HANNAH'S REVIVAL
By William M. Smith

A Bible Study Of Hannah And Samuel

Fourth Thousand
1951

Union Bible Seminary
Westfield, Indiana

Digital Edition 06/26/06
By Holiness Data Ministry

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PREFACE

This booklet was first printed shortly before the writer was asked to take the superintendency of Union Bible Seminary. It is the first of his writings that were put in booklet form. Three thousand copies were printed and sold. It has been out of print for some years.

I found a copy of it among my papers a few days ago, and, after reading it again, concluded that its message was still good. So I am having another edition printed. I hope it may do as much good to the reader as it has done to the writer in compiling it.

The portions of Scripture on which my comments are based are printed at the beginning of each chapter.

William M. Smith

01 -- HANNAH'S SURROUNDINGS

"Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was E1kanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: and he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there." I Sam. 1:1-3. "Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord." -- I Sam. 1:9.

"And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself." -- I Sam. 2:13-14.
The Divine camera has recorded, in the opening chapters of the First book of Samuel, some photographs of conditions existing in Israel in Hannah's day, from which we can judge their need of a revival.

The first is a family group, the central figure of which is Elkanah, a Levite, one of the priestly tribe, therefore one in whom we may expect to find an example of the best spiritual life and moral conduct. Bible photographs do not always tell what is good and what is bad in the picture. They merely record scenes and leave us to judge from our knowledge of other Scripture what is praiseworthy and what is otherwise. Hence we are a little shocked to see that Elkanah "had two wives," though no remark is made in the context about this being contrary to the Bible ideal for a Levite.

The next picture is a scene from Elkanah's religious activities. He "went up out of his city yearly to worship" at the tabernacle in Shiloh. Again we are made to wonder why, when all the men of Israel were required by the law to go up three times in a year, that this man of the priestly tribe should only go up once a year.

Then we are introduced to some scenes in the temple. "Hophni and Phinehas... were there." The snapshot caught them on the spot. They "were there." And is this all that can be said of them, that they "were there"? "Priests of the Lord" are supposed to do more than merely be there. Why could it not be said of them that they served the Lord there? Look again: "Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord." "Sat upon a seat"! Where in all the detailed and repeated instructions to Moses how to build the tabernacle, and every piece of it, is any direction given about making a seat in it? Where in all the ordinances of service for the priesthood is anything said about sitting down at the job? This "temple" is that tabernacle Moses built in the wilderness, now permanently located at Shiloh.

More temple scenes are given in chapters two and three. In one place we read, "The priest's custom" was, when any man offered a sacrifice, to send a servant, who would strike a three-pronged fleshhook into the kettle where the flesh was cooking and whatever the hook brought up the priest took for himself. What perversion is this! The law of the offerings gave explicit instructions regarding peace-offerings, which is evidently the kind referred to here, as to what part should be burnt upon the altar, what part should go to the priest and what to the offerer. Nothing said here about whole burnt offerings, trespass offerings or sin offerings, of which so much is said in the law, and even the Lord's part of the peace offering made a secondary matter. Worship was degraded from holy communion between God and man to a bargain between priest and people, on the grab-bag plan. No wonder the Divine Photographer cannot refrain from writing below the picture "The sin of the young men was very great before the Lord!"

Again we read, as the aged priest lay down to sleep at night, "ere the lamp of God went out." Think of it, "went out"! Had the priests completely forgotten the directions to keep the lamp's burning "from the evening unto the morning"? Now
the candlestick had been degraded to a go-to-bed lamp, with just enough oil to keep it burning until the priest had seen his way to rest, and then it could go out when the oil was consumed. No doubt the expense of olive oil led to this retrenchment, and then, they could reason, why did God need a lamp anyway?

Truly, as we study these scenes from a priestly family's home life, the activities of the priesthood and its profanation, supposedly scenes from places where we would expect the greatest piety, we must admit that there was great need of a revival in Hannah's day.

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02 -- HANNAH'S TRIALS

"But the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoke[d] her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" -- I Sam. 1:5-8.

"And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." -- I Sam. 1:12-14.

Hannah was not one of your imaginary characters of modern Unitarian, semi-religious novels. She was a woman, with a woman's heart, surrounded by circumstances not calculated to make her religious by absorption. If any might say they could not be victorious because of their environment, she might.

Woman's sphere was limited in Hannah's day. None but men could officiate in matters as between God and man. This curtailed woman's opportunities for service to the family circle. The highest place of usefulness open to her was to be the mother of some useful man. But nature had denied Hannah even this place of honor, for, "the Lord had shut up her womb," and, as an additional trial, her husband, doubtless desirous that the family name should not become extinct, had added a second wife. "Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children."

And, to add insult to injury, this other wife was contentious. "She provoked her." Seeing she was loved more than herself, Peninnah endeavored to get even by venting her spite on Hannah. And the point of attack was her affliction. She could proudly point to her own flock of children, and taunt Hannah because she had none. Well might Hannah entertain doubts as to whether God loved her. Sorrow moved her even to tears, and appetite left her.
Hannah's husband, in an attempt to comfort her, ventures the suggestion that she ought to think him better than ten sons -- so poorly do men enter into the depth of a woman's sorrow.

Pained to her heart's depth, Hannah withdrew from the family circle, feasting on the yearly sacrifice, and approached the temple. She might well have claimed she could worship better at home, and, in conjunction with her Levite husband and other grieved Israelites, could even have founded a tabernacle on their own account. But radical and conservative elements met in perfect blend in Hannah's life, Religious blessing with her was not merely seeking a place to worship where everything would be pleasant for her and a few of her co-religionists, but a revival of primitive piety that would renovate the temple and priesthood and call apostatizing Israel back to the God of their fathers.

Her trials were not merely domestic. Her earnest prayer and solemn vows, uttered before the Lord in the women's court of the temple, were rudely interrupted by an authoritative and annoyed voice. Eli, the high-priest, from his "seat by a post of the temple of the Lord," spied this female worshiper. One can imagine the seat worn smooth by long use, and a greasy streak on the post where he leaned his head through long "sittings." Mistaking Hannah's earnest exercises for what he too often saw about the temple courts, Eli with more annoyance than spiritual discernment, called to her, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee."

What an insult! It is not difficult to imagine what some women, even some of those making high religious profession, might have done under the circumstances. It could not have surprised any one much if Hannah had shook her skirts of the dust of the tabernacle floor and declared she would never worship in that church again; that she would go where she could have liberty to do what the Spirit moved her to do. Neither could we have wondered if the come-outers had received a sudden accession a few days thereafter. But then you or I would never have heard of Hannah. No, that was not her way. Hannah was a truly sanctified woman, and was given wisdom in dealing with an undiscriminating priesthood.

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03 -- HANNAH'S PRAYER

"So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Ell the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." -- I Sam. 1:9-11.
"Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." -- I Sam. 1:17-18.

It was a new order of service Hannah introduced into the temple that day. Hophni and Phinehas "were there," and Eli "sat," but now Hannah "prayed unto the Lord." The seeds of revival were sown that day, and, though enormities were practiced in the courts of the temple for some years thereafter, forces were set in motion that were destined to purge temple and priesthood and people.

Let us trace the prayer to its source. Anything so potent for good deserves our careful study. A satisfied heart is not a fertile source of prayer. It was the emptiness of her life that drove Hannah "in bitterness of soul" to prayer as her one resort. Perhaps if nature had blessed her with children, she would have been, like Peninnah, self-satisfied and absorbed in natural results. But if Hannah had results they must be supernatural.

Where nature and circumstances are favorable to us we are seldom prayerful; and almost never thankful. But where nature has left us barren, there faith's fruit grows most readily; where circumstances are against us, there we raise our altars of prayer. "Peninnah had children," but who knows how many or what their names were? What do we know beyond this brief mention that would not have been made except for their proximity to Hannah? Who knows anything of Peninnah except as Hannah's tease, one of Elkanah's wives and a few nameless children's mother?

But Hannah "bare a son and called his name Samuel," and devout fathers and mothers: have been using the name for their boys ever since; and the Bible emblazons his name in faith's gallery of worthies -- the eleventh of Hebrews. So great are the products of prayer as compared with the increase of nature.

Hannah's prayer was accompanied with a vow, and in this vow we see a glimpse into the purpose behind the prayer. It was not just a selfish desire to get even with her "adversary" that prompted Hannah to pray, but to have something to "give unto the Lord." God Himself was wanting a revival in Israel before Hannah did, and, failing to find the man He could use, He found a woman who could raise Him such a man.

Her prayer was interrupted, and the manner of interruption might have been construed as discouraging, but Hannah turned the occasion into an opportunity and secured the answer to her prayer. "The God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him," said Eli, and, dull in apprehension though he was, and apparently to us backslidden, he was, as high priest, God's messenger to Israel. "So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." She had received the answer to her prayer.
There is a difference between the answer to prayer and the results of prayer. The answer is God’s witness to the heart of the petitioner that the request is granted; but the results are worked out into visible forms afterwards. Hannah received her answer that day, but results were not apparent until some time later. In fact results are still coming in. Too frequently we confuse the results of prayer with the answer, and because results are not immediately forthcoming are discouraged from continuing in prayer. God’s witness is His secret answer to our prayers; results, His reward openly before the world.

Abraham received the answer, "a father of many nations have I made thee," and died with no visible results but Isaac, Jacob and Esau; but the results are still crowding each other into the realm of visible reality. The man and woman of God lives through eternity. Let us pray in the light of eternal values.

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04 -- HANNAH'S BOY

"And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there." -- I Sam. 1:26-28.

"And the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest." -- I Sam. 2:11.

"But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." -- I Sam. 2:18.

"And the child Samuel grew before the Lord." -- I Sam. 2:21.

"The child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men." -- I Sam. 2:26.

"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli." -- I Sam. 3:1.

Some years have rolled by since Hannah offered her prayer in the temple courts. Again it is the season for the yearly sacrifice. Hophni and Phinehas still pervert the right ways of the Lord, and Eli still sits in his accustomed place. Hannah's prayer apparently has had no effect upon temple conditions.

But Eli has some more than usually interesting visitors. Hannah, Elkanah and their little son Samuel seek an interview with the high priest. The woman becomes the spokesman and introduces herself: "I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord." No doubt this description is sufficient to refresh the
memory of the aged priest. No such occasion has occurred since that might be confused with that time when Hannah prayed.

"For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him." How such a testimony to God's prayer-answering faithfulness puts life into a meeting! How it must have thrilled those who heard it!

But this was more than a testimony meeting. It was a consecration meeting also: "Therefore also have I lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." Consecrations are life-long-deals with God. No re-consecrations ever recorded in Hannah's case.

"He worshipped the Lord there." The order of the old temple service is being renewed. Hannah's prayers broke through dead formality a few years ago, and now Samuel worships. Again, too, Hannah's voice is lifted up in prayer and she speaks forth the words of this psalm in chapter two.

Hannah's boy is left to minister in the temple courts. Surely it was a terrible place to put a boy of tender years, when we read the record of the deeds of Hophni and Phinehas. But the character of Samuel was not shaped by the reflection or absorption of his environment. He was fashioned in the mould of his devoted mother's prayers, a mightier force in character building than surrounding circumstances. And, then, his mother had not loaned him to Eli but "to the Lord," and the Lord kept that which was committed unto Him.

Keep your eye on Hannah's boy. Hannah's psalm is interesting, but at its close our attention is recalled to the boy. "And the child did minister." The custom of the priests with the offerings is necessary to an understanding of things, but at the close of this description we are told: "But Samuel ministered before the Lord." The fact that Hannah was rewarded with "three sons and two daughters" rejoices our hearts, but, lest we be diverted from the main line, it is recorded: "And the child Samuel grew before the Lord." The "little coat" his mother made and brought to him from year to year had to be made a little larger each time.

The depth of the sinfulness of Hophni and Phinehas comes out in verse 22, and Eli's feeble, unheeded remonstrance shakes our confidence in the entire priesthood. But in spite of all this we are informed, with the calmness of an unchanging purpose, "The child Samuel grew on." Consider this, you who are tempted to complain that on account of the condition your church is in, and the character of the ministry, you are dying and not growing. Samuel, in the midst of circumstances worse than yours by far, nurtured by mother's prayers and blessed of God, "grew" and "grew on," demonstrating that life can grow anywhere it is placed in God's economy.

The tiny seed, dropped by a feeble bird in the crevice of the rock, is destined to grow, nurtured by heaven's sun and rain, until it bursts the rock asunder. The
question is not so much what our surroundings are as it is whether we really have life and are in God's place for us. The fertile valley may be more congenial, but God wants some rocks split, and old sinful systems renovated by an infusion of new life. Keep your eye on Hannah's boy and watch him grow.

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05 -- SAMUEL'S CALL

"Ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child." -- I Sam. 3:3-8.

Hannah's boy outshines his illustrious mother. The center of interest shifts from Hannah to Samuel. God's work moves on. Each worker in his day of opportunity makes or mars, leaving his name an heritage of joy or sorrow, faith or doubt, righteousness or sin, to succeeding generations. Happy are they who, like Hannah, spend their brief day in things of eternal value, whose prayers become incarnate to live and do after their voices are no longer heard. Whether she lived or not to see the reformation of Israel under Samuel's judgeship we do not know, but she prayed while she could, and her prayers marched triumphantly on, and are still marching on to meet her in the great consummation when the rewards are distributed.

"Ere the lamp of God went out." Surely God's lamp was burning low in Israel then. Not only the lamps of the seven-branched candlestick, but the lamp of His presence among them. But He will soon snuff its dead wick away, that it may burn brighter, and now ere it went out, "The Lord called Samuel."

It was not a drone the Lord called -- none of your sleepy-heads. He was accustomed to the night calls of his superior priest. He answered at once. But the boy was brighter than his teacher. "Lie down again." What numbers of God's called ones have lain down again on such advice and closed their ears to later calls, until the voice of God grew faint and indistinct, and they fell asleep in the world's dreamland.

But "the Lord called yet again," and it brought the same ready response, with the same high priestly advice to "lie down again." Why such methods? Perhaps, lest we younger ones should despise the advice and counsel of those older in
God's work than ourselves, though they appear to us dull and unimpressionable to His forward marching orders, it is ordained that the young should learn in part from their elders. Then, too, it may be as much God's purpose to show them we are called as to convince us of our call. And He can show them so much more forcibly than we. When "Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child," it prepared him to admit, next morning after Samuel had delivered the message, "It is the Lord."

"There was no open vision" in the days when the priesthood were disobedient and dull of spiritual understanding, and, as a result, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The line of communication was interrupted at man's end. God still had messages for men, but no priest to convey them. But His promise, "I will raise Me up a faithful priest," was now being fulfilled, and soon, as "Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him," "all Israel... knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord."

Hannah's revival is gaining ground as her prayer-obtained and vow-devoted son continues worshiping, ministering, and growing before the Lord. To be sure the temple courts are not yet cleansed from the abominations of a profligate priesthood, but God is at work. Patient waiting may be necessary while faithful to God. He is long-suffering toward the wicked, not willing that any of them should perish. The iniquity of Hophni and Phinehas was great before the Lord, but not yet full. He to whom vengeance belongeth will not be slack concerning His promise.

Samuel's word "came to all Israel:" Thus, before the decaying framework of Eli's priesthood, which served as a scaffolding while Samuel was in the making, was removed, Samuel's ability as a priest and prophet had secured the attention of Israel. So now, when God suddenly removes the time-honored, but corrupt, system of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the shock will not shatter the religious organization of Israel. The wheat is to be gathered into the garner, and the chaff burned up; but the chaff should not be removed too soon, or it will be disastrous to the wheat.

06 -- ELI'S DEATH

"And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in Mine heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread." -- I Sam. 2:34-36.

"And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli
all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end." – I Sam 8:11-12.

God's warnings and admonitions, unheeded, bring sudden destruction. Eli, Hophni and Phinehas lived on, apparently unchanged by the message of prophet or child. While they carelessly lived through the "Indian summer" of their career, dreamily unconscious of the impending trouble, God's thunderbolts of wrath were preparing. He was about to begin that beginning which would not stop until "I will also make an end."

The old, persistent enemies of Israel, the Philistines, gathered again to war with them. The first skirmish resulted in Israel's repulse with loss. There was faint remembrance of better days when God was a power with His people. The ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies, was about the only reminder of those better days: -- a form of godliness without the power. There had been no mention these many years of the manifestation of His presence over the tabernacle. The elders suggest sending to Shiloh to get the ark that when it comes it may save them from their enemies. How vain the heart of self-willed man becomes when he supposes doing something that looks religious will save him!

The spirit of sacrilegious sacerdotalism and sacramentalism devises its own destruction. Fearing to-trust itself on the unchangeable promises of God, it presumptuously substitutes the form of religion contained in ceremonies and sacraments and rests itself and eternal welfare on things that can never take away sin. Doing something religious was so much easier for Israel at this time than repenting from their sins.

But God will cleanse the temple and establish the faithful priest He has been raising up. His clock seems to go slowly, but the eleventh hour is passing; and, though the darkest hour seems now at hand, new days are born from dark nights. Let us watch the process of cleansing the temple of its profligate and unconscientious priesthood.

Hophni and Phinehas enter the holy of holies and carry the ark out of the tabernacle; Eli tremblingly follows them and sits outside the tabernacle. None of the three, who these many years have fattened themselves on the offerings of the people and offended high heaven with their abominations and indulgences of evil customs, ever returns to walk the courts designed for other purposes. "Hophni and Phinehas are slain," and Eli, who "sat upon a seat by the wayside," on hearing the news of another defeat and the capture of the ark, "fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died."

Samuel, the living prayer of Hannah, the God-prepared, faithful priest, was left alone in the deserted temple to begin the offering of right sacrifices before God and the reconstruction and reformation of Israel. There were doubtless some gruesome tasks before Samuel. No doubt it was a discouraged and scattered
people he had to call back to the living God. Trained for forty years to look up to Eli as judge and high-priest, and accustomed to appease conscience by the semblance of offerings through the unclean hands of Eli's sons, they could not but see the removal of these priests in any other light than a national calamity, especially when, besides all the rest, the ark was taken by the Philistines.

But prayer-born and vow-given sons are made for heroic occasions. Samuel is yet to show that the calamity is but the cleaning away of the rubbish of man's failure to erect a better commonwealth. Out of the rubbish of "customs" must arise the "Thus saith the Lord."

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07 -- ICHABOD AND EBENEZER

"And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken." -- I Sam. 4:21-22. "And Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." -- I Sam. 7:9-12.

Human estimates of God's dealings are frequently colored by one's personal relation to the things disturbed by the readjustment. When Eli heard the ark was taken he fainted for grief. He had become so accustomed to think of God only in connection with the ark, that it seemed to him for the moment that God Himself had been captured by the enemies of Israel.

Much more painful was the position of Phinehas' wife when she heard the triple calamity of the capture of the ark and the death of her husband and father-in-law. It seemed to her the very structure of the nation of Israel was about to collapse. "Ichabod" was the name she left her new-born son. "The glory is departed." But had the glory really departed? The Scripture does not say it had; but it does say she said, "the glory is departed." Careful reading of events before and after this eventful day will show that, while the things to which human estimates attached glory were departed, the glory itself had long ago departed and was now in a fair way to be restored.

"Customs" of priests that a generation or two had become accustomed to consider as part and parcel of God's religious order were demolished that the true things of God might be restored to their rightful place. And while in the revolution
even right things are temporarily displaced, it is in order to fit them more firmly where they belong.

Samuel, a silent witness of these stirring scenes, seems lost for awhile among the shifting views of reconstruction. There is no mention of him nor any record of his estimate of the results. But after the dead are buried, after Dagon has fallen before the ark, the ark has been restored and found a temporary resting place in the house of Abinadab, where it begins a twenty-year sojourn unconnected with Samuel's reformation, Samuel speaks to all Israel: "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only."

In response to the prophet's call all Israel is gathered at Ebenezer, the scene of the late defeat, where Samuel offers sacrifice, and where in the absence of the ark and without any of the tabernacle furniture "the Lord heard him." Then it was "the Lord thundered with a great thunder" upon their assembled enemies, the Philistines, and a victory was won that retrieved former losses.

"Ebenezer" -- "hitherto hath the Lord helped us," began a period of which it is written, "the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." Lost cities were recovered, the border lands restored, and a period of prosperity began that prepared the way for the setting up of the kingdom.

Ichabod -- Write the word over all dead forms that have been severed from their primitive significance of truth; over profligate, careless and indiscriminating priests. Let idolatrous Israel be defeated in battle, her iniquitous priests slain, her impotent high-priest lose his grasp on the order of service, let the birth-throes of reformation become death-throes to those who say "the glory is departed."

Ebenezer -- Write the word on our banners as we gather remaining Israel to the scene of defeat. For the forms of glory from which the power has vanished substitute the Lamb of sacrifice. Put away the gods lately sprung up and return to the God of our fathers at the call of faithful priests and according to the prophets, and the apostles of our Lord.

Out of the Ichabods of failure let us spell Ebenezers of success.

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THE END