

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 1, 1 Samuel 1

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This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 1, 1 Samuel 1.1-2.11, Barren no more.

In this lesson, we're going to be studying 1 Samuel chapter 1 as well as the first 11 verses of chapter 2. This is of course the story of Hannah, her rather famous song appears in chapter 2, and I've entitled this section Barren No More.

The big idea for this section is the Lord, who is the incomparable king, Hannah is going to affirm that he is just that in her song, so the Lord, Yahweh, the incomparable king, vindicates his loyal followers. He vindicates Hannah, who is suffering terrible oppression from Penina, his rival wife because she can't have a child, and so she prays to the Lord, and the Lord vindicates her by giving her a son. The story isn't just about Hannah, the individual, Hannah's experience as she makes clear in her song is representative of all of those who are oppressed, and in fact, she represents Israel, and she looks forward to a day when the Lord will vindicate his people as well through a king, who is not yet on the scene, but Hannah anticipates that.

So that's kind of an overview of what we're going to see in this passage. I would say that the key themes are the Lord begins a process of providing competent leadership for Israel in this section through the birth of Samuel, and the Lord is indeed the incomparable king who protects and vindicates his loyal followers. We need to put 1 Samuel in perspective chronologically and historically.

Of course, before Samuel, we have Judges in the Hebrew Bible in the former prophets, Ruth is in the writings, it's not even there, but we'll talk about how Ruth fits in in the structure. But Judges ends with a problem. Everyone was doing what was right in his or her own eyes because there was no king, and so Israel needed a king, but not just any king.

In fact, we'll talk about this issue of kingship in Israel when we get to 1 Samuel 8, we'll talk about that in more detail. But it's apparent that Israel needs some leadership, and I think it's talking about the kind of king that is described in Deuteronomy 17. Just to preview what we're going to say, Israel will want a king like all the nations, but if you read Deuteronomy 17 carefully, the Lord is willing to give them a king, but not one like all the nations.

One who will lead them and guide them in their understanding of the Torah, and that's the kind of king they need. They don't have that kind of leadership. In Judges,

we find depicted very failed leadership, and so Samuel begins with Israel needs leadership.

There are serious problems when we do not have a competent leader, and in 1 Samuel, Israel is going to get that kind of leadership, first through the prophet priest Samuel, and then eventually through David. Saul was kind of a false start. More on that when we get to that section.

So, Samuel is going to solve that problem to some degree, at least temporarily. Now in the English Bible, following the Greek Bible, the book of Ruth is tucked in between Judges and Samuel, and quite appropriately, because the book of Ruth is really about David's ancestors. It ends with a genealogy, and David is mentioned, and so the book of Ruth anticipates David, and in 1 Samuel, we see the arrival of David on the scene.

In 1 Samuel 16, he becomes eventually the king that Israel needs. Of course, eventually, he's a failure as well, but more on that as we progress through the study. So, we can see that 1 Samuel really is a fitting sequel to Judges and Ruth.

It's going to continue the story and really solve the problem that Judges raised and bring into the story an individual who is anticipated in the book of Ruth. So let's begin, let's dive in, and we will read the text. I'm going to be reading from NIV, the 1984 version.

And so, 1 Samuel chapter 1, verse 1, there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah, son of Yerucham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives. One was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

Now you might think, that's just kind of a straightforward background section, but actually, the way this story is introduced is interesting. There was a certain man from, in this case, Ramathaim, whose name was Elkanah.

I remember when I was studying this for the first time, I thought, this was probably a standard introduction, a typical way of introducing stories in the Old Testament. But what I discovered in this particular style of introduction, there was a certain man from fill-in-the-blank, whose name was fill-in-the-blank. It only appears in four passages, and they're together.

Judges chapter 13, Samson is introduced this way, his lineage. And then in Judges 17, Micah, not as well-known as Samson, but Micah. And then also 1 Samuel chapter 9, and so I began to think, well, is there some kind of correlation between these passages? It looks like these larger literary units go together.

And it really didn't take a lot of thinking to realize, yes, there are some correlations between these sections. If you think about it, what we have here is a godly woman who is named Hannah, who is the mother of a godly leader, Samuel. Well, if you go back to Judges 13, Samson is a leader that the Lord brings on the scene.

Through a miraculous birth, as it were, a barren woman is allowed to have a child, and Samson is a failed leader. His mother's name is not even given. There's no indication in the story that she even told Samson what his role in life was going to be, namely, to begin the deliverance of Israel.

Samson, of course, is a failed leader. I know Hebrews 11 holds him up as an example of faith, and there was faith present in his life, but the book of Judges is about leadership, not just what God can accomplish when faith is present, which is the point of Hebrews 11. And so, what we see is a failed leader.

But nevertheless, God does great things through him, but he's a failed leader. He begins the deliverance of Israel, but he doesn't complete it. Samuel will complete it.

He will win a great victory over the Philistines in 1 Samuel chapter 7, and he will also anoint David, who will do a number on the Philistines. And so, it's almost as if Samson is a foil for Samuel and then David and his unnamed mother is a foil for Hannah. First, I mean, in Judges chapter 17, we have this fellow Micah, and he is not a godly man.

In fact, he concocts his own religion. He hires a Levite. Eventually, all of his religious paraphernalia gets stolen by the Danites as they are migrating northward, and they set up a renegade religion up in the north that is in violation of God's standards and runs counter to what he wants to do.

And so, in some ways, Micah's mother, who's a very important part of that story as well, she's a foil for Hannah, and Micah is a foil for Samuel. So, we have these failed leaders, these failed individuals with these unnamed mothers who are kind of setting the stage for Hannah and Samuel. There's also some correlation with 1 Samuel chapter 9 and Saul, but I will wait to talk about that when we get to that chapter.

So just from this introduction, the pattern that is used, it seems as if the author wants you to correlate this story with what has gone before in the book of Judges, and I think the significance of that correlation is what I just stated.

Well, let's continue on. We have a problem here. Peninnah has children, and Hannah has none. That has the potential for conflict. We know this from the patriarchal stories where there was a woman who could have a child, like Hagar or Leah, and then a rival wife who could not, Sarah or Rachel, and this breeds conflict.

The Old Testament I don't think ever really comes out and condemns polygamy. I think it's implicit in your reading of the story in Genesis 2, the story of the first marriage, but it never really comes out and condemns it. God makes provision for it in his law, but it's interesting that when we see it in action, it doesn't seem to work out well because it runs contrary to God's pattern.

That's going to be the case in this story as well. So, reading along, year after year this man, Elkanah, went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh. Shiloh is where the central sanctuary was located at this time, and that's where the Tabernacle and the ark and the author just throw this in, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord.

More on them later. He doesn't develop that at all. He's just kind of locating the time period, it would seem, but they're going to play a role in the story as we get into chapter 2. Some more on them.

Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters, but to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her and the Lord had closed her womb. We are not told why the Lord closed her womb. In ancient Israel, they don't deal with secondary causes a lot.

Our inclination would be in our culture if there was a woman who couldn't have a child, we would not say the Lord has closed her womb. We don't think about it that way. We think in terms of medical reasons, but in ancient Israel, they understood that the Lord was ultimately sovereign over everything and they weren't as concerned about secondary causes as we are.

So, the Lord had closed her womb. We're not told why, but the Lord doesn't leave her in that condition. And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.

I think it's pretty clear that Hannah is Elkanah's favorite, but nevertheless, he wants to have children so he has turned to Peninnah and I'm sure that Peninnah sensed the tension, as did Hannah. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

So, the conflict is so severe, and this is so painful for Hannah, that she cries and she refuses to eat. She's thoroughly depressed. We're going to get more insight into how she felt about all of this in her Thanksgiving song in chapter 2. Elkanah, her husband, would say to her, Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons? One of the things we're going to discover as we read through here is the men in Hannah's life don't get it.

They do not appreciate the pain that she, as a barren woman, is feeling and the pain of oppression. They just don't get it. And so, Elkanah simply says to her, I don't understand why you're so upset.

Don't I mean more to you than ten sons? Am I not able to fulfill your desire for a meaningful relationship? And if I'd been Hannah, I think I would have come back and said, well, why did you take Penina? Don't I mean more to you than sons? But he doesn't seem to get it. And we're going to see the same thing with Eli. He really doesn't get it when he sees Hannah's suffering.

So that's one of the things that you see in this story, and it's not surprising because in Judges, women play a very important role in the story. In the first part of Judges, it's almost as if they have to be substitute warriors. Deborah and Yael and the unnamed woman who throws the millstone down on Abimelech's head.

But there's a turning point in the middle of Judges when Jephthah offers up his daughter as a burnt offering to the Lord. Things kind of change, and if you'll recall in the epilogue to Judges, women suffer. Women are kidnapped.

One woman is gang raped and murdered, the Levite's concubine. And so, this oppression of women by Israelite men is something that we see in Judges, and so it's not surprising that Samuel begins with an oppressed woman. And the irony of it is she's oppressed by another woman.

It's come to that. So, this is a theme that's been running through the former prophets. If we exclude Ruth for a second and just think in terms of 1 Samuel continuing the story, if we think of Ruth as an interlude maybe, and we see 1 Samuel as continuing the story of Judges, it's not surprising to see this theme.

Once they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's Temple.

When we first meet Eli, he's sitting. He's old, we're going to discover. He's almost blind.

He is going to be kind of a passive character in this account, who never really seems to understand what's going on around him. And when he does, it's too late. So, his posture, sitting in this chair by the doorpost of the Lord's Temple, casts him in the role of a passive character.

In bitterness of soul, Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, in this culture, they would do this. When they were suffering, they would sometimes go before the Lord and make him a promise.

Lord, if you do this for me, I will in turn give you something. So, O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery. And notice the terms as we're reading through these verses that she uses for herself.

Different terms for misery, anguish and oppression. If you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me. And in the Bible, in prayers like this, when they say remember, it's not as if the Lord has forgotten, but they feel as if he has.

And so, when they say remember, they really mean remember and do something. Recognize and do something about it. But it's an idiom that they use.

And do not forget your servant. I feel forgotten, Lord, but give her a son. Then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.

It doesn't come right out and call Samuel a Nazirite, but this is something that Nazirites did, so it may very well be that he was indeed a Nazirite. But hopefully you can see Samuel does parallel Samson, as we pointed out. He's a long-haired servant of the Lord.

Samson was a failure in that regard, ultimately, but Samuel will be a success. But no razor will ever be used on his head. So, Hannah doesn't necessarily want a boy who's going to be running around the house initially.

Her main concern is, I just want to be delivered from this oppression. Because I'm sure in this culture, people were thinking, who sinned? She must have done something terrible, or someone, maybe her parents, did something terrible. She can't be blessed by the Lord in the way that most people are.

People thought this way. You see it in Jesus' time when they decided, who sinned with the blind man. Who sinned him or his parents? And they did believe that children in the womb could sin that early. And so, people probably were looking at Hannah and thinking, what did she do wrong? And she's oppressed.

She just wants to be able to say, I have had a son. And sons were preferred in this culture. I have had a son.

I am not barren anymore. The Lord has indeed blessed me. And she is saying, I'll give him back to you.

And he will serve you in the sanctuary all the days of his life. And he will be dedicated to you. And his unshaven hair will be a sign of that.

As she kept on praying to the Lord, in verse 12, Eli observed her mouth. So, Eli can see her praying quietly. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard.

Eli thought she was drunk. Isn't that interesting? He sees this woman mouthing words, and he thinks she must be drunk. So once again, the men in Hannah's life just don't seem to get it.

He makes this value judgment that's completely wrong. And he said to her, how long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine. So righteously, self-righteously condemns her.

These words will become even more significant on a second reading. You know, when you're reading biblical narrative, there's that first reading. It's like watching a movie for the first time.

And there's a lot of emotion as the story unfolds, especially if it's one that you're not as familiar with. We're so familiar with some of these stories that we're well beyond first reading. But think about the original audience.

As they're reading this, they're just kind of taking all of this in. But a second reading sometimes is very, very interesting. You see things earlier in the story that you may have missed the first time through.

I remember when I watched the movie *The Sixth Sense*. It was, first time through, it was like, wow, the kid's crazy. The kid's crazy.

But then you realize as the story progresses, no, the kid's right. The guy's dead. And so, the second time through the movie, you're not emoting and you're not as confused and trying to figure things out.

The second time through the movie, you see things in the first part of the story that you missed the first time through, like when he's talking to his wife in the restaurant. And it kind of looks like she's aware of him, but not really if you look at it carefully. So, the second time through, these words are going to make a lot more sense because we will now know about Hophni and Phineas and what they're like.

His own sons are violating the sanctuary. They're stealing the Lord's food from him, basically. Just violating the protocol for proper sacrifices, and we'll look at that in our next lesson.

And they're actually having illicit sexual relations with women who work at the sanctuary. All this is going on around Eli, but yet he is condemning this woman as a

drunkard without even having all of the facts. So, the guy is presented as kind of clueless.

He really doesn't understand what's going on around him, but Hannah quickly corrects him. Not so, my lord, Hannah replied. I am a woman who is deeply troubled.

She used the word misery earlier. Now, she is a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer.

I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman. I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.

Two more words that she uses, and it's very significant, that phrase, wicked woman, because in the Hebrew, she doesn't use a normal word for wicked or evil. She basically uses a word belial, or belial is the way you see it sometimes. Later, it becomes a title for the devil by the time you get to the New Testament, Beliar or Belial.

But belial, in the Old Testament, simply means worthless, kind of worthless. So, don't take me for a worthless wicked woman. Apparently, she felt as if Eli was thinking of her in that way by accusing her of being a drunkard.

But it's very interesting, that same word is going to be used in chapter two for Eli's sons. The narrator is going to describe them with that word. They are worthless, wicked sons.

So, see the irony of it? Eli is treating her as if she were this kind of person. She's not, when in reality, his own sons are that kind of person. But more on that when we get to chapter two.

Eli answered, go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him. So, whatever you ask the Lord, may he give you the desire of your heart. She said, may your servant find favor in your eyes.

Then she went away and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. It's interesting, that she pours her spirit out before the Lord, and then she receives a blessing of sorts from Eli, finally, when he finally gets what's going on, and praying to the Lord, and sort of receiving a word from the Lord, changes her countenance and changes her attitude. Her face is no longer downcast, and she goes and she eats.

And I find this is a theme. I don't think this is the primary point of this story, but these Old Testament stories are so illustrative of biblical principles. I mean, the main theme of this passage is God vindicates his loyal followers, but there are many sub-themes.

And you see this principle in the Old Testament. The psalmist pour out their hearts before God. Some people are hesitant to pray to the Lord in that way, like Hannah was doing here.

We don't really get the words of her prayer, but we can, I think, clearly see this was a lament that she was praying before the Lord, and people shy away from that. I can't pray to the Lord like that. That's inappropriate.

Protesting and asking him to wake up as if he's asleep. People shy away from talking to God that way, but there's something very freeing about doing that, I've discovered in my own experience. And so, I think that's what Peter means when he talks about casting all of your cares upon him.

We're supposed to be thankful, but the first step sometimes is to cast our cares upon him, because when we do that, we have kind of committed our issue to the Lord, and we know what kind of God we have, and there's something freeing about that. And that's the case with Hannah. She has poured her heart out before the Lord.

She has received a response from the Lord for us that would come through his word, as we read his word, the assurances that he has given to us that he's always with us, and we can trust him with the present and our future, and that changes her demeanor. Early the next morning, they arose and worshiped before the Lord, and then went back home, went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah, his wife, and the Lord remembered her.

She asked for that, Lord remember me, and now the Lord remembers her, which means that he is going to respond to her prayer. He's going to give her that son, just as Eli had prayed. So, in the course of time, Hannah conceived.

Conception occurs relatively quickly, I think within four to seventy-two hours, but in ancient Israel, they probably didn't understand all of that, and so they wouldn't know that Hannah was pregnant until she showed. So, in the course of time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son, and she named him Samuel, saying, because I asked the Lord for him. Now the name Samuel, Shemuel, doesn't mean ask or anything like that, but sometimes what they would do, they would choose a name that sounded like a particular word, and in this case, she had asked for the Lord, for the child, sha'al, she had asked for him, and so some of the letters in that word are the same as in Samuel's name, Shemuel, and so when she said Samuel's name, she was reminded, I asked for him, and the Lord heard me.

And so, she gives him an appropriate name in this case, one that for her will be a reminder of the circumstances surrounding Samuel's birth. So, when the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to

fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband after the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always.

So, she had promised the Lord that she would do this, but we're not quite ready for that to happen. She wants to wean him and have him ready to go when he gets there. And once again, Elkanah's response seems inappropriate to me.

Do what seems best to you, Elkanah, her husband told her. Stay here until you have weaned him. Only may the Lord make good his word.

It seems as if he's a little hesitant about this. He's not quite sure what she is doing is appropriate. We're not really sure what he's referring to.

Only may the Lord make good his word. There's no promise that the Lord has made to her or to him prior to this. We had the blessing of Eli, but that's been realized.

Hannah's child, Hannah had a son, and her prayer was answered, so we're not really sure what this is referring to. So, the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him. After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh.

When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, As surely as you live, my Lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. So she is fulfilling her vow, her promise to the Lord.

And then it says, oddly enough, that he worshipped the Lord there. Who is he? I suppose it could be Elkanah, but he hasn't been mentioned for a few verses. Why bring him in here? Some texts read, that they worshipped the Lord, which would make better sense, but at the same time, it may be picturing Samuel, as young as he is, as already a worshipper of the Lord.

He's capable of doing that at this point. So that would set up the contrast with Hophni and Phinehas that we're going to see in the next chapter. That may be one of these elements in the story that you puzzle over as you read the story for the first time, but these stories are designed as canonical stories, as inspired scripture, to be read over and over and over again.

And by the way, when you do that, you always discover something new. So, this may be an element in the story that's going to make more sense when we read the story through for the second time, and we see, ah, Samuel was worshipping the Lord from the very beginning, even when he was small and just weaned. In contrast, Eli's sons, don't worship the Lord at all.

And that brings us to chapter two in a very wonderful passage. Then Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord. In the Lord, my horn is lifted high.

That's very significant. What is she talking about? Does she have horns? Well, you can't take it that literally. It's a metaphor.

She is comparing herself to a wild ox, an animal who would use its horns in combat against rivals. And so right from the beginning here, we begin to get a feel in her song for how she viewed the conflict with Peninnah. She describes it in military terms.

And the Lord has enabled her to have a son. He has vindicated her before this rival wife, and really before others who were probably asking questions about her, because Hannah can't have a child. There's something wrong here.

But it's as if she has gone into combat against her critics and her oppressor, and now she has won the victory. And the Lord has lifted her horn high, and so she's comparing herself to this wild ox who has won the battle with its rival, and its horn is lifted high. She is vindicated by the Lord.

She says, My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. She was one who needed to be delivered by the Lord. He delivered her from her enemies.

So once again, this militaristic language that's used. At this point, to really appreciate what she says in the rest of the song, we need to know something about the culture. And so, we're going to talk about Baal, the god Baal, the Canaanite god Baal, who was a fertility god and also a storm god.

Baal was the god whom the Canaanites worshiped in order to have rain. They believed that Baal was the one who would provide the rain and the dew so that the ground would be fertile and would grow crops. He's also a god of fertility in the human realm.

He is the one who gives you children. And in this culture, it's all about kids and crops. It's an agricultural society, and they want to have good crops, and they want to have children.

It's important in an agricultural context to have a lot of children. Furthermore, in this particular historical context, you're going to lose a lot of children. Children are going to die.

And so, it's important to have children. And so, they worshipped Baal, this fertility god. And Baal would have sexual relations with goddesses.

He's a fertility deity. And so, the Canaanites worshipped him. And in 1929 at the site of Ugarit, north of Israel, which was excavated by the French, they discovered tablets there.

As these tablets were deciphered and translated and studied carefully, we now know quite a bit about Baal worship in this region of the world at this time. Baal was part of a pantheon of gods, and in the Canaanite system, there is a high god. Baal is not the high god.

The high god is called El, E-L, which is kind of a generic word for god in Hebrew and even in Ugaritic, but it's the name or title of this high god. He's up here at the top of the Canaanite pantheon. Beneath him, there are other deities who are vying for control over the world under the ultimate authority of El.

Baal is one of these deities. There are two other main deities, though, that are rivals of Baal. One is Yam.

Yam is the god of the sea. And so, Baal has to defeat the sea because the sea just wants to come in and inundate everything and take over and just create chaos, as it were. And so, Baal has to defeat the sea.

It's interesting in the Old Testament some of this imagery is applied to Yahweh, the god of Israel. He defeats the sea in conjunction with creation, in conjunction with the exodus, and this doesn't mean that Yahweh has evolved out of Canaanite religion, as some people try to argue. These passages in the Old Testament are inherently polemical.

The Israelites are affirming our god, Yahweh, controls all of that. He is the one who defeats the sea, which represents evil in opposition to God. So, Baal defeats Yam.

He defeats the sea. He also has another rival, Mot. Mot is the god of death.

And so, in the mythology of the Canaanites, Baal actually is defeated by Mot. He has a battle with Mot and he loses and he has to go down into the underworld, into the world of the dead, Mot's realm that he rules over. Fortunately for Baal, he gets resurrected.

He's a dying and rising god. He comes back to life through the help of a goddess by the name of Anat, who defeats Mot. But these gods have a way of coming and going.

Mot is ground all up and cast to the wind, but seven years later, lo and behold, he's back again. And Baal and Mot have another struggle and El, he issues a verdict and he says Baal is the winner. But you get the impression it's sort of like a split decision in boxing.

This is not the end of it. What is all of this mythology about? It's about nature. The gods and nature are one.

In the Old Testament, Yahweh, the god of Israel, is above nature. He's the creator of nature. He's not a part of it.

He's above it. But in the Canaanite thinking, nature and the gods are all woven together. It's all part of one system.

Basically, it's reflecting nature and the seasonal cycle and situation. When Baal is in control, everything is going to operate in the proper way. The rain will come in its proper season.

We don't want it to rain all the time either. The rain will come, fertilize the ground, the crops will grow, and everything will just cycle through the way it's supposed to. But what happens when there's prolonged drought when the dry season doesn't end? It just gets prolonged.

Well, in their thinking, that's when Baal has been defeated and Mot has taken over. So, prolonged drought can be fatal. No food.

And so, the mythology is designed to kind of reflect what they knew about nature. And so, when Baal was defeated and had to go down into the world of the dead and the underworld, they would mourn him in an attempt to get him back to life. As we see described in the mythology, even the high god El is unhappy about Baal's death.

And he comes off his throne, puts on sackcloth, takes a sharp rock, and starts cutting himself. These are mourning rites. This is what you do when you're mourning the dead.

It's why Deuteronomy 14 says to the Israelites, you are not to cut yourselves for the dead. You are not to engage in these Canaanite mourning rites. It's pagan, and I don't want you doing it.

If you recall the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18, what do the prophets of Baal do? They cut themselves as they're jumping around trying to get Baal to produce the rain, because remember, a drought had set in. The Israelites had decided, we were going to worship Baal. And, well, kind of bad luck.

The minute they decide to make Baalism an official religion in the northern kingdom, he goes and dies. He goes and dies on them. And there's drought.

And so, they're cutting themselves in an effort to get him resurrected. So, that's some of the background. Baal is the god who brings the rain.

He thunders. He comes in the thunder. The thunder was called his holy voice.

And Baal is a key god. He's very important. There are several gods who surround the high god El, and they are called the holy ones.

But in one text, Anat says Baal is the most holy of the gods. Who can compare to him? So, think about Hannah's situation. And I don't think we're reading into the text here.

She lives in a cultural environment where Baal is worshipped in Israel. Judges talk about this many, many times. In fact, remember the story of Gideon.

They've got a Baal altar in an Israelite town. Gideon's father is running it. And when Gideon tears it down, the whole town is ready to kill him.

His father intervenes, and we're not really sure what his statement means, but he seems to be saying, that we better not fight Baal's battle for him. He might get offended. Let him fight his own battle.

Now, that may have been designed to save his son. At any rate, he gives his son a new name, Yeruv Baal. Let Baal strive with him.

So, from that point on, Gideon's got this name, Yeruv Baal, this challenge to Baal. And so, yes, Baal is worshipped in Israel. And so, think about Hannah's situation.

She's a barren woman. The Lord has not given her a child. I think a lot of women in that situation would have done what others were doing.

They would have turned to Baal, and they would have worshipped him because after all, that's his job. Maybe we can infuse him with Yahweh. We can kind of worship Yahweh, but maybe we can bring Baal in as well and worship him because maybe his jurisdiction is fertility and life and death and all of that.

So, I think I'll worship him. I'm not rejecting Yahweh, but I'm going to worship Baal on the side. There would have been a temptation to do that.

That's called syncretism, and the Lord said, no, you're not going to do that. Hannah didn't do that. She went to the sanctuary.

She poured her heart out before the Lord, even though she was experiencing great misery and oppression. She was faithful and loyal to the Lord. And so now, as she is thanking the Lord for intervening on her behalf, we are going to see echoes of the Canaanite worldview, and she's going to be polemicizing against that.

So, notice in verse 2, that there is no one holy like the Lord, and she's not talking primarily in moral terms here. When we use holy, we tend to think of someone who is righteous. She's using holy in its basic sense of set apart, unique, one and only.

There is no one who really is holy like Yahweh. He is set apart. He's distinct from all others.

He's unique. He's the one and only God. There is no one besides you.

Now, in her cultural context, many would say, oh yes, there is. Baal, what about Baal and some of the other gods? There is no rock like our God. Now, rock, that's kind of a confusing word.

Why would she be calling God a rock? What in the world does that mean? A rock to pick up and throw at somebody? What does she mean? Well, that particular word that's used for rock, *sur*, really refers to a rocky cliff. David is going to call the Lord his rock because when David was running around being chased by Saul, he had to go up into these regions sometimes where he could get away from Saul. It refers to a rocky cliff as a place of refuge where you can find protection, and you will be relatively inaccessible as far as your enemies are concerned.

So, it really means protector, but if you translate it that way, you lose the image. But rock in English can be confusing as well, so she really means protector. Now, I'm afraid of rocky cliffs.

I don't like heights, but think of it as a place of protection. There is no one who can protect his people like our God, and I found that to be true. She says I have been protected by the Lord.

I've been delivered from this oppression, and now she speaks to those who have been questioning her, and she uses the plural. She's not just speaking in the singular. In Hebrew, we can tell whether a second-person form is singular or plural, and she uses the plural.

Do not keep talking so proudly, or let your mouth speak such arrogance. She probably has Peninnah in view, but others as well, maybe who had said things to her, or maybe just the enemies of Yahweh in general, for the Lord is a God who knows. So, God is aware of what's going on, and by him, deeds are weighed.

So, she is very much aware of the fact that God is omniscient. He knows everything, and also, he is just. That's one of the main functions of his omniscience.

He knows everything, so he can do what is right and just. By him, deeds are weighed. The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

She again uses this militaristic language to describe what's going on, and she seems to be generalizing about what has happened. The bows of the warrior, well, one of those warriors was Peninnah. Those who stumbled, well, that was her, but now she has strength.

She's had a child. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry, hunger no more. The Lord brings about a reversal.

Yes, some may prosper for a time, but if they're not righteous, and they're not on God's side, they will be brought down eventually, and those who are hungry, yes, God's people sometimes suffer oppression. Hannah has, but eventually, the Lord brings them food, as it were, and they hunger no more, and so the Lord has brought about this reversal. He's done that in the past, generally speaking.

He's done it for Hannah, and then she comes a little closer to home. She's been speaking kind of in general terms, but then she says, she who was barren has born seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. You can't help but see Hannah and Peninnah in that.

Hannah has not had seven children, but she's using exaggeration for the sake of emphasis. She is going to get more. She's going to get five more, but she uses seven.

You may have heard that it's the number of perfection or completeness, and it really is. As you read through the Bible, you see it used this way, and also in the ancient Near Eastern world, it was a cultural thing. So, they would use seven or multiples of seven when they wanted to emphasize completeness, and perfection, and so she who was barren has born seven children.

She has everything she wants. She's a fulfilled mother, I think is the idea, but she has to kind of be referring to herself primarily here at this point, even though it's in more general terms. Then she kind of switches in verse six, and she starts using participles in Hebrew, forms that suggest this is what God typically does now.

So, she moves from past to present. The Lord brings death and makes alive. He brings down to the grave, and NIV translates it raises up, as most translations do, and I used to translate it that way, but in Hebrew, it's actually a form, it's a verb form that

you use when you're giving an account of something that's happened, and so I'm more inclined now to translate it, and he has raised up, because she just can't generalize anymore.

She's got to talk about her experience, and so if that's the case, notice the Lord brings death and makes alive. Well, that's in contrast to Baal, by the way. Baal does not control death.

He fights against death, sometimes winning, but he doesn't control death, but notices the Lord is sovereign over life and death. That is, when you understand it in the context, that is a polemic against Baal. He brings them down to the grave, but he has raised up, and she doesn't say raised me up, because I think she feels you probably understand what I'm talking about from the context, and so if this is the case, that's the way she felt.

The oppression was so bad, that she felt as if she was one step away from the grave. She was dying from depression, and the Lord reached down and he delivered her from the grave. He raised her up, and he did that by giving her a child, a son.

It was that important to her. The Lord sends poverty and wealth. He humbles and he exalts.

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap. He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor, for the foundations of the earth are the Lord's. Upon them, he has set the world.

So, the Lord is a just God. He brings down the high and mighty and the proud. Sometimes you wonder how long is it going to be, Lord, before you do that, but he's in the business of doing that, and he eventually will, and he takes the poor and the needy and he lifts them up, and he gives them a seat with princes.

He's in the business of doing that. It doesn't always happen as quickly as we would like, but ultimately the poor and needy, the followers of the Lord in this context, like Hannah, who are suffering oppression, will be vindicated. And Jesus says the same thing in Matthew 5. He talks about his followers as poor and needy and oppressed, and he says, be thankful when you realize that you're suffering persecution, because that's a sign that you're on my side, and you will be vindicated.

You will be vindicated. You will inherit the kingdom, and the high and mighty will be brought down. And so, Hannah sees this.

The Lord is just. He's a just God, and now she begins to look toward the future and what the Lord will typically do in the future and ultimately do in the future. He will

guard the feet of his saints, his people, his Hassidim, and those who are his loyal followers.

But the wicked will be silenced in darkness. It is not by strength that one prevails. Those who oppose the Lord will be shattered.

And now notice her use of Baal imagery here. He will thunder against them from heaven. So, she pictures the Lord coming as the great judge, and he's thundering from the sky.

She's picturing the Lord in Baal-like terms. This is the way the Canaanites would talk about Baal, but for Hannah, no, it's the Lord who is the just king. He's the one who controls life and death and fertility and all of this, not Baal, and he is the one who will come thundering from heaven on behalf of his people.

And the Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed. She goes back to that horn image, which she started with.

She said the Lord has exalted my horn. He's lifted me up over my enemies. And at this point, you realize Hannah is not just thinking in terms of what the Lord has done for her as an individual.

She understands that Israel is in a situation very much like she is in, oppressed. You know, there are powerful enemies all around. You read about this in the book of Judges, and we're going to see it in Samuel, the Philistines in particular.

But she's looking forward to a day when he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed one. And some people will say, there's no king at this point, so this has to be something that was written later. Hannah really didn't say this.

This is somebody writing this later, maybe adding something to her original prayer, or maybe the prayer itself is just concocted because she's talking as if there's a king and there isn't one. I would say, no, she's anticipating that there will be a king, that the Lord is going to provide leadership for his people. And this is consistent with the conclusion of Judges.

Israel needs a king. Hannah knows that. They need a leader.

They need a strong leader. And she is, I would actually translate that last statement as more of a prayer. May the Lord give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.

She's praying for that, and she really sees her experience as something that is significant for the people as a whole. We're not going to do this in this particular lesson, but I would challenge you to compare Hannah's song of thanks with Mary's song in Luke. Very similar structurally, and Mary really sees her experience the same way Hannah does.

The Lord has come to me, and he has blessed me greatly, but the purpose, the ultimate purpose in all of this is to provide for his people Israel, and he's going to do that through Messiah. And so Hannah is very similar in that regard. I think Mary was familiar with Hannah's song, and she patterned her song after Hannah's.

But in both, you have the theme that the Lord is going to provide for his people through a woman. And so Hannah is looking forward to that day. And it's very interesting that in 1 Samuel 7, the Lord is going to come thundering against his enemies, the Philistines, as Samuel prays to him.

And then later David is going to, in 2 Samuel 22, at the very end of all this, well a couple of chapters away from the end, there's a lot of parallels between what David prays there and what Hannah prays here. And the Lord has delivered David many times, and David pictures it as the Lord coming, thundering in the clouds, and delivering him from his enemies. So, this is a motif that we're going to see that's very important in the book.

And so, this prayer of Hannah is setting the stage for what we're going to see as the book unfolds. Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the Lord under Eli the priest. And that is a stopping point in the development of the story.

I think the chapter division, the chapter divisions of course was late, I really think it should have been placed here, rather than 11 verses earlier. But there is a break here, and now we're going to switch over to Eli and his sons. And what we're going to see is a marked contrast between Samuel and Eli and his sons.

And we're going to go back and forth. We're going to describe Eli and his sons, we're going to describe Samuel, back and forth, back and forth, over the rest of chapter two, and then on into chapters three and four. But we'll take a closer look at chapter two, verses 12 through 36 in our next lesson.

This is Dr. Robert Chisholm in his teaching on the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 1, 1 Samuel 1.1-2.11, Barren no more.