

1 Samuel (Sh'mu'el Alef)

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Chapter 1

1 Now there was a certain man of Ramath of Zophim (Ramatayim-Tzofim)¹, of Mount Ephraim (Efrayim)², and his name was Elkanah³, the son of Jeroham (Yerocham)⁴, the son of Elihu⁵, the son of Tohu (Tochu)⁶, the son of Zuph (Tzuf)⁷, an Ephrathite.⁸

¹ **H7436**

רמתים צופים

raˆ maˆ thayim tsoˆ phıym
raw-maw-thah'-yim tso-feem'

From the dual of H7413 and the plural of the active participle of H6822; **double height of watchers**; Ramathajim Tsophim, a place in Israel: - Ramathaim-zophim.

A strategic place to stand guard. In the spirit realm, there would have been a guard of angels watching over Elkanah and Hannah, protecting them, observing Hannah's distress and how she handled it, and waiting for the time of Samuel's conception.

Hannah had no idea that she was a special woman who had been selected to bring forth a very special child. For a long time, she thought she'd never have children and that she was at a great disadvantage with her rival, as well as socially. Hannah ended up not only having the reproach of childlessness removed from her among her community, but she also became a famous, highly admired woman in her nation as the mother of their High Priest, whose birth was a miracle.

² **H669**

אפרים

'ephrayim
ef-rah'-yim

Dual of a masculine form of H672; **double fruit**; Ephrajim, a son of Joseph; also the tribe descended from him, and its territory: - Ephraim Ephraimites

³ **H511**

אלקנה

'elqaˆ naˆ h
el-kaw-naw'

From H410 and H7069; **God has obtained**; Elkanah, the name of seven Israelites: - Elkanah.

His name seems to express the miracle that God did when He opened the womb of the beloved wife. It also indicates that God obtained Samuel from Elkanah.

The names of Elkanah, Hannah, and Peninnah may not have been the names they started out with in life, but were given to them after these events played out. Hebrews were usually named according to something significant about them, which meant that there was a delay in naming them the main name that they would bear for the rest of their life.

2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah⁹, and the name of the other Peninnah (P'ninah)¹⁰: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

⁴ **H3395**

ירחם

yero^ˆcha^ˆm
yer-o-khawm'

From H7355; **compassionate**; Jerocham, the name of seven or eight Israelites: - Jeroham.

Samuel's grandfather was possibly a kind-hearted, generous man.

⁵ **H453**

אליהו אלהי

'e^ˆlîyhu^ˆ 'e^ˆlîyhu^ˆ
el-ee-hoo', el-ee-hoo'

From H410 and H1931; **God of him**; Elihu, the name of one of Job's friends, and of three Israelites: - Elihu.

Samuel's greatgrandfather. Expresses reliance on God.

⁶ **H8459**

תוחי

to^ˆchu^ˆ
to'-khoo

From an unused root meaning **to depress; abasement**; Tochu, an Israelite: - Tohu.

Samuel's greatgreatgrandfather. Perhaps he was a moody or melancholy person due to a demotion of some type, either in position or finances or some other embarrassing occurrence.

⁷ **H6689**

צופי צוף

tsu^ˆph tso^ˆphay tsîyph
tsoof, tso-fah'ee, tseef

From H6688; **honey comb**; Tsuph or Tsophai or Tsiph, the name of an Israelite and a place in Israel: - Zophai, Zuph.

Samuel's greatgreatgreatgrandfather; he was a sweet guy. Or maybe he was a charmer with a smooth tongue.

⁸ It's a good thing to look at the meanings of the names in Hebrew. The Hebrews often named their children according to a significant event in their life, or to reflect their character or personality, or to describe something physical about them. By looking at the meaning of the names in a person's lineage, it gives clues to the person's DNA, and suggests some of the internal battles they may have had to fight in order to break free into fulfilling their destiny in God, or give clues as to why they did not fulfill their potential.

⁹ **H2584**

חנה

channa^ˆh

3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of the hosts (Adonai-Tzva'ot) in Shiloh¹¹. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni (Hofni)¹² and Phinehas (Pinchas)¹³, the priests (cohanim) of the Lord, were there.

khan-naw'

From H2603; **favored**; Channah, an Israelitess: - Hannah.

God favoured her prayer for a son, but He waited until she was so desperate for one that she was ready to give him to the Lord. God wanted that child to be His from the start, so that He could make him into an exemplary prophet.

¹⁰ **H6444**

פִּנְנָה

peninna^h

pen-in-naw'

Probably feminine from H6443 **contracted**; Peninnah, an Israelitess: - Peninnah.

The name seems to reflect the status of a concubine, purchased like a servant, rather than regarded as a wife of full dignity, but her status was elevated because, for many years, she was the only wife who bore children. Peninnah exalted herself over Hannah like Hagar had exalted herself over Sarah.

Peninnah was probably contracted on the condition that she had children, and if she did not, that she would be returned to her family with compensation. Or perhaps she was offered an amount of money for each child she bore, to induce her to marry a man who obviously loved his first wife very much and was never going to love another like he loved her.

¹¹ **H7886**

שִׁילוֹ

shîylo^h

shee-lo'

From H7951; **tranquil**; Shiloh, an epithet of the Messiah: - Shiloh.

¹² **H2652**

חֹפְנִי

chophnîy

khof-nee'

From H2651; **perhaps pugilist**; Chophni, an Israelite: - Hophni.

Hophni was aggressive, probably a brute, one whose main way of imposing his will was by force.

¹³ **H6372**

פִּינְחָס

pîynecha^s

pee-nekh-aws'

Apparently from H6310 and a variation of H5175; **mouth of a serpent**; Pinechas, the name of three Israelites: - Phinehas.

4 And when the day would come, Elkanah would sacrifice, and he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters.

5 But unto Hannah he would give a worthy portion;¹⁴ for he loved Hannah, even though the Lord had shut up her womb.

6 And her rival provoked her to anger and sorrow because the Lord had shut up her womb.¹⁵

7 And this would happen year by year when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she would provoke her;¹⁶ therefore, she would weep and not eat.

8 Then Elkanah, her husband, said to her, Hannah, why dost thou weep? And why dost thou not eat? And why is thy heart grieved? Am I not better to thee than ten sons?¹⁷

He was possibly cunning and sharp-tongued, and could say mean, condemning things that cut people to the heart. Possibly his main way of imposing his will was through guilt and shame and deception. God can temper cunning and intuition and forthrightness for His own will, when the person surrenders to Him, such as Aaron's grandson who bore this same name.

Together, Hophni and Phinehas complemented each other in their tyranny over Israel, pairing brutality with cunning to keep the Israelites intimidated.

¹⁴ Elkanah wanted to reassure Hannah that he valued her as much as ever, regardless of her barrenness. He married her for love, and the double portion was also a statement to those who looked down on her for her barrenness that he valued her highly, regardless. He appreciated her character and did not see her as deserving of a curse. The double portion vindicated her character and God vindicated it, too, when He not only opened her womb, but chose that son for a special purpose, to lead Israel.

¹⁵ Peninnah felt unloved. She figured that Elkanah would never love her as he loved Hannah, and she was jealous, of course. What woman wouldn't be, in the same circumstances? Hannah was probably much more beautiful, as well. She was the first lady of the household, regardless of her barrenness. But Peninnah's response to her hurt was ungodly, unlike Leah's. Leah did not hate Rachel, and Leah exalted the Lord every time she bore a child, instead of exalting herself. Leah resolved her jealousy and was blessed for having done so, with seven children, one a daughter after her heart's desire, and with long life, as well as honour.

¹⁶ I imagine, that to assuage her humiliation that people knew that she was not the beloved wife, but the "brood mare", Peninnah preened her feathers in Shiloh, bragging loudly to other women about her children, and how her family was increasing, and made sure that Hannah was around to hear her trading motherhood stories with the other women, rubbing it in, and frequently making snide, veiled remarks that were a slap in the face to Hannah. Though Hannah was the beautiful wife, and in charge of the household, Peninnah wanted Hannah to feel that she was useless and worthless, less than a woman.

Hannah also had to endure the response from Peninnah's listeners, some smirking at her, some looking at her with pity. As she was a gentle and dignified woman, she refrained from being spiteful and vindictive in return, and probably said nothing to anyone but her husband about Peninnah's remarks. If she had ventured an answer, Peninnah would have mocked her more, and her listeners would have scorned her for trying to defend herself. People thought that barren women were cursed, and that they had done something wrong to deserve such a curse. If she had punished Peninnah, the sympathy would have been with Peninnah, who would have told everyone that Hannah mistreated her because she was jealous that she had children.

¹⁷ I surmise that Hannah was the first wife and would have remained the only wife, if she had not proved to be barren after several years of the couple trying to have a child. Elkanah loved her like Jacob had loved Rachel.

It must have been heartbreaking for Hannah that her husband had decided to take another wife to bear him children to carry on his name. They obviously loved each other very much, and her husband was probably the kind

9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest (cohen) sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord.

10 And she was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore;

11 and she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of the hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid and remember me and not forget thy handmaid¹⁸ but wilt give unto thy handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.¹⁹

12 And it came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord that Eli was observing her mouth.

of man who would have been very satisfied to have no other wife, if Hannah had been able to give him children within the first five years or so of their marriage.

Elkanah's family and friends probably urged him to take another wife. I see Hannah as being sad at having her husband visiting another woman's bed, but because she loved him, she did not want him to be denied having children. He probably sought her consent, first, before he proceeded to marry another, and he may have deliberately chosen a wife who was far less attractive than Hannah, and strongly built with wide hips, to assure Hannah that it was not for lust that he was taking another wife.

Being only human, it was galling to Peninnah to be simply a surrogate, rather than a beloved wife, as every normal woman hopes to be. She probably consented to this arrangement because she was too homely to have better prospects, and her family not well off enough to attract any offers for the sake of her dowry. Marriage to Elkanah offered her financial security and some status in the community, even if only as a second wife, as he was a respectable man.

But it would be hard to take to daily see him looking soft-eyed at Hannah, speaking to her in an intimate, affectionate way, consulting her about decisions, and given the best gifts, while Peninnah was treated with politeness, and fairness equivalent with her inferior rank, and her husband was emotionally distant from her. It is not reasonable, however, to demand of people to feel what we would like them to feel for us, if that inclination is not there. This was the lesson that Jacob's sons had to learn.

If Peninnah had not tormented Hannah about being childless, and been respectful, thankful for what she had, Hannah might have settled for being cherished by her husband and been able to bear her barrenness. God allowed the second wife to persecute Hannah, to provoke her to desperation, so that Samuel would be born in due season through prayer, and then surrendered to Him.

¹⁸ Godly women were referred to as a handmaid of the Lord. She looked to the Lord for help, rather than reverting to charms and other types of witchcraft to solve her problem, as other people frequently did then, and still do.

¹⁹ Hannah consecrated the child to be a Nazarite his whole life. Samuel probably wore his hair in several braids, and may have braided his beard, too. He never drank wine or ate grapes or raisins.

So much for "nature itself teaching that it is a shame for a man to have long hair." That was a tongue in cheek reference to the fact that nature doesn't teach this, so don't try to dictate to people about how they wear their hair, but people took it literally, ignoring the fact that lions have manes and the lionesses have short hair, and other male animals have manes, and some male birds have very long tail feathers.

Yehoshua said that John the Immerser was the greatest man among all who are born of women; interestingly, he NEVER cut his hair, and neither did Samuel, another man of great character, who was honoured for his obedience to the vow his mother made concerning him.

13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore, Eli thought she was drunk.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee.²⁰

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink but have poured out my soul before the Lord.

16 Do not count thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial²¹, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have waited until now to speak.²²

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace, and the God of Israel (Isra'el) grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.²³

18 And she said, Let thy handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and ate, and her countenance was no longer sad.²⁴

²⁰ God allowed Eli to misunderstand and rebuke Hannah, because He wanted everyone to know what Hannah had prayed. When “bad” stuff happens to a child of God, it works out for their good, if they respond with the right attitude.

Also, Eli’s rebuke indicates that, though the Israelites drank wine during their festivals, it was acceptable to do so only until they were feeling merry or peacefully relaxed, but not beyond that to where it caused them to act foolish. This is unlike the prevailing Jewish attitude towards celebrating Purim, where many believe that God approves of them getting raucous and drunk.

What a rebuke. Eli lived during the time of the Judges, when Israel was somewhat messed up, with people doing what they thought was right in their own eyes, rather than adhering strictly to the Law. He came into his office after the death of Samson, according to Josephus in *The Antiquities of the Jews*. If a weak High Priest who judged Israel in a morally muddled time considered drunkenness inappropriate, it demonstrates that the Jewish mentality, in general, has greatly declined in regards to appropriate ways to celebrate.

²¹ People who get drunk are behaving like “sons of Belial” or “daughters of Belial.” Drunkenness and debauchery were primary features of idolatrous rituals and festivals.

²² Hannah was not indignant at this false accusation. She understood that it was just a misunderstanding. How could Eli know what kind of person she was, seeing as he did not know her? Her response was meek and respectful of his position and age.

²³ Because of her humility and patience, Hannah obtained a powerful prayer of agreement. Eli was not a particularly godly man, but God maintained the respect for his office. This is why when a public official makes godly pronouncements, they carry weight in Heaven, even if the person errs in their private life. God instituted authority.

That does not mean that He will not depose those who are corrupt, and use people to do so, either through the courts or through war, but it demonstrates that when leaders do good things and say good things, according to God’s idea of good, it has a powerful impact in the spiritual realm towards benefiting the lives of those who are under their authority.

Likewise, when leaders say arrogant things that are contrary to the Bible, it has a destructive effect on their realm of authority. The destruction can be over-ruled and limited to themselves, though, as we see in the case of the lord on whose hand the king leaned when Elisha prophesied that the siege of Samaria would end on the following day, and there would be food for the city. The lord doubted and answered Elisha with scorn. The relief came, but that man was trampled in the rush at the gate when he was put in charge of bringing in the food. 2 Kings 7:17. Sometimes people go too far in opposing God and contradicting His anointed.

19 And they rose up in the morning early and worshipped before the Lord and returned and came to their house to Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her.²⁵

20 Therefore, it came to pass when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, she bore a son and called his name Samuel (Sh'mu'el)²⁶, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord.

21 And the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer unto the Lord the accustomed sacrifice and his vow.

22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child is weaned, and then I will bring him that he may be presented before the Lord and abide there for ever.²⁷

23 And Elkanah, her husband, said unto her, Do what seems good unto thee; tarry until thou hast weaned him; only let the Lord establish his word.²⁸ So the woman abode and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

²⁴ When she believed, this is when Hannah “received” her child. She had not conceived him in her womb, yet, but she knew it would happen, and so she was happy. She may have sensed the anointing on Eli’s words. What a wonderful change her demeanor must have been to Elkanah; this trip to Shiloh was a real joy, no longer marred by his favourite wife’s depression. She was merry. She could smile and joke and laugh, and she ignored Peninnah’s snide remarks.

We can have joy, even if we have not yet received what we are believing God for, when we know that the thing will come in God’s time, which is the right time. Having our heart’s desire too soon spoils things somehow; when it comes at the right time, it has a mighty impact on many lives.

²⁵ Hannah’s prayers had built a memorial in Heaven, like the good deeds and prayers of Cornelius, the Roman centurion who loved Israel and the Torah, and wanted to know the one true God. Acts 10:4. Prayers that proceed from a heart that looks to God alone for their fulfillment make it to Heaven and become substance there, which serve as a reminder to God that the person is waiting for Him to intervene in their circumstances.

²⁶ **H8050**

שמׁואל

shemu^ˆe^ˆl
shem-oo-ale'

From the passive participle of H8085 and H410; **heard of God**; Shemuel, the name of three Israelites: - Samuel, Shemuel.

²⁷ Hannah would have probably found it too painful to go to Shiloh and see the place where she would soon have to leave her little boy. She didn’t want to go back on her word, so she avoided a situation where she might have had second thoughts, limiting her exposure to that temptation. She waited until the year he was weaned, so that she could be firm about keeping her vow.

²⁸ One of the reasons that God delayed giving Hannah children was to help Elkanah agree to give Samuel up when he was a little tot. Samuel was probably very special to him, because he was born as a result of his union with the love of his life. If Elkanah had not already had several children, and his thoughts so occupied with supporting them and his interactions with them, he may have found it impossible to give up Samuel, if he was his first child, when he was only three years old.

24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks and one ephah of flour and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh; and the child was young.

25 And they slew a bullock and brought the child to Eli.

26 And she said, Oh my Lord, as thy soul lives, my Lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord.

27 For this child I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of him.

28 Therefore, I also have given him back to the Lord;²⁹ as long as he lives he shall belong to the Lord.³⁰ And he worshipped the Lord there.³¹

Also, Elkanah needed all those years of holding Hannah in his arms while she wept, and seeing her sorrowful face at other times, to appreciate the desperation that had driven her to offer her child to the Lord, if God gave her a son. If offering the child to the Lord was what it took to give her a child, then he was agreeable to the deal.

²⁹ It would have been very painful for a woman to give up her child, to not have him to see every day and hold in her arms, but even more so knowing that she was sending him to a place where the priests were corrupt. But like Moses' parents, Samuel's parents may have known that this child was going to set things right, which would have helped them release him to Eli's care.

³⁰ In spite of the drawbacks of the place where she left Samuel, Hannah trusted that the Lord would keep him spiritually safe. She had to trust the Lord as to how kindly her little boy would be treated, and keep on trusting Him, even if he was not looked after as carefully and lovingly as she would have done it. She also had to trust the Lord would make things work out well, though the child was likely to feel that his parents had abandoned him and not understand for a few years what it was all about.

³¹ It sounds like Eli and Samuel's parents spent some time explaining to Samuel about how he was a special gift from God, and God had particular plans that required him to be raised in the Tabernacle and thoroughly taught all about its service and the Torah.

He would have been taught that we owe everything to God and must give ourselves to Him completely, so that Samuel would know that what his parents were doing was right, even if he did not understand it. Though he was only three, when he knelt at the altar, he understood something of God's greatness and power and purity, conveyed by the solemnity of his parents and Eli, and so he quietly submitted to having to stay there at God's command. He knew that his parents loved him and that they felt pain at leaving him there, but their obedience was an example to him to be obedient also.

I can see Samuel kneeling before the altar, a little boy of three with long, black ringlets, wearing a beautiful coat that signified that this child was very loved and well-cared for, reminding his caregivers and others who came in contact with him that it had been a sacrifice for his parents to leave him at Shiloh.