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Samuel's Birth
First Samuel 1: 19-20

Samuel's birth DIG: Who were the other famous women in the Bible who were unable to bear children? In what ways did Hannah remain a good mother to Samuel? What did her sacrifice cost her? What did she gain? What else happened at Ramah? What two things did Hannah's experience show us?

REFLECT: When has ADONAI remembered you in your time of need? Has there been a time of need when you suddenly "remembered" ADONAI? What helps at such times: recording your prayers? Reading the Bible? What does it mean when God does not seem to answer our prayers?

Samuel would be the last of the judges, and the first of the prophets.

Not all the mothers of the nation of **Isra'el** were not able to conceive and have children naturally. Some were barren. **Sarah**, **Rebecca**, **Rachel**, and **Hannah** all had to have a miracle to give birth to **their** children. But why? **ADONAI** wanted to be clearly seen in the births of the major historical heroes in the path to our salvation. Of course, the most out of the ordinary was the birth of **Yeshua, our Messiah. That** is not a birth given by a barren woman, but a birth given by a woman who knew no man!



When the priests offered the burnt offering the next morning (see the commentary on **Leviticus, to see link click Ai – The Burnt Offering: Accepted by God**), **Elkanah** and **his** family were there to **worship God**. **They got up early in the morning and worshipped before ADONAI, then returned and came to their house at Ramah (1:19a).** It was **at Ramah** that **Rachael died** (see the commentary on **Genesis Ij – The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel**); it was **at Ramah** where the exiles began their march into the **Babylonian** captivity (see the commentary on **Jeremiah En – The LORD Bless You, O Righteous Dwelling, O Sacred Mountain**); and it was **at Ramah** that **Herod** tried to kill the baby **Yeshua** (see **The Life of Christ Aw – Herod Gave Orders to Kill all the Boys in Bethlehem Two Years Old and Under**). Therefore, many would mourn **at Ramah**; nevertheless, when **Hannah** returned from Shiloh **her** soul must have been rejoicing, for **she** had given **herself** as **a living sacrifice** (see the commentary on **Romans Dc – Responding to the Mercies of ADONAI**).

When the family arrived home, **Elkanah had sexual relations with Hannah his wife,** and **God** answered **her** prayer (see **Aj – Hannah's Prayer**). **YHVH** did exactly what **Hannah** had asked, that **God** would **remember her misery and not forget her, but would give her a son (1:11).** As hopeless as **Hannah** had been, **she** now had a future. As is characteristic of the TaNaKh, the narrative leading up to the hoped-for event receives most of the attention. The climax, in this case **the birth of Samuel**, only serves to reveal what the narrative has anticipated. When the story finally gets to the anticipated event, things can happen rather quickly. It took nineteen verses to prepare us for the announcement and only one verse to narrate **it**.[32] **In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son (1:20a)**!

As Richard Phillips relates in his commentary on **First Samuel**, **Hannah's** experience shows us **two things** that happen when **God's** people pray to **Him** in faith. **The first is that prayer changes things.** We see in **her** a dramatic change of attitude. **Hannah** entered into prayer shattered and depressed. But as **she** rose from prayer, **she went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad (First Samuel 1:18). She** experienced the blessings of renewed faith, which the writer to the **Hebrews** says is **the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).** But, however **ADONAI** would answer **Hannah's** prayer, the time spent with **Him** was rewarding, as it always is. To focus our hearts on **YHVH** is to **remember** that **the Lord** who reigns is also the **God** of grace who invites us into **His** presence. **He** blesses those who trust **Him** according to **His** wise, holy, good, and sovereign will. It is for this reason that those who neglect prayer, or who pray without faith, deprive themselves of this world's chief resource for peace and joy. **Peter** says it this way: **Cast all your anxieties on God because He cares for you (First Peter 5:7).**

Not only does prayer change us, but prayer changes things. If prayer only changed us, it would be worthwhile. But the second thing that happened was that **the LORD** answered **Hannah's** prayer. **ADONAI** is pleased to act in response to our prayers. But some people react to the knowledge of the sovereignty of **God** by thinking that prayer doesn't matter because **He** has decided everything in advance. **Hannah** didn't think that way. **She** understood that **God's** sovereign will is achieved through the acts of people, especially our prayers. Faith in **YHVH** leads us to pray to **the One** who is sovereign over all things.

In the course of time, then, we find that **ADONAI remembered Hannah (1:19b).** This does not suggest that **God** had previously forgotten **her**, or that **He** was too busy running the universe to pay attention to **her** needs before **she** pointed them out. Rather, it means that **the LORD** was mindful of **her** prayer and began to move and bless **Hannah**. The same verb is used in **Genesis 8:1**, when, after the Flood, **God remembered Noah;** that is, **God** kept **His** covenant promise and made sure to save **Noah**. **God** is faithful in hearing our prayers. **Some wonder what it means when God does not seem to answer our prayers as He did for Hannah.** Many women will pray in equally earnest tears for a dying child, an unbelieving husband, or an unfulfilled desire to bear a child. Yet, the child does not live, the husband does not believe, or the child is not born. So she looks at **Hannah** and agonizes that her prayer was just as fervent and believing, but the prayer was not answered. Does this mean that **God** did not **remember** such a woman, or that

God was less faithful to her?[33]

The Scottish Presbyterian minister William Blaikie (1820 to 1899), in his commentary on **First Samuel**, responds this way, "In spite of all such objections and difficulties, we must maintain that **God** hears our prayers. Every sincere prayer offered in the name of **Christ** is heard, and dealt with by **God** in such a way that seems good to **Him**."[34] It is true that some prayers are not answered because they are offered in a wrong spirit or with selfish motives **(John 9:31)**. Others are not answered because **ADONAI** knows that to do so would be harmful. Many of those taken from us by death early in life are being spared by **God** from agonizing sorrows. Yet, there is no way for us to know this at the time when the prayer seems to have failed. In other cases, prayer denied or delayed because **the LORD** knows that we need the discipline of learning to faithfully wait on **Him**, **walking by faith and not by sight (Second Corinthians 5:7)**.[35]

Therefore, Blaikie urges us that "whatever the reasons for the apparent silence of **God**, we may rest assured that hearing prayer is the law of **His** Kingdom. The Old Testament and New alike bear witness to this. Every verse of **the Psalms** proclaims it, and in every teaching and example, our **Lord** constantly enforced it. Every apostle took up the same theme, and what true Christian is there who cannot add testimonies from his or her own life? If the answer to some of your prayers has been delayed, have not many of them also been answered? And if there are prayers that have not yet been answered, can you not afford to wait until **God** gives the explanation? And when the explanation comes, will you not have much to praise **God** for, even though at the time everything seemed dark and terrible. At that time you will proclaim a new and overwhelming testimony that **God is love**" **(First John 4:8b)**.[36] We know that **Hannah** reasoned in a believing manner, because **she** did not wait until **her** prayer was answered to regain a joyful attitude. Similarly, **her** example urges us to find our peace in waiting on **the Lord**, knowing **His** mercy and grace.

The key to Hannah's prayer was that she knew ADONAI. She began **her** prayer by naming **Him ADONAI-Tzva'ot (1:11a),** or **the LORD of heaven's** angelic **armies** (see **Joshua 5:13-15; Second Kings 19:31; Psalm 24:10; Second Corinthians 6:18**), who is able to overcome every difficulty in answering prayer. But **her** experience in **casting all her anxieties on ADONAI**, then trusting **Him**, caused **her** to know **Him** even better. For just as **Hagar** called **God's** name **El-Roi,** or **"You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen**

the One who sees me" (Genesis 16:13), and just as **Abraham** named the place **ADONAI Yir'eh**, or **the LORD Will Provide,** when **he** saw that **YHVH** had provided **a ram** for **the sacrifice (Genesis 22:14a)**, **Hannah** also **remembered God's** grace to **her** with **a name.**

Scholars debate the precise meaning of **the name Samuel**. Since the form of **the name** employs letters that could be taken a number of different ways, different solutions are provided. One solution is that **Samuel** means the name *of God*, the idea being that as **God's** gift the child bears **God's name**. However, the most natural **name** is taken to mean *God hears.* This is reflected in **Hannah's** explanation. **She** named **her son Samuel**, *God hears*, **for she said, "I have asked ADONAI for him" (1:20b). Hannah** asked for **a son**, and **she** knew that **God** had heard **her** as soon as **she** prayed . . . because **she** knew **ADONAI**. Once **the child** was born, **she** wanted to bring praise to **God's** faithfulness in answering **her** prayer.

Wherever **Samuel** went and whatever **he** did, **Samuel's name** testified to a great and important truth about **ADONAI. He** was a living example that when **God's** people humbly ask, our **LORD** hears and answers with mercy and grace. **ADONAI** calls us to know **Him**, and thus to **cast all** our **anxieties on Him**, believing that **He** hears us. If we believe this, however **God** chooses to **remember** us, we can be sure not only that our prayers will change our own hearts, but also that in **God's** faithful hands they will make a difference in the world. **Hannah's** prayer brought the coming of **Yeshua** one step closer in history. Our prayers, offered with the same faith as **Hannah's**, will bring the blessings of **Messiah's** Kingdom in ways small and large, and all in ways that will touch **God's** heart and bring **Him** praise.[37]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, praise and thank **You** that **You** not only hear all my prayers, but **You** are all powerful, and do whatever is best for me. Praise **You** that **nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37).** Life is often filled with difficulties and I cannot see any way out; but **You, Father,** are all wise and always do what is best for me. **You** desire to richly bless me, but sometimes **You** do say **"No"** to my prayer, but only for my well-being. **So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Messiah may dwell in me.***

(Second Corinthians 12:7-9). *Here, Paul did not argue or complain but he trusted in* ***Your*** *steadfast love and kindness. Please help me accept* ***Your "No's!"*** *and in so doing,* ***be conformed into the image of Your Son (Romans 8:29).*** *In the name of* ***the One who sits at Your right hand*** *and the power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*