

The Birth of Samuel

CHARACTERS: Elkannah, Peninnah, Hannah, Eli

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 1

ELKANAH: How wonderful to worship and sacrifice at the house of the Lord.

PENINNAH: And to feast afterwards with our children.

ELKANAH: Here is a portion for you, Peninnah.

PENINNAH: Thank you. It is so nice to have all our children here to worship at Shiloh.

ELKANAH: Here are portions, one for each of our sons and daughters.

PENINNAH: I have so many children. (*staring and smirking at HANNAH*) Unlike some people.

ELKANAH: Here is a double portion for you, Hannah.

HANNAH: (*weeping*) Thank you.

ELKANAH: Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted?

HANNAH: I have no children.

ELKANAH: Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?

HANNAH: Excuse me from the table please. I must go pray.

NARRATOR: Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house.

HANNAH: (*praying in deep anguish*) LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.

ELI: (*aside*) That woman's lips move but no sound passes her lips. She must be drunk. (*to HANNAH*) How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.

HANNAH: Not so, my lord. I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer.

ELI: What were you doing?

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HANNAH: Do not take your servant for a wicked woman. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord, praying here out of my great anguish and grief.

ELI: Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.

NARRATOR: Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying,

HANNAH: Because I asked the LORD for him.

ELKANAH: It is time to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD.

HANNAH: I won't go this time but after the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always.

ELKANAH: Do what seems best to you. Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word.

NARRATOR: After Samuel was weaned, Hannah took the boy with her, young as he was, to the house of the LORD at Shiloh.

HANNAH: (to ELI) As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him.

ELI: I see.

HANNAH: Now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life, he will be given over to the LORD.

(HANNAH'S PRAYER occurs here)

NARRATOR: Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.

ELKANAH: It is again time to go to Shiloh to worship.

HANNAH: Samuel, here is a little robe I brought for you.

ELI: May the LORD bless you Elkanah and Hannah!

HANNAH: Thank you.

ELI: May God give you children to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD.

HANNAH: The LORD has been gracious to us.

ELKANAH: Hannah has three more sons and two daughters.

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

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Hannah's Prayer choral reading

CHARACTERS: Hannah, ALL

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 2

HANNAH: My heart rejoices in the LORD;

ALL: There is no one holy like the LORD;

HANNAH: there is no one besides you;

ALL: there is no Rock like our God.

HANNAH: Do not keep talking so proudly

ALL: or let your mouth speak such arrogance,

HANNAH: for the LORD is a God who knows,

ALL: and by him deeds are weighed.

HANNAH: She who was barren has borne seven children,

ALL: but she who has had many sons pines away.

HANNAH: The LORD brings death and makes alive;

ALL: he brings down to the grave and raises up.

HANNAH: The LORD sends poverty and wealth;

ALL: he humbles and he exalts.

HANNAH: He raises the poor from the dust

ALL: and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

HANNAH: he seats them with princes

ALL: and has them inherit a throne of honor.

HANNAH: For the foundations of the earth are the LORD'S;

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ALL: on them he has set the world.

HANNAH: He will guard the feet of his faithful servants,

ALL: but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.

HANNAH: It is not by strength that one prevails;

ALL: those who oppose the LORD will be broken.

HANNAH: The Most High will thunder from heaven;

ALL: the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

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Eli's Wicked Sons

CHARACTERS: Israelite, Servant, Hophni, Phineas, Eli, Narrator, Voice of God

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 2

ISRAELITE: I am here to offer a sacrifice.

SERVANT: Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.

ISRAELITE: Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want.

SERVANT: No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force.

ISRAELITE: You and the young men who are priests, Hophni and Phineas, treat the Lord's sacrifice with contempt, you scoundrels!

SERVANT: Who cares? Eli doesn't correct his sons so shut up.

ISRAELITE: *(aside)* Their sin is very great in the LORD's sight.

NARRATOR: Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing.

ELI: Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours.

HOPHNI: No big deal.

ELI: No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD's people is not good.

PHINEAS: Who cares what they say.

ELI: If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?

HOPHNI: Come on Phineas; we're not listening to this nonsense.

NARRATOR: Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people.

VOICE OF GOD: Eli, I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to eat all the food offerings presented by the Israelites.

ELI: You did Lord.

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VOICE OF GOD: Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling?

ELI: I... I ...

VOICE OF GOD: Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?

ELI: Um ...

VOICE OF GOD: Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. No one in your family line will ever reach old age.

ELI: (*stunned*) My descendants will die in the prime of life?

VOICE OF GOD: Yes. Your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day.

ELI: Then who will be priest?

VOICE OF GOD: I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind.

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The LORD Calls Samuel

CHARACTERS: Narrators 1 & 2, Samuel, Eli, Voice of God

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 3

NARRATOR: During the time the boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli, the word of the LORD and visions were rare.

ELI: Samuel, my eyes are weak. Where are you?

SAMUEL: Lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God is.

ELI: Good night, Samuel.

NARRATOR 1: Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD.

NARRATOR 2: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him

VOICE OF GOD: Samuel!

SAMUEL: Here I am.

ELI: I did not call; go back and lie down.

VOICE OF GOD: Samuel!

SAMUEL: Here I am; you called me.

ELI: My son, I did not call; go back and lie down.

VOICE OF GOD: Samuel!

SAMUEL: Here I am; you called me.

NARRATOR 2: Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy.

ELI: Samuel, go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'

SAMUEL: yes, Eli.

NARRATOR 1: The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times.

VOICE OF GOD: Samuel! Samuel!

SAMUEL: Speak, for your servant is listening.

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VOICE OF GOD: I am about to carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end.

SAMUEL: What do you mean?

VOICE OF GOD: I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about.

SAMUEL: Because his sons blasphemed you and he failed to restrain them?

VOICE OF GOD: Yes. The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.

NARRATOR 2: Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD.

NARRATOR 1: He was afraid to tell Eli the vision.

ELI: Samuel, my son, what was it he said to you? Do not hide it from me.

NARRATOR 2: Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him.

ELI: He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.

NARRATOR 2: The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up.

NARRATOR 1: All Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was a prophet of the LORD.

NARRATOR 2: And Samuel's word came to all Israel.

The Philistines Capture the Ark

CHARACTERS: News Reporter, Philistines 1, 2, 3, 4, Elder, Benjamite, Narrators 1 & 2, Wife of Phinehas, Woman

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 4

NEWS REPORTER: The latest from the battlefield. Israel has been defeated by the Philistines, who killed about 4000 of them on the battlefield. The elders of Israel wonder why.

ELDER: Why did the LORD bring defeat on us today before the Philistines?

NEWS REPORTER: They have ordered that the ark be brought to the battlefield.

ELDER: This way God will go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.

NEWS REPORTER: This caused questions in the Philistine army.

PHILISTINE 1: What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?

PHILISTINE 2: The ark of the LORD had come into the camp.

PHILISTINE 3: (*afraid*) A god has come into their camp!

PHILISTINE 4: Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before.

PHILISTINE 3: We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods?

PHILISTINE 2: I know. They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.

PHILISTINE 1: Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!

NEWS REPORTER: An update from the battlefield: Thirty thousand soldiers have been slaughtered and the rest scattered. The ark of God has been captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead.

NARRATOR 1: That same day a Benjamite ran from the battle line and went to Shiloh where Eli was sitting in a chair with his clothes torn and dust on his head.

NARRATOR 2: He was ninety-eight years old and blind.

ELI: (*to self*) I fear for the ark of God.

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NARRATOR: When the Benjamite arrived, the whole town sent up a cry.

ALL: NO! No!

ELI: What is the meaning of this uproar?

BENJAMITE: I have just come from the battle line; I fled from it this very day.

ELI: What happened, my son?

BENJAMITE: Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.

NARRATOR 1: When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate.

NARRATOR 2: His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man, and he was heavy.

NARRATOR 1: He had led Israel forty years.

WIFE: What!? The ark is captured?

WOMAN: And your father-in-law and husband are dead.

WIFE: No!

WOMAN: You're going into labor. Your baby is about to be born.

WIFE: These labor pains are killing me.

WOMAN: Don't despair; you have given birth to a son.

WIFE: Name him Ichabod because the Glory has departed from Israel.

WOMAN: What?

WIFE: The Glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.

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The Ark in Ashdod and Ekron

CHARACTERS: Philistine ruler, News Reporter, Man 1 & 2, Woman 1 & 2, Ekron, All

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 5

PHILISTINE RULER: The ark of God, which we Philistines recently captured, has been carried into Dagon's temple.

NEWS REPORTER: But in a strange turn of events, the people of Ashdod found Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! I'm here at the temple with some witnesses.

WOMAN 1: We got up this morning, and Dagon was down.

MAN 2: So we set him back up, but this morning, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD!

WOMAN 1: His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained.

MAN 2: From now on, neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod are to step on the threshold.

WOMAN 2: Things in Ashdod and its vicinity are bad.

WOMAN 1: The God of Israel has brought devastation on us in the form of tumors.

MAN 2: I say the ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god.

WOMAN 1: *(to all the rulers of the Philistines)* What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?

RULER 1: Have the ark of the god of Israel moved to Gath

NEWS REPORTER: But after they had moved it, the LORD's hand was against that city, throwing it into a great panic.

WOMAN 2: It's awful! God has afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumors.

MAN 1: Send the ark to Ekron.

EKRON: *(yelling in panic)* They have brought the ark of the god of Israel around to us to kill us and our people.

MAN 1: *(to all the rulers of the Philistines)* Send the ark of the god of Israel away.

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WOMAN 1: Let it go back to its own place, or it will kill us and our people.

MAN 2: Death has filled the city with panic.

WOMAN 2: Those of us not dead are afflicted with tumors.

ALL: Get rid of the ark!

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The Ark Returned to Israel

CHARACTERS: Philistine rulers 1 & 2, Philistine diviner, Israelite 1, 2, 3, Woman 1, News Reporter

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 6

PHILISTINE RULER: *(to Philistine priests and the diviners)* What shall we do with the ark of the LORD?

WOMAN 1: These last seven months have been awful.

PHILISTINE RULER: Tell us how we should send it back to its place.

PHILISTINE DIVINER: If you return the ark of the god of Israel, do not send it back to him without a gift;

WOMAN 1: send a guilt offering to him.

PHILISTINE DIVINER: Then you will be healed, and you will know why his hand has not been lifted from you.

PHILISTINE RULER: What guilt offering should we send to him?

PHILISTINE DIVINER: Five gold tumors and five gold rats, according to the number of the Philistine rulers, because the same plague has struck both you and your rulers.

PHILISTINE RULER: Perhaps Israel's God will lift his hand from us.

PHILISTINE DIVINER: Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did?

WOMAN 1: When Israel's God dealt harshly with them, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?

PHILISTINE RULER 1: *Get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked.*

PHILISTINE RULER 2: Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up.

PHILISTINE RULER 1: Take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering.

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PHILISTINE RULER 2: Send it on its way, but keep watching it.

WOMAN 1: Why? Those mother cows aren't going to leave their calves.

PHILISTINE RULER 2: If it goes up to its own territory, then the LORD has brought this great disaster on us.

PHILISTINE RULER1: But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us but that it happened to us by chance.

WOMAN 1: Sounds like a plan.

PHILISTINE DIVINER: Look! The cows went straight back to Israel, keeping on the road and lowing all the way.

WOMAN 1: they did not turn to the right or to the left.

ISRAELITE 1: Look. Stop harvesting and look!

ALL: It's the ark! It's back!

ISRAELITE 1: Chop up the wood of the cart and sacrifice the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD.

ISRAELITE 2: I wonder what's in the ark? I'll just take a little peek, even though I'm not a Levite and shouldn't touch the ark.

ISRAELITE 1: He's dead! He touched the ark and died!

ISRAELITE 3: Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?

ISRAELITE 1: To whom will the ark go up from here?

ISRAELITE 3: We can send it to Abinadab's house on the hill at Kiriath Jearim.

ISRAELITE 1: Consecrate Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD.

NEWS REPORTER: The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all.

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Samuel Subdues the Philistines at Mizpah

CHARACTERS: Samuel, Israelite 1, 2 & 3, Woman 1, Philistine Ruler

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 1 Samuel 7

ISRAELITE 1: After the ark returned, all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD.

SAMUEL: If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

ISRAELITE 1: So we Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

SAMUEL: Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you.

ISRAELITE 1: We assembled, fasted and confessed,

WOMAN 1: We have sinned against the LORD.

ISRAELITE 1: Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah.

PHILISTINE RULER: Israel has assembled at Mizpah. Let us attack them.

WOMAN 1: (*fearfully*) The Philistines are here! (*to Samuel*) Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.

ISRAELITE 1: Samuel sacrificed a lamb cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf,

WOMAN 1: (*relieved*) and the LORD answered him.

PHILISTINE RULER: Draw up to engage Israel in battle.

ISRAELITE 1: But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.

WOMAN 1: The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar.

ISRAELITE 1: Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen naming it Ebenezer.

SAMUEL: Thus far, the LORD has helped us.

PHILISTINE RULER: Stop the invasion on Israel's territory.

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WOMAN 1: Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.

PHILISTINE RULER: Give Israel back the towns from Ekron to Gath that we captured.

ISRAELITE 1: There was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

WOMAN 1: Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life.

WOMAN 2: From year to year, he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places.

SAMUEL: But I always went back to Ramah, where my home was.

ISRAELITE 1: Samuel held court and built an altar there to the LORD.