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Introduction

Some account of Elkanah and his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, 1 Samuel 1:1, 1 Samuel 1:2. His annual worship at Shiloh and the portions he gave at such times to his wives, 1 Samuel 1:3-5. Hannah, being barren, is reproached by Peninnah, especially in their going up to Shiloh; at which she is sorely grieved, 1 Samuel 1:6, 1 Samuel 1:7. Elkanah comforts her, 1 Samuel 1:8. Her prayer and vow in the temple, that if God would give her a son, she would consecrate him to His service, 1 Samuel 1:9-11. Eli, the high priest, indistinctly hearing her pray, charges her with being drunk, 1 Samuel 1:12-14. Her defense of her conduct, 1 Samuel 1:15, 1 Samuel 1:16. Eli, undeceived, blesses her; on which she takes courage, 1 Samuel 1:17, 1 Samuel 1:18. Hannah and Elkanah return home; she conceives, bears a son, and calls him Samuel, 1 Samuel 1:19, 1 Samuel 1:20. Elkanah and his family go again to Shiloh to worship; but Hannah stays at home to nurse her child, purposing, as soon as he is weaned, to go and offer him to the Lord, according to her vow, 1 Samuel 1:21-23. When weaned, she takes him to Shiloh, presents her child to Eli to be consecrated to the Lord, and offers three bullocks, an ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, for his consecration, 1 Samuel 1:24-28.

Verse 1

Ramathaim-zophim - Literally, the two high places of the watchman; these were, no doubt, two contiguous hills, on which watchtowers were built, and in which watchmen kept continual guard for the safety of the country and which afterwards gave name to the place.

Verse 2

He had two wives - The custom of those times permitted polygamy; but wherever there was more than one wife, we find the peace of the family greatly disturbed by it.

The name of the one was Hannah - חַנָּה (Channah), which signifies fixed or settled, and the other פִּינְחָס (Peninnah), which signifies a jewel or pearl.

Verse 3

Went up out of his city yearly to worship - As the ark was at Shiloh, there was the temple of God, and thither all the males were bound by the law to go once a year, on each of the great national festivals: viz., the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles.

The Lord of hosts - יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (Yehovah tsebaoth), Jehovah of armies. As all the heavenly bodies were called the hosts of heaven, מַלְאָכֵי שָׁמַיִם (tseba hashshamayim), Jehovah being called Lord of this host showed that he was their Maker and Governor; and consequently He, not they, was the proper object of religious worship. The sun, moon, planets, and stars, were the highest objects of religious worship to the heathens in general. The Jewish religion, teaching the knowledge of a Being who was the Lord of all these, showed at once its superiority to all that heathenism could boast. This is the first place where Lord of hosts is mentioned in the Bible; and this is so much in the style of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., that it gives some weight to the supposition that this book was written by a person who lived in or after the times of these prophets. See the preface.

Verse 4

He gave - portions - The sacrifices which were made were probably peace-offerings, of which the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar; the fat was burnt on the fire; the breast and right shoulder were the portion of the priest, and the rest belonged to him who made the offering; on it he and his family feasted, each receiving his portion; and to these feasts God commands them to invite the Levite, the poor, the widow, and the orphan, Deuteronomy 16:11.

Verse 5

Unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion - The Hebrew here is very obscure, יָתֵן מָנָה אַחַת אֲפָאִיִּים (yitten manah achath appayim); he gave her one portion of two faces; which the Syriac renders, he gave her one Double Part; and the Chaldee, he gave her one Chosen part; the Arabic is nearly the same; the Vulgate Annae autem dedit unam partem tristis, but to Anna he being sorrowful gave one part. As the shew-bread that was presented to the Lord was called לֶחֶם פָּנִים (lechem panim), the bread of faces, because it was placed before the face or appearances of the Lord; probably this was called מָנָה אֲפָאִיִּים (manah appayim), because it was the portion that belonged to, or was placed before, the person who had offered the sacrifice. On this ground it might be said that Elkanah gave Hannah his own portion or a part of that which was placed before himself. Whatever it was, it was intended as a proof of his especial love to her; for, it is added, he loved Hannah.

## Verse 6

And her adversary - That is, Peninnah.

Provoked her sore - Was constantly striving to irritate and vex her, to make her fret - to make her discontented with her lot, because the Lord had denied her children.

## Verse 7

And as he did so year by year - As the whole family went up to Shiloh to the annual festivals, Peninnah had both sons and daughters to accompany her, 1 Samuel 1:4, but Hannah had none; and Peninnah took this opportunity particularly to twit Hannah with her barrenness, by making an ostentatious exhibition of her children.

Therefore she wept - She was greatly distressed, because it was a great reproach to a woman among the Jews to be barren; because, say some, every one hoped that the Messiah should spring from her line.

## Verse 8

Am not I better to thee than ten sons? - Ten, a certain for an uncertain number. Is not my especial affection to thee better than all the comfort thou couldst gain, even from a numerous family?

## Verse 9

Eli - sat upon a seat - אֵלִי יָשָׁב עַל הַכִּסֵּי (al hakkisse), upon the throne, i.e., of judgment; for he was then judge of Israel.

By a post of the temple of the Lord - I think this is the first place where אֵימֹת יְהוָה (heychal Yehovah), "temple of Jehovah," is mentioned. This gives room for a strong suspicion that the books of Samuel were not compiled till the first temple was built, or after the days of Solomon. After this the word temple is frequent in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and in the prophets. Perhaps those Psalms in which this word occurs were, like many others in the Psalms, not of David's composition; some of them were evidently made long after his time.

## Verse 11

I will give him unto the Lord - Samuel, as a descendant of the house of Levi, was the Lord's property from twenty-five years of age till fifty; but the vow here implies that he should be consecrated to the Lord from his infancy to his death, and that he should not only act as a Levite, but as a Nazarite, on whose head no razor should pass.

## Verse 13

Spake in her heart; only her lips moved - She prayed; her whole heart was engaged: and though she spake not with an audible voice, yet her lips formed themselves according to the pronunciation of the words which her heart uttered.

## Verse 15

I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink - Neither wine nor inebriating drink has been poured out unto me; but I have poured out my soul unto the Lord. There is a great deal of delicacy and point in this vindication.

## Verse 16

Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial - אֲנִי אֵימֹת יְהוָה אֲנִי אֵימֹת יְהוָה אֲנִי אֵימֹת יְהוָה (al titten eth amathecha liphney bath Beliyael); "Put not thy handmaiden before the faces of a daughter of Belial." "I am a drunkard, and strive by the most execrable hypocrisy (praying in the house of God) to cover my iniquity, then I am the chief of the daughters of Belial." Or, "Give not thy handmaid (to reproach) before the faces of the daughters of Belial." Several of these probably attended there for the purposes of prostitution and gain; for it is said, 1 Samuel 2:22, that Eli's sons lay with the women at the door of the tabernacle, though this may refer to the women who kept the door.

## Verse 17

Grant thee thy petition - He was satisfied he had formed a wrong judgment, and by it had added to the distress of one already sufficiently distressed.

The fact that Eli supposed her to be drunken, and the other of the conduct of Eli's sons already mentioned, prove that religion was at this time at a very low ebb in Shiloh; for it seems drunken women did come to the place, and lewd women were to be found there.

**Verse 18**

Let thine handmaid find grace - Continue to think favorably of me, and to pray for me.

**Verse 20**

Called his name Samuel - As she gave this name to her son because she had asked him of the Lord, the word שְׁמוּאֵל (Shemuel) must be here considerably contracted; if it express this sentiment, the component parts of it are the following: שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל (shaul meEl), אֶשְׂאָל אֶת־יְהוָה. This name would put both the mother and the son in continual remembrance of the Divine interposition at his birth. See on 1 Samuel 1:28 (note).

**Verse 21**

The man Elkanah and all his house - He and the whole of his family, Hannah and her child excepted, who purposed not to go up to Shiloh till her son was old enough to be employed in the Divine service.

And his vow - Probably he had also made some vow to the Lord on the occasion of his wife's prayer and vow; in which, from his love to her. he could not be less interested than herself.

**Verse 23**

Until thou have weaned him - On the nature of this weaning, and the time in which it was usually done, the reader will be pleased to refer to the note on Genesis 21:8.

The Lord establish his word - Or, may the Lord establish his word - preserve the child, cause him to grow up, and make him a blessing to Israel.

**Verse 24**

With three bullocks - The Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, read, a bullock of three years old; and this is probably correct, because we read, 1 Samuel 1:25, that they slew שְׁתֵּי־חֲפָרִים (eth happar), The bullock. We hear of no more, and we know that a bullock or heifer of three years old was ordinarily used, see Genesis 15:9.

One ephah of flour - Seven gallons and a half.

A bottle of wine - נֶבֶל יַיִן (nebel yayin), a skin full of wine. Their bottles for wine and fluids in general were made out of skins of goats, stripped off without being cut up; the places whence the legs were extracted sewed up, as also the lower part; and the top tied. See the notes on Genesis 21:14, and Matthew 9:17. These three things, the ox, the flour, and the wine, probably constituted the consecration-offering.

**Verse 26**

As thy soul liveth - As sure as thou art a living soul, so surely am I the person who stood by thee here praying.

**Verse 28**

Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord - There is here a continual reference to her vow, and to the words which she used in making that vow.

The word Samuel, as we have already seen, is a contraction of the words שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל (Shaul meEl), that is, asked or lent of God; for his mother said, 1 Samuel 1:27, The Lord hath given me my petition, which שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל (Shaalti), I Asked of him. In 1 Samuel 1:28 she says: שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל (hu Shaul layhouah), he shall be Lent unto the Lord: here we find the verb is the same; and it is remarked by grammarians that שְׁמוּאֵל (shaal), he asked, making in the participle pahal שְׁמוּאֵל (shaul), Asked, in the conjugation hiphil signifies to lend; therefore, says his mother, 1 Samuel 1:28, שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל (Hishiltihu layhovah), I have Lent him to the Lord. This twofold meaning of the Hebrew root is not only followed by our translators, but also by the Vulgate, Septuagint, and Syriac.

And he worshipped the Lord there - Instead of שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל (vaiyishtachu), He worshipped, שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל (vaiyishtachavu), and They worshipped, is the reading of six of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., of some copies of the Septuagint, and of the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic.

This and the following chapter are connected in most copies of the Septuagint and Vulgate thus: And Anna worshipped, and said, My soul is strengthened in the Lord, etc. It is very likely that the whole passage, from the beginning of 1 Samuel 1:26 to the end of 1 Samuel 2:10 of the ensuing chapter, contains the words of Hannah alone; and that even the clause, He worshipped the Lord there, should be, And she worshipped the Lord there, and prayed, and said, etc. Indeed this latter clause is wanting in the Polyglot Septuagint, as I have stated above.