



HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

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Shiloh and Rosh Hashana

Torah Tidbits is proud to present a new series of articles in the coming year about the magnificent and holy sites of Israel. This new addition to Torah Tidbits seeks to connect each of us even more deeply to the profound meaning of our people's return to the Land of Israel and bring us even closer to experiencing the *kedushat ha'arezt* in our daily lives.

Living in the Land of Israel brings us face to face with the holy energy of Tanach that shines out from the sites we pass every day.

In Ancient Shiloh, the ground is littered with shards of pottery from the time of the Mishkan, connecting us in a tangible way with the *korbanos Am Yisrael* brought. But the story of Chana, the Haftorah of Rosh Hashana, is what calls to me here.

Chana, the wife of Elkanah is childless. Every year when Elkanah takes his family

up to Shiloh, Chana suffers the taunts of Penina, her co-wife who has children. One year, Chana makes her way to the Mishkan and silently begs Hashem to bless her with a son, whom she will, in turn, dedicate to serve Him. This style of silent prayer was so foreign in her time period that Eli, the Kohen Gadol, accuses her of being drunk. Chana responds, "I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the LORD." (Shmuel I, 1:15)

The Navi goes on to tell us that Chana's tefillah comes to fruition, and she gives birth to the son who will become Shmuel HaNavi. She follows through on her promise, and when Shmuel is 2 years old, Chana brings him back to Shiloh and presents him for service. She says, "It was this boy I prayed for; and the LORD has granted me what I asked of Him." (Shmuel I 1:27)

Chana's silent prayer became the model for our own tefillot. Being in Shiloh helps

us tap into the energy and the messages of her story, and feel empowered to pour our own hearts out to Hashem with her fervent passion.

Chana's tefillah was not for herself but for Hashem, and for Am Yisrael. She was, in effect, asking Hashem to enable her to be the vessel of bringing the bracha of Shmuel HaNavi into this world. Chana teaches us to see ourselves as part of the bigger picture and to utilize the power of tefillah to ask Hashem for ways of finding and fulfilling our purpose in this world.

It is common to "bargain" with Hashem. To promise certain behavior if a tefillah comes to fruition. But how often do we uphold this part of the deal? Remembering Chana's integrity in the active fulfillment of her promise can strengthen us to do the same in our own lives.

Sometimes, like Chana, we see clear answers to our tefillot, but the answer doesn't match our expectations. The imagined perfection of any situation is the gateway to disappointment. Chana brings her son to Shiloh and then sings a song of appreciation and praise to Hashem. Her ability to acknowledge the bracha even while living the challenging reality models for us a powerful level of gratitude and emotional strength.

There are so many sites like Shiloh in our Holy Land that can enable us to tap into the strength and energy of our ancestors. May we be blessed to open our hearts and try. ■

Shoshana teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya and Shiviti Women's Institute. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.

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