

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Hannah's prophetic hymn, 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Samuel ministers to the Lord, 1 Samuel 2:11. The abominable conduct of Eli's sons, 1 Samuel 2:12-17. Farther account of Samuel, and of the Divine blessing on Elkanah and Hannah, 1 Samuel 2:18-21. Eli's reprehensible remissness towards his sons in not restraining them in their great profligacy, 1 Samuel 2:22-26. The message of God to Eli, and the prophecy of the downfall of his family, and slaughter of his wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas, 1 Samuel 2:27-36.

Verse 1

And Hannah prayed, and said - The Chaldee very properly says, And Hannah prayed in the spirit of prophecy; for indeed the whole of this prayer, or as it may be properly called oracular declaration, is a piece of regular prophecy, every part of it having respect to the future, and perhaps not a little - of it declaratory of the Messiah's kingdom.

Dr. Hales has some very good observations on this prophetic song.

“This admirable hymn excels in simplicity of composition, closeness of connection, and uniformity of sentiment; breathing the pious effusions of a devout mind, deeply impressed with a conviction of God's mercies to herself in particular, and of his providential government of the world in general; exalting the poor in spirit or the humble-minded, and abasing the rich and the arrogant; rewarding the righteous, and punishing the wicked. Hannah was also a prophetess of the first class, besides predicting her own fruitfulness, 1 Samuel 2:5, (for she bore six children in all, 1 Samuel 2:21), she foretold not only the more immediate judgments of God upon the Philistines during her son's administration, 1 Samuel 2:10, but his remoter judgments ‘upon the ends of the earth,’ 1 Samuel 2:10, in the true spirit of the prophecies of Jacob, Balaam, and Moses. Like them, she describes the promised Savior of the world as a King, before there was any king in Israel; and she first applied to him the remarkable epithet Messiah in Hebrew, Christ in Greek, and Anointed in English, which was adopted by David, Nathan, Ethan, Isaiah, Daniel, and the succeeding prophets of the Old Testament; and by the apostles and inspired writers of the New. And the allusion thereto by Zacharias, the father of the Baptist, in his hymn, Luke 1:69, where he calls Christ a ‘horn of salvation,’ and the beautiful imitation of it by the blessed Virgin throughout in her hymn, Luke 1:46-55, furnishing the finest commentary thereon, clearly prove that Hannah in her rejoicing had respect to something higher than Peninnah her rival, or to the triumphs of Samuel, or even of David himself; the expressions are too magnificent and sublime to be confined to such objects. Indeed the learned rabbi, David Kimchi, was so struck with them that he ingenuously confessed that ‘the King of whom Hannah speaks is the Messiah,’ of whom she spake either by prophecy or tradition; for, continues he, ‘there was a tradition among the Israelites, that a great king should arise in Israel; and she seals up her song with celebrating this King who was to deliver them from all their enemies.’ The tradition, as we have seen, was founded principally on Balaam's second and third prophecies, Numbers 24:7-17; and we cannot but admire that gracious dispensation of spiritual gifts to Hannah (whose name signifies grace) in ranking her among the prophets who should first unfold a leading title of the blessed Seed of the woman.”

In the best MSS. the whole of this hymn is written in hemistich or poetic lines. I shall here produce it in this order, following the plan as exhibited in Kennicott's Bible, with some trifling alterations of our present version: -

1 Samuel 2:1. My heart exulteth in Jehovah; My horn is exalted in Jehovah. My mouth is incited over mine enemies, For I have rejoiced in thy salvation.

1 Samuel 2:2. There is none holy like Jehovah, For there is none besides thee; There is no rock like our God.

1 Samuel 2:3. Do not magnify yourselves, speak not proudly, proudly. Let not prevarication come out of your mouth; For the God of knowledge is Jehovah, And by him actions are directed.

1 Samuel 2:4. The bows of the heroes are broken, And the tottering are girded with strength.

1 Samuel 2:5. The full have hired out themselves for bread, And the famished cease for ever. The barren hath borne seven, And she who had many children is greatly enfeebled.

1 Samuel 2:6. Jehovah killeth, and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

1 Samuel 2:7. Jehovah maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth down, and he even exalteth.

1 Samuel 2:8. He lifteth up the poor from the dust; From the dunghill he exalteth the beggar, To make him sit with the nobles, And inherit the throne of glory. For to Jehovah belong the pillars of the earth, And upon them he hath placed the globe.

1 Samuel 2:9. The foot of his saints he shall keep, And the wicked shall be silent in darkness; For by strength shall no man prevail.

1 Samuel 2:10. Jehovah shall bruise them who contend with him; Upon them shall be thunder in the heavens. Jehovah shall judge the ends of the earth; And he shall give strength to his King. And shall exalt the horn of his Messiah.

It is not particularly stated here when Hannah composed or delivered this hymn; it appears from the connection to have been at the very time in which she dedicated her son to God at the tabernacle, though some think that she composed it immediately on the birth of Samuel. The former sentiment is probably the most correct.

Mine horn is exalted in the Lord - We have often seen that horn signifies power, might, and dominion. It is thus constantly used in the Bible, and was so used among the heathens. The following words of Horace to his jar are well known, and speak a sentiment very similar to that above: -

Tu spem reducis mentibus anxiis,  
Viresque et addis Cornua pauperi.

Hor. Odar. lib. iii., Od. 21, v. 18.

Thou bringest back hope to desponding minds; And thou addest strength and horns to the poor man.

Paraphrastically expressed by Mr. Francis: -

“Hope, by thee, fair fugitive,  
Bids the wretched strive to live.  
To the beggar you dispense  
Heart and brow of confidence.”

In which scarcely any thing of the meaning is preserved.

My mouth is enlarged - My faculty of speech is incited, stirred up, to express God’s disapprobation against my adversaries.

#### Verse 2

None holy - Holiness is peculiar to the God of Israel; no false god ever pretended to holiness; it was no attribute of heathenism, nor of any religion ever professed in the world before or since the true revelation of the true God.

There is none beside thee - There can be but one unoriginated, infinite, and eternal Being; that Being is Jehovah.

Any rock like our God - Rabbi Maimon has observed that the word *tsur*, which we translate rock, signifies, when applied to Jehovah, fountain, source, spring. There is no source whence continual help and salvation can arise but our God.

#### Verse 3

A God of knowledge - He is the most wise, teaching all good, and knowing all things.

Actions are weighed - *nithkenu*, they are directed; it is by his counsel alone that we can successfully begin, continue, or end, any work.

#### Verse 4

The bows of the mighty - The Targum considers the first verse as including a prophecy against the Philistines; the second verse, against Sennacherib and his army; the third, against Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans; the fourth, against the Greeks; the fifth, against Haman and his posterity; and the tenth, against Magog, and the enemies of the Messiah.

#### Verse 5

They that were full - All the things mentioned in these verses frequently happen in the course of the Divine providence; and indeed it is the particular providence of God that Hannah seems more especially to celebrate through the whole of this simple yet sublime ode.

#### Verse 6

The Lord killeth - God is the arbiter of life and death; he only can give life, and he only has a right to take it away.

He bringeth down to the grave - The Hebrew word *sheol*, which we translate grave, seems to have the same meaning in the Old Testament with *hades* in the New, which is the word generally used by the Septuagint for the other. It means the grave, the state of the dead, and the invisible place, or place of separate spirits. Sometimes we translate it hell, which now means the state of perdition, or place of eternal

torments; but as this comes from the Saxon, to cover or conceal, it means only the covered place. In some parts of England the word helling is used for the covers of a book, the slating of a house, etc. The Targum seems to understand it of death and the resurrection. "He kills and commands to give life; he causes to descend into Sheol, that in the time to come he may bring them into the lives of eternity," i.e., the life of shame and everlasting contempt, and the life of glory.

### Verse 7

**The Lord maketh poor - For many cannot bear affluence, and if God should continue to trust them with riches, they would be their ruin.**

**Maketh rich - Some he can trust, and therefore makes them stewards of his secular bounty.**

### Verse 8

To set them among princes - There have been many cases where, in the course of God's providence, a person has been raised from the lowest and most abject estate to the highest; from the plough to the imperial dignity: from the dungeon to the throne; from the dunghill to nobility. The story of Cincinnatus is well known; so is that of the patriarch Joseph; but there is one not less in point, that of Roushen Akhter, who was brought out of a dungeon, and exalted to the throne of Hindustan. On this circumstance the following elegant couplet was made: -

âœHe was a bright star, but now is become a moon,  
Joseph is taken from prison, and is become a king.âœ

**There is a play here on Roushen Akhter, which signifies a bright star; and there is an allusion to the history of the patriarch Joseph, because of the similarity of fortune between him and the Mohammedan prince.**

**For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's - He is almighty, and upholds all things by the word of his power.**

### Verse 9

**He will keep the feet of his saints - He will order and direct all their goings, and keep them from every evil way.**

**The wicked shall be silent in darkness - The Targum understands this of their being sent to the darkness of hell; they shall be slain.**

**By strength shall no man prevail - Because God is omnipotent, and no power can be successfully exerted against him.**

### Verse 10

The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken - Those who contend with him, x̄x'x<sup>TM</sup>x'<sup>TM</sup>x• (meribaiu), by sinning against his laws, opposing the progress of his word, or persecuting his people.

**Shall judge the ends on the earth - His empire shall be extended over all mankind by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, for to this the afterpart of the verse seems to apply: He shall give strength unto his king, and shall exalt the horn of his Christ, or, as the Targum says, x•x™x"x"x™ xžxœx;x•xª xžx©x™x—x™x” (viribbey malcuth Meshicheyh), â€œhe shall multiply the kingdom of the Messiah.â€ Here the horn means spiritual as well as secular dominion.**

**After the clause, The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces, the Septuagint add the following words:** ἰοῦν· ᾠψι...**ἡ ψαλμ**, ἀνα...**ὁ πνευματικὸς ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν ὁ υἱος τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὁ υἱος τοῦ υἱοῦ.** Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glorieth rather glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth the Lord; and that he executeth judgment and righteousness in the midst of the earth. This is a very long addition, and appears to be taken from Jeremiah 9:23, but on collating the two places the reader will find the words to be materially different. This clause is wanting in the Complutensian Polyglot, but it is in the edition of Aldus, in that of Cardinal Caroffa, and in the Codex Alexandrinus.

## Verse 11

**And Elkanah went to Ramah - Immediately after the 10th verse, the Septuagint add, ἰσὶαῖ τὰ ὁμολογία, ἱμαί»τ' ἐν μέρει  
ἰστ...ι., ἡ δὲ ἥμισυ ἱμαί»τ' οὐκ εἴρεται· ἰσὶ...τοῦ γένους... Ἀ. τοιαύτη ἵσταται τῇ ἡμίσει ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος, καὶ ἀφ' αὗτης ᾧ ὅτι ἔστι,  
before the Lord, and went unto Arimathea. Thus the Septuagint suppose that the song of Hannah was composed when she brought Samuel to present him to the Lord; and as soon as she had completed this fine ode, she delivered her into the hands of Eli the high priest, and the child entered immediately on his ministration.**

**Verse 12**

The sons of Eli were sons of Belial - They were perverse, wicked, profligate men; devil's children. They knew not the Lord.

They know! nor would an angel show Him; They would not know, nor choose to know Him.

These men were the principal cause of all the ungodliness of Israel. Their most execrable conduct, described 1 Samuel 2:13-17, caused the people to abhor the Lord's offering. An impious priesthood is the grand cause of the transgressions and ruin of any nation; witness France, Germany, Spain, Ac., from 1792 to 1814.

**Verse 13**

When any man offered sacrifice - That is, when a peace-offering was brought, the right shoulder and the breast belonged to the priest, the fat was burnt upon the altar, and the blood was poured at the bottom of the altar; the rest of the flesh belonged to the offerer. Under pretense of taking only their own part, they took the best of all they chose, and as much as they chose.

**Verse 14**

Kettle - caldron, or pot - We know not what these were, nor of what capacity; nor is it of any consequence.

**Verse 15**

Before they burnt the fat - They would serve themselves before God was served! This was iniquity and arrogance of the first magnitude.

He will not have sodden flesh - He chooses roast meat, not boiled; and if they had it in the pot before the servant came, he took it out that it might be roasted.

**Verse 17**

Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great - That is, Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli.

Men abhorred the offering - As the people saw that the priests had no piety, and that they acted as if there was no God; they despised God's service, and became infidels.

A national priesthood, when the foundation is right, may be a great blessing; but if the priesthood becomes corrupt, though the foundation itself stand sure, the corruption of the national manners will be the unavoidable consequence.

**Verse 18**

Girded with a linen ephod - This the Targum translates *asir cardut debuts* (asir cardut debuts), Girded with a cardit of byssus, or fine linen. The word (cardut) they seem to have borrowed from the Greek *ἱμάτιον ἱματίον*, a tunic, having *ἱματίον ἱματίον*, i.e., sleeves that came down to, or covered, the hands. This was esteemed an effeminate garment among the Romans. See Buxtorf's Talmudic Lexicon.

**Verse 19**

Made him a little coat - *meil katon* (meil katon), a little cloak, or surtout, an upper garment: probably intended to keep him from the cold, and to save his other clothes from being abused in his meaner services. It is probable that she furnished him with a new one each year, when she came up to one of the annual sacrifices.

**Verse 20**

Eli blessed Elkanah - The natural place of this verse seems to be before the 11th; after which the 21st should come in; after the 21st, perhaps the 26th should come in. The subjects in this chapter seem very much entangled and confused by the wrong position of the verses.

**Verse 22**

They lay with the women that assembled - It is probable that these were persons who had some employment about the tabernacle. See the note on Exodus 38:8, where the Hebrew text is similar to that in this place.

**Verse 23**

Why do ye such things! - Eli appears to have been a fondly affectionate, easy father, who wished his sons to do well, but did not bring them under proper discipline, and did not use his authority to restrain them. As judge, he had power to cast them immediately out of the vineyard, as wicked and unprofitable servants; this he did not, and his and their ruin was the consequence.

**Verse 25**

If one man sin against another - All differences between man and man may be settled by the proper judge; but if a man sin against the Supreme Judge, God himself, who shall reconcile him to his Maker? Your sin is immediately against God himself, and is the highest insult that can be offered, because it is in the matter of his own worship, therefore ye may expect his heaviest judgments.

But if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? - This was a question of the most solemn importance under the old covenant, especially after the death of Moses, the mediator. The law had determined what sins should be punished with death; and it was supposed that there was not any appeal from the decision there pronounced. 1 John 2:1 is an answer to this question; but it is an answer which the Gospel alone can give: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not; but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Because the Lord would slay them - The particle  $\times\text{'}\times^{\text{TM}}$  (ki), which we translate because, and thus make their continuance in sin the effect of God's determination to destroy them, should be translated therefore, as it means in many parts of the sacred writings. See Noldius's Particles, where the very text in question is introduced: Sed non auscultarunt, etc., Ideo voluit Jehova eos interficere; æœBut they would not hearken, etc.; Therefore God purposed to destroy them.æ• It was their not hearkening that induced the Lord to will their destruction.

#### Verse 27

There came a man of God - Who this was we know not, but the Chaldee terms him  $\times\text{'}\times^{\text{TM}}\times\bullet\text{'}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}$  (nebiya daya), a prophet of Jehovah.

Unto the house of thy father - That is, to Aaron; he was the first high priest; the priesthood descended from him to his eldest son Eleazar, then to Phinehas. It became afterwards established in the younger branch of the family of Aaron; for Eli was a descendant of Ithamar, Aaron's youngest son. From Eli it was transferred back again to the family of Eleazar, because of the profligacy of Eli's sons.

#### Verse 28

And did I choose him - The high priesthood was a place of the greatest honor that could be conferred on man, and a place of considerable emolument; for from their part of the sacrifices they derived a most comfortable livelihood.

#### Verse 29

Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice - They disdained to take the part allowed by law; and would take for themselves what part they pleased, and as much as they pleased, 1 Samuel 2:13-16: thus they kicked at the sacrifices.

Honourest thy sons above me - Permitting them to deal, as above, with the offerings and sacrifices, and take their part before the fat, etc., was burnt unto the Lord: thus they were first served. At this Eli connived, and thus honored his sons above God.

#### Verse 30

Should walk before me for ever - See Exodus 29:9; Exodus 40:15; Numbers 25:10-13, where it is positively promised that the priesthood should be continued in the family of Aaron For Ever. But although this promise appears to be absolute, yet we plainly see that, like all other apparently absolute promises of God, it is conditional, i.e., a condition is implied though not expressed.

But now - be it far from me - You have walked unworthily; I shall annul my promise, and reverse my ordinance. See Jeremiah 18:9, Jeremiah 18:10.

For them that honor me - This is a plan from which God will never depart; this can have no alteration; every promise is made in reference to it; æœthey who honor God shall be honored; they who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.æ•

#### Verse 31

I will cut off thine arm - I will destroy the strength, power, and influence of thy family.

#### Verse 32

Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation - Every version and almost every commentator understands this clause differently. The word  $\times\text{'}\times^{\text{TM}}$  (tsar), which we translate an enemy, and the Vulgate aemulum, a rival, signifies



calamity; and this is the best sense to understand it in here. The calamity which he saw was the defeat of the Israelites, the capture of the ark, the death of his wicked sons, and the triumph of the Philistines. All this he saw, that is, knew to have taken place, before he met with his own tragical death.

**In all the wealth which God shall give Israel - This also is dark. The meaning may be this: God has spoken good concerning Israel; he will, in the end, make the triumph of the Philistines their own confusion; and the capture of the ark shall be the desolation of their gods; but the Israelites shall first be sorely pressed with calamity. Or, the affliction of the tabernacle, for all the wealth which God would have given Israel.**

**There shall not be an old man - This is repeated from the preceding verse, all the family shall die in the flower of their years, as is said in the following verse.**

### Verse 33

And the man of thine - Of this passage Calmet observes: "The posterity of Eli possessed the high priesthood to the time of Solomon; and even when that dynasty was transferred to another family, God preserved that of Eli, not to render it more happy, but to punish it by seeing the prosperity of its enemies, to the end that it might see itself destitute and despised. This shows the depth of the judgments of God and the grandeur of his justice, which extends even to distant generations, and manifests itself to sinners both in life and death; both in their own disgrace, and in the prosperity of their enemies."

### Verse 34

**They shall die both of them - Hophni and Phinehas were both killed very shortly after in the great battle with the Philistines in which the Israelites were completely routed, and the ark taken. See 1 Samuel 4:1-11.**

### Verse 35

**A faithful priest** - This seems to have been spoken of Zadok, who was anointed high priest in the room of Abiathar, the last descendant of the house of Eli; see 1 Kings 2:26, 1 Kings 2:27. Abiathar was removed because he had joined with Adonijah, who had got himself proclaimed king; see 1 Kings 1:7.

**I will build him a sure house - I will continue the priesthood in his family.**

**He shall walk before mine Anointed - He shall minister before Solomon, and the kings which shall reign in the land.** The Targum says, "He shall walk  $\times\text{š}\times^{\text{x}} \times\check{\text{z}}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}$  (kodam Meshichi), before my Messiah," and the Septuagint expresses it, ἰμὶ½ῖ%οἱἑῖ½ Ἰσὶ-ἰῖfῖ,,ἰλ... ἰ¼ἰλ½ , "before my Christ;" for, in their proper and more extended sense, these things are supposed to belong to our great High Priest and the Christian system: but the word may refer to the Israelitish people. See the note on Hebrews 9:26.

### Verse 36

**Verse 33**  
**Shall come and crouch to him - Shall prostrate himself before him in the most abject manner, begging to be employed even in the meanest offices about the tabernacle, in order to get even the most scanty means of support.**

**A piece of silver - כסף אחד (agorath keseph), translated by the Septuagint, ἑξήκοντα ἄρτα... ἑξήκοντα ἄρτα... , an obolus of silver. The Targum translates it כסף אחד (mea), which is the same as the Hebrew (gerah), and weighed about sixteen grains of barley.**

**A morsel of bread - A mouthful; what might be sufficient to keep body and soul together. See the sin and its punishment. They formerly pampered themselves, and fed to the full on the Lord's sacrifices; and now they are reduced to a morsel of bread. They fed themselves without fear; and now they have cleanness of teeth in all their dwellings. They wasted the Lord's heritage, and now they beg their bread!**

In religious establishments, vile persons, who have no higher motive, may and do get into the priest's office, that they may clothe themselves with the wool, and feed themselves with the fat, while they starve the flock. But where there is no law to back the claims of the worthless and the wicked, men of piety and solid merit only can find support; for they must live on the free-will offerings of the people. Where religion is established by law, the strictest ecclesiastical discipline should be kept up, and all hireling priests and ecclesiastical drones should be expelled from the Lord's vineyard. An established religion, where the foundation is good, as is ours, I consider a great blessing; but it is liable to this continual abuse, which nothing but careful and rigid ecclesiastical discipline can either cure or prevent. If our high priests, our archbishops and bishops, do not their duty, the whole body of the clergy may become corrupt or inefficient. If they be faithful, the establishment will be an honor to the kingdom, and a praise in the earth.

The words pillars of the earth, xžx!xšx<sup>TM</sup> x•x"xŷ (metsukey erets), Mr. Parkhurst translates and defends thus:

“The compressors of the earth; i.e., the columns of the celestial fluid which compress or keep its parts together.” This is all imaginary; we do not know this compressing celestial fluid; but there is one that answers the same end, which we do know, i.e., the Air, the columns of which press upon the earth in all directions; above, below, around, with a weight of fifteen pounds to every square inch; so that a column of air of the height of the atmosphere, which on the surface of the globe measures one square inch, is known by the most accurate and indubitable experiments to weigh fifteen pounds. Now as a square foot contains one hundred and forty-four square inches, each foot must be compressed with a weight of incumbent atmospheric air equal to two thousand one hundred and sixty pounds. And as the earth is known to contain a surface of five thousand five hundred and seventy-five billions of square feet; hence, allowing two thousand one hundred and sixty pounds to each square foot, the whole surface of the globe must sustain a pressure of atmospheric air equal to twelve trillions and forty-one thousand billions of pounds; or six thousand and twenty-one billions of tons. This pressure, independently of what is called gravity, is sufficient to keep all the parts of the earth together, and perhaps to counteract all the influence of centrifugal force. But adding to this all the influence of gravity or attraction, by which every particle of matter tends to the center, these compressors of the earth are sufficient to poise, balance, and preserve the whole terraqueous globe. These pillars or compressors are an astonishing provision made by the wisdom of God for the necessities of the globe. Without this, water could not rise in fountains, nor the sap in vegetables. Without this, there could be no respiration for man or beast, and no circulation of the blood in any animal. In short, both vegetable and animal life depend, under God, on these pillars or compressors of the earth; and were it not for this compressing power, the air contained in the vessels of all plants and animals would by its elasticity expand and instantly rupture all those vessels, and cause the destruction of all animal and vegetable life: but God in his wisdom has so balanced these two forces, that, while they appear to counteract and balance each other, they serve, by mutual dilations and compressions, to promote the circulation of the sap in vegetables, and the blood in animals.