

PRAYER IN THE DEUTERONOMIST HISTORY

The books of Joshua through 2 Kings are sometimes referred to as the Deuteronomist History because they narrate the central history of Israel as a nation.

Most prayers in these books are petitions for divine help or knowledge (Judges 1:1, 1 Samuel 1:20, 10:22, 23:2, 2 Samuel 5:19, 1 Kings 22:5, 2 Kings 3:11); *calling on the name of the Lord* in times of need (Judges 15:18, 1 Samuel 12:17, 1 Kings 17:20, 2 Kings 5:11); and *seeking the favor of the Lord* (1 Samuel 13:12, 1 Kings 13:6, 2 Kings 13:4). Solomon also pleads with the Lord to *hear...the prayer and plea* of those that worship Him at the temple (1 Kings 8:28, 30, 33, 38, 45, 49). In brief:

- **Joshua's** prayers concern taking possession of the Promised Land.
- **Judges** is a seemingly endless cycle of the people disobeying, the Lord allowing their captivity, the people *crying to the Lord*, God sending a leader who delivers them, and then a repeat of the same. An example of story-telling mingled with prayer is highlighted for us in Judges 5, titled *The Song of Deborah*. Here, Deborah, one of the judges of Israel, is recounting the battle against Sisera, detailing what God has done to give the Israelites the victory. This prayer is similar in format to Judith's prayer in the Apocrypha.
- **Ruth** contains a number of short intercessory blessings given by various people, and in some ways shows God's reply to these blessings by His activity behind the scenes.
- **Hannah's** prayers are covered in detail in the following page(s).
- **Samuel** – 1 Samuel lays out Samuel's role as intermediary, interceding for the people to God, and giving God's responses to the people. 2 Samuel notes a number of small petitions that David asks of God, along with blessings and judgments in His name, including David's thanksgiving when Nathan recounts God's promises to his house (see

following), David's confessions for his transgressions with Bathsheba and the census, and ending with David's praise to God for deliverance.

- **Kings** – Many vows, oaths, and blessings are said in the name of the Lord, along with petitions, intercessory prayers, praise, and affirmations (reciting what is true). Solomon asks for an understanding heart, and his dedication prayer of the temple is recorded (see following). After this prayer, there are no other records of Solomon's prayers or the kings after him, until Elijah. Through the end of 1 Kings and into 2 Kings, Elijah makes various requests to the Lord, including his prayer against the priests of Baal, and when God comes to him in a still, small voice to reassure him of His continued presence. The second half of 2 Kings includes Elisha's prayer in battle and Hezekiah's prayers for deliverance, from the Assyrians (see following) and from his sickness.

Songs of Thanksgiving

The Song of Hannah appears at the beginning of 1 Samuel (chapter 2), while 2 Samuel ends with the Song of David (chapter 22). Thus, the contents of first and second Samuel are framed by these prayers of thanksgiving: one as an expression of maternal triumph, the other of a male warrior's triumph over enemies. The two "songs" share specific poetic words, such as *horn* (1 Samuel 2:1, 2 Samuel 22:3) as a figure of speech for *strength*, and both refer to God as the *Rock* who delivers them (1 Samuel 2:1-2, 2 Samuel 22:2-3). Finally, both songs end with a reference to the *anointed* or *king* (1 Samuel 2:10, 2 Samuel 22:51). These parallels imply that the two prayers most likely originally framed one long book, rather than the two separate books that appear in our version of the Bible.



Let's look at four prayers in detail, expressing the petitioners' confidence in and humility before God:

David (2 Samuel 7:18-29)

Solomon (1 Kings 8:12-61)

Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:14-19)

Hannah (1 Samuel 1:9-18, 2:1-10)

These prayers contain the following three elements:

A servant attitude

- **David** uses the phrase *your servant* ten times in his prayer, addresses God as *Lord God* (a kingly designation), highlights the mercy shown to him by God, and comes before the Lord to pray.
- Like his father, **Solomon** refers to both David and himself as *your servant*, and stands *before the altar of the Lord... and spread out his hands towards heaven*.
- **Hezekiah** does not even refer to himself in his prayer, but rather prays on behalf of the people, spreading the letter from the Assyrians *before the Lord* and praying *before the Lord*.
- In her petition, which consists of a single sentence, **Hannah** refers to herself as *your servant* (or *maidservant*) three times, and prays *before the Lord*, also making a vow to God.

Prayer is an approach to the living God. It is access to the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity. It is detailing in the ear of Divine sympathy every sorrow. It is consulting with Divine wisdom on every difficulty. It is asking from Divine resources the supply of every want. And this not once in a lifetime, or for a few moments on a stated day of each year, but **at any moment, at every time of need.** Whatever be the day of your distress, it is a day when prayer is allowable...available. It needs no saint, no proficient in piety, no adept in eloquent language, no dignitary of earthly rank. This access to God in every place, at every moment, without any price or any personal merit, **is it not an amazing privilege?**

JAMES HAMILTON (1814-1867)

Spurgeon's Library: Prayer

Prayer is an act of humble confidence



Confidence in God's future help is based on recognition of His past deeds

- **David** expresses praise and amazement in what God has done for him: *Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?* (2 Samuel 7:18). In the second half of his prayer, he confidently asks God for His continued blessing in the future: *Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You, O Lord God, have spoken it, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever* (2 Samuel 7:29).
- **Solomon** starts his prayer by reiterating what God has done to this point: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled it...* (1 Kings 8:15). He then envisions seven different situations that would prompt worshipers to pray to God and entreats God to hear them and deliver them: *...may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive* (1 Kings 8:30).
- **Hezekiah** recalls God's creative power: *You have made heaven and earth*. In asking for deliverance from the Assyrians, he does not fail to mention how they have dishonored and mocked God.
- **Hannah's** prayer of thanksgiving praises God for what He has done; *...The Lord kills and makes alive... the Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up*.

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory (1 Samuel 2:6-8). She then proclaims what God will do: He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces, from heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed (v. 9-10).

Praise of God's incomparability

- **David:** *For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You... (2 Samuel 7:22).*
- **Solomon** returns to this theme throughout his prayer: *Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You... (1 Kings 8:23), But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You (v. 27), ...give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men) (v. 39), ...that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other (v.60).*
- In view of all the other false gods that the Assyrians destroyed, **Hezekiah** makes it clear that Israel's God does not compare: *...You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth (2 Kings 19:15), ...O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone (v.19).*
- **Hannah** begins her prayer of thanksgiving, exalting God for who He is: *No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God (1 Samuel 2:2).*

Prayer is an act of humble confidence; confidence that the One you are praying to can deliver you, and humility in both your smallness before such a great God and out of gratitude for what He has already done for you. Proper humility is a necessary attitude of prayer before God, for there is no one and nothing that can compare to the Lord God.