

1 Samuel 2:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

Analysis

The economic reversals continue Hannah's theme. Those once satiated must hire themselves out for bread (the most basic sustenance), while the hungry need work no more. Hannah's personal experience of reversal (barren to blessed) grounds her prophetic vision. The number 'seven' represents completeness - the barren woman bears the full blessing of children while the prolific mother fades. Hannah herself would bear five more children (verse 21), making six total. Yet Samuel, as dedicated firstborn, accomplishes what many sons could not.

Historical Context

Hiring oneself out for food indicates desperate poverty, essentially becoming an indentured servant. The reversal of the barren bearing 'seven' children appears also in Ruth 4:15 and Jeremiah 15:9, becoming a standard formula for complete maternal blessing.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Hannah's personal story of reversal give her authority to speak of God's broader work?
2. What reversals in your own experience testify to God's transforming power?

Interlinear Text

וַיְרַעֲבֵ יָם	שְׁבַע יָמִים	בְּלִ קְמָה	נִשְׁאַבְתָּ רֹא	וְרַעֲבֵ יָם
They that were full	themselves for bread	have hired out	and they that were hungry	
H7649	H3899	H7936		H7457
לֹא	עַד	עֲקָבָה	יָלִד הָ	וְרַבְתָּ
ceased	so that the barren	hath born	seven	and she that hath many
H2308	H6135	H3205	H7651	H7227
אָמַלְלָה:	בְּתִ יָם			
children	is waxed feeble			
H1121	H535			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 113:9 (Parallel theme): He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalms 34:10 (Parallel theme): The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

Jeremiah 15:9 (Parallel theme): She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.

Luke 1:53 (Parallel theme): He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

Isaiah 54:1 (Parallel theme): Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

Luke 16:25 (Parallel theme): But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

1 Samuel 1:20 (Parallel theme): Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

1 Samuel 1:6 (Parallel theme): And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.