

1 Samuel 1 and 2 Questions

Pray first. Ask the Lord to cultivate the soul of your heart for formation rather than simply opening your mind for information download. Read the entire passage. . . yes, all 28 verses. Pray again together for God to reveal some questions and themes. Discuss first before reading the resource notes at the end of the study.

- Why do you think this is such a common “type” in scripture? A childless woman, divinely miraculous intervention, bears a very special child, who serves a leader at a critical time for God’s people and in his story of covenant redemption? Can you think of other examples?
- What about Hannah? Do you think God is actually punishing her by closing her womb, or is Penninah just taunting her with this accusation (1 Sam 1:5,6)? Why is this important to the story?
- Look ahead to 1 Samuel 19-20 and Hannah’s song in chapter 2. What themes resonate with Elizabeth’s life and benediction of Mary (Luke 1:42-25), Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), and Zechariah’s Prophetic song (Luke 1:67-79)?
- Could Hannah’s song actually be a Psalm before the Psalms were compiled? What themes/parallels do you find in Psalm 18:2, 32:4, 75:10, 89:17?
- Look back at Hannah’s prayer in 1 Sam 1:10-11, her defense in 15-16. How does God remembering her in verses 19-20 connect? What if you consider that “remember” in both contexts can be translated “name”? How does God “name” Hannah as she names her son, “name of God/asked of God”?
- What about Hannah’s life and experience can you resonate with? How has God remembered you? Or, how are you still praying and longing for this sense of being remembered and named that may still feel like bareness?

Further Resources

“Actually, the Bible does not specifically call Hannah barren (in the original text, the word, often used, is not used here), but states simply, ‘Hannah had no children b/c the Lord had closed her womb (1 Sam 1:5), suggesting divine action. The only other appearance of the expression ‘The Lord had closed her womb’ occurs with regard to Abimelech’s wives and female slaves, ‘For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelich because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife (Gen 20:18). In this case the closed wombs represent punishment of Abimelech and protection of the promise of Abraham (so clear and understandable). In contrast, most of the other barren mother narratives refer to the woman as “barren:” . . And the song of Hannah praises the Lord because the ‘barren woman bears seven’ (1 Sam 2:5). But regarding the Shunammite woman the text reads simply, ‘She has no son.’. No explanation for her childlessness is given.”¹

So, what are we to make of Hannah’s barrenness? Punishment from God? All part of God’s twisted set up? Happenstance that God just happened to redeem (God allowed but did not

¹ Joan E. Cook, *Hannah’s Desire, God’s Design: Early Interpretations of the Story of Hannah*.

directly cause as punishment or judgement)? Is the Bible using contextual language with certain cultural connotations of the time/era? Or, as some commentators have suggested, is verse 5 foreshadows and introduces the common cultural understanding of barrenness, and verse 6 explains its effect on Hannah. The taunt and provocation of Peninnah (and likely others) in verse 6 could in fact feasibly be read, "her rival would provoke her bitterly with 'the Lord had closed her womb.'"

Development of the Temple Structure: During its long tenure at Shiloh, the Tabernacle likely had permanent structures built around its courtyard to accommodate the priests (like Eli and his sons) and to manage the sacrifices. The complex may have included walls, doors, and chambers, making the entire compound function more like a permanent "house" or "palace" of God than the simple, mobile tent. The reference to Eli sitting by the **"doorpost"** (*mezuzah*) in 1 Samuel 1:9 supports the idea of a more solid, fixed entryway.

Theme	Hannah's Song (1 Sam 2:1–10)	Mary's Song (Luke 1:46–55)
Personal Joy/Exaltation	"My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is lifted high by the LORD." (v. 1)	"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (v. 46–47)
Reversal of Fortunes	The barren woman bears children, but the one with many children languishes. (v. 5)	He has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. (v. 48)
The God of Justice	The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he humbles and he exalts. (v. 7)	He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. (v. 52)
Social Justice	Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. (v. 5)	He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty. (v. 53)