

Samuel Hears God's Call

Hannah really felt that God had lifted her "from the ash heap" by giving her the joy of a child. She kept her promise to God to "lend him to the Lord." Even though she knew she would greatly miss having Samuel at home, she took him to the temple as soon as he was old enough to be separated from her. There the priest Eli would care for him and teach the little boy to serve God.

Every year, when Hannah and Elkanah came to the temple to worship, Hannah would bring Samuel a little robe that she had made for him. The priest Eli would give Samuel's parents a blessing. Eli prayed that they might have more children. And over the years they did have three more sons and two daughters.

Samuel continued to live in the temple with Eli as his teacher. He loved being in God's house. He loved learning more and more about God. He was glad to help Eli in every way. Eli's own two sons were grown men. They did not help their father. They did not care to obey God. They behaved badly and did not live in a good way. Eli was unhappy and embarrassed by his sons because they did not follow God's teachings. But Samuel, so faithful and willing to learn, gave joy to Eli's heart.

As Eli became an old man, he began to go blind. He depended more and more on Samuel. One night as they both were lying down to sleep, God called, "Samuel! Samuel!" The boy thought that Eli was calling him. He ran to the old man and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli told Samuel that he had not called, and sent him back to bed. A second time, Samuel heard the call: "Samuel! Samuel!" Again he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call, my son. Lie down again."

When God called a third time and Samuel came running to Eli, the old priest understood that God was calling the boy. Eli said, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, say 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' " So Samuel went back to his bed. God called to Samuel again, and the boy answered as Eli had told him to. God told Samuel everything that He planned to do in Israel.

From that day on, Samuel became a prophet of God. He became known and trusted throughout the whole land as a man who spoke for the Lord. Samuel was the person who gave God's blessing to David and crowned him king of Israel.