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Dedicated to ADONAI
First Samuel 1: 21-28

Dedicated to ADONAI DIG: What was the best thing Hannah had going for her? Does this passage lend support to baby dedication practiced in many of the congregations of God today? Why or why not? Why did it take faith for Elkanah and Hannah to leave Samuel in the care of incompetent 'Eli and his wicked sons?

REFLECT: Why do you think God waited so long to give Hannah a son? How do you think she felt as she brought Samuel to the Tabernacle? What is the most reassuring point of Hannah's story to you? Are you ready to dedicate someone or something to ADONAI (spouse, children, future, home, or possessions)?

**Hannah acknowledged that God had given Samuel to her;
therefore, it was right for her to give him back to God in return.**



Certainly **Hannah** told **Elkanah** about **her vow** (**to see link click Aj – Hannah's Prayer**), because **she** knew that the Torah permitted **a husband** to annul **a wife's vow** if **he** disagreed with **it** (see the commentary on **Numbers Fn – The Vows of a Married Woman**). **Elkanah** agreed with **her vow**, but was careful not to let anything hinder the fulfillment of **his** commitments at **Shiloh**. In **God's** eyes, **Hannah's vow** then became binding on **him** as well, and **Elkanah** recognized this

solemn responsibility to see that **it** was fulfilled. In this, **he** demonstrated **his** deep love for **his wife** far more than any words of encouragement might have done. Therefore, **he** allowed **Hannah** to remain at home while **he went up with all his household to offer the yearly sacrifice to God (1:21)**.[38]

As we wonder about **Hannah's** response to **her son's** birth, we should inquire about **God's** attitude toward solemn **vows** made to **Him**. The Bible answers: **When you make a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow, why should Ha'Shem be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands (Ecc 5:4-6)?** It turns out that **ADONAI** takes our **vows** very seriously. **Vows** made to **God**, including marriage **vows**, ordination **vows**, congregational membership **vows**, and oaths of office, should be made soberly and with mature judgment. **Ecclesiastes** continues: **It is better that you should not vow than to that you should vow and not pay (Ecclesiastes 5:5).** For this reason, **vows** should not be entered into by those who are immature and do not have the means to carry out the intentions of their hearts. **Hannah's** actions suggest that **she** was mature and that **she** made **her vow** to **God** in sober judgment and honest intent.[39]

Hannah did not go up, explaining to her husband, "As soon as the child has been weaned, then I will bring him, so that he can appear before ADONAI to serve **and live there** as long as **he** lives**." According to Second Maccabees 7:27, Jewish children were breast-fed for three years. Her husband Elkanah answered her, "Do what seems good to you; stay here until you have weaned him. May ADONAI enable you to fulfill your vow." So Hannah stayed behind and nursed the child, until she weaned him (1:22-23).** We can't help but admire **Elkanah** for what **he** said and did, for this was **his firstborn son** by **his** beloved **Hannah**, what is more **father** and **son** would be separated for the rest of **their** lives. A **firstborn son** had to be redeemed by a sacrifice (see the commentary on **Exodus Cd – Redemption of the Firstborn**), but **Elkanah** was giving **his son** as a living sacrifice to **ADONAI**. As **a Nazirite (1:11c)**, **a prophet (3:20)**, and **a judge** (see **Bm – The Last Judge**), **Samuel** would faithfully serve **God** and **Isra'el**, ushering in a new era of Jewish history.[40]

After weaning him, Hannah took her son up with her to **the yearly sacrifice, along with three young bulls** for blood **offerings, to the house of ADONAI at Shiloh** (see **Ae – The Tabernacle at Shiloh**)**, even though he was just a child (1:24). 'Eli** accepted **Samuel** because there were a number of

women serving in the Tabernacle compound.[41] A translation issue with this verse sheds some light on **the offering**. Most English versions say that **Hannah** brought **a three-year-old bull**. But the original Hebrew text states that **Hannah** brought **three young bulls**. Some scholars consider the original reading to be problematic, changing it to a single **three-year-old bull**, in part because **verse 25** says that they **slaughtered the bull** (singular). But the main objection to the original text is the extreme economic sacrifice that would have been involved in such an **offering**.[42]

The **bull** was the most expensive sacrifice possible and was sacrificed for **the burnt offering**. Normally, a common person like **Elkanah** would not be able to afford to sacrifice **three young bulls**. By comparison, even the high priest was commanded to personally offer just one **bull** for **a purification offering** (see **Leviticus Aq – The Chatta'th Offering: Communicating God's Forgiveness**); even **the leader of a tribe** did not have to offer a **bull**, but **a male goat**; and **a common Israelite** was to offer **a female goat or lamb** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ai – The Burnt Offering: Accepted by God**). In such a primitive agricultural society, **three young bulls** represented a staggering amount of wealth. **Elkanah** was, without a doubt, very rich. But unable to imagine **Elkanah's** generosity in giving to **ADONAI**, some scholars have needlessly changed the text, following the example of influential ancient translators of **the Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Peshitta**.

Hannah's additional gift of **a grain offering** (see **Leviticus Aj – The Grain Offerings: Dedicated to God**), about three-fifths of **a bushel of flour** (or about 25 pounds), however, seems to fit **the offering** for **three young bulls**, since the Torah prescribed that three-tenths of **a bushel of flour** should be offered along with each **bull**. So Hannah's **offering** of about 25 pounds **of flour** was slightly more than required for **three bulls (Numbers 15:8-10)**. In addition, **Hannah** brought **a drink offering** of **a skin of wine** (see **Numbers Ch – Grain and Drink Offerings**), which is better understood to be a large jug containing as many as twenty liters (or 5.3 gallons).[43]

After the bull had been slaughtered, Elkanah and **Hannah** fulfilled **their vow** when **they brought their child to 'Eli.** While **Elkanah** has stayed in the background, **he** was with **her** all along. **Hannah** reminded **the high priest** that **she** was **the one** who had **prayed** for **a son** three years before. **She** said: **O my lord, as sure as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here near**

you, praying to ADONAI. I prayed for this child, and ADONAI has granted the request I asked of Him (1:25-27). Did **the old man** remember the occasion, and did **he** recall how unfairly **he** had dealt with **the woman** who was in so much pain? If **he** did, there's no record of it, but **he** received **the boy** to become a servant of **the LORD** at the Tabernacle and be trained in the Torah.

Considering the pitiful spiritual condition of **'Eli** and the wicked ways of **his sons** (see **Ar – 'Eli's Wicked Sons**), it took a great deal of faith for **Elkanah** and **Hannah** to leave **their** innocent **son** in **their** supervision. But **ADONAI** was with **Samuel** and would preserve **him** from the pollution around **him**. Just as **YHVH** protected **Joseph** in **Egypt**, so **He** would protect **Samuel** in **Shiloh**. **The Ruach Ha'Kodesh** can protect our children and grandchildren in this present evil world. Judgment was coming to **'Eli** and **his** family, but **God** would prepare **Samuel** to guide **the nation**, and move **them** into the next stage of **their** development, the monarchy under **king David**, and **his son**, **King Solomon**.

Then **Hannah** declared: **So, I have also dedicated my son to ADONAI – as long as he lives, he is dedicated (1:28a). Hannah's** example shows that **God's** grace rightly demands that we respond by giving back to **Him**. To receive **God's** gifts merely for our own pleasure is to misuse them and despise **the Giver**, not appreciating **His** generosity and our dependence on **His** grace. English evangelical Anglican bishop J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) puts this principle in the context of the Gospel, "Grateful love is the true spring of real obedience to **Christ**."

The contrast between **Hannah's** selfless devotion, and the self-indulgence of **'Eli** and **his sons** at **Shiloh (2:12)** highlights the cost of **her** leaving **Samuel** there, though this is not mentioned directly. People like **her** were salt and light in the community. Ironically, there is a subtle foreshadowing of **God** preparing **Samuel** to replace Eli's authority. It will be **Samuel**, not **his** master **'Eli**, who will hear the voice of **ADONAI** distinctly addressing **him** as **a child**.[44]

The final words of the chapter provide a fitting conclusion: **And Samuel prostrated himself there before ADONAI (1:28b).** This was the great purpose in all that **Hannah** had hoped for: that **her son** might worship and serve **the LORD** in **His house**. The purpose for our lives is no different. **Paul** writes: **Therefore, I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1). Paul's "therefore,"** refers to the whole Gospel teaching that precedes **his** appeal. Just as **Hannah** responded to **God's** gift of **a son** by bringing little **Samuel** to serve

all **his** days in the Tabernacle, so we are to respond to **God's** grace in **Yeshua Messiah** by offering ourselves as **living sacrifices** for the sake of **His** praise.

Realizing our calling to serve **the Lord**, we see that while **Samuel** would fulfill a unique and vital role in Isra'el's history, there is just as much value in one who serves **God** faithfully at home as in one who serves **God** faithfully in the congregation. Ministry is not only for the rabbi or pastor. Everyone should be involved in some way. Many are called to full time ministry, but most will serve **God** in secular vocations or at home, while still offering their time, effort, money, prayers, and spiritual gifts to **the Lord**. Really, what **ADONAI** wants from us is our whole lives, which **He** gave to us in the first place, and which **He** has purchased with the precious blood of **His Son Yeshua (First Corinthians 6:19-20).**

So whatever plans our parents have had for our lives, we should present ourselves to **ADONAI** in the manner that **Hannah** presented young **Samuel**. **Hannah** acknowledged that **God** had given **Samuel** to **her**; therefore, it was right for **her** to give **him** back to **God** in return. Likewise, each of us should say to **God**, "**Abba**, **You** made me, and **You** redeemed me from my sin through the death of **Your** own **Son**. I now belong to **You**, so I offer my whole life for **Your** praise and for service to **Your** glorious Kingdom." And as you make your offering to **the Lord**, hand it over as John Wesley offered himself to the service of **Christ** and the Gospel, saying, "I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for **You** or laid aside for **You**. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to **Your** pleasure and disposal.[45]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being such an awesome **Father**! The loving relationship with **You** is so much more important than anything here on earth. **David** is an excellent example of even when we have big problems and trials, we should call out to **You**, remembering and meditating on **Your** steadfast love that has made a home of eternal love in heaven for all who have put their faith in **You**. **A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You in a dry and weary land, where there is no water. So, I looked for You in the Sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Since Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You (Psalms 63 1-3).** In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*