

Bible Study – June 13, 2018

“Dealing With Disappointment”

UNSUNG: Major Lessons from ‘Minor’ People – Pt. 4

Character Study: Elkanah

SCRIPTURE: **1 Samuel, Chapter 1**

Background & Chapter Summary

The first member of the Sons of Korah to have an illustrious and extended introduction in the Bible is Elkanah, in the opening chapters of 1 Samuel. Elkanah was a Levite, a Kohathite from the family of Zuph ([1 Chron. 6:22-28, 34-35](#)). From these texts we learn that Elkanah comes from a family of Levites who served as musicians. The Levites were scattered throughout the land and went to Shiloh to minister at the tabernacle whenever they were needed. Knowing Elkanah was a Levite helps us understand how and why other events in Elkanah’s life happened the way they did.

Elkanah lived in Ramah on the border of Ephraim and Benjamin (see [Josh. 18:25](#)). Hannah was his first wife, and when she proved barren, he married Peninnah so he could have a family. Each year Elkanah took his family to Shiloh to worship ([Ex. 23:14-19](#)). This annual visit to the tabernacle should have been a joyful event for Hannah, but each year Peninnah used it as an opportunity to irritate Hannah and make fun of her barrenness. When Elkanah distributed the meat from the sacrifice, he had to give many portions to Peninnah and her children, while Hannah received only one portion. Elkanah gave her a generous share... “*a double portion.*” Certainly, Hannah told Elkanah about her vow, because she knew that Jewish law permitted a husband to annul a wife's vow if he disagreed with it ([Num. 30](#)).

Elkanah agreed with her decision and allowed her to remain at home with her son when the rest of the family went on its annual trip to Shiloh. We can't help but admire Elkanah for what he said and did, for this was his firstborn son by his beloved Hannah and father and son would be separated for the rest of their lives. A firstborn son had to be redeemed by a sacrifice ([Ex. 13:11-13](#)), but Elkanah was giving his son as a living sacrifice to the Lord. (Elkanah in Hebrew means “God has purchased,” “God has created,” or “God has possessed” as being descended from Korah). However, as 1 Samuel 1:1 states that he was an Ephraimite, some scholars have viewed this as an apparent discrepancy and have therefore cast aspersions on the reliability of the genealogical data of 1 Chronicles. A more sensible conclusion is to comment that the two accounts preserve different aspects

