories

# "Samuel's Message"

1 Samuel 1 - 3

☞ What would you like to praise God for today?

☞ Pray for God's guidance as you study



1. What does your name mean or why did you choose the names of your children?

2. Hannah was barren. How does this impact Hannah's life?

Elkannah's life?

Peninnah's life?

3. What does Hannah intend for her son by her vow? Read Numbers 6:1-8 and Judges 13:7.

What is the irony in Eli's accusation (1:13)?

4. In this culture, mothers usually nursed children until they were preschoolers. Samuel would probably have been three or four when he was fully weaned. How do you think Hannah felt giving Samuel to someone else to raise?

5. What things or people in your life are most indispensable to you? How does Hannah's example challenge your faith in these relationships?

6. Now we are going to take a closer look at Eli and his family. Read 1 Sam. 2:12-25. How did Eli's sons corrupt their priestly office? (Read Leviticus 7:22-36)

7. Eli is both aware of, and confronted about his son's behavior. Why does Eli distinguish between the sins mentioned in verse 25?

How does the Lord support his warning?

8. How important is it to discipline children? What does it mean to be a *Hannah-like parent* versus an *Eli-type parent*?
9. In Deuteronomy 6:1-9 God gives parents a strong injunction regarding their children’s spiritual education. Why is a spiritual foundation so important to child rearing and what part does that play in “discipline”?

“To keep the lamp supplied with oil around the clock, the priests would take turns sleeping near the Most Holy Place to be sure it burned perpetually.

Eli and Samuel were probably taking their turn sleeping in the tabernacle to keep the lamp lit. They slept in little rooms or closets near that special area of God’s presence.”

-----Excerpt from: Fascinating Stories of Forgotten Lives, by Charles Swindoll

10. After repeated warnings, God delivers a message through Samuel. Why does God extend to Eli the responsibility for the sins of his sons? (3:13)
11. What does it mean that Samuel “let none of his words fall to the ground” (3:19)?

How is Samuel the fulfillment of the prophetic warning in 2:34?

12. Do you pray with an attitude of: “*Speak Lord, your servant listens*” or “*Listen Lord, your servant speaks*”?

How can you learn to listen to God more?

How do you treat the word of God in your own life? What commands have you “*let fall to the ground*”?

**Prayer:** For one another

## LIFE GROUPS

*A safe place to build friendships and grow spiritually.*

- L** ♦ Learn..... applying Biblical truth for everyday living
- I** ♦ Invite.....welcoming others to our fellowship
- F** ♦ Fellowship.....nurturing Christ centered caring relationships
- E** ♦ Evangelism..... reaching others with the hope of Christ



## DID YOU KNOW?

It was customary in these times for nations to carry their idols into battle with them. Maybe as Israel fought the Philistines, they saw the Philistine god (Dagon) in a prominent place. After their defeat (4:2), Israel took the ark of God and carried it into battle in a similar way; they were using this sacred object as a huge “rabbit’s foot” hoping it would give them luck. God – the real GOD – isn’t a Divine genie at our beck and call. Not surprisingly, Israel was soundly defeated (4:10).

“After defeating Israel, the Philistines had Israel’s ark of God and carried it proudly back to Ashdod. It was more than just a gold-plated box to them. It was proof they were the mightiest army on the face of the earth. They were mighty enough to capture the mightiest of gods among the nations. It was the physical evidence that proved their god Dagon was stronger than even the mysterious gods of the Israelites.

The Philistines would not hold these erroneous conclusions for long, however. As was their custom following a military victory, they brought the gods of their defeated enemy and laid them at the feet of their god Dagon. Symbolically, the action expressed the belief that the god of the enemy was now subservient to the Philistine god. While God was tolerant in allowing Israel to abuse and misrepresent the ark in the battle, He would not stand for allowing the Philistines to perpetuate their myth at the expense of His reputation. When the men of Ashdod came to view their idol Dagon the next morning, they found the idol had fallen forward on its face before the ark, as though it were paying homage to the defeated god.

The problem was quickly corrected by the Philistines as they raised Dagon back to his more prominent position. But the next morning the idol had fallen forward again. This time, Dagon’s head and hands had been cut off and the stump of the idol lay prostrate before the ark. . . .

But the problems were not over for the Philistines. A mysterious outbreak of tumors affected the city. The description of the affliction and the response of the Philistines to the conditions suggests the disease may have been the bubonic plague. This disease is usually transmitted by the bite of a flea from small rodents, such as rats, squirrels, or mice (see 1 Sam. 6:5). It is characterized by chills, fever, nausea, and the formation of mounds or “bubos” in the regions of the lymph nodes, armpits, and groin. If uncontrolled, the plague can have a devastating effect on the infected region. More than a fourth of the world’s population died as a result of this plague during the Middle Ages. As recently as 1910, over 60,000 deaths were attributed to this disease during an epidemic in China. While the men of Ashdod may not have been able to diagnose and treat the disease, they realized it was related to their possession of the ark of God. They insisted they no longer wanted to house the sacred treasure of Israel. At a meeting of the lords of the Philistines, it was decided to move the ark to Gath. But the plague then affected the men of that city and they insisted the ark be moved again. And so it was moved to Ekron, but again the plague affected the men of the city. As tumors continued to appear in the “secret parts” of their bodies and they continued burying those who died as a result of the plague, the consensus of the people was to send the ark back to Israel.

It had taken the Philistines seven months to come to the place where they were willing to send the ark back to Israel, yet even then they were reluctant to do so unless it was absolutely necessary. The Philistine priests and diviners agreed to send the ark back with appropriate gifts, but only to do so in such a way that it was most likely the ark would not get to Israel unless this supposed god really had the power to find its own way home. . . .

The two milk cows who had never borne a yoke were the most unlikely beasts one could choose to bear the ark (or any load, for that matter) on a cart or wagon. As soon as their calves were taken

back to the barn, the cows could have naturally gone back to the barn after them. The last thing that could be expected was that the cows would find their way along a road they had never traveled and take the ark directly to the Israel. The people who had suffered through the plague were convinced they had been cursed by the mysterious ark, but the priests of Dagon, Baal, and Ashtoreth had too much at stake to give up that easily. So they increased the odds against the ark getting safely back to Israel. They reasoned, *"If it goes up the road to its own territory, to Beth Shemesh then He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that struck us; it was by chance that it happened to us"* (1 Sam. 6:9).

But there was no question in the minds of the lords of the Philistines as to the cause of the plague by the time the sun set that evening. The cows pulled their wagon and cargo directly to the city of Beth Shemesh, never going off course the least."

---excerpt from History Makers of the Old Testament by Elmer Towns