

### I Samuel

#### Lesson 4 - Chapter 2

I prepared you a bit last week for what we'll study today: Hannah's prayer or Hannah's song. This 10-verse segment that introduces 1st Samuel chapter 2 isn't particularly familiar to the Church (because it is buried deep within the much maligned Old Testament). However Judaism sees it as forming a central tenet of Yehoveh worship, generally on par with the Shema and the 10 Commandments. We are going to look at it in depth and then attach it to the principles it speaks about that appear later on in the bible.

Interestingly, we will find that Hannah's Prayer becomes a model for some important New Testament passages, and in some cases it is simply directly quoted and at other times it is somewhat paraphrased.

Last week's lesson was pretty technical; this week's will have a significantly different flavor as we take one of our famous detours towards the end of the lesson (that will extend into the following week) and eventually into a section of the Bible that will surprise you.

Let's re-read Hannah's Song.

#### **RE-READ 1ST SAM. 2:1 – 10**

How might we best characterize these few passages? I suggest that it is very much a Psalm of Thanksgiving. It has the same soaring tone as many of David's Psalms. Hannah's prayer is a Psalm of joy and gratitude of her deliverance. But it is also unmistakably prophetic and Messianic in its nature, as are so many of David's. Hannah's personal experience with God is the force behind her prayer and those experiences are expressed in such a way in this Psalm that it actually results in a beautiful and profound statement of Yehoveh's unrivaled holiness and nature. Hannah is like Job: she has found herself receiving great affliction from the Lord for reasons unknown, however she has also found herself receiving the greatest mercies and blessings from the Lord (also) for reasons unknown. All of the Bible's great saints and heroes have expressed (to one degree or another) this same kind of mysterious and perplexing experience with God that seems to go with the territory; so it both surprises and baffles me as to why it has become the norm within the Church of the modern era to proclaim that today we can ONLY expect mercies and blessings, and never afflictions, from the Father's hand. I fear that such a nice-sounding but erroneous doctrine as this one has caused many Believers to lose faith when calamity suddenly and inexplicably invades their otherwise peaceful and pious lives; or even worse that such unexplained and seemingly undeserved afflictions can cause a Believer to question God's judgment.

And on another level while this Psalm is but one individual's fervent and moving prayer

inspired by her own salvation experience, it also applies to all Israel as a nation.

As we begin examining this Psalm verse-by-verse I ask that you keep something crucial in mind: Hannah's song is every bit as much for the Church as it is for Israel. Further understand that what is proposed here, instructed here, and exposed here applies ONLY to God's set apart people who at one time were Israel and Israel alone; but with the advent of Messiah it now applies to **all** who call upon His holy name and are thus spiritually joined to Israel.

This is probably an appropriate time to remind you that the principles of the Bible are NOT FOR the unbelieving world; they are only for God's people. Certainly the pagan world is spoken about and at times referred to in God's Word, and they are encouraged to join Israel's covenants: but the mention of pagans is primarily for the purpose of contrast and comparison. Thus God's laws and commands are not for the world at large, they're only for His elect, His followers. I've said many times that if humanity could correctly follow the Law without the Lord, then there would have been no need for YHWH to **first redeem** Israel, and then only **after their redemption** give them His Laws on Mt. Sinai. The order of redemption first, and then learning and following His commands second, is critical. Without the Holy Spirit as our guide, no one (including the nation of Israel) can hope to carry out the Father's commandments in the manner and spirit they are intended to be carried out.

So I repeat (hear me please!): there is no reference to the pagan world in this Psalm and no contrast with the pagan world is even remotely suggested in these passages. It's all about God's people and those joined to His people. After we're done thoroughly studying these 10 verses, I'll show you why Hannah's prayer's lack of pertinence to the pagan world is so critical for us to realize.

The first 3 verses speak of Yehoveh's holy sovereignty, and so are the truest form of praise and worship. They are much like the Old Testament version of the Lord's Prayer. Thus the reason for Hannah's joyful exuberance is placed at the Lord's feet just as much as the reason for her deep despair had been. "Her heart", she says, "exults in the Lord". Two things about this short statement: the Hebrew word for heart is **leb** or **lev**, and while "heart" is the proper translation and definitely correct in its literal meaning, its sense is NOT literal (at least not literal for we moderns). Just like when we say that we are heartsick, it doesn't mean that our heart muscle has a disease; rather it's merely a common way of expressing that we are emotionally despondent (because we tend to attach emotions to the human heart).

However recall that I have brought to your attention that throughout the Old and New Testament eras, the heart was thought to be the place where the intellect and the mind resided. The function of the brain was unknown at that time. It was the kidneys and the liver where even the academics of those ancient days believed that our emotions were housed. So Hannah was saying that her mind, her thoughts, her consciousness exalted in the Lord. This was not a purely emotional outburst.

The second thing we find in this short stanza is that where we see the word "Lord" in most bibles (or Adonai in the CJB), in reality the word is YHWH. Every verse, every stanza of this Psalm where we see the word Lord, Hannah was actually saying Yehoveh. She felt perfectly

secure and justified to speak to the Lord using His formal name; in fact it is a rather more intimate thing to do than to call Him by a title like Elohim or HaShem.

In the next stanza Hannah speaks of her “horn” rising up in the Lord; what a strange statement! Hebrew Scholars and Sages have always known the general sense that is meant by the Hebrew word **keren**, but what it specifically meant to the ancients is less clear. The CJB translates **keren**, horn, as “dignity”. Other versions will translate it as “might” or “strength” or even “victory”. In some ways these are all reasonable translations; however if we added them altogether we’d get a more complete and better sense of what Hannah was thinking: her dignity, strength, and victory all reside in Yehoveh.

Since the word “horn” appears in the New Testament, and it especially is noticed in the book of Revelation with the strange beast that appears with 10 horns and one bigger one, let’s spend just a moment more in trying to understand what the intent of that word is when used in these sorts of contexts. In the ancient Middle East, the Bull (or Ox) was probably the greatest and highest symbol of strength and authority. And the part of the Bull or Ox that was the focal point was its horns. It was in the horns of the Bull where it’s fearsome strength and ability to project power lay. Thus it was NOT that Hannah was speaking or envisioning the literal horns of an Ox, but rather it was merely an expression of authority and power used by herding and farming societies that was regularly used to refer to the attributes of a king. And in this case since it said that the Lord raised Hannah’s horn, then it means that she was conspicuously fortunate and victorious. For Hannah, her loss of dignity by not being a whole woman was restored (her horn was raised) thanks be to God. For the beast of Revelation, the horns are not literal either; rather they are figurative speech that reveals 10 rulers who have the strength and might that comes in their leadership roles. But the 11th horn that appears (who most identify as the Anti-Christ) is mightier than they are and thus lords over them.

The thing to notice is the contrast between the horn of Hannah (and the future horn of Israel, it’s king), as opposed to the horns of the Revelation beast: the horn of Hannah and of Israel’s coming monarchs are raised up by God; the horns of the beast (the might and power of the beast) are raised up by Satan or by men influenced by Satan. Hannah’s kind of horn is God ordained; the other kind is man or demon ordained. Hannah’s kind of horn cannot be defeated; the other kind horn is destined to be defeated.

Next, still in verse 1, another archaic saying is used when Hannah says that her mouth opens wide against her enemies (which is the most literal translation). Our CJB says that Hannah can gloat over her enemies, which is probably close to the intent of the expression. However “gloat” is likely not quite strong enough because in other places in the bible where this approximate expression is used, it means to “swallow up” the enemy. It’s another way of expressing absolute victory over one’s enemies to the point that they effectively cease to exist. But WHO is the enemy in this case? First, it is NOT the only person that could even remotely be suspected as Hannah’s enemy in this story, P’ninah, the co-wife. As much as P’ninah mocked Hannah, they were certainly not enemies.

Rather it is that an enemy (as envisioned here) was a rather general term for that age. An enemy was anyone who might someday want to do you harm. This was tribal society so even if

another local tribe was a brother tribe of Israel, the fact remained that there was a never-ending battle for dominance that often spilled over into kidnapping and bloodshed. Many of the Middle Eastern societies were (and remain) marauders and bandits; it was (and still is) seen as a rather legitimate (though problematic) occupation. So in that sense THEY were your enemies. Remember; there was no police force that existed, and in tribal society it was the norm to acquire wealth by taking somebody else's. So everyone had enemies; it was just part of everyday life.

However in the context of this verse the idea thus far in the Song of Hannah has been that the Lord is responsible for everything and given credit for everything. Thus since Hanna's horn (her dignity and her strength) has been raised up (meaning restored or established) by the Lord, then so are Hanna's enemies now the Lord's enemies and vice versa. And the Lord will see to it that Hannah (through His mercy and grace) receives victory over what are now their mutual enemies (due to Hannah's conspicuous relationship with Yehoveh).

Think about that for a minute: as Believers and worshippers of the God of Israel, His enemies are automatically our enemies. But our enemies are also automatically His enemies, and He will save us from them. What a dangerous mistake we make when we side with those who openly stand against the Lord. This has happened in various ways over the centuries within the church; but recently we find many Christian leaders and their followers siding with the Muslim world and the Palestinians against God's people and land, Israel. Being part of the body of Christ hardly makes us immune from such destructive error and rebellion. And next week I'm going to demonstrate that principle to you in a way that is going to jar many of you who are listening.

Then in the last few words of the 1st verse we get a stunning statement IF we read it in the original Hebrew. Our CJB says that Hannah has "joy at your saving me". Most other versions say something like, "I have rejoiced in your salvation" (two ways of saying the same thing). But in Hebrew it says, "I have rejoiced in your Yeshua"! Isn't that amazing? I have rejoiced in your Jesus. Of course no one (including Hannah) could possibly have thought in terms of this being the formal name of the coming Messiah, the eternal king, Yeshua, which means, "God saves." But such is the nature of God's inspiration upon men and women that Hannah could mouth the very name of the Christ who would come 1200 years later, without at all realizing it.

Verse 2 goes on to express a concept of Yehoveh that was only now beginning to catch on in Israel: that Yehoveh is not just Israel's only god, but He is the only god in existence. In other words this was a statement of monotheism. Hannah also says that there is no rock that can compare to Yehoveh. The term "rock" had become a common epithet for God in Israelite culture and was slowly and steadily evolving in the Hebrew language as a term that had messianic significance until we finally reach the New Testament when "rock" became firmly attached as an epithet of the Messiah who, as it turned out, WAS God!

But I think an even greater blessing is to be had for us if we connect what has just been stated here (and in Hannah's song generally) with what the earthly mother of Yeshua is recorded to have said in Luke chapter 1. Luke 1:46 – 55 is (among some denominations) called The Magnificat, and it is patterned precisely after Hannah's song and is actually more or less a

paraphrase of it spoken by Miriam (Mary) about the coming birth of Yeshua HaMashiach.

### READ LUKE 1: 39 – 55

So here we have a direct connection from Hannah's Prayer to Mary's Prayer. Hannah's prayer had Messianic overtones, but Mary's prayer was directly about the Messiah. Hannah saw the Redeemer as God in heaven, but Mary sees the Redeemer as God incarnate.

After Hannah praises the Lord for His incomparable holiness and righteousness, starting in verse 3 she addresses the community (meaning Israel in general) and tells them how they ought to behave before their God considering who they are in Him. She tells them not to be proud or boastful, and of course this is because (as Hannah has learned) in the end God decides all despite humankind's typical belief that we are in control.

At the end of the 3rd verse is the phrase in the CJB, "and he (God) appraises actions". Most bible translations will say, "and by Him actions are weighed". The key word is "weighed", which the editor of the CJB says means "appraises". The Hebrew word that causes the difficulty is **takan**. And while "appraise" is not wrong, it misses the point. But simply transliterating the word as "weighed" causes it's own misconceptions. **Takan**, weighed, has to be envisioned in how items were actually weighed in ancient times and that was by means of a balance scale. The idea was to put a known weight as a standard on one side, and then put an amount on the other side that brought the two weight trays into balance. Or it was to put an agreed amount on one side, and a matching amount on the other so that equality was achieved. So in old times to weigh something didn't mean that the purpose was to determine how much an item weighed, rather it was to make the two sides of the scale equal or level. This is the idea here; God is the one who brings fairness and balance to every situation according to His standard.

Thus in the next several verses we see God weighing human actions, which means bringing them into balance according to His justice. And in many cases what that entails is divinely reversing whatever the current (and it could be said as the "natural") situation.

So begins a series of couplets that contrasts the fates of the strong and the weak. In verse 4 it says the bows of the mighty are broken, but those who have no power are given strength. This is God "weighing", **takan**, bringing the two disparate groups into balance.

In verse 5 those who have an abundance of the best food because they were wealthy suddenly find themselves having to work for a wage just to purchase enough to buy the basic food staple, bread. But this is contrasted with those who had barely enough and often went hungry, who now have plenty and never hunger again. God is intervening in the affairs of men, changing the natural order of things (in men's view, anyway) and bringing them into balance.

In the last half of verse 5 Hannah thinks of her own situation and says that the barren woman miraculously bears 7 children, while the fertile woman with many children wastes away. The number 7 is a symbolic number that indicates fullness, completeness, it is the ideal number; so the naturally barren woman is blessed by Yehoveh with a full compliment of children, while the

naturally fertile woman with many children suddenly finds herself brought low. From the perspective of that era that means that her children have either died or abandoned her, leaving her without means of support (not that she is now ill, “wasting away”).

Starting in verse 6, while we continue to see a series of contrasts and a reversal of fortunes occurring, the emphasis shifts more to describing God's true inherent nature, power, and His holy sovereignty over all matters. That Yehoveh kills and makes alive is a way of saying that God reigns supreme over life and death. This is a good example of the rather common literary device called merism, whereby the idea is to state the outermost boundaries of possible outcomes of a circumstance as a means of saying “everything concerning not only what is stated but all that lies in between”. But notice something: this statement is NOT as simple as saying that the Lord reigns over the dead and the living. Rather this is making clear that the Lord KILLS, He actively and purposely ends life. On the other end of the scale is that God creates life, He actively and purposely takes that which does not have life and injects it with life. The first half of that statement is something that many Christians rail against, but this theme is repeated over and over throughout both Testaments in the bible. The Lord WILL kill, He does take away life. This is active, not passive. The Lord doesn't merely stand aside and ALLOW life to be taken; at times He will personally intervene and commit a divine execution. And I remind you of what I said at the start of this section: this is NOT pagans that are being killed in contrast to God's followers being made alive. This section of Scripture, Hannah's song, concerns ONLY God's people. Israel and all who are joined to Israel is the subject.

Next in verse 6 is a statement that might seem to be synonymous with the previous thought but it's not. That God sends down to the grave (the Hebrew is Sheol) and He brings up from the grave is speaking of His CONTROL not just over life and death, but that He can at His will take the dead and resurrect them to new life!

Yehoveh decides who will have little and who will have much, who will be lowly and who will be set high. In other words this is talking about human social status and human prosperity. And we see in verse 8 that just because the poor may begin life as the poor, that doesn't mean they are automatically destined to remain that way. Conversely, the rich may be born into wealth but that doesn't automatically mean that they will always remain honored leaders or aristocrats. The Lord can and does intervene and balance things out.

Of all the things America stands for, this biblically based Judeo-Christian principle is one of our greatest and is most responsible for our abundance. We hold that all men have the right (if not the duty) to become all they can be, and that hard work and God's grace can take a person coming from the humblest of beginnings and elevate him to prominence. In fact we are a nation who roots for the least among us to succeed and applauds the underdog who overcomes and achieves victory. Of the many ideals and principles that will never allow Islam and Judeo-Christianity to reconcile, this is a chief one that is rarely exposed or talked about. In Islam, the poor are ordered by Allah to remain poor and the rich are to remain rich. The lowly are born lowly and are there to serve those who are in power. The Koran says that this is necessary because alms (charity) to the poor is a requirement to go to heaven. If there are no poor, then the well-to-do can give no alms, and thus they can't go to heaven. So understand that all this nonsense about the reason that the Islamic societies around the world are angry is

because of their poverty is just that: nonsense. Certainly the poor Muslims want food and housing, but they want it from their leaders. The leaders only know one way to attain and maintain their wealth, and that is to take it from someone else.

The next part of verse 8 involves the use of a rare Hebrew word that is not well understood: **matsukh**. **Matsukh** is usually translated to “pillars” (just as we see it in the CJB). But the word is also used for “molten core”. We could talk about this verse for a long time because of all the various scholarly opinions about it; but I’m going to just give you my personal view on it and you can take it for what it’s worth. I think the point is that Hannah is declaring that the Lord devised the very plan and structure of planet Earth. For me the “molten core” meaning is probably the more correct one. Even though the ancients didn’t know it, our “world” is really little more than a thin crust or hard layer that sits on top of, or is sort of wrapped around, a fiery hot molten core of liquid rock and metal. And we now know that this molten core is not simply an interesting anomaly of our planet, it’s one of the several keys that allows life to exist and flourish. Our molten core operates much like the alternator in your car; using the rotation of the Earth it generates a magnetic field that is converted into electricity. Without our magnetic field we’d be as sterile as the Moon or Mars, because this magnetic field behaves as a shield that deflects the enormous amount of ultra-deadly cosmic rays that pervades our Universe. This same molten core affects ocean temperatures and thus creates the all-important currents that are vital to the oceans’ food chain, and so much more. For me, this verse is explaining that God planned and built our planet and especially prepared it for life; it was no accident of mathematical probabilities. The Lord is in charge, and sovereign over, all the physical processes. And of course this reality will play a vital role in the end of days, as the Lord both uses those physical processes to pour out His wrath, and as He alters many of those physical processes, so that life on our planet (that is dependent upon them) is nearly extinguished.

Thus far Hannah’s song has spoken of the Lord’s absolute control over life and death, social status, poverty and abundance, what happens AFTER death, who is powerful and who is feeble, who has dignity and who suffers humiliation, who has sufficient food and who goes hungry, and lastly over all the physical processes of our planet. Now the matter shifts to the spiritual. In verse 9 the issue is good versus evil, and the idea is that those who are good are those who are faithful to Yehoveh. Those who are evil are those who are NOT faithful. The good will have their journey through life charted out and guided by the Lord. The wicked will walk in darkness.

The word used for darkness is a familiar one for us; **choshek**. **Choshek** doesn’t mean nighttime or merely the absence of physical light (like what naturally happens when the sun goes down). Rather **choshek** is an ominous term that is the opposite of divine enlightenment. **Choshek** is the lack of spiritual light, not the lack of physical light. When that great darkness came over Pharaoh’s Egypt as a plague, it was not that it was a long lasting time without sunlight; it was a spiritual darkness that overcame them. It was the essence of evil. Thus in that story the term **choshek** was employed.

The final stanza of verse 9 cautions that God cannot be defeated by human strength or determination; rather anyone who comes against the Lord will be shattered. The idea of “shattered” is utter, complete, inalterable destruction. Hannah says that the Lord will

“thunder” against the rebels from heaven. The Hebrew word for thunder is **ra’am**; and it much more means to rage or cause to tremble than it indicates the clapping of thunder in a storm (although it is used in that way, too).

Biblically, thunder often precedes or accompanies God’s wrath. Just as when we hear thunder we know a storm is coming, so it is that heavenly thunder is that event or series of events that portends the onset of God’s anger. The ancient oriental mind had the same kind of mental picture that we do about thunder; it is startling and we flinch involuntarily at the sound. Some of us practically “hit the deck” or immediately break into flight when it’s especially near and violent. Thus before God’s wrath appears physically, on earth, verse 10 demonstrates that FIRST God’s wrath “thunders” in heaven. The hope for Believers is that we are sufficiently spiritually aware that we can detect the Lord “thundering” in wrath in heaven, so that we can warn others or prepare (or both) for His coming earthly wrath (and maybe even change our ways, repent, and avert the consequences).

But we also are told that Yehoveh judges the ends of the earth; there is nowhere to escape. It’ll do no good to dig a deep hole and stock it with food, and climb into it. It’ll do no good to move to the Outback of Australia. There is no escaping God’s anger, especially if He wills it that YOU are to experience it.

Hannah’s song ends with the purpose for which the Lord relieved the burden of her barren condition and gave her Samuel: to anoint a king over Israel. But this king is to be unlike kings brought to power by men. This king shall be God’s king and thus the Lord will lend some of His power to His anointed king. When we realize that the Hebrew word for anointed is Mashiach (which in certain contexts we translate as Messiah), then we see that for the first time in the bible the concept of Messiah being connected with a king is presented. This makes Hannah’s song even more indispensable and central in the history of salvation. Thus it is a tragedy that the Church long ago abandoned the Old Testament such that this clear and early prophetic statement and understanding about the source of salvation is all but forgotten.

Next week I’m going to make a connection between Hannah’s song and a section of the New Testament that will startle many of you. In fact, I think it will cause you to think about certain aspects of the end times in ways you may never before have considered.