

Sewing Devotion 4

We've been talking about sewing references in the Scripture. We spoke about a word that many of us had not heard before—BESPOKE. Bespoke is a word that describes a garment that is constructed according to particular specifications. A custom-made suit, for example, could be described as a bespoke suit. It is made for a particular person and according to that person's measurements. And we looked at how God has custom-designed each one of us to accomplish his purposes. We are God's BESPOKE creation.

Today, we are going to look at another seamstress in Scripture. This seamstress made BESPOKE creations—she sewed for a particular person. I think many of you will be familiar with the story.

In I Samuel chapter 1, we are introduced to an Israelite man name Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives, one named Peninnah and one named Hannah. The Bible tells us that Peninnah was able to have children, but Hannah was barren.

Having more than one wife doesn't work. It doesn't work now and it didn't work then. It was not God's ideal plan which was one man, one woman. In the case of this family, having 2 wives in the same household caused trouble. Peninnah was not a kind person. Scripture tells us she PROVOKED Hannah, her fellow wife, about not having any children. The word provoke is a strong word—it was much more than teasing. It was teasing to the extent that a person feels miserable and helpless to stop it. That's what happened to Hannah. It was a major case of bullying. Hannah was miserable and broken-hearted, weeping and unable to eat. Her husband Elkanah loved her and tried to cheer her, although we aren't told that he put a stop to it. Elkanah even gave Hannah double portions compared to Peninnah, but the desire for children is strong and year after year, as the family went to Jerusalem for the sacrifice, Hannah was grieved in her spirit and cried out to the Lord.

The Bible records that at one of the yearly sacrifices, Hannah stood in the Temple praying silently. Her lips were moving but no sound was coming out. Have you ever prayed like that—have you ever had such a heavy request to lay before God that words aren't enough? Imagine Hannah—she knows that her years of child-bearing are numbered. It's been years already. She is beaten down.

Eli the priest notices that there is something not right about this woman standing there. Her mouth is moving but she isn't talking to anyone. He accuses her of being drunk! But she explains her predicament and Eli gives her a blessing.

God heard Hannah's cry. He heard all her cries through the years but God's timing is not our timing. Now the time is right—Hannah has a baby.

Can you see Hannah? What joy to have a baby after years of trying! She names her newborn son Samuel which means "God has heard me". The most famous verse of the chapter is verse 27: "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him."

If you know this story, you know what happens next. Hannah cares for baby Samuel until he is weaned. In Jewish tradition, a child is weaned sometime between 18 months and 5 years. The Scripture tells us that when Samuel was weaned, Hannah takes him up to the sacrifice in Jerusalem along with 3 bulls, a measure of flour and a skin of wine. She presents Samuel to Eli, the priest who had blessed her, and then . . . SHE LEAVES HIM THERE. Hannah leaves Samuel at the Temple. This baby, this child of under 5 years old, whom she had longed for and prayed for and rejoiced at his birth—Hannah leaves him at the Temple. It is her way of thanking God for his blessing—by "lending" God her son for the rest of his life.

I promise we are getting to the sewing part. I just like to put myself in the shoes of Bible characters sometimes. What did Hannah put in the suitcase that she sent with little Samuel? Some clothes? Some clean underwear? A toothbrush? Some toys or a teddy bear? How do you "leave" a child at the Temple? My husband came from a family of 5 children and he likes to tell the story of how his parents left him at church once—they didn't discover he was gone for like 2 hours. But this, this, is deliberate. What did you expect your child to even be able to do at the Temple? How did you entrust an old priest to raise your child?

But God used this situation! The Bible says that "Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child." It also tells us Samuel wore an EPHOD—a special garment made of linen with blue, red and purple threads. The Ephod was worn by the priests who served at the Temple and now hear was this child in a child-sized

Ephod, doing work before the Lord. Skilled seamstresses, both men and women, would have made those garments.

But Hannah also had sewing skills. She had one special garment to make every year. Scripture tells us Hannah would sew a new robe for Samuel and bring it to the Temple when she saw her son. I don't know what this robe was like—not a bathrobe—it could have been his main garment or maybe a coat.

How would you feel if you saw your firstborn son once a year and your present to him was a new robe? What kind of time would you devote to sewing that robe? How carefully would you be in choosing the fabric? How painstaking would you be with every stitch, knowing that your son would wear this robe for a whole year? Would you sew this bespoke creation with love, thinking of him, praying for him, the entire time you are sewing?

How does this story correspond to our sewing for TOH? We are sewing for children who will receive one garment, maybe for a long, long time. How careful are you in choosing the fabric and the pattern? Do you pray over the garment you are making, praying for the child who will wear it? Are you joyful to present this “robe” to a child in need of it?

This month we have an opportunity to sew not only for un-named children, but also for some whom we can identify with pictures and sizes. I encourage you to put these pictures up on the wall where you sew. Look at these girls, pray for them. Think about the day they receive their new dresses and skirts.

Hannah sewed for a son whom she lent to the Lord. Her child Samuel lived for the Lord his whole life and did great big things. We are sewing for children who need the Lord. What will they be able to accomplish for the Lord? Let's make sure we are sewing in the same joyful and careful spirit as Hannah. BTW, Hannah was rewarded with more children—3 more sons and 2 daughters. God has a blessing in store for you as well.