



# HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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## Go the Extra Mile

ROSH HASHANA HAFTORAH DAY 1: I SAMUEL 1:1 – 2:10

The selections for the Torah and Haftorah readings this time of year are laden with inspirational messages, intended to impact and uplift. And while the focus of the narrative of the Haftorah on the first day of Rosh Hashana is primarily the emotional quest of Channah for a child and her ultimate song and sacrifice, the Tanna Debei Eliyahu Rabbah's poignant description of Elkanah leaves us with powerful life lessons to learn and transmit.

Four times a year, Elkanah would take his entire extended family, wives, children, brothers, sisters and their families to the Mishkan. He set out four times - one time beyond the three obligatory ascensions necessary for the pilgrimage festivals - to infuse his family with the message that spirituality obligates us to show up beyond the minimum required times. Rather than traveling directly to the Mishkan, he and his family would stop in a city along the way and set up camp in the middle of the town. The local populace would come out to see who was coming through with such a large entourage. The midrash describes how the men would speak with the men, the women with the women, and the children with the children. The townspeople inquired as to where this group was headed. Elkanah would share that he was going up to the City of G-d, Shiloh, the place

from where Torah and observance emerges. He would extend an invitation to the townspeople, "Why don't you join us and we will go together?" Their eyes would fill with tears as they joined the travelers traveling to Shiloh. The first year, five families came, the next year, ten, and over time, tens and tens of families joined the pilgrimage to Shiloh.

But Elkanah did not stop there. He took alternative routes in an effort to continue to spread the word of Hashem. The result of his travels was an inspired people, a nation reconnected with Torah and its observance. Hashem promised Elkanah that in the merit of reconnecting the Jewish people to lives of meaning and purpose, he would be blessed with a son who would continue to bring merit to his people. It is in this merit that the great prophet Shmuel was born to Elkanah and Channah.

Rosh Hashana is an opportunity to focus not only on our own personal growth but also on the collective return of our people to Hashem and His Torah. Elkanah is a model for the transformative power of the individual, the ability of one, to impact widely. A new year highlights this mission, to bring spirituality to those not yet touched. On Rosh Hashana, we must ask ourselves, how can we continue Elkanah's journey? How can we impact widely and wisely? ■