

Bye, Bye Baby

1 Samuel 1:19-28 May 17, 2026

Hollywood loves to fawn over method actors. It's when an actor fully takes on the behavior and mentality of a character they've been cast to play until the production has finished. Even when the cameras aren't rolling, they will demand people refer to them by the *character's* name. They will use the character's voice. They will act not as themselves, but as the part they're playing.

Daniel Day-Lewis is notorious for method acting. On *Gangs Of New York* he developed pneumonia because he wouldn't wear modern clothing for warmth between takes.¹ On *The Crucible*, he refused to bathe.² On *Last Of The Mohicans* he wouldn't eat anything he didn't hunt himself.

But it was his 1989 role on stage as Hamlet that stands out the most. One night, after Act 1, Scene 5, Day-Lewis walked off stage and collapsed in sorrow and exhaustion and refused to go back out. He claimed he hallucinated the ghost of his father and had been dialoguing with *him* for weeks.

Why does he keep method acting? *He* says, "I most enjoy the loss of self."³ I would argue his antics are the absolute glorification of self.

Why talk about method acting? Well, when reading this text I was thinking about a person fully devoting themselves to a role. You see, Hannah had gone to the Lord and poured out her heart. She recognizes God as the the King of the universe, the Director of life. And then she describes herself as the Lord's servant. Not as an aristocrat's wife. But as a trusting maidservant, ready to be directed and *asking* Her Master to give her an additional role as mother to a son.

She promised that, if she got the role, she would totally dedicate herself. That she would willingly, joyfully, return this boy to the Lord and that he would live all his days as a Nazarite in God's service.

Today she gets the part. We watch the lengths she goes to performing this role. *Never* flinching. Carrying out her devotion to the Lord, no matter what it required. She *lived* the part God gave her.

1 Samuel 1:19 - 19 The next morning Elkanah and Hannah got up early to worship before the LORD. Afterward, they returned home to Ramah. Then Elkanah was intimate with his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her.

This family wasn't perfect, but this is a faithful and Godly family. *Every* year they came to Shiloh to worship God. While there, they're up early to participate in the daily morning sacrifice.⁴ That wasn't specifically required of regular people. Yet here they are, together in worship.

¹ <https://www.slashfilm.com/818565/going-method-for-gangs-of-new-york-made-daniel-day-lewis-sick/>

² <https://www.joblo.com/daniel-day-lewis-how-method-acting-was-used/>

³ <https://www.beyondcriticism.com/20038/from-the-archives-what-drove-daniel-day-lewis>

⁴ Robert Bergen *The New American Commentary, Volume 7: 1, 2 Samuel*

In fact, our text begins *and* ends with worship. They lived life as worshippers. Not just in the ritualistic sense. Theirs was a *lifestyle* of worship in their choices, their activities, their relationships, and, yes, their schedule. It was part of the regular family calendar.

"[They] got up early to worship *the LORD*." Look at chapter 1 and note how many times you can see that name in all caps. It's the name Yahweh. 12 times in 10 verses today. *He* is the focus. He was the focus of Hannah's life and Elkanah's life. In their minds, on their lips, directing their activities.

The name Yahweh is interesting to study. We're not sure how it's pronounced. Scholars believe in Moses' day the Name would've been four syllables, not two.⁵ The name "connotes God's nearness, His concern for man, and the revelation of His redemptive covenant."⁶ *That* Name, that glorious and fearful Name, is all over these verses. His house. His presence. His power. His kindness.

We're told He *remembered* Hannah. It's not that He forgot - the Lord can never forget you. In the Old Testament, to "remember" means to act on their behalf.⁷ How did the Lord act for Hannah? First of all, He went home with them! They go home and there is the Lord right inside their tent with the family. He acts in their regular life experience.

God doesn't only want involvement with you during prayer times or during Sunday mornings. His overt desire is to involve Himself in every aspect and phase of your life. He wants to nourish and bless your whole life, from the most intimate aspects all the way out to your ultimate legacy.

When Moses asked God about His name in Exodus 3, His response was essentially, "I Am present is what I Am."⁸ The LORD is present with you, today. Remembering you and acting on your behalf.

1 Samuel 1:20 - ²⁰ After some time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, because she said, "I requested him from the LORD."

Samuel is a normal name to us, but scholars say that Hannah used wordplay here - maybe even an acrostic.⁹ The name can mean "He who is from God,"¹⁰ "Offspring of God,"¹¹ "Asked from God."¹²

Hannah knows this baby is not a coincidence. He is living, breathing proof that God *remembers* His people. He *remembered* Noah in the flood. He *remembered* Abraham when He destroyed Sodom. He *remembered* Rachel and gave her Joseph.¹³ He remembers His covenant *forever*.¹⁴

⁵ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

⁶ TWOT

⁷ *CSB Study Bible Notes*

⁸ TWOT

⁹ Bergen, *CSB Study Bible Notes*

¹⁰ P. Kyle McCarter *1 Samuel: A New Translation With Introduction And Commentary*

¹¹ David Toshio Tsumura *The New International Commentary On The Old Testament: The First Book of Samuel*

¹² Bergen

¹³ John Woodhouse *1 Samuel: Looking For A Leader*

¹⁴ Psalm 111:5

1 Samuel 1:21-22 - ²¹ **When Elkanah and all his household went up to make the annual sacrifice and his vow offering to the LORD,** ²² **Hannah did not go and explained to her husband, "After the child is weaned, I'll take him to appear in the LORD's presence and to stay there permanently."**

After Daniel Day-Lewis left the stage that night playing *Hamlet*, he quit the show. He broke his contract. Despite the responsibilities he had to the production, despite his agreement with the producers, he was done. In fact, he never returned to acting on the stage again.

What about Hannah? The boy she asked for had been born. Is she reneging on her promise? The answer is no. There's no hesitation or procrastination here. A little one *needed* to be nursed and delivering an infant to Old Eli was not a wise or realistic course of action.

And it wasn't a problem that she didn't attend the annual festival. Under the Mosaic Law, women were not commanded to go each year - men were.¹⁵

So, she would wait. But already we can sense *just how committed* she would have to be. Who here would give up their child? Hannah, of course, *loves* her boy. Where we read "child" she used a tender term. Typically it would be used of young men in the height of their powers, but mothers would also use it of baby boys.¹⁶ Something like, "the Little Man," or, "the Big Guy."

We can imagine the love and affection radiating from Hannah as she holds Samuel in her arms. But she said, "I'm going to take him to appear before the Lord's *face*."¹⁷ That's what she literally said.

I cannot imagine what her mother's heart felt at the prospect of handing over her precious baby boy after only a few short years. But it is clear, her *servant's* heart was full of faith, knowing that while Samuel was lit by the shining face of Yahweh, he would be safe and he would be loved.

1 Samuel 1:23 - ²³ **Her husband, Elkanah, replied, "Do what you think is best, and stay here until you've weaned him. May the LORD confirm your word." So Hannah stayed there and nursed her son until she weaned him.**

Mothers of the time typically weaned at three years of age.¹⁸ Not a long time to have a child in the house. *But* long enough to be tempting to *forget* a vow made to the Lord. Notice - Elkanah doesn't scold his wife or shoot her down. He's starting to live with her in understanding. *But* as he gives her personal encouragement, he also encourages her to be sure to keep her word to the Lord.

After the *Hamlet* debacle, Daniel Day-Lewis' doctor told him to quit, so he did.¹⁹ Elkanah takes their vows seriously. Under the Law, when a husband heard a wife make a vow, if he didn't veto it, *he* was

¹⁵ James Smith *The Books Of History*

¹⁶ Robert Alter *The David Story*

¹⁷ Alter

¹⁸ Dale Ralph Davis *1 Samuel: Looking On The Heart*, Ralph Klein *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 10: 1 Samuel*

¹⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/09/16/theater/london-hamlet-loses-star-to-illness.html>

responsible for it, too.²⁰ But we see here he *trusts* his wife. They're partners together in this vow to the Lord. But he does a great job here leading his family spiritually, with grace and integrity.

Manuscripts are divided here. Some say, "May the Lord establish *your* word," meaning Hannah. Others, "May the Lord establish *His* word." Each gives us something to think about. We have duties and responsibilities to the Lord. We've promised our lives to Him. At the same time, He has a word for our lives. A plan and a will for us. Promises that He keeps every day as we walk with Him.

In other words, we don't just interact with God because we want things from Him. We recognize He wants things for us and from us. A life for us to live according to His direction.

1 Samuel 1:24-25 - ²⁴ When she had weaned him, she took him with her to Shiloh, as well as a three-year-old bull, half a bushel of flour, and a clay jar of wine. Though the boy was still young, she took him to the LORD's house at Shiloh. ²⁵ Then they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy to Eli.

This family was clearly sincere in their worship. We've seen they *scheduled* their worship. But here, we see how their worship was *sacrificial*. To offer your child to the Lord's service is something beyond costly. But then, *on top of that*, they gave a lavish gift to the Lord's house.

Where it says there a three-year-old bull, many scholars believe it actually means *three* bulls.²¹ And the amount of flour and wine is also three times the normal amount.²² Why would they do this? Well, clearly this family believes in worshiping God with heart *and* word *and* calendar *and* wallet.

Now listen: If you don't give Christ your *heart*, He doesn't want your *bulls*. With that said, if you're a Christian, you are commanded to give of your resources to God's work. The New Testament does not tell you the *amount* you have to give or *where* you have to give. Instead, it gives the principles that our giving should be regular, cheerful, and sacrificial.²³ All three are exemplified by this family.

Let me pause to say that we are so thankful to anyone who has ever or continues to donate to our church. That's how we're able to do the things we do. And for those of you who give to other ministries, we are thankful for you, too. It's between you and the Lord how you contribute to His work on the earth. On *our* side, we try hard to never coerce people to give. Opportunity, yes, but never pressure. Because *we're* commanded to *not* compel people or strong-arm them or shake people down. That's why we don't pass a bag. That's why we don't put up thermometers.

But back to our text - I believe there's another reason why they brought a triple sacrifice to the Tabernacle that day. It's likely Samuel was three years old, meaning Hannah had sat out of the family trip three times. And now, here they are, giving a triple offering. Why? Because this family

²⁰ Numbers 30:10-15

²¹ Davis, Tsumura

²² John Walton, Victor Matthews, & Mark Chavalas *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*

²³ 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Mark 12:42-44, 2 Corinthians 8:2-3

took their vows, their devotion, their worship seriously. They didn't just show up when they felt like it or tack on worship when it was convenient. They oriented their lives around worshiping God.

You know, Daniel Day-Lewis speaks about how much he loves the process of "loss of self." But it's always at the cost of *others*. While filming *My Left Foot*, he refused to leave his wheelchair and made crew members lift him over equipment to move him from place to place. He also demanded they spoon-feed him, as his character was unable to move his arms.²⁴ People talk about his dedication and sacrifice, but it's those around him who have to foot the bill. Not Elkanah and Hannah. They have a sincere, steadfast, sacrificial worship that focuses not on self, but on Yahweh.

1 Samuel 1:26-28 - ²⁶ "Please, my lord," she said, "as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked him for, ²⁸ I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." Then he worshiped the LORD there.

This must've been a hard day for Hannah, but when it came she didn't flinch. She gave testimony of God's faithfulness. And notice, even when she references herself, it's not about *her* righteousness or *her* greatness. It's all about the Lord. She uses Yahweh's name four times in three sentences. A simple testimony, but so powerful. An Old Testament equivalent of "I was blind but now I see."

Daniel Day-Lewis is often asked about his *Hamlet* crash out. In one interview he said, "I lived with the part for eight months...I was beyond caring."²⁵ So he quit and never looked back. He had 8 months of commitment and no more.

Hannah was *dedicated* to her role as servant. She was still dedicated in her role as mother. Both were anchored in worship. Both were the *true* loss of self for the glory of God. Full commitment.

Hannah had been despondent, heart-broken, not eating. Now, she's healthy, she's full of deep contentment and joy, difficult though this part to play was. But Samuel would not only be a relief to Hannah. We'll find out soon enough that the whole *nation* needed relief from the terrible wickedness of Eli's two sons. And what has God done? He has orchestrated events so that Samuel is brought to the Tabernacle. *Here's* relief, in toddler form. It would take a few years, but Samuel would grow, and God would be with him. And eventually, by God's power and providence, the predators Hophni and Phineas would be replaced by the prophet Samuel. God *remembered* Hannah, but He *remembered* Israel's need, too. And used the lives of His people to play these parts not just for entertainment, but for edification.

God remembers you. He has a plan for your life. Do you know what it is? Are you walking in it? Is your life anchored in the worship of God? Not just something that you do if it's easy or convenient, but like the pattern seen here? Worship that is sincere, scheduled, sacrificial, steadfast and selfless?

²⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1579473/Daniel-Day-Lewis-aims-for-perfection.html>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SFvaootAL8>

We are called to act as God's servants. Not that we're faking or pretending, but a faith in action. Enacting God's stage directions in our lives. We called to leave our old character behind and take on the character of Jesus - dying to self and conforming to His image.

To do so requires devotion. To love the God Who loves us with all our heart, all our souls, all our minds, all our strength. In that sense, to never break character, but to be *truly* transformed into the character of Jesus and to live out the parts He has given us to play not for the fleeting glory of the stage, but the eternal glory of our Savior.