

The Mussaf Amidah on Rosh Hashanah consists of 9 blessings based on the prayer of Chana, the mother of Shmuel Hanavi. Chana who prayed fervently and desperately for a son and was remembered by Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and granted a child who ultimately became the greatest of the Shoftim and among the great prophets and leaders of Bnay Yisrael. The Gemara notes Chana's tenacity in her approach to Hashem, refusing to surrender her goal and desire to have a child who she ultimately dedicated to the service of Hashem and the Jewish People. We emulate her approach to Hashem in our Tefilot on Rosh Hashanah.

In Sefer Shoftim we read about Elkanah and his 2 wives, Pnina and Chana. Chana is childless and inconsolably depressed over her apparent inability to have a child. Pnina, on the other hand, has several children and based on various Midrashic sources, is at best unsympathetic to Chana and at worst spiteful and mocking. Elkana, recognizing Chana's depression, attempts to console her but is unsuccessful. Chana prays with all her heart and promises that if she is granted a son, his life will be dedicated to the service of Hashem. Chana travels to Shilo where she meets Eli the Kohen Gadol. He initially misunderstands her actions and mistakes her for a drunkard, but when Chana explains her situation and her sincerity becomes apparent, he blesses her that Hashem should hear her prayers and fulfill her wish for a son. After Hashem grants Chana's wish and she has a child, she brings the child to Shilo to fulfill her promise that she made when she prayed so persistently for a son. The narrative continues with Chana yet again praying to Hashem, Vatisparallel Chana, and the text of her prayer is recorded. The term Tefila as in Vatisparallel, connotes a heightened level of anxiety, a spontaneous reaction to a difficult situation. It is readily understandable as to why the term Vatisparallel was used prior to the birth of Samuel. After all, Chana was highly distressed and moved to pray with all her heart and soul. However, after Samuel was born, what was the sense of urgency that spurred her to pray with such fervor again? Why use the term Vatisparallel? Perhaps Vatodeh, and Chana gave thanks, would have been more appropriate?

Chana recognized that there are many challenges when it comes to children. There is the worry and angst associated with having a child. That clearly can motivate one to pray fervently. However Chana recognized that the concern of a parent towards his or her child does not end with the birth of the child. The parent constantly worries as to what life the child will lead. How will the child be educated? What will his relationship be with Hashem? Will he be a positive force for the sanctification of the name of Hashem? Will he interact well with others? Will he be healthy and happy? In short, Chana realized that her need for prayer did not culminate with the birth of Samuel. If anything, she needed to intensify her

prayers that Shmuel fulfill his potential and achieve the greatness he was destined for. That spurred her to even more intense prayer as described by the Navi.

Chana's attitude stands in stark contrast to that of Pnina, her co-wife. Pnina was given the gift of children but did not appreciate that gift. Instead of using that gift as a force for good, she used it as a tool for spite against Chana. Chazal tell us that Pnina was ultimately punished with the death of her children. Rather than following Chana's example of taking nothing for granted and fervently praying that Hashem watch over her child, Pnina lets the opportunity slip away, and with it her chance of her and her children to lead a redeemed and positive life.

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