Hannah expresses her strong feelings about her rival and about the Lord in her Hymn of Praise (1Sam 2,1-2)

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Preliminaries

The present study forms part of a wider research project that would comprise the entire text block 1Sam 1,1-2,21, the story of Samuel's birth and infancy. What helps isolating this textual segment from the rest of its literary context[1] are the *wayhî* clause in 1,1 that introduces the family of Samuel as personages completely unknown with the readers, and the circumstantial clause in 2,22 which ushers in Eli and his family as the participants in the next narratological unit.[2] This essay will focus further on part of what the Masoretic reading tradition identified as Hannah's *tephillah* (2,1-10), normally formulated as 'poetry' notwithstanding current scholarly misgivings to apply such descriptive terms for identifying literary units within the Hebrew canon.[3]

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1. For the present writer, 1-2 Samuel form part of what he termed 'The Primary History' which would include the textual extension of Genesis-2Kings, cf. Anthony Abela, "Is Genesis the Introduction of the Primary History?" in André Wénin (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, Leuven University Press & Peeters, Leuven 2001,397-406.
2. For the use of circumstantial clauses as markers of new beginning in Hebrew Narratives cf. J.C. L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar-Syntax*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1994,166-167; Lénart de Regt, "Macrosyntactic Functions of Nominal Clauses Referring to Participants," in Cynthia L. Miller(ed.), *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew. Linguistic Approaches*, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic, 1; Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana 1999, 274-275.
3. Cf. James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, Yale, New Haven 1981.

Regarding the text critical issues which in this pericope are especially complex[4], the present writer adopts, generally though not completely, the hypothesis developed by Stanley D. Walters[5] and Eugene C. Ulrich "that 1 Samuel 1-2 is preserved in one edition in the MT and in another edition in the LXX, and that one of these two editions was intentionally reedited from the other."[6] Besides, the textual history of I Samuel includes among others a Qumran fragment labelled 4QSam[a] which is said to be quite close to the *Vorlage* of the LXX. This textual history is only partially relevant to our current research project, only in so far as it may help rebuild the MT when this results to be corrupt or difficult. According to P.Kyle McCarter, "the received Hebrew text of Samuel in its Masoretic dress is in poor repair. It is a short text, but its shortness is not the wholesome shortness of a text free of expansion and interpolation; rather it is the result of countless copying errors and omissions, some of them extensive scattered throughout the book."[7]

The narrator's interpretation

The exegete and the interpreter should investigate closely the issue of the relationship of Hannah's Hymn to its literary context. This issue was normally summarily treated, judging the Hymn as a later interpolation within a completely alien literary context since explicit mutual references are scarce and superficial.[8] It is this complex relationship of psalm to narrative that engendered the varied textual situation well described by textual critics. The tradents of the various textual traditions misunderstood also the literary dynamics of the narrative itself. And in this they were not alone.

The segmentation of the narrative in 1 Samuel into three scenes: vv. 4-8.9-18.19-28 that has been proposed in a short paper read by the present author at the 2002

4. Cf. Frank M. Cross, "A New Qumran Biblical Fragment Related to the Original Hebrew Underlying the Septuagint" *BASOR* 132(1953)15-26; Eugene Charles Ulrich Jr., *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, 19; Scholars Press 1978; the two essays by Emanuel Tov, "The Textual Affiliations of 4QSam[a]" and "Different Editions of the Song of Hannah and of its Narrative Framework" in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible. Collected Essays on the Septuagint*, Brill, Leiden 1999, pp.273-284 and 433-456 respectively.
5. "Hannah and Anna: The Greek and Hebrew Texts of I Samuel 1" *JBL* 107(1988) 385-412.
6. Eugene C. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids & Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden 1999, 68.
7. *I Samuel*, Anchor Bible 8; Doubleday, New York 1980, 5.
8. Cf. McCarter, *ISamuel*, 75; James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story. Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOT Press, Sheffield 1992, 32-40.

Congreso Internacional of the Asociación Biblica Española held in Salamanca and published in the *Actas* of the congress[9], has proved both useful and tricky for exegetical analysis of the text under study.[10] It was useful because it facilitated close reading of the text; but it proved also deceptive since the narrator's strategy, and his management of various narrative aspects is far more complex than the analysis in that paper thought. Scene Three (vv.19-28) sees Elkanah's family back to Ramatayim after the experience of Hannah with both her family circle (scene One, vv.4-8) and with Eli (scene Two, vv. 9-18). The narrator looses no time to tell of the only event that matters for him, the copulation of Elkanah with Hannah (v.19), and of the sequence of events that followed (v.20). Time is only vaguely computed, and when we meet Elkanah again he is ready to embark on the seasonal or yearly[11] pilgrimage to Shiloh. He accepts Hannah's excuses for not accompanying the rest of the family on this pilgrimage (vv.22-23). For how many years or seasons she keeps from taking part in these pilgrimages with the family we are not told by the narrator. It would seem that weaning time in ancient Israel could last up to three years (cf. 2Mac 7, 27).[12] This information is taken as known to the prospective reader, and the narrator feels no need to explain the details of the weaning institution.

When we meet Hannah again in v. 24, and we are told that she took the child with her to the Shiloh sanctuary, together with the gifts for the sacrifice, we should keep in mind that the pilgrimage is a different one. The narrator though does not explain that we are reading an account of an experience different from the one initiated at verse 21 when Elkanah leads another pilgrimage to Shiloh in which Hannah does not participate. The narrative is therefore elliptical. The narrator takes for granted that the reader would recognise the ellipsis, that he would bridge the hiatus between the narrative initiated at verse 21 and that one resumed at verse 24; scene Three actually lumps together two different experiences. Probably, the narrator chooses this strategy in order to shorten the time lapse and to speed the narrative to its climax. But some tradents of textual tradition have not realised the narrator's strategy at this junction.

9. Cf. Anthony Abela "What is Hannah saying about her son in 1Samuel 1,28b?" in Jesús Campos Santiago & Victor Pastor Juliàn (eds.), *Biblia, Memoria Historica y Enrucijada de Culturas*, Cicero Imprente S.L. Zamora, Salamanca 2004, 518-525

10. On the segmentation of Hebrew narrative discourse into shorter scenic units following the indications of the narrator, cf. Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us"*. Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives, Subsidia Biblica 13, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome 1990, 1-3.

11. Cf. commentaries.

12. Cf. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel. Its Life and Institutions*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London1961,43; Philip J. King & Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louis & London 2001,40-43.

This may be seen in how MT wayištaḥû in verse 28 has been treated[13]. Some manuscripts of the LXX simply refrained from translating the lexeme. Others versions of the text like 4Q Samª changed the subject of the verb from masculine to feminine referring to Hannah; others still read the cluster as an apocopated third person masculine singular with the verb tentatively referring to Elkanah. Probably the best solution will be exegeting the cluster as an apocopated plural form[14] of the verb hištaḥăwāh; it is not Elkanah or Hannah who worships the Lord, but the two together, as well as the baby Samuel. It was the whole family who was paying homage to the Lord just as they did at the beginning of the second scene (1,19). Within this cultic moment Hannah indulged in prayer: wattitpallēl ḥannāh. Of course, it is not the first time within the narrative that Hannah prays (cf. v.10); this prayer Hannah herself later describes as an outpouring of her spirit: wā'ešpōk 'et-naphšî liphnê YHWH (v.15). Is this second praying intervention in 2,1-10 by Hannah to be read as another pouring out of her spirit? This last intervention of the narrator (2,1a) before he hides behind the personage's voice in the hymn offers another piece of his interpretation: this hymn, whatever its genre, was a prayer formulated by the protagonist, who somehow seeks to give the significance of what has just happened to her. When the tradents of the LXX versions leave out the sentence 'and Hannah prayed', just as they do when they chop off the other expression 'and they worshiped the Lord there' for reasons we have explained above, they demonstrate that they have misunderstood the story with its narrative techniques.

Overview of Hannah's hymn

It is the contention of the present writer that regarding this hymnal composition two hypotheses may be sustained.

First, that though it is encased within the narrative of Samuel's birth and childhood as Hannah's second outpouring of her spirit on offering her son to the Lord(1Sam 1,1-2,21), the song follows its own compositional dynamics, those of its genre, and only superficially does it yield to contextual pressures. Meir Sternberg elevates this observation to the level of universal compositional law: "Once the tale modulates into or from parable (as with Jotham's sermon from the mount) or poetry (Deborah's

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13.   For a detailed study one should read Tov, "Different Editions of the Song of Hannah and of its Narrative Framework," 433-440.
14.   Cf. Paul Joüon &T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome 1991, § 79t

or Hannah's song) or dream (as often in Genesis), divergences from the prose version find their coherence in the laws of the genre: formal constrains, poetic license, stylised expression, the language of symbols or morals. It makes no sense, therefore, to ask why Hannah sings of the barren women bearing seven children while she herself bore only six..."[15] But the relative autonomy of a poetic genre inset within a narrative should not be pushed to reading the poem as a completely independent composition with no reference to the current literary context. This context becomes the 'co-text' a principle in linguistic studies that sanctions that "any sentence other than the first in a fragment of discourse, will have the whole of its interpretation forcibly constrained by the preceding text, not just those phrases which obviously and specifically refer to the preceding text, like the *aforementioned* ."[16] From this there follows that the exegesis of the song may well start with its own dynamics and less with its insertion into the current context, independently of whether its composition was synchronical with it or not. However, we may not ignore that it has been embedded within the narrative of Samuel's infancy (1,1-2,21) which somehow constrains its interpretation since this now constitutes its co-text as well as its literary context.

Second, the analysis of the song's literary dynamics as well its exegesis will establish whether it is meant to fit purely the literary unity within which it is encapsulated, or whether it has a function to play within its wider context, the Primary History. If exegesis will discover elements that point to themes that are situated outside the closer literary context (1,1-2,21), the full understanding of the song itself will have to wait till the whole context is properly studied.

The song is made up of four stanzas[17] of varying length: the first stanza is made up of three strophes: vv.1.2.3; the second stanza is built of two strophes: vv.4.5; two strophes make up the third stanza: vv.6-7. 8.a-b while the concluding stanza consists

15. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*. Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1987, 246-247

16. Gillian Brown & George Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge1983, 46.

17. For this nomenclature cf. William D. Reyburn, "Anatomy of a Poem: Lamentations 1," in Ernst R. Wendland (ed.), *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures*, UBS Monograph Series 7; New York 1994, 147-169; Lynell Zogbo & Ernst R. Wendland, *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible*. A Guide for Understanding and for Translating, United Bible Societies, New York2000, 57-58.

of two strophes: vv.8c-9a. 9b-10. The first stanza is characterised by verbs in perfect tense and by the shifting of persons; the second stanza offers a reflection on the reversal of fortunes in life; the third stanza makes statements on the Lord as the Lord of history, while the fourth stanza makes it clear that there is no place in man to be proud, for life is in the hand of the Lord who protects his servants as well as his king.

The First Stanza

This stanza (vv.1-3) is particularly dynamic and dramatic. In this study we shall focus on the first two strophes(2,1-2). The first strophe (v.1), made up of four cola, we see the singer referring back to her own past though in oblique terms. There are the unidentified participants 'my enemies' whom the reader may choose to mix up with her ṣārātāh of 1,6; but given that Peninna participated in the cult together with her family, and with Hannah herself, one would exclude her as the **only** referent of the plural 'ôyᵊbay in 2,1b. And Peninnah's yᵊlādîm do not seem to have participated in their mother's cruel harassment (wᵊkiᶜăsattāh, 1, 6) of Hannah. The reader would not be able to avoid the possibility that the third colon of the first strophe constitutes a flashback upon a moment in the story of Samuel's birth and infancy which the narrator chooses not to narrate[18] : once the issue of progeny for Hannah is assured, Hannah pays back her rival the many years of unkind harassment. If, on the other hand, Hannah's song is a 'victory song' even though without any 'precise historical reminiscences'[19] the phrase 'my enemies' may be referring to more than Hannah's partner in their home troubles. Therefore, even if a third participant is indirectly mentioned by the singer, 'my enemies', the focus is on Hannah herself and her feelings, as well as on the other main character, YHWH. The cluster 'my enemies' therefore may be a pointer to a level of text which is wider that the immediate literary context of Samuel's infancy narrative though this latter is hermeneutically included.

But the first strophe is more complex than that. In this strophe Hannah articulates her sentiments at this second moment of prayer at Shiloh during the family's ritual of thanksgiving for the birth of infant Samuel. The four cola (henceforth marked by

18.   On flashbacks in biblical narratives cf. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Almond
       Press, Sheffield 1989, 166.175-183; Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us"*, 8.23.
19.   Cf. Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, Orbis Books, New York1979, 119; Watts, *Psalm
       and Story*, 30-32.

the letters a-d) are somehow chiastically disposed in that colon (a) and colon (d) speak of Hannah's feelings in straightforward terms, while cola (b) and (c) employ figurative and even idiomatic language[20] as they describe the changes in Hannah's place in social life with the birth of her son.[21]

The strophe intensifies as it moves on from colon to colon. The singer opens and closes this first unit in a triumphal manner; the verbal head words in the two cola/ clauses, ʿālaṣ, to exult, and śāmaḥ, to rejoice, often appear together in literary contexts(cf. Ps 68,4). The motivation for the sheer exultation and the intense joy[22] that transpires through the opening strophe is borne out through the preposition bᵊ in lines (a), (b), and (d). In the first two lines the preposition governs the tetragrammaton while in (d) it rules over the nominal yᵊšûʿāh that in MT is qualified by the possessive pronoun of the second person singular: 'your salvation'. This shift of participant to the second person without proper discourse preparation is a common feature in Hebrew poetry[23], and often marks the reach of a climatic point within the segment.[24] Unfortunately, some have not understood this literary function of such participant shift and suggested parsing the final kᵊ of the noun yᵊšûʿāh in (d) as causal particle introducing the following statement in the next line (v.2).[25] This would explain also the hoti in verse 2 of the LXX. In this case the text would read 'scriptura defectiva' for yᵊšûʿātî 'my salvation' or 'my victory'. NRSV renders this line: 'because I rejoice in my victory'. But the similarity in the language type in cola (a) and (d) would show that we have here a case of structural Inclusio.

What is Hannah saying about herself in the intervening lines (b) and (c) of the first strophe? McCarter rendered line (b) as 'My horn is raised by my god!' He justifies his textual option in this manner: "Reading b'lhy on the basis of the LXX (en theō

20. Cf. Jean-Marc Babut, *Idiomatic Expressions of the Hebrew Bible*. Their Meaning and Translation through Componential Analysis, Bibal Dissertation Series,5; North Richland Hills, Texas1999, 58-60

21. "Childbearing conferred status on the woman, especially in times when the need to produce more children was critical, owing to war, famine, disease, and epidemics," King & Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 50.

22. This is expressed through the emphatic kî in (d). On this grammatical feature the reader is referred to T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew*, The Magnes Press, Jerusalem & Brill, Leiden 1985, 158-164 which offers also a good bibliography.

23. Cf. Ernst R. Wendland, *Analyzing the Psalms*, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Dallas 1998,159-160

24. Zogbo & Wendland, *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible*, 50-51.

25. Cf. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 68.

mou) and OL. MT and 4QSam^a (*rmh qarni by[hw]h* repeat *byhwh* 'in, by YHWH' which is poetically inferior and textually suspicious."[26] This sounds like seeking to set rather than to discover and understand the author's agenda. One should notice: 1) the maintenance in (b)of the same subject of (a); 2) how the author/participant keeps in (b) the 'synecdoche principle' employed in (a); 3) how the author/participants resort to figurative (McCarter) and even idiomatic language(Babut) to describe Hannah's feelings now that her status in society changed radically(one should perhaps read 1Sam1,4 in this light); 4) McCarter has shown how the metaphor of the 'raised horn' "implies a significant elevation in condition involving some kind of visible distinction; in certain instances it refers specifically to the establishment of the lasting distinction of posterity. It does not follow necessarily that in the present passage the birth of a son was intended by the original composer of the poem, but this is quite possible. At the least the statement is susceptible to such a construction and gives a certain propriety to the placing of the song on Hannah's lips"[27]; 5) that while the tradents behind the possible *Vorlage* of the LXX may have thought that the author of the poem could have meant to resort to the stylistic technique of the 'break-up of a composite name'[28] and thus wrote ʿělōhîm instead of YHWH in (b) governed by the preposition b^2, he seems to have preferred the tetragrammaton for reasons of content. Within the wider context of Samuel's infancy narrative Hannah is constantly depicted as addressing 'the Lord' (1,11. 23.26.28); the inferior stylistic choice points to the conscious underlining that Hannah's spiritual exultation(a) and her elevation within society because of her motherhood (b), had their only source in YHWH.[29]

One should note the use of asyndesis[30] as the first three lines (a), (b), and (c) follow each other in rapid succession. The asyndeton construction was probably meant to evoke speed but also contemporaneity in the sense that the three actions described

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 72
28. YHWH-ʾělōhîm has been considered as one such composite name. Cf. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III*, Anchor Bible 17a; Doubleday, Garden City, New York1970, XXXVIII-XLI; on the stylistic devise of breaking up names cf. Wilfred G.E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1994, 380.
29. "....in the sentiments it expresses, (this hymn) is an apt inclusion here. Hannah exults in the Lord and rejoices in his salvation; the Lord is the central figure of her song," Antony F. Campbell, "1-2 Samuel", *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Raymond E. Brown & Joseph A. Fitzmyer & Roland E. Murphy eds.), Chapman, Prentice Hall, New Jersey1968.1990,147.
30. On this feature of Hebrew grammar one may consult A. E. Cowley(ed.), *Gesenius'Hebrew Grammar*, Clarendon Press, Oxford1910.1980, §154; Joüon & Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, § 177.

are taking place together: as soon as the Lord raises Hannah's horn by giving her a son(1,20), Hannah's mouth 'widens' against her enemies who in the context cannot but materialise though not exhaust in her 'rival' Peninnah. Unfortunately the literary context is multifunctional in that Hannah's hymn is meant to serve both the characterisation of the protagonist in this episode[31] as well as the protagonist of this section of 'the David Narrative' within the Primary History, King David,[32] and the interpretation of Israel's history as a victory through the essential intervention of YHWH in particular events. Hannah's hymn has been read also as a victory hymn[33]. In the light of what Prof Stanley Fish's insistence on the role of contexts constituting meanings[34], it is possibly this context that allows in the idiomatic expression rāḥab phî ʿal in line (c) the semantic value isolated by McCarter[35] and accepted by Roger L.Omanson and John E. Ellington[36], of 'swallowing one's enemies', that is, vanquishing them. However, the meaning of verbal conflict often met with in modern translations: "la bouche grande ouverte contre mes enemis"(TOB); "I gloat over my enemies" (REB/NJPS); "je peux rire de ennemis" (PdV); "my mouth boasts over my enemies"(NIV), better fits the context which tells in flashback of verbal conflicts between the two women.

31. Cf. Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 29-32.
32. One should notice two important instances of Inclusio: the first one in this hymn: 'my horn is raised high in the Lord'(2,1b) and 'the Lord...will raise the horn of his anointed'(2,10c). In the previous parallel line 'his anointed' is identified as 'his king'. The reference to the king is generally taken as anachronistic in the sense that within the narrative of Samuel's infancy(1,1-2.21) no king is strictly speaking introduced; however, rather than being a slip by the narrator, we have to read this reference to the multi-level character not merely of the hymn but also on the narrative context within which it is inset. On the other hand, Prof Watts has pointed to the many parallels between this hymn and 2Sam 22, David's hymn, where David's narrative also comes to a close (cf. Ibid. pp. 21-24) . One may speak therefore of a 'proleptic' function of Hannah's hymn in 2,1-10 and an 'analeptic' function of David's hymn in 2Sam 22 in that it refers back to Hannah's hymn. Together, the two hymns form an Inclusio in that they define where David's narrative actually starts and where it closes. The narrative of the monarchy in the Primary History is actually the story of David (1-2 Samuel) and his descendants (1-2 Kings).
33. J.T. Willis, "The Song of Hannah and Psalm 113," CBQ, 34(1973) 142-143; Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 25-32.
34. *Is there a Text in this Class?* The Authority of Interpretative Communities, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts1980.
35. *I Samuel*, 72.
36. *A Handbook on The First and Second Books of Samuel*,1, United Bible Societies, New York2001, 52.

The Second Strophe (2,2)

In this second strophe Hannah focuses on her relationship to the Lord although she speaks of him in general religious terms. In the current MT text as we find it in BHS, the strophe is a tricola unit with the first (a) and the third(c) being parallel, while the second (b) being quite different from its adjacent members. Cola (a) and (c) are very similar in structure; they consist of two 'quasi-verbal nominal clauses'[37] starting with the existential adverb 'ên [in (c) this is preceded by the conjunction], and the predicate made up of the adjectival qādôš in (a) and the nominal ṣûr in (c), the comparison marker kᵊ attached to the tetragrammaton in (a) and to the nominal 'ĕlōhîm in(c); this latter is also qualified by the first person plural suffix, 'our God'. There is no topic in these impersonal constructions, though the virtual subject of both clauses is 'someone' or 'something' encoded within existential adverb 'ên. The two cola create no particular difficulty except that the metaphor ṣûr is substituted in the LXX by the adjectival ṣaddîq, righteous, in Greek, dikaios, which is followed by some modern translations(cf. REB). Although this feature is presumed to have been present in the *Vorlage* of both the LXX and 4QSamᵃ, and has been included in the reconstructions of the latter text by Ulrich[38] and Cross[39], the Qumran text is supposed to have come from conflated readings of both LXX and MT, while the adjective in LXX and then the Vetus Latina is due to translation strategies rather thanto reconstruction of a *Vorlage*[40]. The presence in Ugaritic of the 'word pair' ṣûr and qadôš[41], with word-pairs being 'one of the prominent features of Hebrew poetry'[42], would point rather to the two words as being original, and the change of the term 'mountain' in(c) may have been dictated by the fear that the pairing of 'holy' and 'mountain' may have seemed strange(Dahood).

But it is colon (b) that created the greater problems. Some versions, ancient and modern, simply eliminate this colon as an independent member of the strophe; some scholars drop elements of its constituents as being redactional and as not being part of the *Vorlage*, and distribute what remains among the two other cola. McCarter for instance translates this text as a two cola strophe:

37. Cf. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*,56-57
38. *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, 121
39. "New Qumran Biblical Fragment,"20
40. Cf. A. Passioni dell'Acqua, "La metafora biblica di Dio Roccia e la sua soppressione nell'antiche versioni,"*Ephemerides Liturgicae* 91(1977) 417-453; Tov, *The Greek & Hebrew Bible*, 441
41. Cf. Mitchell Dahood, "Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs" in Loren R. Fisher(ed.), *Ras Shamra Parallels*, II, Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, Rome 1975, I:49
42. Wendland, *Analyzing the Psalms*, 129

> *For there is no holy one like Yahweh*
> *And no mountain like our god!*

Others allow for a three cola structure but change their order by putting colon (b) at the end of the strophe as its climax (LXX) or as the opening of the strophe: The MBS translation in *Il-Bibbja* reads as follows:

> *Ma hemm ħadd ħliefek,*
> *ħadd qaddis bħall-Mulej,*
> *m'hemmx Blata bħal Alla tagħna.*

The main difficulty in (b) came from the clause initial kî normally parsed as causal particle; but the clause that the particle introduces is not anaphoric, does not function as an explanation of the previous clause (a); neither is it cataphoric in that it does not lay the ground for the following clause in (c).[43] Furthermore, there is in this colon the shift to the second person we meet in the concluding colon of the previous strophe. This may explain the translation strategy in *Il-Bibbja*, but would leave unexplained the poet's strategy of separating the parallel colon (a) and colon (c) by interlaying colon (b). What is the narrator trying to say in interposing a clause that is completely different in structure from its two outflanking cola?

The poet ensured that with verse 2 starts a new line of thought by opting for a caesura through the asyndeton to open (a). The LXX perceived a formal causal link between the last colon of the first strophe and this first line of the second strophe by explicitation through the particle *hoti*; McCarter misunderstood this conjunction as a translation of the Hebrew conjunction kî currently present as second person singular pronominal suffix in the cluster bîšû'ātekā in verse 1.[44] One should note that the LXX itself translates this qualification of the term/concept yəšû'ā, salvation, by the phrase en sōtēría sou, literally 'in your salvation' and therefore McCarter's parsing cannot be correct, and actually no major translation follows his lead in this.

43. For these terms cf. Ellen van Wolde, "Linguistic Motivation and Biblical Exegesis" in Ellen van Wolde (ed.), *Narrative Syntax & Hebrew Bible*, Brill, Leiden1997, 38.
44. *1Samuel*, 68

Concerning the exegesis of (a) and (c) some basic questions need to be asked and answered to. Even if we were to follow Sternberg's principle that embedded hymns function more or less autonomously from the context in which they are inset, this would not mean that they were chosen haphazardly by the writer/narrator[45] or that they would carry no contribution to the narrative within which they are inset. They are after all acts of interpretation by the narrator. The corollary of this reasoning is that it is exegetically relevant to ask what Hannah the character would have understood when she declared in (a) that the Lord is qādôš and (c) that 'our God' is a ṣûr. Does the immediate context which is the narrative of Samuel's birth and infancy in 1,1-2,21 really exercise no influence on the semantics of the text? What have the concept qādôš, intuitively translated 'holy', and the metaphor ṣûr that is normally rendered 'Rock' or 'Mountain' in common as to be placed within the poetic structure in parallel positions? Do these two predicates in (a) and (c) denote the 'unreachability' of 'our God' who is 'the Lord'? Are the two cola together with the central colon (b) denoting further Hannah's (and perhaps the narrator's) marvel at God's control of human history? How are we to translate the two terms in order to avoid that a modern reader would fail to understand the word pair as the LXX translator(s) did when they substituted ṣûr with ṣāddîq which is behind the LXX dikaios?

The two syntactically and semantically parallel cola (a) and (c) consist of negative statements introduced by the existential adverb 'ēn[46]. Joüon distinguished two basic linguistic functions in the use of 'ēn: it is used to negate the presence of something in a specific place; this function has a subspecies wherein the adverb is used to negate the existence in an absolute manner (see Ex 2,12); the other function is when one negates the veracity of a statement expressed with a pronominal clause as in Is 1,15. The absolute use of the first function seems to fit our context better. Hannah states that there is no one/no thing (to contrast 'the Lord') who is 'holy' as the Lord and that there is no person who is 'rock/mountain' as 'our God'. The two statements in (a) and (c) are meant to be perfect parallels, joined together by the conjunction *waw* introducing (c); they are 'semantically equivalent' in the manner

45.   In the case of the Bible there exists no real difference between the two figures, cf. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 74-75

46.   On this adverb cf. Joüon & Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §§ 102j.k;154k;160g; Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures*,99-112; Bruce K. Waltke & M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana1990, § 39.3.3.

Professor Adele Berlin[47] understands the phrase, though they are not saying the same thing. The perfect parallelism between (a) and (c) would give (c) an anaphoric function in that, notwithstanding the interposition of colon (b), (c) is meant to disambiguate also colon (a)[48]. And this it does in two ways. Firstly. Through the pronominal suffix qualifying the nominal 'ĕlōhîm in (c), which is in perfect parallel to the tetragrammaton, a personal name of the God of Israel, in (a) as the governing preposition affixed to both demonstrates, shows that the virtual subject in (a) has to be a 'someone' not a 'something'. Secondly. The phrase 'our God' would point to a 'man-centred' function of both statements in (c) and (a). In other words, even if the statement in (a) seems to be strictly theological, what it says remains relevant to the lives of Hannah and her people. The 'holiness' of Yahweh has to do with humans like Hannah just as his being a ṣûr has. This brings us to the heart of the matter: the meaning of qādôš in (a) and ṣûr in (c).

The basic idea of the noun qōdeš from which the adjective qādôš derives is 'apartness' 'sacredness'.[49] The Lord is described in (a) as 'apart' 'separate' and so 'sacred' 'holy'. But this adjective is rarely found alone in the Old Testament if we leave the *trisagion* of Is 6,3 alone. Normally it is found in relationship with some other epithet. Even the famous title qᵊdôš yiśrā'ēl in Isaiah (cf. 1,4; 5,19.24; 10,20;12,6; etc) presents the absolute qādôš in its close relatedness to the people of Israel. Perhaps H. Seebass was right when he stated that "L'aspetto determinante del sacro nell'AT, se teniamo conto del rapporto con il profano ....non è tanto la potenza divina esterna, quanto piuttosto ciò che si determina in particolare luoghi, circostanze e tempi in rapporto relativamente diretto con la potenza divina, la quale può diventare estranea se non si instaura una relazione appropriata nei suoi confronti (1Sam 6,20). L'aspetto primario non è la separazione dal divino, ma il venirne positivamente a contatto, il che causa naturalmente una determinata condotta..."[50]

47. "The semantic aspect of parallelism does not refer to the meaning of a line, or even the meaning of the parallelism as a whole. The semantic aspect is the relationship between the meaning of one line and its parallel line....Equivalence, as I use the term, does not mean identity or synonymity. Two lines do not have to mean the same in order to be semantically equivalent; semantic equivalence does not imply sameness of meaning any more than lexical equivalence does," *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington1985, 90.
48. Cf. Ibid., 96.
49. Francis Brown & S. R. Driver & Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1907.1974, 871.
50. "Santo, sacro" in L.Coenen & E. Beyreuther & H. Bietenhard(eds.), *Dizionario dei Concetti Biblici del Nuovo Testamento*, Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, Bologna1970, 1653.

This close relatedness of Yahweh to human reality transpires in this second strophe of Hannah's hymn; the statement about the Lord's holiness (a) has to be read together with the other statement which is its parallel in (c) as the strict parallelism of the two cola, and the initial conjunction in the latter demonstrate. In his long essay on the sacred in the Old Testament, Maurice Gilbert[51] has captured this relatedness between the sacred and human reality. On p.222 of his work Gilbert comments briefly on Hannah's hymn with particular attention to our text: "Du parallélisme entre Saint et Rocher, on pourrait tirer une idée de solidité, de 'hors d'atteinte', de suprématie inattaquable et indomptable. Assurément le contexte montre que Yahvé est essentiellement secourable pour le faible et le pauvre: c'est le sens même de l'hymne." The parallelism between cola (a) and (c) hints that the statement about the Lord's 'holiness' is not complete if it is not seen together with the other statement that 'our God' is a ṣûr without identifying the beneficiary of God's being ṣûr. The genitival suffix affixed to 'ĕlōhîm suggests that the beneficiary is 'us', Hannah and her people.

The nominal ṣûr, 'rock' or 'mountain'[52] stands for an ancient metaphor which had its roots in the mythology of the 'cosmic mountain'. "The cosmic mountain is a well-known phenomenon in the history of religions. It is the centre of the universe, the starting-point of creation, highest place in the world, *axis mundi*, connecting heaven and nether world. It is the victory of cosmos over the chaotic forces of the nether world. 'Rock' is applied to Yahweh, mainly in the Psalter, in a sense closely related to some aspects of the cosmic mountain."[53] It would seem that ṣûr in the Old Testament was meant to evoke the figure of God or the Lord as Protector: 'ĕlōhî[54] ṣûrî 'eḥĕseh bô(2Sam 22, 3).[55] In most examples where this metaphor appears[56], it normally appears grammatically or semantically related to some nominal element in its linguistic context. In 1Sam 2,2, even if the beneficiary remains unexpressed on the surface level, within the deep structure of the text, the suffix in

51. "Le sacré dans l'Ancien Testament," in J.Ries & H. Sauren & G. Kestemont & R. Lebrun & M. Gilbert, *L-Expression du Sacré dans les Grandes Religions*,I, Proche-Orient Ancien et Traditions Bibliques, Centres d'Histoire des Religions, Louvain-la Neuve 1978, 205-292.
52. Cf. *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*,3, Brill, Leiden1996,1016-1017.
53. Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome1969, 205.
54. Reading with the LXX which translates ho theos mou
55. Cf. Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 23 for this latter psalm being in structural parallelism with the Hannah's hymn within the 'David Narrative' in what the present author terms the Primary History.
56. Cf. Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 1958.1993,1215.

the phrase kĕ'lōhênû, 'like our God', would seem to hint towards the singer and her people as the beneficiaries of the protecting activities of 'our God'. Is this the way colon (c) is disambiguating (Berlin) colon (a) and of course colon (b)? Or is not ṣûr used absolutely in this context, and only indirectly[57] predicated of 'our God', meant to express another attribute of 'the Lord/our God'? If this is the case, it will constitute a perfect parallel to qādôš in (a): if this latter would be referring to the 'apartness' 'otherness' of the Lord, the metaphor ṣûr could be referring to the 'loftiness', the 'transcendence' of 'our God'. There are many gods but none is holy like the Lord, and there are many 'mountains' (ṣûrîm) among the nations (cf. Dt 32, 30; Ps 78, 35) but none is like our God.

In modern translations of the verse we meet three kinds of treatment of colon (c). We find bare literal renderings: " Nor is there any rock like our God"(NKJV); "There is no rock like our God"(NJPS); "il n'y en a pas de rocher come notre Dieu"(NBS); "non c'è rocca come il nostro Dio"(CEI); "there is no rock like our God"(RSV).In these literal translations of ṣûr little interpretation is allowed and at times as in the case of NJPS, NBS, and CEI even the anaphoric nature of (c) expressed through the conjunction that introduces the colon is suppressed together with the particle. We find then translations that recognise ṣûr as a divine title[58] but without elaborating over its significance in the context; normally the term for 'rock' is capitalised: "Il n'est pas de Rocher pareil a notre Dieu"(TOB); "there is no Rock like our God"(NIV); "point de Rocher comme notre Dieu"(BJ); "there is no Rock like our God"(NRSV). Among this group we have to include MBS which rendered ṣûr by 'Blata'. The third group of translations either links the idea of mountain to the other that "the image evokes the idea of God as the source of protection and security for his people"[59] or choose to translate the metaphor: "We are safer with you than on a high mountain"(CEV); "Auf nichts ist so felsenfest Verlass wie auf ihn"(GN); "Personne ne nous protégé comme notre Dieu"(PdV); "Le Seigneur est sans pareil, notre Dieu seul est un rocher"(BE); " ...no protector like our God"(GNB); "Solo il Signore è rocca sicura"(BLC). One should note that this last group does not translate ṣûr as a divine title but simply as a metaphor which needs to be 'unpacked' into its semantic components.

57.   Of course only indirectly is it predicated of 'our God'; as in (a) the subject in (c) is encoded within the impersonal construction introduced by the adverb 'ēn.
58.   Cf. Lorenzo Viganò, *Nomi e Titoli di YHWH alla luce del semitico del Nord-ovest*, Biblical Institute Press, Rome1976, 2.
59.   Omanson & Ellington, *Handbook*,54

In view of what we said in the previous paragraphs, it would seem advisable to
'translate' both the concept 'holy' as well as the metaphor 'rock/mountain' used in
its absolute sense: "There is no one so unique as the Lord(a)....and no one is so
majestic as our God(c)". The adjective 'unique' expresses the semantic component
'apart, separate' underlying the adjective qādôš, while the adjective 'majestic' which
is marked by the adverbial 'so' renders the metaphor 'rock/mountain'.

Colon (b)

This is another ʿēn clause "indicating non-existence or absence"[60] that seems to fit
none of the twenty five ʿēn clause formats listed by Muraoka.[61] It consists of the
existential negative particle ʿēn, preceded by the conjunction kî that introduces the
colon, and followed by the adverb biltî qualified by the suffix of the second person:
bilteka, possibly referring to *YHWH* in colon (a) which is not vocative though. The
particle biltî with the final (î) being paragogic[62] though at times it can also be a
pronominal suffix (Hos 13,4), is a negative adverb functioning in biblical Hebrew
in various subtle manners.[63] Among its uses we may isolate what Bruce K. Waltke
& M. O'Connor[64] would call 'clausal restrictive adverb' (perhaps Genesis 43,3
would furnish a good example), and 'item restrictive adverb' for which these
grammarians pointed to Num 11,6 as an example. Our text in 1Sam 2,2 seems to
offer an example of the latter type. The adverb commands the suffix -ka which in
the context can refer only to *YHWH*. So what Hannah is saying in colon (b), when
we take the adverb bilteka together with the preceding existential adverb ʿēn, is
that 'there is no one except you'. The referent to the suffix in the cluster may easily
be picked up from colon (a) as being *YHWH* notwithstanding the shift from indirect
in (a) to direct speech in (b) just as the poet has done in the first strophe (v.1). H. W.
Hertzberg[65] states that Hannah is here making a major theological statement similar
to what we find in the Shema Prayer in Deut 6,4 about *YHWH* as the unique God.
There is no one besides him.

60.   Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*,109
61.   Ibid., 102-111.
62.   Cf. Joüon & Muraoka, §93q
63.   Cf. David J.A.Clines(ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, II, Sheffield Academic Press,
      Sheffield1995, 183-184
64.   *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §39.3.5e note 103.
65.   *I & II Samuel, A Commentary*, SCM Press, London1964, 29-30.

But by far, the main problems in (b) for exegesis and translation were caused by the particle kî which introduces the colon. Waltke & O'Connor's brief discussion of this particle shows where the problem lies: "There are two clause-adverbial uses of kî: the emphatic (Isa 1,27. 29,20; Ps 3,8) and the logical(Isa 14,29). The second of these overshadows the first through the dominance of the translation 'for' in 'Biblical English'. This translation is often used where it, and the understanding behind it, are simply wrong, that is, where there is no evident logical link of the clause to what precedes..."[66]

And this is what happened in our text. Normally it was parsed as carrying out the logical function somehow linking (b) to (a), and thus colon (b) was simply read as an 'expansion' (Hertzberg) or as an 'addition' (Gilbert) to colon (a). But was this expansion original with the author of the hymn or later? Prof Gilbert says only that it must be 'ancienne' since the LXX knew this addition.[67] Today we may concur with him that colon (b) must be ancient because we have 4QSam[a] which, though in fragmentary state, still contains the final k of the cluster bltk as part of the original text of the manuscript.[68] We venture to say that colon (b) was written together with the two adjacent cola, though this cannot be proven in an absolute manner. But our parsing of the colon initial kî differs from that of the great majority of versions old and not so old.

The LXX translator has shown that he did not understand the real rhetorical role of colon (b) by lengthening the colon through the term hagios that in (a) renders the Hebrew qādôš, and by transposing the line to the third position within the tricolon(v.2).[69] But he maintained the asyndeton of the Hebrew text so that this third colon in his translation looks more like a wooden repetition of the first colon. Unfortunately, this procedure of altering the place of the colon within the tricolon is followed by a number of other translations; this shows also that they misunderstood the parsing of the particle kî. MBS segments the text differently than we do in this study aligning verse 2 to verse 3 to form the second stanza while verse 1 forms the

66. *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §39.3.4e.
67. "Sacré dans l'Ancien Testament,"222
68. Cf. the reconstruction of the text by Eugene Charles Ulrich, Jr., *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, 19; Scholars Press, Missoula, Montana 1978,121.146
69. For other texts where the LXX shows that its translators actually misunderstood their Hebrew *Vorlage* cf. Emanuel Tov, "Did the Septuagint Translators always understand their Hebrew Text?" in *The Greek & Hebrew Bible*. Collected Essays on the Septuagint, Brill, Leiden 1999, 203-218.

first stanza of the poem. Colon (b) in verse 2 is the opening line of this second
stanza, possibly because this is the only colon in the stanza where we find the shift
to the second person address: *Ma hemm ħadd ħliefek*. The same strategy is adopted
the REB. The Vulgate puts the line to its original order within the strophe but
translates the kî by the causal *enim*, for. The BJ follows suit, but it also shows
unease with the colon as a whole by putting it within brackets: *(car il n'y a personne
except toi)*. The same procedure is employed by Prof Peter Paul Saydon.[70] A few
translations opt to delete colon (b) probably because they consider it later and
secondary[71]; CEI renders the verse in this manner: *Non c'è santo come il Signore//
non c'è rocca come il nostro Dio*. BE instead puts this colon just like the Septuagint in
the third position seemingly though as the climax of the strophe demoting colon
(c) to a simple parallel line of (a):

> *Le Seigneur est sanz pareil, notre Dieu seul est un rocher*
> *À part lui, il n'y a pas de Dieu.*

This would not be a bad solution if postposition to the end of the strophe signifies
ipso facto emphasis. The greater part of the translations, however, following the
traditional parsing of the particle kî as introducing a clause that is explanatory
of the previous one, simply choose not to reproduce in the translation. BLC may
be taken as representative of this position:

> *Solo il Signore è santo*
> *lui solo è Dio.*
> *Solo il Signore è rocca sicura*

But there is another possibility which respects the text as it stands: the solution
lies in parsing the kî in (b) as an emphatic particle. This solution has been adopted
by at least two leading modern translations, that of JB and NJPS:

> NJB: (indeed, there is none but you).
> NJPS: Truly, there is none besides You.

Two short comments: The NJB maintains the hesitancy of its parent translation

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70.   The NKJV: "For there is none besides You".
71.   Cf. Omanson & Ellington, *Handbook*, 53-54. Cf. Hertzberg and McCarter ad hoc.

the *Bible de Jerusalem* regarding the authenticity of (b), hence it reproduces the brackets; but it parses the kî as emphatic rather than as having a 'logical' function. The NJPS tries to disambiguate the suffix in bilteka by capitalising the 'y' of you, thus making it evident that the referent of the suffix is the Lord. But this is an unnatural use of capitalising in English. Instead it would have been a better solution if they would have inserted a vocative after the 'you' translating the -ka: "Truly, there is none besides you, O Lord". It is not a matter of not finding anyone so 'holy' like the Lord, but that there is none but the Lord. This would mean that colon (b) is disambiguating colon (a) in that the Lord is the only Holy One: there is none besides him.[72]

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BHS: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Stuttgart1987.
BJ: *La Bible de Jerusalem*, Paris1978.
BLC: *Parola del Signore. La Bibbia in Lingua Corrente*, Torino/Roma1985.
BS: *Bibbja Saydon*, Malta ²1982.
CCB: *Christian Community Bible*, Manila 1988.
CEI: *La Bibbia di Gerusalemme*,Conferenza Episcopale Italiana 1971.
CEV: *Into the Light.*Contemporary English Version, Swindon1997.
GN: *Gute Nachricht Bibel*, Stuttgart1997.

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72.   One should note that a few versions mistranslate this text in that they render the 'ēn clause as a comparative clause even though the comparative preposition kᵊ does not feature in this colon. GNB renders this clause by 'there is none like him' 'domesticating' the text by obliterating the address shift to the second person by changing 'you' of bilteka to 'him'. CCB maintains the 'foreignization' by maintaining the shift to the second person; but they offer the same mistaken translation: 'no one is like you'. On the concepts of 'domestication' and 'foreignization' of translations cf. Aloo Osotsi Mojola & Ernst Wendland, "Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies" in Timothy Wilt (ed.), *Bible Translation. Frames of Reference*, St Jerome Publishing, Manchester UK-Northampton MA 2003,24-25.

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LXX: *Septuaginta*, Stuttgart ⁹1935
MBS: *Il-Bibbja*, Malta Bible Society, Malta ³2004.
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NJPS: *Tanakh. The Holy Scriptures*, New Jewish Publication Society, New York1988.
NKJV: *Holy Bible. The New King James Version*, New York1990.
NRSV: *The Holy Bible.* The New Revised Standard Version, Oxford 1989.
PdV: *La Bible.Parole de Vie*, Villiers-le-Bel 2000.
REB: *The Revised English Bible*, Oxford/Cambridge1989.
RSV: *The Holy Bible.* Revised Standard Version, London 1966.
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