

# Hannah

*“Think of the Lord with uprightness, and seek him with sincerity of heart; because he is found by those who do not put him to the test, and manifests himself to those who trust him.”*

WISDOM OF SOLOMON 1:1-2

Eli entered the temple early that morning to offer his sacrifice of flour and ephah. He entered the cool, dimly lit chamber with a torch that cast an oval glow before him. In the rim of the light, he spotted two feet. He moved forward, holding the torch higher to find the long thin body of a woman lying prostrate on the marble floor, her forehead pressed to the ground and her lips moving silently. From under her veil, light strands of hair lay about in straggled heaps.

*“Ach,” thought Eli, “another drunk got in during the night. When will it stop? This is a holy place; don’t they know? Now we will have to begin another day with the purification rite.”*

The woman hadn’t yet noticed that the priest was standing over her. He called to her, “Woman, get up! You are profaning a holy place in your state of drunkenness. Have you no respect for God?”

She made no reply. Eli leaned forward to speak into her ear. When he bent down, he listened to what she was mumbling,

“Oh Lord of Hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant, and remember me, and not forget me, but if you will give to your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”

Eli straightened up. He had never heard a woman pray so fervently, however, as she began to shake in quiet sobs, Eli decided her piety’s authenticity needed to be tested. “*I have been fooled too many times by these drunken women...*” he thought.

“Woman!” Eli put his foot under her rib and lifted it until she was sprawled over on her back. Crying out, she scrambled into a sitting position, crouching on the floor like a wounded animal, cheeks streaming with tears and arms hugging her legs to herself. Eli continued, “How long will you be drunken? Put away your wine from you.”

At the accusation, Hannah flung herself prostrate before Eli, crying out, “No, my lord, I am a woman sorely troubled; do not regard your maidservant as a base woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” She grappled at his feet, trying to convince him.

Eli began to regret the roughness he had shown toward her. She was a pitiful sight. Bending down, he touched her head and she looked up at him, pulling herself up to sit. He stayed squatting next to her, listening.

“I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul to the Lord.” A fresh well of tears gushed forward.

Eli put his hand upon her head in blessing, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition you have made to him.”

The woman’s face cleared. She looked with wonder at this