

# TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY



## Hannah - seeing the little picture

High crime rates, economic uncertainty, flagrant immorality, compromised national security, ... Hannah's world was in bad shape. The theocracy that God had set in place for the nation of Israel seemed to be failing. This was the time of the judges, the days when "Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." (Judges 21:25) With enemies without and within, the future for the nation of Israel looked grim.

But Hannah had matters closer to home to deal with. I suppose she shared the concerns everyone else had about what the nation was coming to, but that is not what is recorded for us. What we see is a woman with ample heartache at home to consume her attention and fuel her prayers. Her husband was married to another woman. The "other woman" was not only in her home, but also in her face—flaunting and tormenting Hannah with her superiority, at least in the realm of motherhood. Hannah's name means grace, but surely there was a limit to what even she could bear. What she wanted, almost more than anything, was a child of her own. She

"Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand."  
Thomas Carlyle

tion, was not out to put things right in her nation only her family. But God cared for His nation by caring for this obedient, godly woman. Through Hannah's prayers for her family, God answered the needs of her nation.

Like Hannah, our own families will have an influence on the future of our nation. What is your greatest prayer for your family? \_\_\_\_\_



*"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."*

*2 Corinthians 4:7*

### READ:

- 1 Samuel 1 and 2
- Luke 1:46-55

## Giving up your child

What is the measure of a good mom? As my children are quickly making the transition from childhood to adulthood, I am asking myself that question with perhaps greater intensity than ever. I am reflecting on the fleeting years when I could actually hold them safely in my lap, protecting them from the enticements and dangers of the world around them. Those vital moments are all too short-lived, and they quickly outgrow our laps to become autonomous beings, who will one day stand before the Lord without their mother.



When Samuel was weaned, probably around 3 or 4, Hannah took him to live with the priest Eli. My adopted children were 2,5,7,and 9 when we received them into our family. As their mother, I can identify more with Eli, than with Hannah, but for all of us, the time was short, even shorter than usual. I took especially seriously the notion that these children were being entrusted to me to raise as children who were special to God. Raising them was definitely a project initiated by God. Through them, God taught me that the greatest thing that we can do for all of our children as mothers is to allow them to belong to God. To give them to the God to whom they have always belonged. To give up our "rights" to control the outcome, and to yield them prayerfully to their God.

In Exodus 2:9-10, who was another mother who had

her child for only a short time? \_\_\_\_\_

What did God have in mind for her son? \_\_\_\_\_

Did mom see him at his best? \_\_\_\_\_

In 1 Samuel 1, who was it that had closed Hannah's womb? \_\_\_\_\_

What did Hannah learn about motherhood from her experience of barrenness? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think that affected the way she raised her other children? \_\_\_\_\_

## Misunderstood

What conclusion did Eli jump to when he saw Hannah in prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

Not all people are alike, and not all worship is alike. Sometimes we are as inclined as Eli to jump to wrong conclusions about the way another person, or another church, is approaching God. In Eli's case, it seems he was unfamiliar with the kind of heartfelt worship that he witnessed in Hannah. How would we respond to her in our own assembly? Would we be uneasy? Scornful? Would we understand?



## Hannah the prophetess

Hannah's intimate relationship with God especially comes to light in her prayer that has been recorded in 1 Samuel 2. She recognizes and praises God's sovereign activity in the world, and speaks of

the future king that God will give His people. She testifies to what God has done in her own life and expresses gratitude for His salvation. She acknowledges that it is God who will judge her rival, along with all who act arrogantly.

Mary expresses her personalized version of Hannah's prayer in Luke 1:46

-55, as does Zacharias in Luke 1:68-79. After carefully reading these three songs of praise, try writing a couple stanzas of your own here:

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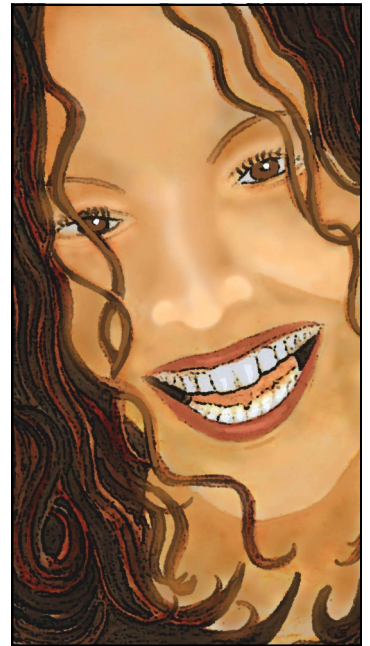
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## Sorrow turned to joy (from *Through the Bible in a Year*)

Infertility is an enormously difficult situation to endure. Friends have described to me the excruciating cycle of crushed hopes endured month after month after month. That is the situation Hannah found herself in. As if the empty arms weren't enough, women in Bible times also suffered the guilt and disgrace of letting their husband down. To intensify her frustration, she was continually provoked by Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife who seemed to have no trouble bearing children. To his credit, Elkanah had a great love for Hannah despite her inability to produce a son, but he did not seem able to enter into, or understand, her anguish. She alone carried the longing, the shame, and the torment from her rival. This had been the story of her life year after painful year.

So, this time when they made their annual pilgrimage to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices, Hannah was feeling the full weight of her situation. But she didn't let her bitterness of soul turn her away from God. Instead she turned to God and as she prayed to the Lord she made a vow. If God gave her a son, she would return the child to Him.

Once Eli was convinced that she wasn't drunk in the fervency of her prayer, he gave her his blessing. At this point Hannah still isn't pregnant, but we see a remarkable change come over her. Her situation has not actually changed one bit... yet. But we are told that her appetite is back and her face is no longer downcast. Her sorrow has turned to joy. Why?



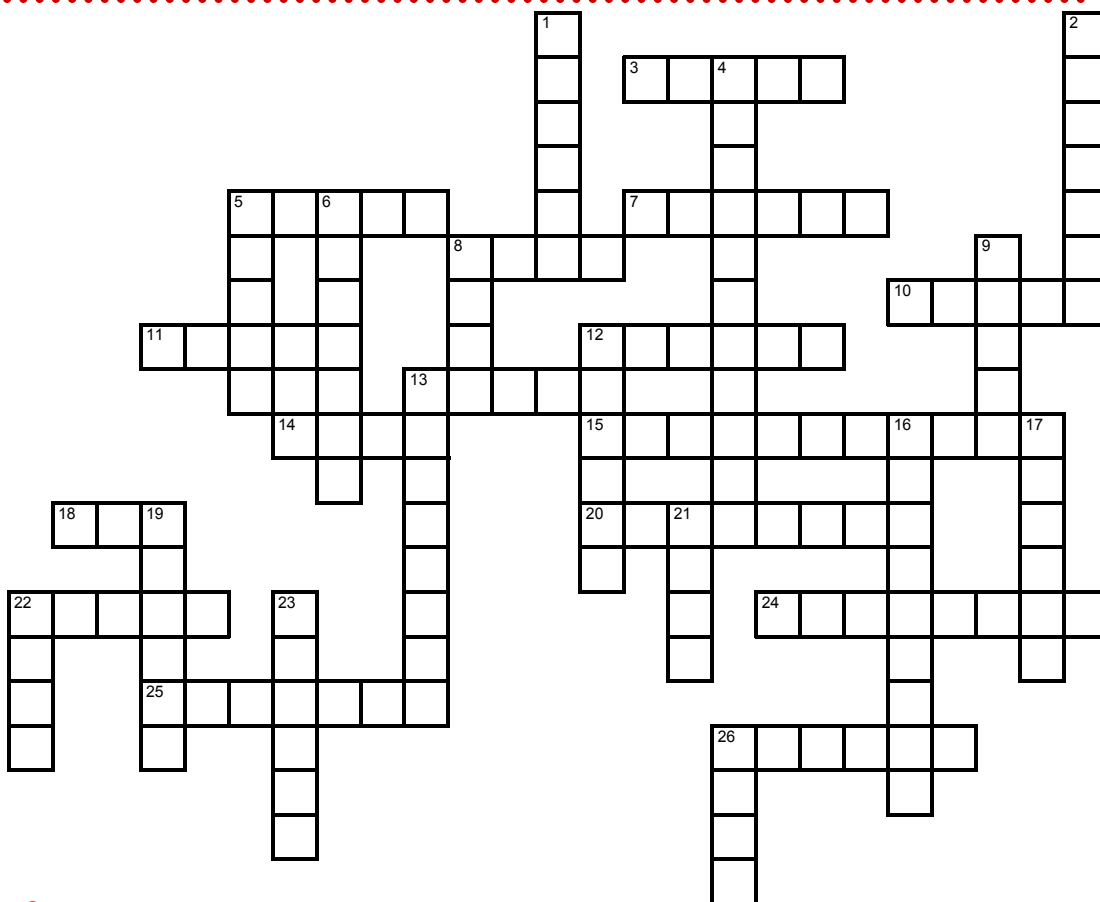
**"In everything  
you do, put  
God first, and  
He will direct  
you and crown  
you with suc-  
cess."  
Prov. 3:6**

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# PUZZLE PAGE



## Clues

### Across

- 3 the Lord will do this (5)
- 5 weighed by God (5)
- 7 location of the Lord's house (6)
- 8 hers was lifted high in the Lord (4)
- 10 lifted from the ash heap (5)
- 11 the needy will inherit this throne (5)
- 12 without children (6)
- 13 Eli told her to go in this (5)
- 14 length of Samuel's dedication to the Lord (4)
- 15 those of the earth are the Lord's (11)
- 18 she made one to the Lord (3)
- 20 she asked God to do this (8)
- 22 her home (5)
- 24 what will happen to the wicked (8)
- 25 her husband (7)
- 26 God will guard the feet of these (6)

### Down

- 1 this was done in anguish of heart (6)
- 2 sent by the Lord (7)
- 4 she delighted in this (11)
- 5 Eli thought she was (5)
- 6 tribe she lived among (7)
- 8 where she stayed until Samuel was weaned (4)
- 9 number of her children (5)
- 12 she rejoiced \_\_\_\_\_ she was with child (6)
- 13 her rival (8)
- 16 she was one (9)
- 17 her oldest child (6)
- 19 kept Samuel home until he was \_\_\_\_\_ (6)
- 21 New Testament mother who gave a similar prayer (4)
- 22 she said there is none like our God (4)
- 23 sent by the Lord (6)
- 26 poured hers out to God (4)



## Map

### Shiloh

Archaeological record shows that Shiloh was used as a sacred cultic center before the arrival of the Israelites.

What was installed at Shiloh in Joshua 18:1?

What went on at a yearly festival there in Judges 21:19-21? \_\_\_\_\_

What did Elkanah and Hannah do in Shiloh?

What is recorded about Shiloh in Psalm 78:60? \_\_\_\_\_

In Jer. 7:12-14? \_\_\_\_\_

Shiloh

Ramah

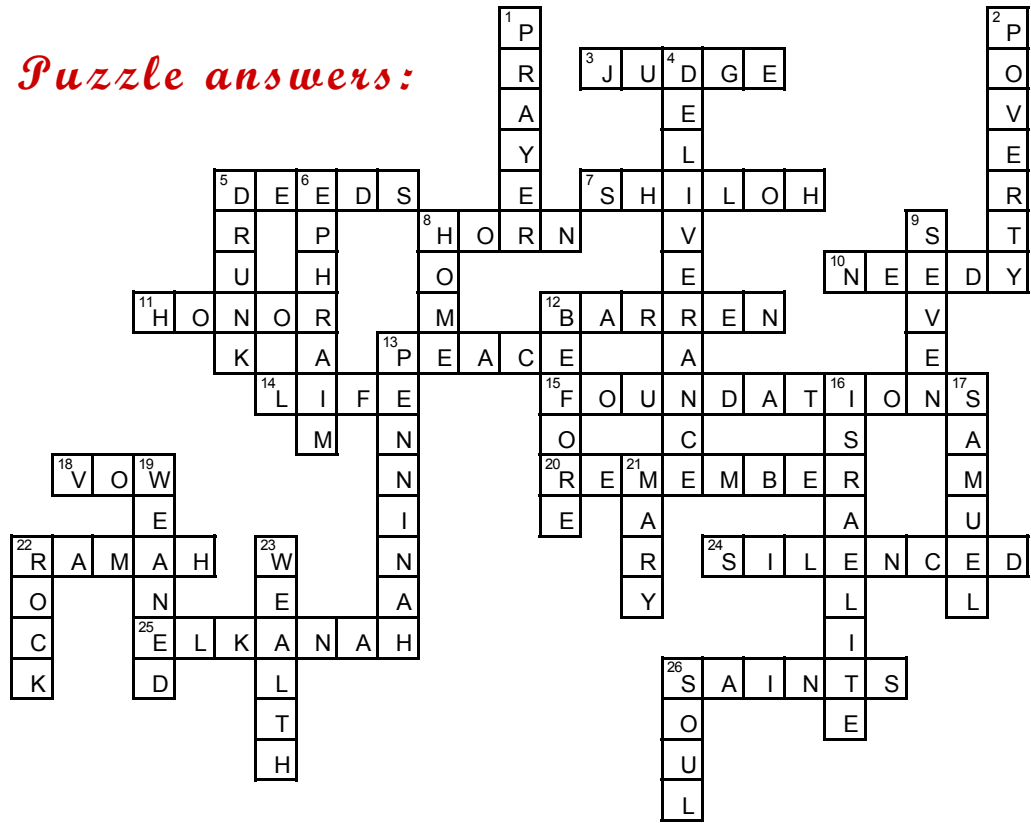
Jerusalem ★

Ramah was about 18 miles from Shiloh

Jerusalem was still under the control of the Jebusites at this point and time, and would continue to be until conquered by David.



## Puzzle answers:



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[www.thelightedjourney.com](http://www.thelightedjourney.com)



## Sources:

Shiloh p.5

"Israelite Shrines and Worship Before the Temple of Solomon." *Archaeological Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005. 398. Print.