

YOUTH



LEVEL 5

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 9



Samuel—Last Judge of Israel

SAMUEL—LAST JUDGE OF ISRAEL

Near the end of the Period of the Judges, the Israelites were suffering from attacks by the Philistines. God allowed the Philistines to oppress the Israelites because they were following the idolatrous ways of the surrounding nations.

During this time, a Levite named Elkanah lived in the hill-country of Ephraim, in the southern part of Israel. He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other Peninnah.

Elkanah loved Hannah more than he did Peninnah, which made Peninnah very jealous. So Peninnah, who had several children, would often taunt Hannah, who had none. This made Hannah very sad.

SAMUEL IS BORN

Each year Elkanah and his family went to God's Tabernacle at Shiloh, the center of worship during the Period of the Judges. As they were eating a meal near the Tabernacle one year, Peninnah began taunting Hannah again for not

having any children of her own.

Hannah was unable to bear Peninnah's frequent insults any longer. She became so upset that she lost her appetite and began to cry. Elkanah tried to comfort her, but she politely left the table and went over to the Tabernacle. There she began to pray (I Samuel 1:1-10).

"Oh God, please make it possible for me to give birth to a baby boy," Hannah fervently prayed. "If you will do this for me, I will gladly give him to you to use in your service all the days of his life."

Hannah continued to pray silently, her lips moving as she prayed. She was unaware that Eli, the high priest, was watching. Thinking that she was drunk, Eli came over and said, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine!"

"I assure you, sir, that I am not drunk," Hannah said respectfully. "In my sorrow I was praying fervently to God. Do not consider me a wicked woman, for I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

Eli recognized Hannah's humble attitude and said, "Go your way in peace, and may God grant your request."

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

Ruins of the Philistine city of Ashdod near the Mediterranean Sea. To this city the Ark was taken and placed before the idol of Dagon.

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Hannah was comforted and rejoined her husband. She believed that God would answer her prayer. The next day Elkanah and his family returned home.

God did answer Hannah's prayer. The following year she gave birth to a boy. She named him Samuel, which means "asked of God" (I Samuel 1:20).

When Samuel was weaned, Hannah kept her promise. She and her husband took Samuel to the Tabernacle and dedicated him to God's service for the rest of his life.

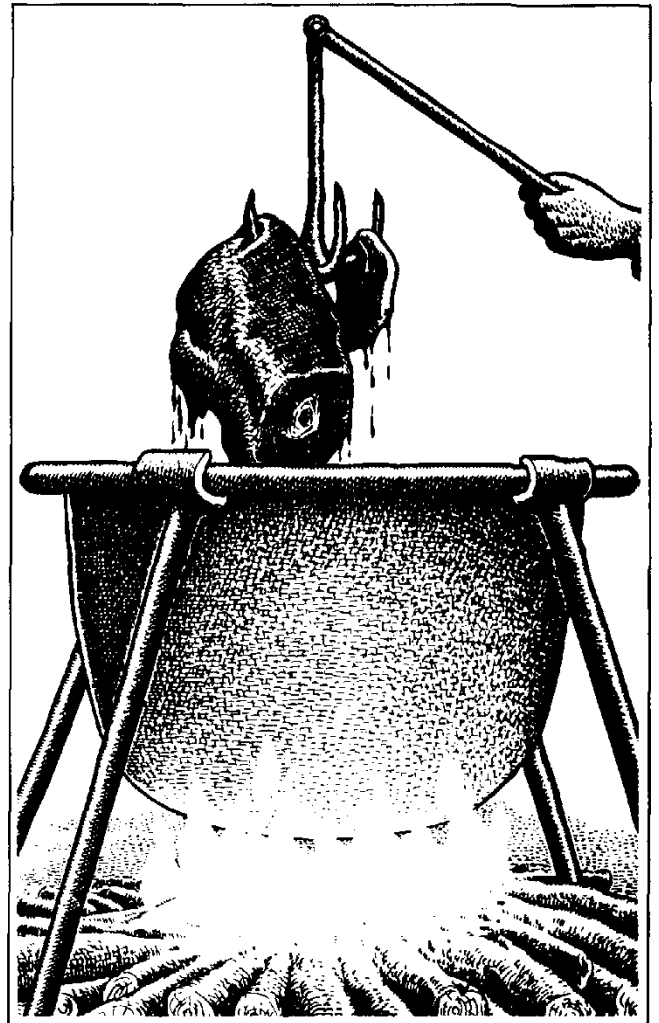
THE PROPHECY AGAINST ELI

In the years that followed, young Samuel served Eli in the Tabernacle. Also serving in the Tabernacle were Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were priests directly under him. However, the two sons did not obey God.

When people came to sacrifice animals at the Tabernacle, Hophni and Phinehas would steal large portions of meat for themselves.

Hophni and Phinehas were careful to hide these and other evil deeds from their father. But God knew what they were doing. God sees all and knows all. He can see and hear us now. He also knows what we are thinking. It is wrong to try to deceive our parents, as Eli's sons tried to deceive him.

As time passed, Eli began hearing reports of the many terrible things his sons were doing at the Tabernacle. One day he called them to him and asked, "Why _____ ye _____? for I _____ of your _____"



Hophni and Phinehas often stole large portions of meat for themselves.

_____ by all this _____" (I Samuel 2:23).

Hophni and Phinehas paid no attention to their father's words. Nevertheless, Eli neglected to take any action to correct them.

One day a man came to visit Eli with a message from God. "Here is what God says," the man began. "I am well aware that you and your sons have failed to do what is right. You have honored your sons above me.

"Therefore, you will see an enemy

come and attack Israel. As for your two sons, they will both die the same day. I will choose a high priest who will be faithful and obedient to me. Others in your family will beg him for food and work. Furthermore, all your male descendants shall die before they reach an old age' ” (I Samuel 2:30-36).

GOD SPEAKS TO SAMUEL

As Samuel grew, he learned the various duties around the Tabernacle and diligently served Eli. He slept near Eli's bedroom at night in case the aging priest needed help.

One night, Samuel was awakened by a voice calling his name. Thinking that Eli had called him, Samuel ran to the elderly priest's bedroom. "Here I am," he said.

"I didn't call you. Go back to bed," Eli muttered.

Samuel returned to his room and went back to bed. Then the voice called his name again. Samuel went to Eli's bedroom and once more announced his presence to the sleeping priest. But Eli again informed Samuel that he had not called.

So Samuel went back to bed. He was



Young Samuel was awakened by a voice calling his name.

startled when the same voice, for the third time, called, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Sure that Eli had called, Samuel hurried to the priest's bedroom. "Here I am," he said.

By this time Eli realized that it was God who was calling Samuel. "Go back to bed," Eli said. "And if God calls your name again, say, 'Yes, Lord, I hear you.'"

Samuel obediently went back to bed. Again the voice called out, "Samuel! Samuel!"

This time Samuel answered: "Speak; _____ thy _____" (I Samuel 3:10).

God then told Samuel that He would do something that would astonish everyone who heard it. "Samuel, I am going to punish Eli and his sons for their evil ways," God said. "Eli must bear responsibility for his sons' conduct because he did not stop them" (I Samuel 3:11-14).

Samuel was frightened, and lay in bed until morning. He then arose as usual and set about to fulfill his routine duties in the Tabernacle. Samuel tried to avoid speaking to Eli because he was afraid to tell him the bad news. However, Eli called for him and said, "Samuel, tell me all that God has told you. Do not hide anything from me."

After listening to Samuel tell him everything, Eli said, "Let God do what seems just to Him."

In the years that followed, Samuel grew up to become a well-known young man. All of Israel came to know him as one whom God had chosen as a

prophet. Notice that Samuel did not ask to be a prophet. He did not apply for the job or get elected by the people. God inducted, or called him into the office.

Do You Remember?

1. Elkanah's two wives were named
 - A. Hannah and Peninnah.
 - B. Hannah and Penelope.
 - C. Peninnah and Helen.
2. Eli's two wicked sons were named
 - A. Hophni and Peter.
 - B. Hophni and Phinehas.
 - C. Phinehas and Barnabus.
3. Eli was a
 - A. priest.
 - B. tentmaker.
 - C. farmer.
4. Hannah named her son
 - A. Elkanah.
 - B. Eli.
 - C. Samuel.
5. Samuel
 - A. served Eli in the Tabernacle.
 - B. was selected by God to be a prophet.
 - C. was both A and B.

THE PHILISTINES ATTACK ISRAEL

While Samuel was serving in the Tabernacle, the Philistines attacked the Israelites with a large army and badly beat them. Israel's army staggered wearily back to camp, having lost nearly 4,000 of its men (I Samuel 4:1-2).

The Israelite elders were stunned by this defeat, wondering why God had allowed them to lose. It did not occur to

them that the Israelites lost the battle because of their continued sins against God.

The elders thought that if they had the Ark of the Covenant with them, their army would be able to defeat their enemies. So they sent soldiers to Shiloh for the Ark. The soldiers soon returned with the Ark and Eli's two sons, who accompanied it.

A thunderous cheer went up from the waiting soldiers as the Ark was brought into camp. The shouting was so loud that the Philistines plainly heard it in their camp several miles away. They were alarmed, wondering what the noise could mean.

When the Philistines learned what it meant, what was their reaction? "And the _____ were _____, for they said, _____ is come into the _____. And they said, _____ unto _____! for there hath not been _____ a _____" (I Samuel 4:7).

"Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods?" many of the

Philistines said. "These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with plagues!"

Some of the soldiers, however, were not afraid. "Be strong and fight like men!" they said. "Otherwise, we'll become servants of the Israelites! Conduct yourselves like men and fight!"

After hearing this, the Philistines marched out to fight against the Israelites. The Israelites also felt brave, because they had the Ark of God. However, as the battle raged, it became obvious that the Ark was not going to save them. Over 30,000 Israelites were killed, while the rest fled for their lives. Hophni and Phinehas were killed also, and the Ark was captured!

Later that day, a tattered Israelite soldier, who had escaped from the Philistines, staggered wearily into the main streets of Shiloh. With torn clothes and dirt sprinkled on his head as a sign of remorse, he wailed, "We've lost! All is lost!" Soon the whole town was crying out in misery.

When Eli heard the outcry he sent for the soldier. "What is the meaning of this uproar?" Eli asked.

"The Philistines attacked our camp and killed a great number of our troops," the soldier replied. "Hophni and Phinehas were killed too, and the Ark has been captured!"

Eli was so shocked at the news that he fell backward from his elevated chair beside the gate, killing himself in the fall (I Samuel 4:18).

The terrible tragedies that befell the nation came to pass as God had said. These events would not have occurred



The Philistines were alarmed by the loud cheers coming from the Israelite camp.



Eli was so shocked at the news that he fell from his elevated chair, killing himself in the fall.

had the Israelites been obeying God.

GOD PLAGUES THE PHILISTINES

Following their victory, the Philistines carried the Ark to Ashdod, a chief city located near the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. In Ashdod was a temple dedicated to the pagan god Dagon. Inside the temple was the half-human, half-fish statue of Dagon.

The Philistines set the Ark in front of Dagon, whom they thought gave them the victory.

Early the next morning, as the priests entered the temple, they were shocked at the sight before them. Some time during the night the statue of Dagon had toppled to the floor on its face in front of

the Ark, as if to be worshipping it! (I Samuel 5:3.)

The priests spent the next few hours putting the idol back into place. But they were in for an even greater surprise the following morning. What happened during the night? “_____ was _____ upon his _____ to the _____ the _____ of the _____; and the _____ of _____ and both the _____ of his _____ were cut off upon the threshold; only the _____ of Dagon was left to him” (I Samuel 5:4).

The destruction of their idol was embarrassing and unpleasant for the Philistines. But God did not stop there in

dealing with them. He also struck the entire city with a terrible plague. The people of Ashdod became afflicted with painful sores. This plague became so serious that the rulers of the city hastily called a meeting.

“We must take the Ark of the God of Israel away from here quickly!” they said. So they decided to send it to the nearby city of Gath.

Soon the people of Gath were stricken with the same agonizing sores. They demanded that the Ark be sent elsewhere. So where was it sent? “Therefore they _____ the _____ of _____ to _____” (I Samuel 5:10).

When the Ark arrived in the Philistine city of Ekron, what happened to the people there? (Read and summarize I Samuel 5:11-12) _____

Many people became so sick they died. At the same time hordes of mice overran the city, scurrying through fields, barns and homes!

All this was too much for the inhabitants of Ekron. “Take this Ark away immediately!” they pleaded. “Take it out of our nation. We do not want the Ark or the plagues that it brings!”

THE ARK IS RETURNED

The leaders of the Philistine nation met together to discuss the problems that had beset their nation during the past seven months. But they could not decide what to do about the Ark. So

they consulted their priests. “What shall we do with this Ark?” they asked.

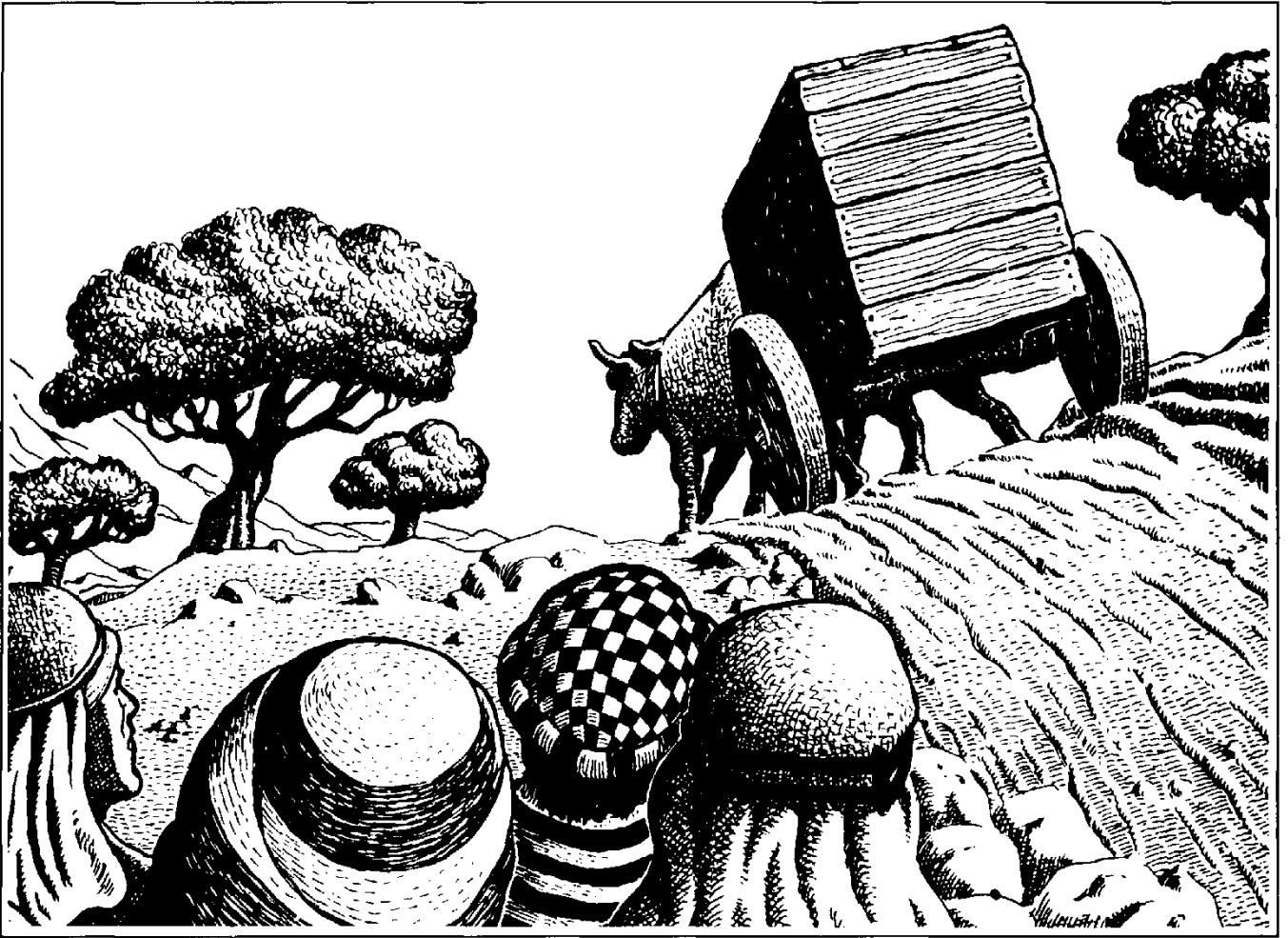
The priests recommended sending the Ark back to the Israelites. “If you return it,” they advised, “include a trespass offering with it. The offering should consist of five golden images of each of the things that have plagued us.

“Also, should you return the Ark, place it on a newly built cart drawn by cows that have never pulled a cart. Let them pull in whatever direction they desire as a test. If the cows take the Ark to Beth-shemesh (a village in Israel about 12 miles southeast of Ekron), then we will know that the God of Israel has caused the plagues. But if they take the Ark in any other direction, we will know that the plagues happened by chance” (I Samuel 6:1-9).

The Philistine leaders followed the advice of the priests. They built a new cart and hitched it to the untrained cows. After placing the golden images and the Ark on the cart, the cows were let loose.

In what direction did they walk? “And the _____ [cows] took the _____ to the _____ of _____, and went _____ the _____, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the _____ or to the _____” (I Samuel 6:12).

Some Israelite harvesters just outside the village of Beth-shemesh spotted the cows pulling the cart. They ran to the road, stopped the animals and swarmed around the cart to see what it contained. When they saw the Ark, they rejoiced.



The Philistine leaders anxiously watched to see which direction the cows would pull the cart.

Soon the whole village knew about the discovery. The cows were killed and offered as a burnt offering, with the wood from the cart serving as fuel.

The Philistine leaders, who had followed the cows, were now convinced that God was responsible for the plagues. So they returned to Ekron.

Even though the villagers should have known better, the Ark was opened and many of them looked inside. What happened to them? “And ____ [God] _____ the men of _____, because they had _____ into the _____ of the _____” (I Samuel 6:19).

Many years earlier, God had warned the Israelites that death would come to any who touched the Ark except by its carrying poles—or showed any lack of respect or reverence for God in their conduct toward it (Leviticus 16:2; 26:2; Numbers 4:5-6, 15).

The people of Beth-shemesh were upset, and sent messengers to the nearby town of Kirjath-jearim to ask men there to come and take the Ark. Men soon came and carried it away. They took the Ark to the home of a Levite named Abinidab, where it was to remain for 20 years (I Samuel 7:1-2).

THE PHILISTINES ATTACK AGAIN

During the next few years, the Israelites were repeatedly troubled by attacks from the Philistines. Samuel continually reminded the people that if they would repent of their idolatry and turn to God, He would deliver them from their enemies.

Finally the people listened. They destroyed their pagan idols and began to worship God. Pleased with their conduct, Samuel called for a large gathering of people at the town of Mizpeh. There the Israelites prayed, fasted and acknowledged their sins (I Samuel 7:5-6).

When the Philistine rulers heard about the large gathering of Israelites at Mizpeh, they sent a large army to attack. When the Israelites heard about the approaching army, they became fearful. "Ask God to save us from the Philistines," they said to Samuel.

Samuel quickly offered a lamb as a burnt offering and prayed to God for deliverance. God answered the prayer by sending a terrifying thunderstorm upon the Philistines. Panic-stricken, the army broke ranks and fled before the pursuing Israelites. The Philistines were soundly defeated, and as a result, no longer invaded Israel during the remainder of Samuel's lifetime.

THE ISRAELITES WANT A KING

Samuel judged Israel for many years. When he was old, he made his two sons, Joel and Abiah, judges over Israel. Unknown to Samuel, they did not follow



God answered Samuel's prayer by sending a terrifying thunderstorm upon the Philistines.

his good example. Instead, they took bribes and judged unfairly.

One day a group of the leading men of Israel came to tell Samuel about the conduct of his two sons. "We know that you are a just judge, but your sons are evil," they said. "We want a king to rule over us, like all the other nations" (I Samuel 8:5).

Samuel was displeased at their request, realizing that it meant they did not trust God. So he prayed to God about it.

What was God's reply? "_____ unto the voice of the people in _____ that they say unto thee: for they have _____, but they have _____, that I should _____" (I Samuel 8:7).

God then told Samuel to tell the Israelites what a king would be like.

"Here is what you can expect from a king," Samuel began. "A king will take your sons and use them as horsemen and chariot drivers. He will also use them as army commanders, as farmers for himself, and to make instruments of war. As for your daughters, he will take them to be his servants and cooks."

Read I Samuel 8:14-17 and list on the lines below some of the other things a king would do. _____

What further warning did Samuel

give the people? "And ye shall _____ in that day because of your _____ which ye shall have _____ you; and the LORD will _____ in that day" (I Samuel 8:18).

After listening to the warning, what decision did the Israelites make? "Nevertheless the people _____ to _____ the voice of Samuel; and they said, _____; but we will have a _____" (I Samuel 8:19).

The Israelites wanted to be like the nations around them. But they were making a big mistake.

This event marks the end of the Period of the Judges, a period spanning over 400 years of Israel's history. It began after the death of Joshua and ended with Samuel.

Do You Remember?

1. The name of the Philistine idol that God destroyed was _____.
2. The Philistines suffered from painful _____ and hordes of _____ after they captured the Ark.
3. Because the Israelites destroyed their pagan _____ and began to _____ God, He delivered them from the Philistines at _____.
4. The Israelites later _____ God, not Samuel, and wanted a _____ to rule over them like all the other nations.
5. The last judge of Israel was _____.

