

When Hannah Spoke with God

by [Margaret Mackinnon](#) in the [December 2024](#) issue

Published on November 19, 2024

after an image in the Paris Psalter, ca. tenth century

Years later, what Hannah remembered most
wasn't that morning she took young Samuel
to the temple, nor the many trips she made
to visit him, carrying, always, *those little robes*
she sewed. Instead, another day—
watching herself
as if from far away: a childless woman, then,
at Shiloh, walking alone amid the offerings
and the arch. Hannah's lips moved, her stark
prayer held within. And the priest Eli asked,
Are you drunk, woman?
No, I am a woman hard of heart, she said.
Jagged hills stretched beyond, strewn, perhaps,
with other mournful songs—
but God was faithful in her exile.
And Hannah saw what others failed to see.
Air around her wavered. A hand reached out,
let fall a blessing. A weeping azure wash—
now flaming, fading. Walls nearby gone gold.
Old colors condensed to meaning. All distances
dissolved, as if she were inside an old story,
now entirely new. Blue light fell around her

like a fragment of the sky, like the sun
that streamed through a high church window

one Sunday when my daughter held to the glass
a sign she'd made: *I love you God*. Then she, too,

lived within a story all her own. Then that same new light
touched her face, her hand. Touched her lovely hair.