

1 Samuel 1:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And 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.

Analysis

The introduction of Elkanah's two wives immediately signals domestic tension that drives the narrative. Hannah's name means 'grace' or 'favor,' while Peninnah means 'pearl' or 'coral.' The stark contrast between Peninnah's fertility and Hannah's barrenness echoes earlier matriarchal struggles (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel). In ancient Near Eastern culture, a woman's primary value was measured by her ability to bear children, particularly sons. This cultural context intensifies Hannah's anguish and makes God's subsequent intervention more remarkable.

Historical Context

Polygamy, while permitted in ancient Israel, consistently produced family strife in biblical narratives (Abraham-Sarah-Hagar, Jacob-Leah-Rachel). The practice was tolerated but never endorsed as God's ideal for marriage (Genesis 2:24). Archaeological evidence confirms that polygamy was common among wealthy households in Iron Age Israel.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Scripture's honest portrayal of family dysfunction encourage believers facing similar struggles?
2. What does Hannah's situation teach about finding identity and worth in God rather than cultural expectations?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא יָמַשׁ יְשִׁירָה
H0 And he had two wives and the name of the one but Hannah
H8147 H802 H8034 H259 H2584

וְלֹא יָמַשׁ יְשִׁירָה
and the name of the other Peninnah Peninnah had children
H8034 H8145 H6444 H1961 H6444 H3206

וְלֹא יָמַשׁ יְשִׁירָה
but Hannah had children
H2584 H369 H3206

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