

October 26, 2014
Port Gardner Church
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Introduction to 1 Samuel
Hannah's Prayer
1 Samuel 1:1-2:10

First and Second Samuel were considered as one book in the earliest Hebrew manuscript, and were later divided into the two books by the translators of the Greek version. The earliest Hebrew manuscripts entitled the one book "Samuel" after the man God used to establish the kingship in Israel. Later Hebrew texts and the English versions call the divided book "1 and 2 Samuel."

Author and Date

Jewish tradition ascribed the writing of "Samuel" to Samuel himself or to Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (based on [1 Chr. 29:29](#)). **But Samuel cannot be the writer** because his death is recorded in [1 Sam. 25:1](#), before the events associated with David's reign even took place. Further, Nathan and Gad were prophets of the Lord during David's lifetime **and would not have been alive when the book of Samuel was written**. Though the written records of these 3 prophets could have been used for information in the writing of 1 and 2 Samuel, **the human author of these books is unknown**. The work comes to the reader as an anonymous writing. The human author speaks for the Lord and gives the divine interpretation of the events narrated.

The books of Samuel contain no clear indication of the date of composition. It was most likely penned before the Exile during the period of the divided kingdom (Judah separated from Israel) (ca. 931–722B.C.)

Background and Setting

The majority of the action recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel took place in and around the central highlands in the land of Israel. The events of 1 and 2 Samuel took place between the years ca. 1105 B.C., **the birth of Samuel** ([1 Sam. 1:1–28](#)), to ca. 971 B.C., **the last words of David** ([2 Sam. 23:1–7](#)). The books span about 135 years of history. During those years, Israel was transformed from a loosely knit group of tribes under "judges" to a united nation under the reign of a centralized monarchy. 1 & 2 Samuel deals primarily with Samuel (ca. 1105–1030 B.C.), Saul who reigned ca. 1052–1011 B.C., and David who was king of the united monarchy ca. 1011–971B.C.

Historical and Theological Themes

As 1 Samuel begins, Israel was at a low point spiritually. The priesthood was corrupt ([1 Sam. 2:12–17, 22–26](#)), the ark of the covenant was not at the tabernacle ([1 Sam. 4:3–7:2](#)), idolatry was practiced ([1 Sam. 7:3, 4](#)), and the judges were dishonest ([1 Sam. 8:2, 3](#)). Through the influence of godly Samuel ([1 Sam. 12:23](#)) and David ([1 Sam. 13:14](#)), these conditions were reversed. Second Samuel concludes with the anger of the Lord being withdrawn from Israel ([2 Sam. 24:25](#)).

During the years narrated in 1 and 2 Samuel, the great empires of the ancient world were in a state of weakness. Neither Egypt nor the Mesopotamian powers, Babylon and Assyria, were threats to Israel at that time. The two nations most hostile to the Israelites were the Philistines ([1 Sam. 4; 7; 13, 14; 17; 23; 31; 2 Sam. 5](#)) to the W and the Ammonites ([1 Sam. 11; 2 Sam. 10–12](#)) to the E.

The Philistines controlled the use of iron, which gave them a decided military and economic advantage over Israel ([1 Sam. 13:19–22](#)). The Ammonites were descendants of Lot ([Gen. 19:38](#)) who lived on the Transjordan Plateau.

So here we are. Israel is in a low spiritual state. There is corruption in the judges, there is idolatry, the ark of the covenant was not in the tabernacle. Everything is really a big mess. Israel is nowhere. They are nothing. They are lost and wandering. There is no sense of unity or of reverence for their Holy God. And this is where our story begins.

1 Samuel 1:1-1:27 [1:1] *There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was **Elkanah** the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. [2] He had two wives. The name of the one was **Hannah**, and the name of the other, **Peninnah**. And **Peninnah had children**, but **Hannah had no children**.*

[3] Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two **sons of Eli**, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. [4] On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. [5] But to Hannah he gave a double portion, **because he loved her**, though **the LORD had closed her womb**. [6] And **her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her**, because the LORD had closed her womb. [7] So it went on **year by year**. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, **she used to provoke her**. Therefore **Hannah wept and would not eat**. [8] And 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 more to you than ten sons?**"

[9] After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now **Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost** of the temple of the LORD. [10] She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and **wept bitterly**. [11] And she **vowed a vow** and said, "**O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.**"

[12] As she continued praying before the LORD, **Eli observed her mouth**. [13] Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. **Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman**. [14] And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." [15] But Hannah answered, "**No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. [16] Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.**" [17] Then Eli answered, "**Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.**" [18] And she said, "**Let your servant find favor in your eyes.**" Then the woman went her way and ate, and **her face was no longer sad**.

[19] They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the **LORD remembered her**. [20] And in due time **Hannah conceived and bore a son**, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "**I have asked for him from the LORD.**"

[21] The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. [22] But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "**As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever.**" [23] Elkanah her husband said to her, "**Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish his word.**" So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. [24] And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young. [25] Then they slaughtered the bull, **and they brought the child to Eli**. [26] And she said, "**Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. [27] For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. [28] Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.**"

And he worshiped the LORD there.

What does Hannah have to be sad about?

After all, she has just about everything a woman in that day and age could want or need. A husband, a home, good financial support, social standing and the love of her husband. She's got just about everything don't you think?

But in reality she had several problems.

She shared her husband with another wife. That wife had many children. And Hannah had none because God had closed her womb.

Sometimes the facts are hard enough to bear... but in Hannah's case, the aggravation from Peninnah made things much worse.

Hannah is not the first barren women in scripture. She takes her place in a long line of women begging God for children. And we have seen this over and over again. That new chapters, new beginnings with God always seem to start with nothing.

God seems to make our total inability His starting point. This is God's way... His method

God always seems to begin His work when we are without hope, strength, resources and human ideas. This is the point that He begins. When we have finally reached the absolute end of ourselves. We've exhausted every avenue of escape and defense. We are exposed... and there is nowhere to turn... but to God.

And God's work not only begins in barrenness, but it also begins in great distress. Hannah's infertility is bad enough but then there is the public scrutiny led by her adversary Pininnah.

And this went on for years and years. This was not a situation that Hannah could escape. Many times we just change our surroundings, our spouse, our friendships and the stigma of our problem can get pushed aside and out of the way so that we don't have to look at it that often. We don't have to be reminded of our failings. But this is never God's way. His way is always through... never around.

What we can fail to see is that great suffering, great grief... Hannah's great grief and even our own suffering is always a prelude to a mighty work of God. Without great suffering, there can never be great deliverance. Without sin... there is no need for salvation.

Let's learn from Hannah. Look at how free she seems in the presence of God. Calling to Him, begging Him, making a vow to Him. Her tears are many. Her suffering is great.

Did you know that tears can be prayer unto God?

Psalm 6:8-9 [8] *Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the **sound of my weeping.**
[9] *The LORD has **heard my plea;**
the LORD **accepts my prayer.****

Hannah has nowhere else to turn. Have you ever been here... where Hannah is? What did you do? Did you cry out to God? Or did you just try and shoulder it yourself? Maybe you've never really dealt with the issue... you've just dodged everything to do with it... maybe you're stuck. Maybe Hannah's story can help you get un stuck.

Hannah calls on the Lord of Hosts.

Dale Ralph Davis says *"Hannah could only turn to "Yahweh of hosts", the God whose universal rule encompasses every force or army, heavenly, cosmic and earthly, the God with the total resources of the universe at his command. This God, Hannah's God, is clearly no provincial ethnic mascot, no deity emeritus of an Israelite ghetto. "Yahwey of hosts"- His very title calls our faith to stretch all its imagination to catch up to such omnipotence."*

Is this Yahweh of Hosts the God think of when you are in trouble? Is this all powerful being with all the resources of the universe at His command the God you know and serve?

And this is why Hannah's prayer is so remarkable. This obscure woman in the hill country of Ephraim **matters to God... and she knows it. She believes it. She acts on it.**

1 Samuel 2:1-10

Hannah's Prayer

[2:1] *And Hannah prayed and said,
"My heart exults in the LORD;
my horn is exalted in the LORD.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in your salvation.*

[2] *"There is none holy like the LORD:
for there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God.*

[3] *Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;*

*for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.*

*[4] The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble bind on strength.*

*[5] Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.*

*The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.*

*[6] The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.*

*[7] The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.*

**[8] He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.**

**For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and on them he has set the world.**

*[9] "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.*

*[10] The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;
against them he will thunder in heaven.*

*The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed."*

Can you hear... can you see the great liberty Hannah has before God. Hannah trusts God. How can she trust Him? Because she knows Him. She knows what He has said about Her. What He thinks of her. How He loves His children.

And Eli... He thinks she's drunk.

Have you ever been praying and pouring your heart out to God and someone sees you and asks... "are you OK"?

Do you know why they ask if you are OK? Because it is not a usual occurrence. It does not happen that often. Maybe a few times in our lives will we call upon God in an hour of true crisis.

There are families in Marysville right now that are calling on God. They are calling out to Him, crying and pouring out their pain and suffering to Him. Some are wondering where God is in all of this.

At the Chaplain's Academy we are taught to get to know the police officers of the department. They tell us this because the officers live in a tight knit community of trust. They will only call a chaplain to a scene if they know him and have a relationship with them before the crisis occurs.

The hard part for many of us in crisis is that we may not be familiar with who God really is. We may have just avoided a deeper relationship out of convenience. If everything is going well... why do I need God?

But God wants a real relationship with us. Not one of convenience or one that happens only in crisis. He wants all of you. And He wants us to want all of Him.

So how do you get to know someone? You converse. You interact. You get together and talk and experience life together. You observe one another in the day to day of life. Ups and downs, good days and bad. This is what Jesus wants from us. So you may ask... how can I have this kind of relationship? It's not complicated... but it's not necessarily easy. It's called prayer.

Prayer is a conversation with God. And It can happen anywhere or anytime. Hannah prays with confidence and ease... why? Because this is not her first conversation with God. She has had many.

To know God in this way, to understand Him in a greater way, to feel comfortable in the conversation of prayer, it takes some effort. It takes a heart that runs to Jesus in our sin.

Many of us don't converse with God. We just talk about Him. We don't interact with Him, we pontificate about Him. We believe, we might even trust a little bit, but we keep clear. Why? Sin. We don't want to be told ...no. We don't want to feel guilty or shameful. We want our way and we don't want God to mess with our life... our desires or our fun. Oh.... Unless we are in crisis.

So how do we start this conversation with God? How do we begin? We confess our sin. And not just casually, not just with a broad brush. We confess the detail of our sin. The depth of our transgressions. The hurt that we have caused God and the hurt we have caused others.

I get a lot of positive comments about being "transparent", "open" or even "real". Do you know why I am like this? It's because my conscience cannot bear the weight of my own sin. I know it. I can't live with it. I'll die. And because of this, I must keep short accounts. If you've known me long enough... you know I am a sinful man. You know that I will sin in your presence and against you. BUT... I hope you can be assured that I will always confess that sin and repent. Sometimes it takes awhile... sometimes its not pretty... but God eventually gets me to the point of repentance.

So how do you start? Ask God to show you your sin. Ask him to show you who you have hurt and how badly. Now there is a conversation starter. That's an ice breaker of life changing proportions.

And as you ask God to do this, know that He will bring it to you. It will be hard. It will hurt. But it is the only path to healing. And then, ask Him what to do next. He will tell you. You can get a good idea of what to do next from His word. Confess your sin one to another. He'll give the courage and the peace. He'll be with you through it all. Not around... but through it.

As we close I want to read a prayer I read this morning.

[Prone to Wander: Prayers of Confession and Celebration](#) by Barbara R. Duguid

Heavenly Father,

*Teach us to love prayer. Help us to live our lives before you, in public and in private, at church and at home, each prayer and each moment perfumed with the incense of Christ's atoning blood. We are invited by your promises to come to you with all our burdens and desires. Draw us by the power of your Spirit, or our hearts and minds will wander carelessly from thought to thought, **and our anxieties will rule over us.***

We praise you that great sin draws out great grace, for we are great sinners. We seldom want to pray, and when we do our petitions are laced with self-importance and mixed with sinful motives. **We confess our ignorance,** for we do not know how to pray, and we confess our willful rebellion for **prayers uttered from cold and selfish lips.** But we celebrate **Jesus and plead his righteousness** to cover our iniquities, and rejoice that his obedience weighs more heavily on your scales **than all our sin** and satisfies your justice in full. **Where our guilt is most terrible, your mercy is most free and deep, and we thank you for this incredible grace.**

*Holy Spirit, by your power, may the throne of grace become the pleasure ground of our souls. There may we know the delight of our Savior's love, **the relief of repentance and reconciliation,** the privilege of our sonship. Ignite our hearts with joy before you, quicken our deadness with thanksgiving, and strengthen us to cling to you, love you, and obey you. **Fill us with the imagination of faith, which considers all things possible** and believes that you are a God who loves to **give far beyond** all that we could ask or imagine. May we grow to be persistent in prayer, until Christ is the pulse of our hearts, the spokesman of our lips and the center of all our hopes and longings. In his great name we pray, amen.*