

## “A Gift Exchange” (1 Samuel 1:1–2:11)

Have you ever heard the expression, “Everything rises and falls on leadership?” There is a great deal of truth to this statement. However, in the church, I would suggest that: “Everything rises and falls on *godly* leadership.” Throughout human history God has always used leaders to accomplish His purposes. Whenever God wants to move in a powerful way, He raises up a man or woman to serve Him and His people. Godly leadership is critical to God’s kingdom purposes. And, at no time, has godly leadership been more critical and desperately needed. The ancient book of 1 Samuel is a leadership manual that will raise up godly leaders. It chronicles the lives of Samuel, Saul, David, and many others. Studying the lives of these individuals teaches us how to be godly leaders who have an immense view of God.

Before jumping into our study it is important to understand the context of 1 Samuel. In our English Bibles, 1 Samuel follows the book of Ruth. However, in the Hebrew text, 1 Samuel immediately follows the book of Judges. Thus, in the Hebrew Bible, the last words written before 1 Sam 1:1 are: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25). After more than four centuries of failure, Israel was frustrated with the lack of central leadership. They concluded that their troubles were political, and therefore, required a political solution, so they requested a king to lead them in battle. They were blind to the fact that their political problems had a spiritual cause. Instead of a political solution (seeking a king), they should have opted for a spiritual solution: renewed faithfulness to the Lord and the covenant.

First Samuel is a call to all leaders. As we study through this great book, we should learn from the successes and sins of the various characters. More importantly, we must see God throughout His stories. Although there are several contributing characters, God is always the main actor. This is true in every passage.<sup>1</sup> God is the chief leader and we are to follow His lead. In 1 Sam 1:1–2:11 the narrator pens a story filled with hurts and obstacles. Despite disappointment and pain, God yearns for you and me to worship Him. This passage poses two critical questions: (1) What is true worship? (2) Why is true worship important?

**1. What is true worship (1:1–28)?** Our story begins with three seemingly innocuous verses: “**Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah<sup>2</sup> and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh.<sup>3</sup> And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD there**”<sup>4</sup> (1:1–3). The same formula “Now there was a certain man” begins the books of Joshua (1:1), Judges (1:1), Ruth (1:1), Nehemiah (1:1), Esther (1:1), and Ezekiel (1:1).<sup>5</sup> The Scriptures love to emphasize the significance of God’s man coming onto the scene. Here, Elkanah,<sup>6</sup> is depicted as a wealthy and godly man,<sup>7</sup> who had just one problem: he had two wives. His first wife, Hannah,<sup>8</sup> whom he loved, was unable to have children, so he married a second wife, Peninnah, in the hopes of having an heir. I know what you’re thinking: “That’s awful!” I agree, but please understand that polygamy is never *explicitly* condemned in Scripture.<sup>9</sup> Godly men such as Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon were polygamous. However, polygamy was not God’s design from the beginning (Gen 2:28, 24). The complications and consequences of polygamy are devastating! One wise man once said: “First learn to live with two tigresses, and then expect to live happily with two wives.”<sup>10</sup> With that said, we must understand that the inability of a wife to produce an heir was a huge disgrace in ancient Near Eastern societies. An heir contributed to the family wealth through their work, cared for their parents in old age, and ensured the future of the family by inheriting the family wealth. To put it bluntly: Children were the Social Security of that culture.<sup>11</sup> So, obviously, having children was especially important in this time and culture. This cultural insight provides greater appreciation for Hannah’s plight.

Now back to our story: **“When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; but to Hannah he would give a double portion,<sup>12</sup> for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat”** (1:4–7). The Lord had closed Hannah’s womb.<sup>13</sup> This reality is repeated in 1:5 and 6. Clearly, God is utterly sovereign.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, barren women seem to be God’s instruments in raising up key figures in the history of redemption, whether the promised seed (Isaac), the father of Israel (Jacob), deliverers of Israel (Joseph, Samson, Samuel), or the forerunner of the great King (John the baptizer). God loves to make our total inability His starting point. He wants us to understand that our hopelessness and our helplessness are no barriers to His work. Indeed, our utter incapacity is often the prop He delights to use for His next act. When God’s people are without strength, without resources, without hope, without human gimmicks—*then* He loves to stretch forth His hand from heaven.<sup>15</sup> This principle ought to be a tremendous source of encouragement. Are you dealing with an impossible situation? Is your marriage falling apart? Does it seem like divorce is inevitable? Do you have a child that is adversely affecting the rest of your children? Is this child even putting significant stress on your marriage? Do you have a job that is driving you mad? Have you tried to find other work but without success? To all of these circumstances, God says: “Trust Me, depend upon Me, cling to Me. I will see you through.”

Of course, it’s never easy to endure helplessness and hopelessness. “Adversity makes cowards of us all.” Not only did Hannah have to suffer through barrenness, she was continuously taunted. Can you imagine the pain and grief? To make matters worse, Hannah had to endure such mistreatment “year after year” on her way to worship the Lord. Yet, despite her pain, Hannah, continued to go up to the house of the Lord, year after year. She was a faithful woman of God even when other women and even members of her family made her life miserable. Worshipping God demands perseverance in the dark nights of the soul. We could call this “Worshipping in the dark.” This narrative should remind you that your family problems may go on for a long time before God resolves them or changes the situation. I wish I could promise you immediate deliverance, but I can’t. It seems to be that God uses our pain for His purposes—one of those being—our maturity! Nevertheless, in the midst of your pain, God longs for you to pour out your hurts to Him. Our Lord can handle your tears; it won’t make Him nervous or put out if you unload your distress.<sup>16</sup> Cry out to Him today. Cultivate an intimate relationship with Him.

How did Elkanah respond to Hannah’s plight? Read these words in 1:8: **“Then Elkanah her husband said to her, ‘Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?’”**<sup>17</sup> This is a “guy response” if there ever was one! Hannah needed empathy and sincere understanding, not a typical male, self-centered approach. Elkanah displayed insensitivity to the needs of his wife. Instead of praying for her, he feels rebuffed that she doesn’t value him more than ten sons! Guys, learn from Elkanah’s mistake.

Fortunately, Hannah doesn’t react to Elkanah’s hurtful words with more hurt or resentment. Rather, she turns to prayer. In 1:9–11 the narrator writes: **“Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly.<sup>18</sup> 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 son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.”** Even in the midst of great pain, Hannah makes a special vow to the Lord.<sup>19</sup> She dedicates her son to the Lord for his entire life as a Nazirite (Num 6). Normally, a Nazirite vow was temporary.<sup>20</sup> However, Hannah was so committed to the Lord that she made it permanent. She promised that if God would give her a son, the child would be given back to God. Hannah dedicated her son for lifelong service.<sup>21</sup> Are you willing to offer your kids to the Lord’s service?

There are two notable observations that stem from 1 Sam 2:11: (1) Hannah cries out to God as the “Lord of hosts” (*Yahweh tsaboth*). This is the first time God’s war title is spoken by a person (cf. 1:3).<sup>22</sup> The “hosts” are the armies of the sovereign God and consist of humans (17:45), angels (Josh 5:14), and stars (Isa 40:26). This name expresses the infinite resources and power at God’s disposal as He fights for His people.<sup>23</sup> The reason that Hannah prays is because Peninnah provoked her. As a result, Hannah’s prayer transforms a nation. Always remember God commonly uses sinners to provoke saints to transforming prayer (e.g., Isa 37:1–4).<sup>24</sup> (2) Hannah referred to herself three times in her prayer with the term “maidservant” (*amah*), which is normally used to describe a female household slave. Hannah humbled herself before the Lord.<sup>25</sup> Are you willing to humble yourself in this same manner?

There is an interesting exchange in our story in 1:12–14: **“Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Then Eli said to her, ‘How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.’”** Worship was apparently so rare in Israel that the priest didn’t even recognize it.<sup>26</sup> (Remember, this is the time of the Judges.) We will discover later the utter hypocrisy of Eli’s words. Eli was an indulgent, lazy priest and lazy father. He had learned to indulge his wicked sons (2:22–25, 29–30), yet he gets riled up over what he thinks is an inebriated woman.<sup>27</sup> Hard times have fallen on Israel; even the priests are messed up!

Sadly, Hannah must overcome the obstacle of a priest whose dulled vision sees the expression of godliness as drunkenness.<sup>28</sup> **“But Hannah replied, ‘No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless<sup>29</sup> woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation.’ Then Eli answered and said, ‘Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him.’<sup>30</sup> She said, ‘Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.’ So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad”** (1:15–18). Far from pouring herself too many drinks, Hannah had been “pouring out [her] soul to the LORD” (1:15).<sup>31</sup> Eli jumps to conclusions and is quick to judge others. What a lesson for us not to jump to conclusions and not to judge fellow believers unless we know all the circumstances. Fortunately, Eli corrected his error and blessed Hannah. Amazingly, she found peace *before* the answer came (1:18)! Her peace was the result of casting her cares upon God, even though the answer had not yet come.

In 1:19–20 we read two powerful verses: **“Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I have asked him of the LORD.’”<sup>32</sup>** Elkanah and Hannah worshipped the Lord, returned home, and celebrated their oneness. Then God in His grace “remembered her.” This is a key phrase. It doesn’t mean that the Lord had forgotten Hannah. Rather, He “remembered” (*zakar*) His commitment or promise and acts on it!<sup>33</sup> Nineteen verses prepare for the birth; one verse narrates it.<sup>34</sup> God often builds great faith and sends special blessings out of sorrow and disappointment. What trial or test are you going through today? Will you worship God as you go through it? Will you patiently wait on Him until your change comes?

God responded to Hannah’s prayers. Now the question is: Will Hannah follow through with her vow? This is the tension point of the story. What will Hannah do? Will she obey God or keep her baby boy for herself? **“Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and pay 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 bring him, that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever.’ Elkanah her husband said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word.’ So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him”** (1:21–23).

These three verses are not looking good. Elkanah goes up to Shiloh and worships Lord alone. Previously, Hannah had always accompanied him. But now she is caught up in being a mother and weaning her child. It should be noted that in the ancient Near East the weaning of a child could take three years.<sup>35</sup> While Hannah still seems to remember her vow, it appears that she is procrastinating. Elkanah seems concerned about Hannah keeping her vow. He has a right to be concerned! The God-given love of a mother for a child is powerful and relentless. Hannah had prayed so hard for this child. Would she really be able to give him up as she had promised? This would be gut-wrenching and excruciating!

Our chapter concludes with these powerful words: **“Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull<sup>36</sup> and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. She said, ‘Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD.’ And he [Samuel<sup>37</sup>] worshiped the LORD there”** (1:24–28). Hannah kept her vow! She then worshipped the Lord. In 1:27–28 a form of the Hebrew root word “to ask” (*shaal*) appears four times. This is not evident in our English versions because it is translated by different words (e.g., “dedicated,” “give,” “lent,” “praying”).<sup>38</sup> This emphasis seems to point to the fact that God honors Hannah for asking Him to move (cf. 1:17). A mother’s prayers and a father’s encouragement changed the destiny of an entire nation. Just look at the man that Samuel became! There is tremendous potential for a godly, loving mother to change the world through a child conceived in faith and dedicated to the Lord.<sup>39</sup> Never underestimate the power of prayer or the value of one godly home.

[Throughout chapter 1 the theme is worship. Specifically, what is true worship? The answer is that true worship is *costly* worship. In chapter 2 the writer of 1 Samuel addresses the question . . .]

**2. Why is true worship important? (2:1–11).**<sup>40</sup> The song of Hannah is important for the interpretation of the story because, like most songs in the Bible, it is one of the ways the author uses to draw out thematic hot spots of the story.<sup>41</sup> Read 2:1–3 carefully: **“Then Hannah prayed and said, ‘My heart exults [rejoices<sup>42</sup>] in the LORD;<sup>43</sup> My horn is exalted in the LORD, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God. Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed.”**<sup>44</sup> Hannah has just dropped off Samuel at the temple and now she breaks out into praise. Most people would sing *if* they could *keep* their son, but Hannah sang because she could *give* her son to the service of the Lord. She was thrilled to be able to parent a prophet. Hannah indicates that her “horn is exalted in the Lord.” The horn of various animals is a symbol of pride or strength.<sup>45</sup> Hannah speaks boldly because of her confidence in God’s salvation. She says three times that there is “no one” like the Lord (2:2). She also calls God a “rock” (*tsur*), which refers to a rocky cliff where one can seek refuge from enemies. Here the metaphor depicts God as a protector of His people. This entire song is about God, which can be clearly seen in the twenty references to Him. Based upon your knowledge of God, what do you have to sing about?

In 2:4–8 Hannah continues her prayer: **“The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven,<sup>46</sup> But she who has many children languishes. The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, And He set the world on them.”** God’s great sovereignty is evident throughout these verses. He can be trusted. Worship Him in the midst of your sorrow.

Hannah's psalm closes out with two critical verses: **“He keeps the feet of His godly ones,<sup>47</sup> But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; For not by might shall a man prevail. Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; Against them He will thunder in the heavens, The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; And He will give strength to His king, And will exalt the horn of His anointed”** (2:9–10). Perhaps you assumed that Hannah's is song about her son. It is. It concerns her “horn” (2:1). The song, however, breaks out beyond Hannah. It anticipates the “horn of David,” who is the true horn of Israel. This is a reference to none other than Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup> This is further confirmed by the Hebrew word for “anointed” (*mashiach*) or “Messiah,” which translated into Greek means “Christ” (*christos*). This is the first time that the term Messiah appears in the Old Testament. Through King David, God brought a line of kings that would usher in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is all about Jesus! He is present in every book. This is one reason studying the Old Testament is so exciting!

Our story concludes in 2:11 with a sobering sentence: **“Then Elkanah went to his home at Ramah. But the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest.”<sup>49</sup>** Elkanah and Hannah left their son Samuel with Eli. What a grueling commitment they fulfilled! I can't even begin to imagine how arduous and painful the journey home from Shiloh to Ramah must have been. But they fulfilled their vow in obedience to the Lord. Note the key phrase, though, is “to the Lord.” While Samuel was trained and mentored by Eli he worshipped and served the Lord.

What does true worship look like? It is costly and sacrificial. Is this type of worship reasonable? Absolutely! It is the only proper response to the God of the Bible. This passage has taught us that *God's gifts should be given back to Him*. In light of what God has done for you and me, the only natural and reasonable response is to give ourselves back to Him. So what does this look like on a practical level?

***Give your children back to God.***<sup>50</sup> Now, don't drop your child off tomorrow morning to live and serve at your church facility for the rest of their lives. I don't know if your pastor would appreciate being a full-time daycare provider. Obviously, this is not what the text is suggesting. But, it may be that you have thought: “I don't want my child to be a pastor.” “I don't want my child to become a missionary.” I don't want my child to work for a nonprofit organization.” Do you tell your child, “God loves you, but *I* have a wonderful plan for your life?” This text is calling you to recognize that God has a better plan for your children than you do. He created them and has a calling upon their lives. He can accomplish more in and through your children than you can possibly imagine. Will you fully release your children to whatever the Lord calls them to do? Will you pray that they will use their gifts for mission and worship? *God's gifts should be given back to Him*.

***Give your career back to God.*** You may have the tendency to hold on tightly to our job. In this unstable and insecure economy, this is natural. However, God is calling you to a supernatural perspective. It could be that God is calling you to serve Him in another capacity. Eric Messelt was a successful computer consultant who made six figures. When Eric visited our church he was living in Rancho Cucamonga, CA. He had everything that this world had to offer. But he decided to move his family to rainy Olympia, WA, become my intern, and enroll at Western Seminary. Eric graduated from seminary at fifty and took a pastorate in snowy Detroit. Eric and his family gave up a great deal to realize his calling. Paul MacLurg was a successful executive pastor at a church of 5,000. He was in his fifties when he decided to leave his pastorate and reach unchurched people by opening up a Thrive Fitness Club. He and his family gave up security and stability to pursue another calling. Maria Goodin, a member of our church, earned a degree in engineering. She is brilliant and analytical. She could make a great deal of money as an engineer. Instead, she decided to become the director of our church preschool. Although her training was not working with children, she decided to pursue another calling to transfer truth to the next generation. Can God have your occupation, if He wants it? Will you commit to making your business a place of mission? At the very least, will you ensure that your work is an expression of worship? Remember, work is intended to be worship. *God's gifts should be given back to Him*.

***Give your time back to God.*** Our most valuable commodity is time. We are selfish creatures who want to protect our time and use it for ourselves. Yet, God is calling us to redeem the time because the days are evil (Eph 5:16, KJV). If you are a teenager, you may say, “I am just a kid. Kids are supposed to have fun. This means I should be able to watch movies, play video games, spend time on social media, and hang out with my friends.” There is nothing inherently evil with these activities, but it is so easy for teenagers to squander time. God is calling teenagers (and even children) to invest in His kingdom.<sup>51</sup> Presently, I am seeing a trend among my retired friends and church members to invest their lives in eternity. Our marriage mentors, Kevin and Debbie Mehan, currently live in Phoenix, AZ. Debbie (57) just retired from being a schoolteacher and Kevin (61) has also resigned from his place of employment. Instead of traveling and playing golf in sunny Arizona, they are spending the next ten days with us and are exploring how they should spend their remaining years. They want their lives to count for eternal purposes. Our own Roger and Vicki Brittingham recently retired from their successful state jobs. Like the Mehans, they have said that they want to pour their lives into people not their own pleasures. They regularly ask me what more they can do to serve our church and our greater community. They are even exploring ways that their lives can touch the outermost parts of the world. This is what it’s all about! How will you give your time back to God? *God’s gifts should be given back to Him.*

Do you know what the name “Hannah” means? “Hannah” (*Channah*) means “grace.” What a reminder of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. Hannah’s severe trial proved to be the salvation of God’s people. Throughout the course of our lives we experience salvation via personal rescue or deliverance on a micro scale. It happens over and over again. It is a reminder of the macro salvation that will be ours one day. God uses micro deliverances to persuade us that He is God and that He sent the Lord Jesus to die for our sins and rise from the dead. Will you place your faith in Him today? If you have already believed in Christ, will you allow grace to motivate you to live for Him? *God’s gifts should be given back to Him.*

### **Scripture References**

1 Samuel 1:1–2:10

Luke 1:46–55

Judges 2:10–12; 21:25

Deuteronomy 28:1–68

Deuteronomy 32:30–31; 33:17

2 Corinthians 12:7b–10

Romans 8:28–30

### **Study Questions**

1. What are my unfulfilled dreams? When have my expectations of blessing from the Lord been frustrated or delayed? Is there something in my life that God has refused to give me that I am bitter about? Will I confess that to God right now? What is the proper perspective in response to trials? Read Job 2:10 and Ecclesiastes 7:14. What personal tribulations and trials have brought me to a deeper recognition of God's purposes and His love?
2. Do I pray from a broken and sincere heart? Have I recognized that God must be approached humbly? Read Isaiah 66:2b. Am I desperate for God to move in my life? What has brought this about? How do I cultivate an intimate relationship with the Lord? Do I communicate my heart to Him? How well do I listen to God? How can I increase the passion and fervency of my prayers?
3. Have I dedicated all my children to the Lord, realizing that even if they are grown, it is still not too late? Will I pray that they will be committed to doing God's will in every respect? Have I encouraged my children to serve in the church? In their community? On missions trips? Am I willing to wholly release my children to the Lord regardless of what God may call them to do or where He may lead them to go?
4. Do I worship out of a sense of obligation or out of a heart overflowing with gratitude for all that I have received in God's grace? Do I possess an attitude of gratitude? If not, why not? Am I constantly looking to "get" more blessings from God or do I long to "give" back to God and others? What area is God calling me to give back to Him? Will I do so today?
5. Do I consider myself a leader? Do others think of me as a leader? Why or why not? Who do I presently have influence over? Am I using my influence to impact these individuals spiritually? If so, how? What area of my life needs attention (e.g., character, skill, experience) so that I become a more effective leader? Will I take the necessary steps to grow in this area?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In 1 Sam 1, Yahweh stands at the center of each scene: (1) “The Lord had closed her womb” (1:5, 6); (2) “the God of Israel grant your petition” (1:17); (3) “the Lord remembered her” (1:19); and (4) “the Lord has granted me my petition” (1:27). Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 15.

<sup>2</sup> The proper name “Hannah” occurs again in Luke 2:36 (“Anna” with the rough breathing mark, transliterated as “h” in English) and is improperly transliterated in all but a few English translations as “Anna.” Unfortunately, the KJV spelling “Anna” in Luke 2:36 has become traditional.

<sup>3</sup> Jerusalem was controlled by the Jebusites, so God’s people had to worship twenty miles to the north.

<sup>4</sup> The mention of Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, serves as a direct contrast to Elkanah and his family. We will learn more about Eli and his sons in 1 Sam 2:12–36.

<sup>5</sup> At times this same introductory phrase sets off a narrative in a series of narratives within the same work (i.e., Judg 13:2; 17:1; 19:1).

<sup>6</sup> Elkanah, whose Hebrew name means “God has created” was a Levite (1 Chron 6:26, 34). “Elkanah” was a popular name which was shared by at least five different OT men, two of whom were Samuel’s father’s ancestors (1 Chron 6:22–27). Elkanah’s name occurs in 1 Sam 1:1, 4, 8, 19, 21, 23; 2:11, 20. Outside of 1 Samuel, the name occurs in Exod 6:24; 1 Chron 6:23, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36; 9:16; 12:6; 15:23; 2 Chron 28:7.

<sup>7</sup> Sailhamer writes: “In this way the writer has linked Elkanah and his family to the instructions of Moses in Dt 16:16, which required that all Israelite men appear before the Lord three times each year to present an offering to the Lord. We thus see that Elkanah and his family are righteous, obedient Israelites, which makes the announcement of Hannah’s barrenness all the more problematic.” John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 218.

<sup>8</sup> For a similar construction (“the first . . . the second . . .”), see Gen 4:19; Exod 1:15; Ruth 1:4; cf. 1 Sam 8:2; 25:3.

<sup>9</sup> Although polygamy is never expressly forbidden in the OT, it is also never expressly approved of either. The Torah governs it by various regulations (Exod 21:7–10; Lev 18:18 [legislates not marrying sisters]; Deut 17:17; 21:15–17 [legislates inheritance when both wives have children]). Lamech, the seventh descendant from Cain, is the first mentioned polygamist in Scripture (Gen 4:19).

<sup>10</sup> Elmer Towns, *History Makers of the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Victor, 1989), 313.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen J. Andrews and Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), Electronic ed.

<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew text is difficult to read at this point and scholars are not sure exactly how to translate it. Regardless of whether it was a “special portion” or a “double portion,” Elkanah gave it to Hannah because he loved her, even though the Lord had closed her womb.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah emphasizes it in her prayer: “The Lord kills . . . He brings down to Sheol . . . The Lord makes poor . . . He brings low . . .” (1 Sam 2:6–7).

<sup>14</sup> Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 218 remarks: “Hannah’s bitterness is elevated to a significantly higher thematic level in the story. She appears to represent one whose suffering ultimately comes from God, but for which there is no visible cause. Hannah here in this story is not unlike Job. Both are faithful, yet both suffer at hand of God.”

<sup>15</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000 [1988]), 13.

<sup>16</sup> Davis, *1 Samuel*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Note that he echoes the blessing given to Naomi in Ruth 4:15. Like the number seven, the number ten is sometimes used in the Old Testament as an ideal number (e.g., Dan 1:20, Zech 8:23). So, the reference to the “ten sons” refers to an ideal number. Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed suggest it may be an allusion to the sons born to Jacob during the period of Rachel’s barrenness (Gen 29:31–30:22). In saying this, Elkanah may have been trying to tell Hannah that he loved her like Jacob loved Rachel.

<sup>18</sup> The NET study notes remark: “*Heb* ‘and weeping, she was weeping.’ The infinitive absolute emphasizes the extent of her sorrow. The imperfect verbal form emphasizes the continuation of the action in past time.”

<sup>19</sup> Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed. point out: “Women were permitted to make vows (Num 30:3–16), as long as their father or husband agreed (as Elkanah apparently did later; see 1 Sam 1:23). No other example of a woman making a vow is found elsewhere in the Old Testament.”

<sup>20</sup> Levites customarily served from age twenty–five to fifty (Num 4:3; 8:24–26).

<sup>21</sup> The Bible speaks of only one other Nazirite for life, the judge Samson (Judg 13–16).

<sup>22</sup> Bergen states: “The phrase proclaims the Lord’s dominion over all spiritual entities and points to his unmatched sovereign authority.” Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 65. Contrast this with Eli who used the more distant phrase “God of Israel” (1 Sam 1:17).

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Samuel,” 2010 ed: [www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf](http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf), 8. Accessed 5 October 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 627.

<sup>25</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 68 remarks: “She understood that the proper position of a believer in relation to the Lord is that of absolute subjection.”

<sup>26</sup> Leithart writes: “Eli’s inability to identify what Hannah was doing, however, points to the apostasy of the priests and Levites during this period. The book of Judges comes to a climax with stories about corrupt Levites (chapter 17–21), and 1 Samuel fills out that portrait.” Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 39.

<sup>27</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 69 really hits the nail on the head: “He was a man who watched lips instead of perceiving hearts, who judged profound spirituality to be profligate indulgence in spirits, who heard nothing when the Lord spoke (1 Sam 3:4, 6), and who criticized his sons for abusing the sacrificial system yet grew fat from their take (2:22–24; 4:18). Fittingly, in the end his powerful career was surpassed by those who were ‘nothing’—a socially powerless rural woman and a child.”

<sup>28</sup> Hannah had to forgive her husband for his tactlessness. She had to forgive Peninah for her perverse animosity. She had to forgive Eli for his false accusation. And she had break through the feeling of being betrayed by God for His delayed help. See Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 12.

<sup>29</sup> Deffinbaugh notes: “Ironically, the word Hannah uses (“worthless”) is the very term the author uses in chapter 2 (verse 12) to describe the two sons of Eli. She informs him that she has, up to this moment, been speaking out of her agony of soul.” Bob Deffinbaugh “The Son and Psalm of Hannah” (1 Sam 1:1–2:10): [www.bible.org/seriespage/son-and-psalm-hannah-1-samuel-11-210](http://www.bible.org/seriespage/son-and-psalm-hannah-1-samuel-11-210); accessed 5 October 2011.

<sup>30</sup> This is the only place in the OT where a priest blesses an individual.

<sup>31</sup> This is a vivid idiom for praying earnestly (cf. Pss 42:4; 62:8; Lam 2:19). Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed.

<sup>32</sup> Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed. comment: “The meaning of the name Samuel has perplexed scholars to this day. Suggested meanings include: ‘His name is El,’ ‘Name of El/God,’ ‘Heard of God,’ ‘Asked of God,’ ‘He Who Is from God,’ ‘Offspring of God,’ and ‘El Is Exalted’ (Bergen, 71, n. 24). The problem arises when scholars try to connect the name (*shemuel*) and the verb ‘asked’ (*shaal*) which Hannah used in giving the reason why she named the boy Samuel: ‘Because I asked the LORD for him.’” Perhaps it is better to remember that Samuel can mean “The Name of God.” Since the word *name* in biblical Hebrew can mean “reputation,” “fame,” or “memorial,” it doesn’t seem so farfetched to assume that Hannah may have chosen a name that exalted God for his gracious gift.

<sup>33</sup> When used with the Lord as the subject, the verb “to remember” (*zakar*) points to the beginning of a major new work initiated by God on behalf of His people (Gen 8:1; Exod 2:24).

<sup>34</sup> Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 14.

<sup>35</sup> 2 Maccabees 7:27 describes a mother who had nursed her son until the age of three.

<sup>36</sup> The Hebrew text actually says “three bulls.” The large amount—a full ephah and a whole skin—of flour and wine is more appropriate for a sacrifice of three bulls than for one. Hannah wanted to do this sacrifice right. See also Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed.

<sup>37</sup> The “he” who worshipped before the Lord (1:28) may refer to Elkanah, the leader of the family and the main man in the context. It might also refer to Eli to whom Hannah was speaking. I think it probably refers to Samuel, the most immediate antecedent of “he” in 1:28. If this interpretation is correct, this reference marks the beginning of Samuel’s ministry, which all of chapter 1 anticipates.

<sup>38</sup> This foretells the name “Saul” which means “asked for.”

<sup>39</sup> Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 13 aptly states: “At the beginning we have a clue about how and why Samuel became such a sturdy champion of Yahwistic faith. He is predestined by his mother to be such a champion.”

<sup>40</sup> 1 Sam 2 and 2 Sam 22 (David’s victory psalm) echo each other and serve as formal “bookends” that include the stories of Samuel, Saul, and David. See Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 1999), 9.

<sup>41</sup> See Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 219 who goes on to observe: “The song follows the formal pattern of a praise song: (1) An introductory announcement of praise (2:1a); (2) Praise of the Lord’s Majesty (2:1b–3); and (3) Praise of the Lord’s grace (2:4–8b). At its conclusion, however, the song contains a fragment of eschatological hymn. As we will see, the additional element in Hannah’s song plays an important role in developing the meaning of the narrative and ultimately the book.”

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Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” Electronic ed.: “The Song of Hannah appears near the beginning of 1 Samuel, and the Song of David appears near the end of 2 Samuel. These two remarkably similar hymns of praise thus constitute a kind of *inclusio* framing the main contents of the books and reminding us that the two books were originally one. Both begin by using ‘horn’ (1 Sam 2:1; 2 Sam 22:3) as a metaphor for ‘strength,’ referring to God as the ‘Rock,’ and reflecting on divine ‘deliverance/salvation’ (1 Sam 2:1-2; 2 Sam 22:2-3). Both end by paralleling ‘his king’ with ‘his anointed’ (1 Sam 2:10; 2 Sam 22:51).

It may well be that Hannah’s song is the seedplot for Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55; cf. also the Song of Zechariah in vv. 68-79). The two hymns begin similarly, and certain themes in the Song of Hannah recur in the Song of Mary (cf. 1 Sam 2:4, 7-8 with Luke 1:52; 1 Sam 2:5 with Luke 1:53; notice also that Luke 1:48a—‘for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant’—is obviously dependent on 1 Sam 1:11 LXX: ‘if you will only look upon the humble state of your servant’). Both Hannah and Mary became pregnant miraculously (though admittedly in quite different ways), in due course each presented her firstborn son to the Lord at the central sanctuary (1:22; Luke 2:22), and both sang a hymn of thanksgiving and praise (Hannah after the birth of Samuel [1 Sam 2:1-10], Mary before the birth of Jesus [Luke 1:46-55]).”

<sup>42</sup> HALOT s.v. *alats*: “to rejoice or exult.”

<sup>43</sup> The word “LORD” in all capital letters means this is the personal name for God—*Yahweh*. In Exod 3:14 we learn that this is the memorial name for God. It means “He is!” God says, “I AM” and we say, “He is.”

<sup>44</sup> For more on the structure of this psalm see, Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1983), 14.

<sup>45</sup> See 1 Sam 2:10; see also Pss 75:10; 89:24; 112:9; 132:17.

<sup>46</sup> The NET study notes state: “The number *seven* is used here in an ideal sense. Elsewhere in the OT having seven children is evidence of fertility as a result of God’s blessing on the family. See, for example, Jer 15:9, Ruth 4:15.”

<sup>47</sup> House says: “Hannah’s assertion that Yahweh ‘will guard the feet’ of the godly but banishes the wicked to darkness (1 Sam. 2:9) prefigures what occurs with the Lord’s protection of David and rejection of Saul.” Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1998), 229.

<sup>48</sup> Most English versions translate the verbs in 2:10 in the future tense. However, Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 220 notes that “the form of the verbs in the Hebrew text is ‘volitional’; that is, they request that God will do something; they are not merely a prediction that he will. Thus, having proclaimed that the Lord is a righteous judge, Hannah continues by making a request to the Lord that he will now, or in the future, judge all of his creation. What she calls for, in other words, is the reign of God’s kingdom upon the earth. She wants God King and his Anointed One, the Messiah, to prosper and all the world to be judged. She is praying that God will send the promised Messiah. Such an expectation is not only sanctioned by the Pentateuch (cf. Ge 49:8–12; Nu 24:7–24; Dt 17:14ff.), but it is also the central theme of 1 and 2 Samuel (cf. 2Sa 7).” See also Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1983), 13 and P. Kyle, McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel*. Anchor Bible series (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 68 who translate subjunctively.

<sup>49</sup> Tsumura observes that 1 Sam 2:11 is sequential to 1:28 (“and he worshiped the LORD there”). David Toshio Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 135.

<sup>50</sup> Andrews and Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Electronic ed.: “Hannah serves as a faithful role model for all Christian parents. Children are gifts from the Lord (Ps. 127:3). We should seriously desire that each of our children be ‘given over to the Lord.’ God’s gifts should be given back to him. It is not coincidence that many churches hold special dedication services to help parents present their children to the Lord.”

<sup>51</sup> See Alex and Brett Harris, *DO Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2008).