

1 SAMUEL 2

2:1

Hannah’s prayer is related to the biblical songs of other women, including Miriam and Deborah in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:20–21; Judges 5:2–31) and Mary in the New Testament (Luke 1:46–55; this song is known as the Magnificat). In Hannah’s case, the prayer is not specifically called a song but does follow Hebrew poetic tropes, including parallel structures, contrasting points, and the use of repetitive words and sounds.

The word “prayed” here can also be translated as “entreated” or “made supplication,” implying Hannah’s desire that her words would reach the Lord.

The Hebrew word translated as “rejoiceth” sounds the same as the name of Hannah’s hometown—Ramah, which can be translated as “height” or, in this case, “lifted up to a height.” Again, Hannah expressed her desire to lift her words and heart up to the Lord.

The use of the term “horn” here may refer to the symbol of the horns found on Hebrew altars (Exodus 27:2). The horns of the altar were anointed and dedicated to the service of the Lord. In verse 10, the horn is mentioned again at the end of the poem in a clear reference to the king that Samuel would someday anoint—also a reference to the “anointed one,” or the Messiah.

Hannah’s poem expressed the themes of an omnipotent God, His love for His children, and His justice. It also affirmed that the true object of worship was Yahweh (Jehovah) as opposed to the other gods that the

children of Israel falsely worshipped at the time. Later in 1 Samuel, one of the recurring themes was the tension between the people who worshipped Yahweh versus those who had fallen into idolatry.

2:2

Hannah's poem continued to establish Yahweh as the one who had blessed her with a child and who was to be the sole object of worship.

2:3

Hannah emphasized that Yahweh (in contrast to other gods—for example, Thoth, the Egyptian god of knowledge) is the one who judges us in this life and in the life to come.

2:4–5

Yahweh, as in other Hebrew poetry, was praised because of his strength, compassion, and righteous judgment.

2:6

In one of its rare mentions in the Old Testament, Hannah expressed the concept of a resurrection, saying that Yahweh could bring the dead back from the grave. Compare, for example, Job 19:25–26: “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” The word for “grave” in Hebrew is *she'ol*, which is the underworld or land of the dead. The Hebrew concept of *she'ol* was more like the Greek idea of Hades than the relatively modern Christian idea of hell. It's clear from the context in the Hebrew that *she'ol* is more a land of the dead than a place of punishment.

2:7–9

Hannah used the poetic form to express Yahweh's omnipotence—that He is indeed the only God over the whole earth.

A common theme throughout Hebrew history after Samuel was the primary responsibility God's people have to take care of the poor and needy. Most of the prophets who came after Samuel emphasized the need for taking care of widows, orphans, the poor, and the needy. The people, especially those in power, were entreated to exercise good judgment, which referred to keeping all people, rich or poor, accountable

to the law. For example, Isaiah 1:23 says, “Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.”

2:10

Hannah concluded her poem by acknowledging that it is only Yahweh, as opposed to other, false gods, who will judge all.

The use of the term “horn” here may refer to the symbol of the horns found on Hebrew altars (Exodus 27:2). The horns of the altar were anointed and dedicated to the service of the Lord. Here, the horn is mentioned at the end of Hannah’s poem in a clear reference to the king that Samuel would someday anoint—also a reference to the “anointed one,” or the Messiah.

2:12–17

Eli’s sons, who served as priests at the tabernacle in Shiloh, sinned against the Lord because they “abhorred [despised] the offering of the LORD.” Instead of giving the Lord proper respect and proper sacrifices, the two sons selfishly ate the best parts of the burned offerings. Because they were prideful and had rejected the Lord, they had become “sons of Belial,” which means that they were evil or lacking in worth. “Belial” derives from the Hebrew words *balah* (“lacking”) and *ya’al* (“value”).

2:17–19

Samuel served in the tabernacle while wearing the clothes of a priest. Note that Samuel’s mother still played an important role in his life, affirming his dedication to the Lord by providing priestly robes for him.

2:20–21

Because Hannah was a righteous woman and had fulfilled her oath to the Lord to fully dedicate her son to His service, the Lord blessed Hannah with other children, emphasizing that she was indeed one of the covenant people who were blessed with a posterity.

The end note, that “Samuel grew before the LORD,” echoes the phrase applied to Jesus as he grew up (see Luke 2:52; see also 1 Samuel 2:26). This phrase as applied to children in the Old Testament indicates that the children understood the covenant, the law, and the obligations placed on them.

2:22–25

Eli attempted to call his wayward sons to repentance, but they would not listen to their father. Because Eli could not help his sons change and, more importantly, because he failed to remove them as priests in the house of God, Eli and his sons would be cut off from God’s covenant.

2:26

This verse echoes the phrase applied to Jesus as he grew up (see Luke 2:52). When this phrase is applied to children in the Old Testament, it indicates that the children understood the covenant, the law, and the obligations placed on them.

2:2–34

The unnamed “man of God” who came to Eli announced that the Lord would cut Eli and his posterity off as a punishment for disobeying Him. Eli’s sons rejected their role as priests and had perverted the sacrifices to the Lord. They also promiscuously took advantage of women who came to the door of the tabernacle. For their offense against God, the sons would die. For Eli’s offense in allowing evil to continue in the tabernacle, he would lose the covenant blessing and his posterity would be cut off, either by dying at an early age or by never serving at the tabernacle again as priests. Both Eli’s posterity and priesthood would be cut off.

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