

The Song of Hannah and the Song of Mary

There are many similarities in the Bible between the Old and the New Testament. One similarity which often goes unnoticed has to do with two women, separated by a thousand years. Their names are Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. The prayers that they said to God, or “songs” show how their lives centered around their child and their reactions to their God-given sons. In Judaism, the Song of Hannah is regarded as the prime role model for how to pray and it is read on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, as the haftarah, series of selections from the books of Nevi'im ("Prophets") of the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*) that is publicly chanted in the synagogue. Growing up as a Jewish girl, Mary would have been very familiar of Hannah's prayer. The Song of Hannah has several features in common with the Song of Mary (Magnificat), which is often sung or said in many Christian denominations. Hannah, in the Old Testament, struggled with her barrenness but showed great strength of character and understanding. She was a faithful woman in Israel who like Mary was waiting and praying for Israel's Messiah. Hannah wanted a son, whom she was willing to give him back to God, just as the Son of Man was given back to God. Some 1,000 years later, Mary gave birth to a boy who would become that anointed one, the one that Hannah had such a clear vision of. In the Magnificat, Mary joyfully responds to God's favoring her. Below are some comparisons from both of the prayers, which show the similarities between the two.

Hannah's Prayer: My heart exults in the Lord;
My horn (shofur) is exalted in the Lord,..."

Song of Mary: "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior..."

Hannah's Prayer: Because no one is holy like the Lord, no one is righteous like our God.

Song of Mary: For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.

Hannah's Prayer: Those who were full of bread were made empty, and the hungry have forsaken the land.

Song of Mary: He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away the empty.

Hannah's Prayer: The Lord makes poor and rich, He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the earth and lifts the needy from the dung heap..."

Song of Mary: He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and the exalted the lowly.

Hannah's and Mary's songs of praise are truly indeed OUR song of praise and redemption.

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