

Chana: The Unique Quality of Womens' Prayer Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Chana's name stands for the three *mitzvot* that were given to woman, *challah*, *niddah*, and *hadlakat neivot*. Chana was fulfilling Hashem's will in the best possible way, but she wanted to do more. When her husband told her to accept Hashem's plan, she still felt she wanted to do her utmost and she went to pray in the *mishkan*. She was the first one to call Hashem- Tzivakot. *Tzivakot* comes from the root word *tzeva*, an army. She saw masses of people coming to Shilo and she told Hashem, "You have such an immense army, can't you just give me just one." She davened and examined her heart to see if it was pure, "*Vatidaber al libah*," and she saw in fact that all she wanted was the will of Hashem. She made a vow that if Hashem would give her a child, she would dedicate him to Hashem.

Chana asked for *zera anashim*, a seed of people. Chazal say she asked for righteous, wise, great, and understanding children. She was asking for a child that would serve Hashem and the more potential he had, the more spirituality he could bring into the world. Rabbi Levi said, it's compared to a person who saw someone working on a crown for the

king. He said, "Put in as many precious stones as you can so that it will bring honor to the king." Similarly, Chazal say Chana wanted a child with maximum potential so that he would bring greater glory to Hashem.

Chana's second tefilah was when she came back to Shilo to leave Shmuel with Eli Hakohen. She returned to the place where her request was answered to offer praise and thanks to Hashem. It's a very special prayer which is the basis for the structure of *shemonei esrei*. It tells us what the essence of prayer really is and how one should pray. It was said with prophecy. She speaks about the two kings her son will crown. Chana says, "*Alatz libi b'Hashem*; My heart is happy with Hashem." An average woman would say, "My heart is happy with my child." Chana asked for a child for the sake of heaven. She was grateful for the greater opportunity to serve Hashem. She could show people what prayer could do and what divine providence was about. The birth of her child was something people could learn from and would bring more spirituality into the world. This was the source of her happiness. "*Rama karni b'Hashem*; My horn has been raised by Hashem." Karni comes from the root

word *keren*, a horn made out of strong material. She gained strength from her challenges. When she saw the divine providence of Hashem and that He had answered her request, it gave her strength to give up her child. When a person has such a relationship with Hashem as Chana did, they have the inner fortitude for such a sacrifice. Parents who send their children away from home for the sake of a stronger Jewish education follow in her footsteps.

Chana then says, "*Rachav pi al ovei ki samachti b'yeshuasecha*; My mouth is open broadly and I know how to answer my enemies for I rejoiced in your salvation." The commentaries explain that she said, "Now I can respond to those who told me inappropriate things when I was in pain." Everyone who goes through difficulties will share that sometimes a big part of the anguish is the prying questions and suggestions of tactless people. Chana wanted to create sensitivity among people. One way to do this is to share with people what it means to go through challenges and teach them how to respond differently.

Recognition and Rejoicement Pesach- Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

An integral part of the *Haggadah* is the recitation of Hallel comprised of five paragraphs from Psalms. The Hallel begins, "Therefore it is our duty to thank, praise... We will therefore recite a new song" Then we recite the first two paragraphs of the *Hallel/Praise*. This section then concludes with the final words of the blessing, "*Go'al Yisroel/Who has redeemed Israel*." We continue the *Seder* with the Matzah, the bitter herbs, and the festive meal, and conclude with the last three paragraphs of Hallel and *Nirtzah/Accept* [our observance].

What are we praising Hashem for? According to the GR"A, all five paragraphs refer to the

redemption from Egypt. But that would leave us with the question of the future-sounding "Let us/we will... sing a new song." Rabbi Bernstein explains that although our redemption from each exile is based on our original redemption from Egypt, each paragraph of the *Hallel* refers to a different exile. We will sing a new song of praise after our final redemption. In our introductory paragraph, each phrase echoes terminology used in reference to our other exiles such as *mei'eivel leyom tov*/from mourning to festivity as recorded in *Megillat Esther*.

Rabbi Mirsky asks, how is this *Hallel* a new song? Is it not from previous generations? And if the miracle of Pesach is the source for all

future redemptive miracles, why not recite *Al Hanisim* on Pesach? Further, at the *Seder* we fulfill the positive command of *vehigadita levinchal*/you shall tell [the story of Passover] to your children; why don't we recite a blessing as we do for other positive commandments?

Perhaps we can connect our "new song" to a different "new" at the onset of our enslavement. Rabbi E. Roth zt"l notes that our *Torah* records that "a new king arose in Egypt who did not know Yosef." This "not knowing" was the source of Pharaoh's evil. He did in fact know, he was just unwilling to concede any power to another considering himself a god. The seed of evil is born of an ungrateful

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attitude, of believing the "I" is all important and no one else matters. Contrast this with that of Moshe, the humblest of all men, who would not damage inanimate objects from which he had benefited. Our relationship to Hashem is based on such profound gratitude that we want to fulfill all His *mitzvot* with joy and praise.

The very first of the Ten Commandments solidifies the connection between gratitude and *mitzvah* observance, notes the Sefas

Emes. Hashem identifies Himself as the One Who has taken us out of Egypt. In the Haggadah, the story of our deliverance continues with the passage recited when offering the *bikurim*. Although it mentions descending to Egypt, it says nothing overtly of our redemption. Yet by offering the *bikurim*, the Jew is acknowledging that just as the redemption from Egypt came directly from Hashem, so do these fruit and all our food come directly from Him, and therefore/lefi choch I must be grateful to Him for everything. In fact, notes the

Lilah Kayom Yair, if by the end of the Seder we have not come to this conclusion, we have not properly understood the Seder

Matzah is the food of humility. It is the response to the serpent who enticed Eve with the thought of being like God. Therefore, we begin with the negative, that we are nothing, and conclude with the positive, with gratitude to Hashem for all the gifts He bestows upon us.

Agonut Part II- Section 2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

Although normally *beit din* requires two witnesses, in the case of *agonot* one witness can be enough. If a witness comes to testify in *beit din* and he's a known liar or thief, his testimony will not be accepted. But if he's *meisiach lefi tumo*, he's just telling a story, then we can rely on his evidence. If a woman's husband went abroad and a relative, usually invalid as a witness, testifies to his death, the *beit din* can be lenient and accept it. The Tur says even second-hand information told over by a witness, although usually invalid evidence, will be accepted for an *aguna*. Someone who is *pasul l'edos d'rabanun*, an invalid witness on a Rabbinic level, such as a gambler, is permitted to testify for an *aguna*. The biggest leniency is that the testimony of the wife herself who is most biased is accepted. We can be certain she won't give testimony unless she knows for sure that it's true. She will make extensive inquiries and be one hundred percent sure before she remarries. Whether a husband is dead or not is considered a *milsa d'avida giluya*, it's going to come to light. If the husband is alive somewhere, it may take years, but eventually he will turn up. Therefore, we can trust her and rely on the evidence she provides.

In the Yom Kippur War, there was a serious problem with identifying bodies, knowing who was dead, or taken captive. There was doubt whether the cold peace made with Egypt at that time could be relied on. It took years for Israel to sign a peace treaty with Egypt. Only after that, could the Rabbis verify if someone was being held captive or had in fact died. According to *halacha*, clothing and utensils are not reliable identification. If a person's name is written on his shirt but his body is unrecognizable, you cannot rely on the shirt that that is the person, because it is accepted that people lend their clothing to each other. But there are certain things that people don't exchange such as dog tags. If you find that on a dead body, you can certainly testify one hundred percent that this is the person. Nowadays every soldier wears two dog tags so that in case something happens there's a double check as to who the man is. Dog tags were used by the Rabbis after the Yom Kippur war to identify bodies that were otherwise unrecognizable.

The question regarding the British tourist was whether he went to the WTC or not. If the husband was not in a good mental state, disappearing is not proof that he died. Perhaps he's still alive in a hospital somewhere suffering from amnesia and he cannot remember who he is? Maybe he just decided

to run away? How can we allow his wife to remarry? The Gemara asks, what about the fact that we haven't heard from the husband in many years? Shouldn't that be proof that he's dead? We would assume yes. But the Gemara says it's not adequate proof. The Gemara then asks, what if he's a famous respected person? If he's alive somewhere in the world, we would hear about him within a year or two. If we haven't, we can presume he's dead. The Gemara says that's right but lo plug, the Rabbis didn't want to differentiate between one case and another. Since in the majority of cases, it's not proof that he died, we don't rule like this. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that in our times where communication is so quick and easy, the fact that he hasn't been in touch, is a minority situation. In our times everyone is considered like the famous person mentioned in the Gemara. It wouldn't have taken long to hear from him if he was alive. On the basis of that, we can allow the wife to remarry. But the condition is that there has to have been peace between the couple when they separated. If there wasn't, then you cannot necessarily be sure he died from the fact that they haven't been in touch. In the case of the British tourist we would have to wait a maximum of 2 years. After that time it can be presumed that he died.