GIVING BIRTH TO YOUR PROMISE

Bessons from the life of Hannah

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I dedicate my first book to God my heavenly Father for giving me insight in the importance of writing to help strengthen the Body of Christ. Thank you Lord for your love and grace, I owe you everything!

My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 73:26

FOREWORD

An excellent mind has created a book for believers and nonbelievers. Congratulations apostle Stefan, my son and colabourer in the Body of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Stefan has written an Easy to Read book, yet with so many lessons to be learned. Simple, but able to lead us deeper in all the promises of God that have to come to fruition. This is a wonderful book reaching out to many, to experience God in the birthing of lots of promises becoming a reality.

This book shows us how Grace overshadowed jealousy by being kind and tenacious in silent prayer. Thank you for showing us that the prayer of the righteous avails much. Stefan also shows us that Hannah in her barrenness found a refuge in prayer in God's house. Se besought the creator to raise her up in the realm of motherhood. She bargained with God, she vowed that if He would give her a son, she would give him back to God exclusively for His use. Hannah prayed and promised, and when her prayer was answered she quietly redeemed her promise. She birthed a son, who can be seen as a type of Christ, a prophet that changed the cause of history.

I believe many will find encouragement in this book and learn to be consistent in all their endeavours.

Apostle Melvin (Benjamin) Abrahams Overseer of Heaven Designed Life International

TESTIMONIALS

"Giving Birth to your Promise' is an inspirational and practical guide on how to bring forth the great treasures God placed inside of us. It's a must read for every believer, especially those going through a dry season."

Swendly Benilia Author of 'The Force Companion'

"My brother, apostle Stefan, gives us insights and understanding that we are pregnant with a promise from God. The book makes us look to God as well as inwardly as the investment that God through His Son has made in us as His people. I recommend the book as a rediscovery of what God has spiritually impregnated you with and bring it forth!"

> Jehonathan Abrahams Author of 'The Rare Anointing'

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PREFACE

'Giving birth to your promise' is my very first book. As you can imagine, I am extremely proud of this achievement. From the moment I decided to start writing this book it took me about a year to complete it. It has been a great journey thinking about the topic, praying, reading and speaking about it in church. Finding time in my busy schedule was sometimes quite challenging. At times weeks went by without me writing anything and sometimes I took a day off just to write for hours.

Acknowledgments

To my patient and supportive wife Melvina, I want to say 'Thank you so much, for the love and inspiration! Your prayers and encouragement kept me going, not only while writing, but gave me strength in general in our marriage. I love you dearly!' To the church family I want to say 'Thank you my brothers and sisters for continuously covering us with your prayers and believing in us! God put us together and I am forever grateful for being part of each other's lives. Love you all!' Lastly, thank you to my father in law and spiritual father apostle Melvin Abrahams. 'Daddy, you always believe in me and push me to reach my full potential in life. I appreciate your council and correction (which is not always nice, but necessary for me to grow ©). With your 40 years of ministry experience you have become a great resource to my life.'

Full Potential

In the beginning of 2019 God reminded me that everyone is unique and has a mind filled with ideas, thoughts, questions, experience and expertise. This means that everyone has a story to tell or at least things to share, but unfortunately the majority of great stories were never told. Inspirational ideas, creations or potential never came to life. The Bible says that we are able to do far more abundantly than we ask or think according to the power of God at work within us. We often limit ourselves by thinking we can never achieve that which is our

mind. We believe it's foolishness to even think that we could be the next great politician, musician or business man. Others yes, but we could not see ourselves mounting up to that level. We might settle for a job we do not enjoy or where we cannot use our talents fully, but because of comfortability and fear of stepping out we unfortunately never reach our full potential. I was saddened thinking about all the insight, knowledge, talents, gifts and wisdom buried and gone, so decided dedicating my time helping our church family to reach their full potential and becoming successful in God's eyes!

Writing assignment

Shortly after this, my wife and I gave the whole congregation the assignment to start writing. Some of our church members have started with writing articles, others with poetry, a journal or a cook book. Inspired by the life of Hannah, I decided to write this first book on what we can learn from the way she operated in life to eventually have our promise birthed. I would be exceptionally grateful if my book would help even only one person to be inspired or motivated to become the person God called him to be!

Reading instruction

Every chapter in this book focuses on a personality or character trait of Hannah showing us how her attitude influenced her actions bringing her closer to birthing her promise. I believe we can all learn from Hannah. At the end of every chapter I formulated the most important lesson that can help us to improve in life. Although the book might be read through in a couple of hours, it will be most effective not reading more than a chapter per day or even multiple days. Thinking about and meditating on the 'lesson' is necessary for us to maximize the impact. I have added a reflection page after every chapter to write down anything that comes to mind. Ideas, evaluation points, prayer points, points of action etcetera. Have fun and please let me know how the life of Hannah has impacted you!

INTRODUCTION

The Promise Inside

Everyone has a promise inside of them. God has created each and every person for a purpose to fulfil on the earth. Sometimes we walk the earth based on our own understanding of what it means to be successful. Or we assume we fulfil our role by being occupied with businesses, jobs and family. Yet unfortunately most of us never figure out for what purpose exactly we were created. What we fail to understand is that is it not only us who need God and His guidance in our lives, but God also needs us on the earth. We live in a body so we can legally walk around on this beautiful planet. However, God is spirit and so are we; created in His image and likeness. Our spirit does not die when we pass away. And our spirit already existed before we were born. The Bible says that we already had a purpose in Christ before the foundation of the world. And the father knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb.

In other words, we were with God before we were born. We should ask ourselves the question why God sent us to the earth. Not to be saved to eventually go back to heaven. That does not make sense. Because if getting to heaven would have been the purpose for our life on earth, why did God not immediately kill us after we had given our lives to Christ? Or even better, why would he send us here in the first place if all we have to do is trying to get back into heaven?

We all have a promise inside of us. The Bible also calls it a treasure in earthen vessels. Think about it as a treasure chest filled with diamonds and other precious stones, probably worth billions. However, if the chest remains closed, the content can never be accessed and it is in fact worthless. Inside of you God has hidden such a treasure chest. The problem is that most of us don't even realize that treasure is there. Can you imagine what would happen if all God's children start opening their treasure chest, or in other words, have their promise birthed? That would be transformational!

Keep in mind that my promise is different than yours. What I will give birth to, is different than what you give birth to. The objective of our promise however is the same, God. Abraham's promise was to become the father of a great people, the people that God needed to carry out His purpose for the earth. God spoke and Abraham responded in faith. Without God therefore it is impossible to access our promise. Understanding God's will and purpose is the key to opening the chest.

In this book we look at the life of Hannah. She was the mother of Samuel who was dedicated to live for God. Of course, we all know Samuel as an amazing prophet who anointed Saul and David as King. But what we often do not realise is that the characteristics of his mother initiated his ministry. And I believe that we can learn a great deal from Hannah so we can also be sons and daughters of God giving birth to the next promise for the earth.

BIBLE STORY

The First Book of Samuel

The Story of Hannah can be found in the Bible in the first book of Samuel. Seeing that these scriptures will be the basis for this book, I have added them below. I recommend reading these scriptures first before we start looking at the life of Hannah.

1 Samuel 1:1 - 1 Samuel 2:21 (NASB)

'Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD there. When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah

his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat. Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head." Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Then Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you." But Hannah replied, "No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation." Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him." She said, "Let your maidservant find favour in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel,

saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD." Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever." Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. She said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is dedicated to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.'

'Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. Boast no more so very proudly, do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, but she who has many children languishes. The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honour; For the

pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, And He set the world on them. He keeps the feet of His godly ones, But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; For not by might shall a man prevail. Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; Against them He will thunder in the heavens, The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; And He will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed." Then Elkanah went to his home at Ramah. But the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." If the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force." Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD. Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a boy wearing a linen ephod. And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the LORD give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD." And they went to their own home. The LORD visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before the LORD."

CHAPTER ONE

Who Is Hannah?

Let us start with mentioning we do not really know Hannah besides what we read about her in the first two chapters in the first book of Samuel. She is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. However, we can learn a great deal from her. And the result we of course all know, she gave birth to Samuel.

Two wives

In the first chapter of the book of Samuel the genealogy of Elkanah is explained. He is mentioned to come from the hill country of Ephraim. We must understand that Elkanah was not an Ephraimite, but a Levite from the sons of Kohath (*1 Chron. 6:23*). Levites did not have their own territory, but lived amongst the other tribes. Kohathites were highly respected and godly people. Although polygamy had never been

God's intention for men, the Bible says that Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah.

Hannah

According to Jewish history Hannah was most probably the first wife of Elkanah. He loved Hannah, but she was barren. She could not conceive; not able to become pregnant. It had probably been taken years before they decided to have children through someone else. It could have been Hannah pointing Elkanah to Peninnah, just like Sarah and Rebekah had done. Or Elkanah deciding he needed to reproduce after his own kind.

Can you imagine the pain Hannah must have felt? She was married but was unable to reproduce. A woman not being able to bring forth children was a great shame at that time. She must have felt worthless. No more generations after Elkanah also meant no income at an old age. Children were also the people who took care of you later on. It was every woman's desire to become pregnant and give birth to a son.

Hannah did not understand where her barrenness came from. She was always faithful to God and prayed for a son, but never realised it was God who closed her womb. Honestly, most believers would rebuke the devil and pray or fast God would turn the barrenness into fertility. However, can you believe the most dry and unfruitful season in her life, the worst time of her life, was orchestrated by God? God allowed her to go through the process so that she finally understood the son she would give birth to was meant for God alone. God had a need in the earth that would have never been met if He had given Samuel when Hannah desired it. Prematurely access to your promise might destroy its intended function.

Peninnah

After a number of years trying to conceive, Peninnah came in the picture. She fell pregnant even putting more shame on Hannah. Before Peninnah was there, the problem of not conceiving could have also been Elkanah, but not anymore. Hannah was clearly the problem and Peninnah knew exactly how to remind her of that. She was called her rival, provoking Hannah in order to irritate her. She made Hannah upset and sad.

Double Portion

The Bible tells us that when the day for sacrifice came Elkanah used to give a double portion of the food to Hannah because he loved her. That is quite interesting seeing that the double portion was normally only given to the firstborn son. With giving this to Hannah he made a public declaration to Peninnah that she was not good enough. She had given him children, but his choice was still his first wife Hannah. The firstborn was the person representing the father in his absence. The firstborn also inherited the full blessing by prophetic utterance. This probably made Peninnah go crazy. She was married to Elkanah, but always came second. She had given him children, but the double portion went to Hannah.

LESSON

Sometimes when you desire something in your life, it is God keeping the door closed and sending you to dry places. Do not worry about jealous people around you. Focus on the desire and need of God, just like Hannah did. That will allow you to pray effectively. You can rebuke the enemy as much as you want, but try to understand who you are in God. Does your name have a special meaning as well? Do you know your role in your family and the reason why you are in this season? In Christ you also have received the right of the first-born son. How do you see yourself and in what aspect can you grow even further? Use the reflection page to write down your thoughts!

REFLECTION PAGE CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER TWO

The Need of God

What made Hannah such a wonderful woman is that she did not only look at the needs of her husband or herself, but she came to understand the need of God. Let me explain.

Year after year Hannah would go up to Shiloh with her family. A long trip hoping that God would finally answer her prayers and give her the son she always desired. Year after year worshipping at the temple and bringing their sacrificial offerings, unfortunately did not result in Hannah becoming pregnant. Can you imagine, praying and fasting the whole year for a son, looking forward to the annual trip to Shiloh where the Ark of the Covenant (God's presence) was located, high expectations, but instead of enjoying the experience of becoming a mother she was mocked and bitterly provoked by her rival Peninnah. That must have hurt, year after year...

Being a prayerful woman, Hannah saw what was going on at the temple when they came to offer their sacrifices to the Lord. She observed the priests Hophni and Phineas, the wicked sons of Eli executing the 'holy' priesthood. The Bible says that the two boys were corrupt. Thrusting a three-pronged fork into the pan and take all the meat for themselves that the fork brought up. Even their servants would ask the raw meats with the fat still on, and if not given freely, taken by force. Hannah also probably witnessed how Hophni and Phineas would be having sex with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

The Bible says that in those days the word of the Lord was rare and there were not many visions (1 Sam. 3:1). So, every ritual in the temple just continued as if everything was fine. However, there was no word, no visions nor any presence of God.

Hannah was a righteous woman. What she saw happening at the temple in Shiloh must have broken her heart. A corrupt priesthood and no word of God. Hannah loved God. She loved God's people. She had so much respect for God's order, but saw the corrupt state of the temple. She made a decision that changed her life completely.

One year they went up to Shiloh as usual and the day came that it was Elkanah's turn to sacrifice their offerings. He gave portions of the food to everyone and a double portion to Hannah, because he loved her. She however was extremely sad. Again, Hannah did not receive any word from God concerning a child, her only desire and prayer. Of course her jealous rival Peninnah started offending and hurting her again with her barrenness. On top of that her own husband did not even understand why her heart was so saddened. When he made a foolish remark, being better than ten sons, she was fed up with

everyone. She stood up and went to the only person who would understand her... God.

Fulfilling God's need

Hannah, still extremely sad, went to the temple to pray to God. She started her prayer as usual, greatly distressed and bitterly weeping. Can you image the pain she was going through? Knowing God exists, but never answering her prayer? For years crying out to God for the need she had in her life? Every time she prayed, she focused on her own need of receiving a son. It did not work. She was a woman of God, a strong believer, but still God kept her womb closed. I think she knew God would give her a son. She was prophetic, understanding the promise God had given her, but never understanding why it would take so long for the promise to be birthed.

Prophetic shift

I believe there, that one moment Hannah realised something. The promise she knew God had given her was not meant for her, but for God Himself. She still desperately wanted a son, but he would fulfil the need of God and not primarily her own desires. Hannah remembered the state of the temple and all corrupt practices that were occurring there. She knew the word from the Lord was very rare in those days and God desired to speak again. God was in need of a new type of priesthood, one that could really capture the heart of God. A prophetic priesthood. That was the promise he had given her. She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

By understanding what God had in His heart and releasing that in the earth realm she operated prophetically. Especially calling upon the

'Lord of hosts', or the Lord of the heavenly armies. Hannah didn't just call upon God, but on the specific expression she had a need of. No one would fight for her; she herself couldn't do it anymore, so she wanted the Lord of hosts, the one who can send a whole army of angels in times of battles to fight on her behalf. She understood God. Hannah was prophetic. We sometimes associate the prophetic gift with some kind of fortune telling. See what is happening in the future and release that to the people of God. When God gives us a word of wisdom, he might give us a look into the future, that is correct. But the first thing we must understand about the prophetic is that we receive a deeper look into the heart of God. That is why the declaration of the Word of God is already a prophetic act. The Word is the most important attribute for us in understanding the will of God.

God first

Our prayers must also change to understanding the need of God first. We first seek His Kingdom and His Righteousness and all other things will be given unto us (*Mat. 6:33*). Everything we need will be given to us as long as we first desire to fulfil the need of God. And YES, God has a need you can meet. We sometimes make ourselves so low and God so high. 'We are nothing and He is everything'. Well, we are made in His image and likeness. He even called us gods on the earth, sons of the Most High (*Psalm 82:6*). We are God's hands and feet on earth. He sent us here from where He is in eternity so we could fulfil our purpose for the earth, which is also His purpose for us; to speak the matters that are in God's own heart (prophetic). Hannah understood that. She made the vow to dedicate her fruit, her son, her firstborn to God. And that was exactly what God wanted to hear. And this time He answered her prayer.

We know God has given us a great purpose. We know there is a promise inside of us that needs to be birthed, but still we are unable to produce fruit. We do not understand why everything we undertake seems futile. We are mocked, life is hard and we are hurt because things do not seem to go the way they should.

I want to challenge you. Shift from chasing after your desire and need to what God needs from you. Transition from your own heart and will to tapping into God's heart. The Bible says we should delight ourselves in the Lord and He will give us the desires of our heart (*Psalm 37:4*). He has not forgotten you, do not worry my friend. But He cannot give you something prematurely. Hannah would have been happy with Samuel years before, but the order of God in the temple would then not have changed. God's plan is so much bigger than ours.

Premature access to your promise might destroy God's purpose for you. I encourage you to go through the process. You are not yet aware of the greatness there is inside of you. Do not be limited by your own thoughts and desires, but try to see God's need and plan. Study the Word of God and pray. Be imparted into by a true 5-fold ministry and you will see how God will use you. Use the reflection page to write down your thoughts on the need of God. What do you see? Where can your promise be an answer to God's need for the earth?

REFLECTION PAGE CHAPTER 2
