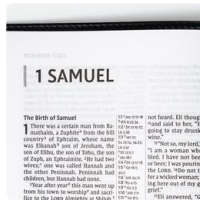


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1 Samuel 1 - 2



1 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In 1 Samuel 1-2, it is suggested that God allowed polygamy due to the practical needs of society at the time, where women found purpose in having children to raise. The story follows Hannah, who was barren and prayed to God for a child, and was granted a son. She dedicated her son to the Lord, and in doing so, inspired the idea of monarchy and the anointing of a king. However, the story also highlights the corruption and disobedience of the priesthood, ultimately resulting in the judgment of the house of Eli.

Transcript

When we turn to the book of 1 Samuel, having just come through the book of Judges, it's really kind of a relief, in a way. Not everything in it is good, but nothing in it is quite as bad as a lot of the things in the book of Judges, especially that we encounter at the end of the book of Judges, because those stories are really kind of gross and depressing. This is a little bit more like the story of Ruth.

There are some good people in it, and some positive things going on, especially the birth of Samuel, who is the focus of the first several chapters, and of course is the main character in the book of 1 Samuel. If you look at the first chapter of this book, we read, Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jehoram, or Jeroham, excuse me, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuth, an Ephraimite, and he had two wives. The name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah.

Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. Now, this man clearly is considered to be a good man of the period, yet we find him having two wives, and this, of course, is something that we need to maybe give consideration to once in a while when we encounter it in Scripture, because it's so contrary to what we consider to be normal, moral, righteous behavior. Polygamy, today, we consider to be very much a sin, and therefore, it seems strange to us to find people like Abraham, and Jacob, and this man Elkanah, and others, David, having multiple wives.

And the question, why is this permitted? Well, I personally think that God was not

pleased with polygamy, but he had not made any kind of law to forbid it for the simple reason that it served a good purpose for some people. For one thing, there were many times when in war, the men of the population were reduced in numbers considerably. When tens of thousands of men would be killed in war, that would leave many women widows, or many young women who had not married yet, without prospective husbands.

In our society, that would be considered sad, but not tragic. Women in our society can get along without a man, like a fish can get along without a bicycle. And they couldn't do that back then.

A woman could not really make a living for herself. If she didn't have a husband, she pretty much had to be supported by her father. But she would probably outlive him, and so she might end up just being a beggar someday, or a younger woman might end up prostituting herself to make a living.

There weren't a lot of honorable vocations open to women in that society. So women depended very heavily on men to care for them, and more than that, to give them children. Because in that society, more than our own, although this still is true even in our time, in some measure, women found much more satisfaction and meaning in their life by having children to raise.

And that's really what the woman's body is clearly designed for. It doesn't mean that every woman is to have children, but when God made man, he decided it was necessary for man to have a partner. And he made sort of a similar creature when he made a woman.

Not as similar as we could wish at times, but nonetheless quite similar, same species. But the differences between the man and the woman that were created were all in the area of reproductive issues, besides the psychological differences. But apart from the psychological differences, the physical differences had to do with childbearing and child nurturing.

And it's clear that God made women with a very important task of rearing and bearing children. And obviously, if there were no husbands available for the women, women would be deprived of that fulfillment, of that satisfaction, as well as of economic support. And so in ancient societies, when men were fewer than women, especially because of war, and the men who got into battle would get themselves killed, then there are so many women who don't have husbands that it was actually to their advantage.

And I think God saw it also, that a man might take more than one woman to be a wife so that she'd have support and be able to bear children. Even if there weren't enough men to go around, most women would rather share a man and have children by him than to be childless and an old widow without any children. We see this mentality throughout Scripture.

It was a great tragedy for a woman not to be able to have children. And I believe that many times men, who would find it, of course, economically difficult to raise more than one family, unless they were very rich, like King David or Solomon, had plenty of money. It didn't matter how many women he took because he could afford it.

The average laborer, the average farmer, couldn't really afford to support more than one family and wouldn't take more than one wife unless usually his first wife was barren. The only reason Abraham ever had more than one wife in Sarah's lifetime is because Sarah was barren. And therefore both Sarah and he thought it was good to go into Hagar and have a child because otherwise they felt they wouldn't have any children.

That was not okay. So even Sarah felt it was good for Abraham to go into Hagar so that this family would not be childless. Now in that case, Hagar was a slave and therefore her son would be Sarah's credit because Sarah owned the slave.

And therefore it was like Sarah was having a child through the womb of her servant, sort of a surrogate mother type situation. But of course it involved Abraham taking Hagar as a concubine. And that wasn't as offensive to Sarah as it would be to any modern woman today because it was just understood.

Sarah can't have children. Someone's got to have them. Man can't be left childless.

And so the same was true of Jacob. Jacob had two wives because he was deceived by his father-in-law but the two concubines that bore him children would have never been involved and he would have never been involved with them if his wives were not having trouble conceiving. It's because Rachel was barren that she gave Jacob her concubine.

And it's when Leah stopped bearing that she gave Jacob her concubine. So taking additional wives was usually a matter of the infertility of a first wife so that a man rather than be left without any children would have to take additional wives. It never worked out well.

There never was a time in the Bible when a polygamous marriage or a polygamous family was a happy one. It might have been a little bit happy in some respects but not because of the marriages. The wives almost always were rivals of each other and caused trouble for the men.

Often the children of multiple wives would be hostile toward each other as in David's case or even in Jacob's case. And so the Bible does not put a happy face on this whole thing of polygamy. But it was an institution that God did not forbid because it actually met the needs of widows and orphans to provide a man for women when there weren't enough men to go around.

We see that mentality reflected in a statement, a prophecy that Isaiah makes. In Isaiah chapter 4, chapter 4 of Isaiah, the chapter division is kind of not appropriate there. The

chapter division should have been one verse later because chapter 4 verse 1 of Isaiah belongs to chapter 3. And in chapter 3 God is talking about how many men of Israel will be killed in battle as God brings his judgment upon them.

And in chapter 4 verse 1 which is describing that same time when the men of Israel are greatly decimated in their population it says in that day seven women shall take hold of one man saying we will eat our own food, wear our own apparel, only let us be called by your name to take away our reproach. Now this is a case that shows another reason for polygamy. These women weren't poor.

Their husbands who died in battle had apparently left them enough to live on. So they're saying to a man, listen, you don't have to support us, we can take care of ourselves, but just marry us so that we won't have the reproach of being widows. There is just a sort of a stigma to being a widow and not having a husband in society.

Because I mean a woman who didn't have a husband didn't have someone to protect her from, for example, oppression and exploitation by powerful men in society who might want to take their property from them or something else. I mean if there's a man in the house he could stand up to the outside dangers of the household. A woman who is by herself is very vulnerable.

But here we see Isaiah describing a time when so many men of Israel are killed that seven women are willing to share one man just to have a husband and not be stuck as widows without a husband. So that is basically what we see in the Old Testament. And here this man Elkanah has two wives, but one is barren.

We're not told this is the case, but I think we've probably deduced that Hannah was his first wife, and perhaps the only one he was interested in initially. Because it's clear that he loves her from the way that they talk. They have an affectionate relationship like Abram and Sarah did.

But Hannah is barren, and so in all likelihood, if we read between the lines, he probably took his second wife just because he needed someone to bear children for him and his wife couldn't do it. So Penanah comes in as a second wife, and she does have children, though Hannah does not. Now verse 3, this man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to Yahweh of hosts in Shiloh.

Also, the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. Now Eli at this point was both a judge and high priest in Shiloh. We don't know how he rose to power because his story is not told in the book of Judges, and the book of 1 Samuel opens with him already installed.

He's already in that position. We can assume he became high priest simply by being the hereditary high priest. That's how people became high priests, is that their father was a

high priest and their grandfather was a high priest.

That's how you become high priest. We don't know enough about Eli to know these things, but I think we can assume that he was the hereditary high priest, and as such he served as a judge for some period of time. I believe it was 40 years that he served as a judge, but it's not clear that he did so at a separate time from some of the judges.

His judgeship probably overlapped Samson's by some years. It is generally thought. But his two sons also are priests of the Lord, but very unworthy of that title.

Eli himself was not a perfect man, but he was a pious man, and he was not a bad man. His sons were bad men and very unworthy of the role of priest. And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, that's, of course, Hannah's husband, he would give portions to Penanah, his wife, and to all her sons and daughters.

But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although Yahweh had closed her womb. So Penanah's children each got one portion to offer the Lord, but Hannah got a double portion, showing that Elkanah really favored her, and as I say, probably would never have married Penanah, if not for the barrenness of Hannah. And her rival, meaning Penanah, also provoked her severely to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb.

This is what we see often in the marriages that are polygamous in the Bible. When Hagar became pregnant, she began to torment Sarah, and there began to be strife between those two women that didn't exist before. Even though Sarah had approved of Abram going to Hagar, and Hagar was only a slave, she had no reason to exalt herself above her mistress, yet she suddenly felt superior, because she had a baby inside her and Sarah didn't.

And that, in a sense, would give Hagar status, and it was an embarrassment to him not to have a baby. So Hannah was continually ashamed of not being able to give her husband children, and Penanah exploited the situation, since she apparently was quite fertile, had sons and daughters, and she never let Hannah forget that Hannah was barren and that Penanah was not. And it's probable that since Elkanah loved Hannah, that he might not have loved Penanah very much.

Again, she might have been more like a useful second womb in the family, and he might not have had the same affection for her, and Penanah might have felt that. And Penanah might have been guilty of Hannah because her husband loved Hannah. And Hannah was jealous because Penanah had children.

We don't actually read that Hannah was jealous or that Penanah was jealous, but that's usually the thing that would cause strife between two wives in the same household, I'm sure. So I'm assuming there was jealousy there. And Penanah provoked Hannah

continually, needling her, making little wry comments about Hannah's barrenness and putting her down.

So it made her miserable. So it was year by year when she went up to the house of the Lord that she provoked her. Therefore she, Hannah, wept and did not eat.

Then Elkanah, her husband, said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons? Perhaps he was not aware of how Penanah was picking on her. It might have been in the women's quarters that this was going on, and he may not have observed it. Or he might have just been an unobservant husband in general.

We don't know. Not that that makes him a bad man, but husbands are pretty clueless about things. Why can't these women get along? So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh.

Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat of the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me and not forget your maidservant, but will give your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to Yahweh all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.

Now it's interesting that she wanted a male child, which seems like that would be something she'd want to be able to give to her husband. I mean, that's so she could please her husband. But he had plenty of male and female children apparently already.

And she wasn't trying to compete with Peninnah in that sense of have more children than her. She wasn't like Rachel and Leah competing with each other in that respect. But just the fact that she was barren, I think, made her feel like maybe God had something against her.

Often when God closed the womb of a woman, it was because they felt she was under God's disapproval for some reason. So maybe she was just hoping to have that sense that God is not on her side removed. Just give me a son.

I'll give him back to you. But just don't let me stay barren. And so she says, I will commit him to you so that no razor shall come upon his head.

So he would be like Samson, a Nazarite. By implication, he would also keep the other parts of the Nazarite vow. So Samson and Samuel both were Nazarites from before they were born.

Samson, the angel of the Lord, commanded that he should be a Nazarite. And in this case, Hannah volunteered it. And it happened as she continued praying before the Lord

that Eli watched her mouth.

Now Hannah spoke in her heart. Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore, Eli thought she was drunk.

Now, I do a lot of my praying silently. And I always have. Partly just not to disturb others around me and things like that.

I mean, I don't have so much privacy as to feel comfortable all the time praying out loud when there's others doing things around. And I remember when I was younger wondering, does the Bible anywhere say that God can hear silent prayers? Because all the prayers that you read about in the Bible seem to be verbalized. You know, people publicly praying is the most common thing you find in Scripture.

And it was this Scripture here that made it clear to me that prayers that are not vocalized can be heard by God. Because it says she was silent. She didn't make any noise.

Her mouth moved, but nothing was coming out. Of course, God can read lips. So maybe it's as good as a spoken prayer that way.

But it says she prayed in her heart. And God looks on the heart. God can read what's in the heart.

So silent prayer, that works too. This prayer was answered. But Eli, because she was not making a sound, again, that's unusual in the Bible for people to pray silently.

He thought she was drunk. Now, I'm not sure why he would think that particularly. I don't know that drunk people are commonly moving their mouths without words coming out.

But that's, whatever it was, he didn't perceive that she was praying. And for some reason, maybe, I don't know, sometimes people who get too drunk are overly emotional and convulsing and sobs and so forth. And maybe that's what she was doing.

So he thought she was drunk for some reason. So Eli said to her, how long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you. Now, this means that at least the high priest was against drunkenness, which not all of them were.

He was a man who wanted to uphold some kind of principles, especially among those that worshiped at the tabernacle, that they should not come drunk. Of course, his own sons misbehaved at the tabernacle, and the Bible says that he was culpable for not restraining them. But he didn't just let everything go on.

And if he thought someone was drunk there, he'd rebuke them, as he did in this case. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I'm a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink.

But have poured out my soul before Yahweh. Do not consider your maid servant a wicked woman. For out of the abundance of my complaint and grief, I have spoken until now.

Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace. And the God of Israel grant your petition, which you have asked of him. And she said, Let your maid servant find favor in your sight.

So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. So she considered that a blessing from the high priest was as good as a word from the Lord in this case. She prayed that God would give her a son.

She didn't tell the priest what she prayed for, but when he realized that she was full of grief, he wished a blessing on her. May God grant your request. And she took that as if it was a given.

So she was no longer sad, and she started eating again, and she got over it. And she was right, because God did speak through the priest and did answer her prayer. Verse 19, Then they rose early in the morning and worshipped before Yahweh, and returned and came to their house in Ramah.

And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked for him from the Lord. Samuel means heard by God.

So she realized that although she had prayed silently, her prayer was heard by God. The priest couldn't hear her, no human being could hear her, but God could hear what was spoken in the heart. And so she names her child a name that commemorates that fact.

And the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, I will not go up until the child is weaned. Then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever.

Now by the way, this vow that she made, she made without her husband's knowledge. Under the law in the book of Numbers, it says that if a wife or a virgin daughter makes any vow to the Lord, that the husband or father has the right to cancel that vow the day he hears of it. But if he doesn't cancel it on the day he hears it, on the day he learns of it, then it has to be binding.

Now obviously we don't know when she, that's in Numbers chapter 30, that law. It says about husbands, about their wives' vows and fathers about their daughters' vows. That women's vows would not be binding unless their father or husband approved it.

Now you might say, well that's chauvinistic, but actually there's a reason for that. Because a vow usually had to do with the family assets. Usually people were vowing to

give something of the household goods to the Lord.

That's what a vow usually meant. And since the man was the man who, was the one who provided for the household, and he was providing for his wife and children, if the vow of a wife was going to impoverish the family somehow more than the husband was willing to do, he could cancel that. And this was a vow that was going to cost the family because here was a son, the only son so far, from this woman whom Elkanah loved and probably would be his favorite son if he were to stay at home.

But Hannah had vowed that he wouldn't stay at home, that he'd go and serve God all the days of his life. And Elkanah, when he heard of it, could have canceled that. He said, nope, I don't agree with that.

But he didn't apparently. He apparently went along with it. He was willing to let Hannah make that decision and he honored it before the Lord.

So she told him, I'm not going to go up yearly as we have been until the child's weaned, and then I'll take him up and we'll leave him there. And Elkanah said to her, do what seems best to you. Wait until you have weaned him.

Only let Yahweh establish his word. So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him. It's clear that both Elkanah and Hannah were pious people given that this is the period the judges were in.

I mean, you see how corrupt many people were and how religiously confused many people were by reading the book of Judges. And yet during this same period of time we have families like this. It's a little like reading about Ruth and Boaz in that period.

There were both kinds of people in that period of time, godly and ungodly. And this was a godly couple, obviously. And he was willing to surrender his son to the Lord because his wife had wished for it.

So he said, well, just let the Lord establish his word. And I don't know what that means in this particular context because we don't know that the Lord had given any word except the word of Eli that God would grant her her request but that had already happened. So I'm not sure what word he's thinking of.

Maybe there's been more spoken than we know about. Maybe they had some kind of a word from the Lord that this child was not only going to be dedicated to the Lord but was going to be significant in some important ways. The fact that he was dedicated to the Lord would not guarantee that he'd have a significant impact.

Nobody knew that the period of the judges was almost over and something was going to change radically at that time. They were just living out a period of time that had gone on for centuries before and might go on for centuries similarly as far as they knew. And

there were many people dedicated to the Lord.

Well, there might not have been many, but there were others at least. Jeff, his daughter, was. She might have even been there at the same time.

I'm not sure how the chronology shakes out. Probably not. Jeff was probably too much earlier.

But the point is they seemed to feel that God had some kind of a hand on this child and had either verbally or by implication made some kind of promise concerning him. And so he said, May the Lord establish his word. So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

This was probably, well, it would be at least three years in that society, sometimes longer. So she would actually have him with her beyond the point where he learned to walk and talk and where she could relate with him. But, I mean, that's a hard time to give up a child, too.

It's never a good time to give up a child. So this is an extreme act of piety that a woman who's become attached to her child, weaned him, would now just say, Okay, I'm going to now give you to the Lord. You'd think a child in that situation would have abandonment issues, but not so in this case.

There was a time in modern missions where a lot of missionary agencies required their missionaries to give up their children and put them in boarding school to raise. I've known a number of older missionaries of an earlier generation than myself, my parents' generation, who actually had to give up their children while the parents went and served on the mission field. The kids had to go to a missionary boarding school with the other missionary kids, which seems really wrong to me.

I mean, what's the point of going on the mission field if you can't take your family with you and be an example of a godly family among the people that you're laboring with? What kind of example are you setting to them if you're sending your kids off and not even raising them? You're not giving any kind of example of godly parenting. It just seems wrong. And as a result, many missionary kids turned out to be angry and non-Christians.

I've known kids who were raised in that situation and they just resented their parents. They resented God because their parents were serving God when they abandoned them that way and so forth. But I have met a few times.

I remember in England, speaking for a while, I went over there meeting a young woman who had been raised in a missionary boarding school. Her parents had done that. And she loved God, serving God, and so forth.

So not all people who are abandoned by their parents necessarily will have a negative reaction. I remember David said, I think it's Psalm 27:10, if I'm not mistaken, he said, When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. And Samuel, no doubt, was one of those rare kids who could say that.

I've been abandoned by my parents, not sinfully, but in the sense that as an act of devotion to God. But it's not always the case that a child would be on board with that. That's a parental decision that reflects the parents' piety, but it's not always the case that the children share their parents' piety.

And a child could have resentment about that. Samuel did not. Samuel was one of those who, when his father and mother abandoned him, the Lord took him up.

Of course, they abandoned him, as they felt, to good hands. Unfortunately, the high priest was going to become his surrogate father, more or less, his foster father. And Eli was not real good at raising kids.

All of Eli's kids were wicked and turned out bad. And so if I were Hannah, leaving my little three-year-old son with this man and looking at his son and saying, Is my son going to turn out this way? It would be a really, really hard thing to do. As it turns out, though, God spoke to Samuel, of course, in his childhood.

And Samuel is a true believer. And he did not go the way of Eli's sons, although he was raised by the same dad, essentially. So, verse 24.

Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. We're never told exactly how old he was, but there's a likelihood he was three or four.

He could have been five or six, because sometimes they would take that long to wean a child in those days. Then they slaughtered a bull and brought the child to Eli. And she said, O my Lord, as your soul lives, my Lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to Yahweh.

For this child I prayed, and Yahweh has granted me my petition, which I asked of him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he shall be lent to the Lord.

So they worshiped the Lord there. It's interesting she says lent to the Lord rather than given to the Lord. And it may be that she had some kind of a hope that in the next life they'd be reunited, you know.

I'll have him again someday. It's hard to say because the Old Testament doesn't have any revelation about life after death. But that doesn't mean people didn't have hopes of

it.

I mean, people have always had hopes of life after death, whether they had a word from God or not. Even pagan societies who had no revelation from God had hopes of that. So she might have thought, well, I'll give him to the Lord as long as he lives.

After that, maybe I'll get him back. Maybe that's the kind of loan she's thinking of. And then, chapter two, Hannah prayed and said, and her prayer, by the way, is rather lengthy, but it resembles in many points what's called the Magnificat, the prayer or the praise that Mary uttered in Luke chapter one when she met Elizabeth.

And Mary was now pregnant and she praises God. Mary and Hannah had very similar prayers. In fact, there's some ways in which Mary's prayer seems to have borrowed imagery from this one.

Now, this is given in poetry. Whether Hannah had composed this for the occasion, which is possible, or whether she spoke naturally in poetry because she was speaking under inspiration, or maybe she said all these things but not poetically, and later the writer framed it in poetry, I don't know. I think it's probably as likely as not that she, knowing for years that she was going to do this at this ceremony of dedication, she had prepared this poem to pray to God.

Because it's not in ordinary speech, it's in poetry. It does look like it was, in a sense, contrived in its structure and its style. She said, My heart rejoices in Yahweh.

My horn is exalted in the Lord. Now, the word horn just means power. She's been empowered by having a child, especially in her rivalry with the other woman who could no longer accuse her of being sterile.

She says, I smile at my enemies, no doubt Peninnah is the one in mind here, because I rejoice in your salvation. There is none holy like the Lord, for there is none besides you, nor is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly.

Let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the Lord is the God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. This is no doubt addressed to her rival. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and those who stumbled are girded with strength.

Those who are full have hired themselves out for bread. Those who are hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble.

Now, all of these are sort of metaphors for her condition and her contrast with Peninnah, who had been mocking her all this time. The way that she had been vindicated is poetically stated as if the barren has borne seven. Well, seven is just a perfect number, and of course she had not borne seven, that's not the case, but actually God did give her

more children after this, but she had only borne one at this time.

And she says, the one who had many children has become feeble. This is a contrast between herself and her present vindication against Peninnah. Also the bows of the mighty men are broken, those who stumbled are girded with strength is a contrast.

Peninnah was in a position of strength before, having been the one who gave her husband children. Now, Hannah, who previously was the weaker one, is now strengthened. Likewise, those who are full have hired themselves out for bread.

That would be Peninnah, who had had a lot of children. She was satisfied with children, but Hannah had been unsatisfied, hungry, craving children, and now she's ceased to hunger. So these are the ways that she poetically describes this turn of events.

The Lord kills and makes alive, verse 6, he brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes poor and he makes rich. He brings low and he lifts up.

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap. To set them among princes, to make them inherit the throne of glory. Now, she's apparently talking about how God has vindicated her.

So, when she talks about the poor and the low and the beggar, in verses 7 and 8, this is how she's describing her own self. She's been poor. She's been a beggar.

She's been low. And now God has lifted her up and exalted her by giving her this child. In the middle of verse 8, it says, for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he has set the world upon them.

He will guard the feet of his saints but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. Now, it says the pillar of the earth are the Lord's. This is reflecting an old conception that the earth apparently rested upon pillars.

And she may have believed that too. It's hard to know what she would have thought about that. It's poetic, though.

And because it's poetic, it might not be that she really pictured the earth that way. This is poetic language. The idea of pillars is that which supports something.

And that which supports the pillars is God. The earth, if it's supported on pillars, what supports the pillars? You know, in the days of Job, people believed that the earth was resting on the back of six elephants. But what were they on? Well, they were on a giant tortoise.

Well, what was it on? Well, nobody knew. But it had to be something underneath the elephants. And so a tortoise was postulated.

It reminds me of a conversation my oldest daughter had when she was about five or six years old, as I recall, with a girl from her non-Christian family that was a friend of hers. And they were arguing about evolution. And the little girl said, you know, well, people came from monkeys.

And my daughter said, no, they didn't. They came from God. And the girl says, no, they came from monkeys.

And my daughter said, well, where'd the monkeys come from? And the girl said, they came from dogs. And she said, well, where'd the dogs come from? She said, well, they came from mice. She said, where'd the mice come from? She said, they came from birds.

And the girl wasn't highly educated about this, obviously. But the point was, she gave all this long list of things, and finally she got down and, you know, the cat came from the pig or something like that. And finally my daughter said, well, where'd the pig come from? And the girl said, that's a good question.

That literally happened. So classic, you know. Had this long, almost interminable list of links.

It was entirely arbitrary. The girl was just thinking of anything she could. But she finally couldn't think of anything.

She said, well, that's a good question. And in the Bible if someone said, well, what's the earth sitting on? It's sitting on pillars. Well, what are they sitting on? Well, that's a good question.

The elephants are standing on a tortoise. What are the pillars on? The pillars are on God. God upholds the pillars of the earth.

God is the one who is, who causes the world to exist and to stand, she says. And that same God who upholds the whole earth will guard the feet of his saints. And the wicked shall be silent in darkness.

So that's, it's good to have that God on your side who's in charge of sustaining the whole world. For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces.

From heaven he will thunder against them. Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth. Now, man, she's kind of expanding her vision from this family situation to a much larger, you know, scenario.

She sees the way that God has vindicated her personally is just a microcosm of how God will judge generally and universally that as she has been vindicated in her righteousness against somebody who is wrongfully, you know, mocking her. So what God has done for

her is a small, you know, snippet of the larger picture of what God is going to do in all cases. He's going to judge the whole world.

And then it says this, very strangely, he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed. Now this is interesting because Israel didn't have a king yet. Although Samuel, her son, would grow up to install one.

Did she know this? To exalt the horn of his anointed. The anointed means someone who has had oil poured over him. That could be a priest, but she probably had the king in mind.

Kings were installed by having oil poured over them as well. That was the way priests and kings were installed, was by having oil poured over them. That was called the anointing.

And she doesn't seem to be thinking of an anointed priest, but she's mentioned that God is going to give strength to his king. So she has in mind, perhaps prophetically, no doubt prophetically, the idea that there will be a monarchy. And that God will anoint a king and give strength to his king.

If so, this would have to be David. Although David was not the first king, he was certainly the one that God gave strength to and gave victory to and used and made promises to. So there may be in Hannah's prayer, an actual prophecy that God gave her that has something to do with David and his dynasty, which of course, this child Samuel would someday be very instrumental in bringing this about.

But how did she know this, if not by prophetic word? And how early did she know this? If she knew it earlier, that might be what Elkanah meant when he says, may the Lord establish his word. Maybe they had all, maybe this revelation had been given to her earlier and she knew this was a word from the Lord. And Elkanah did too.

And so maybe that's the word that he thought, he prayed that God would establish. Well, verse 11 says, then Elkanah went with his, went to his house at Ramah, but the child ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest. So they went home without their baby.

That'd be really a hard thing to do. And here's this little child and he ministers before the Lord. What's that mean? The word minister means serve.

You're not supposed to think of him like a pastor of a church, a minister like that. But he's just serving in the tabernacle, probably in the most menial, simple things that a little child could do. Who knows? Just washing the cups or whatever he did initially.

We don't know. He obviously grew up to have some serious responsibility though. Now the sons of Eli were corrupt.

They did not know Yahweh. Now of course they knew about him. They were priests.

They were trained. They had a father who was a high priest who was a godly man. But they didn't personally know Yahweh.

They had not become acquainted with him. They had not devoted themselves to him. And the priest's custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with his three-pronged flesh hook in his hand while the meat was boiling.

Then he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself all that the flesh hook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw.

And if the man said to him, They should really burn the fat first, then you may take as much as your heart desires. He would answer him, No, but you must give it to me now. And if not, I will take it by force.

Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Now, exactly what this custom was is hard to know because we're only told what's told here, and it doesn't really correspond with very much that the law says in Leviticus about sacrifices. There's nothing there about boiled meat at all.

And when it comes to the fat, it's made very clear in Leviticus that the fat is to be burned to the Lord, and that even the average worshipper knew that was true, but the priest just said, No, we're going to take what we want of it, including the fat. In other words, the laymen were able to correct the clergyman about biblical procedure, and the clergyman didn't care. This is the epitome of wickedness in the church, is when the people in the pews actually know the Bible, and are more committed to keeping the Bible than the pastors are.

And that was the case here. These men were the ones who were supposed to be teaching the law to the people. The people knew more about it than they did, or at least were more committed to keeping it than they were, and the priest would bully the people, and force them to comply.

And so it said, this caused people to abhor the offering of the Lord. What that means is, people dreaded going to worship God. And it was the priest's fault.

What kind of obligation or responsibility rests on the shoulders of a minister, if when people come to sit under his ministry, they feel abused, they feel there's compromise, they feel like this is not really how it's supposed to be, and so they hate going to church. So they stop. Or worse yet, they stop serving God.

You see, they might stop going to church without stopping serving God, because maybe the church isn't serving God. They may leave the church so that they can serve God and not compromise with the church. But the thing is, there are some people who just abhor God, because their whole experience in the church has been so bad, and that experience has been bad because of the leadership of the church, and church politics and weird stuff, and hypocrisy in the ministry and all that.

That is a very common thing, as we all know. And this lays a tremendous burden on those who are in ministry, to know that they may cause people to stop worshipping God. Make people abhor or dread going to church.

These people began to dread bringing their offerings. They had to do it under the law. They had to bring their offerings, but there was such an abuse taking place that people hated doing it.

So going to church was something they did with great dislike. When David said, I was glad when they said to me, let's go into the house of the Lord, he obviously was talking about the tabernacle under much better circumstances. It's a delight to go to church or to worship God with people if things are done God's way.

But when there's compromise and selfishness on the part of the priesthood or whatever, then anyone would rather not go to church. That's why Paul, or James said in his book that teachers have a much stricter judgment than other people have because their public ministry can turn people off to God if they do it wrongly. There's a great responsibility there.

Now, Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod. So he made a little priest garment for him. Moreover, his mother used to make him a little robe and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

And Eli would bless Elkane on his wife and say, Yahweh give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was lent to the Lord. Apparently Eli was happy with the charge of Samuel. It meant Eli had more responsibility to raise another kid.

And that might not be something an old man with grown sons who's finished child raising would want to do. It's like when parents have to take on their or grandparents have to take on their grandkids to raise. I thought I was done with this.

Eli was like grandfather age and now he's got to take on this little toddler. But obviously Samuel was such a boy as it was a delight to raise him apparently. Eli was very grateful to them for bringing Samuel to him.

And he said, the Lord give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was lent to the Lord. Then they would go to their own home and the Lord visited Hannah so that

she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

So she had six children all together including Samuel. We don't know if she had as many as Penanah had but she certainly was no longer reproached for barrenness. Now Eli was very old and he heard everything his sons did to Israel and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Boy, these guys had all the vices of modern ministry. I mean, greed, sexual scandal, and when I say modern ministry, I mean the worst of modern ministry. I don't mean all modern ministry.

There's lots of Christian ministers who are good examples, good Christians. But the stuff you hear about, the scandalous stuff is in these two areas. Taking more than their share of the offerings that come to the Lord on the one hand and taking more women than their share too.

And that is something that Eli's sons were busy doing and he knew it but he didn't stop them. And this is where he was guilty and where he got in trouble. But he says that the sons lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

So apparently as they took the meat by force from people, they probably came to these women and forced them to come and sleep with them too. So he said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear your evil dealings from all the people. Know my sons for this is not a good report that I hear.

You make Yahweh's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him? Nevertheless, they did not heed the voice of their father because the Lord desired to kill them.

He didn't want them to repent. So like Pharaoh, he hardened his heart so he wouldn't repent because he intended to judge him. He hardened their hearts from hearing their father too because God intended to kill them.

Now it might look like Eli did all he could to end this abuse. He scolded them. He told them they weren't just sinning against man, they were sinning against the Lord, which is even more serious.

And they wouldn't listen to him because God wanted to kill them. So it seems like Eli now has discharged all of his responsibility toward his sons, but that's not so. Because a prophet is going to come and tell him that or actually because of he's going to tell Samuel.

God's going to speak to Samuel later and say that Eli is going to be judged because his sons made themselves vile and he did not restrain them. Apparently he was supposed to

do more than just speak to them. Now these were adult sons.

The old man might not be able to physically hold them, but he could expel them from the priesthood. There's certainly no reason for him to keep them functioning there where they're abusing their power. So he raised a complaint of sorts.

It was kind of a weak complaint. I mean it sounds like a strong rebuke, but I mean it's pretty weak because he didn't say, you're out of here. You guys have ruined the sanctity of the tabernacle.

You're causing people to hate offering to the Lord. You get out of here. In fact, he could have actually punished them in some other ways, but he could at least put them out of the priesthood and said, you're not going to do this anymore.

But he didn't. He was apparently a little too soft on them. And the child Samuel grew in stature and in favor both with the Lord and men.

Sort of what is said about Jesus in Luke chapter 2. It says that Jesus, the child, increased in stature and wisdom and in favor with God and men. So obviously the words in Luke are taken from here, but the wisdom is added in Luke. Then a man of God came to Eli, this would be a prophet of some sort, and said to him, thus says Yahweh, did I not clearly reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel? He means Levi.

To be my priest, to offer upon my altar, to burn incense and to wear an ephod before me? Did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? Why do you kick at my sacrifice and my offering which I have commanded in my habitation and honor your sons more than me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel, my people? Therefore Yahweh, God of Israel, says, I had said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before me forever. That is that the household of Aaron from which he had descended, that they would walk before God, means be priests, walking before God had to do with their functions in the tabernacle. So he said, I have said that Aaron's family, which included you, would walk before me forever in the priesthood.

But now the Lord says, far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Now this is an interesting principle here, because God had made a promise to the house of Eli, or to the house of Aaron, that they would be priests forever, but he's saying that only applies to those who honor me. There's not some kind of blanket, unconditional promise that just because you have the right bloodline you have these privileges.

This principle needs to be considered when we consider Israel too as a whole, as a nation. Many people feel like, well just because they have the right bloodline, they are

special to God. Well, he did make promises to Israel, but he says, but I will honor those who honor me, and I'll despise those who despise me.

And so just having the right parentage, obviously is not something that puts a person in a favored position with God. It's having the right heart. Honoring God is what he will honor.

Behold the days are coming that I will cut off your arm, and the arm of your father's house, figuratively speaking, so that there will not be an old man in your house, and you will see an enemy in my habitation. That's probably the Philistines who came and destroyed Shiloh shortly after this. Despite all the good which God does for Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever.

That means his children will die young. They won't get old. But any of your men whom I do not cut off from my altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age.

Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas. In one day they shall die, both of them. Then I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in my heart, and in my mind, I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before my anointed forever.

Now you might think the priest that God's going to raise up here is a reference to Samuel. And I don't think that's true because it seems to talk about a priest whose descendants will continue forever to walk before the king. And it was probably Zadok and his priesthood that is implied here who was the priest whose descendants remained in power from the time of David on replacing the house of Eli.

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house, Eli, will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver for this other priest that God raised up. And a morsel of bread and say, please put me in one of the priestly positions that I may eat a piece of bread. In other words, Eli, your sons are going to be out of a job.

To them the ministry is nothing more than a job. And so they're going to be fired. And I'm going to raise up somebody who's a better priest than you, and your sons the ones that survive, are going to be begging for food from this priest because they're not going to have any income from ministry anymore because they have not qualified for long-term ministry here.

They've had the chance they've mismanaged it. And so there's this unnamed man of God who comes and issues this prophecy against the house of Eli. It will be repeated by God to Samuel when God wakes Samuel in chapter 3 in the night.

God's going to also prophesy to Samuel that Eli's house is going to have judgment upon it. But the one particular mentioned here that is a sign that God would give him is that

Hophni and Phinehas would die in one day. And that fulfillment happened in chapter 4 when they carried the ark out to battle against the Philistines and they both fell in battle and the ark was captured.

So this is a pretty horrible judgment on the house of Eli despite the fact that the man was generally a nice guy, a reverend guy. He stood for what was right but he didn't stand strongly enough for what was right. And God's anger on the house of Eli we will see in chapter 3 is because Eli's sons made themselves vile and he did not restrain them.

So there's a responsibility on parents to restrain their children if they make themselves vile. You can't prevent your children from making themselves vile but you can restrain whatever activities you cannot empower them. You cannot help them do their wicked things.

And by leaving Hophni and Phinehas in office without expelling them from office Eli was empowering them to continue doing their abuse of their position and that was not acceptable to God.