

HAFTARAH FOR THE FIRST DAY OF ROSH HASHANAH

וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה מִדֵּי עֲלֹתָהּ בְּבֵית יְהוָה כֵּן תִּכְעַסְנָה
וְתִבְכֶּה וְלֹא תֹאכַל: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ אֱלֹקֶיךָ אִישָׁה חֲנָה לָמָּה תִּבְכִּי
וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי וְלָמָּה יִרְעֶה לְבָבְךָ הֲלוֹא אָנֹכִי טוֹב לָךְ מִעֲשָׂרָה
בָּנִים: וְתִקֶּם חֲנָה אַחֲרֵי אֲכָלָה בְּשִׁלָּה וְאַחֲרֵי שָׁתָה וְעָלִי הַכֹּהֵן
יֵשֵׁב עַל־הַכִּסֵּא עַל־מְזוֹזֹת הַיֵּכָל יְהוָה: וְהָיָה מִקֵּרַת נַפֶּשׁ וְתִתְפַּלֵּל
עַל־יְהוָה וּבִכָּה תִבְכֶּה: וְתִדַּר נָדָר וְתֹאמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אִם־רָאָה
תְּרָאָה | בְּעֵינַי אֲמַתְךָ וּזְכַרְתִּנִּי וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּח אֶת־אֲמַתְךָ וְנִתְתָּה
לְאֲמַתְךָ וְרַע אֲנָשִׁים וְנִתְתָּיו לַיהוָה כָּל־יָמַי חַיִּיו וּמוֹרָה לֹא־יַעֲלֶה
עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ: וְהָיָה כִּי הִרְבֵּתָה לְהִתְפַּלֵּל לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְעָלִי שְׁמִר אֶת־
פִּיהָ: וְחֲנָה הָיָה מְדַבֶּרֶת עַל־לִבָּהּ רַק שְׁפָתֶיהָ נִעֲוֹת וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא
יִשְׁמָע וַיַּחֲשֹׁבָה עָלֶי לִשְׁכָּרָה: ←

COMMENTARY. Hannah prays silently but urgently for a child. Eli the High Priest, noticing her odd behavior, accuses her of drunkenness. Hannah justifies herself, and Eli blesses her. The heartfelt prayer of an ordinary woman has a moral authority to which even a high priest must accede.

R.A.

נדר / She made a vow. To Hannah the rabbis of the Talmud (*Berakhot* 31a-31b) attributed the great privilege of having created a new name for God. *Adonay tzeva'ot*, often translated "the Lord of Hosts," is usually taken to refer to God's glory dwelling among the angelic throngs. The rabbis accept a sharp revision of that belief by recognizing that Hannah, calling out in her bitterness, gives God this name. She sees the One surrounded by countless throngs, who may include other people's children as well as angels. "You who have made so many," she says, or "who are surrounded by so much wealth, could You not create but one child for me?"

The pain of Hannah's childlessness has here entered into our prayerbook and enriched the prayers of all those who come in her wake. This is the real contribution of Hannah and the way in which we believe prayer is fulfilled rather than "answered." While we do not know a God who hears a would-be parent's prayer and grants a child, we affirm the tradition that has carried both Hannah's pain and her faith forward and allowed them to enrich and inspire the prayer life of so many generations.

A.G.

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COMMENTARY
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