

STORY 3: TROUBLED

There was a certain man named Elkanah who lived in the north hill country of Israel. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah, who had no children, and Peninnah, who had many.

Once a year, Elkanah went from his hometown to the Temple in Shiloh to worship. Whenever he would offer his sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her and the Lord had closed her womb. Peninnah liked to make Hannah feel miserable about not having any children, especially when the family went to the house of the Lord each year.

One day, when Elkanah saw that Hannah was crying and refusing to eat, he said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why don't you eat? Why do you feel so bad? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

After the sacrifice and meal, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli, the priest, was sitting in his chair near the door to the place of worship. Hannah was brokenhearted and was crying as she prayed, "Lord All-Powerful, I am your servant, but I am so miserable! Please let me have a son. I will give him to you for as long as he lives."

Hannah prayed silently to the Lord for a long time. But her lips were moving, and Eli thought she was drunk. "How long are you going to stay drunk?" he asked. "Sober up!"

"Not so," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking and I am not drunk. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. I've been praying all this time, telling the LORD about my problems."

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may God give you what you have asked for." Then Hannah left and after she ate something, she felt better.

After Hannah returned to their home, the Lord blessed her with a son. She named him Samuel.

The next year, she did not go with Elkanah to worship. She told him, "After he is old enough to stop nursing, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there for the rest of his life." "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah replied.

So after the boy stopped nursing, Hannah took him, along with an animal for sacrifice, and brought Samuel to the house of the Lord. She said to Eli the priest, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord gave me what I asked for. So now I give him to the Lord."