

# FAITH AND DEDICATION

## 1 Samuel 1:1-28

### Episode 2: 1 Samuel 1:3-8

#### *Yearly Worship and Despair at Shiloh*

LITERAL TRANSLATION	TEXT (Biblia Hebraica)
<p><sup>3a</sup> And-he-went-up this man from-his-city from-days to-days to-bow-down and-to-sacrifice to-the-LORD of-hosts in-Shiloh.</p> <p><sup>3b</sup> and-there two-of sons-of-Eli Hophni and-Phinehas priests to-the-LORD.</p> <p><sup>4a</sup> And-it-came the-day when-sacrificed Elkanah</p> <p><sup>4b</sup> to-Peninnah his-wife he-customarily-gave and-to-all-her-sons and-to-her-daughters portions.</p> <p><sup>5a</sup> But-to-Hannah he-customarily-would-give portion one face</p> <p><sup>5b</sup> because Hannah he-loved</p> <p><sup>5c</sup> although-the-LORD had-closed her-womb.</p> <p><sup>6a</sup> And-she-would-provoke-her her-rival indeed fiercely in-order to-humiliate-her</p> <p><sup>6b</sup> for-He-closed the-LORD completely her-womb.</p> <p><sup>7a</sup> And-this it-would-be-done year by-year</p> <p><sup>7b</sup> whenever her-to-go-up in-the-house of-the-LORD then-she-would-provoke-her</p> <p><sup>7c</sup> so-she-would-weep and-not she-would-eat.</p> <p><sup>8a</sup> Thus-he-said to-her Elkanah her-husband</p> <p><sup>8b</sup> Hannah</p> <p><sup>8c</sup> Why you-weep?</p> <p><sup>8d</sup> And-why not you-eat?</p> <p><sup>8e</sup> And-why it-is-resentful your-heart?</p> <p><sup>8f</sup> Not I better to-you than-ten sons?</p>	<p><sup>3a</sup> ועלה האיש ההוא מעירו מימים ימימה להשתחות ולזבח ליהוה צבאות בשלה: <sup>3b</sup> ושם שני בני-עלי חפני ופנחס כהנים ליהוה: <sup>4a</sup> ויהי היום ויזבח אלקנה <sup>4b</sup> לפננה אשתו ונתן ולכל-בניה ובנותיה מנות: <sup>5a</sup> ולחנה יתן מנה אחת אפים <sup>5b</sup> כי את-חנה אהב <sup>5c</sup> ויהוה סגר רחמה: <sup>6a</sup> וכעסתה צרתה גם-זכעס בעבור הרעמה <sup>6b</sup> כי-סגר יהוה בעד רחמה: <sup>7a</sup> וכן יעשה שנה בשנה <sup>7b</sup> מדי עלתה בבית יהוה כן תכעסנה <sup>7c</sup> ותבכה ולא תאכל: <sup>8a</sup> ויאמר לה אלקנה אישה <sup>8b</sup> חנה <sup>8c</sup> למה תבכי <sup>8d</sup> ולמה לא תאכלי <sup>8e</sup> ולמה ירע לבבך <sup>8f</sup> הלא אנכי טוב לך מעשרה בנים:</p>

Some explanation about this episode's distinctive temporal sequential of events demands special attention. Elkanah's repetitive annual pilgrimage to Shiloh (v. 3) encompasses and becomes the setting for this exposition, with the remaining narrative (vv. 4-8) detailing the catalysis for the action of the next episode (vv. 9-20).

Verse 4 begins with an account of a specific annual sacrifice at Shiloh, but the narrative is interrupted by a long parenthesis, enveloping all the actions in v. 4b through 7c, informing the reader of the customary behavior that occurred during such an occasion in the years past. The temporal sequence of verses 3-8 may be charted as follows.

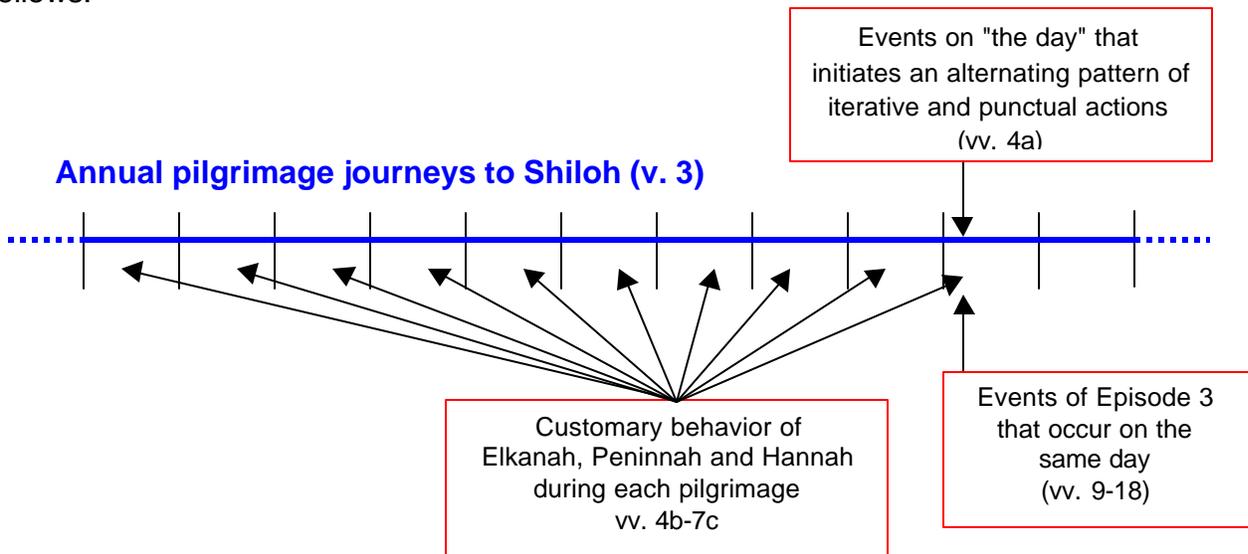


Illustration 1.

Considerable amount of time has transpired between Elkanah's marriage to Hannah (not recorded) and the events that occur in this episode. Nothing is known about the intervening period other than: (1) After some time that Hannah could not give an heir to Elkanah, presumably, he took another wife, Peninnah; (2) Peninnah bore both sons and daughters--as many as ten (v. 4; also see notes on 1.8f); and (3) Elkanah's annual pilgrimage to Shiloh. Exactly how much time has elapsed is unknown. However, eight to twelve years or much more is not out of the question. Time compression is common to biblical narrative when intervening actions of those involved do not directly contribute to the author's plot development.

The parenthetical material (vv. 4b-7c) forms the backbone of the exposition proper and serves to explain the repeated behavior of Elkanah, Peninnah and Hannah. Our narrator paints a series of events that are captured by verb forms indicating repetition or duration in the past tense. This chain of iterativeness articulates with precision the following iterative or customary actions:

- Elkanah customarily gave to Peninnah and her children portions of the sacrificial meal (v. 4b)
- Elkanah customarily gave Hannah her special portion of the sacrificial meal (v. 5a).

- Peninnah would customarily humiliate Hannah during this time because of her sterility (v. 6a, 7b).
- A summary note that "it [Peninnah's provocation] would be done year by year whenever she [Hannah] went up to the house of the LORD (v. 7a).
- Hannah would customarily weep and would not eat the choice portion of the sacrificial meal that Elkanah had given to her (v. 7c).

Verse 3a strikes the major iterative note, giving the background to this entire episode. Elkanah's repeated annual pilgrimage to Shiloh is accompanied with a circumstantial verbless clause in verse 3b, reporting that both Hophni and Phinehas, priests and the sons of Eli, regulated the worship.

At the beginning and near the end of the iterative chain proper, explicit adjuncts of time occur that disclose the repetition ensemble semantically. These adjuncts consist of repetition themselves: "from days to days" (מִיָּמִים יְמִימָהּ, v. 3a) and "year by year" (שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה, v. 7a). Thus the iterative exposition marks an extensive flashback, a sad and tragic picture of what has transpired before.

At the same time, there is an artful alternation with the punctual in the midst of these iterative verbs that is usually erroneously rendered in the English translations, and go almost completely unnoticed by the commentaries. Just when the reader becomes accustomed to the iterative sequence, the narrator strategically inserts special remarks that will receive further attention in the expositional notes:

- Elkanah loved Hannah (v. 5b)
- The LORD prevented Hannah from conceiving (v. 5c, d)
- Elkanah attempts to console Hannah (v. 8)

The first of these two actions fuel the fire of discord among the wives. After years of recurring pain and unsuccessful attempts to protect Hannah from Peninnah's hurling insults, Elkanah in desperation attempts to encourage Hannah (v. 8). They interrupt the chain of habitual behavior, offering the reader what is unique. This subtle and artful transition has been notably obscured by the KJV and the NBG. The result is that the speech of Elkanah in verse 8 is iterative. Consequently, these translations (and others) have him keep on making this attempt to comfort Hannah--year after year! In addition, another disastrous result is when verse 9 is translated as "One day Hannah rose up", severing our narrator's purpose of mentioning the special day of verse 4a.

The following English translation attempts to capture the nuance of the alternating pattern of iterative and punctual actions. The iterative and the punctual temporal sequence align themselves in the *inclusio* of "this man" (3a) and when

Elkanah's name again is repeated in verse 8, with his name as the subject of a narrative imperfect.

- (iterative) <sup>3</sup>This man would go up from his city annually to bow down and sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts in Shiloh. And there! the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests to the LORD.
- (punctual) <sup>4a</sup>And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed  
(iterative) <sup>4b</sup>he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; <sup>5a</sup>but to Hannah he would give a double portion  
(punctual) <sup>5b</sup>for he loved Hannah, <sup>5c</sup>but the LORD had closed her womb.  
(iterative) <sup>6a</sup>Her rival, however, would humiliate her, <sup>6b</sup>because the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>7a</sup>And it happened year after year, <sup>7b</sup>as often as she [Hannah] went up to the house of the LORD, she [Peninnah] would provoke her [Hannah], <sup>7c</sup>so she [Hannah] wept and would not eat.
- (punctual) <sup>8</sup>Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart grudging? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Flashback  
vv. 4b-7c

## EXPOSITORY NOTES

### Sequence 2: 1:3-8

Verse 3 introduces and undergirds the remaining temporal markers, serving as background for the remaining episode. It purposely establishes a pattern of Elkanah's annual pilgrimage, but carefully allows punctuality that comes to a full circle in verse 8 with his desperate attempt to cheer up Hannah because of her barrenness.

**1.3a (NASB) Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh.** Elkanah's prominence in the narrative line continues in 1:3a with the demonstrative pronoun, "this man" (הַאִישׁ הַהוּא), replacing "a man" (אִישׁ אֶחָד) of 1:1a.<sup>20</sup> Also, the timeless and static "there was" (יָהָיָה) in 1:1a, dramatically shifts to a compressed iterative movement in 1:3a, "he used to go up".<sup>21</sup> A further parallel may be observed when the three names of Elkanah's place of origin in 1:1b-c (רָמַתַּיִם, צוֹפִים, אֶפְרַיִם; "Ramathaim", "Zophim", Ephraim") are replaced by the three closing words of 1:3a, "to-the-Lord", "of-hosts", "in-Shiloh" (לְיְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּשִׁילוֹ) that belong to the object of his worship and sacrifice.

Our narrator employs technical terminology for Elkanah's pilgrimage to Shiloh, "he went up" (עָלָה; cf. Ex. 34:24). The Hebrew verbal construction stresses the continuous or repetitive character of the action of Elkanah. It also serves as an introduction to the

<sup>20</sup> Because הַאִישׁ is preceded by the definite article, it cannot be functioning as the independent pronoun "he", but a demonstrative pronoun. It underscores that he is not any man, but "this" man.

<sup>21</sup> The iterative is morphologically indicated by the *wqtl* form, and lexically indicated in conjunction with Hannah by מָדַי with the infinitive, עָלָהּ, when combined, "whenever to-go-up-her".

episode that moves from the general background to a specific customary action of Elkanah's that is central to the narrative's development that follows.<sup>22</sup>

The idiomatic expression "yearly" (NASB), is literally, "from days to days" (מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה). Notably, of the three principle yearly feasts, the expression is only used for the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year (מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה)" (Ex. 13:10, NASB). Judges 21:19-24, referring to "the yearly (מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה) feast of the Lord at Shiloh" (v. 19), mentions vineyards festivities. If the Feast of Unleavened Bread is not the one meant here, it may be this one.

It is as if, Elkanah made this pilgrimage yearly alone.<sup>23</sup> Not until verses 4 and 5 do we become aware that his wives and children also accompanied him on his annual pilgrimage. Uniquely then, is Elkanah's faithfulness as an observer of the Law's sacrificial duties first specified.<sup>24</sup> It was his responsibility to assemble his family and make the yearly pilgrimage--not his wives' incentive.

Elkanah's faithfulness is also underscored when we are reminded during the times in which he lived. The early chapters of 1 Samuel dovetails into the concluding remarks of Judges 21:25: "In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (NASB; the events of the book of Ruth is another bright spot in an otherwise dismal period of Israel's history). Furthermore, Elkanah could have justified not attending the annual feast because of the heightened tension between his wives that occurred on every journey (cf. vv. 6, 8e). He could have thought, "Why bother!"

Three times a year all Israelite men were required to be at the central or most important sanctuary to offer sacrifices (Ex. 34:23; Deut. 12:5-7; see also Lk. 2:41). Elkanah chose to worship at Shiloh instead of other equally famous sanctuaries that perhaps were located nearer to his home, such as Bethel, Mizpah or Shechem, because it was at Shiloh the Ark of the Covenant was located (1 Sam. 4:4). According to Joshua 18:1-10, the Tent of Meeting was set up at Shiloh during the confederacy, and Judges 18:31 refers to the house of God located at Shiloh. Thus, Elkanah chooses the principle location where the ark was located in order to worship and sacrifice to the true God.

The purpose of Elkanah's pilgrimage is expressed with two infinitives, "to worship and to sacrifice" (NASB). The English translation, "to worship", is more accurately translated, "to bow down" or "prostrate oneself" (שָׁחָה). Based on Ugaritic evidence, the verb is an Esthtaphal stem. It is the only known example of this stem in biblical Hebrew. The fact that the verb is found more than 170 times in biblical Hebrew shows its importance in

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<sup>22</sup> The verb (וַעֲלָה) is an affix (perfect) form. The contrast between the waw conversive and the affix form וַעֲלָה underscores Elkanah's customary action. The subsequent expression, מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה ("from days to days"), makes it unmistakably poignant that וַעֲלָה is not used to express one action completed in the past.

<sup>23</sup> The verb, עָלָה, is Qal masculine singular.

<sup>24</sup> Verse 3a has eleven words, within which there are thirty-three syllables. This makes it the longest lines of the entire chapter. As a comparison, verse 21 has twelve words, but only twenty-six syllables; and verse 24a has eleven words with thirty-one syllables.

Jewish religious life. Genesis 18:2 records its first instance in the Hebrew Bible, where Abraham "bowed himself toward the ground" before the three messengers who announced that Sarah would have a son.

The object of Elkanah's pilgrimage was "the LORD of hosts". This is the first occasion for this divine title in the Hebrew Scriptures and linked to Shiloh where the portable sanctuary came to rest after the wilderness period. It is also the first of five references in 1 Samuel.<sup>25</sup> One connotation of the title is that God is "the God of the armies of Israel" (cf. 1 Sam. 17:45; in this instance the Hebrew word for "armies" is different from that for "hosts"). "Hosts" can also mean celestial bodies (Deut. 4:19) or heavenly creatures (Joshua 5:14). The NIV always translates "hosts" as "Almighty" in the sense of "he who is sovereign over all the 'hosts' (powers) in heaven and on earth, especially over the 'hosts' (armies) of Israel".<sup>26</sup>

Elkanah's destination was "Shiloh".<sup>27</sup> The modern city of Seilun, a ruined site about twenty miles north of Jerusalem, is the ancient site of Shiloh. Danish excavations have established the site beyond question.<sup>28</sup> The meaning of Shiloh is "rest", and it was here that the many of the Twelve Tribes heard from Joshua what their inheritance was to be.

**1.3b (NASB) "And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were priests to the LORD there"** (וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי בְנֵי-עֲלִי חֹפְנִי וּפִנְחָס כַּהֲנָיִם לַיהוָה;). It was at Shiloh that Hophni and Phinehas ministered in the tabernacle. Whereas the English versions place the demonstrative "there" last in this nominal clause, in the Hebrew it is placed first: ". . . in Shiloh and there, the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were priests to the LORD." An exclamatory contrast is drawn between Elkanah's worship to the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh and two priests who regulated the tabernacle.<sup>29</sup>

Eli's two sons, whose wickedness and death play significant roles in the following episodes, have Egyptian names. "Hophni" means "tadpole", and is a rare name, unattested after the Middle Kingdom. "Phinehas" means "the Negro", and is more common, being the name also for Aaron's grandson (Num. 25:7). Eli sons' Egyptian names are probably residual from Israel's earlier sojourn to Goshen in Egypt, commencing with Jacob while Joseph was vizier (Gen. 46:8ff.; 47:11-12), and ending with their departure under the leadership of Moses (Ex. 13:2ff.). Notably, only Eli's two sons are called priests in this context, and not he (cf. 1:9b).

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<sup>25</sup> See 1 Sam. 1:11; 4:4; 15:2; 17:45. The reader needs to reflect upon the importance of this divine name's introduction at this juncture. Two other passages may help, 1 Sam. 1:11 (Hannah's vow) and 4:4 (description of the Ark).

<sup>26</sup> NIV preface, p. ix.

<sup>27</sup> Shiloh occurs in Jos. 18:1, 8-10 and 19:51, serving as a framework in 1 Sam. 2:9, 12; 21:2. The proper place occurs nine times in 1 Samuel, eight of which are to be found in 1 Samuel 1:1--4:22.

<sup>28</sup> Hans Kjaer, *The Excavation of Shilo, the place of Eli and Samuel* (Jerusalem, 1930).

<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, our narrator gives Elkanah action ("went up") compared to these two priests who appear in a nominal (verbless) clause.

From his yearly pilgrimages to Shiloh, Elkanah would have been familiar with these two priests' wicked reputation (cf. 1 Sam. 2:12-17)---yet, he still faithful came. Our author sows the seed necessary for us understanding 1 Samuel 2:12ff.

What now follows in verses 4a-5a are the same three names that were introduced in the first episode (vv. 1-2), appearing again in the same order: v. 4a (Elkanah), v. 4b (Peninnah) and v. 5a (Hannah).

**1.4a (NASB) "And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed"** (וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיִּזְבַּח) (אֵל קָנָה). Verse 4a punctuates "the day" during which an otherwise repetitious pilgrimage to Shiloh takes place in that "the day", *i.e.*, Hannah's vow to the LORD and her meeting with Eli (vv. 9-18), transpires. Thus, "the day" becomes the temporal demarcation, announcing in anticipation the unique ensuing events as happening upon it.

**1.4b (NASB) "he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters;"** (לְפִנְנָה אִשְׁתּוֹ וְנָתַן וּלְכָל-בָּנֶיהָ וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ מִנּוֹתַי). Beginning with verse 4b, a parenthesis is drawn that ends in verse 7b. The parenthesis is indicated by the verbal form of וְנָתַן ("he customarily would give") that stops the flow of the narrative to give needed background for the event that is about to be told. The events depicted in these verses is a far cry from the festive ideal of joyous family celebration commended in such a reference as Deuteronomy 16:14.

When Elkanah took his entire family to Shiloh, they would share in eating the meat from the sacrificial animal.<sup>30</sup> While the narrator draws attention to the contrast between Peninnah (v. 4b) and Hannah (v. 5), one cannot but notice Peninnah is called "his wife", and that these sons and daughters are called "her [Peninnah's] sons" and "her daughters". Indeed, the "children" which Peninnah had in verse 2d is now expanded to "all her sons and her daughters". This phrase being enhanced by the word "all", informs us that Peninnah is crowded around by a number of children, which sharpens the contrast with Hannah who is childless.

The added descriptive phrase, "his wife", gives the point of view of Elkanah. Elkanah respects his second wife by giving her and to all her children their proper portion of the sacrificial animal. Peninnah's status as Elkanah's wife in this context of the sacrificial meal also has special significance. She alone is called "his wife" because of her children which Elkanah can present before the LORD--Peninnah solely has been the provider of Elkanah's praise.

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<sup>30</sup> מִנּוֹתַי ("portions") refers to the parts of meat from the sacrificed animal that can be eaten by the person who brought the animal.

**1.5a (NASB) "but to Hannah he would give a double portion"** (ולחנה יתן מנה אחת) (אפי' ). The sentence begins with the indirect object instead of the verb, "but to Hannah he would customarily give . . ." ( . . . ולחנה יתן ).<sup>31</sup> The disruption of the usual Hebrew word order highlights the contrast between Elkanah's actions toward Hannah to those of Peninnah (v. 4b).

Elkanah paid special attention to Hannah with a special and personalized portion at the sharing of the portions. This presumably did not escape Peninnah's attention, and must have been irritating to her. It seems that Peninnah's behavior in verses 6a and 7b stems from jealousy. A profound feeling of inferiority when one longs to be loved.

Hannah, Elkanah's beloved-wife, is singled out for special attention. The text, however, is difficult to understand. The following English translations indicate the problem:

- NASB: "but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb".
- NIV: "But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb."
- NRSV: "but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb".
- LTB: "And to Hannah he gave one double portion, for he loved Hannah. And Jehovah had shut up her womb".
- KJV: "but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb".
- NJB: "to Hannah, however, he would give only one portion: for, although he loved Hannah more, Yahweh had made her barren".
- RSV: "and, although he loved Hannah, he would give Hannah only one portion, because the LORD had closed her womb".

The text literally says: "He used to give her one [the word is stressed]<sup>32</sup> portion, face . . . for he loved Hannah . . .". The word that is difficult to understand in this context is אפי' (apym). It properly means "nostrils" (dual form), and frequently means "face", especially

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<sup>31</sup> The verb, יתן, points to a customary behavior, like the previous ונתן. A comparison between the latter verb and ויזבח ("when he sacrificed"; v. 4a) needs to be made. ויזבח points to a singular event, with the verbs following pointing to a customary or a repeated series of actions as background information to the reader. The main narrative chain of events is picked up again in verse 7c, forming a parenthesis from 4b-7b: "the day came when Elkanah sacrificed (he customarily would give to Peninnah . . . and this would be done year after year) so she [Hannah] wept and did not eat".

<sup>32</sup> The cardinal number "one" comes into play again and underscores its placement in 1:2b (see notes on 1:2b), and Hannah is associated with it again. The "one man" (v. 1a) demonstrates his loving esteem to the "one" wife (v. 2b) who receives the special "one" portion.

when used in contexts of bowing down before God or before men in high positions, thus, "a portion of honor". It is probable that on one hand, to Peninnah and her children, Elkanah would give one portion for each person. On the other hand, Hannah would receive one portion (= "special portion") equal to all theirs. In any case, Hannah was treated by Elkanah in some special way to explain the taunts which Peninnah used to fling toward her on such an occasion.

There are proposals in the commentaries to emend the Hebrew text based on the Septuagint. According to this emendation, the original text would have read **כִּי אָפֵס** (aps ky), instead of the Masoretic consonantal text **כִּי אָפִים** (apym ky). This emendation leads to the English translation, "But to Hannah he used to give one portion, though he loved Hannah; but the LORD had shut her womb". This explanation has a serious drawback that escapes those who wish to emend the text. It assumes not only that the scribe erred, but also that both the copyist and the community of readers of the copied text, both of which were fluent in Hebrew, consistently failed to recognize the err.

**1.5b** (NASB) "**for he loved Hannah,**" (**כִּי אֶת־חַנָּה אָהַב**). The unexpected Hebrew word order (*i.e.*, the inversion of the subject and predicate), "for Hannah he loved", underscores that Hannah was the object of Elkanah's love. The veiled implication is that Elkanah did not love Peninnah. However, this does not stop him from strictly doing the proper thing by her as evident in v. 5a. There is no indication by our narrator that the LORD's shutting up of Hannah's womb was because of discipline or judgment.

Comparing the Hannah--Peninnah dynamics to that of Leah--Rachel fails. Genesis 29:31 explicitly states that Leah was unloved ("hated"), whereas the position of Peninnah is different in that no where does it say that Elkanah hated her. Indeed, because Leah was hated, the LORD "opened her womb" (Gen. 29:31). If Elkanah did hate Peninnah, it would be easier to understand her harassment of Hannah year in and year out. Peninnah's tormenting Hannah stems from her jealousy of Elkanah's love for Hannah, especially displayed during the annual family religious pilgrimage to Shiloh.

As we see now, Elkanah's love for Hannah was not conditional. It was not based on whether or not she had children.

**1.5c** (NASB) "**but the LORD had closed her womb**" (**וַיִּהְיֶה סָגַר רַחֲמָהּ**). This clause introduces a clause of concession and is directed toward the reader alone. Elkanah loved Hannah "although the LORD had closed her womb". In the cases of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Manoah, their barrenness was never explicitly stated that the LORD caused the "shutting" of the womb.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The verb used here for the LORD closing Hannah's womb is atypical. The usual term for barrenness is **עֲקָרָה** (Gen. 11:30; 25:21; 29:31; Ex. 23:26; Deut. 7:14; Judg. 13:2f; 1 Sam. 2:5, etc.).

**1.6a (NASB) "Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her"**  
(וכעסתה צרתה גם־כעס בעבור הרעמה). A chiasmic structure emerges: A (v. 4b) B (v. 5a) -- B' (v. 5bc) A' (6a). The innermost lines, 5a, 5bc, form a pair because of Hannah's name. She is the object of special care and love. The outermost lines (4b, 6a) threaten and envelop the positive by showing Peninnah and her children, and by placing Hannah's barrenness in opposite to them.

The understood object of the possessive pronoun "her" is Hannah. Including this instance, Hannah becomes the object in the form of the Hebrew suffix "her" six times. Her name disappears, an ellipsis that may signal an attack is being made on her identity.

The quartet of lines (6ab + 7ab) increases the tension between Elkanah's two wives. Peninnah's name is avoided, and in its place is "her rival" (צרתה). This describes from Hannah's point of view the special delight that Peninnah took in using the yearly pilgrimage to Shiloh as an occasion for continued provocation, badgering Hannah to the point of tears because of her barrenness. Perhaps Peninnah could not understand a husband could love his wife if she could not bear an heir for him.

Hannah's barrenness most likely prompted Elkanah to take Peninnah as his second wife (cf. Sarai, Gen. 16:2; Rachel, Gen. 30:3; and Leah, Gen. 30:9). Thus, Peninnah became Hannah's "rival", a term used to denote "an adversary" or "enemy" (Lev. 18:18).

Peninnah used her fertility to provoke anger in Hannah (cf. Hagar and Sarah, Gen. 16:4; Leah and Rachel, Gen. 30:1-24). She engages in premeditated character assassination, devising one dig after another "in order to humiliate her" (בעבור הרעמה).<sup>34</sup> The verbal form lends itself to a sinister resemblance to the word which completes both the preceding and the following clauses in the original:

5c although the LORD closed her womb (רחמה)

6a in order to humiliate her (הרעמה)

6b because the LORD had sealed her womb (רחמה)

This phonetic similarity between the words "her womb" (vv. 5c, 6b) and "humiliate her" (v. 6a) leads one to conclude that Peninnah tormented Hannah not only because her womb had been sealed, but also "in order to humiliate her" because the LORD had been the One who had done it! This perhaps was one of Peninnah's major taunts: "The reason why you do not have any children, Hannah, is because the LORD's hand is

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<sup>34</sup> The NASB understands the consonants רעם coming from רעם (1) meaning "to irritate her". However in this context, it is best to understand the consonants as רעם (2), meaning "to humiliate". הרעמה is a hiphil infinitive construct with a third person feminine singular suffix. Infinitive constructs may act as verbal nouns. Note also that the ר in הרעמה is pointed with a dagesh forte. This is very rare in biblical Hebrew. With this doubling of ר, verse 6 contains no less than six רs. The consonant recalls the harshness of Peninnah's harassment of Hannah. רעם (1) is used in Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:10, where Hannah declares that the LORD will "complain aloud against" all who oppose Him. The connection between these two instances would doubtless include Peninnah.

against you. Look at me, I have many children, because the LORD favors me!" The allegation on the surface would seem to be true, but is very cruel because it is not open to falsification. Peninnah's continual taunts would eat at Hannah to the point she may doubt her self-worth as Elkanah's wife.

**1.6b (NASB) "because the LORD had closed her womb."** (כִּי־סָגַר יְהוָה בְּעַד רַחֲמָהּ:). This clause explains Peninnah's attacks against Hannah. Because the LORD has sealed Hannah's womb, it arms Peninnah with ammunition to torment her. Just as in v. 5c, so now in v. 6b, the LORD is responsible for Hannah's childlessness. The emphatic repetition of the final clause in both v. 5b and 6b links the two verses, both of which focus upon Hannah's barrenness.

The repeated clause is almost identical to v. 5c except for the addition of the preposition בְּעַד that functions idiomatically with the verb "to close" (סָגַר; cf. BDB). The addition of the preposition stresses the totality of Hannah's barrenness. Whereas v. 5b might be translated, "because the LORD closed her womb", v. 6b would be, "because the LORD had completely closed her womb". In this way, our narrator increases his readers' interest in Hannah's barrenness. But why? The redundancy of this clause emphasizes the LORD's manipulation of human events. He is working behind the scenes to direct events toward His purpose and goal. For what purpose?

**1.7a (NASB) "And it happened year after year"** (וּכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה). Verse 7 summarily states the preceding events. The structure, ". . . כֵּן (v. 7a). . . וְכֵן (v. 7b), is best understood "as it happened year after year (the events of vv. 4b-6a) . . . so she (Peninnah) would do that (humiliate Hannah) . . .".

**1.7b (NASB) "as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her"** (מְדִי עֹלְתָהּ בְּבַיִת יְהוָה כֵּן תִּכְעֶסְנָהּ). The understood subject of the verb ("she"), "went up", could either refer to Peninnah or Hannah. It cannot be grammatically determined. In fact, one could argue that it refers to Peninnah, the subject of the main verb, "provoke her" (תִּכְעֶסְנָהּ). However, because of the flow of the text, it refers to Hannah for a number of reasons:

- Hannah's going up to the "house of the LORD" (v. 7a) balances her husband's going up in v. 3a, where the title "LORD of Hosts" occurs for the first time. This pattern is duplicated again in 1 Samuel 1:21 and 24a. In addition, verses 7ab and 3a are connected because of the repetition of the annual pilgrimage described in an iterative manner.
- The series of the Hebrew suffix, "her" (occurring for a total of six times), and now attached to the infinitive (her going up; עֹלְתָהּ), refers to Hannah (cf. 1 Sam. 2:19b, a clause which is clearly a successor to vv. 1:3a and 24a).
- Twice before Hannah has been associated with the name "LORD" (vv. 5c, 6b). Peninnah has not been directly associated with it.

We have come to the climax of the episode. The narrator brings both Peninnah and Hannah together in the same clause for the first time and the only time in all recorded revelation. Purposely, the author confuses his readers in reference to whom the pronouns refer. It is if as the two wives are in the death struggle of their lives, tumbling over and over, with the readers off on the sidelines trying to determine who is who, and thus the confusion of the personal pronouns. Peninnah's hands grasps at Hannah's throat, Hannah weeps and howls to no avail.

Ironically, that which should have united the two women, divides them. They have both come to [literally, "in"] the house of the LORD with their husband. However, their respective verbs, "as often as she [Hannah] went up" and [Peninnah] "she would provoke her" occur on either side of the complement "in the house of the LORD" in the original to signal their opposition to one another. We are explicitly told that it was only during this time of the year--year in and year out--that this clash occurred, and with "the house of the LORD" in the middle. This is not how it was meant to be!

We now understand why it was only Elkanah who "would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh" (v. 3). His wives are distanced from this action because of their feuding. Oh, how difficult it is to worship the LORD when one is emotionally in turmoil with one's peer. The wives' struggle may be charted:

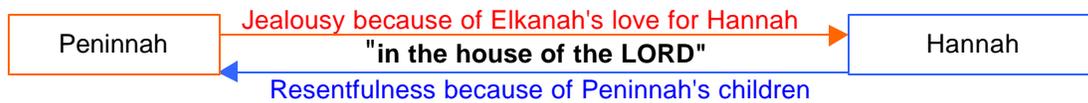


Illustration 2.

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When one comes to worship the LORD, they must not be at odds with their brother. Jesus said, "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering" (Matt. 5:23-24). The illustration Jesus presents is that of a person who, according to Jewish custom, is bringing an offering to the altar. Naturally, at this time the worshipper should be meditating upon God's goodness toward him. At this time of meditation, he realizes, "Since God has been so good to me, I too must act accordingly to my brother". It is the worshipper's initiative to reconcile with his brother any grievance that would break their union. How many today believe what Jesus says and are actually worshipping the LORD?

The Hebrew Scriptures emphasizes that God is not obligated to accept every act of worship (cf. Gen. 4:5; 1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11; Jer. 6:20; Amos 5:22; Micah 6:6, etc.). The gift derives its value from the heart of the giver (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4, etc.). The time for reconciliation is always appropriate--now! Tomorrow may be too late.



times, then husbands, like Elkanah, may have called their wives by their first names. There is no similar example of direct speech of a wife to her husband where she calls him by his name.

**1.8c (NASB) "Why do you weep"** (למה תבכי).<sup>38</sup> After addressing Hannah directly, three rhetorical "whys" ensues. All three mention negative states in which Hannah presently finds herself. "Why do you weep" (v. 1:8c) and "why do you not eat" (v. 1:8d) reflects the facts of 1:7c.

Elkanah's rhetorical questions directed toward Hannah on one hand reveals his impatience towards her resentfulness toward Peninnah. Elkanah knows very well that Hannah is resentful toward Peninnah because she is childless (1:8f). On the other hand, he reassures her that even though she is barren, he is still her husband and cares for her. In this way, Elkanah disassociates himself with Peninnah's mistreatment of Hannah. Also, Elkanah's intensity increases in magnitude by noting his rhetorical questions increase in ascending number of words that climaxes in the last: 2 words (v. 1:8c), 3 words (1:8d), 3 words (1:8e) and 6 words (1:8f).

**1.8d (NASB) "and why do you not eat"** (ולמה לא תאכלי).

**1.8e (NASB) "and why is your heart sad?"** (ולמה ירע לבבך). Whereas the former questions focused on the external, the observable, this question deals with the internal. More literally, Elkanah's question to Hannah is, "Why is your heart bad?" The only precise parallel in biblical Hebrew for this phrase is Deuteronomy 15:10: "[lit.] May your heart not be bad when you do so!" [*i.e.*, when you give generously to the LORD]. To do something "with a bad heart" is doing it grudgingly. Thus her husband is not so much asking Hannah why her heart is sad (NASB), but why she is resentful. Contextually, he would be asking her if she was resentful because she did not have any children. This conclusion is probable based upon Elkanah's subsequent question to her in verse 1:8f.

**1.8f (NASB) "Am I not better to you than ten sons?"** (הלווא אנכי טוב לך (מעשרה בנים)). This rhetorical question has a different interrogative particle (הלווא) than those that preceded it (למה). It is not verbal as its predecessors, but nominal. It no longer asks about Hannah's grief, but centers on Elkanah and what he means to Hannah. The function of the preceding rhetorical questions was to prepare for his final question that becomes the punchline in the series. Contextually, Elkanah's question may give an indication how many sons Peninnah had actually borne--ten children, the same number as Leah.

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<sup>38</sup> The form למה occurs only three times in biblical Hebrew, and all of them in verse 8. However, a similar form, למה, occurs many times in biblical Hebrew.