

Promise for Child - Not a Child of Promise

Introduction:

There are unifying themes to the verses. The themes are the promise of life and the giving of life. In the Torah and Haftarah, it is the promise of life honored and kept. First, the Genesis account where sterile Sarah receive the promised son. Then we have the Haftarah account of Samuel being born to Hannah, a sterile woman. Out of no life, out of a dead womb, the Lord created life. In the New Testament passage, there is the promise that the Lord will breathe life into the dead tomb, just as He breathed it into the dead wombs. We have the assurance of salvation, resurrection and eternal life.

Today, we will look at the Haftarah portion first. Then we will look at the New Testament portion and we will conclude with the Torah portion.

Haftarah:

The Haftarah portion covers 1 Samuel 1:1 to 2:10. The verses we will look at describe events surrounding the birth of Samuel. Hannah is majorly depressed. She would not eat.¹

At the temple, she prayed. Hannah prayed so fervently, Eli thought she was drunk. She told Eli she was praying, because she felt so miserable and upset.² Eli responds with words of comfort. 1 Samuel 1:17 (*Contemporary English Version*) **You may go home now and stop worrying. I'm sure the God of Israel will answer your prayer.**

First the Lord responds with comfort, through Eli. Then He answers the prayer. Skipping down to verse 19. **Elkanah and his family got up early the next morning and worshiped the LORD. Then they went back home to Ramah. Later the LORD blessed Elkanah and Hannah ²⁰with a son. She named him Samuel because she had asked the LORD for him.**

New Testament:

The New Testament portion is 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 18. These verses are about the return of the Lord. At the end of time, those who are dead in the Messiah are raised.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 (*Contemporary English Version*) **We believe that Yeshua died and was raised to life. We also believe that when God brings Yeshua back again, he will bring with him all who had faith in Yeshua before they died.**

The Haftarah portion gives us hope and courage. God answers prayer. He keeps His promises of eternal life as He did His promises of children. He breathes life into our lives. And He gives us eternal life through Yeshua.

Torah:

The Torah portion is Genesis Chapter 21. This is the story of the Abraham and Sarah and the birth of the promised son.

My first thought was to talk about the story of Abraham and Sarah. Discussing the promise, God being faithful to His promises and being a child of promise is easy. Starting the new year with a promise is just awesome.

When reading about the verse and reflecting on the verse, another theme came to mind. That theme is about being a child who is **NOT** of the promise. Somehow, that seems like a better way to start the year. I am hoping you can understand how, after we are done reflecting on the texts.

¹ 1 Samuel 1:8.

² 1 Samuel 1:15-16.

Genesis 21:15-18 (*Contemporary English Version*) and after they had run out of water, Hagar put her son under a bush. ¹⁶Then she sat down a long way off, because she could not bear to watch him die. And she cried bitterly. ¹⁷When God heard the boy crying, the angel of God called out to Hagar from heaven and said, "Hagar, why are you worried? Don't be afraid. I have heard your son crying. ¹⁸Help him up and hold his hand, because I will make him the father of a great nation."

Pastor Ed gives the background of Hagar. She was an Egyptian and a slave. And she gives Abraham, the important man Abraham, a son. Abraham's only son for a while too.³

Then what happens. She gets royal boot, the right boot of fellowship. Out into the desert, Hagar and Ishmael are sent, with a little food and water.

How would you feel? From the hero, the one who rescues Abraham and Sarah from their childless plight to persona non grata.

There are many people who are persona non grata, people who do not feel very welcome, like they are not children of promise.

A few groups of people who feel like they are not the privileged few, like they are not children of the promise in school, church and society include:

- The poor and impoverished.
- The young and the elderly.
- People with drug, alcohol or gambling addictions.
- Non-believers. People who have families that do not extend back in the church denomination for generations.
- Black people, First Nations peoples, Jewish people, Visible minorities, gay people.
- Learning disabled, handicapped people, beauty challenged individuals.
- Those with stagnated careers.
- The quiet, shy and retiring.
- Artistically and musically challenged.
- Those who are weight challenged (skinny) and weight gifted (obese).
- Second bests.

Life is not fair. School is not fair. The church is not fair. Work is not fair. Family is not fair. But God is just.

In the depth of our despair, God comes, just as He did to Hagar, He comes. He brings a word of encouragement and provisions.⁴ During the new year, there may be times when you do not feel like a child of promise. When that happens, wait. Listen to God's words of comfort, feed on His provisions and watch as He does wonderful things in your life, as He makes a great nation out of you.

³ Ed Vasicek. The Average Ones: God Uses "Seconds." SermonCentral.com, internet site <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=32105&ContributorID=661>

⁴ Vasicek, internet.