

Hannah

Hannah was the favourite of the two wives of Elkanah, an Ephraimite.

1 Samuel 1:1-2 [New King James] *“Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains 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. 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.”*

The other wife, Peninnah, tormented Hannah because she had no children, [**1 Samuel 1:4-7**].

1 Samuel 1:10-11 [New King James] *“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 the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.’”*

Hannah made a vow to God that if she bore a son she would devote him to God as a Nazarite.

In Old Testament times, a childless woman was considered a failure, and her barrenness was a social embarrassment to her husband.

Hannah knew that her husband loved her, but even his encouragement could not comfort her, for Peninnah’s jeers eroded her self-confidence.

Although we cannot keep others from unjustly criticising us, we can choose how we react to their hurtful words.

Instead of retaliating or giving up hope, Hannah brought her problem to God.

It is difficult to pray in faith when we feel so ineffective, but Hannah discovered that prayer opens the way for God to solve our problems and provide our needs, [**1 Samuel 1:19-20**].

In our prayers we must be very careful if they include a vow, for God may very well expect us to fulfil that vow.

Hannah did fulfil what she had vowed, even though it was painful, [**1 Samuel 1:27-28**].

Psalms 127:3-5 [New King James] *“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.”*

Children are a gift from the Creator God to be enjoyed but they are also individual human beings and mothers must be prepared to let their children leave home after the years of physical dependency are over, in order to allow them to become mature, independent adults.

Hannah praised God for His answer to her prayer for a son.

1 Samuel 2:1-10 [New King James] *“And Hannah prayed and said: ‘My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation. No one is 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. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and those who stumbled are girded with strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry have ceased*

to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble. The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. 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. For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; from heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.'"

The theme of Hannah's poetic prayer is her confidence in the Creator God's Sovereignty and her thankfulness for everything He had done in her life.

Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, modelled her own praise song, called 'The Magnificat', after Hannah's prayer, [Luke 1:46-55].

Like Hannah and Mary we should be confident of God's ultimate control over the events in our lives, and should be thankful for the way God has blessed us. By praising God for all the good gifts, we acknowledge His ultimate control over all the affairs in life.

Psalms 139:1-17 [New King James] *"O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You. For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"*

This is how well we are known by our Creator God.

Such knowledge should give us the confidence in His guidance and support that will allow us to relax in His presence as a child can in the arms of a loving father.

Hannah likened God to a rock; firm, strong and unchanging. In our fast-paced world, friends come and go and circumstances change, so physically it is difficult to find a solid foundation in life.

Those who devote their lives to achievements, causes or possessions have as their security that which is finite and changeable, all of which will pass away.

But the Creator God is eternal and always present, He will never fail.

God honoured the desires of faithful Hannah. We never hear about Peninnah and her children again, but Samuel was used mightily by God. God also gave Hannah five children in addition to Samuel, [1 Samuel 2:21].

God blesses us in ways we do not expect. Hannah never expected to have a child at her age, much less six children. Do **not** resent God's timing, His blessings may not be immediate, but they will come if we are faithful to do what He tells us in His Word, the Christian Bible.