



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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1 Samuel 1:9-20 **New Revised Standard Version** **September 8, 2019**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 8, 2019**, is from **1 Samuel 1:9-20**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(1 Samuel 1:9) After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD.

Hannah was the wife of Elkanah, a Levite; therefore, his sons could rightfully serve in the Levitical priesthood. Elkanah's other wife was named Peninnah, who tormented Hannah because Hannah was childless and Peninnah had

children. Each year, Elkanah's family went to Shiloh to worship the LORD. During their feast at Shiloh, Hannah wept and fasted; then, after the family feast (where she did not eat) she went to pray to the LORD. Eli was the chief priest and judge over Israel at that time, and for the first time in Israel's history, Eli served as both a priest and a judge. Eli had two evil, worthless sons who served as priests under his supervision (1 Samuel 2:12-17). After forty years as priest and judge, Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died on the same day, and Samuel replaced them.

(1 Samuel 1:10) She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly.

Elkanah loved Hannah, but Peninnah so mistreated Hannah that she wept bitterly and would not eat until after she went up to the house of the LORD and prayed. We learn something about Peninnah's moral and spiritual character from the fact that she would torment Hannah on their way to worship the LORD. There are some, even some family members, who will try to ruin the worship experience of others. Sarah had experienced similar mistreatment from Hagar after Hagar bore children for Abraham; then, the LORD answered Abraham's and Sarah's prayers and she bore Isaac in their old age. Perhaps Hannah's recollection of Sarah motivated Hannah to pray to the LORD and ask for a child. The Bible gives us many examples to encourage us to pray and not give up. Though polygamy was practiced in the Old Testament,

that was not the LORD's intention from the beginning. During Jesus' discussion on divorce in Mark 10:4-9, Jesus restated the LORD's intention in Genesis 2:24—"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Bible does not record a happy polygamous marriage and forbids adultery.

(1 Samuel 1:11) She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head."

Even as believers, our suffering can sometimes be so great that we do not know how to pray; so, our prayers simply include our asking the LORD to look upon our misery, remember us, and not forget us. We ask the Lord to look upon our suffering and do what is best; then, we submit ourselves to the Lord and the Lord's will. Such was Hannah's misery from her childlessness and the torments of Peninnah that she felt the LORD had forgotten her. However, the LORD knew when, where, and how He would replace Eli and his sons as priests in Shiloh with Samuel, her son. The same words can be said of Samuel and all believers that the LORD said to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5—"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." In her

distress, the Holy Spirit moved Hannah to pray as she did. In Romans 8:26, Paul described the work of the Holy Spirit among God's people in prayer—"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." Doubtless, the Holy Spirit moved upon Hannah to make her very specific nazirite vow to the LORD so the LORD could answer her prayer, encourage believers to keep praying, and replace Eli and his sons according to His perfect timing. She prayed specifically for a male child who would serve the LORD as a nazirite his entire life. The word "nazirite" means "consecrated" or "separated." A nazirite was separated to live a holy life in the service of the LORD. As a visible symbol of his lifetime consecration to holy living for the LORD, a man under a nazirite vow would not drink alcohol, not cut his hair, and not touch a corpse his entire life (not even a family member). Samson, a judge over Israel for sixteen years, was also set apart as a nazirite, but he broke his vows, which shortened his life (see Judges 13-16). Samuel did not break the nazirite vows that his mother made in his behalf.

(1 Samuel 1:12) As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.

In those days, much praying was done by speaking out loud, which the LORD heard, and which others nearby could also hear. For this reason, even in the nineteenth century (and perhaps later), believers and those seeking

God prayed in their closets or went out into the woods to pour out their hearts to God aloud in private, going where none but an occasional passerby might hear. In her distress, Hannah prayed to the LORD silently in an unusual way, and Eli observed this as unusual among those who prayed. Even in Jesus' day, praying aloud was most common. In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus told a parable about two men who prayed aloud in the temple and which one went home justified. Some hypocrites even prayed on street corners to be seen and heard (see Matthew 6:5).

(1 Samuel 1:13) Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk.

Hannah's silent praying while her mouth moved was so unusual that Eli thought she was drunk. He could not hear her voice, so he made a wrong deduction—thinking the worst of her.

(1 Samuel 1:14) So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine."

Thinking she was drunk, Eli reprimanded her for making a spectacle of herself. If Eli had reprimanded his sons and enforced his just judgments upon them as a father, judge, and priest, they might have faithfully served the LORD. Tragically, Samuel learned his parenting skills from Eli (see 1 Samuel 8:1-5). In 1 Samuel 8:3, we read of Samuel's sons, "Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned

aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.” The LORD determined to replace them too.

(1 Samuel 1:15) But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.

Hannah explained her situation to Eli. She was not drunk. She was so deeply troubled that she was praying with sighs too deep for speaking words aloud; yet, she was praying according to the will of God. In Romans 8:27, Paul wrote, “And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” The LORD knew what she was praying as she silently poured out her soul to Him. The Spirit of the LORD inspired her to pray and make a vow as she did. Perhaps her explanation to Samuel of how the LORD had answered her prayers comforted him when she took him to Eli at a young age to be trained in the priesthood. Doubtless, when Samuel was older, she told him that he was the answer to her prayers and how she had prayed and had made a vow to the LORD regarding his future service of the LORD. Knowing how she prayed may have helped Samuel be true to her vow when he was tempted to forsake the LORD or his nazirite vow.

(1 Samuel 1:16) Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.”

Simply because someone seems to be denied what they ask in prayer does not mean they are forsaken by the LORD or that someone who is blessed by the LORD in a specific way is better than the person whose prayers for that same blessing seem to be denied. Peninnah needed to learn this lesson (along with many others after her), and perhaps she did. Believers can and often do pray out of great anxiety and aggravation, as Hannah did. In Romans 8:18, Paul wrote, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.” After much suffering, pain, prayer, and labor, Hannah’s sufferings were not worth comparing to the glory and comfort that the LORD brought her with Samuel’s birth and his later service to the LORD. The LORD’s answers to her prayers far exceeded her hopes and dreams, for which she rejoiced.

(1 Samuel 1:17) Then Eli answered, “Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.”

As chief priest and judge, after Eli understood why Hannah prayed as she did, Eli blessed her. Eli told her to go with peace of heart and mind. The peace of God did go with her, and her actions demonstrated that she trusted in the LORD to do what was best for her and all concerned. In addition, Eli prayed for her—that the LORD would answer her prayers.

(1 Samuel 1:18) And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your sight.” Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

Hannah humbly submitted to Eli as a chief priest and judge who served the LORD; therefore, she called herself his servant, as one who would do what he told her—she would go in peace and entrust her future with the LORD. Likewise, she considered herself a servant of the LORD and had prayed that she would have a son who likewise would be a servant of the LORD. Her unselfish prayers were according to the will of God. As a Levite, Samuel grew into a prophet, chief priest, and judge who would rule over Israel; and later, Samuel would anoint two men to be kings in Israel—Saul and David. Trusting in the LORD and Eli’s blessing, trusting in the LORD to answer Eli’s and her prayers, Hannah returned to Elkanah in peace, ate and drank, and was no longer sad.

(1 Samuel 1:19) They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her.

Before they returned home early in the morning, they worshiped again before the LORD. Most probably, Elkanah and Hannah praised the LORD and joined together in prayer for the LORD to give them a son according to the vow that Hannah had made the day

before. Having worshiped in Shiloh, they returned to their home at Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim (between Bethel and the city that would later become Jerusalem). As her husband, Elkanah agreed with Hannah's vow, and after Samuel's birth, Elkanah said to Hannah, "Do what seems best to you, wait [to take him to Eli] until you have weaned him; only—may the LORD establish his word" (1 Samuel 1:23). Elkanah had relations with his wife Hannah, and Samuel (most likely the writer of the chapters about him in 1 Samuel) emphasized that the LORD made his conception and birth possible. As Elkanah had prayed, the LORD did indeed establish His word throughout Samuel's life, and even today believers find a blessing and learn many truths from the study of Samuel's life, words, and work—the LORD established His word.

(1 Samuel 1:20) In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."

The name "Samuel" means "God heard." Hannah asked the LORD for Samuel; God heard her prayer; and after Samuel's birth, Hannah kept her vow to the LORD.

Though we find it a deep mystery, the Spirit of the LORD inspired Hannah to pray as she did, where she did, when she did, and with perfect timing the LORD answered her prayer so Samuel would be ready to serve the LORD as prophet, priest, and judge at the right time. When Samuel was about three years old, having been weaned, Hannah took him to Shiloh where he grew up and learned to be a

priest under the supervision of Eli. Each year, when they returned to Shiloh for their yearly sacrifice, Hannah would take a robe to Samuel. After Eli saw her selfless dedication to the LORD and her son, Eli prayed that she would have more children, and Hannah conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. “The boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD” (1 Samuel 2:21).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What motivated Hannah to fast and pray?
2. Why did Eli think she was drunk? What did he say to her?
3. How did Hannah answer Eli?
4. What vow did Hannah make to the LORD?
5. What did Hannah do after she returned from praying? What did she and her husband do the next day?

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International Bible Lesson.

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