

## Expansions on First Samuel

### Introduction

This document follows the same pattern as three earlier ones, Expansions on Genesis, Exodus and Jonah, all posted on this home page under the heading “Old Testament.” As noted in each, the purpose is not so much to do a word study—that’s certainly part of it—but to take the incidents recorded and flesh them out for the purpose of situating them within the context of *lectio divina*. That, of course, is the chief goal of this entire website. An historical account as we have in First Samuel may not lend itself to *lectio* as it would with the Psalms, the Song of Songs or even Genesis and Exodus, the latter two being quasi-historical books, if you will. However, much more lays beneath the surface. Attention to the historical details recorded in First Samuel has value, but they are given a second place...not to treat them lightly but to see how the mysterious working of divine grace plays itself out through the practice of *lectio divina*. The process is virtually endless which fills the reader with delight and makes him return time and again to the text. Just when you think you’ve gotten hold of a valuable insight, something else pops up, practically *ad infinitum*.

To do *lectio* with an historical text can be more challenging. In fact, it is more “boring” insofar as one’s imagination isn’t allowed as much freedom to roam. Here is where the value of close attention to the original Hebrew comes in which allows for other avenues to be explored. The document at hand is a result of those explorations which essentially have been prayed out, not written in the conventional sense. To make that shift to praying-out a text requires spending a fairly extravagant amount of time on a word or two, let alone a single verse. Then we advance to reading several verses (obviously necessary to grasp the larger context) and finally drop the text altogether in favor of resting in God’s presence. The process between this rest and examining the text again from the *lectio* point of view alternates continually, not at all like conventional reading. It continues as a fruitful process yet at the same time is quite exhausting. Always the temptation to read more quickly lurks in the background. As soon as that happens, you tend to lose the sense of divine guidance. You start fumbling over yourself which is a sign to shift gears downward once more. Such is one way of looking at Jesus’ words, “And they shall all be taught by God” [Jn 6.45]. Jesus quotes Is 54.13 where the Hebrew verb is *lamad* which implies a getting accustomed to, of approaching the text gradually and hovering over it (‘Talmud’ derives from this verb meaning an explanation of the Torah or Law).

Now for the usual but important caveat. What is set forth here is done with the intention of employing the biblical text as a means for *lectio divina*, nothing else. If this purpose does not lead us to a deeper awareness of God’s presence, it is better to go elsewhere.

Two practical points: as the first paragraph states, three other “expansion” texts have been posted, let alone a number of others dealing with the Hebrew text. Words have been explained which means that the reader comes across some over-lapping. While this becomes more frequent the further you advance in the text, it has the advantage of showing how a given word has various shades of meaning and application. The second point is the frequent reference to Hebrew verbal roots. In that language the root of a word, almost always derived from a verb, is of highest importance. This gives the relatively spare Hebrew language much broader latitude than expected, even more than in other

languages. For example, a verb or word derived from one root can have multiple meanings, and from the *lectio divina* point of view, this is a veritable gold mine.

Hebrew words are transliterated and in italics. References to the more important ones are noted which gives the reader a way to see how the same word is used elsewhere in First Samuel. They are taken from this book as much as possible to show their various uses and meanings. Such references naturally tend to increase in frequency the further you move along in the text.

As with all biblical documents in this site, the **New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (Revised Standard Version)** is used (Oxford, 1973).

## Chapter One

**Vs. 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 Ephraimite.**

The adjective *'echad* starts off First Samuel which fundamentally means “one” or literally “man one” as, for example, the six days of creation (‘day one,’ ‘day two,’ etc.). Although Elkanah plays a subsidiary role in the larger drama to follow, this way of presenting him singles him out as an important agent of all that will follow; important not so much as in and by himself but by reason of being located at the very beginning of a grand narrative. After Elkanah plays his part he passes off the scene without having been missed.

The words “there was a certain man” or “there was man one,” set the mood for the telling of a story, of the major characters that will follow: Samuel, Saul and David. To have begun First Samuel otherwise would make the account boring, a laundry list of names, facts and events. Thus “there was man one” grabs out attention and carries us through to the end which in the grand scheme of things runs through the last verse of Second Kings: “and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him (Johoiachin) by the king, every day a portion, as long as he lived.” Obviously, much has occurred between Elkanah and Johoiachin. The words “as long as he lived” cap off the narrative and don’t allow us to hang in midair for something to follow. Events do come after Johoiachin, of course, yet what we’ve experienced to date rounds off a particular time in history marked by divine intervention. As for what has occurred in between, they advance in a sequence always with these two poles in mind.

Elkanah comes “from the hill country” of Ephraim, *mehar* being composed of the preposition *min* (from) prefaced to *har*, and usually applies to a mountain compared with its smaller counterpart, a hill. *Har* is singular, “from the hill country of Ephraim,” and the Hebrew text lacks “country” giving us “from the hill of Ephraim.” We get the idea that Elkanah was ensconced in some *har* of Ephraim and singled out by God as indicated by use of the adjective *'echad*.

Ramathaim-Zophim is a tongue-twister of a name which serves to make Elkanah all the more obscure, ironically why he is crucial. However, as noted several times in First Chronicles (for example, 6.27, Elkanah was a Levite and thus listed as belonging to the priestly class. We have four generations: Jeroham, Elihu, Tohu and Zuph, all obscure, yet their mention serves to flesh out slightly less obscure descendant who begins First Samuel.

**Vs. 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.**

The conjunctive *w-* ('and') begins the second sentence. In addition to this document, **Expansions upon the Book of Genesis** noted this fact for the first time, that is, virtually every sentence begins with *w-* just as it does in First Samuel. The reason is to show continuous action and unity between what had occurred and what is to follow. Though *w-* is a tiny word...a letter, in fact...it's important insofar as it helps to impart historical continuity to a text: "and to him two wives" as it goes literally.

Vs. 2 uses "name" instead of simply mentioning the two women, this lending a more formal air and serving to distinguish between them right away. Thus the stage is set for the conflict that will arise later. This distinction is made as "one" and "second" (*'achath* and *hashenyth*) where the definite article is prefaced to the latter ('the second') which already intimates that Hannah will turn out to be more preferable. Both women as wives of Elkanah are introduced nonchalantly, in a matter-of-fact way, without any qualms as to the two being married to one man.

The proper name "Hannah" or *Chanah* (alternately as *chan*) also means grace and refers to an entreaty or prayer. So when *Chanah* prays "Let your maidservant find favor (*chan*) in your eyes" [vs. 18], she is intimating that such *chan* will come to her as *Chanah*, an irresistible entreaty on her part which God cannot refuse.

The second wife of Elkanah is Peninnah, a name possibly related to the noun "pearl." Although she had children, the number isn't given which is in stark contrast with barren Hannah. We have no information as to how Elkanah met his two wives nor their earlier history, which one he married first and so forth. Peninnah is mentioned only two other times (vss. 2 and 4) and passes off the scene as quickly as she had appeared. The two women are reminiscent of fruitful Leah and barren Rachel in Genesis 29. Jacob loved Rachel (cf. 29.18) just like Elkanah loved Hannah (vs. 5) despite both not being able to bear children and therefore heirs.

**Vs. 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.**

Calling Elkanah as "this man" (*ha'ysh hahu'*) imparts a certain impersonal air to him, as though he were secondary to the narrative and a necessary inconvenience to get off the scene as quickly as possible once he has fulfilled his function. Also it may be taken in a somewhat derogatory manner due to having two wives, one with children and the other without any. It wouldn't be surprising that both Peninnah and Hannah called their husband "this man" behind his back. This doesn't mean his maltreated them but that they were fully aware of his subsidiary role in the larger scheme of things. The sooner he passed off the scene, the better.

*Halah* is the verb for "go up" which implies that Ramathaim-Zophim in Ephraim was at a lower elevation to Shiloh. Given this context, one can't help but recall the "psalms of ascent" (Pss. 120-134) composed for pilgrims who several centuries later would make their way to Jerusalem as on the Passover. As for Elkanah's *halah*, another way of fleshing it out is through the verbal root for *holah* or that which is laid on the altar for sacrifice, the smoke of which went up to heaven. "Bring the burnt offering here to me

and the peace offerings” [13.9]. With this double meaning in mind, we could say that as Elkanah was making his yearly ascent to Shiloh, he was conscious of going there for chiefly sacrificial purposes. Perhaps he had in mind Abraham as he ascended the mount in Moriah (Gen 22.2), the near-sacrifice of his son, Isaac. “Year by year” is *myamym mamymah* which consists of two uses of the noun “day” (*yom*) or something like “from days to days” and is suggestive of the repetitive, constant nature of the event, of how it important it was for Elkanah.

Here the Lord is identified as with his “hosts” or *tsava’oth* (*tsava’* being singular), a word referring to an army or military force as well as angels in heaven. “O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me” [vs. 11].

Shiloh is mentioned first in Jos 18.1 where Israel had assembled, the place where they “set up the tent of meeting” [vs. 1] for the purpose of portioning out territory to seven of the twelve tribes which needed it (cf. vs. 2). Thus for some three hundred years before the temple in Jerusalem Shiloh was the center of worship. During his journey there, Elkanah, must have pondered over his belonging to the tribe of Ephraim which had received its allotment earlier (cf. Jos 16.5-10), and upon arrival, performed two obligations, worship and sacrifice. The verbs are *shachah* and *zavach* with the former meaning to bow oneself down, to prostrate. “Yet honor me now before the elders of my people...that I may worship the Lord your God” [15.30]. As for the latter, cf. vs. 21: “And the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow” [vs. 21].

The temple in Shiloh was the very the summit of Elkanah’s ascent or *halah* where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were responsible for its upkeep. Shortly they will be introduced as less than desirable ministers of the Lord but for now can be pictured as waiting at the temple’s entrance for the offering made by the people. We don’t know if Elkanah realized their wickedness which had been going on for some time now. He may have gotten an intimation here and there which accumulated over the years and wondered why Eli, their father who was an upright man, never seemed to have caught on. Eli may have know about it but preferred instead to turn a blind eye, hoping it would go away since the people who presented their offerings weren’t acquainted with what went on behind the scene. Then again, all these offerings brought in a substantial profit. Thus Hopni and Phinehas could use their priestly role as masks to conceal their iniquity for a lengthy period of time.

*Kohen* is the word for “priest,” originally attributed to Aaron, and Eli the father was one as well (cf. vs. 9). In the verse at hand, Hophni and Phinehas are “priests of the Lord.” Prefaced to “Lord” or *YHWH* is the preposition *l-*, literally as “priests to the Lord.”

**Vs. 4: On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters;**

“On the day” or better, “came the day” which implies that Elkanah had been at Shiloh for a while prior to the performance of any sacred duties. Because a sacrifice is involved (the verb *zavach* is used as in the previous verse), he either had brought livestock along or purchased some from vendors. His two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, accompanied him which must have made for a rather contentious journey. Peninnah had brought his children whom she asked to taunt the barren Hannah, making it even more uncomfortable. Since Elkanah was their father, they must have provoked him endlessly. In

other words, Elkanah ended up just as severely taunted as Hannah. As for Hannah, she knew that once such a trip to Shiloh had been completed, she would have to endure the same taunts en route home...and dreaded looking forward to a repeat performance the following year. It is quite a contrast to Mary's journey "into the hill country" [Lk 1.39] to visit her cousin, Elisabeth.

*Manah* is the word for "portions," often referring to food as is the case here, and used in the next verse as well as in 9.23: "And Samuel said to the cook, 'Bring the portion I gave you of which I said to you, 'Put it aside.'" In the verse at hand, we get a better idea of Peninnah noted in vs. 2 as the wife "who had children," that is, she had both sons and daughters though the number isn't given nor their age. Obviously Elkanah had to give priority to them over Hannah, for one of the sons would be destined to take over his inheritance. Besides, these children were being trained at an early age to make the obligatory trip to Shiloh and were expected to continue the tradition of offering sacrifices there.

**Vs. 5: and, although he loved Hannah, he would give Hannah only one portion, because the Lord had closed her womb.**

Even though Elkanah provided for Peninnah and her brood, we are naturally directed toward Hannah even before this point because her plight had caught our attention, and we are anxious to learn what will happen to her. No question about it...Peninnah is secondary despite her fruitfulness. Already it's easy to detect that we're being set up for a miraculous divine intervention.

The Hebrew text begins with "he would give Hannah only one portion (*manah*)."<sup>1</sup> The word *apaym* appears here labelled by a footnote in the **RSV** as "obscure."<sup>2</sup> However, it can be taken as something like "double" or more literally, "one portion of two faces," *aph* being the noun for "anger" and refers to nostrils, the breathing through which is indicative of this emotion.

*Ahav* is the verb for "loved" and fundamentally means to desire, to breathe after. "Speak to David in private and say, 'Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you'" [18.22]. While Elkanah did his best to care for Peninnah and her children, it seems he was attentive more out of obligation which is why it's significant the text speaks of his *ahav* towards Hannah. We don't know how Hannah responded to this "one portion," but she knows the *manah* at hand was part of the sacrifice Elkanah had just offered. It wasn't just another piece of food to consume compared with Peninnah who grabbed her *manah* and gave it to her children to shut them up.

Although the text recounts that the Lord himself made Hannah barren, she must have known it for a long time, aggravated by Peninnah boasting about her fertility. Elkanah was clearly aware of this yet didn't intervene except perhaps an occasional consolation to Hannah and a warning to Peninnah. That pretty much sums up both his fairness and mediocrity.

*Sagar* means "closed" as well as to shut up as you would close a gate, giving it an added slam to make sure it was shut firmly. "For he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars" [23.7]. Despite coming close to condemnation for being childless, Hannah could take comfort that it was from the Lord. Elkanah, given his quasi-sensitivity to things divine, knew as well but left it at that. He was more resigned to the fate of his wife than she was, for Hannah had an intimation things could change with divine intervention. On the other hand, Peninnah was clearly threatened. If Hannah had gotten

pregnant, she could upset the already tense relationships within the household, so all she could do was hope that things wouldn't turn out that way. Even though Peninnah took every opportunity to gloat over Hannah (it was especially hard during pilgrimages to Shiloh where some public exposure was involved), in the long run it was she and unfortunately her children who suffered the most damage.

As for "womb," the noun is *rechem* which derives from the verbal root *racham* meaning to behold with tender affection, to be compassionate. "Upon you was I cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God" [Ps 22.10]. A related noun is *rachamym* which means both mercy and bowels.

**Vs. 6: And her rival used to provoke her sorely, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb.**

*Tsarah* is the word for "rival" which has the stronger connotation of adversary or trouble and derives from the verbal root *tsur* (to press, besiege). In a sense, the text didn't have to speak of Peninnah in this manner; early on we learned about her uneasy relationship with Hannah including hapless Elkanah, stuck in between, trying to do as best he could with his limited resources.

We have both the verb *kahas* and the noun (same spelling) derived from it as "provoke" and "sorely" which means a provocation. *Kahas* also means to take offense, to anger which certainly is the case here. "They have stirred me to jealousy with what is no god; they have provoked me with their idols" [Dt 32.21]. As for the noun, cf. vs. 16: "I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation."

In addition to *kahas* by Peninnah, she caused Hannah irritation or *raham*, a verb meaning to rage or to roar and can refer to the sound of thunder as in 2.10: "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven."

Both the *kahas* and *raham* demonstrated by Peninnah toward Hannah come from the fact that the latter had no children or as the text says a second time, "the Lord had closed her womb." Hannah knew the reason secretly for this whereas Peninnah only made surmises from the only resources available to her, disdain. Soon Peninnah, despite her children, would turn out to be "barren" as far as being shown divine favor.

**Vs. 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.**

"So it went on year by year" reads literally "thus it did year in year." These words sound even more depressing as they describe the situation at Shiloh which reflects unfavorably upon Elkanah who, despite the love shown to Hannah (cf. vs. 5), did nothing to resolve the situation. If things were tense at Shiloh as well as the journey to and from there, one can only imagine what life was like at home.

The true significance of Shiloh is revealed here, "house of the Lord." Although the provocation of Hannah by Peninnah had been mentioned fairly extensively, there's no clear indication that it took place while they were physically present in Shiloh. Elkanah in his weakness at least had the sense to suppress any wrangling, even by Peninnah's provocation of her children, for he knew they were in the Lord's house. As for any provocation, the verb *kahas* is used again here, "used to provoke her." Any bickering

could wait until later when it would resume but not here in public. This is born out by the words “as often as she went up.” As noted in vs. 1, the verb *halah* is used for “went up.”

It is no small wonder that Hannah’s response to this yearly taunting, again keeping in mind it must have continued at home but under a different guise, was to weep and not eat. *Bakah* is the verb for “wept” and can also apply to mourning the dead. “She was deeply distressed as prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly” [vs. 10].

**Vs. 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?”**

At last Elkanah shows his tender side by being motivated to say something. He appears a bit guilty at not having spoken earlier and comes off with three short questions in rapid fire succession. Surely the motivation to speak this way didn’t come from Peninnah nor her children who couldn’t care less. They knew Elkanah’s concern for Hannah and stood by wondering what would come of it. Peninnah’s status as having children was threatened, so she was on guard as to what might happen. She probably engaged in some eavesdropping not unlike Rebekah who came up with a plan to rob Esau of his birth right as first born in favor of Isaac: “Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau” [Gen 27.5]. Perhaps Elkanah was using the occasion of being away from home in Shiloh to bring up some delicate family matters.

For some time now Elkanah knew that Hannah was not taking nourishment due to her sad heart. “Sad” is the verb *yarah* which fundamentally means to tremble, to be envious. “But these things displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to govern us’” [8.6]. In the verse at hand, the *yarah* of Hannah is located in her “heart” or *lev*, seat of the senses and affections. *Lev* is prefaced with the preposition *l-* which signifies direct action by the verb *yarah*, something like “Why is sad to your heart?” The next reference to *lev* is 1.13: “Hannah was speaking in her heart.”

The third questions reveals something of Elkanah’s self-centered attitude, of being worth more than ten sons to Hannah. Yet there is some truth to this because he loved her (cf. vs. 5), a sentiment he didn’t show as much to Peninnah and presumably to her children. Question number three comes off more expressively as “Am I not good (*tov*) to you from ten sons?” Hannah does not respond to her husband’s triple inquiry. Given her nature, she took it in lovingly, not wishing to upset the already tense family situation. Also Hannah didn’t want to abandon hope that she might become pregnant, the worst fear on Peninnah’s part.

**Vs. 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.**

Elkanah, Hannah, Peninnah and her children all participated in the meal which must have been a glum affair, even on this occasion of pilgrimage to Shiloh. The three questions must have echoed in the ears of Peninnah though chances are she kept quiet throughout. The words “Hannah rose” can signify that no further discussion was possible. She knew the conversation had gone as far as it could and felt it best to remove herself. Perhaps she had a conversation with Elkanah although in private and away from the itchy ears of Peninnah. Also Elkanah and Hannah agreed to make the homeward journey



without acting differently. Besides, there remained important business for Hannah the next day after having informed her husband that she intended to ask God for a son. If Peninnah ever found out, no doubt she would do everything in her power to stop this.

Right after Hannah “rose” (*qum*), a new sentence begins, this gesture setting the stage for something new, of Hannah carrying out her intent. It is not small wonder that her rising is followed immediately by the sitting of Eli the priest or *kohen*, his two sons holding the same office as noted in vs. 3. His sitting (*yashav*) suggests a habit of hanging in a public place to watch the ceremonies and people coming and going to the temple. Over the years this elderly man (ninety-eight years old as 4.15 says) had got to recognize many familiar faces, Elkanah and his two wives being among them. Given his age and failing eyesight (again, cf. 4.15), Eli took great pleasure sitting on the “seat” or *kise’*, this term also meaning a royal throne often covered with a canopy. “To make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor” [2.8]. Also *kise’* is used with regard to Eli, that is, “by the road” [4.13]. As for the *kise’* by the temple, it may have had an umbrella-like cover to protect against the sun.

Note the location of Eli’s *kise’*, by the “doorpost” or *mezuzah*. “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” [Dt 6.10]. Reference is to the divine words in vs. 4, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.” Also upon the *mezuzah* the Lord bade Israel to put the blood of the Paschal lamb prior to their departure from Egypt (cf. Ex 12.21+). As for the verse at hand, both *kise’* and *mezuzah* are prefaced with the preposition *hal*, literally “upon.” Surely Eli, being a priest and long familiar in the study of Torah, must have kept these two incidents in mind as he took up his position at the temple’s entrance.

As for “temple,” the word is *heykal* which also can refer to a palace. “The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was” [3.3]. Although mention of the ark comes a bit later, it is the chief reason why Eli was positioned at the temple’s entrance, both as observer and as elder custodian. While there, he must have had to field plenty of questions as to the immoral behavior of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas mentioned in vs. 3. Unfortunately soon he would have to pay a dear price for not having remedied the situation which by now had reached scandalous proportions.

#### **Vs. 10: She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.**

Here Hannah is described as “deeply distressed,” words comprised of the noun *nephesh* (literally, ‘soul’) and the adjective *mar*, more specifically as bitter...in other words, a bitter soul. “But I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord” [vs. 15]. Hannah had good reason to be bitter, especially at her husband who did nothing to prevent Peninnah and her children from taunting her. It was worse at Shiloh, the holy place, where you would assume greater respect would be shown. Since the family came year after year and the taunts continued, no doubt Eli got wind of this as well as his two son, let alone other pilgrims. Still, nothing was done to relieve her pain, making all guilty to some extent.

*Palal* means “prayed” which connotes making supplication or intercession and here is used with the preposition *hal* (upon) concerning “the Lord.” Hannah’s prayer was so intense that she placed her prayer “upon” the Lord. All the years of mockery finally took their toll, and she couldn’t restrain herself any longer. It must have taken some doing to absent herself from Elkanah. In her vengeful wrath and



admitted jealousy (though never she could admit that) Peninnah might have followed Hannah into the temple. And so Peninnah is not unlike the Pharisee in the temple who said “I thank you that I am not like other men...even like this tax collector.” On the other hand, Hannah could be likened to the tax collector who “would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but beat his breast” [Lk 18.11 and 13].

“And wept bitterly” is expressed by the verb *bakah* used twice, a double weeping, if you will. Although this verse first mentions Hannah’s *palal* or supplication, both that and her *bakah* were mingled. “Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep” [30.4].

**Vs. 11: And she vowed 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 to your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”**

Here as with the previous verse when making a point or an exaggeration, the verb is used twice, the first being *nadar* which refers to a voluntary promise. “And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord” [Judg 11.30]. In the verse at hand, “and said” serves to spell out this vow which is directed to the Lord of “hosts” or *tsava’* noted last in vs. 3. By invoking not just the Lord but his angels as *tsava’*, Hannah knew her prayer would get results reminiscent of Heb 12.1: “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.”

The common verb *ra’ah* (‘look’) comprises the second pair of verbs used twice with respect to Hannah’s “affliction” or *hony* which is prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as “look in the affliction.” The second use of *ra’ah* corresponds to the English “Indeed.” *Hony* derives from the verbal root *hanah* which has multiple meanings such as to answer, to sing, to be afflicted. “It may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction” [2Sam 16.12]. In the verse at hand, Hannah speaks of herself as a kind of object for the Lord to consider, *amah* or “maidservant” which primarily refers to a female slave. She speaks similarly of herself in vs. 16: “Let your maidservant find favor in your eyes.” While this reveals Hannah’s littleness and submission to the Lord, it is based somewhat on personal experience accumulated over so many years and intensified during the yearly visits to Shiloh, namely her abuse at the hands of Peninnah.

Next Hannah asks the Lord to “remember” her, *zakar* suggestive of more than remembering but of being mindful and therefore holding in continuous regard. Interestingly, *zakar* is the verbal root for the noun *zakar* or a male. Later such *zakar* will result in a *zakar* or the birth of Samuel. “And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your handmaid” [25.31]. Such words are similar to Hannah as uttered by Abigail who also considers herself a *amah* (she became David’s wife).

*Zakar* is the opposite of *shakach* (‘forget’) and even more opposite, if you will, by reason of the inferred possibility of a male child (*zakar*) being born to Hannah. “But they forgot the Lord their God” [12.9]. Hannah refers to herself a second time as *amah* or “maidservant” to drive home the point to the Lord. It also shows her determination to have her desperate situation resolved as quickly as possible. Next comes the essence of Hannah’s request, a “son” or *zarah* which means a seed or the produce of the field. “The Lord give you children by this woman for the loan which she lent to the Lord” [2.20].

Hannah's request for a son is essentially selfless because she makes the strict condition that if the birth comes to pass, she will hand him over to the Lord which means she will leave him in the custody of the Shiloh temple. Indeed, she is courageous because although Eli is almost a hundred years old and can pass away any minute, his two corrupt sons, Hophni and Phinehas were priests in charge and showed no signs of mending their ways. Obviously Hannah was aware of their behavior for quite some time, and to hand over any future child in their custody was a huge risk. Also she may have had some personal if not selfish motive, to get back at the taunts from Peninnah.

*Morah* means "razor" and refers to a specific sign of the future child's dedication to the Lord, that his hair never will be cut. Two other biblical references to *morah* exist, both with respect to Samson, the first being 13.5: "No razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth." These words are addressed to a woman whose name is anonymous and who was barren just like Hannah. Surely Hannah had in mind this example and perhaps thought her son-to-be-born would turn out like Samson which was true in that both were judges in Israel.

#### **Vs. 12: As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth.**

The previous verse speaks of Hannah's vow which formed part of her prayer beginning in vs. 10, hence the reason why it says here "continued" or *ravah* which fundamentally means to become great, to increase. Thus the intensity of her prayer increased which got Eli's attention as he sat by the temple's doorpost (cf. vs. 9). Hannah must have been praying with considerable fervor, so much so that Eli perceived that something unusual was going on within the temple. Although nearly blind, he knew exactly where to trace down Hannah, being familiar with every nook and cranny of the place. So Eli got up, possibly with some assistance, turned around and entered the temple to find the source of this *ravah*. Those with him didn't have to guide him to Hannah. Her prayer was so intense that he was drawn to it as by a magnet, not necessarily because she was praying in a loud voice. Besides, there must have been plenty of other pilgrims in the temple making all sorts of noisy prayers. As for the next example of the verb *ravah*, see 2.26: "Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men." It has obvious parallels with Lk 2.52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

*Palal* is the verb "praying" as in vs. 10 which applies to the making of a supplication. In the verse at hand, *palal* is prefaced with the preposition *l-* (to), something like "continued...grew strong or increased...to pray." Such *palal* within the Shiloh temple was "before the Lord" or literally "to the face of the Lord" implying direct contact between the Lord and Hannah. If we throw in the verb *ravah*, the sense of contact is all the stronger.

No small wonder that this phenomenon attracted Eli's attention. He couldn't help but be drawn into the temple to Hannah most likely having taken up her position in some corner away from prying eyes, especially those of Peninnah and even her husband, Elkanah. Eli "observed" Hannah's mouth, *shamar*. This verb implies close attention and observance and is used frequently with regard to observance of the divine Torah in Ps 119 ('I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts,' vs. 63). As for a reference in First Samuel, cf. 17.20: "And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper." As for Eli, once in the temple, at first he did not approach Hannah directly but stood there assessing the situation by paying close attention to her words of prayer. After all, "his eyes

were set, so that he could not see" [4.15]. That means Eli approach Hannah gradually...came right up close to her, almost face to face, in order to *shamar* her mouth. Apparently this didn't phase Hannah in the least, for she kept on with her *palal*. All in all, it must have been a somewhat comical situation to see this very old man practically in the face of someone who was praying.

**Vs. 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.**

*Davar* is the common verb for "was speaking" used with *lev* or "heart" or literally, "on (-) her heart," this noun noted last in vs. 8. Compared with another common verb (*'amar*), *davar* more specifically means to put words into a conversation, so it's more personal and indicative of a one-to-one relationship. Thus Hannah was having a conversation with... "on"...her heart, *lev* being the seat of senses and affections. No one could hear this *davar* even though its silent presence had attracted the blind and aged Eli. His two reprobate sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were too concerned with their own selves and could not recognize this unusual situation even if they had stumbled over Hannah. Should they see her, they would have thrown her way a scornful glance, more intent at seeking profit from the offerings other people were making their offerings in the temple.

*Nuah* is the verb for "moved" as applied to the lips of Hannah while the *davar* between her and the Lord was continuing. It suggests a swinging to and fro as well as staggering which is no small wonder that Eli came to the conclusion that she was intoxicated. Again keeping in mind Eli being nearly blind, he had to get really close to Hannah in order to see this. Obviously he rushed to conclusion, for being this close to another person's mouth would have revealed the scent of alcohol. One reference which shows the sense of *nuah* is Am 9.9: "For lo, I will command and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve." Another way of considering how Eli was attracted to Hannah is that other people, even Hophni and Phinehas, may have reported this sight. After all, it was a time when many, along with Elkanah's family, made the yearly pilgrimage to Shiloh. Thus by no means was the temple empty. Since Hannah was engaged in *palal* or the making of petition noted in vs. 12, people may have wondered why she didn't say this petition out loud, a custom during this holy time.

Anyway, it was time for Eli to show his authority as senior priest at Shiloh and custodian of the temple. To have a person making a scene was embarrassing, and he had to move quickly. *Chashav* is the verb for "took (her)" and implies reckoning in the sense of giving careful thought to something. "And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" [Gen 15.6]. In the verse at hand, Eli's *chashav* was misdirected, that Hannah was drunk, *shakar* being the verb. As noted in the last paragraph, if Hannah were drunk, Eli would have smelled alcohol on her breath, but he came to that conclusion because here lips were moving. "And David invited him, and he ate in his presence an drank so that he made him drunk" [2Sam 11.13].

**Vs. 14: And Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunken? Put away your wine from you."**

Immediately the *chashav* or reckoning of Eli in the last verse takes the form of him blurting out a tasteless statement. Then again, some might excuse Eli due to his age; after all, he had encountered plenty undesirable persons over the years. It was embarrassing when a woman was involved, and even more so because Hannah was the wife of Elkanah, a faithful pilgrim year after year. Surely Eli didn't

want word to get back to Elkanah and even more so, Peninnah who would exploit the incident to the hilt.

As it had been pointed out, Eli rushes to judgment about Hannah, and without any grace tells her to put the wine away from her. In back of his mind was the possibility that the wine came for the temple's storehouse and used for rituals in the temple. The words "how long" (*had-matay*) make Eli's question all the more harsh. It is one thing to judge a person drunk but another to say "how long."

*Mehalayk* is "from you" which literally reads as "from upon you," the preposition *hal* (upon) being indicative of hard drinking on Hannah's part. When Eli speaks like this he is careful to do it quietly, not out loud, for surely other people were in the temple offering prayers and sacrifices.

**Vs. 15: But Hannah answered, "No, my Lord, I am a woman sorely troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord.**

Hannah had been absorbed in her *palal* or prayer, and despite being interrupted rudely, she remains gracious and respectful. She may have sensed the old man shuffling toward her from behind as he got closer and closer. Finally he put his face right into hers. For Hannah to respond so promptly and courteously must have taken Eli by surprise. In that fraction of a second he knew he had rushed to judgment and was in a situation which he'd have to exit as quickly as possible taking into consideration that other worshippers were in the vicinity. For them to see their venerable priest behave harshly to a woman in distress would have shamed him more than anything. One could just imagine his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, coming on the scene. They would have disdained their aged father all the more, writing him off but at the same time using him as a distraction from their wicked behavior.

*Qeshath-ruach* is rendered as "sorely troubled" with the adjective *qasheh* meaning hard and even impudent. "Who will tell me if your father answers you roughly" [20.10]? *Qasheh* modifies *ruach*, literally as wind and applicable to spirit. It is next found in 10.6, "Then the spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man." As for Hannah, we could say that her spirit...her wind...had become so hardened that it was unable to breathe properly, almost leading to a spiritual suffocation.

Hannah makes a distinction between *yayan* and *shekar*, "wine" and "strong drink." The former is a general term whereas the latter is more specific, a wine usually made from barley or distilled from honey or dates. Both Lev 10.9 and Num 6.3 make a distinction between the two. For another passage using both, cf. Prov 31.6: "Give strong drink to him who is perishing and wine to those in bitter distress."

Eli has mistaken Hannah for imbibing in both forms of alcoholic drink, confusing that with her "pouring out" of her soul, the verb being *shaphak*. "So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day" [7.6]. *Shaphak* implies the pouring out of anything in profusion, easily identified with the incoherent mumbling of a drunken person, the flow of which cannot be stopped. Such pouring out is with regard to Hannah's "soul" or *nephesh* (cf. vs. 10) which refers to the breath of life and is distinguished from *ruach* as being the vital principle by which the body lives. So while her *ruach* is *qasheh*...stopped up, if you will...Hannah nevertheless can release her

*nephesh* but only “before the Lord.” As for Eli, he is confused totally by this stopping-up and pouring-out, for him equivalent to being intoxicated.

**Vs. 16: Do not regard your maidservant as a base woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.”**

*Natan liphney* means “do (not) regard” and is rendered literally as “do (not) give before,” *liphney* being used in the previous verse as “before” the Lord. As noted above, Eli certainly was “before” Hannah when he approached her, right in her face, due to his almost complete blindness.

Consistent with her character, Hannah takes a gracious, humble attitude toward Eli. She had been deeply absorbed in her prayer and must have been startled by him suddenly right before her. For the second time Hannah calls herself a maidservant or *amah* (cf. vs. 11), yet another sign of the humility of her prayer to God, a sure sign that it is effective though right now she can’t perceive it.

*Belyahal* means “base woman” which fundamentally refers to a worthless person, almost worse than being outright evil. Joined with it is *bath* or “daughter” reading literally “a daughter (who is) a base woman.” A bit later we heard that “the sons of Eli were worthless men; they had no regard for the Lord” [2.12]. Even this early on in the story we’ve gotten a hint of this *belyahal* as applied to Hophni and Phinehas. By asking Eli not to call her this despicable name, we could say Hannah is intimating that he should take a good long hard look at his sons and do something about it before things get out of hand.

*Had-henah* comprises two words as “all along” or literally as “until hither” or thus far. This refers to temporal duration which comprises the time Hannah has spent thus far in the temple. We don’t have indication of how long was her heartbreaking prayer. Though it’s possible that Hannah had tucked herself away in a corner for a considerable period of time, this isn’t necessarily true. The important point is that it is a spill-over from the years of abuse suffered by Peninnah. What puts this in perspective is that Hannah has “been speaking out” or *davar* as noted in vs. 13 in conjunction with her *lev* or “heart” where *davar* implies having a conversation.

*Syach* and *kahas* mean “anxiety” and “vexation.” The former derives from a verb meaning to speak or to utter with the intent of complaining. As a noun, *syach* applies to a meditation related to things divine. “Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint” [Ps 64.1]. The latter applies to irritation or provocation and is noted in 1.6. To both Hannah adds the adjective “great.”

**Vs. 17: Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have made to him.”**

*Shalom* is the well-known word for “peace” prefaced with the preposition *l-*, literally as “go to peace,” as to go in that direction. *Shalom* involves wholeness and completeness and next found in 7.14: “There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.” As for Eli, we get the impression that despite his harsh words to Hannah, immediately he repented of them and wished to back off as quickly as possible. As noted in the last verse, that posed no problem for Hannah whose character was nobler than Eli’s.

The second half of Eli's response, while genuine, has a professional air about it, as something uttered by someone who has been a priest a long time. In other words, Eli has all the stock phrases. *She'elah* is the noun for "petition" derived from the verbal root *sha'al* (to inquire, to request), and that verbal root is translated here as "have made." As for *she'elah*, cf. vs. 27: "For this child I prayed; and the Lord has granted me my petition which I made to him."

"To him" is rendered literally as "from (*min-*) him."

**Vs. 18: And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her countenance was no longer sad.**

*Shiphchah* means "maidservant" which usually refers to the mistress of a household as well as a female slave. Note that Hannah speaks of herself in a passive way which is not untypical for such a circumstance, namely that she is a maidservant...attendant...waiting on the Lord. It reflects that gracious humility on Hannah's behalf already noted and similar to though with a slight nuance from *'amah* of vss. 11 and 16. "Behold, your handmaid has hearkened to you" [28.21].

As *shiphchah*, Hannah asks the priest Eli graciously and humbly that she find "favor" or *chen* in his eyes. "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight" [16.22]. "In your eyes" is a common expression with regard to finding respect, perhaps indicative that Hannah was playing on the fact that Eli was virtually blind, and she didn't want to let him realize this in her presence.

Vs. 18 concludes the dialogue between Hannah and Eli which isn't taken up until she presents him with her new-born son approximately a year later as noted in vs. 26. The text calls Hannah "the woman," a way to bring this episode of her personal distress to an end. So when Hannah goes her "way" (*derek* is suggestive of a journey; cf. 4.13 for the next use of this noun), she departs Shiloh with confidence even though Peninnah and her children may continue to taunt her. In fact, they may have poured it on even more but to no avail because Hannah now comported herself with a quiet confidence she had lacked for so long. Her husband Elkanah noticed the difference as intimated by the fact that at last she took proper nourishment ('and ate'). Eating implies that the entire family gathered around the table for one last festive meal before leaving Shiloh for home. During this meal Peninnah didn't dare taunt her but remained silent as well as her children. We could say that as soon as she requested a polite dismissal from Eli, she conceived a son. Most likely Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, got wind of this, but it didn't mean a thing to them, so deep was their depravity.

As for Peninnah's children, we lose track of them. Although Samuel is to be born soon, perhaps he got to know them and shared in some type of reconciliation that the two mothers couldn't quite bring about.

The word "sad" is not found in the Hebrew text which reads literally "and her face was to her no longer." That is to say, no longer did Hannah wear a countenance that was depressed, so the adjective "sad" doesn't have to be inserted. As for this earlier description, cf. vs. 8 with Elkanah's question, "Why is your heart sad?" So if this sadness had been lifted from the heart (*lev*) of Hannah, it was the equivalent of a weight being lifted from it.



**Vs. 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;**

The eating of vs. 18 took place the day before Hannah and the others departed Shiloh, using that occasion as one to stock up, if you will, for the journey. *Shakam* is the verb for “rose early” and implies getting ready for the day. “And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day” [5.3]. Almost always throughout the Bible this verb is used with *boqer* or “morning,” more properly daybreak. We can surmise that the night before was the best sleep Hannah had in a long time and rose refreshed. Peninnah, on the other hand, must have stayed up most of the night because she had been frustrated. In fact, the last time we heard of her was vs. 4 though her influence had far-reaching consequences. However, by now she is practically a memory, albeit an unpleasant one.

This early rising to worship is a hopeful sign regardless of what Peninnah might do next. The verb is *shachah* noted last in vs. 3 and generally refers to a bowing down. Obviously this *shachah* took place in the temple along with others who were wrapping up their pilgrimage duties though nothing is said about Eli nor his two sons being present. Given the behavior of Hophni and Phinehas, they wouldn’t dream of being up at such an early hour, having slept off whatever the previous night’s wicked behavior has brought.

Ramah is identified as the home, not mentioned in the opening verses. Apparently Hannah’s son Samuel preferred to live there, for it’s mentioned in 8.4 when the Israelites assembled there to ask that he appoint for them a king.

Interestingly, it is only after this special visit to the Shiloh temple that Elkanah is mentioned as having known Hannah. Although he loved her (cf. 5), nothing explicit is said about sexual relations. Surely Elkanah had them with Peninnah because she had children. The verb *yadah* is used for “knew” and is fairly well known for meaning to have sex with a view toward procreation. So when *yadah* is used in 3.20 (‘And all Israel...knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord’), the people had intimate, one-on-one contact with Samuel. In other words, he was not distant from them in the least bit.

In the verse at hand, *zakar* is used for “remembered” noted last in vs. 11 where it is noted that this word (same spelling) means a male as opposed to a female. So at the very moment of *yadah* by Elkanah the Lord stepped in with his *zakar*, the two being practically synonymous. Hannah must have perceived a union between these two incidents which would give birth to Samuel.

**Vs. 20: and in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked him of the Lord.”**

*Tequphah* is a noun used with the common word for “days” meaning “due time” and is prefaced with the preposition *l-* (to, toward), literally as “toward due time.” Fundamentally *tequphah* means a circuit or course as of the sun and thus a measurement of time. “Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and there is nothing hid from its heat” [Ps 19.6]. Because *tequphah* refers to the sun’s passage from dawn to sunset, it applies to the measurement of time, the counting of days. So with regard to Hannah’s pregnancy, we’re talking about nine months beginning with her return from

Shiloh to Ramah. When Hannah began to swell with child, Elkanah was delighted whereas Peninnah was not. Although nothing is recorded of these nine months, Peninnah must have made life even more miserable for her “co-wife,” even urging her children to taunt her more relentlessly, but now it didn’t matter. In less than a year Hannah knew she would give birth. Hannah’s other relatives and acquaintances in Ramah must have been delighted and offered their support, eagerly awaiting the child’s birth. That means after nine months when the child is born, only three more remained until the next trip to Shiloh, the first trip there Hannah eagerly awaited compared to so many past instances when they were a real agony.

Although it was impossible to tell whether Hannah’s child would be a girl or boy, she had confidence from her prayer in Shiloh’s temple that it would be the latter. It turned out to be so, and she named him Samuel. As Hannah adds, “I have asked (*sha’al*) him of the Lord.” The preposition *min* is prefaced to the divine name, literally as “from the Lord.” Incidentally, *sha’al* is the proper verbal root for Saul who will appear later in First Samuel. The later antagonism between Samuel and Saul can be seen as one between two different types of “asking” relative to the Lord or more accurately, “heard from the Lord” vs. “asked.”

Although Hannah has asked (*sha’al*) the Lord for a child, it is more accurate to say that the proper name Samuel is comes from the verb *shamah* (to hear) with *’El* (God)...“Heard of God.” Later (cf. Chapter Three) when Samuel was older, the Lord called Samuel in the temple, and the priest Eli, not Hannah, was first to acknowledge the significance of this name, that is, of Samuel being called by the Lord: “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him” [3.18].

**Vs. 21: And the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow.**

In vs. 3 Elkanah is called “this man” whereas here it’s “the man” (*ha’ysh*). Both reflect pretty much the writer’s attitude towards him...basically a good man but a secondary agent used by God for a loftier purpose. After 2.20 or when he and Hannah return from Shiloh to Ramah, he disappears, no longer to be heard of again.

In earlier pilgrimages to Shiloh as recorded first in vs. 3, Elkanah “went up” (*halah*, vs. 3) on a yearly basis. Now one year late the text has him going with “all his house” or *beyth*. Although this is a common word for a physical dwelling, it can be used in the expanded sense of family and attendants, including livestock. It’s significant that Elkanah’s entire *beyth* went to Shiloh, leaving no one home in order to celebrate the birth of Samuel. It was too soon for Hannah to make the arduous ascent some three months later, so someone from the *beyth* must have remained with her. We can assume that Elkanah had enough sense to take Peninnah and her children along. Things could have turned out disastrously for Hannah if they remained with her at Ramah. Even though everyone found this pilgrimage to Shiloh filled with special joy at the birth of Samuel, it was empty because they wished he and Hannah could have come.

Just as recorded in vs. 3, Elkanah made the yearly sacrifice (*zevach*) or literally “sacrifice of days” (*hayamym* is reminiscent of *tequphah* of vs. 20 as the marking-out of days), this time it’s different. Elkanah “payed (his) vow” or *nadar*. Though nothing is said about this *nadar*, we can assume Elkanah

had been inspired by Hannah in vs. 11. We can only hope that Eli the priest was the person at whose hands he did it, not his thoroughly corrupt sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

**Vs. 22: But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and abide there forever.”**

*Gamal* is the verb for “weaned” which also means to give, show or repay. “For you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil” [24.17]. During this interval time Hannah had plenty of time to reflect on the request she made to the Lord for a male child. Now that Samuel was born, she must have been tempted about the wisdom of her decision in terms of a vow (cf. vs. 11) which was irrevocable. To go through all the pains of child birth followed by handing your newborn over to strangers just after it had been weaned demonstrates that Hannah must saw further into the future than any of her household. She intuited that her child was destined to play a major role in Israel’s affairs and thus can be likened (as she is with her own ‘Magnificat’ in Chapter Two) to the Virgin Mary who similarly saw well in the future.

Note the self-reliance previously lacking in “I will bring him.” Hannah was prepared to bring Samuel, barely a few months old, to Shiloh whether Elkanah would come or not (he did).

*Ra’ah* is the common verb “to see” and used for “may appear” noted last in vs. 11 but here has a special sense, of being in the divine “presence of the Lord” or literally as “may appear before (‘face,’ *peney*) of the Lord.” Thus the idea of being in the Shiloh temple is a kind of replication of Moses on Mount Sinai and the subsequent tabernacle in which the Lord had dwelt, that tabernacle having been portable. Such appearing must assume a liturgical expression like the presentation of Jesus in the temple which occurred eight days after his birth (cf. Lk 2.21+), unlikely applicable to Samuel. Just like Elkanah’s own visit which included his house as noted in vs. 21, we can only hope that Eli had presided without the interference of Hofni and Phinehas.

Hannah not only wishes her newborn to appear in the Shiloh temple but to “abide” there, *yashav*, a verb that fundamentally means to sit down. “Therefore take heed to yourself in the morning; stay in a secret place and hide yourself” [10.2]. Here is an instance of consecrating an infant for divine service which apparently did not have to take place at designated feasts or times but when the parents and priest of the temple were prepared. Indeed, a very great trust in the Lord on Hannah’s part. She knew Eli was trustworthy but advanced in age and having not much longer to live. Nothing is said about his wife who must have been like the prophetess Anna, wife of Simeon the priest who accepted Jesus at his circumcision (cf. 2.36). Of course, the biggest gamble was the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, ever lurking in the shadows. Would they raise Samuel to be like them, thereby continuing the corrupt practices that have been in place at Shiloh? Strange that Elkanah never uttered a word about this, but it must have been on his mind. Then there’s Peninnah who would have taken perverse delight in Eli’s sons corrupting Samuel. All in all, a huge leap of faith on Hannah’s part.

**Vs. 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..**

Despite Elkanah's limitations but to his credit, he consents to the request Hannah made in the previous verse. Not only that, he leaves any and all decisions up to her. "Do what seems best to you" is rendered literally as "make the good in your eyes." This must have irritated even more the ever present yet sulking Peninnah who by now had been rendered powerless. Who knows...perhaps after Hannah had given Samuel into Eli's hands better relations were restored between Peninnah and Hannah. Hannah had experienced child birth and consecrated it in a way Peninnah never could have, forfeiting her only-begotten son with the distinct possibility that she would not bear any more children.

*Yashav* is the verb for "wait" noted in the last verse as "abide."

While Hannah is encouraged by Elkanah to wait...bide her time...he expresses his wish for the Lord to "establish" his word, *qum* being the verb which fundamentally means to arise, stand up (thus opposite to *yashav*) and noted last in vs. 9. However, the current form of *qum* (hiphil) next appears in 3.12: "On that day I will fulfil against Eli and all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end." In the verse at hand, *qum* is tied in with the Lord's "word" or *davar* which is a broad, all-inclusive term connoting a promise and something akin to the Greek *logos*. It occurs next in 2.23: "Why do you do such things?" While nursing Samuel, Hannah looked down on her son at her breast. He couldn't communicate to her, but Hannah must have felt the divine *davar* being transmitted from him into her in a very intimate way. The words of Mary certainly are applicable: "But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" [Lk 2.19]. Here we have an interaction between "kept" and "pondering," *suntereo* (a guarding-with) and *sumballo* (a casting-with).

The *yashav* urged by Elkanah regarding Hannah suggests that she is not to do anything special for now but concentrate on raising her only-begotten child and protect him from the influence of Peninnah. This wasn't a long time, really, before Hannah brings Samuel to Shiloh for dedication. Hannah thus had only the briefest time to be with him, and he would not have the opportunity to know her as his mother. In the meanwhile, she must have been filled with both hope and anxiety: hope that Samuel would live up to his name as "asked by the Lord" (cf. vs. 20) and anxiety in that she would be separated from him permanently except for those yearly pilgrimages to the Shiloh temple. During this time of nurturing Hannah and Elkanah must have thought of how they could keep Samuel safe from Eli's two corrupt sons, Hophni and Phinehas. The threat of Samuel falling under their influence was indeed a reality. If it weren't from Eli, they may have reneged on offering him.

**Vs. 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.**

This weaning must have been especially painful in the knowledge that soon the two would be broken up forever even though Samuel was to be consecrated to the Lord. While a certainly a wonderful sacrifice, its proximity made it very painful for Hannah. She had only a vague, general idea of what offering a son implied as based on her limited experience with the Shiloh pilgrimages. Surely there must have been other young men, now older, who underwent the same ritual, and Hannah would have sought them out for consultation, including their parents. Perhaps not all such men were at Shiloh but were scattered about the land. If any were living between Ramah and Shiloh, Hannah would have made a detour or two along the way.

Earlier (vs. 3) Elkanah as head of the household...with two wives...took the initiative to make the yearly pilgrimage to Shiloh whereas here the initiative rests upon Hannah. Although he came (vs. 25 has 'they' and 2.11 has Elkanah by name) along, already Elkanah has faded well into the background, having performed his necessary duty. Peninnah is omitted, deliberately so, either because she was not allowed to come or was too jealous, preferring to wallow in her thoughts at Ramah along with her nagging children.

The family took the offering; whether it was required or voluntary, nothing is said. However, the Hebrew has "three bulls" instead of "three year old bull." That means Elkanah must have been fairly well off. As a background to this, Chapter Four of Leviticus goes into considerable detail as to the offering of a bull (*par*) for sin. "And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven" [vs. 20]. The "ephah" or *'eyphah* is a measure of grain some thirty-six (dry) liters first mentioned in Ex 16.36: "An omer is the tenth part of an ephah." Finally, they brought a "skin (*nevel*) of wine" noted next in 10.3: Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread and another carrying a skin of wine." One *nevel* of wine seems insignificant but probably an essential ingredient in any sacrifice to be performed at Shiloh.

"And she brought him to the house of the Lord," which consisted mostly of carrying Samuel since he was way too young to walk. Though we lack details, we can assume that the family had a number of servants who accompanied them as in earlier journeys. So despite the short, prosaic-sounding words of vs. 24, they are full of weariness for Hannah. Every step closer to Shiloh filled her with dread and even some possible regret at having promised her only begotten son. That means she would have to look forward to many years as being childless.

The concluding words of the verse at hand are even more poignant: "and the child was young." Of course, he was young, but these words add drama to the story. The text reads literally "and the child was a child" which drives home the drama even more.

### **Vs. 25: Then they slew the bull, and they brought the child to Eli.**

This verse is kind of ominous in light of 2.13+, the devious behavior of Hophni and Phinehas while people were making their offering to the Lord. They must have been present with Elkanah and Hannah as with other sacrifices in years past. Though the two sons were officially priests, the family must have wanted to get this ritual over with as quickly as possible and move on with the donation of Samuel. In earlier pilgrimages Hannah must have been appalled by how Eli's sons mistreated the offerings, her anger building up year after year without people taking action, this compounded by Peninnah's ill-treatment. Finally one day Hannah decided it was enough. She would volunteer a child to counter this long-standing tradition of abuse.

After the obligatory sacrifice which could have been mis-handled by Hofni and Phinehas, Elkanah and Hannah brought Samuel to Eli for safe keeping. Strangely, Eli says nothing. Though a good man in his own right, he was no Simeon who accepted Jesus in Lk 2.25+. Nevertheless, Eli was there pretty much like Elkanah to fulfil a larger function.

**Vs. 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.**

‘*Adony* as “Lord” is used twice referring to Eli, the first use of this proper term of address being 1.15. “Lord” as applied to God here is *YHWH* or the Lord properly speaking compared to his rulership signified frequently by ‘*adony*.

The words “as you live” contain a certain irony because Eli is so advanced in age. The Hebrew text has the noun *nephesh* or “soul noted last in vs. 15:” “as your soul lives.” In the situation at hand, Hannah wishes to get Eli’s attention and perhaps was forced to yell at him so he could hear and recognize her. We don’t have his response but certainly he was awaiting arrival of Hannah and her new son, having perceived that she had given birth little less than a year ago. Again keeping in mind this story with that of Jesus’ presentation, Eli bore some resemblance to Simeon: “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to your word” [Lk 2.29].

Going back to her last visit to Shiloh, Hannah was in the temple pouring her heart out which got Eli’s attention, albeit in a negative fashion. Reminding him now of that must have embarrassed him very much, but that was not Hannah’s intent. Back then she had been “standing here,” the verb being *natsav* which means more than just standing but a being put in place. “The women attending her” [4.20]. As for “place,” in is not in the Hebrew text.

As for “in your presence,” the text has “with you.”

Hannah also reminds that she was “praying” or *palal* (cf. vs. 15) or making petition. She also could have used this occasion approximately a year later to make a dig at Eli’s rash judgment. *Palal* has the preposition *l-* (to) prefaced to it and used along with ‘*el* as “to the Lord.” The former is more direct, indicative of towards-which whereas the latter simply means “to.”

**Vs. 27: For this child I prayed; and the Lord has granted me my petition which I made to him.**

Hannah tells Eli that she prayed (*palal*)...made intercession for...her new-born. The preposition *l-* signifying direction towards-which is prefaced to *palal*, indicative of Hannah’s intent.

The second part of vs. 27 restates what Hannah expressed back in vs. 20, of how she asked a child from the Lord and named it Samuel. Throughout this incident and her pregnancy, a span which extended a little over a year, it turned out that Hannah was in actual possession of her son a very short period of time. Even though she was guided by the Lord throughout, it’s still remarkable that she bore a son after many years of abuse at the hands of Peninnah and almost at once relinquished him. Eli could not help but be impressed. Hophni and Phinehas who most likely accepted Hannah’s sacrifice in vs. 25 could care less. In fact already they had their eyes on Samuel as someone they could exploit for monetary gain.

*She’elah* is the word for “petition” (cf. vs. 17) which derives from the verb *sha’al* used here and noted last in vs. 20. Hannah freely and boldly speaks such to Eli yet within has second thoughts now that she



was on the verge of actually handing over her infant son and only seeing him as an outsider, if you will, once a year.

**Vs. 28: Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord.” And they worshipped the Lord there.**

*Gan* means “therefore” as well as also, in addition to. This word serve to introduce Hannah saying that she has “lent” her son to the Lord (prefaced with *l-*), the verb being *sha’al* which is noted in vs. 20 as “asked.” Thus *sha’al* has a kind of double meaning, the one as used in vs. 28 representing a hesitation, if you will, on Hannah’s part about relinquishing Samuel permanently. So if Samuel is lent to the Lord in the Shiloh temple, in a sense she will collect interest on this loan meaning that she will continue to possess him. Samuel was to remain at Shiloh the bulk of his life but by no means is he confined there. For another reference with *sha’al* as pertaining to what had been lent, see 2Kg 6.5: “Alas, my master! It was borrowed.”

Chapter One concludes as it began, namely, with Elkanah and Hannah worshiping at the Shiloh temple. The verb *shachah* is used as in vs. 3. The Hebrew text has the first person singular masculine, “he worshipped the Lord there.” While unclear, it could refer to Eli and even Samuel. While the latter was only a few weeks old, his presence in the temple was sufficient worship and indicative of his future role as a prophet. As for this *shachah*, it continues in Chapter Two with Hannah’s song lasting through vs. 10 after which the couple returned home to Ramah.

## Chapter Two

**Vs. 1: Hannah also prayed and said, “My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies because I rejoice in your salvation.**

Hannah’s prayer (the verb *palal* is used again as in 1.27, essentially as the making of a petition) begins here and continues through vs. 10. Throughout this section Hannah draws a number of contrasts through the presentation of opposites, especially from vs. 4 through vs. 9.

*Palal* is used with *amar* or “said” indicating that Hannah is to make her petition out loud for all to hear: Elkanah, Peninnah and her children, Eli, Hophni, Phinehas and anyone else in the temple area. She has no hesitation to utter it and does so boldly for everyone. Certainly any bystanders must have known that Hannah was about to hand over her only-begotten son because of Eli and his two sons at the ready, so they gathered around her to listen intently.

Hannah speaks of two parts of herself, if you will, her “heart” (*lev*, cf. 1.17) and her “strength” (*qeren*). The former is used with the verb *halats* meaning to be joyful. “But let all who take refuge in you rejoice, let them ever sing for joy” [Ps 5.11].

The latter more specifically means a horn which is an image of a bull’s raw power. “My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” [Ps 18.2]. And like a bull running free, Hannah lifts up her *qeren*, the verb being *rum*. “The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples” [Ps 99.2]. The preposition *b-* (in) is prefaced to *YHWH* meaning that Hannah has flung up her *qeren* right “in” the

Lord's presence. So with these two verbs (*halats* and *rum*) in mind as indicative of Hannah's exultation, at last she has achieved all that she ever could desire.

*Rachav* as "derides" means to be enlarged and here suggests that Hannah is opening her mouth as widely as possible to give full voice to her praise. "Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice (*rachav*)" [Is 60.5]. In the verse at hand, Hannah's *rachav* is done by her mouth which is put objectively, as though Hannah were apart from it and employing it to make this broad gesture. Her object is her "enemies" or *'ayav*. The first person to come to mind, of course, is Peninnah who isn't present. Since *'ayav* is plural, perhaps Hannah is intimating Hophni and Phinehas although they were too hardened in their hearts to realize it. Use of this term must have shocked everyone around Hannah, especially her husband, Elkanah. Eli must have been surprised as well, not having a clue as to what happened between now and her last visit when he accused her as being drunk.

Given Hannah's gracious and sensitive nature, she is quick to add the fact that she is rejoicing, *samach*. "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days" [Lev 23.40]. Like the preposition *b-*prefaced to *YHWH*, *samach* is used with the same preposition regard "salvation" or *yeshuhah* (the verbal root for the proper name Jesus). "Shall Jonathan die who has wrought this great victory in Israel" [14.45]? Thus the sentiment of Hannah's *samach* is right up there (literally) with *halats* and *rum*.

All in all, this exultant opening verse of Chapter Two is because of Hannah's child, Samuel. Although she has him for a very short period of time, she is delighted to hand him over to service in the Shiloh temple. Any bystander who knew the story...and given the tight-knit society of the time...plenty of people did which is why they must have been impressed greatly.

**Vs. 2: "There is none holy like the Lord, there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.**

*Qodesh* is the adjective for "holy" which fundamentally means that which is set apart and almost always in the Bible refers to God and things belonging to him. It is the first instance *qadesh* is found in First Samuel. "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord" [6.24]? So when Hannah says that "there is none besides you," she's adding another *qadesh* to the mix, if you will. This can also infer the presence of gods in the vicinity which are still being worshiped.

*Tsur* means "rock" usually in the smaller sense such as when compared to a hill or mountain. "Be a rock of refuge for me,, a strong fortress to save me" [Ps 31.2]! Obviously Hannah had perceived the Lord as *tsur* as well as *qadesh* much earlier, but now both have come to fruition.

**Vs. 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.**

Given her experience at Shiloh year by year, more specifically with Hophni and Phinehas, she can be addressing them and those who might presume to behave irreverently like them. Not only that, she must have had in mind Eli who allowed his sons to defraud pious worshippers for so long a time. Though not directly involved, how could he not have some inkling? Did he ignore or disregard complaints brought to him being the priest responsible for the Shiloh temple? Surely he must have been uneasy when hearing Hannah speak thus, most likely in the temple with others around here.

The common verb *davar* means “talk” noted last in 1.16 when Eli had mistaken Hannah’s *davar* for drunken incoherency. Now the tables are turned, and Hannah is articulating herself boldly before the Lord and people. The verb *ravah* is used with *davar* (to become great, to increase) with the same sense here as in 1.12 (‘and she continued praying before the Lord’) just prior to Eli’s mistaken judgment as to Hannah being intoxicated.

*Gavuah* (high) is an adjective used here as an adverb, “proudly,” occurring twice to make it “very.” Thus *gavuah gavuah* literally means “high high.” “From his (Saul) shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people” [9.2].

For a second time in one verse Hannah issues a warning as to “arrogance” which has the adjective *hataq* derived from a verbal root meaning to be removed, to be transferred.” “Let the lying lips be dumb which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt” [Ps 31.18]. If only Hophni and Phinehas heeded these words they would have repented and saved the reputation of their elderly father, including their own. “Mouth” is plural, certainly a reference to them and others like them.

When Hannah continues saying that the Lord is a God of “knowledge” she is referring back to her incident with Eli who mistook her for being a drunken woman. The word here is *dehah* with five other biblical references and derives from the verb *yadah* suggestive of intimate (sexual) knowledge. “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High” [Ps 73.11]? The *dehah* at hand is with respect to Hannah’s two warnings.

*Takan* means “weighed” as well as to be level, to prove. “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit” [Prov 16.2]. The idea is that human “actions” are levelled out by the Lord so everyone can see them for what they are worth. *Halylah* usually means wicked actions as Ps 14.1 states: “They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, *there* is none that does good.”

#### **Vs. 4: The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength.**

Hannah makes reference to “bows” or *qesheth*, symbolic in her case of all the assaults she had to endure, obviously from Penninah as well as her brood of children. She may have been tempted to throw in her husband Elkanah who did nothing to prevent this taunting even though he loved her. “The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and need, to slay those who walk uprightly” [Ps 34.7]. Such weapons in the verse at hand belong to the “mighty” or *gibor*. One such *gibor* who appears later in First Samuel is Kish, father of Saul, described as “a Benjaminite, a man of wealth,” “man” being *gibor* which means that Kish could have been a warrior. *Chat* as “broken” is a noun with three other biblical references, one of which is Gen 9.2: “The fear of you and the dread (*chat*) of you shall be upon every beast of the earth.”

After this strong description of anyone who dares oppose the Lord, Hannah mentions the “feeble” or those who are *kashal*, a participle whose verbal root means to stumble, to fall down. Surely Hannah had her fair share of being brought low...of having stumbled...and though she doesn’t apply it directly to herself, she had that experience. “On that day the Lord will put a shield about the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David” [Zech 12.8]. ‘Azar as “gird on” certainly fits the description of a warrior...a future King David...who will prepare himself for battle.

“For you did gird me with strength for the battle; you made my assailants sink under me” [Ps 18.39]. That which girds the feeble or those who have stumbled is *chayl* or “strength” which is also found in Ps 18.39. *Chayl* can also mean virtue and integrity, a trait those around Hannah had lacked. Surely her son, Samuel, would inherit this in abundance.

**Vs. 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.**

The imagery Hannah uses briefly shifts from a military one to a contrast between those who are “full” and those who “were hungry,” *saveah* and *rahev*. Two pertinent references are Job 10.15: “I am full of confusion” and Ps 107.5: “Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.”

*Sakar* translates as “hired” which means that a salary is expected for work done and biblically speaking doesn’t have a good connotation. In the verse at hand, *sakar* applies to those who have been well off yet now find themselves destitute and will take any measure to survive. “You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes” [Gen 30.16]. Hannah contrasts those who find themselves in this desperate situation with those who have “ceased” to hunger, the verb being *chadal* which means leaving off as well as to desist. “The words of his mouth are mischief and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good” [Ps 36.3].

The second sentence must have hit home for Penninah who had children compared to “barren” Hannah, that adjective being *haqar* whose verbal root means to root out. “He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the Lord” [Ps 113.9]! To be barren was considered as one of the greatest pains a woman could suffer, for it offered no prospect for an heir to continue the family name. Perhaps the fact that Penninah was fertile contributed to Elkanah’s benign neglect of Hannah. At least through Penninah his line would continue. Certainly it didn’t even with Samuel’s birth, for he was destined to reside at the Shiloh temple. As an adult we have no information whether he was married or not. Though Elkanah has been portrayed as less than sensitive, after all he was in a delicate position. Surely he must have rejoiced in these words of Hannah as he stood by her.

The number “seven” or *shivvah* stands in contrast to “forlorn” or *amal*. Hannah’s use of the former is not literally true in her own case, but she is thinking of the symbolic meaning of *shivvah* as in Chapter Six of the Book of Joshua (the taking of Jericho), the Bible’s most prolific use of that sacred number. For an example of *amal*, cf. Is 16.8: “For the fields of Heshbon languish and the vine of Sibmah.” Even if Hannah bore seven children, chances are she would have offered them all to the Lord’s service at Shiloh.

**Vs. 6: The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.**

Hannah continues with her remarkable “Magnificat” covering the whole range of human experience with the Lord. Her song is all the more amazing given her lowly status as a woman...not only that, but one of two wives. It’s easy to see how Hannah must have been a favorite of the Virgin Mary, a heroine of sorts.

Note the two sets of parallels in which the Lord takes direct action: “kills” and “brings to life” followed

by “brings down” and “raises up.” It would be surprising if Hannah had a premonition, not long in the future, of the death not only of Hophni and Phinehas but of their father, Eli (cf. 4.13-18). Their deaths were necessary, if you will, to lift the curse that had settled upon the Shiloh temple. In fact, they are secondary to the real disaster to occur, capture of the ark of God at the hands of the Philistines.

*She'ol* originally pertained to a hollow or subterranean place containing the dead, the only mention in First Samuel. “The cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me” [2Sam 22.6]. So when Hannah next says that the Lord “raises up” (*halah*), she implies something with no precedent in Israel’s history, so most likely it is a reference to herself. That is to say, after Hannah’s prolonged humiliation at the hands of Penninah and the benign neglect of her husband Elkanah, her pregnancy was a kind of lifting up from the shades of her that existence. Thus the *halah* from Sheol is akin to deliverance from a near-death experience which for Hannah is embodied in her son Samuel offered to the Lord in the Shiloh temple. The words of Ps 86.13 is more akin to her situation: “You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.”

**Vs. 7: The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts.**

Here the second set of opposites is between those who are “poor” vs. “makes rich” and “brings low” vs. “exalts.”

Although *yarash* means “makes poor,” the more common use is to possess in the sense of to inherit and also translates as to drive out. The idea seems to be that by taking possession of something, you have to despoil someone else. Another use of this participial form (there are three of them in the Bible) is Dt 9.4 which contains the same verb: “Do not say in your heart...‘It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess (*yarash*) this land;’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out (*yarash*) before you.”

Once this *yarash* with its dual sense of taking possession of something and despoiling has taken place, the Lord “makes rich” or *hashar* which fundamentally means to be straight. “And the man who kills him (Goliath) , the king will enrich with great riches” [17.25].

*Shaphal* is the verb for “brings low” and often connotes being humbled. The first pair (poor vs. rich) is obvious though the second is less so, being more inclusive. “The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” [Ps 147.6]. In contrast to this verb is *rum* as “exalts” as in vs. 1 with respect to Hannah’s heart and must have had in mind that personal experience which she repeats in a slightly different context as here in vs. 7.

**Vs. 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.**

Hannah uses two verbs relative to raising up, *qum* and *rum*, the latter being mentioned in the previous verse concerning those persons whom the Lord “exalts.” The former verb is found in 1.23 as “may the Lord establish his word.” While *rum* pertains more to a physical lifting up, *qum* includes that but in

addition has an air of permanence, of fixing something or someone in a position that will not be subject to alteration.

Hannah speaks of *qum* and *rum* (respectively) with regard to the “poor” and the “needy” (*dal* and *‘evyon*). *Dal* derives from the verbal root *dalal* (basically as to hang down) and suggests those who are weak and feeble. As for *‘evyon*, it pertains more to those who are afflicted and wretched. Ps 72.13 contains both: “He has pity on the weak and the needy and saves the lives of the needy.” Though both are pretty much the same...and Hannah easily can identify with them...those who are poor sit in the “dust” or *haphar*. As for the needy, they are on the “ash heap” or *‘ashpoth* or more specifically, a dunghill. The two groups of people are mentioned in Ps 113.7: “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.”

It’s not especially clear whether the two will “sit with princes” and “inherit a seat of honor,” though clearly the second group is associated with this elevation. *Nadyv* means “princes” and is suggestive of someone who is generous and noble in character, not just in rank. Keeping in mind Ps 113.7 just cited with regard to those who are poor and those who are needy, the next verse continues with “to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.”

In addition to associating with princes, the two groups (again, presumably the two) will “inherit a seat of honor,” the verb being *yarash* whose dual nature was noted in vs. 8 as “makes poor.” Surely Hannah had in mind the poor and needy having experience both sides of *yarash*, of possessing, of being despoiled and then possessing. Note the sequence here: first sitting with princes followed by inheriting that “seat of honor” or a *kise’* which is *kavod*. First some time and experience with the sitting (*yashav*, cf. 1.23) is required. Then and only then does it become possible to actually insert this *kise’* into one’s line of inheritance, making it available for posterity. As for this “seat,” often it refers to a throne and thus rulership of one degree or another...perhaps not royal per se but belonging to the rank of *nadyv*. One reference is 2Sam 3.10: “to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah.” Such a seat is *kavod* which is a noun meaning “glory.” “And give glory to the God of Israel” [6.5].

*Matsug* is the noun for “pillars” which has one other biblical reference, 14.5: “The one crag rose on the north in front of Michmash and the other on the south in front of Geba.” This term derives from a verbal root meaning to be narrow or straight. Hannah doesn’t say how many of these pillars support the earth, just that they belong to the Lord. Here the preposition *l-* is prefaced to *YHWH*, literally as “to the Lord.” Such pillars aren’t set up to be free-standing but work together to create a platform on which the Lord can set the world. *shyth* is the verb here and often connotes a founding. “But he set his face toward the wilderness” [Num 24.1]. As for the object of *shyth*, it is *tevel* or the “world” referring mostly to inhabited areas. “Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were laid bare” [2Sam 22.16]. One could say that an extra amount of pillars were required to support the *tevel* compared with other parts of the globe which were uninhabited. The weight, of course, was not physical but a moral and spiritual one which, if corrupted, would cause the pillars to sag and eventually collapse. That would cause the “fountains of the great deep” [Gen 7.11] to burst forth thereby releasing an uncontrollable flood as with the story of Noah.



**Vs. 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.**

*Chasyd* is an adjective for “faithful ones” or those who are characterized by *chesed*, a word considered untranslatable referring to divine love and mercy. Here it refers to “feet” which the Lord “will guard” or *shamar* noted last in 1.12 as a verb in conjunction with keeping the divine Torah. Certainly the feet of Hannah had trod between Ramah and the Shiloh temple on her yearly pilgrimage though often it was difficult due to the constant taunting of Elkanah’s other wife, Penninah. Yet when Hannah looks back, she can see that the Lord did *shamar* her feet. Thus she echos Ps 2.8: “guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his saints.”

In contrast to the Lord’s *shamar* Hannah says that the wicked “shall be cut off” or *damam*, a verb which fundamentally means to be silent. “Gather together, let us go into the fortified cities and perish there” [Jer 8.14]. In the verse at hand, such cutting off/reducing to silence is associated with “darkness,” *choshek*. Such darkness was present before the creation of the earth: “and darkness was upon the face of the deep” [Gen 1.2]. In other words, Hannah is situating the “wicked” or *rashah* (adjective) first as without feet compared with the faithful ones and second as cast into the primeval *choshek*. As for those who are *rashah*, this adjective connotes being unrighteous, of causing trouble. “Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness” [24.18].

*Koach* means “might” both in the sense of strength and violence, hence fitting in with those who are *rashah* and destined for darkness. “Then Saul fell at once...and there was no strength in him” [28.20]. Such might Hannah says shall not “prevail” or *gavar*, that is, *koach* will not become strong. Note that this is the verbal root for “man” (*gever*) as opposed to woman. “The waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth” [Gen 7.18].

**Vs. 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 power of his anointed.”**

This verse brings to a close the “Magnificat” of Hannah which as noted above, serves as a template for the one associated with the Virgin Mary.

*Ryv* is a verb used as participle meaning “adversaries” or those who strive against someone or something. It also means to plead as a case in court. “Woe to him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter” [Is 45.9]! *Chatat* is the fate of such adversaries, this verb alternately meaning to confound. “When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid” [17.11]. As for Hannah, this did happen not long after when the Philistines captured the ark of the Lord and slew Eli along with Hophni and Phinehas.

The threats of which Hannah speaks in the earlier verses are more or less general with regard to their source. However, here we have a divine threat coming from “heaven” or *shaymym*. “The cry of the city went up to heaven” [5.7]. Since “thunder” (*raham*) is involved, implied is torrential rain which came from the sky as well as from the primeval waters beneath the earth as in the Noah example cited in vs.

8. A good example of a human *raham* is found in 1.6 as associated with the constant “thundering,” if you will, by Penninah.

Divine judgement isn’t confined to Israel but extends to the “ends” of the earth, *ephes* intimating that the earth does have an end after which you fall off into those primeval waters just noted. “May he have dominion from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth” [Ps 72.8]! In the verse at hand, *dyn* is the verb for “will judge,” more poetic than the common *shaphat*.

At the time of Hannah’s song, Israel did not have a king though her newly born son would be responsible for anointing the first one, much against the Lord’s will (cf. Chapter Eight). While Hannah would go along with her son, in her song she could see beyond this to King David. Still, she and Samuel would have preferred ruling Israel by judges, less centralized and allowing for participatory government. So to this yet to be identified king the Lord will bestow upon him “strength” or *hoz*. “Mighty king, lover of justice, you have established equity” [Ps 99.4].

Not only does Hannah sing of the Lord and a king he favors, she adds that he has an “anointed” or *mashyach* (adjective) whom he will “exalt” or *rum*, a verb noted last in vs. 8. This term figures considerably later in First Samuel with the emergence of Israel’s first king (Saul) followed by David. It was Samuel who anointed Saul reluctantly, preferring a more active role for divine intervention under the system of rulership by judges. The next reference to *mashyach* is 2.35: “And he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.” This anointed one is just as anonymous as the king here in vs. 10, and he will have “power” or *qeren* noted last in vs. 1 and which alternately means horn as of a bull.

**Vs. 11: Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy ministered to the Lord in the presence of Eli the priest.**

A verse with two short but meaningful sentences. In the first, Elkanah returns home without mention of Hannah which doesn’t intimate he was alone but had to face Penninah on his own, not a pleasant prospect. He had a lot of explaining to do, of why Hannah stayed on in Shiloh with some maidservants in order to be with her son, Samuel. As for Hannah, later on Eli may have used the opportunity to question her at some length as to her “Magnificat,” of how it might apply to him as well as to Samuel. He found much in her song disturbing. Because Hannah was inspired to speak these words, probably she wasn’t aware of the details of what she had uttered. Her words had an even more unsettling presence upon Hophni and Phinehas.

Although Hannah is mentioned in vs. 21 as having given birth to more children, by now she has faded off the scene, leaving the stage set for Samuel. Such fading away is not uncommon in biblical accounts of notable people. They realize that their duty has been fulfilled and must give way to further developments. At the same time they do not pass into oblivion as Hofni and Phinehas will do but form essential links in divine revelation which continues. A similar situation is found with the Virgin Mary after her Magnificat: “And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home” [Lk 1.56].

In the second sentence Samuel is described as a “boy” or *nahar*, a term which can pertain to a male child from very young to the threshold of manhood. It is used in 1.22: “So the woman remained and

nursed her son until she weaned him.” Chances are that Samuel had been around ten to twelve years of age when he began his ministry in the Shiloh temple. *Sharath* is the verb here (participle) which suggests waiting upon as a servant and is used two more times. “When Moses turned again into the camp, his servant Joshua...did not depart from the tent” [Ex 33.11]. While Samuel was too young to be familiar with this incident, he must have reflected upon Joshua’s experience later on, how his ministry might mirror that *sharath* of Moses. Most likely the tasks given to Samuel were liturgical nature, helping the elderly Eli in and around the temple. In the meanwhile he couldn’t help but notice Eli’s two sons defrauding worshippers of their offerings. Though Eli is recorded as not intervening over an extended period of time and was pretty much as guilty as they, he seems the type who would have shielded Samuel from them as much as possible. Still, Samuel took notice. It had a positive impact insofar as it taught him about true worship of the Lord and how to discern good from evil, essential for his later role as a judge in Israel.

As for the *sharath* of Samuel, it is a direct relationship with respect to the Lord, the word *’eth* being used as indicative of a relationship between the verb’s action and its object and thus cannot be translated adequately if at all. Secondly, *sharath* is used with regard to Eli, but has “in the presence of” or *’eth* coupled with *peny* (or *panym*) which suggests tutelage. So Samuel receive a twofold training: with regard to the Lord himself and Eli or the temple ministry. Already Samuel could see the relationship between the two which becomes manifest later in 3.10+ when the Lord communicates more openly with him.

**Vs. 12: Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they had no regard for the Lord.**

The conjunctive *w-* prefaced to “sons” generally means “and” which is used frequently to show the flow of a narrative and sometimes is left untranslated. However, given the shift from the beginning of Samuel’s ministry as a boy to mention of Eli’s sons is more significant by way of contrasting the two. Thus it merits to be rendered as “now.”

“Worthless” or *belyahal* is what Hannah calls herself in 1.16 when Eli confronted her for the first time. More accurately it applies to Hophni and Phinehas because they did not “regard” the Lord, the verb being *yadah* or to know in an intimate manner. It is used in 1.19 as sexual intercourse between Elkanah and Hannah. Such lack of knowledge does not appear applicable to Eli despite his tolerance of his two sons’ wicked behavior. He and Elkanah were pretty much the same, it seems, as far as their character. Yet if it weren’t for Eli, this *belyahal* would transfer over to young Samuel. So in the end, Eli’s protection of Samuel and negligence of his sons’ behavior make him a kind of borderline character.

**Vs. 13: The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a threepronged fork in his hand,**

*Mishpat* means “custom” but more generally pertains to judgement or sentence. “Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice” [8.3]. In the verse at hand, *mishpat* is related to “sacrifice,” the verb being *zavach* (cf. 1.4) and used with the noun *zevech*. This offering requires attention and therefore a “servant” of the priests or *nahar*, the same word used in vs. 13 as applicable to Samuel. The location of this sacrifice doesn’t seem to be the altar itself but

adjacent to it or where the boiling pot was situated. The role of this *nahar* really engaged in menial work and not belonging to the priestly order itself.

*Mazleg* is the noun for “fork” with one other biblical reference which occurs in the next verse.

**Vs. 14: and he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle or caldron or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. So they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.**

Three types of instruments are mentioned, all more or less the same, which were the direct responsibility of the *nahar* or servant: “pan,” “kettle” and “caldron” (*keyor*, *dud* and *qalachath*). The first applies to any basin as in Ex 30.18 and is the first liturgical mention of *keyor*: “You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing.” The second has five other biblical references and also can mean a basket. “And put their heads in baskets and sent them to him at Jezreel” [2Kg 10.7]. The third and final term has one other biblical reference, Mic 3.3: “And break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a kettle.” It derives from a verbal root meaning to roast or to parch. All three words do not seem to have special reference to sacrifice but more or less refer to cooking.

The words “take for himself” read literally “take in (*b-*) himself,” indicative of greediness. That means the priest’s servant or *nahar* was standing by and waiting for instructions from the priest. Once the *nahar* had performed this servile duty, most likely he was dismissed immediately without any share in the offering.

The words “so they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there” indicate the real deceit shown to innocent, well-meaning people who had come to Shiloh at great personal risk. But as noted above, some word must have gotten out...it was inevitable...yet no one was strong enough to do anything, even to lodge complaints against Eli. So it turned out that Eli was the best ally in the hands of his two corrupt sons, a shield behind which they could hide. As for “Israelites,” the proper name “Israel” is used.

**Vs. 15: Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give meat for the priest to roast; for he will not accept boiled meat from you, but raw.”**

Note the thankless task of the hapless *nahar* to an unsuspecting person making sacrifice. This person, along with his family, had made the arduous trek to Shiloh and had purchased an animal for the sacrifice, often at considerable expense. Now the *nahar* must confront this person and demand meat for his master, the priest. In the case at hand, we don’t know if the *nahar* was Samuel working under Hophni and Phinehas. If so...and let’s say it is the case...the two had no qualms at corrupting an innocent boy right from the beginning. When they reached Eli’s age, they would be guaranteed a steady income as well as meat from sacrifices. Although this part of First Samuel is about Hannah’s offering of her son, we can assume that Hophni and Phinehas had been defrauding worshippers for an extended period of time, given that Eli was so old. So when they first saw Samuel, automatically they thought “another one,” but this would prove to be their undoing later on.

**Vs. 16: And if the man said to him, “Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish,” he would say, “No, you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force.”**

Here the unfortunate pilgrim tries to strike a bargain which would be fair to himself as well as to Hophni and Phinehas but to no avail. The word *nephesh* is used for “you” and means “soul” (noted last in 1.26). In other words, both brothers can take as much as sacrifice as their souls desire after having burnt the fat of the offering. *Nephesh* as “soul” adds to the sense of the greed by the two sons, that they demanded the offering directly from their inmost being. The equally unfortunate *nahar*...let’s say Samuel...would have to comply with the two corrupt brothers breathing down his back. If Samuel failed to comply, they would throw him out. Even worse, they would wait until his parents made their yearly pilgrimage to Shiloh after which they would break the news in order to thwart Hannah’s original intent of offering her only begotten son to the Lord.

*Chezqah* is the word for “force.” One can imagine little Samuel making this threat which must have astonished the man attempting to strike a bargain. Even if it weren’t Samuel, chances are another unfortunate child was forced into making this threat. “And (Jabin, king of Canaan) oppressed the people of Israel cruelly (i.e., with force) for twenty years” [Judg 4.3]. Obviously the man who is presenting the offering would be astonished and easily could refuse or tell the *nahar* to go away. However, Hophni and Phinehas were standing in the shadows watching them both.

**Vs. 17: Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord; for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt.**

*Chata’th* means “sin” which derives from a verbal root meaning to miss the mark; not only did Eli’s two sons miss the mark, they were unwilling to repent. This word is found next 12.19: “For we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king.” Hophni and Phinehas are called “young men” or *nahar*, the same term applicable to Samuel above who is identified as the “servant” in vs. 15. But as noted earlier, *nahar* can refer to a young child up to around the age of twenty. A sin is bad enough but worse in this situation because it is “very great,” the adverb *me’od* being used which means anything in excess, way beyond the means. Furthermore, the sin is “in the sight of the Lord” where *peney* is used for “sight” or literally face (cf. 1.22).

The context in which all this is happening is a sacrifice in the Shiloh temple meaning that the smoke from any burnt offering rises like incense to the Lord. So we could say that the offering-as-scent was especially abominable to him.

The second part of vs. 17 is a sad commentary on the situation at the temple, both pertaining to the Lord and the man offering the sacrifice. We may include Samuel as that *nahar* who demanded the sacrifice as a whole in vs. 16. He must have been forced into this role by Hophni and Phinehas but later broke away from their influence. This may have come about through Eli (he was right there in the temple) and even by later visits by Hannah and Elkanah. It wouldn’t be surprising that if Peninnah tagged along she would have taunted Hannah as before, a kind of told-you-so scorn, though we have no record of this.

*Na'ats* is the verb for “treated with contempt” which intimates spurning, of not considering someone or something up to one’s (perverted) standards. “For the wicked boasts of the desires of his heart, and the man greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord” [Ps 10.3]. In the verse at hand we have one instance of *na'ats* by Hophni and Phinehas. Now multiply that by many more instances, especially during sacred festivals, and it becomes intolerable. The object of *na'ats* is *minchah* or “offering” which usually consists of an animal sacrifice. And so with this deplorable incident the situation in which Samuel was raised comes to a close. It has a certain ominous, even threatening note about it, which implies an interlude before the situation at Shiloh will be resolved but at the cost of an invasion by the Philistines.

**Vs. 18: Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy girded with a linen ephod.**

This verse can be taken as concurrent with the perversion of the sacrifices by Eli’s two sons described above. Though it was possible that Samuel was that *nahar* in vs. 16, it is not the point now. He could have been forced into behaving such even if disinclined to do so. Here the verb *sharath* is used in the same context as in vs. 11 with respect to Eli’s priestly ministry. Note the difference, however. Vs. 11 has “ministered to the Lord in the presence of Eli the priest” whereas vs. 18 has “was ministering before the Lord.” The former includes Eli more as a mentor in things divine with *sharath* being the object first of the Lord and then Eli. The latter has the Lord only and includes *peney* or “before” which, as noted in the previous verse, literally means face. Thus the second instance is more direct minus the guiding hand of Eli.

Again Samuel is called a *nahar* or “boy” only girded with an “ephod” (*ephod*) comprised of linen. An ephod is a priestly garment without sleeves first mentioned in Ex 25.7, almost in passing, and described at great length in chapter 28. Later in 22.18 the ephod is described as made of linen: “And Doeg the Edomite turned and fell upon the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod” [22.18]. King David wore an ephod upon the ark’s return (cf. 2Sam 6.14) which makes it appear to be a light overgarment of sorts not necessarily for priestly purposes.

**Vs. 19: And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.**

*Mehyl* means “robe” or a wide, long upper garment worn by both men and women. In Ex 28.31 *mehyl* is synonymous with the ephod of vs. 18: “And you shall make the robe of the ephod of all blue.” In the verse at hand, Hannah made one for Samuel, possibly along with that linen ephod for use in the temple at Shiloh. When Penninah saw Hannah making both garments, she must have been extremely jealous. Why can’t one of her sons wear one? But that means she would have to offer one of them to the temple at Shiloh, by no means her inclination.

Given the nature of Samuel’s task in the temple with regard to sacrifices, both garments must have become easily soiled with blood which is why Hannah made the *mehyl* each time she went to Shiloh. Since these were yearly visits, the *mehyl* had to be made larger as Samuel grew up. Although the composition of this garment isn’t specified, it could be of linen just like the ephod. Given the generous nature of Hannah, it wouldn’t be surprising that she made other garments for young men under the

tutelage of Eli. Of course, we have Hophni and Phinehas watching all this. They must have looked at Hannah with some jealousy and remained unmoved as to her generosity.

**Vs. 20: Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, “The Lord give you children by this woman for the loan which she lent to the Lord;” so then they would return to their home.**

*Barak* is the common verb for “bless,” the next instance being 9.13: “For the people will not eat until he comes since he must bless the sacrifice.” Eli must have been grateful for the ephod and little robe for Samuel since he didn’t have to worry about providing formal, liturgical clothing; in other words, it was a financial blessing, albeit small.

Although Hannah prayed for a son and immediately handed him over to Eli’s governance, she didn’t seem to expect to bear more children. Thus what she and Elkanah heard from Eli came as a pleasant surprise. Eli was eager to impart his blessing, for he thought that this couple might provide further children for temple service and eventually supplant Hophni and Phinehas.

*Sum* is the verb for “give” which means to put, to set in place. The idea is that the Lord will place children within Hannah in a physical manner. This word is used mostly in the books of Ezra and Daniel, for example, Dan 3.29: “Therefore I make a decree.” Both Hannah and her husband must have been thrilled at Eli’s blessing because he uses the plural “children” or *zerah* which is noted last in 1.11 and alternately means seed as for sowing. The “seeds” promised are for Hannah’s “loan” or *she’elah* noted last in 1.27 as “petition” which derives from the verbal root *sha’al* used in the verse at hand as “lent.”

*Maqom* means “home” or more specifically, a place, and found next in 3.2: “Eli...was lying down in his own place.” This noun is a broader term and in the context at hand intimates a profound change in the way Hannah and Elkanah are living. Probably he divorced Penninah or she left on her own. And so *maqom* forms a balance with the Shiloh temple to which the couple returns year by year to visit their son.

**Vs. 21: And the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord.**

This sound pretty much like a repeat of the visit to Shiloh when Eli prophesied that the Lord heard Hannah’s petition for a son (1.27). Such was a result of the Lord having “visited” her, *paqad*, a verb with many different meanings but fundamentally means to hit or to strike upon. The idea of *paqad*, then, is a sudden meeting or even the mustering of troops for battle. So when the Lord decides to *paqad* Hannah, he does so with a vengeance...not just one child but three sons and two daughters which come in rapid succession. We don’t know if Hannah offered any more boys to the Shiloh temple, let alone their names as well as those of her daughters. The unique birth of Samuel seems to have been sufficient for the narrative. When they matured later on, their encounter with their brother in the temple must have been quite unique.

Of all the children born to Hannah, Samuel alone is recorded as having grown in the divine presence, *gadal* being the verb which means to be great. This is noted later in 3.19: “And Samuel grew, and the



Lord was with him and none of his words fall to the ground.” Such becoming great is done “in the presence of the Lord or literally “with the Lord.”

**Vs. 22: Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.**

The adverb *me’od* is used for “very” and as indicated in vs. 17, indicates something done to excess.

Note the two instances of “all:” the first with respect to Eli’s two sons. Although two sons are in mind, “all” intimates their total corruption and the second with respect to Israel as a nation. Because Shiloh was the center of religious worship, just about everyone who could make the trip there did so. The situation is corroborated by mention of Israelites in vs. 14: “So they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.” If it was such a universal problem extending over a long period of time, part of the blame should be put upon the people. They could have filed a complaint, if you will, but given the exalted status of priests, knew it would go nowhere.

The words “and he heard” are like an after-thought to so much harm by Eli’s two sons. One would think that the priest-in-charge would have known how those under him behaved, especially since they were his sons. Eli knew their character but deliberately seems to have turned a deaf ear hoping the problem would go away. But the more he hid from it, the greater the clamor became.

Especially scandalous was that Hophni and Phinehas lay with women. Note that these women seemed to be like their male counterpart, *nahar*. *Tsava’* is the verb for “served” which fundamentally means to go forth as into battle. “From the people of Israel’s half which Moses separated from that of the men who had gone to war” [Num 31.42]. The idea is that such women were mustered, if you will, for service at the entrance of the temple, and that service remains unexplained. Here “tent of meeting” is used instead of temple which indicates the close identity the fixed building at Shiloh had with the mobile tent the Israelites used throughout their forty year wandering in the Sinai peninsula. *Mohed* means “meeting” or appointed place or time. “Because it was kept for you until the appointed that you might eat with the guests” [9.24]. Thus the element of time is just as important as the sacredness of space.

**Vs. 23: And he said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people.**

It’s kind of surprising that Eli asks this question of his two sons so late in the game. The word for “things” is *davar* which means “word” and noted last in 1.23 as “that.” So when Eli asks that he hears about their wicked activity, *davar* of them...the “things” (*davar*) reach him through reports which had been spoken. *Davar* is also used for “dealings” which here are “evil” or *rah*, an adjective found next in 6.9: “then it is he who has done us this great harm.”

When Eli says “all the people” he means more specifically those who had offered sacrifices in the temple at the hands of Hophni and Phinehas who, in turn, spread word as to their activities. There must have been a fairly long interval between these reports which were filtering in and now when Eli confronts the two.

**Vs. 24: No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad.**

*Shemuhah* means “report” and derives from the verb *shamah* as used in the previous verse. Keep in mind that Eli *shamah* (‘hear’) this *shemuhah* as to the *davar* (things spoken) of his two sons. The noun is found next in 4.19: “And when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was captured...she bowed and gave birth.”

Eli heightens the urgency of his question by changing “all the people” of vs. 23 to the more formal “people of the Lord.” This latter phrase he intends to employ as a collective witness meaning the entire nation of Israel. He wasn’t far off the mark due to the importance of the Shiloh temple where people came to offer sacrifices.

That which is heard...the *shemuhah*...has been spread abroad, *havar* being the participle from the verbal root meaning to pass or to cross over. “There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering (literally, pass through fire)” [Dt 18.10]. If we unite the *shemuhah* with *havar*, the image coming to mind is that the report about Hophni and Phinehas spread like wildfire. And as the **RSV** used here says (‘spreading abroad’), this *havar* went well beyond the borders of Israel.

**Vs. 25: If a man sins against a man, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the Lord to slay them.**

Eli asks this more or less rhetorical question to his sons, the last one, most likely not expecting a response. Still, he felt obliged to do so, all that guilt of not having taken action over the years finally taking its toll. This the final question Eli divides into two parts centering around sin or *chata’* and found next in 14.34: “and do not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood.” If it’s a question of *chata’* between two men (i.e., not God), God will “mediate” for him, *palal* noted last in vs. 1 as “prayed” in the sense of making a petition. But if it’s a question of *chata’* by man against God, Eli wonders whether or not another person can make effective intercession, the verb also being *palal*.

Note that the two sons “would not listen to the voice (*qol*) of their father” instead of simply “would not listen to their father.” Insertion of *qol* is important insofar as it reveals a distinction between it and Eli who possesses it...as though the *qol* had an authority all by itself. In this case *qol* did in that represented the Lord, not Eli, addressing Hophni and Phinehas. Something similar is at work with the Lord. The verse distinguishes between him and his “will” or *chaphats*. While the divinity has no parts, even more so than a human’s mental capacity just described, *chaphats* is indicative of future intent. In the verse at hand it is a verb meaning to incline in a given direction as well as intense desire. It is found next in 18.22: “Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you.” In the verse at hand, the *muth* means “slay,” the common verb for to die. Thus *muth* in and by itself doesn’t imply a violent slaying (it turns out this) but simply dying, pure and simple.

**Vs. 26: Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men.**

The connective *w-* as “now” plays a significant role here as it does in vs. 12 (‘Now the sons of Eli were worthless men’). That is to say, *w-* serves to shift attention from one gripping story to something less intense as is the case at hand. It helps to usher in Samuel who had continued in his ministry for some time now under the tutelage of Eli while receiving yearly visits from his parents which must have been occasions of great joy. At the same time, Samuel had to contend with the less than desirable Hophni and Phinehas and even may have been compelled to assist them as noted in vs. 15. In the verse at hand, *w-* plays a transitional role contrasting the scandalous behavior of the two brothers against the background of their father’s plea too late in life with Samuel’s constant and steady progress. Apparently Eli had been negligent for many years. Now it’s too late and will suffer the consequences not long from now.

The common verb to go for “continued” is *halak*; it is connected<sup>3</sup> to *gadal* (‘to grow’) with *w-* which as in vs. 21 means to be great, to increase. Here the two words read literally, “went and became great” and refer to Samuel’s “stature.” As for “favor,” the adjective *tov* or good is used. This was quite a contrast to the frequently mentioned wicked behavior of Hophni and Phinehas along with their well-meaning but negligent father. Those who had visited the Shiloh temple picked up on this immediately and spread word around that despite the dismal reports coming from there, yes, there was hope for the future.

**Vs. 27: And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, “Thus the Lord has said, ‘I revealed myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh.**

This “man of God” is unidentified which adds mystery and anticipation to the desperate situation at the Shiloh temple. Since that was Israel’s center of worship, he must have come there many times and even may have been acquainted with Elkanah and Hannah. Even then he saw something special in Hannah and knew some day their paths would overlap. Because Samuel was still a youth, this man of God approached Eli instead and addresses him for a considerably long time, the rest of Chapter Two, most of which is unfavorable...disastrous...for Eli and his two sons. Since word got out about the scandalous behavior at Shiloh, perhaps some of the people decided to send this man under the cover of anonymity.

In true prophetic style, the man begins with “Thus the Lord has said” in order to make it very clear he isn’t speaking on his own accord. While this is transpiring, the man is sitting back, if you will, watching the spectacle unfold before his eyes. He refers to the Exodus story very familiar to Eli, and to Eli’s credit, he keeps quiet throughout the account. In the end the Lord brought Israel into Canaan, so he figured it would end well for him. The shock will come later on.

*Galah* is the verb for “revealed” which fundamentally means a making bare or uncovering and even to depart. This form of the verb appears next in 3.21: “for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.” In a sense, the current *galah* as tied in with Israel’s history sets the stage for one as pertaining to Samuel. Note that the man of God refers directly to the “house of your father.” Because Eli was a priest, that meant Aaron, brother of Moses, and his spokesman. As soon as that name was mentioned, Eli knew he wasn’t living up to sacred tradition.

The verse at hand lacks “subject.” As any Israelite would know, their ancestors were slaves to Pharaoh,

and it didn't have to be mentioned. The word "house" is mentioned twice, one with regard to Eli (Levites) and the other with regard to Pharaoh. This brings the struggle closer to home because it suggests family members.

**Vs. 28: And I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me; and I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel.**

A footnote in the Oxford **RSV** says that "Eli was an ancestor of Abiathar" which is fulfilled in 1Kg 2.27: "So Solomon expelled Abiathar from being priest to the Lord, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord which he has spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." In other words, this anonymous prophet says that the line of Eli's priesthood will come to an end. However, Abiathar isn't mentioned by name so we could infer the man God had chosen was Aaron.

Note the seven uses of the preposition /- (to) which read literally as "to me," "to (be) a priest," "to go up," "to burn," "to wear," "before me" and "to the house." There's a definite sense of directness of responsibility with regard to the duty of this priest whether belonging to Aaron or Abiathar. If Eli were paying close attention (and certainly he was), he would realize that he had not so much neglected his priestly duties but failed to pull his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, from their duties as priests. Now it was too late; Eli and they must suffer the consequences.

*Nasa'* is the verb for "wear" which fundamentally means to raise, to lift up (cf. 4.4). In the case at hand, such wearing implies the taking up of the responsibility associated with an ephod.

What really struck home to Eli was mention of "offerings by fire from the people of Israel," the entire nation mentioned in vs. 23: "For I (Eli) hear of your evil dealings from all the people." Obviously the prophet uttering these words was familiar with what had been going on for some time. Perhaps he was too victimized by Hophni and Phinehas when he presented offerings at the Shiloh temple and was a friend of Elkanah and Hannah.

**Vs. 29: Why then look with greedy eye at my sacrifices and my offerings which I commanded and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves upon the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?"**

The anonymous prophet may have been off mark here accusing Eli of having an eye which is "greedy" where the verb *bahat* is used meaning to tread or to kick and has one other reference, Dt 32.15: "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; you waxed fat, you grew thick, you became sleek." Applying *bahat* to the eyes of Eli is a vivid example, especially a bit later when 3.2 reports that his "eyesight had begun to grow dim." In the verse at hand, *bahat* pertains to "sacrifices" and "offerings" or *zevach* and *minchah*. The first is noted last in 1.21 and the second in vs. 18.

*Tsahah* is the verb for "commanded" and found next in 13.13: "You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which he commanded you." The Hebrew of the verse at hand has the noun *mahon* which means habitation and can apply to a refuge. It is found next in vs. 32, similarly not translated. Since *mahon* here applies to God, it refers to the temple at Shiloh.

It doesn't seem that Eli honored his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, just let them continue with their defrauding of people who came to make sacrifice. The verb here is *kavad* which fundamentally means to be heavy and is conveyed in 6.6: "Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?"

As for "fattening," the verb is *bara'* which means to create and has this unique use. It is with respect to the "offering" or *minchah* (note: not *zevach*) or more specifically, the "choicest parts" or *re'shyth*, literally that which is the beginning. "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God" [15.21]. The verse at hand concurs with 1.14 where the priest's servant takes the best of the offering. Again, the people of Israel is mentioned to shame Eli as much as possible. On his behalf, however, the people never raised a complaint despite the long-standing behavior of his two sons.

The anonymous prophet breaks here as speaking the words of the Lord directly. However, he continues in the next verse. It gives Eli a brief interlude to reflect upon his words before continuing his condemnation. Eli is too stunned to offer a response both here and at the conclusion of the prophecy.

**Vs. 30: Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel declares: "I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me for ever;" but now the Lord declares: "Far be it from me; for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.**

The anonymous prophet begins his discourse to Eli with "Thus the Lord has said" in vs. 27 and here resumes the second half with "Therefore the God of Israel declares." The common *'amar* (to speak) belongs to the former whereas the lesser familiar *na'am* is to the latter. *Na'am* fundamentally means to speak in a low voice and is more appropriate for prophetic utterances. "The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool'" [Ps 110.1]. Perhaps because the prophet wishes to impart a greater force to his communication he speaks in the name of the "Lord, the God of Israel;" i.e., his full title. As for *'amar*, it is used for "promised," that is, the verb occurs twice.

The "house" or *beyth* at hand pertains both to Eli and his father, that is, going all the way back to Aaron. The common verb *halak* for "go" is used once minus the "in and out" yet is "before me," *lepanay*. Most likely such going in and out refers to the priestly duties of Aaron as in Ex 28.30, that is, with respect to the tent of meeting: "when he goes in before the Lord; thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually." This chapter describes the garments Aaron and his sons will use followed by Chapter Twenty-Nine referring to the ordination of priests.

The prophet uses *na'am* a second time, also as "declares," but in an ominous sense. Eli knew this would follow the first *na'am* acting like a preface and was braced to receive it. Despite the mental preparation, it was difficult to hear "Far be from me" or *chalylah ly* (the *ly* is *l-* or to prefaced to 'me'). It is found next in 12.23: "Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you." The words at hand are a lead-in to two parts: *kavad* as "honor" (noted in the previous verse) and the pair of verbs *bazah* and *qalal* ('despise' and 'lightly esteemed'). The former is found next in 10.27: "And they despised him (Saul) and brought him no present. But he held his peace." The latter fundamentally means to be light as well as to curse. "And he (Abraham) went in to Hagar,

and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt upon her mistress" [Gen 14.3]. Obviously the prophet is referring not so much to Eli but to his two sons. He wished that they could be present to heed the prophet's words and repent even at this late stage.

**Vs. 31: Behold, the days are coming, when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.**

*Hineh* is a way of grabbing one's attention, "behold." Although the prophet had spoken of the endemic problem at Shiloh regarding Hophni and Phinehas which was affecting the entire nation of Israel, he employs *hineh* as a means to maintain Eli's attention so his mind doesn't wander not attempts to make interruptions and therefore excuses. Note the plural "days" vs. "day" which intimates an extended period of time for Eli, not just a twenty-four hour period when the prophecy will get itself over with.

*Gadah* is the verb for "will cut off" which also means to break into pieces. "He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel" [Lam 2.3]. In the verse at hand it is used with respect to "strength" or *zeruah* which basically means an arm. "And I took the crown which was on his head and the armlet which was on his arm" [2Sam 1.10]. In the verse at hand, *zeruah* applies to Eli and the house of his father which can include both his physical father as well as ancestors going all the way back to Aaron. Though Aaron's priesthood in and by itself is not in question, the prophet has in mind how Eli's two sons and predecessors (unnamed) abused that office. His prophecy came true as to being no "old man" in the house of Eli because shortly the Philistines will kill Hophni and Phinehas (cf. 4.17).

**Vs. 32: Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity which shall be bestowed upon Israel; and there shall not be an old man in your house forever.**

"Then" is rendered by the connective *w-* noted last in vs. 26 which here has special force because it introduces what will happen to Eli after the words prophesied in the previous verse. First, Eli will be in "distress" or *tsar* also as enemy and well as being in dire straits. "When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall" [Ps 27.2]. From this narrowness Eli will "look" or *navat*, a verb which implies beholding with respect. "The Lord looks down from heaven, he sees all the sons of men" [ps 33.13]. As for Eli, he will do this *navat* within the *mahon* which certainly applies to the Shiloh temple, the house of the Lord. At the same time Eli realizes that his time at Shiloh is coming to an end and has in mind as a successor Samuel, still a youth. What will become of him? Will he go the route of Hophni and Phinehas? Already Samuel had been exposed to their corrupting influence, so he must protect him against future dangers.

The Hebrew text lacks "prosperity" and has simply "in all" followed by the verb *yatav* which means to be well and from which is derived the common adjective *tov* (good). It is found next in 20.13: "But should it please my father to do you harm, the Lord do so to Jonathan." *Yatav* is used directly with "Israel," that is, using no preposition.

"Forever" reads literally "all the days" and refers to the impending deaths of Hophni and Phinehas, most likely blithely unaware of this prophecy. Even if Eli communicated to them, they would push him off as they had done in many other occasions.

**Vs. 33: The man of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep out his eyes and grieve his heart; and all the increase of your house shall die by the sword of men.**

“Man of you” seems to refer to that part of Eli’s paternal heritage which will ensure continuation of the priesthood established by the Lord with Aaron and therefore preclude abandoning the Shiloh temple. The anonymous prophet has in mind Abiathar inferred in vs. 28. Later on barely he escaped Saul’s wrath described in the second half of Chapter Twenty-Two.

*Karath* means “cut off” and is the same verb used commonly to cut a covenant. “And do not cut off your loyalty from my house forever” [20.15]. The idea of covenant isn’t far from the prophet’s mind here since he links this verb with the Lord’s “altar” or *mizbeach* noted in vs. 28. This noun derives from the verbal root *zavach* (to sacrifice) and thus refers to the exact spot on which such a sacrifice is offered.

The fate of that man who will retain his priestly functions will be “spared” which is not in the Hebrew text but implied in the verb *karath*.

The anonymous prophet foretells that Eli will suffer blindness, the verb *kalah* for “weep out” which more fundamentally means to be completed, to be consumed. It is found next in 3.12: “On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end (*kalah*).” Already this was intimated in Eli’s encounter with Hannah when he mistook her prayer for drunken mumbling. It will come to pass later in 4.15 (“his eyes were set”) although this near total blindness could have occurred earlier. It was a great advantage to his two sons who could do even more mischief. As for “eyes” and “heart,” the Hebrew has instead of “his” “your.”

*Adav* means “grieve” and is the only use of this verb in the Bible. However, a few Hebrew dictionaries point to Dt 28.63 where a form of this verb (*leha’avayd*) is found: “So the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you.” Whether or not this form is technically correct, the words certainly apply to Eli.

The Hebrew text lacks “sword” so does not specify how Eli’s house will perish, rather, its “increase” or *marbyth* which has just four other biblical references. “And behold, half the greatness of your wisdom was not told me” [2Chron 9.6]. Along with the *marbyth* is the *nephesh* of Eli or soul noted last in vs. 16. Although both the anonymous prophet and Eli didn’t know it, the Philistines will bring all this to pass. What is worse...and the text is very clear on this...is that the Philistines will capture the ark of the Lord. Obviously it was housed in the Shiloh temple, but no explicit mention of that is made.

**Vs. 34: And this which shall befall your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day.**

*Oth* is a noun meaning “sign,” often as a portent for the future, for the words “this which shall befall” as well as for the noun “sign” and is given to Eli concerning his two sons. Actually, it came to him as no surprise. The same might have applied to them if they overheard the anonymous prophet addressing their father. *Oth* is found next in 10.7: “Now when these signs meet you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.” In the verse at hand, note the two different prepositions: *l-* (to) prefaced to



“you” meaning Eli and *‘el* (also to) “your” (two sons). The first signifies on behalf of and the second, more a direction towards-which.

Eli must have been aware of the constant threat of invasion from the nearby Philistines, so that most likely would be the cause of death for Hophni and Phinehas who are mentioned here by name. The two sons were so engrossed in defrauding worshippers of their sacrifices that they barely paid attention to this threat. If they had accumulated enough sacrificial booty, if you will, there was a chance they could buy off the Philistines. If not, they could use it to escape and set up shop somewhere else. If it came to that, they would have no scruples putting themselves at the service of pagan gods.

**Vs. 35: And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.**

*Qum* is the verb for “will raise up” noted last in vs. 8 and here has the sense of establishing, of making firm. This “priest” (*kohen*, cf. 1.9) will be “faithful” or one characterized by being *‘aman* which is used in the next verse. Eli was not unfaithful to the Lord’s service...actually we get the impression that he was conscientious...but unfaithful in not reigning in Hophni and Phinehas when he had the opportunity. While listening to these words from the anonymous prophet Eli must have thought of Samuel being the one in mind which turned out to be true.

This future faithful priest will do what the Lord intends as indicated by “heart” and “mind” or *lev* and *nepshesh* (cf. 2.1 and vs. 33). These words are helpful for Eli in order to recognize the Lord calling Samuel later in Chapter Three. As for the anonymous prophet uttering this, he was in accord with the divine heart and mind.

Note the second occurrence of *‘aman* as “sure” which applies to the future priest’s house or lineage. Perhaps the anonymous prophet had in mind the future kingship in Israel. It turned out that Samuel’s two sons “did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain” [8.3]. In other words, they were just as bad if not worse than Hophni and Phinehas. Samuel would have to put up with this, a scandal to his otherwise illustrious career, and would not contribute to his house being *‘aman*. Regardless, the continuity of the priesthood would survive through Abiathar mentioned in vs. 33, a narrow escape indeed.

Refer back to vs. 30 for a similar going in and out, but that refers to Eli. In the verse at hand this applies to the Lord’s “anointed” or *mashyach* which is a title of honor later bestowed upon Israel’s kings and hence sets the stage for the later anointing first of Saul and then of David. *Mashyach* occurred last in vs. 10, Hannah’s “Magnificat,” and foreshadows this role as applicable to David. Surely mention of this word triggered Eli’s recollection of Hannah uttering that prophecy, re-propheesied as it were, now through the anonymous prophet. And so the faithful priest will have a relationship with the yet-to-be *mashyach*, a going in and a going out, which is reminiscent of his going in and going out concerning the Shiloh temple.

**Vs. 36: And every one who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread, and shall say, “Put me, I pray you, in one of the priest's places that I may eat a morsel of bread.”**

As for those who left (alive) in Eli's household, the anonymous prophet must be referring to others than Hophni and Phinehas...an extended family, if you will...who will come begging to the yet to be appointed priest. *Shachah* is the verb for "implore" noted last in 1.28 and generally involves a bowing down in reference, certainly the case at hand. Eli must have taken some comfort in these words, that his household won't be blotted out entirely even if a few are left to come begging.

*Saphach* means to "put" and fundamentally refers to a pouring out or anointing almost implying being in the anointed position of a priest. There are four other biblical references, one of which being 26.19: "For they have driven me out this day that I should have no share (*saphach*) in the heritage of the Lord." In the verse at hand, this rather desperate request is to be in a "place" of one of the priests, that word not being in the Hebrew but implied in "one." At least a priest will have bread, and if any survivor from Eli's house gets that, he may get part of the sacrificial offerings. But that could renew the defrauding of offerings as had been the case with Hophni and Phinehas.

And so ends the harsh words from the anonymous prophet. He must have left immediately, not hanging around to get Eli's reaction. Never do we hear from him again. Chapter Three begins without reference to him though some time after his words were delivered which means Eli had some time to ponder them. Even though Samuel was still young, many a time Eli cast a furtive eye in his direction well knowing that Samuel was the person the prophet had in mind to take over. It is to his credit that he continued to look after Samuel for some years. If he remained faithful in that duty, perhaps the Lord might change his mind, but it turned out otherwise. The sticking point, of course, was the wicked behavior of Hophni and Phinehas.

### Chapter Three

**Vs. 1: Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.**

Chapter Three begins with the familiar connective *w-* translated here as "now" which serves to make a connection between the anonymous prophet's dire words to Eli and the beginning of Samuel's ministry. The time gap between the two isn't given, but that's incidental to the narrative. Samuel is called a "boy" or *nahar*, that term first used in 2.11 in a similar circumstance: "And the boy ministered to the Lord in the presence of Eli the priest." Then as well as now he is engaged in *sharath* or "ministering" which most likely was some form of liturgical service. That verse has *peney* for "in the presence of" whereas the one at hand has a variation, *lipney*, *peney* with the preposition *l-* (to, towards) prefaced to it. Despite the ominous words from the prophet, Eli proved himself to be an excellent tutor in things liturgical within the Shiloh temple. We get the impression that apart from the corrupt presence of Hophni and Phinehas, Eli kept Samuel a safe distance. He was determined more so after the prophet's prediction as to their eventual doom.

*Davar* is the familiar noun for "word" as it pertains to the Lord and noted last in 2.24 as "report." In the verse at hand, *davar* is equivalent to "vision" or *chazon*, so we have that which is spoken and that which is seen wrapped into one divine reality. The latter often applies to a revelation and is applied to prophets (the anonymous prophet just discussed didn't use this term as well as *davar*). The book of

Isaiah begins with *chazon*: “The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” As far as this term is concerned, First Samuel is the first instance of its use.

The adjectives “rare” and “(no) frequent” are similar in the situation at hand. There’s no direct time frame for divine *davar* nor *chazon*, just that it had been absent and no one alive seems to be familiar with them. At the same time, the Shiloh temple continued with sacrifices. After a while that practice grew stale, if you will, and required input from another source, of God intervening directly in human affairs. The two adjective are *yaqar* and *parats* (a verb used as a participle). The former applies to something which is precious as with stones and very costly. “She (wisdom) is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her” [Prov 3.15]. The latter means to break asunder, to disperse. In other words, *chazon* or vision was not dispersed among the people, let alone any prophets, though the anonymous one we’ve been dealing with certainly had access to things divine. “The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire” [Neh 1.3]. Surely the prolonged behavior of Hophni and Phinehas contributed to the absence of divine intervention through *davar* and *chazon*. In many ways, Hannah’s prayer to conceive a child and given him to the Lord’s service set the stage for this prolonged barrenness to end.

**Vs. 2: At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place;**

“At that time” in Hebrew runs literally as “in that day.” The “day,” of course, applies to the emergence of Samuel and the fading away of Eli and his two sons, the former day. Note the irony of “no frequent vision” and Eli’s failing eyesight, as though the two had a link. Then in the next verse we have “the lamp of God had not yet gone out.”

In the Hebrew text “lying down in his own place” comes after “at that time.” *Shakav* is the verb for “lying down” and is found in the next verse with regard to Samuel in the temple. Like many elderly men, Eli had his favorite spot or his “place,” *maqom* noted last in 2.20, and perhaps not far from “the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord” [1.9]. Thus for the bulk of his days Eli shifted from this area by the door to his bed, nothing more, except to check in from time to time on the sacrifices being offered under the misdirection of his two sons. By now Hophni and Phinehas knew how to handle their father, that is, treating him kindly yet keeping him as a greeter at the temple’s entrance, a clever way to conceal their corrupt handling of sacrifices.

*Kahah* is the verb for “grow dim” which means to fail in strength. “Every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water” [Ezk 21.7]. This presented no real problem for Eli because of his long familiarity with the Shiloh temple, but as noted so often, it was an ideal situation for his two sons to run wild. Besides, who would want to harm a helpless old man by informing him about his sons? That must have been the tongue-in-cheek reaction by many who came to offer sacrifices. All the while Eli knew this gradual loss of eyesight was part and parcel of the anonymous prophet’s words about his impending fate.

**Vs. 3: the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.**

*Ner* is the noun for “lamp” and can refer to a candle in and by itself but more usually to one of the candlesticks in the Shiloh temple. “And you shall make the seven lamps for it; and the lamps shall be set up so as to give light upon the space in front of it” [Ex 25.37]. Apparently the *ner* at hand is allowed to extinguish on its own, perhaps not long after dusk. *Kavah* means “gone out” or to extinguish as in Prov 31.18: “Her lamp does not go out at night.”

As noted in vs. 2, mention of the lamp is significant in view of Eli’s growing blindness, symbolic of how his house is about to fade away in light of Samuel coming on the scene. Apparently Samuel did not have a room but was “laying down” (*shakav*) within the temple itself, this verb referring to Eli doing the same “in his own place.” This exposure of Samuel to the Lord’s presence is significant, a bed off to the side, for it puts in him direct contact with the Lord for the revelation he is about to receive. Chances are Samuel chose to sleep there in the open instead of an adjacent room. There must have been something both creepy and comforting being alone in such a large building.

The verse at hand has the first explicit mention of the “ark” or *’aron* in First Samuel. One has to go back to Judg 20.27 for the last mention of this term: “For the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days.” Samuel’s proximity to the ark is significant, for it will feature later in his life.

**Vs. 4: Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!”**

This verse is to be read in light of the lamp of God still burning, Samuel near the ark of the Lord and Eli away from the action “in his own place.”

The Hebrew text has “And the Lord called to Samuel.” This is more direct than the English text and intimates that the Lord didn’t have to use force to rouse Samuel who responds at once. “Here I am” or *hineh* noted last in 2.31, more a kind of behold or statement that one is fully present for what is to follow. Then and only then can the lamp extinguish on its own. This calling must have been down softly because Eli didn’t hear it. The same applies to Hophni and Phinehas who wouldn’t recognize the divine voice if it spoke plainly to them like the Lord had done to Moses on Sinai.

**Vs. 5: and ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down.**

Samuel mistaking the Lord for Eli’s voice suggests that the two in the temple weren’t far away. Because Eli was quite old, any summons he might have made at night was in a low voice, so it was easily to confuse his voice with the Lord’s. Samuel makes his presence known by *hineh* as he had done with the Lord in vs. 4. As for the verb “called,” it is the common *qara’* as used in the previous verse. Keep in mind that throughout this incident which continues into the next few verses “the lamp of God had not yet gone out.” We could say the lamp extinguished itself once Eli knew the Lord had been summoning Samuel.

Nothing is said of Hophni and Phinehas spending nights at the temple. Chances are they preferred spending nights elsewhere and engaging in less than desirable activity.

**Vs. 6: And the Lord called again, “Samuel!” And Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.”**

Here the Lord addresses Samuel by name only once compared with twice in vs. 4. He already got the boy’s attention, perhaps laying down without falling asleep, so he didn’t have to rouse him. The verb *yasaph* is used for “again” and means to add, to continue. Although there are two distinct calls between vs. 4 and now, certainly that divine *qara’* was echoing in Samuel’s heart and soul, knowing that it would return shortly. With this in mind, *yasaph* is used again in vs. 8.

For the third time in a row Samuel responds to Eli with *hineh*, “Here I am.” It didn’t dawn upon Eli that it was a *qara’* (‘called’) from the Lord, so he brushed off this second interruption of his sleep. As far as he was concerned, Samuel had been dreaming. In the meanwhile, the lamp in the temple continued to burn.

**Vs. 7: Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.**

This verse is inserted between the first two *qara’* of the Lord to Samuel and the third or final one which finally registers on Eli. It serves to prepare the reader for this or more importantly, for Samuel to recognize who was summoning him. The first two *qara’* only involved Samuel’s proper name, not his mission, as in vs. 17+. It would have been too much at first for the boy to know what the Lord intended, so by the third *qara’* he was prepared.

The preposition *terem* or “yet” is used twice which, with the negative, indicates ignorance or a lack of *yadah* by Samuel with regard to the Lord. It stands in stark contrast to Hophni and Phinehas in 2.12: “they had no regard for the Lord” which makes their behavior inexcusable. This *yadah* as to things divine...more a direct, intimate acquaintance with the Lord...was lacking due to Samuel’s youth. However, he had been primed for it during his temple service and indirectly by the negative witness of Hophni and Phinehas. It must have been both startling and disconcerting for such a young boy to see how the two brothers defrauded people making offerings in the temple all the while under Eli’s guidance who was helpless to address the situation.

*Davar* is the familiar “word” as applied to the Lord which in vs. 1 is noted expressly as being quite rare in Israel at the time. And so Samuel is not singled out by reason of his unfamiliarity but as sharing in this general ignorance. No small wonder that he couldn’t identify twice the divine *qara’*. *Davar* is used with the verb *galah* (‘revealed’) which fundamentally means to make naked, to uncover as it applies to an existing reality. *Galah* is noted last in 2.27 as by the anonymous prophet speaking about the Lord and Israel in Egypt. Surely that prophet had some *galah*, else he wouldn’t have uttered what he did.

**Vs. 8: And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy.**

Vs. 7 is a preface of sorts to the important verse at hand which does not mention the express *qara’* of the Lord to Samuel as happened twice, all this which must have taken place in a fairly short period of

time. As in vs. 6 the verb *yasaph* ('again') is used and can be taken as showing continuity between all three interventions by the Lord.

When Samuel said his last *hineh* ('here I am') to Eli, he knew, even before Eli realized it, that the two previous callings were not human but divine. He required an elder to confirm this which Eli now did. The verb *byn* for "perceived" means to understand. Eli can't be blamed for being slow to *byn* because "the word (*davar*) of the Lord was rare in those days" [vs. 1]. "But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead" [2Sam 12.19].

In the verse at hand, this third and final *qara'* is used with the preposition *l-* (to) prefaced to "boy" rendering it literally as "was calling to the boy" which is equivalent to *yasaph* in the first sentence of this verse.

**Vs. 9: Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.**

Now Eli realized the Lord was communicating with young Samuel and told him to go back to sleep (virtually impossible for both) and wait for a third and final *qara'*. Eli knew that as long as the lamp remained alive the Lord would speak.

Eli bids Samuel to say to the Lord "speak" or *davar* (same spelling at the noun). Though *davar* is found frequently in many common circumstances, it has special meaning here in light of the "*davar* of the Lord" in vs. 7. At the time Samuel was a *nahar* or boy, this term being associated sometimes with a "servant," and the term here is *heved* which is used in the next verse.

Vs. 9 for the first times says that Samuel had a "place" or *maqom*, the same word as applied to Eli as in vs. 2. Surely that must have been the most unnerving night Samuel had spent, for upon his response rested so much for the Shiloh temple and the nation of Israel.

**Vs. 10: And the Lord came and stood forth, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."**

On this the third and final time the Lord calls out, that is, first he comes out and then stands forth, the verb for the latter being *yatsav* which means to set oneself or to take a stand. The previous two instances were marked by *qara'* only, nothing else associated with such calling. However, things are different now. To make sure Samuel hears...and by implication, Eli...the Lord comes out of the shadowy atmosphere of the temple, if you will, or out of the ark and takes his position right by Samuel. Samuel couldn't help but hear even though he could trace the previous two occasions of the *qara'* coming from the ark. Now, however, the Lord stepped outside the ark, *yatsav* being the verb. It occurs next in 10.23: "And when he (Saul) stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward."

By now the situation had grown so tense that it forced Eli to take up position behind some column in the temple to look in as to what might happen. This third coming by the Lord didn't bode well for him nor for Israel, but Eli had heard dire words from the anonymous prophet, so he had nothing to lose.

Samuel demonstrates his readiness to hear what the Lord is about to say with “speak” or *davar*...communicate to me that *davar* or word which you wish. He calls himself a “servant” or *heved* as in the previous verse, that is, following the instruction of Eli as how to respond. So no longer is Samuel a *nahar* or boy but a *heved*.

**Vs. 11: Then the Lord said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone that hears it will tingle.”**

So here we have the Lord having stepped outside the ark (*yatsav*) that he may speak more directly with Samuel, that is, minus any possible interference from the ark’s box-like structure. Actually there is no time gap between the last verse and this one, all happening within a fraction of a second, if you will. The Lord complements the earlier *hineh* of vs. 8 (‘Here I am’) which demonstrates Samuel’s readiness with his own *hineh*.

*Davar* is the noun for “thing,” which, as pointed out earlier, also means word as expression and not unlike the Greek *logos*. So when the Lord speaks and does a “thing,” both are one and the same. Thus we could put it as “Behold, I am about to speak...to utter a word...in Israel.” As for the preposition “in” (Israel), it is *‘el* or literally “to Israel.”

*Tsalal* as “tingle” is singled out with respect to “two ears” which means that every person listening to the divine *davar* about to be communicated (or more accurately as *hasah* being the verb, ‘about to do’) will be rivetted by it. An alternate meaning of *tsalal* is to be rolled, and there are only three other uses of it in the Bible. “I am bringing such evil upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle” [Jer 19.3]. So in the verse at hand, “everyone” is equivalent to the entire nation of Israel. In a sense, only Eli can be excluded. Already his ears had tingled at the words of the anonymous prophet and was one of the few people who knew what the Lord had in store.

**Vs. 12: On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.**

Now the Lord gets to the heart of the matter, repeating much of what the anonymous prophet had communicated to Eli. It is a kind of “double whammy” for him and his two sons, something that Samuel must have found difficult to accept, given that Eli had been very gracious to him since Hannah had left him in his care in the Shiloh temple.

*Qum* is the verb for “fulfil” which is noted last in 2.35 as “will raise up.” Such raising up concurs, if you will, with the growth of Samuel from a boy into manhood; fulfilment of this *qum* won’t take place for a while, in Chapter Four, after “Samuel grew” [vs. 19]. Although the Lord is speaking with Samuel outside the ark and what transpired at this juncture was between the two alone, Eli could tell from the look on the boy’s face that something bad was about to happen. Actually, the Lord speaking with Samuel showed great trust in him as well as his maturity at being able to bear such dire words.

*Qum* is used with two instances of the preposition *‘el* which here is rendered as “against” but more literally “to” as “to Eli” and “to his house.” Of course, “house” refers to Hophni and Phinehas and by extension, their families.



There are two verbs for two nouns in the **RSV**: *chalal* for “beginning” and *kalah* for “end.” The former means to perforate, to lay open and to profane. With these three different meanings in mind, certainly *chalal* is a less than pleasant way to make a “beginning” for Eli. “Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the Lord we have eaten and had enough and have had plenty left” [2Chron 31.10]. As for the latter, refer to 2.33 where *kalah* is translated as “weep out.” Thus the part of the verse at hand can read literally as “when I began and when I ended.”

**Vs. 13: And I tell him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity which he knew because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.**

In a sense, there’s no need for the Lord to tell Eli because as noted earlier, already the anonymous prophet had spoken.

*Shaphat* means “to punish” and is noted last in 2.10 more commonly meaning to judge. Note, however, that the Lord both here and a bit later is not as harsh on Eli as upon his house. If the Lord came down too hard on Eli, two things might happen. Eli might drop dead on the spot and even worse, become so depressed and angry that he would take the drastic action of sending Samuel away. No doubt about it...Hophni and Phinehas would be delighted. “Forever” (*had-holam*) sounds particularly harsh, and it is. After all, the two brothers had been defrauding worshippers at Shiloh, the temple of the Lord, for an extended period of time.

The object of *shaphat*, of bringing judgment, results from the “iniquity” of Eli’s two sons or their *hawon* which has a note perversity about it thus making their actions all the worse. *Hawon* is found in the next verse and then in 20.1: “What have I done? What is my guilt?” As pointed out numerous times, Eli knew all about this perversity...had intimate knowledge (*yadah*, cf. vs. 7) of it...yet failed to take appropriate action.

*Qalal* means “were blaspheming” is noted last in 2.30 as “lightly esteemed,” the same accusation brought by the anonymous prophet.

*Kahah* or “restrain” gets to the very heart the matter. If Eli had taken steps in that direction and even if he had not been successful, the Lord would understand and things might have turned out different. This verb is found last in vs. 2 with a different sense, “grow dim.” Then again, *kalah* makes sense here insofar as it implies diminishment, not necessarily total elimination of the brothers’ actions. It is used with the preposition *b-* (in) and reads literally, “did not restrain in them.”

**Vs. 14: Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.”**

Here the Lord singles out “house of Eli” twice for emphasis, as though he were on an unstoppable roll. *Shavah* means “swear” from which is derived the important number seven. It occurs next in 20.42: “Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord.” The *shavah* at hand is a promise with regard to the “iniquity” or *hawon* of Eli’s house, that same *hawon* noted in the previous verse.

*Kaphar* means “expiated” but more fundamentally to cover and technically that doesn’t mean obliteration, just removing the object involved from common sight...a kind of un-revelation. “And how shall I make expiation that you may bless the heritage of the Lord” [2Sam 21.3]? When in the verse at hand the Lord mentions “sacrifice” (*zevach*, cf. 2.29), surely he had in mind the wicked behavior of Hophni and Phinehas defrauding people of their sacrificial offerings. The same applies to “offering” or *minchah*, also in vs. 29.

At last...finally...these dreadful words for young Samuel came to an end. The Lord knew he could bear them, else he wouldn’t have summoned the boy. Now it was a question of how to inform his dear mentor, the elderly Eli.

**Vs. 15: Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.**

Without a doubt, this was the longest night in young Samuel’s life, impossible to get back to sleep. By now the temple’s lamp (cf. vs. 2) had extinguished, making the night all the heavier within the empty temple of Shiloh. Samuel knew that the Lord had returned to his ark after having “stood forth” (cf. vs. 10) from it, so that was a relief. Such was Samuel’s initiation into the prophet’s way of life, and he may have had second thoughts about how to handle it throughout that long night. Significantly vs. 15 says “Samuel lay (*shakav*, cf. vs. 3) until morning” or *boqer* which more technically means daybreak, derived from a verbal root (a noun from it means an animal with a cloven hoof). The idea is that such an animal breaks up the soil with its front hooves.

One of the first duties of Samuel as *nahar* or “servant” (cf. 2.13) was to get the temple ready for receiving worshippers which he did by opening the doors. Apparently the elderly Eli was still asleep, so he decided to let him be. There would be time enough to break the bad news. In the meanwhile, Samuel looked upon Eli long and hard: sometimes with compassion and at other times with a sense of having been betrayed or at least let down. No wonder Samuel was afraid to inform Eli. If he felt that way about his elderly mentor, what about Hophni and Phinehas?

**Vs. 16: But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he said, “Here I am.”**

Fortunately for Samuel the fear he experienced as just recounted is put aside because Eli is summoning him. “Son” is a term of affection, and Eli came to consider Samuel as a truer son than Hophni and Phinehas. Samuel knew this and acknowledge it by saying to Eli as a kind of father, “Here I am,” or that now familiar *hineh* noted last in vs. 11. Although the time span between this verse and the next is short when Eli bids Samuel to inform him of what the Lord had spoken, it must have seem like an eternity to Samuel. Actually Eli had known that the Lord had bad news in store for him and was disposed as best as possible to receive it.

**Vs. 17: And Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.”**

The first two short sentences come in rapid succession, indicative of Eli's anxiety. The first sentence has the noun *davar* ('what...') followed by the verb *davar*. In other words, what "thing" did he say to you and is about to bring upon all Israel (cf. vs. 11)?

*Kachad* is the verb for "hide" which fundamentally means to deny, to cut off. "For I have not denied the words of the Holy One" [Job 6.10]. Eli is so anxious that he threatens the boy Samuel. Would that he had the same courage to threaten Hophni and Phinehas! If Eli had done that, he wouldn't be in such a predicament. The threat's essence is captured in the verb *yasaph* which here is rendered as "more also" and is noted last in vs. 8. This *yasaph* intimates a continuous, almost rolling, sense of accumulation which once started, cannot be stopped.

Again both the noun *davar* ('anything') and the verb *davar* ('told') is used, the second pair. Although just a boy, Samuel knew Eli's desperation, that he wanted to know the divine *davar* as quickly and as fully as possible since not long ago the anonymous prophet had spoken with him. Of course, Eli knew the two communications...the two *davar*...would concur.

**Vs. 18: So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."**

Here the verb *nagad* translates as "told" which means more declaring openly. The preposition *neged* derives from it meaning before, in the presence of. *Nagad* is found earlier in the text at hand, but this is the first time it is noted in order to contrast with the verb *davar* which implies a full communication, especially when it comes from the Lord. "Then the man hastened and came and told Eli" [4.14]. The object of *nagad* is "everything" or the noun *davar* in the plural. Since the divine *davar* is involved, it is virtually impossible to hide it, but this is added anyway. *Kachad* means "hid" and is used in the previous verse.

"And he said" has the most common verb related to speaking, *'amar* as noted last in 2.30.

"Let him do what seems good to him" translates literally as "let him do good in his eyes." Such is the end of Samuel's communication to Eli. While Eli is resigned to his fate...the exact details are unknown but certainly aren't good...we don't know how Samuel responded.

**Vs. 19: And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.**

A considerable gap of time exists between this verse and the last one when Samuel informed Eli as to the Lord's prophecy which fulfilled the one of the anonymous prophet earlier. We are left to ponder how both responded and how they interacted during those years along with Hophni and Phinehas who presumably kept up their abominable behavior. As Samuel grew, he became more outraged at the behavior of these two brothers yet could do nothing about it. He figured it wasn't worth asking Eli to intervene...too late for that now.

*Gadal* is the verb for "grew" and found last in 2.26 in pretty much the same context, there after Eli gave a half-hearted rebuke to his two sons. So while Samuel grew...became greater (the fundamental meaning of this verb)...Eli diminished, the two transpiring together under the same roof of the Shiloh

temple. This growth of Samuel is reminiscent first of John the Baptist and then Jesus when both were young: “And the child grew and became strong in spirit” [Lk 1.8]. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” [Lk 2.52].

“The Lord was with him” suggests that in addition to *gadal*, Samuel continued to receive the divine *davar* in one form or another. These may not have been as dramatic as the three summons at the Shiloh temple, but still they were real. This emphasis upon speaking is intimated by the fact that the Lord never allowed his “word” or *davar* to fall to the ground or to become worthless. Although we have no account of what these words might have been, certainly they were prophetic. The image of the anonymous prophet must have played an important role for Samuel and on whom he modeled himself to some degree.

**Vs. 20: And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord.**

Because the Shiloh temple was the center of worship and many cultural events for the nation of Israel, it was natural that from north to south Samuel’s reputation had been known. The verb *yadah* is used as in vs. 13 which means intimate knowledge. Those who came to Shiloh got to know Samuel personally; not just during major feasts but on other occasions. Surely most complained bitterly about Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. By now Samuel had a more mature outlook on these two scoundrels and was able to comfort the people. Yet the time span over which the two defrauded so many was long. All this must have made Samuel’s parents beam with joy, at how their son had developed and would develop.

*Aman* is the verb for “established” noted last in 2.35 which means to be faithful. Surely that sense of the word was impressed upon the people insofar as Samuel was a “prophet” or *nave’*, this being the first mention of the term in First Samuel. The “man of God” in 2.27 isn’t designated as such explicitly. Actually this is the only time Samuel is designated as such. Note the preposition *l-* (to) prefaced to *YHWH*, literally, “to the Lord” which concurs with the last verse, “the Lord was with him.”

**Vs. 21: And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.**

Part of the enthusiasm shown toward Samuel comes from the fact that everyone knew that “the word of the Lord was rare in those days” [vs. 1]. Now that the divine *davar* was manifesting itself, especially at Shiloh, home of the ark of the Lord, no small wonder that people flocked there from Dan to Beersheba.

The verb *yasaph* translates as “again” with the same sense pretty much as in vs. 17, intimating fairly continuous appearing of the Lord, the verb being the common one for to see, *ra’ah* (cf. 1.22). Note the connection between that which is spoken (*davar* as associated with Samuel) and that which is seen, this *davar* as *ra’ah*. Reference to the last appearance is when the Lord communicated himself to Samuel about Eli. The message, however, did not bode well for Israel, let alone for Eli. Still, the people’s curiosity was so intense that it seemed they were more desperate for divine communication...any

communication...whether or not it was beneficial for them or not. Obviously the extended misbehavior of Hophni and Phinehas contributed to this.

*Galah* as “revealed” is found last in vs. 7 in a personal sense, of the Lord to Samuel.

The second part of vs. 21 again shows the intimate connection between *ra’ah* and *davar*, of seeing and speaking. The preposition *b-* (in) is prefaced both to Shiloh and *davar* which reads literally “in Shiloh in the word (of the Lord).” As for the nature of this revelation, nothing is said except that it occurred. However, it sets the stage for the disaster that will befall Israel in the next chapter, fulfilling all the Lord had said as well as that anonymous “man of God.” Although Hannah and Elkanah were proud of their son, by now they have entertained opposite thoughts, that what Samuel foretold was about to come true.