

1 Samuel 1:4-20,2:1-10

What song shall we sing?

Hannah, the childless wife of Elkanah, presents herself before the Lord at Shiloh and asks for a son, who she promises to give back to God. Observing her fervent prayer, Eli accuses her of drunkenness, but then blesses her. In due time, Hannah gives birth to her son, Samuel. Hannah's subsequent song of praise celebrates how God reverses the fortunes of the poor and powerless while overturning the might of the powerful.



Bible notes



A new chapter in Israel's story opens with the birth of Samuel, who goes on to anoint Saul and then David as Israel's first kings (1 Samuel 10:1ff, 16:1ff). In an unstable and anarchic world, the tribes have no king to lead them against their Philistine enemies (Judges 21:25), and the shrine at Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant has been housed since Joshua's time (Joshua 18:1), is corrupted by Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:12ff). Yet here we find a devout family with a husband devoted to a wife unable to bear children. In Hannah's world a woman's infertility is more than a medical issue. It is seen as God's withholding the gift of sharing his creative power (v.6; cf Genesis 1:22), ample reason for mockery and humiliation. Elkanah's well-meaning compassion can't compensate for Hannah's lack of a son (1:5, 8). She has to endure Peninnah's persistent provocation, which is aggravated by the annual pilgrimage to a festival that celebrates the earth's God-given fertility. It has become an occasion for rehearsing her woe. We can imagine Hannah's silent song as she worships – lamentation tinged with hopeful petition and promise. If only God would remember her by removing her shame, she would willingly dedicate her son to God's service. She is empowered as she prays, enough to correct the venerable priest Eli's misreading of her silent prayer and win his blessing (1:12-18). Her final act of worship is no doubt filled with songs of joy and thanksgiving. She leaves for home a transformed woman (v.18), and later conceives as a result of Elkanah's 'knowing her' and God's 'remembering her' (1:19-20). Surprisingly for modern readers, once Samuel is weaned, his parents leave him at Shiloh with Eli, his life an offering to God's service (1:21-28).

Hannah's song doesn't seem to fit her circumstances, apart from mentioning barrenness in verse 5. But its shape outlines the transformation of her distress into joy and praise. So Hannah's prayer becomes the model for Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55 as they both celebrate God's exaltation of the humble poor.

Write

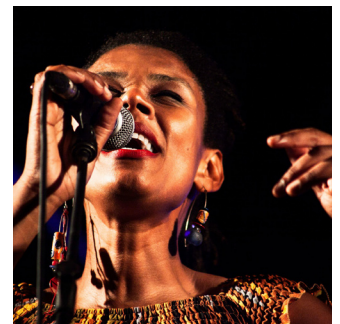
a song in response to Hannah's song – use an app like Lyric Notepad to record lyrics.



a pineapple upside-down cake. Things can feel rather odd and unusual when you're making a cake like this. It goes against everything you know of as a baker. Yet when you turn it upside down, it all makes sense. God has a habit of turning things upside down, as we can see in Hannah's song. God's transformational power can turn our sorrow into joy.

First impressions

- What song would you like to sing right now – one of joy/sorrow/something else?
- When have you prayed wholeheartedly to God?
- What situations would you like to see transformed from sorrow to joy?



Pray

Lord, where people feel feeble, make them strong.
Where people are hungry, may they be filled.
Where people feel down, may they be lifted up.
Where people are crying,
may their sadness turn into song.
Amen.



LISTEN

Make your own Inheritance Track playlist. Build a playlist of songs that mean something to you. Maybe these are ones that help you when you're sad, or celebrate with you when you're happy. Build the playlist individually or as a family, either way share this playlist with others so you can sing your own Hannah Song.



your prayers. Put on some instrumental music or pick up a musical instrument to accompany you as you pour out your heart to God.