

Hannah in Stages and Places: An Exploration of Narrative Space in 1 Samuel 1

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ABSTRACT

The lack of contributions toward the study of narrative space in biblical literature has been lamented for the last four decades. While handbooks on narratology and narrative art have tried to expand discussions on the presentation and functions of space, many of these expositions of narrative space rely on reducing narrative space to setting, which focuses only on providing a basic background to a given narrative. Though these details are important for establishing where, when and how a character's actions take place, this article proposes that the characters' perceptions and experiences in and of places in a story must contribute to the representation of narrative space. The article illustrates this by conducting a synchronic analysis of 1 Samuel 1, focusing mainly on how Hannah, the protagonist, interacts with and in the spaces of the narrative. The study finds that the representation of each place changes according to the phases of Hannah's journey from childless woman to mother and that these changes are a result of Hannah's changing behaviour, psychology and interactions with other characters. These results indicate that space should not be reduced to static and matter-of-fact statements about context but that space should be treated as a malleable facet of narrative which characters can shape and transform.

KEYWORDS: 1 Samuel 1, Narrative space, place, narrator, characters

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A INTRODUCTION

It is no new thing to bemoan the lack of contributions toward the study of narrative space in narratology. Scholars, including Katrin Dennerlein² and Gabriel Zoran,³ have pointed out its visible absence from studies of narratology and narrative criticism in the past four decades. While several studies on narrative space in modern literature have emerged, the study of narrative space in biblical texts is still lagging.⁴ This is evidenced by the lack of scholarly

² See Katrin Dennerlein's *Narratologie des Raumes* (Berlin: W de Gruyter, 2009). Ronald van der Bergh, "Unfocused Narrative Space in Tobit 1:1–2:14," in *Place, Space, and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (ed. Gert T.M. Prinsloo and Christl M. Maier; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013) provides a list of contributors to this discussion up until 2012. Since then, the study of "literary geography" has turned out publications in the study of modern literature increasingly, and in an array of subtopics including virtual and digital storied spaces. Some of the latest handbooks on narrative criticism/ narratology/literary geography, including the revised editions of H Porter Abbott's *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (3rd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) and Peter Hühn, et al (eds) *Handbook of Narratology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), have entire chapters dedicated to the discussion of narrative space. Other scholars have gone further and published books focusing solely on narrative space and its various forms, like Marie-Laure Ryan, Kenneth Foote and Maoz Azaryahu's *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016).

³ Gabriel Zoran, "Towards a Theory of Space in Narrative," *Poetics Today* 5 (1984): 309–335.

⁴ This, however, does not count the growing popularity of "critical spatiality" in biblical studies, in which narrative space is also explored. Critical spatiality is a group of theories designed to understand and analyse the representation of spaces in the texts of the Bible (Jo-Marí Schäder, "The Implied Transcendence of Physical and Ideological Borders and Boundaries in Psalm 47," in *Place, Space, and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (ed. Gert T.M. Prinsloo and Christl M. Maier; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 70). This group of theories includes the work of multiple spatial theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, Edward W. Soja, Yi-Fu Tuan and Mieke Bal (Gert T.M. Prinsloo, "Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World: Theory and Practice with Reference to the Book of Jonah," in *Place, Space, and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (ed. Gert T.M. Prinsloo and Christl M. Maier; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5–12). While critical spatiality has received much merit in the last decades, it has also been criticised for the melding of spatial theories which may have been misinterpreted and may not be compatible, particularly with their individual classifications of space (Claudia. V. Camp, "Storied Space, or, Ben Sira 'Tells' a Temple," in *Imagining Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social, and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan* (ed. David. M. Gunn and Paula. M. McNutt; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 66–68). Further, it is also unclear how applicable these theories (amalgamated or not) are to biblical texts (Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 103–123). It is for these reasons that have opted to only apply narrative theory rather than an amalgamated spatial model.

engagement with space in handbooks of biblical narrative and the scholarly tendency to reduce narrative space to “setting” or “the fictionalised environment in which the author unfolds the plot and against which the protagonists are characterised”.⁵ Such handbooks include Bar-Efrat’s *Narrative Art in the Bible*—a seminal work,⁶ that says little to nothing on space or setting in a narrative and merely describes it as the location or locations where the story takes place and, at times, the geographical places between which characters move.⁷ As a result, space is reduced “...to an ancillary mechanism of authorial technique”⁸ rather than a structural necessity within the Hebrew aesthetic or narrative itself.

Delving a little further, some describe setting in biblical narrative as having three foci—geographical, temporal and social setting.⁹ Therefore, each focus deals with a specific set of questions resulting in categorically defined information. The geographical setting concerns the physical place(s) where each scene transpires, and, like a stage, it includes the props, the actors and the structures which aid in telling the story.¹⁰ Therefore, it deals with issues relating to location, topography and architecture. Temporal setting deals with the relationship between the actions of the characters and time – precisely *when* characters act and *how long* their actions transpire.¹¹ Finally, social setting refers to the social context or era in which the narrative takes place, including the institutions, norms, and class structures.¹²

⁵ R. Vermette, 1987 quoted by Sheila Hones, “Literary Geography: Setting and Narrative Space,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12 (2011): 685.

⁶ Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (trans. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989).

⁷ This includes Robert Alter’s *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

⁸ Luke Gartner-Brereton, *The Ontology of Space in Biblical Narrative* (London: Routledge, 2008), 38.

⁹ See Yven Bourquin and Daniel Marguerat, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (London: SCM, 1999), James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) and Mark Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990).

¹⁰ Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 70–71.

¹¹ This is related to the internal time of the narrative (Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 72–73).

¹² This particular study focuses on the social world of the narrator and the characters in the narrative and is not an attempt at providing social commentary on the world of the author or authors or of recreating their social context. However, the author and the narrator, and thus the narrative itself, are products of a specific time, place and circumstance and consequently require that the reader has or acquires some knowledge and understanding of the times in which the narrative was created (Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 74). Furthermore, while this study is synchronic, i.e. text-focused rather than author and history-focused (See Angelika Berlejung, “Methods,” in *T & T*

However, three facets of setting only make up the tangible aspects of space as they rely on the narrator's matter-of-fact statements about where, when and how actions take place. As such, they do not provide all the necessary information for understanding how setting and character interact and thus how space is represented, moulded or shaped by actants or even through the input of the narrator.¹³ In order to bridge this gap, some handbooks point to a metaphorical or symbolic value of setting in biblical narrative,¹⁴ but little has been done to explicate it.

Metaphorical value is born out of the associations that are made between places and the commonly held assumptions about or people's experiences in and of the places.¹⁵ For example, weddings are generally happy occasions, so one would likely assume that people enjoy themselves in this particular space. One can extrapolate from this that in narratives, the narrator and the actors create perceptions about the spaces in which they act. This is because characters have life experiences and interact with ideas and feelings within spaces. These, in turn, create memories which shape current and future thoughts and perceptions about these spaces.¹⁶ One can thus conclude that space in a narrative is more than just

Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Old Testament (3rd ed, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al.; London: T & T Clark International, 2012), 31–57), for a clear and concise explanation of the methods applied to biblical text) the use of narrative criticism and narratology relies upon the reader to make interpretations, particularly when examining and exploring the psychology of characters and commenting on inter-personal relationships (see Eryl W. Davies, *Biblical Criticism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London & New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 11–16). In other words, though narratology and narrative criticism are preoccupied with the words, facets, characteristics and other building blocks of the text, it also relies on an "interplay between text and reader" (Eryl W. Davies, *Biblical Criticism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 14) which is useful for providing a more holistic view and understanding of the text and what the narrative is trying to convey (Berlejung, "Methods", 40–41).

¹³ Narrative space considers a combination of narrated space – the world and context of the narrative and the world that the reader creates – and narrator's space – the perspective and context of the narrator (Gert. T. M. Prinsloo, "Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World: Theory and Practice with Reference to the Book of Jonah," 7).

¹⁴ See Daniel Marguerat and Yven Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 80 and Marie-Laure Ryan, "Space," in *Handbook of Narratology* (2nd ed, ed. Peter Hühn, et al.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 796; cf. Irene J. F. de Jong, *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 122–134.

¹⁵ Daniel Marguerat and Yven Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 80.

¹⁶ Daniel Marguerat and Yven Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 79; Also see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (4th ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 220.

the physical descriptions, space is shaped by the manner in which space and actant interact with one another.

B NARRATIVE SPACE AND 1 SAMUEL 1

In this section, we read 1 Sam 1 paying attention to space drawing from the principle established in the preceding section. 1 Samuel 1 narrative takes place in three geographical locations, Ramah, the city of Shiloh, and the sanctuary of Shiloh.¹⁷ Each site is connected to events in the protagonist's journey from childless woman to mother. Ramah and Shiloh are essentially domestic spheres where Hannah's primary role of "wife" is enacted. On the other hand, the temple of Shiloh is the space in which Hannah life is impacted the most as it is where she makes a vow to YHWH and where she will fulfil her vow.¹⁸

1 Samuel 1 narrative may, thus, be divided into three different parts: "Before the Sanctuary" (1 Sam 1:1-8), "At the Sanctuary" (1 Sam 1:9-18), and "After the Sanctuary" (1 Sam 1:19-28). In each of these sections, I analyse the narrator and characters' actions, reactions, and experiences within the given locations. In this way, I intend to demonstrate how the places are transformed through their association with Hannah's experiences in the development of the plot of the story.

1 Before the Sanctuary

1 Samuel 1 begins by introducing the family of Elkanah, an Ephraimite man from Ramathaim-Zophim,¹⁹ and their annual pilgrimages to the city of Shiloh, a cult centre, and the current home of the ark of the covenant.²⁰ These pilgrimages involve worship, making sacrifices to YHWH, and the division of portions between family members (1 Sam 1:3-4). However, the joyous religious pilgrimage is marred by domestic conflict between Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah, who is jealous of the love that Elkanah bestows upon Hannah (1 Sam 1:5), teases Hannah for her childlessness to the extent that Hannah "would weep and not eat" (1 Sam 1:7).²¹

¹⁷ Keith Bodner, *I Samuel: A Narrative Commentary in Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 11-13, 17.

¹⁸ Jan P. Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 6-7.

¹⁹ Ramathaim-Zophim is reduced to 'Ramah' in verse 19 (Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 12). Fokkelman suggests that the importance of the doubling of Ramathaim-Zophim lies in the role it takes on for Samuel once he has left Shiloh. However, this doubling may just be a mirroring of the doubling of Elkanah's lineage (Lyle. M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis* (Sheffield: Almond, 1985), 66-67).

²⁰ Baruch Halpern, "Shiloh," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5: 1214.

²¹ Unless otherwise specified, the translations of the text are my own. The translations are based on MT as presented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Rudolf Kittel et al. ed.

The narrator notes that the conflict between the wives of Elkanah would occur every time they would come to Shiloh (1 Sam 1:7) and heighten the matter. In addition, the narrative highlights that Hannah would not participate in the sacrifice or the meal during the religious occasion.²² Peninnah's acts of shaming are, therefore, easily likened to the shaming of social deviants²³ who, like Hannah, live on the social periphery due to their inability to function in a way that befits their communities.²⁴ In Hannah's case, her childlessness keeps her from being a mother, a role that her community expected of her. Hannah's situation stands in contrast to Elkanah's second wife, Peninnah, who is established as a mother because of her children (1 Sam 1:2). Peninnah's advantage, thus, symbolises for Hannah all the things she is not. So, Hannah was repeatedly reminded of her failure to participate socially expected role as a mother, which was viewed as YHWH's favour (1 Sam 1:5).²⁵ Therefore, for

Torah, Nevi'im u-Khetuvim. BHS (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1990). The verse demarcations thus follow that of MT and not standard English translations of the text. Lillian Klein's essay, "Hannah: Marginalised Victim and Social Redeemer," in *Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 77–92) explores mimetic desire and marginalisation in the polygynous marriage of Hanna, Elkanah and Peninnah, which provides further useful background and considerations about the marital dynamic in which Hannah is involved.

²² Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 7; Serge Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle: 1 Samuel 1–8 in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 84–85.

²³ Dietmar Neufeld, "Chapter 9: Trance as a Protest Strategy," in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 129–139. Acts of shaming also separate the pure or impure, or honourable and shameful (Lynn. M Bechtel, "Shame as a Sanction of Social Control," in *Social Scientific Old Testament Criticism* (ed. David J. Chalcraft; Sheffield: Sheffield Publishing, 1997), 254). Labels of deviance and shame are attributed to the social values of honour and shame, which were embedded in the social fabric of the ancient Near East, and used to determine status and position in terms of social class and acceptability within a community (Halvor Moxnes, "Honour and Shame," in *The Social Sciences and the New Testament Interpretation* (ed. Richard Rohrbaugh; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996; Joseph Plevnik, "Honor/Shame," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (2nd ed., ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 106; Also see Bechtel, "Shame as a Sanction of Social Control," 236). Unfortunately, due to space constraints, I could not develop the relationship between honour and shame in Hannah's narrative completely. Where aspects of honour and shame do appear in the narrative, I include further information in the footnotes.

²⁴ Leo G. Perdue, "The Israelite and Early Jewish Family: Summary and Conclusions," in *Families in Ancient Israel* (ed. Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins and Carol L. Meyers; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 167–171.

²⁵ It is important to highlight that the reasons behind Hannah's barrenness are unclear. While it might be suggested that she has erred in some way and that YHWH is punishing her for this infraction, this cannot be a foregone conclusion. The text does

Hannah the yearly cycle of emotional abuse at Shiloh characterises Shiloh as a place of shame and hurt.²⁶

Unfortunately, Elkanah’s attempts at intervention perpetuates the cycle of emotional abuse. Instead of acting as a mediator and attempting to resolve the conflict between his two wives, he continues to give Hannah preferential treatment over Peninnah and attempts to placate her with food (1 Sam 1:5). It might be assumed that Hannah has reached her wit’s end when Elkanah tries to comfort her by asking, “Hannah, why are you weeping and why don’t you eat, and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:8). Despite his efforts at consoling her, his actions and words do not remove the treatment she receives from Peninnah, the social obligation she may feel to become a mother, nor the belief that YHWH has closed her womb.²⁷ At this point, she decides to leave this space, since it has, up to this point, provided no means of giving her what she desires.²⁸

2 At the Sanctuary

Ancient Near Eastern temples and their sanctuaries were regarded as the physical and “architectural embodiment[s]”²⁹ of the cosmic mountain where the world was created.³⁰ Such a location—including the temple of Shiloh in which this next phase of Hannah’s story transpires—was a site of holiness, a space set apart from the profane because it was the earthly representation of the home of the god(s).³¹ The holy space was, thus, a place of encounter between divine and human.

not reveal in any way why “YHWH closed her womb” (וַיִּהְיֶה סָגַר רַחֲמָהּ; 1 Sam 1:5), it only states that he did and the context implies that this is a further reason behind Elkanah’s pity for Hannah and her situation. Furthermore, her later actions at the temple do not suggest that she asks YHWH for forgiveness or penitence for some transgression she committed. Instead, she only asks for his favour (1 Sam 1:11).

²⁶ Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 12; Serge Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 84–85.

²⁷ Yairah Amit’s essay “‘Am I not more devoted to you than ten sons?’: Male and Female Interpretations,” in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*. (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 68–76) explores Elkanah’s statement further and considers the implications that this complaint has on Hannah’s experiences as a childless woman.

²⁸ Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 85–86.

²⁹ Jo-Marí Schäder, “Understanding (the Lack of) Space in Psalm 47:6 in Light of its Neighbouring Psalms: A Spatial Reading of Psalms 46–48,” *OTE* 23 (2010/1):141.

³⁰ Nicolas Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 165; Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 113–114. For further reading on the temple as a site where heaven and earth meet, consult John M Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993).

³¹ Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 112; Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East*, 161–162.

Hannah likely believed her situation could change if she encountered YHWH at the "house³² of YHWH" (1 Sam 1:9–18) and entreated him to give her a child.

The first descriptions of Hannah demonstrate how she acknowledges the sanctuary of the temple space. She stands near the doorpost of the temple for the entirety of the scene. From this position, she makes her request to YHWH or "YHWH of hosts" (1 Sam 1:11). The temple's physical and metaphorical borders were created to retain its holiness and were set up according to a person's level of purity or pollution.³³ According to biblical social values, purity is indicative of an honourable social position within a community which is decided upon by its members.³⁴ As a result, only the purest of society would be permitted into the temple, so entry was reserved for priests.³⁵ Purity was a quality assigned to those who respect and defend the boundaries of the holy space and, in so doing, showed reverence and respect for the divine being who established the regulations.³⁶ Therefore, Hannah's position outside of the sanctuary highlights her effort to maintain the boundaries and sanctity of the temple. By remaining outside while she prayed, Hannah kept her assumed pollution and yet positioned to gain purity in the process.³⁷

Hannah also maintains the metaphorical boundaries of the temple by the manner in which she speaks to those who occupy the space. She addresses YHWH with the rare epithet, לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת ("YHWH of hosts"), while referring to herself as his "handmaiden" (אִמָּה) (1 Sam 1:11). These terms clearly convey how Hannah views YHWH and her relationship with him in the sanctuary space. The terms denote a difference in the levels of honour that YHWH, the God of the

³² Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God* (Washington, D.C: CBA, 1989), 12. Koester explains that there is no uniform name of the dwelling of YHWH in the narratives of the Old Testament. The house of YHWH (בְּבַיִת יְהוָה) featuring in 1 Samuel 1 is a change from the use of 'tabernacle' and precedes the common use of 'temple' with one exception in 1 Samuel 1:9 (הַיְכָל יְהוָה; 'The temple of YHWH') (Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 11–12). Given that the text refers to the house and the temple of YHWH (1 Sam 1:7, 9), I use these versions.

³³ Schäder, "Understanding (the Lack of) Space," 138.

³⁴ Ernest van Eck, *Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark's story of Jesus: A Narratological and Social Scientific Reading* (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 1995), 196.

³⁵ Schäder, "Understanding (the Lack of) Space," 140; Lori McCullough, "Dimensions of the Temple: The Temple Account in 1 Kings 5–9 Compared with Ancient Near Eastern Temple Paradigms," (MA diss., Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 2007), 29–30.

³⁶ David P. Wright, "Holiness in Leviticus and Beyond," *Interpretation* 53 (1994/4): 353–354.

³⁷ Neufeld, "Chapter 9: Trance as a Protest Strategy", 139–140; David Alter, *The David Story* (New York: WW Norton and Co., 1999), 4–5; Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 85–88; Evans, *Women in the Bible*, 29.

temple, has in comparison to herself. Since he is the greatest “of hosts”, this places YHWH in a far higher position than herself, whom she regards as a mere servant. This simple gesture indicates a reverence for YHWH, whom Hannah recognises as greater and capable of granting her what she desired. This gesture also brings us to another important message that Hannah conveys with her choice of names. Since Hannah describes herself as YHWH’s handmaiden, this places YHWH as her patron or the one who can provide a service, and herself as his client or the one who asks and may receive the aid of the patron. This relationship is based on differences of status, class, and means, and is formed based on the client, who is of lower status than the client, asking the patron to aid them in some way without an expectation of repayment – or, at least, repayment in kind.³⁸ This means that the patron-client relationship places the client at the patron’s mercy and acts of grace.³⁹

Hannah’s dependence on YHWH’s patronage is further illustrated by her emotional state and how she lays out her bequest. The passage paints a clear picture of Hannah’s desperation by describing her as being “bitter of soul” (מרת גפש), and by commenting on her continuous weeping (1 Sam 1:10). Hannah’s tears are likely motivated by the intense grief she feels for her childlessness and the consequences thereof (1 Sam 1:15–16) as well as the belief that she is not worthy of YHWH’s intervention. After all, YHWH is said to have been the one to have closed her womb in the first place (1 Sam 1:5). How Hannah formulates her vow to YHWH is grounded in these feelings of grief and unworthiness, alongside conditional statements and labels that draw attention to their disparate statuses. Hannah’s vow reads: “YHWH of hosts, *if* you certainly look on the affliction of your handmaid and remember me, then I will give to YHWH all the days of his life and a razor will not go up to his head” (1 Sam 1:11, emphasis added). By avoiding using a definitive statement here, Hannah acknowledges her situation and the possibility that YHWH may choose to reject her vow, based on his knowledge of her situation or the judgement that her choice of “repayment” would be insufficient. When these elements are considered together, one may argue that Hannah’s interactions within the temple space are mediated by her knowledge about the temple and its protocols and an awareness of her situation. While the former governs how she is to navigate and manage herself in the space,

³⁸ Gratitude can be regarded as a form of payment for the services or aid that a patron supplies to the client. This gratitude is shown by means of social support or the bestowal of praise and honour upon a patron in the public sphere (D.A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 109.

³⁹ Phil J. Botha, “Social Values and the interpretation of Psalm 123,” *OTE* 14 (2001/2):189–198. For more information on patron-client relationships, see D.A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*, 2000 and Bruce J. Malina, “Patronage,” in *The Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (2nd ed. Ed., John J Pilch and Bruce J Malina; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 151–155.

the latter informs her of her status and what this means for how she can and should interact with the other characters who inhabit the space.

Her careful navigation of the sanctuary space and the hierarchies linked to it is also evident in her conversation with the high priest Eli, whom she refers to as אֲדֹנָי ("my lord"). It is not clear if Hannah is aware of Eli's presence, but he has been watching her since her arrival at the temple doors. His focus is said to be on her mouth because her lips are moving rapidly as she prays and so he judges Hannah to be drunk (1 Sam 1:12–13). He chooses then to confront her, asking her "How long will you be drunk? Turn away your wine from upon you!" (1 Sam 1:14). Even though this reaction to Hannah's state is rash⁴⁰ and questions Hannah's honour, Hannah's response is to remain respectful and humble as she explains that she has "poured out [her] soul to the face of YHWH" and even asks him to not regard her as a "worthless woman" (בַּת-בְּלִיעַל) (1 Sam 1:15–16). While Eli's initial reaction to Hannah's presence and behaviour at the temple gates appears alien to the idea that a temple is a place which is representative of healing and restoration, the defence of her honour produces an entirely different reaction in Eli. Instead of disregarding her vow, he chooses to honour it by saying, "Go in peace and the God of Israel will your petition that you have asked of him" (1 Sam 1:17). Their interaction is particularly significant in that it shows Hannah's characteristic self-awareness and understanding of the space she is in and its rules, but this time includes the voice of someone who is a spokesperson for the sanctuary.

When Eli blesses Hannah's vow⁴¹ and prayers to YHWH, it invokes a change in Hannah's countenance. This is likely because Eli's blessing may have given Hannah some hope that her vow may come to fruition and that YHWH will give her a child.⁴² As a result, Hannah is no longer "bitter of soul" (1 Sam 1:10) or "sad of spirit" (1 Sam 1:15). Instead, Hannah is hopeful as she departs the sanctuary, particularly at the prospect of becoming a mother (1 Sam 1:18). This alteration in Hannah's emotional state seems to indicate that her experience of the temple stands in stark contrast to the domestic spaces she normally inhabits. In both cases, Hannah is expected to navigate the space by understanding which social elements and guidelines govern her behaviour and status. The perceived roles she needs to play in her community and her relationships with the other characters who inhabit those spaces alongside her.

⁴⁰ Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 88–89.

⁴¹ Frolov (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 88–89) points out that Eli might have blessed Hannah's vow in an effort to send her from the temple and to avoid further confrontation, but it might be that he has realised that his accusation was, in fact, erroneous or unnecessarily harsh.

⁴² Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 53–54.

In the sanctuary's representation as a space that grants direct access to YHWH, Hannah finds the seemingly never-ending cycle of childlessness and shame broken. The temple acts as a "petitionary locus for [the] infertile [Hannah]",⁴³ allowing Hannah the physical and metaphorical space to address her lack of status and seek the means which could change her position. Together, the potentiality of the temple and Hannah's behaviour in it facilitate a transformation of her status.

3 After the Sanctuary

When Hannah has reunited with her family, it is clear that she and her domestic space undergo a change. Before going to the sanctuary, Shiloh represents the shame attached to her barrenness, mainly because it is attached to the belief that she has lost favour with YHWH, and because of Peninnah's incessant reminders that Hannah is, effectively, "purposeless".⁴⁴ Now, however, Hannah has found "grace in [Eli's] eyes" (1 Sam 1:18), which likely means she has also found grace in YHWH's eyes. Consequently, Peninnah's taunts begin to lose their initial potency, and Hannah's behaviour changes from trembling, weeping and refusing food (1 Sam 1:6-7) to being glad, eating and taking part in acts of reverence to YHWH (1 Sam 1:19). This means that Shiloh does not have to represent the cycle of shame it did before Hannah visited the temple.

The same might be said for Ramah. While little is revealed about Hannah's family life there before their return, one could assume that it represents similar ideas to those of Shiloh for Hannah. This is because Hannah's childlessness would remain an issue for her regardless of which space she enters and because the party that goes on the pilgrimage is made up of the same people who make up Elkanah's household. So, if her husband pities her for her childlessness in Shiloh, he would likely still pity her in Ramah. It also means that if Hannah's status or role were to change in Shiloh, it would impact how she experiences and characterises that space and Ramah too.

The differences in Hannah's interpersonal interactions in domestic spaces are evident in the actions – or absence thereof – of Elkanah and Peninnah. Hannah's status as Elkanah's first wife (1 Sam 1:2) implies an existent hierarchy between herself and other members of the household. When Hannah leaves the sanctuary, she is armed with hope and the high priest's blessing, which means that her engagement with space *need not* be impacted by Peninnah's taunts nor Elkanah's pity at her barrenness. Furthermore, with the birth of Samuel, Hannah has evidence that "YHWH remembered her" (1 Sam 1:11) and the vow she made to him (1 Sam 1:19), thereby granting her honour. Consequently, even if Peninnah remains jealous, she cannot shame Hannah based on childlessness or a

⁴³ Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East* (Cambridge: Harvard Seminal Museum Publications, 1995), 328.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 328.

lack of divine favour, nor could Elkanah find a root for pity in either of these again.⁴⁵ The passage supports this as Peninnah/the rival is not mentioned after 1 Sam. 1:6, nor are there any examples of Elkanah's pity after Hannah's return from the sanctuary. When it is time for the annual sacrifice in Shiloh again, Hannah remains behind at first so that she can wean Samuel before dedicating him to the temple. This decision is supported by Elkanah,⁴⁶ who tells her "Do the good in your eyes... Surely YHWH will establish his word" (1 Sam 1:23). Even though Hannah's decision is likely motivated by practicality and, as such, might not necessarily need Elkanah's approval, Hannah still involves him and she receives the support which she was sorely lacking before. Overall, Hannah's restored honour triggers positive changes in her experiences in the domestic spaces of both Ramah and Shiloh. Both Elkanah and Peninnah's pre-sanctuary responses to her childlessness have been rendered invalid, and have enabled her to attain respect from others and fulfil her perceived role of first wife.

Hannah's behaviour in Shiloh and the nearby temple upon her return with Samuel stands, once again, in stark contrast to her previous inhabiting of the space (1 Sam 1:3–18). Her continued presence and involvement in the festivities are clear in verse 24 when she and Elkanah present a bull calf as a sacrifice at the temple, suggesting that she does not revert to the silent and unhappy woman to which readers are first introduced but maintains the positive outlook she gained at the sanctuary. Furthermore, Hannah's desperate, woeful pleadings have been made into retellings of YHWH's favour of her and her gratitude for what YHWH has done. This is most evident in how Hannah recounts to Eli how she "prayed unto YHWH" and how he answered her request and gave her a son (1 Sam 1:27).

When Hannah returns to the sanctuary, she stands once again on the precipice of change. While verses 10–11 show her looking for solutions, the final verses of the passage show how Hannah upholds the vow she entered into by giving up the child YHWH agreed to give her (1 Sam 1:11, 24–28). Unfortunately, the narrative ends with Samuel's dedication (1 Sam 1:28); therefore, it is not entirely clear whether or not the changes Hannah experiences in the narrative and the perceptions that she makes of these places are permanent.⁴⁷ Hannah's choice to give her child to the sanctuary means that she

⁴⁵ Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 53–55; Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 85.

⁴⁶ This statement is, arguably, more positive than what Frolov (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 85) has posited about Elkanah's psychology. In his analysis of 1 Sam 1–2, Frolov argues that while Elkanah and Hannah seem to want the same things, Elkanah is also a "frustrated egotist" who has taken his want for a child out on his wife. Then, when Hannah decides to remain behind in Shiloh in 1 Sam 1:23, Frolov proposes that Elkanah's response to Hannah's decision is a "cautious disapproval" (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 93).

⁴⁷ Bodner, *I Samuel: A Narrative Commentary in Hebrew*, 25.

is once again childless in some sense and may still be subject to ridicule.⁴⁸ It is only revealed later in 1 Samuel that Hannah had children and that she continues to see Samuel even after he is taken in at the temple (1 Sam 2:19–21). Hannah's experience of the spaces she inhabits is, therefore, more permanently transformed outside the set text's bounds, but the intermediary time remains unresolved.

C CONCLUSION

This paper illustrates how representations of narrative space change according to the stages of Hannah's journey from childless woman to mother. By dividing the story up into three parts, the analysis compares each place from when it was first introduced to how it changes as the narrative progresses. Before Hannah goes to the sanctuary, she is an emotionally downtrodden and silent member of her marriage. At the sanctuary, she works through her pain and seeks the final solution to her childlessness. Once she leaves the sanctuary, she is a more confident, resilient version of herself (1 Sam. 1:18) in anticipation of the fulfilment of her vow. This confidence increases upon Samuel's birth and, as a result, alters how places like Shiloh and Ramah are experienced. The place most affected is Shiloh which was first characterised by Peninnah's humiliation of Hannah and the emotional turmoil that accompanies this treatment. Once Hannah has given birth to Samuel; however, Shiloh becomes a place of renewed hope, and a representation of YHWH's favour for Hannah.⁴⁹

The analysis creates a clear link between the ways in which the representations of spaces change as a result of the progression in Hannah's story: as Hannah goes from being a childless woman to a mother, the perceptions created of the spaces change because of the spaces' altered associations. While this explains how her perceptions of these spaces might change, it says little about how already established representations of space affect the characters. The exception to this is the temple, which stages the turning point in Hannah's narrative. The sanctuary, the home of YHWH and a sacred place of healing, acts not only as the site of Hannah's transformation but as a tool which makes her transformation possible. The analysis indicates that this is due to the manner in which Hannah interacts with the temple space and the people who dwell in it.

Therefore, it may be concluded that an analysis of narrative space relies both on the concrete, that is, the physical locations, time and social norms and values that govern a place, as well as the metaphorical, the perceptions created and suggested by the narrator and characters. This indicates that it is imperative to examine how these narrative voices interact with space, whether on the outside or inside. Due to the lack of resolution the passage offers, it is not clear whether

⁴⁸ Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis*, 90; Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 45–46.

⁴⁹ Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, 55.

the representations of Ramah, Shiloh and the sanctuary are permanently changed. It is clear, however, that they have the potential to be (re)shaped and to do some altering of their own.

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