

The First Book of Samuel

Chapter 1

Each year, Elkanah and his two wives Hannah and Peninnah, went to Shiloh to worship the Lord.

Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren.
Each year at the temple,
Peninnah would taunt Hannah because she was barren.

One year at the temple, Hannah prayed in great distress:
"God, if you give me a child, I will dedicate him to you."

Not long after,
Hannah conceived a son whom she called "Samuel".

When Samuel was weaned, she took him to the temple
and gave him to the priest there to serve the Lord
for the rest of his life.

Dear God, please bless all women
who are unable to have a baby

Chapter 2

Hannah praised God for giving her a child:

"My heart rejoices in the Lord.

The Lord, our fortress, is holy.

Don't speak proudly,

for the Lord knows what's in our hearts.

The Lord breaks the power of the strong.

He gives strength and victory to the weak.

He blesses the barren woman.

The Lord raises the poor from the dust,
and gives them a seat of honor with princes.

The Lord guards the steps of good people,
but scatters bad people in their pride."

The Lord blessed Hannah

and she gave birth to three more sons and two daughters.

Her son Samuel grew up in the temple.

The temple priest at that time was Eli.

But Eli's sons were bad men.

They stole the people's offerings to the Lord.

Dear God, please bless good people like Hannah,
and please help bad people
like Eli's sons to stop being bad

Chapter 3

One day when the boy Samuel was serving in the temple,
the Lord called to him "Samuel, Samuel."

The boy thought it was the old priest Eli calling to him
so he ran to Eli and said "Here I am."

Eli replied "I did not call you."

Two more times the Lord called.
Both times the boy went to Eli.

Eli now realized it was the Lord calling Samuel.
Eli told Samuel to say
"Speak Lord, your servant is listening"
the next time he heard the voice.

The Lord told Samuel that Eli's family would be punished
for the bad things they had done.

The people quickly found out that
the Lord was with Samuel
and that Samuel was the Lord's prophet.

Dear Lord, please help me to listen to your voice,
your voice in the Bible,
in my conscience and in other people

Chapter 4

Around this time,
the Philistines defeated the Israelites in a battle.

The Israelites then went to Shiloh
and took the Sacred Chest of the Lord.

They took the Sacred Chest into battle with them
but the Chest was captured by the Philistines.

In the same battle, Eli's two sons were killed.

When Eli heard that his sons were dead
and that the Sacred Chest had been captured,
he fell backwards off his seat, his neck was broken,
and he died.

Dear God, please don't let me cause unhappiness
for my family

Chapter 5

The Philistines took the captured Sacred Chest to the shrine of Dagon in one of their towns.

Next morning, they found the statue of Dagon on its face on the ground, in front of the Sacred Chest.

They picked Dagon up and put him back in his place. But next morning he was down again, with his head and hands cut off from the rest of his body.

While the Sacred Chest was in the Philistine town, the people there were struck with tumors and many people died.

The people told their leaders to take the Sacred Chest back to Israel where it belonged.

Dear God, please help everyone know
that there is no other God but you

Chapter 6

The Sacred Chest of the Lord was in Philistine territory for 7 months.

Then the Philistines put the Chest on a cart pulled by 2 milch cows.

The cows went straight to the Israelite town of Beth-shemesh, without anyone leading them.

The people of Beth-shemesh were overjoyed to see the Sacred Chest.

Dear Lord, thank you for the joy in our hearts
which comes from friendship with you

Chapter 7

The Sacred Chest was taken from the town
of Beth-shemesh to the town of Kiriath-jearim,
to the house of Abinadab,
whose son Eleazar was consecrated to guard the Chest.
After 20 more years,
the Israelites again longed for freedom from the Philistines.
Samuel gathered all the Israelites at Mizpah,
where after prayer,
battle was joined with the Philistines who were defeated.
The Philistines no longer came into Israelite territory.
Samuel was judge over all Israel for the rest of his life.
During Samuel's time
the Philistines no longer troubled Israel.
There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.
Each year Samuel went on circuit around the country
to judge cases of law.
He would then return to his home town of Ramah
and continue his work as a judge from there.

Dear God, please give the world more leaders like Samuel

Chapter 8

When Samuel grew old,
the people asked him to find someone to be their king.
Samuel was not happy that the people asked for a king.
Samuel also warned the people that
a king would impose taxes and have many rights over them.
But the people insisted on having a king.
The Lord then told Samuel to give the people a king.

Dear God, you are our only true King

Chapters 9, 10

Among the men of the tribe of Benjamin there was a very tall and very handsome man named Saul. Once when he went in search of his father's stray donkeys, he met up with Samuel.

The Lord had told Samuel that he would meet Saul, and that he should be anointed as king.

And so Samuel took some oil and poured it on Saul's head. He told Saul that the Lord had chosen him to be king.

Samuel presented Saul to the people.

The people acclaimed Saul saying "Long live the king!"

Dear Lord, please protect and guide
all people in authority

Chapter 11

The people of Jabesh-gilead told Saul that the Ammonites were threatening them.

The spirit of the Lord stirred up Saul and he led the Israelites to a great victory over the Ammonites.

Samuel and all the people then went to Gilgal where Saul was again proclaimed king.

Dear Lord, may your Spirit stir us up to do good things

Chapter 12

As the elderly Samuel handed over leadership to Saul, he said to all the people:

"In future it is the king who will lead you.

The Lord is my witness
that I have never treated you unjustly.
You must follow the Lord with all your heart.
Do not turn your back on the Lord's way.
Do not follow false ways."

Dear God, thank you for the life of Samuel.
Please help all people to follow your way,
not follow false ways

Chapters 13, 14, 15

Not long after he became king, Saul began doing things that caused Samuel to stop supporting him. Samuel clearly told Saul what the Lord wanted Saul to do, but Saul insisted on doing things his own way. Saul seemed more concerned about his own popularity than about being obedient to the Lord. This displeased the Lord and he rejected Saul.

Dear God, please help us not to disobey you.
"Your will be done"

Chapter 16

The Lord told Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint one of Jesse's sons as king. Samuel anointed Jesse's son David as king. The spirit of the Lord came down on David and stayed with him from that day on.

Dear God, may your Holy Spirit
come down on more and more people

Chapter 17

The Philistine and Israelite armies prepared for battle.

The Philistines were on one hill,

the Israelites on an opposite hill, with a valley between them.

The Philistines produced a giant warrior, Goliath,

who challenged the Israelites to find one man to fight him.

Goliath said: "If I win, you become our slaves;

if I am killed, we will become your slaves."

For many weeks Goliath issued his challenge,

but no Israelite soldier was brave enough to fight Goliath.

Then David visited the army camp and heard Goliath's words.

He offered to fight Goliath.

Some people made fun of David,

but David knew he would be helped by the Lord.

David took 5 smooth stones from the river bed

and with his sling in his hand he went to fight Goliath.

When Goliath saw the young boy David,

Goliath insulted and ridiculed him.

But David took out one of his stones and slung it at Goliath.

The stone hit Goliath on the forehead

and he dropped to the ground.

David then used Goliath's sword

to kill him and cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead,

they fled in fear, chased by the Israelites who defeated them.

Saul put David in charge of his army

and David had many victories.

David and Saul's son Jonathan became good friends.

Dear God, please help me just as you helped David

Chapter 18

After one of David's victories against the Philistines, the Israelite women came to meet David and Saul singing "Saul has killed thousands, David tens of thousands."

From that day Saul became jealous of David.

Saul realized that the Lord was with David and that the people loved David.

Saul was filled with jealousy of David and wanted to kill him.

Saul more and more treated David like an enemy.

Dear God, please don't let me be jealous of other people

Chapter 19

Saul's son Jonathan urged his father not to hate David, but Saul again tried to kill David, this time with a spear.

David then escaped from his home and went to live with Samuel at Ramah.

Three times Saul sent men to capture David. Each time they were overcome by the spirit of the Lord and they went into an ecstasy.

Then Saul himself went to Ramah and he too went into ecstasy.

Dear Lord, please protect people
who are being unfairly treated by others

Chapters 20, 21, 22, 23, 24

Jonathan again tried to help David make peace with Saul.
But Saul was full of anger and just wanted to kill David.

David then became a nomad, roaming from place to place,
continually pursued by Saul's soldiers.

David once had a chance to kill Saul
but David refused to kill him.

David said: "Saul is the anointed one of the Lord.
It is wrong for me to hurt him."

Even though Saul hated and hunted David,
David respected and protected Saul.

Dear God, when other people treat me unkindly,
please help me to be kind to them,
as David was kind to Saul

Chapters 25 – 31

Samuel died and was buried in his home town of Ramah.
Saul continued to try to capture David.

David and his band of 600 soldiers
spent more than a year in Philistine territory.

They stayed with Achish, king of Gath.
They fought against the enemies of Achish.

Achish sent David away
when the Philistines made war on Israel.
Saul and his son Jonathan died in this war.

Dear God, please protect and help all refugees