

## **Hannah: She went to God**

### **1 Samuel Chapter 1**

In this story, we are going to experience a very interesting situation from the cultural point of view that is still present today in the Jewish and Middle Eastern culture. We will find that after two or three thousand years, Middle Eastern culture has not changed much. In this account, Hannah did not have children. Hannah needed to have children and she prayed for a son. Let's go together for a journey to look at the account of Hannah's situation. In this chapter we will go through several scenarios.

- Polygamy: Hannah is one of two wives. The other wife is. Did God allow polygamy in the Old Testament? Did God bless polygamy in the Old Testament? How did God address this issue?
- What was the urgency for Hannah to ask for a son? Why did she ask for a son and not a child?
- Communities respond to Hannah's barrenness.
- What did Hannah gain?
- God's plan. What was the outcome?
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### **Polygamy**

I hear these questions very often and not just from Christians but from other religious people with different beliefs. Why did God allow polygamy in the Old Testament? Why did he change his mind in the New Testament? How did God deal with polygamist believers in the Old Testament? I have been asked, "it seems that God blessed polygamists. There are examples Moses, Abraham, David, Solomon to name a few." To address the first question, why did God allow polygamy in the Old Testament? The answer lies in Genesis in chapter two,

God created them husband and wife. In fact, in the ancient language, God created them a husband and a wife. I will even take it farther, God created them a man (masculine) and a woman (feminine). (Type the text in Arabic and Aramaic). I hope that this helps to correct the question. In my travels to different countries, a friend approached me about a certain issue and he said, "Victor, you are not from this country and in our culture we all do it this way." My answer was "the fact that everyone does it this way does not make it right." I learned in my early life not to generalize by using "all", "everyone", and "always". This kind of language interestingly is even used in the Bible (Find Text: John the Baptist, all Judea and Jerusalem were baptized.) A human beings we tend to use this concept to emphasize what we are really trying to say, the majority. So "all" are guilty of using this concept. Isn't it funny that we use this phrase we are all guilty. Even I am using the words. I am simply trying to make the point that we mean the majority. Why did God allow polygamy? No, he did not allow it. Humans did. (Genesis 1 ). God did not change his mind at in the New Testament but people at the time of the Old Testament were influenced by their surrounding cultures. Man at that time was not ready to understand God's mind and the heavenly ways. (Find Text: Hebrews 1, 1) God let the people go in their own ways, 2) God forgave them of their old ways, 3) Jesus looked at the disciples and told them if I teach you the earthly matters and you do not understand how much more the heavenly matter, 4) Paul told the Corinthians because you are still babies and drink milk and are not ready to the real food.) I believe the reason that Paul in Corinthians 14 (Find Text) did not describe what he saw in the third heaven because he felt that the people at this time were not ready to comprehend. They were still drinking milk and did not want to throw pearls to the swine. He kept what he saw in the third heaven sealed from the others to keep the glory of God from being tainted by man. If we look at

the men who were called by God, Moses, Abraham, David, Solomon and others, they paid the price. God wanted to fulfill his purposes for mankind and because of humanities ignorance of his word man will not stop God's plan. He continues to use man despite of his shortcomings. Man's misunderstanding the heart of God and his great purposes for us and in his perfect love, he will continue to manifest himself and fulfill his purposes. We see in the New Testament when Jesus preached (Matt.5) about the relationship between men and women the multitude, starting with the religious leaders did not accept his teaching. In fact some of his disciples "not apostles" this teaching is heavy who can bear it? (Find Text). We still today with our technology and all the wonderful archeological work that has been done, all the findings, excavation that has been done to understand more of the language and we have come a long way but we don't have a full understanding. (Find Test from Paul saying we know in part). We lived in a time of ignorance and God waited patiently. The question is raised why did God bless such people? As we study the lives of many of God's people, he was ready to deal with people who were willing and obedient and to act. While Saul acted in disobedience, God saw that David was going to be a man after his own heart. David was a man of worship. With his instrument and words of praise he understood the heart of God and he knew how to move the heavens. He actually entered into worship and sang with the heavenly hosts. God does not count how many mistakes you make. He is not at all concerned but he is looking for heart willing to do whatever it takes to please him. It is not my works lest I boast (Find text) it is my total willingness to move with God's plans and understanding the heart of God as we saw with the prodigal son.

Back to our story of Hannah. As a result of her husbands polygamy, Hannah suffered and her husband as well. He was aching inside to see his wife Hannah longing for children. In

fact, we can tell from the passage that he loved her dearly but he did not understand the heart of a woman who was created by God with the purpose of being fruitful and multiplying. Multiplying was for Eve and making dominion was for Adam. God had an assignment and role for each of them. Hannah's husband did not understand her assignment and that is to bear children and to multiply. (1 Samuel). Can you hear Hannah laughing as she answered him and said no you're not better than ten children. As a husband you have a responsibility to fulfill my needs as a wife but as a mother you cannot even understand my needs. Is it not interesting that we hear this kind of language from men who think that by providing financially for their wives that their wives should be grateful and that this the ultimate expression of their love. It is very true of the Byzantine culture that the husband will tell his wife, "What do you mean by do you love me?" I provide shelter and food and meet all your needs. Are you familiar with Fiddler on the Roof? I advise you to watch it. It is very accurate picture of the Byzantine culture and it is the closest that we can get. Hannah's husband did not understand her needs. Give me a son and I will give him back. Why a son? In the Byzantine culture a son, especially the oldest son is considered to be the retirement plan, welfare for the parent. Girls will eventually get married and join the husband's home and live with the in-laws. The younger boys as well will get married and move on. However, the oldest son carries the responsibility managing, maintaining, and all aspects of support for their younger brothers and sisters. That is why the oldest son inherits double the amount of the father's estate. Hannah needed a son. She would soon grow old and the children of her husbands' other wife will not support her. Secondly, the father will be called by his first name in the community until his wife bears a son and afterwards he will be called the father of that son. He will carry his oldest son's name. In this case he will be

the father of Samuel instead of Elkanah. Thirdly, an unmarried man cannot be a member of the communities' council because he does not have the full experience of life in order to give advice.

Hannah made a very interesting request in her prayers that almost cost Hannah, her marriage. In the Byzantine culture, a woman who does not bear children, especially sons will be divorced. The husband will not be blamed. The blame would be put on the wife and in fact his family and community will encourage him to divorce the barren woman or she can carry girls but not boys and marry a younger woman who can bless him with more children, especially boys and can serve him. If we read carefully, Hannah's prayers (give me a male child and I will give him back to you". This is where the husband's family and his friends and the community will surely force him to get rid of this woman. We can hear them saying to Hannah, "you must keep the first child if you want to send anyone to the temple to serve God it can be any of the other children after but not the first child." We often use a humorous illustration but a true one about the parent who sent their first son to the university to a good education and the second to a college but it came to the third or that last, he was not that important so they sent him to the monastery to become a priest. We do not know if Hannah's husband approved of sending Samuel to the temple but he was under pressure from family members and the community to not honor his wives' request. We need to keep in mind that God honored Hannah's vow and later bore more children.

Imagine with me what Hannah went through first when she was not able to bear any children and secondly when she decided to send Samuel at the temple. How did she feel when she could only see her son once a year. How many times to you think she told her husband, "I'm sorry, forgive me. It is hard to

understand what I am doing right now with Samuel but later on you will see the full vision.”

The state of Israel at that time.

When Hannah was faced with the fact that she is barren, she decided to go to God. Her husband did not understand the need for a woman to bear children. (Am I not better for you than ten children?) Today Hannah would have asked her husband, “are you for real? Go get a life!” But she decided to go to God. She did not argue with him and now Hannah is in the Temple praying softly and the high priest did not see it in the spirit and rebuked her and offended her. “Woman you are drunk!” I think Hannah looked at him and asked, are you for real? I’m not talking to you, I’m talking to God!” Here we can see in the house of God the shepherd was not able to pasture his sheep. Eli was not able to shepherd the Israelites because his own home was not in order. His two sons were committing adultery, fornication, stealing, and cruelty towards the worshipers. We can imagine what kind of state the land of Israel was in at this time. Hannah who was a godly woman was misunderstood at home, in the community and at church. How wonderful to learn from Hannah that when we are faced with a difficult situation and instead of arguing let us say, I will go to God. Hannah sets the example of true faith in the Lord to meet her needs. She went where God would hear her. My friends, whatever situation you are in, whatever hardship, rejection, warfare, people do not understand and do not feel with you, tell them, “I’m going to God.”

### **What did she gain?**

In Judges we read that the people of Israel went stray from God.  
Judges 21:25

In those days [there was] no king in Israel; everyone did [what was] right in his own eyes.

Now we see that Samuel became a prophet and that God trusted him and all the people of Israel knew that God had appointed him.

Judges 3:19-21

So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel [had been] established as a prophet of the LORD. Then the LORD appeared again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

To all the people in the Byzantine culture, Hannah is now the first lady. Secondly, she is the mother of the prophet and now if you need a favor from the prophet, you go to mama. If you need anything from the leader of the country, you go to mama. Thirdly, if you want to meet with the leader of the country, his mother will arrange it for you. (Find Text: Solomom). Fourthly, all the children of Israel called her mama. Finally, God gave her many children after Samuel. After thirty years, her dreams and vision were fulfilled and that was to see the land of Israel changed.

### **The Vision**

Her husband, community, or church did not see the vision that Hannah had. Her vision was for the whole country. Hannah saw that the people of Israel living in sin because the church and state were corrupt and the leaders took from the people to meet their own carnal desires. The answer was not to elect another president. Today we are crying for a change and we just elect another man because we want a change and we are disappointed when we discover that the man we just elected is worse than the previous one. As long as we put our hopes in humans to fix our political, economic, and moral problems surely we will be disappointed. The only answer to our societal

needs is to do exactly as Hannah did, “*Go to God.*” Another problem that we face in today’s society, we are looking for a fast solution. What Hannah did, she took her son to the Temple to be trained and grow as a godly man and she was determined to produce a godly leader who would turn the hearts of Israel *back to God.* It was not a fast fix, it took thirty years for Samuel to be trained and he became a prophet and the leader of the country. The first thing that he did was to call the people of Israel to join him to offer a sacrifice of repentance. We can hear Hannah’s voice to her son as a child, “*My son, always go to God.*” That is exactly what Samuel did but not alone. He led the leaders and the whole nation *back to God.*

Waiting patiently is very hard on us, especially in today’s society of technology, fast food, and fast paced life. We want everything now. We are looking for a fast fix. A fast answer for our societal problems. For sure many of us go to God but when God delays in his answer, we are ready to go to plan “B” that is our technology, our knowledge, force and we think that we know it all. My advice to you my friends, is go to God and wait there without plan “B”. In fact, make sure you do not have a plan “B”. (For if you wait for it, it will not tarry and surely come. Habakuk: Find Text). Some people ask me, some who have been waiting all their lives, “how long is the last hour?” “A person just told me that last hour is way past me. I’ve waited so long.” The prophet Habakuk said, “that the summer is gone and we are not saved yet.” I encourage myself with the words of Habakuk, “there are not olives in the tree, no sheep in the field, and are no grapes on the vine and yet I will trust in the Lord.”

### **Byzantine and Time.**

Often, you hear the statement from the Byzantine time, “you have all the time in the world.” Things do not move fast and no one is in a rush to do anything even if it is a money making business. You always hear the term “tomorrow” or

“bukrah inshallah” and “maalish”, In Arabic means, tomorrow , God willing, and that id ok, or never mind, or not to worry. When tomorrow comes, and nothing had happened, God will be the one to blame, and not to worry, there is a reason that God did not accomplish it.

If you send your car to a mechanic for repair, he will tell you come tomorrow. We know for sure it will not be fixed by tomorrow, the mechanic’s answer is that God did not allow it, and to worry about it.

Worse yet, if a person get hit by a car because of carelessness, it will be interpreted that God allowed it. It was meant to be. God knew he will die this way, why worry about the way you cross the road.

We hear the stamen in this culture, It is the will of Allah, it was written for him or her to die this way, or to have such disaster. It is interesting that in some culture, the driver of car that hit or killed such person, will be charged or even compensate to the family of the deceased or the victim.

It is very interesting because tomorrow never comes for the Byzantine even today. If you are told “come tomorrow” it does not mean literally tomorrow. Non-Byzantine people after living there for a long time find themselves accepting and even liking that kind of time. It is good for your soul, mind, and body to take it easy and relax. Rest assured that the job will be done but it will happen in their own time. They interpret it as God’s time. We need to learn this mind set to let go and let God. I agree with you that many times it leads to fatalism. When some will not take any responsibility for anything with the excuse, “if God wants, he will do it.” We need to balance to continue my daily business and give myself time to rest and wait for God’s perfect timing. I know it is hard to balance but it comes with practice and through experience.

Hannah had a vision to totally change her country by bringing the right man into the 'White House'. In the Western mind set, we like to fix the man in the 'White House' in the Byzantine mind set, we will raise and train a new man no matter how long it takes. "We will make one from scratch!" Hannah knew that this would take thirty years for the next leader of the country. And when I say the next leader, it is literally the next leader. Have you noticed that leaders in the Byzantine time will reign for a generation.

Hannah might not have spent much time with Samuel but she trained him well so that he knew the word of God. She taught him how to go to God because she went to God first. I am sure that she has offered daily prayers for Samuel to be the right man for the next generation. How often do we hear ourselves say, "we need a change." We are ready to enter into a new marriage, a new move, a different house, a different car and a different leader. Seldom do we know what kind of change we are seeking. Hannah knew that if they had a godly leader, they would have a godly country. So my friends go to God to help you learn how to wait for him to fix what needs fixing in your life.

### **Do you have a vision?**

Proverbs 29:18

Where [there is] no revelation, the people cast off restraint.

God wants you to dream big. You might not see all your visions fulfilled in your lifetime but it is important to have visions and continue in your daily business and I can assure you from my own experience that God will fulfill many of your visions. Many times when I teach in seminars I address the audience by this statement, "if you don't have a vision, he will give you one." As I travel I see the needs and opportunities and that is why I make

the statement. I see open doors and opportunities in the mission field.

### **Does God change his mind?**

I would like to shock you by saying that yes he does. I can assure you that the Bible supports that idea. What do we understand by this question and what do we understand by change? What do you mean by change? Let me take it further. Are we talking about God's plan for the human race as far as atonement, redemption, the cross, or God's plan for you and me. The destiny that he has for you. Obviously, I am not talking about God's plan for salvation because in the fullness of time Christ came born of a woman.) The area that I am addressing now is that God in his mind and foreknowledge, he has destinies for all of us. He wants the best for you. (Jeremiah: thoughts of goodness for you). I say this because so often, I hear Christians saying, "I guess God doesn't want to give me this", "I'm not good enough for this", "There is nothing I can do about this". My dear friends, let us go to the word of God because I am sure that many people had these thoughts and God changed their mind. We need to understand, God looks at our hearts and our intentions. He knows that we mean well and that we try to do our best. (Find text: Paul said my spirit is willing but my flesh is weak.) He knows you are human. I believe as Anne Frank wrote in her journal that people in general are good at heart. This is powerful because she knew that the Nazi's were coming to kill her.

### **the daughters of Zelophehad**

Book of Numbers 27:1-7

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "The daughters of Zelophehad speak [what is] right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.

This topic will be discussed in detail in another chapter. The daughters of Zelophehad went to God. They were not going to inherit their father's property because they were daughters and not sons.

## **Nineveh.**

### **Jonah 3:10**

Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

Jonah came with a negative to the people of Nineveh, which is in present day Iraq. How sad to know from the scripture that Jonah wanted God to destroy Nineveh. He was not happy with God's plan of restoration. Be assured my friends, that God's plan for you, your family, your country, and the whole world is restoration. He loves to restore because he is the God of restoration. So when you go to God, keep in mind that he will restore. I am speaking from my own experience. Everything that I lost in my life, house, job, finances, friends, family members, and whatever else that can be listed. Always, always God definitely restored to me and even more than what I had previously lost. When Jonah went to the king of Nineveh with the news of God's ultimate decision that his wrath was coming down on the whole country, we find that the king of Nineveh chose to go to God and he led the whole country to God.

Many times Jesus asked before healing someone: what do you want me to do for you? He told his disciples that whatever you ask in my name I will do for you. You have asked nothing. My dear friends I would like to tell you that God is not against you. He has great destinies for you. Go after your destiny. "Go to God."

Thirty years: Jesus and John the Baptist started their ministry at thirty years old.

Her retirement plan. Hannah's long term vision: Hannah saw that the Israeli nation had fallen away from God and she had a vision that a son thirty years later would bring the hearts of the people back to God. The usual prayers.

### **Can I change the world around me?**

If you want change in the country, you start with the White House and in order to do that you need to start in your own home and raise your children in a godly way. But not every mother wants her child to be the president of the country. Your child one day can be a leader in the government to make a change. As you train your child to be godly, invest in their mind and heart that one day they will be a person influence to bring about the change that you want and pray to see.

A son in the family especially the oldest son is the heartbeat of the survival of the family. A son is essential for the family especially the mother this includes Christians and Muslims. Daughters and sons will eventually get married and move out of the house. Daughters in particular will serve their husbands and in-laws. They will continue contact with mom but they are committed to serve their new household. Younger sons might continue to stop by their parent's home and sometimes they are invited to a nice meal. Why not enjoy what other members of the family have prepared? But the majority of the responsibility of the family is on the shoulders of the oldest son. The oldest son finds himself bearing the burden. So often we find in the Old Testament that the law of land and the Sharia law of Islam gives the oldest son the largest part of the inheritance. Our first reaction that this is not fair for the oldest

son to inherit so much but once we understand the reasons for the oldest son to inherit two to three times the inheritance of his siblings. Our reaction will change however, once we understand the huge responsibility that is placed on the oldest son. We are going to say that it is not fair for the oldest son to carry such responsibilities.

### **Eloping,**

Judges 21: 19

"However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath, saying, 'Cursed [be] the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.' "

Then they said, "In fact, [there is] a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which [is] north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah."

herefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, "Go, lie in wait in the vineyards,

"and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh; then go to the land of Benjamin.

"Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, 'Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for [it is] not [as though] you have given the [women] to them at this time, making yourselves guilty of your oath.' "

And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their number from those who danced, whom they

caught. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them.

So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance.

We see this practice today, in some Middle Eastern culture.

When a girl is spoken for to get married, all her uncles, and cousins have to agree on marrying such man, if any one of the member of the family doesn't approve the marriage, the girl can't marry that man.

So eloping became a way out to help the parent of the girl to face the community by saying that they eloped. And later a wedding party will be provided for the newlywed. It is called "to keep face", it is a way out to keep face of the bird's family.

This is exactly what we saw in the above scripture of the story for the tribe of Benjamin.

### **Results of polygamy:**

We can see that Abraham is the biggest example

Ibrahim, marrying Hagar.

Two nations are fighting each other for generation. Isaac and Ishmael.

All the life of David was full of wars, His own son stood against him. 2 Samuel 15:1

After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

Solomon, 1 Kings 11:4-13

For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as [was] the heart of his father David.

Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.

In fact, if we follow all the Biblical stories of the polygamists, we can see that their lives and their family members paid a price for such practice.