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1 Samuel 1:21-2:10

Third Message

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A SONG THAT WRITES HISTORY

SERIES: *THE CROSSING FATES*

One of my secret ambitions is to one day write a book. It's not because I feel gifted as a writer, or that is what pastors are supposed to do to before being put out to pasture. Rather, I feel I have a debt of appreciation to God to document my unexpected journey into the power of the poem. I say unexpected, because the journey was not pre-planned. It was one of those blessings in life that was designed by a gracious God who delights in giving gifts to us before we know we need them, and even before we ask. My experience was not unlike Pablo Neruda's first encounter with a mystery we call poetry:

And I was at that age...Poetry arrived
in search of me...I don't know, I don't know where
it came from, from winter or a river
I don't know how or when
no, they were not voices, they were not
words nor silence,
but from a street I was summoned,
from the branches of night,
abruptly from the others,
among violent fires,
or returning alone,
there I was without a face and it touched me.

— Pablo Neruda

I was that age, thirty-eight, when poetry arrived. Through an impenetrable mystery, I was plunged into the unspeakable songs of a Romanian poet. I did not know where the songs came from, but there were voices, a multitude of them. In every resonant syllable of a language I could not yet understand, I "felt a grim energy verging on elation."¹ Somewhere on the outskirts of hell, a poet had shaped the soul of a nation to sing. Speaking of his birth in 1914, Traian Dorz wrote, "*When I was born with this body among you, there was cloud and night and winter and war.*" Working in this wasteland, God gave this man a voice that possessed a rare light to break through the silent suffering and violent fires of the oppressor. So powerful were his poems, Ceausescu's secret police brutally confiscated every page of them, piled them in an oxcart and burned them before his eyes. They then imprisoned the poet. But they could not silence his voice.

When we arrived in 1988, thousands of Romanians were singing his immortal songs. That was twenty years ago. Since then I never ceased to be amazed at how God has used this gift as one of his tools to enhance honesty, community, and worship in our congregation. I'm not sure if I'll ever be able to succeed in documenting the journey, but I do have a title at least: *Give me an Authentic Voice: The Art of Becoming Storytellers and Poets from the books of Samuel and the Psalms.*

If we were honest, many of us would admit that we grew up in homes without a voice. Even as adults we live in a culture inundated with words, yet it seems that honest conversation is rare. We still long for a voice that people will listen to and take seriously. We want our words to have weight, to be valued and stand the test of time. How do we develop such a voice? I have found the story of Hannah a remarkable treasure in this regard.

In the opening scene of the book of 1 Samuel, Hannah was the passive victim of compromise by her husband and a silent sufferer who was constantly hammered by the rage of her rival. For years on end, at every religious festival she was completely shut down, unable to speak or eat. She was so consumed in sorrow that even her prayers were inarticulate and misunderstood by a blind priest. But once she poured out her soul before God,

everything changed. From that moment on she began to develop a voice that was honest, authentic, strong, and independent.

As we pick up the story today in 1 Sam 1:21-2:11, Hannah's voice becomes even stronger, while her opponents are marginalized and eventually silenced in the darkness. In each of the three scenes she is the only one whose words matter. They transcend and overrule her husband's ritual; they overwhelm and transform a clueless priest; and finally, as she gives shape to her salvation in poetry, her words give eternal glory to the Lord she loves. Her poem launches the kingdom of God in a new direction from which the divine council has never wavered. Hers are true words that stand the test of time. Her song writes history.

I. Nurture Overrides Ritual 1 Sam 1:21-23

²¹Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow. ²²But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband,

*"I will not go up until the child is weaned;
then I will bring him,
that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever."*

²³Elkanah her husband said to her,

*"Do what seems best to you.
Remain until you have weaned him;
only may the LORD confirm His word."*

So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. (1:21-23 NASB)

Following the birth of Samuel, we return to the yearly cycle of Israel's religious festival, anticipating new beginnings as the family makes the annual trek to Shiloh. The opening verse gives the impression that Elkanah is still our coat-and-tie fundamentalist, faithfully maintaining his regular duties of worship. He takes seriously his role as the spiritual head of his home, leading his entire family to Shiloh. This peaceful rhythm is quickly broken, however, with several dissonant details that give hints of marital tension just beneath the surface.

First, we observe that Elkanah is leading his family to Shiloh to pay "his" vow. It was the husband's responsibility to confirm or annul his wife's vows (Num 30:13-14), but that said, it still remained "her" vow. Has Elkanah usurped Hannah's vow and made it his own? When we think of all the suffering that Hannah has already endured to find her ultimate vindication in God, this sleight of hand must have seemed like another slap in the face to her. Secondly, as we read on we note that Hannah and Samuel are missing from the family convoy. Why aren't they there? When the narrator takes us back in time to listen to their conversation, we discover that this was not a mutual decision but one that Hannah made without her husband's input. Hannah and Elkanah are governed by two different realities. Bound by law and ritual, Elkanah can't see beyond them. But Hannah sets her course based on spiritual realities that are larger than life—a precious commodity called grace. As a result, she will present Samuel to the Lord when he is completely weaned, not according to the festival calendar. At that time she, not he, will bring Samuel to Shiloh and relinquish him as the Lord's servant forever. It is at *that* time, not *this* time, she will faithfully pay her vow. Nurture overrides ritual.

Hannah is becoming stronger in every sense of the word. What can Elkanah do? He must give in to the reality before him, yet with a cutting edge to his voice, he makes sure that he has the last word. The phrase “her husband” after his name is completely unnecessary and redundant. We already know that he is her husband. Its insertion suggests that he is attempting to maintain his authority as head of the home. This is confirmed by the fact that he commands Hannah to remain as if it was his idea, or at least he is allowing her to remain with feelings of resignation. And his initial “Do what seems best to you” is not as affirming as it appears. The Hebrew is literally, “do what is good in your eyes,” which may have undertones of condescension, evoking the painful refrain in Judges, where “every man did what was right in his own eyes.”

But the biggest difference between husband and wife is that for Hannah, her decision to remain is all about the boy; while for Elkanah, Samuel hardly enters into the picture. For him her decision to stay is all about her. Fokkelman notes that in Hannah’s speech, “The boy is the subject in three out of the four clauses Hannah utters, and in the single clause in which she herself is subject, and which is only one word in length (I will bring him), she promises that she will part with him. There is virtually nothing left of this in the words of her husband. He too utters four clauses, but Hannah is the subject three times, of all things.”²

Elkanah’s final statement to Hannah, “only the Lord confirm His word,” is difficult to understand, because the Lord has already “remembered” Hannah by giving her a son. Robert Alter notes that “a fragment of Samuel found in Cave 4 at Qumran reads ‘what your mouth has uttered,’ which, referring directly to Hannah’s vow at Shiloh, makes much better sense since God, after all, has made no promises.”³ If that is the correct reading, Elkanah’s words end on a pious, threatening tone: “you may stay, but make sure you keep your vow!” His words seem devoid of any enthusiasm or joy that his wife’s prayers have broken through to heaven, stirred the sovereign powers that guide the universe, and granted them a son. She is now entering the most precious stage of motherhood, when a mother and child develop an intimate bond through nursing that shapes a child’s identity. Therefore as a husband, Elkanah ought to express elation, not resignation.

The distance between husband and wife is further heightened in the final verse. Hannah’s name is left out and she becomes merely “the woman” who remained behind to nurse her son. How sad that a new day has dawned when God is on the move doing new things, using Elkanah’s home as the base of his operations, and yet the head of the home is unable to enter in. In similar fashion, David’s wife, Michal, will be unable to enter into her husband’s jubilation when the king brings the ark of God home to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:20). As Paul will later write,

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. (1 Cor 2:14-15)

The text is not advocating that wives should not be respectful or submissive to their husbands. But it does suggest that the more we grow spiritually, the less control and the greater freedom we ought to be experiencing in our relationships. The more mature we become, the less affected we are by what others think of us. Even Jesus admitted that these developments in our character would not always be appreciated, especially by those closest to us (Matt 10:34-37).

II. Thanksgiving Transforms a Priest 1 Sam 1:24-28

²⁴Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli.

She said,

“Oh, my lord!

As your soul lives, my lord,

I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD.

For this boy I prayed,

and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him.

So I have also dedicated him to the LORD;
as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD.”

And he worshiped the LORD there.

In the second scene, Hannah again occupies center stage. She is the subject of every verb (except for the sacrificial slaughter), taking the initiative and responsibility to fulfill her vow to the Lord. When she arrives at the sanctuary, she speaks with such authority that it is only her voice we hear. The narrator permits no other to disturb the ringing clarity of her angelic tones.

With the time of weaning complete, Hannah is fully energized and on the move to do what she “vowed” to do. If Hannah gives her word to do something, she does it. This act of unequivocal giving, much like the Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, is done with unwavering determination. There is no reluctance or holding back in her gift, though the narrator makes us feel how difficult it would be to let go of a child so young (“the child was but a youth” i.e., extremely young and vulnerable).

Hannah is so thankful for the privilege of being God’s surrogate mother for Samuel that she brings a feast fit for a king, much more than was required by law. There is some debate whether the text should be read as “three bulls,” or a three-year-old bull. Fokkelman speculates that the sacrificial bull was chosen “because it was born the same year as Samuel.” In any case, the magnitude of the gift is incredible, because a bull represents not just a sacrifice of current income but future income as well, since bulls were used for breeding. Hannah’s gift is her public testimony that her ability to conceive was a miracle of God’s grace.⁴

After the bull is slaughtered, Samuel is presented to Eli. With extraordinary self-confidence, Hannah announces herself to the elderly priest in a polite yet commanding tone. She is no longer the inarticulate woman consumed in sorrow that Eli mistook for a drunkard. She is a totally new person, a woman to be reckoned with, who stands on her own two feet with heavenly strength. And today she has words, holy words, choice words that link that past with the present and the present with the future: words that embrace the very essence of the divine-human relationship—asking, receiving, then giving back in humility, freedom, and appreciation.

Hannah frames her words in an oath (“As your soul lives...”), which “is an example of the most binding kind of utterance in existence.”⁵ Once she has captured the old priest’s attention, she activates his memory of their earlier encounter by quoting the precise language of the priestly benediction, “May the God of Israel grant your petition (*shā’al*) that you have asked (*shā’al*) of Him.” Though Eli’s blessing may have seemed perfunctory to him at the time, it sealed Hannah’s vow with divine approval. Three years later, this woman has brought the answer to her *petition* (*shā’al*) and placed him right in front of the old man. Lest there be any doubt where the credit lies, she attributes the gift as entirely due to the grace of Yahweh, whose covenant name she mentions no less than four times. Today she has come to fulfill her vow with words of thanks, a feast of praise, and finally, the relinquishing of the boy, who will be dedicated (*shā’al*) to the Lord “as long as he lives.” *Shā’al*: with profound simplicity this word becomes the foundation stone for the king’s prayers in the Psalms (Ps 2:8).

As Hannah recites her oath, Eli is stunned. In all his years as priest he has never seen an act so holy. What can he do? Like Elkanah, he must give in to the reality before him. But unlike Elkanah, he has no words. Faced with such a radical commitment and sacrifice, he cannot speak. Now he is the inarticulate one and, like Hannah earlier, he falls down to worship the Lord. Hannah’s character is so pure and powerful that she has managed to bring the presence of the Lord back into the corrupt sanctuary of Shiloh to be acknowledged by even the senile, superintending priest.

Hannah’s act of dedicating Samuel becomes an example to all parents that all children are gifts of God’s grace, that our time to nurture and train them is but short and temporary, and that the goal of parenting is to set them free to serve the Lord in his kingdom. In the New Testament, children were presented to Jesus, who is the new temple and our high priest:

And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*.” And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them. (Mark 10:13-16)

After the ensuing silence by Eli, Hannah breaks forth into ecstatic, buoyant song, giving praise to the one who is now the driving force of her life. The poem is the culmination of three years of Hannah’s reflections condensed into a mere 113 words of seventeen lines of poetry.⁶ The truths contained in it are equivalent to a doctoral degree in theology.

It is beyond the scope of a sermon to probe the genius or intricate depths of Hannah’s poetry. Poetry is designed to be sung into the heart, rather than analyzed by the intellect. To analyze a poem by pulling it apart is like dissecting a rose to comprehend its beauty: in our desire to appreciate the mystery we lose the fragrance. What I would like to do in our remaining time is to make a few observations about the poem as it relates to Hannah’s developing voice and the impact it had on Israel’s history. In two weeks time, on the first Sunday of Advent, we will return to the song to capture more of its lyrical beauty and powerful metaphors which carry us to unexpected heights, and prepared Israel’s imagination for the arrival of the King of kings. Next week, Jerry Tu will lead us back into the narrative of chapter two, while I, having learned well from Hannah, will remain at home to be fully engaged in greater realities—my daughter’s wedding.

III. Praise Silences Opposing Voices 1 Sam 2:1-10

^{2:1}Then Hannah prayed and said:

“My heart rejoices in the LORD;
in the LORD my horn is lifted high.

My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I rejoice in your salvation.

² There is no one holy like the LORD;
there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

³ Do not keep talking so proudly
do not let arrogance come out of your mouth,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed.

⁴ The bows of the warriors are shattered,
but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

⁵ Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
but those who were hungry are hungry no more.

She who was barren has borne seven children,
but she who has had many sons pines away.

⁶ The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.

⁷ The LORD makes poor and rich;
he brings low, he also exalts.

⁸ He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
to make them sit with nobles
and inherit a throne of honor.

For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s;
and on them he has set the world.

⁹ He will guard the feet of his faithful servants,
but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.

For it is not by strength that one prevails;

¹⁰ those who oppose the LORD will be broken.

The Most High will thunder from heaven;
the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.” (1 Sam 2.1-10 TNIV)

A. The language of praise: poetry

A poem of praise is the climax of Hannah’s journey in acquiring an authentic voice. In the first scene, she does not speak. She is shut down and silenced by a compromising husband and a powerful oppressor. After years of accumulated pain and depressive sorrow, it is her husband’s painful questions that serve as goads to break the cycle. Hannah rises and pours out her pain before God. Though she has freedom of emotion, she is unable to articulate her pain with words. But when Eli, the overbearing, blind priest, whips her with the accusation that she is a drunkard, she finds strength from on high to articulate her grief in courageous words, words that free her from the need to be understood by those in authority. Her encounter with God has brought a dramatic change in her voice.

In the following scenes she is no longer a responder, but one who initiates speech. I call this “free speech.” She is the only one whose words matter. She speaks to her husband with confidence about spiritual realities that are larger than life—the divine intervention of grace that gives her freedom to break with family traditions. Faced with such realities, Elkanah is forced to acknowledge them, though he is unable to appreciate them.

Then with amazing initiative, particularly for a woman in that culture, Hannah leads her family to Shiloh to dedicate Samuel to the Lord’s service. In the sanctuary of God she is the only one who speaks. Her words, saturated with appreciation, are framed in a resolute oath which confirms her earlier vow. They are so laden with spiritual force that Eli has the wind knocked out of him and falls to his knees in silence.

Out of the silence comes the poem. Why poetry? First, for what the poem does to us. Edward Hirsch in his book, *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*, describes the impact of poetry on us:

...the deepest spirit of poetry is awe. Poetry is a way of inscribing that feeling of awe. I don’t think we should underestimate the capacity for tenderness that poetry opens within us...The poem delivers on our spiritual lives precisely because it simultaneously gives us the gift of intimacy and interiority, privacy and participation...I am shocked by what I see in the poem but also by what the poem finds in me. It activates my secret world, commands my inner life...I am pried open.⁷

Secondly, for what poetry does for God. Again, quoting Hirsch, “Shelley says that ‘Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.’”⁸ David, the inspired poet, writes in Psalm 22:

**You are the Holy One;
the One enthroned on the praises of Israel. (Ps 22:3)**

God makes his presence supremely felt whenever God’s people take time to praise and glorify him through the vehicle of the poem. While stories have power to pull us into a drama bigger than ourselves, poetry causes us to stop to extract the eternal significance of the journey. The story moves us; the poem stills us. The story draws us up the mountain; the poem allows us to take in the vistas. And these vistas never fail to inscribe “that feeling of awe.”

B. The object of praise: God alone

As we read Hannah’s song we may be surprised that there is no mention of the gift of her son. Rather, she is fully consumed with God as the giver of the gift. Her supreme goal in life was not to possess a son but to experience the covenant-keeping God acting on her behalf so that she might live for his kingdom. He alone is the object of her praise, as she gives him glory for what she has discovered about him. The character of God summarized in v 2 (“There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God”) serves as an outline for the rest of the poem: *holy* is explicated in verses 3-5; *unique* is explicated in verses 6-7, and *rock* is explicated in verses 8-10. The implication is that the truths for which Hannah praises God are not abstract theological tenets, but dynamic realities she learned from her personal encounter with God as she wrestled with her barrenness. That encounter changed the course of her life and opened the door to a new future for Israel. This gives passion to her praise.

C. The theme of praise: True strength

The overall theme of the poem is *strength*, as demonstrated in the opening and closing metaphor of the *horn*, “a symbol of strength. The word ‘strength’ is itself present by means of three different [Hebrew] roots (*hayil* v. 4; *gabar* v. 9; and ‘oz v. 10),” as well as several metaphors that depict strength and its results (*rock, deliverance, guard, exalted high*, etc.). This theme, structured as a chiasm in seven strophes, gives the poem coherence and a lyrical structure that carries the reader from Hannah’s particular situation to the consummation of God’s kingdom on earth through his anointed king.¹⁰

- a True strength, symbolized by the *horn*, given to Hannah (1-2)
- b False strength is examined by God (3)
 - two exhortations* in proverbial form
- c The Lord humbles and exalts (4-5)
 - x The Lord’s strength reverses destinies (6-7)
 - c’ The Lord brings down and raises up (8)
- b’ False strength silenced by God (9-10a)
 - two exhortations* in proverbial form
- a’ True strength, symbolized by the *horn*, given to Israel’s king (10b)

D. The permanence of praise

As Hannah spent three years reflecting on how God worked in her womb, she came to realize that this saving act was not an isolated, random occurrence with little significance beyond the scope of her world. Hannah could read the times. She had a sense that it was time for a king in Israel. She also had the spiritual insight to see that the way God worked in her barrenness to give her a son would be the same way he would give strength to his future king, who would be anointed by her son. Thus her poem opens with the metaphor of the “horn,” a symbol of strength that is given to Hannah and allows her to silence her enemies, and concludes with the identical image, now given to Israel’s king. As Hannah’s mouth was open wide in triumph over her enemy, so too will God’s voice thunder in the heavens, silencing all the enemies of his anointed king in their all-consuming pride.

Yet, even with her amazing insight, I’m sure Hannah had no idea just how much God would honor her voice to write history. Did she have any idea her poem would shape the theology of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel? Did she know that her journey from despair to petition, to thanksgiving, to praise would become the pattern for king David’s prayers in the Psalms? (1 Chron 16:4); or that her words would be recapitulated in the birth of Christ, God’s Son? (Luke 1:46-53); or that they would be incarnate in his very person? (Phil 2:5-11); or that they would become the standard and hope for all Christian behavior? (Jas 4:10) Talk about an authentic voice! Her song writes history.

As a pastor, I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to accomplish my dream of writing that book. But perhaps, like Traian Dorz, I will spend my remaining years making poets instead of poems, for it has been one of my greatest delights as a pastor to give you, our congregation, a stage to develop your own voice. For as Paul said, “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (2 Cor 3:2-3)

¹ This is John Felstiner’s description of how he felt “encountering... and becoming conversant” with the poetry of Paul Celan, another Romanian poet who survived the Holocaust. John Felstiner, *Paul Celan, Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xix.

² J. P. Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire, Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Assen: Van Corcum, 1993), 64.

³ Robert Alter, *The David Story, A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 7.

⁴ Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 67.

⁵ Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 69.

⁶ Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 74.

⁷ Edward Hirsch, *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1999), 3-9.

⁸ Edward Hirsch, *How to Read a Poem*, 27.

⁹ Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 103.

¹⁰ I have adapted this outline from Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 104, and Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology, an Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 627.

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A Song that Writes History: *The Basis for True Strength*¹

1 Samuel 2:1-10

<p>^{2:1} Then Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my <i>horn</i> is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I rejoice in your salvation.</p> <p>² There is <i>no one holy</i> like the LORD; there is <i>no one besides you</i>; there is <i>no Rock</i> like our God.</p> <p>³ Do not keep talking so proudly do not let arrogance come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.</p>	<p>a True strength given to Hannah</p> <p>inclusio: <i>horn</i> - a metaphor of Hannah’s strength Hannah’s voice/ mouth wide open in joy</p> <p><i>holy</i> - explicated in vv. 3-5 <i>unique</i> - explicated in vv. 6-7 <i>rock</i> - explicated in vv. 8-10</p> <p>b False strength is examined by God <i>exhortation</i> in proverbial form</p>
<p>⁴ The bows of the warriors are shattered, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.</p> <p>⁵ Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.</p> <p>⁶ The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.</p> <p>⁷ The LORD makes poor and rich; he brings low, he also exalts.</p> <p>⁸ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; to make them sit with nobles and inherit a throne of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S; and on them he has set the world.</p>	<p>c The Lord humbles and exalts</p> <p>God’s omnipotent power seen in 6 upheavals, reversals in six cola <i>people</i> are present/ <i>God</i> backstage, unseen</p> <p>x The Lord’s strength reverses destinies with increasing speed– 8 dramatic reversals in 4 cola! <i>people</i> absent/ <i>God</i> fully seen</p> <p>c’ The Lord brings down and raises up</p> <p><i>God</i> is united with and focused on one party, the <i>poor</i>, taking them through an entire process</p> <p>The dynamic movements in the first 4 cola give way to quiet rest of the final 2</p>
<p>⁹ He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness. For it is not by strength that one prevails; ¹⁰ those who oppose the LORD will be broken.</p> <p>The Most High will thunder from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the <i>horn</i> of his anointed.”</p>	<p>b’ False strength silenced by God <i>two promises</i> in proverbial form</p> <p>a’ True strength given to Israel’s future king God’s voice opened wide in judgment impacts all creation <i>horn</i> a metaphor of the strength of Israel’s king</p>

¹ My outline is adapted from Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology, an Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 627.

A Song That Writes History

A. The Standard for Israel's Future Kings

Hannah's poem set forth for Israel's future kings that the key to their success will be based on their "trust" in the LORD (Pss 2:12; 3:3-4; 4:5; 9:10; 13:5; 20:7; 25:1, 2; 52: 8 etc.) and the care they extend to the humble and poor in Israel.

B. The Key to the Theology of Samuel

Hannah's song gives voice to the theology in 1 and 2 Samuel and is reaffirmed by David's three poems at the seams of the book (2 Sam 1:17-27; 22:1-51; 23:1-7).

C. The Pattern for the Psalms

Hannah's journey from despair to petition to thanksgiving to praise becomes the pattern for king David's prayers in the Psalms (1 Chron 16:4) and depicts the cycles of our spiritual journey.

D. Modeling the Freedom to "pour out" our Pain before the Lord

Hannah's passionate demeanor of "pouring out" her soul before the Lord is lauded by David as the exemplary way to pray.

These things I remember
and I **pour out** my soul within me.
For I used to go along with the throng
and lead them in procession to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival. (Ps 42:4)

Trust in Him at all times, O people;
Pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us. (Ps 62:8)

A Prayer of the Afflicted when he is faint and **pours out** his complaint before the LORD. (Ps 102:0)

E. Its Recapitulation at the Birth of Christ

Hannah's song becomes the core of Mary's song in the gospel of Luke.

"My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me
— holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their
inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1:46-53)

F. Incarnate in the Person of Jesus

In your relationships with one another,
have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had:

Who, being in very nature God
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a human being,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:5-11)

G. The Standard and Hope of all Christian Behavior

Humble yourselves before the Lord,
and he will lift you up. (Jas 4:10)

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one
another, because,
"God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble and oppressed."
Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand,
that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Pet 5:5b-6)

H. The Best Gift We Can Give to God and his People

God makes his presence supremely felt whenever
God's people take time to praise and glorify Him.

You are the Holy One;
the One enthroned on the praises of Israel. (Ps 22:3)

"As rational beings, with faculties of judgment and
conviction, true Israel recognizes that their existence
depends upon *I AM* and so soberly extol him as the
dynamic One." (Bruce Waltke)

Hannah's Developing Voice

silent & shut down

she has no voice



Elkanah
self-pity



painful rhetorical questions



lament

pouring out her tears before God
she has freedom of emotion
but unable to articulate it in words

Lament

freedom of emotion but no words



painful accusation



spiritually blind



gives words to her lament

Polite, yet courageous speech
about who she is
and what she is doing
with no apology

Free Speech

first time her speech is not a response to pain
initiates direct and confident speech to her **husband**
she lives by grace for a higher purpose
which gives her freedom to break the family traditions



Thanksgiving

speaks passionately and joyously to **Eli**
declaring by an oath what God has done
and what she is about to do



Silence

no human confirmation needed

Thanksgiving



Silence



PRAISE

Unadulterated praise to the Lord
who remembered her

complete emotional freedom
from all other relationships