

Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 1:1-20

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(The Books of 1 & 2 Samuel tell the story of the establishment of the monarchy in the united kingdom of Israel. Israel rejected the theocracy established by God and chose to have a human king who would rule over them instead of a divine one. These books tell how that happened and what happens when people reject the rule of God.)

1 Samuel 1:1-20

Verses 1-2

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

- The story begins by introducing a man named Elkanah. His lineage is traced back four generations. He is a Hebrew without doubt.
- Elkanah has two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. While plural marriage was the custom of the time, it is forbidden by God's word (see Genesis 2:24). One man and one woman become one flesh according to the word of God. All other forms of marriage are excluded.

Verses 3-5

³ Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. ⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb.

- It was Elkanah's habit to go from the place where he lived to Shiloh where the Tabernacle was kept to worship at the Tabernacle once each year. Exodus 23:14-19 requires that a Hebrew man come to the Tabernacle 3

times each year to worship. Again, Elkanah's behavior indicates a lax attitude toward the Law of God. He has two wives and only goes to the Tabernacle once each year.

- When Elkanah offered sacrifice to YHWH at the Tabernacle, he would share the portion of the sacrifice given to him to eat with Peninnah and her children. Hannah had no children, but he gave her two portions of the meat to show his affection for her.

Verses 6-8

Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

- Peninnah teased Hannah about Hannah's barrenness over the years. The teasing was so cruel when they visited the Tabernacle, probably because Elkanah showed his favor for Hannah over Peninnah there, that Hannah was forced to tears and could not eat the double portion of the sacrifice which she was given. Elkanah's home was not a "happy place."
- Elkanah tried to comfort Hannah by reminding her that he meant more to her than having ten sons. He was not an exceptionally comforting man.

Verses 9-11

⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

- On the occasion of one of their visits to the Tabernacle, after the family had eaten its share of the sacrifice, Hannah went to the Tabernacle alone to pray.
- Eli, the semi-retired priest (see verse 3 - Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons were the official priests at the time.), was sitting in a chair at the door of the Tabernacle when Hannah entered.

- Hannah prayed to God asking Him to give her a son. She promised that if God gave her a son, she would dedicate the child to God's service as a Nazarite. A Nazarite was a person under a vow to God. As a sign of being under a vow, a Nazarite did not drink strong drink or cut his hair.

Verses 12-14

¹² As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

- Eli's eyes were failing (see 3:1).
- Hannah was intensely praying but her prayers were silent. Only her lips moved.
- Observing her through his failing eyes, Eli upbraided Hannah for being drunk and told her to stop drinking.

Verses 15-18

¹⁵ "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

¹⁷ Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

¹⁸ She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

- Hannah explained that she was not drunk but was "pouring out her soul to YHWH." She begged him not to think badly of her but to understand that she was deeply troubled.
- Eli then blessed her. He asked God to give her whatever she had requested. Hannah accepted Eli's blessing graciously and went back to join her family. Her spirit was lifted by the prayer and the blessing of the priest.

Verses 19- 20

¹⁹ Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant

and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

- The next day, they worshiped God and returned home. In the course of time, Hannah conceived and bore a son.
- She named him Samuel. The word sounds like the Hebrew word which means, "God has heard me."

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