From Old Testament Made Easy

ELKANAH (Heb. "God-provided"; EL-KAY-nah) Samuel's father dearly loved his wife, Hannah, although she was barren for so many years. One of the most endearing statements made by a male Biblical character was uttered during his attempt to comfort Hannah, who, like Rachel before her, wept for she was childless: "Why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" Knowing how much a son meant to a man in those days, we can love him all the more for his patience with Hannah. The Tabernacle was at Shiloh where it had been set up by Joshua. According to the Mosaic Law every male Hebrew had to attend three of the holy festivals every year. Deeply religious women, although not required to do so, accompanied their husbands.

HANNAH (Heb. "grace") Elkanah's wife and the mother of Samuel was a deeply religious woman who suffered agonies for many years because she was barren and taunted by her husband's second wife. If the first wife bore no sons a man was permitted to take another wife. In some cultures childlessness in a woman was grounds for a divorce. Hannah's beautiful *Hymn of Thanksgiving* composed at the birth of Samuel may be compared to *The Magnificat* of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:40- 59). They are capsuled in Psalm 113: "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord."

PENINNAH (Heb. "pearl"; Pen-IN-nah) Elkanah's second wife bore many children and made Hannah's life miserable during her barren years. The mesmerism was broken at Samuel's birth, and afterwards Hannah had three sons and two daughters. No longer was she subject to Peninnah's taunts.

ELI (Heb. "uplifted"; EE-Ii) The first Israelite to serve as both Priest and Judge, he was the direct descendant of Aaron through his son, lthamar. Weak and indecisive, although good and pure, Eli was not able to control his evil sons. When he heard that they had been killed in the battle and the Ark stolen by the Philistines, he fell over backward and died.

**SUMMARY OF EVENTS**

Hannah, the long-barren wife of Elkanah, finally conceived and gave birth to a son, whom she dedicated to the service of the Lord as a Nazirite. This meant, among other things, that Samuel would never cut his hair or drink wine. He grew up in the Tabernacle at Shiloh under the supervision of Eli, the High Priest and Judge. At an early age Samuel received his first call from God. He was told about Eli's two degenerate sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Eli knew

