

Secure in God's House Reader's Theatre
Lesson 4: Greenhouse—Shelter for Nurture

1 Samuel 1-2

By Jennifer Davis Sensenig

*A reading in three parts: Hannah, Peninnah, group of women.
As the leader introduces the reading, she explains that there will be a pause for silent
prayer in the middle of the piece; this time will end with the sound of the timbrel.
Relish the words of Hannah's prayer, echoed by Mary in the Magnificat (Luke 1:47-55).*

Hannah: Life is worship and eating, household and family.
I am Hannah and I have no children.

Peninnah: Elkanah is *my* husband and our children are growing up strong.
We worship in Shiloh and we share our life with Hannah.

Hannah: I have longed for a child.

Peninnah: If only you had children, Elkanah would love you.
If only you had children, you would be a valuable woman.

Hannah: Elkanah has fed me, and loved me.
I have a double-portion, but I am still sad.
The Lord has closed my womb.

Women: Worship is our way. The Lord is our strength.
Go to the Lord, Hannah, and pour out your heart.

Hannah: We are at Shiloh, in the house of the Lord.
In this holy shelter, I am still sad.

Peninnah: If only you had children, Elkanah would love you.
If only you had children, you would be a valuable woman.

Hannah: Why does she taunt me? Why do I listen?
Why can't I eat? I am too troubled to speak.

Women: Elkanah is faithful to the Lord and to you.
Worship is our way. The Lord is our strength.
Go to the Lord, Hannah, and pour out your heart.

Hannah: Lord of hosts, look at me.
Remember me. Let me shelter a boy in my womb.
I will set him before you as a nazirite.
He shall drink no wine nor shall a razor touch his head.

Women: Worship is our way. The Lord is our strength.
 Is it foolish for a woman to pour out her heart?
 To grieve before the Lord and expect an answer?
 Worship is our way. The Lord is our strength.
 Let us all go to the Lord, and pour out our heart.

Silent prayers of hope.
Silence is ended with a gentle shake of the timbrel.

Hannah: The Lord heard my desperate prayers.
 I can eat again.
 I can come and go in peace.
 Like a greenhouse freshly seeded I am no longer empty.

Women: Welcome, new life. Welcome, Samuel!
 Share in the joy of a child.
 Worship is our way. The Lord is our strength!
 Shelter this boy with your love!

Hannah: I was a woman with deep trouble and tears.
 Today I am nurturing life.
 My prayers are answered and now I give thanks.

Women: Worship is our way. The Lord is our strength.
 Thank you for our children, our homes, our communities.
 Thank you for grace to raise new generations in faith.

Hannah: Though I had no children, I have nurtured this child.

Women: Thank you for grace to raise new generations in faith.

Peninnah: What is the faith Hannah proclaims? Who will join her song?

Hannah: My heart exults in the Lord;
 my strength is exalted in my God.
 My mouth derides my enemies,
 because I rejoice in my victory.

Women: There is no Holy One like the Lord;
 There is no Rock like our God.

Peninnah: Talk no more so very proudly,
 let not arrogance come from your mouth;
 for the Lord is a God of knowledge, who weighs our actions.

Women: The bows of the mighty are broken,
While the weak put on strength.
Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread.
But those who were hungry are fat with spoil.

Hannah: The barren has borne seven.
But she who has many children is forlorn.

Women: The Lord kills and brings to life.
The Lord brings down to Sheol and raises up.
The Lord makes poor and makes rich,
Brings low, and also exalts.

Hannah: The Lord raises up the poor from the dust,
Lifts the needy from the ash heap,
And makes us sit with princes—the Lord honors us.

Women: The Lord is our shelter.
The pillars of the earth belong to the Lord.

Peninnah: The Lord will guard the feet of the faithful.
The wicked shall be cut off in darkness;
for not by might does one prevail.

Hannah: The Lord's adversaries shall be shattered.
The Most High will thunder in heaven.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth,
Give strength to the sovereign,
And exalt the power of his anointed.

Gentle shake of the timbrel.

Women: Sprinkled, anointed, watered like sprouts.
We rejoice in the Lord with Hannah.

Participants may close by singing HWB 490 "Lord of the home."