Beginnings and Endings: Samuel 2:1 – 4:1

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Lenses - Through which I am peering at this study.

- 1. Principles Policies Practices
- 2. Context
- 3. Literary Devices
- 4. Names
- 5. Object Lessons
- 6. Story Arc
- 7. Lessons for Us?

Principles

- a. God is a God of love.
- *b*. Choice is an absolute mandate.
- *c*. Judgements are only acknowledgments of choices we have made.
- *d*. Judgments are delayed, sometimes for centuries to give people, communities, and nations time to learn the qualities of God so they can make an informed decision.
- e. Dominion was given as an object lesson of the way Heavenly beings use power: protect, nurture, build life skills, serve the vulnerable.
- *f*. Relationships are sacred.
- g. There is a conflict with God and the serpent as to who is focused on our best good.
- *h*. God meets us where we are and offers skills and supports to bring us home.

Policies at that time of theocracy relevant to this study

- a. Sacrifices to be held at the sanctuary.
- b. Fat to be burned.
- c. Priests to get the rest.

Object Lessons

- a. Fat represents sin.
- b. A parent giving a child to serve Yahweh, and to be His representative to the people can also, like the sanctuary messages, be representative

of God's chosen personal sacrifice of sending a beloved member of the Deity to us.

c. Eli's eyes had begun to fail, physically and spiritually.

Literary Devices

- a. Poetry Hannah's prayer.
- b. Irony
 - a. the one who should see best sees least.
 - b. Hannah, who was reproved for praying her first wish silently, not only speaks the second one aloud but gets it in print.

Context

- **a.** Takes place during the theocracy.
- **b.** Most of this story arc takes place in the sanctuary environs.
- **c.** Parents pick spouses for their children. (It would be helpful to remember that Elkhanah probably did not choose to have two wives.)

Names of Humans

- **a.** Samuel his name is God; he is heard of God.
- **b.** Hannah favor; shows compassion or mercy.
- c. Elkhanah God has possessed.
- **d.** Eli God has exalted his parents had high hopes.
- e. Hophni tadpole
- **f.** Phineas the black man.

Names of God

- **a.** The Lord Yahweh the personal name of God. The iteration of God who is in covenant relationship with His people.
- **b.** God Lohim plural in form/singular in meaning. Great or Powerful.

A Therapist's Thoughts on Human Development in Terms of Understanding Samuel.

- **a.** From what I have read, children in Hebrew times would have been weaned between the ages of 3 to 5 sometimes as late as nine (this last is a little startling to my 21st century self).
- **b.** In the first year of life children learn that they will be kept safe in the world.
- **c.** By age 3 children should have a sense of themselves as valued and protected.
- **d.** We learn about relationships from the families in which we are raised. Samuel's example of parenting for most of his childhood was Eli and his boys. It makes some sense to me that he would not have known how to parent his own children...plus he was away at work a lot later in life.

Some of My Thoughts on this Reading

- 1. In this study I again see the compassion, patience, and love of God in the Old Testament.
- **2.** I read Hannah's prayer through my lens of the Spirit of Prophecy described in I Corinthians 14:3 *Those who prophecy speak to people for their strengthening, encouragement and consolation.* It fits for me.
- **3.** The term horn/s often refers to weapons of defense.
- 4. Rocks are places of safety.
- **5.** I find the names Hannah uses for God in her prayer interesting given the phrase in which she uses them.
- 6. Since fat of the offering represented sin and its burning represented the sin of the petitioner being burned away, I find it particularly heinous that Eli's sons, in their gluttony and abuse of power, would take away the object lesson of people's sins being destroyed. I can only imagine the horror and grief of the person. In their selfish, power-brokering arrogance they caused untold psychological harm.
- 7. As a young child Samuel was already serving in the linen ephod worn by priests made by his mother.
- **8.** Samuel grew up before the Lord. It reminds me of the phrase written much later: *Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.* Luke 2:52
- **9.** After so many years of spiritual and cultural perfidy it is amazing to me that God sent a prophet to Eli and then Samuel to warn Eli and his sons.

Even then, they had time, after the two prophetic voices to change their ways. I am sure this is one of the stories Peter knew when he wrote: *God is longsuffering to us and not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

- **10.** I find it interesting that Samuel should be sleeping in the temple, *and that the ark was also there. 3*:3
- **11.** Samuel did not yet know Yahweh...that's the covenant but also personal name of God. *Knowing* can mean intimate (not always sexual; that particular object lesson isn't germane to this discussion) and indicates to me that Samuel would grow to have a deeply personal and emotional with relationship with God. Samuel would have been one of those who knew what God's voice sounded like and would converse with Him.
- **12.** I just love the phrase in 3:10 *and Yahweh came and stood nearby* as Samuel was sleeping. It sounds so lovingly parental to me.
- **13.** I keep thinking about the fact that after all the warnings, the last one was given by someone who loved and deeply cared for Eli. That seems like an object lesson to me.
- **14.** 4:1 *And Samuel revealed the word of the Lord to all Israel* His work has begun.
- **15.** I wonder how many years are covered by chapters 2 and 3.

Questions

- 1. Where, in her poem prayer, do you think Hannah was expressing her own strengthening, encouragement, or consolation?
- 2. Why do you think she was using those particular names of God in those various places?
- 3. Where in that prayer poem do you find any of those qualities of God?
- 4. What implication or meaning do you think of the phrase (in Chapter 2:21) that Samuel grew up before the Lord.
- 5. What do you make of the fact that Eli did not deal with his sons, their theft and their brothel?

- 6. What do you think of God giving so much effort to change to Eli and his sons?
- 7. Why do you think the author of Samuel would have mentioned Samuel sleeping near the ark?
- 8. What do you think is the significance of this story taking place in the Sanctuary environs?
- 9. What do you think were the qualities of Samuel's upbringing that left him with the qualities that made him such a great figure in the Biblical story.
- 10. What aspects of this story stand out to you?
- 11. What do you think are the most important lessons here?
- 12. What part of the story did you just like the best?

This, again, was one of those studies that I thought I knew and thought I would just breeze through while prepping it for you. Much to my benefit, I was wrong again. These two chapters are packed. Nothing wrong with me to have so many opportunities for humility.

As always, I picture you in our little Zoom boxes and am already looking forward to your opinions and lively comments.

I look forward to seeing you again in a few days. In the meanwhile, I wish for you those unexpected blessings that I treasure.

Catherine