



STRUGGLE AND SUCCESS

"Chanah's prayer" is a fascinating biblical story that reflects our inner life and challenges, and is especially relevant on the most important day of all – Rosh Hashanah.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



ROSH HASHANAH

Book of Devarim / Deuteronomy

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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Elkanah would take his entire family with him to the holy temple for the holidays. En-route he would sweep the masses along with him. Chanah, one of his wives, was saddened that she had no children. Peninah, his other wife, taunts Chanah about it and pains her. In her bitterness, Chanah approaches the tabernacle and pleads with G-d for offspring which she, in turn, promises to raise holy for G-d. (source 1).

B. A Charitable Reading.....10

Despite Peninah's portrayal in this story as mean, the Talmudic sage Rabbi Levi attempts to give a charitable interpretation of her conduct, asserting that her intentions were positive (Source 2).

G-d takes pride before the Satan in Job's righteousness, but The Satan passes negative judgment on Job and attempts to undo his faith. He tries him with very grave challenges (Source 3). Can we find the positive motive for his behavior?

C. The Inner Dimension.....12

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that Peninah alludes to the "opposing side" (i.e. the unholy), while Chanah refers to kedusha (the holy side) (Source 4). The Rebbe explains that the Ba'al Shem Tov deduced this from the very comparison the Talmud makes between Peninah and the Satan. Based on this, the deeper meaning of the words "Peninah bore children while Chanah had no children" is a penetrating cry: How can it be that when dealing with worldly matters "there are children" to carry them out, but Chanah—spirituality—"has no children"?

In another talk, the Rebbe explained how the name Chanah comes from the Hebrew word *chen* (grace, or favor), representing behavior wherein one finds favor in the eyes of G-d, while the name Peninah—Hebrew for pearl—is symbolic of worldly endeavors. Chanah complains that she has no "children" – no impact in this world. When Elkanah attempts to comfort her, saying "I am better for you than ten sons," meaning that it is sufficient that she herself remains righteous, Chanah refuses to accept this, and beseeches G-d for offspring to be able to shine more holiness in this world.

In order to effect mystical change, practical action is necessary. In order to develop the spiritual service of Chanah to influence the world for the better, one must first bear physical children.

Introduction:

In this lesson we will focus on the story that we read in the Haftarah on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, of Chanah's prayer for a child and the birth of her son, the prophet Samuel (the Haftarah bears a connection to the Torah reading, which tells the story of Abraham and Sarah being informed that they will have a son – Isaac).

As we learned in the past, there are multiple layers to every teaching and story in the Torah, beyond what meets the eye at first glance. We will first explore the story of Chanah on the simple level, and then we will proceed to dig further into the deeper dimensions, based on Chassidic teaching.

השיעור לראש השנה

משיחת ו' תשרי, ה'תשכ"ז, בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם כרך מ"ח עמ' 50
ומשיחת ליל שמחת תורה (קודם הקפות), ה'תשכ"ד
תורת מנחם כרך ל"ח עמ' 113

[לחץ כאן לשמיעת שיחת ו' תשרי](#)



A. Chanah's Prayer

We are about to read a chapter from the book of Samuel, that lays out for us a complex family story. The story portrays three main characters, with a complicated relationship: Two wives, Chanah and Peninah, and their shared husband – Elkanah.

The prophet draws attention to the difference between these two women that is the source of their strained relationship: Peninah is blessed with many children, while Chanah is barren.

Source 1 Samuel 1, 1:1

The Family of Elkanah

There was a man from Ramataim of the Tzuphites, in the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Tzuph, from the region of Ephraim.

He had two wives, one named Chanah and the other Peninah; Peninah had children, but Chanah was childless.

Elkanah used to go up from his town every year to worship and to offer sacrifices to G-d at the tabernacle in Shiloh.

וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִן הַרְמָתִים צוּפִים
מֵהַר אֶפְרָיִם, וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶלְקָנָה בֶן־
יֶרְחָם בֶּן־אֵלִיהוּא בֶן־תָּחוּ בֶן־צוּף
אֶפְרָתִי. וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים: שֵׁם אַחַת
חַנָּה וְשֵׁם הַשְּׁנִיית פְּנִינָה.

וַיְהִי לְפְנִינָה יְלָדִים, וּלְחַנָּה אִין
יְלָדִים.

וְעָלָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מְעִירוֹ
מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת וּלְזָבַח
לֵה' צְבָאוֹת בְּשִׁלֹּה.

A Family That Brought Thousands To The Tabernacle

Pilgrimage to the tabernacle was a mitzvah held dear by Elkanah and his family. Our sages relate that Elkanah was very active in encouraging others to join his pilgrimage, and successful in this regard.

[“Pilgrimage” is a commandment in the Torah (Exodus 34:23) to visit the holy temple during the Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot festivals: “Three times a year all of your males should appear directly before the Master, the L-rd, the G-d of Israel”. The Zohar explains that this pilgrimage of Elkanah was on Rosh Hashanah, for Elkanah was accustomed to go to the Shiloh tabernacle for Rosh Hashanah as well.

The destination: The Shiloh tabernacle. In the ancient city of Shiloh in southern Samaria, the Jewish people built a temporary temple, until the building of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Shiloh tabernacle stood for 369 years, 1258 – 889 BCE.].

Yalkut on Samuel, 77:5

Elkanah would take his entire family with him to the tabernacle for the holidays. On the way, they would camp in the public thoroughfares of the cities they passed. The people in those cities would ask, “where are you going?” They would reply, “to the house of G-d in Shiloh, from which the Torah and mitzvot are spread. Why don't you come join?” The people would be overcome with emotion, and with tears in their eyes, they would say, “we shall go with you.” [Elkanah] would agree.

The next year five families would come, the next year it would double, until they all would come. Elkanah would take a different route each year, encouraging all of Israel to go.

G-d said to Elkanah, “you influenced them for merit, and you educated them in my mitzvot, and the public is merited in your credit. A son will come from you who will do the same.”

From here we know that Elkanah's reward was the birth of Samuel.

אֶלְקָנָה וְאִשְׁתּוֹ בָּנְיוֹ וְאֶחָיוֹתָיו
וְכָל קְרוֹבָיו הָיָה מֵעֵלָה עִמּוֹ
לְרֹגֵל, וּבָאִים וְלָנִים בְּרַחוּבָה
שֶׁל עִיר וְהִיתָה הַמְדִינָה
מִרְגָּשֶׁת וְהָיוּ שׂוֹאֲלִין אוֹתָן:
לְהֵיכָן תֵּלְכוּ? וְאוֹמְרִים: לְבֵית
ה' שְׁבִשִׁילָה שְׁמִשָּׁם תֵּצֵא
תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת. וְאַתֶּם לָמָּה לֹא
תָבוֹאוּ עִמָּנוּ וְנִלְךְ יַחַד? מִיָּד
עֵינֵיהֶם מִשְׁגָּרוֹת דְּמָעוֹת,
אוֹמְרִים לָהֶם: גִּלְךָ עִמָּכֶם!
וְאוֹמְרִים לָהֶם: הֵן.

עַד לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאֵה חֲמִשָּׁה בָּתִּים,
לְשָׁנָה אַחֲרָת עֶשְׂרֵה בָּתִּים,
עַד שֶׁהָיוּ כָּלֶם עוֹלָיִם. וּבִדְרֹךְ
שֶׁהָיָה עוֹלָה שָׁנָה זוֹ לֹא הָיָה
עוֹלָה שָׁנָה אַחֲרָת, עַד שֶׁהָיוּ
כָּלֶם עוֹלָיִם.

אָמַר לוֹ הַקַּב"ה: אֶלְקָנָה, אֵתָה
הַכְרַעְתְּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכַף זְכוּת
וַחֲנֻכָּתָם בְּמִצְוֹת וְזָכוּ רַבִּים
עַל יָדְךָ, אֲנִי אוֹצִיא בּוֹ מִמֶּנֶּךָ
שֶׁיִּכְרִיעַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכַף
זְכוּת וַיַּחַנֵּן אוֹתָם בְּמִצְוֹת.
הָא לְמַדְתָּ שְׁבִשְׁכַר אֶלְקָנָה -
שְׂמוּאֵל.

But while Elkana and his family were rejoicing, Chanah's heart was heavy and sorrowful. The void in her soul was especially painful during these family festivities. Whoever knows loneliness, can easily identify with Chanah as she would watch the children playing and laughing at the feet of Elkana's other wife, Peninah. Chanah could only watch and sink deeper into herself, growing ever lonelier within. Everyone awaits the family holidays and the bustle that comes with it. Yet for the barren woman, this is a nightmare that only deepens her pain.

Family Strife

Elkanah is not blind to this, and attempts to comfort his wife:

Samuel 1 continued

The day came when they arrived in Shiloh, and Elkanah offered a sacrifice. He gave portions of the sacrifice to his wife Peninah and to all her sons and daughters. And to Chanah he would give a choice portion, for he loved Chanah, and G-d had closed her womb.

וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם, וַיִּזְבַּח אֶלְקָנָה. וַנִּתֵּן
לְפָנָה אֲשֶׁתוֹ וּלְכָל־בָּנָיָהּ וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ
מִנּוֹת. וּלְחַנָּה יָתֵן מִנֶּה אַחַת אֲפִים
כִּי אֶת־חַנָּה אָהַב וְה' סָגַר רַחֲמָהּ.

Metzudat David

G-d had closed her womb: Chanah was especially pained because she could not bear children. Elkanah attempted to appease her with the special portion.

וְה' סָגַר רַחֲמָהּ. וְלֹא יָלְדָה,
וְהִיתָה מְצַרָה. וְלֹא הָרְאָה לָהּ
חֶבֶד יִתְרָה לְהַפִּיג צַעֲרָהּ.

While Elkana empathizes with Chanah and tries to ease her pain with a choice portion of a delicious meal, Peninah, his other wife, treats Chanah with the complete opposite attitude. Instead of embracing Chanah, she taunts her.

Samuel 1 continued

Chanah's rival would frequently anger her, in order to make her complain, for G-d had closed her womb.

וְכַעֲסָתָהּ צָרָתָהּ גַם־כַּעַס בְּעַבּוּר
הִרְעָמָה כִּי־סָגַר ה' בְּעַד רַחֲמָהּ.

Yalkut on Samuel, 77

Peninah would repeatedly anger her.

She would taunt her, "did you bring a kerchief, shirt, and robe for your child?"

Rav Nachman Bar Abba said: In the morning she would say, "Chanah, are you not going to wash your children before school?" In the

מְכַעֲסָתָהּ וְחוֹזְרָתָהּ וּמְכַעֲסָתָהּ.

מַה הִיתָה אוֹמְרָת לָהּ? לְקַחְתָּ
לְבָנֶיךָ גְּדוּל סוּדָר וְכַתְנֹת
וְחָלוּק?

אָמַר ר' נַחֲמָן בַּר אַבְבָּא: הִיתָה
פּוֹנֵה מִשְׁכָּמָת וְאוֹמְרָת לְחַנָּה:
אֵין אַתְּ עוֹמְדָת וּמְרַחֶצֶת

afternoon, she would say, “Are you not going to greet your children back from school?”

Rav Tanchum, Bar Abba said: Peninah would taunt Chanah when the family would eat. When Elkanah gave out the food to all the children, she would say, “You gave my children food, but you did not give her children...”

פְּנִיָּהֶם שֶׁל בְּנֵיךְ, כְּדֵי שְׂיִלְכוּ
לְבֵית הַסֵּפֶר? וּבִשְׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת
הֵיטָה אוֹמְרֶת לָהּ: חֲנָה, אֵין
אַתְּ עוֹמְדֵת וּמְקַבֶּלֶת בְּנֵיךְ
שֶׁבָּאוּ מִבֵּית הַסֵּפֶר?

רַב תַּנְחוּם בַּר אַבָּא אָמַר: הָיוּ
יוֹשְׁבִים לְאָכֹל וְהָיָה אֶלְקָנָה
נוֹתֵן לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִבְּנָיו
חֶלְקוֹ, הֵיטָה פָּנָה מִתְכַּוְּנֹת
לְהַכְעִיס אֶת חֲנָה וְהֵיטָה
אוֹמְרֶת לְאֶלְקָנָה: תּוֹן לְזֶה בְּנֵי
חֶלְקוֹ וּלְזֶה בְּנֵי חֶלְקוֹ - וְלְזֶה
לֹא נָתַתְּ חֶלְקוֹ.

We see here Peninah being portrayed as cruel. Instead of being happy with her lot, and thanking G-d for her good fortune, she pours salt on Chanah's wounds, and makes a point of doing so year after year.

Samuel 1 continued

This happened year by year, as Chanah went up to the house of the L-rd, Peninah would anger her.

וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה מִדֵּי עֲלֹתָהּ
בְּבֵית ה' כִּן תִּכְעֶסְנָהּ.

Our plot now reaches its twist. Chanah is no longer able to remain indifferent to Peninah's bullying. She bursts out in tears and pushes aside her meal:

Chanah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, “Chanah, why are you crying and why aren't you eating? Why are you so sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?”

וַתִּבְכֶּה וְלֹא תֹאכַל. וַיֹּאמֶר
לָהּ אֶלְקָנָה אִישָׁה: חֲנָה, לָמָּה
תִּבְכִּי? וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי? וְלָמָּה
יָרַע לְבַבְךָ? הֲלוֹא אֲנִי טוֹב לְךָ
מִעֲשָׂרָה בָּנִים.

Prayer From The Depths of The Heart

Chanah is not appeased by Elkanah's attempts. But then, in her greatest despair, Chanah chooses to act. Looking back, this action is what brings forth the twist in the plot of her life: Chanah takes her destiny into her own hands. Instead of just sitting and crying, she goes to pray before G-d in an attempt to change her story.

Samuel 1 continued

After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Chanah rose and went to the tabernacle. The priest Eli was sitting on the seat near the doorpost of G-d's temple. Chanah was bitter in spirit, and she prayed to G-d, and wept. And she said this vow: "G-d, if You will look upon the affliction of Your servant, and You will remember me, and You will not forget Your servant, and You will give Your servant male offspring, and I shall give him to G-d all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

וּתְקַם חַנָּה אַחֲרַי אֲכַלָּה בְּשֵׁלָה
וְאַחֲרַי שְׁתָּה, וְעָלִי הִכְהֵנוּ יֹשֵׁב
עַל־הַכֹּסֵּא עַל־מִזְוֹת הַיֵּכָל ה'.
וְהִיא מְרֵת נַפֶּשׁ וְתִתְפַּלֵּל עֲלֶיהָ
וּבְכֹה תִבְכֶּה. וְתִדְרַר נְדָר וְתֹאמַר:
ה' צְבָאוֹת אִם־רָאָה תִרְאֶה בְּעֵינַי
אֲמַתְךָ וּזְכַרְתָּנִי וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּח
אֶת־אֲמַתְךָ וְנִתְתָּה לְאֲמַתְךָ זָרַע
אֲנָשִׁים וְנִתְתִּיו לְה' כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּיו
וּמוֹרָה לֹא־יֵעָלֶה עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ.

The Great Miracle

And they arose early in the morning, and prostrated themselves before G-d, and they returned and came to their house, to Ramah. Elkanah came to his wife Chanah, and G-d remembered her. Chanah conceived, and at the turn of the year bore a son. And she named him Samuel, because (she said); "I asked him of G-d."

וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ בַבֹּקֶר וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְפָנָיו ה' וַיָּשֻׁבוּ
וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בֵּיתָם הַרְמַתָּה וַיִּדַע אֶלְקָנָה
אֶת־חַנָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּזְכְּרָהּ ה'. וַיְהִי לְתַקְפוֹת
הַיָּמִים וַתְהַר חַנָּה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־
שְׁמוֹ שְׁמוּאֵל כִּי מָה' שִׁאֲלַתִּיו

Happy ending: Samuel is born! Chanah brings him to the tabernacle and entrusts him to Eli the high priest, so that he should train the child for prophecy and leadership of the Jewish people. (Later on she bears six additional children. Samuel 1, 2:5). After this, she returns to the tabernacle to thank G-d and sing His praises.

B. A Charitable Reading

The Talmud In The Role of Advocate

The story depicts Peninah as insensitive and mean. She taunts Chanah incessantly, and revels in her suffering. Nonetheless, the Talmudic sage Rabbi Levi attempts to give her conduct a charitable spin and portray her in a more positive light.

Source 2 Tractate Bava Basra 16a

Rabbi Levi says: Both Satan, who brought accusations against Job, and Peninah, who tormented Chanah, acted with intent that was for the sake of Heaven.

As for Satan, when he saw that the Holy One, Blessed be He, inclined to favor Job and praised him, he said: Heaven forbid that He should forget the love of Abraham.

With regard to Peninah, as it is written: "Chanah's rival would frequently anger her, in order to make her complain." (I Samuel 1:6), i.e., Peninah upset Chanah in order to motivate her to pray.

Rav Acha bar Ya'akov taught this in Paphunya, and Satan came and kissed his feet in gratitude for speaking positively about him.

אָמַר ר' לוי: שָׂטָן שֶׁקָּטְרַג עַל אִיּוֹב, וּפְנִינָה שֶׁהִצִּיקָה לְחַנָּה אִמּוֹ שֶׁל שְׂמוּאֵל הַנְּבִיא, לְשֵׁם שָׂמַיִם נִתְכַּוְּנוּ.

שָׂטָן - כִּיּוֹן שֶׁרָאָה לְהַקְדוֹשׁ-בְּרוּךְ-הוּא שְׁנוּטָה דַּעְתּוֹ אַחַר אִיּוֹב וּמִשְׁבַּח אוֹתוֹ, אָמַר: חַס וְשְׁלוֹם, יִשְׂכַח אֶת אֲהַבְתּוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם.

פְּנִינָה - שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְכַעֲסָתָה צָרְתָה גַם כַּעַס בְּעֵבֹר הַרְעָמָה" (שְׂמוּאֵל א' א, ו), כְּלוּמַר, כְּדֵי שֶׁתִּצְטַעַר וְתִתְפַּלֵּל.

דַּרְשׁ רַב אַחָא בַר יַעֲקֹב בְּפַפּוּנְיָא אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הַלֵּלוּ, בְּאֵי הַשָּׂטָן וְנִשְׁקָ אֶת רַגְלָיו כְּתוּדָה עַל שֶׁלְמַד עָלָיו זְכוּת.

Rabbi Levi draws a parallel between Peninah and the Satan, but with this non-flattering comparison, he shines light on a different side to the story.

[the Satan: an name for an evil angel who seeks out the bad in man and wishes to punish them for their sins]

Source 3 Job 1:7-11

What does the Satan want from Job?

G-d said to the Satan, “Where are you coming from?” And the Satan answered G-d and said, “From going to and fro on the earth and from walking in it.”

G-d then said to the Satan, “Have you paid attention to My servant Job? For there is none like him on earth, a sincere and upright man, G-d-fearing and shunning evil.”

The Satan answered G-d and said, “Does Job fear G-d for nothing?

Haven't You made a hedge around him, his household, and all that he has on all sides? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his livestock has spread out in the land.

But now, stretch forth Your hand and touch all that he has, will he not blaspheme You to Your face?

G-d takes pride in Job's righteousness before the Satan. The Satan attempts to downplay Job's greatness: Why is it impressive that he is a good person? You have showered him with so much good, You blessed him with a beautiful family and with an abundance of material wealth. Test him, and You will see that he will cease to serve you so faithfully.

This short exchange completely alters Job's life. The Satan brings upon Job a series of awful calamities and much suffering. Nevertheless, Job remains faithful to G-d and maintains his righteousness. Ultimately, the Satan relents and admits that Job indeed withstood the test. G-d blesses him once again with a large and beautiful family and immense riches.

Rabbi Levi teaches that the Satan's intentions were positive. He saw that G-d was so impressed by Job, and he was fearful that this would diminish Abraham's righteousness in the eyes of G-d. The Satan feared that setting such a high standard, would harm and lessen the greatness of Abraham and his children – the Jewish people. He therefore advised to try Job in the hopes of weakening his level of devotion.

Rabbi Levi goes on and says that Peninah too did not mean any harm when she tormented Chanah. She wanted to ensure that Chanah would not make peace with her predicament and sink into indifference. She was determined to make sure that Chanah would beseech G-d from the depths of her heart. Nobody could pray for her as she can for herself.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁטָן: מֵאִן תָּבֹא?
וַיַּעַן הַשָּׁטָן אֶת־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר: מִשּׁוֹט
בָּאָרֶץ וּמִהֲתָהֵלֶךְ בָּהּ.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁטָן: הַשְּׂמֵת לְבָבְךָ
עַל־עַבְדִּי אִיּוֹב? כִּי אֵין כָּמוֹהוּ
בָּאָרֶץ אִישׁ תָּם וְיָשָׁר יִרָא אֱלֹהִים
וְסָר מִרָע.

וַיַּעַן הַשָּׁטָן אֶת־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר: הַחֲנֹם
יִרָא אִיּוֹב אֱלֹהִים?

הֲלֹא אֲתָה שָׂכַת בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעַד־בֵּיתוֹ
וּבְעַד כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ מִסָּבִיב, מַעֲשֵׂה
יְדָיו בִּרְכָתָהּ וּמִקְנֶהוּ פָּרָץ בָּאָרֶץ.

וְאוֹלָם שְׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וְגַע בְּכָל־
אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ, אִם־לֹא עַל־פְּנֵיךָ יִבְרַכֶּךָ.

C. The Inner Dimension

Source 4 Keser Shem Tov, supplement 44

Peninah symbolizes the realm of impurity, as our sages say, “Satan and Peninah acted for the sake of heaven” [they are spoken of together, categorizing them in the same level]. Chanah symbolizes the divine. The verse tells us that although the divine is lacking in [children, as in] holy men, there are many offspring of impurity.

פְּנִינָה רוּמָז לְסִטְרָא אֲחֵרָא,
כְּמֵאמַר חַז"ל שְׁטָן וּפְנִינָה כּו'
לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם נִתְכַּוְּנוּ, וְחֵנָּה רוּמָז
לְשִׁכְיָנָה, וּמִתְרַעַם הַכְּתוּב עַל
הָעֵדֶר הַצְּדִיקִים כּו' וַיִּלְדוּ דְּסִטְרָא
אֲחֵרָא רַבִּים.

>> The Rebbe

Peninah as Satan

On the verse “Peninah had children, and Chanah had no children,” the Baal Shem Tov explains that on a deeper level “Peninah” represents the forces of impurity.

This is evident from the Talmud’s comment that “the intentions of both Peninah and Satan were for the sake of Heaven.” Only the deeper intention - the root and source - of Satan is for the sake of Heaven. But in our world, on the revealed level, Satan is an entity that hinders Torah and mitzvot. The same is true regarding Peninah, who is mentioned in the same sentence as Satan, thereby associating the two. While on the revealed level her actions were negative, her deeper intentions were for the sake of Heaven, as the verse says “And her

הבעל-שם-טוב פירש מה שכתוב¹
”ויהי לפנינה ילדים ולחנה אין
ילדים”, ש”פנינה” מתייחס ללעומת
זה,

כמובן מדברי הגמרא² ”שטן ופנינה
לשם שמים נתכוונו” - והיינו, שכשם
שבנוגע לשטן הגנה רק הכוונה
הפנימית בשרשה ומקורה היא ”לשם
שמים”, אבל בגלוי למטה מציאותו
של השטן היא באופן של היפך
הסיוע לתורה ומצוות, כן הוא גם
בנוגע לפנינה (שמחברים אותה עם
השטן - ”שטן ופנינה” במשפט אחד),
אף שבפנימיות היתה כוונתה לשם

(1) שמואל א, ב.

(2) בבא בתרא טז, א. וראה לקו"ת חוקת סב, א. ובכ"מ.

rival would frequently anger her, in order to make her complain,” which means “so that she should complain about her barren state and pray about it.”

שמים, כמו שכתוב³ “וכעסתה צרתה גו' בעבור הרעימה”, “שתתרעם על שהיא עקרה ותתפלל”⁴.

The Baal Shem Tov says that the Talmud's statement teaches us a paradox. True, Rabbi Levi said that Peninah's deeper intention was positive, but the comparison to The Satan also teaches us that the bottom line is that Peninah was like The Satan. The Satan also has a deeper positive intention, but it is clear that on the revealed level he is an opponent of everything good. Peninah may have had good intentions, but her actions were very negative. As the saying goes, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

Who Has Children And Who Doesn't?

The Baal Shem Tov goes on and explains the continuation of the story: “Peninah had children” is a complaint that worldly matters have “children,” people that concern themselves with them, while Chanah—representing holiness—has “no children.”

ועל זה מתרעם ומתאונן הכתוב - כהמשך תורת הבעל-שם-טוב - שלפנינה יש ילדים, היינו, שכאשר מדובר על אודות עניני העולם, אזי יש ילדים, שישנם כמה וכמה שעוסקים בזה, מה שאין כן בנוגע לחנה, שמתייחס לצד הקדושה, אזי “אין ילדים”.

There is a line in the story which appears to be a very simple detail: Chanah had no children, and Peninah did have children. But a deeper Chassidic reading transforms this line into a powerful outcry: why does Chanah have no children and Peninah does? Why does holiness have no takers, and the synagogue struggles to gather a minyan, while shiny materialistic matters have many excited takers jumping on them?

In another address, the Rebbe goes into greater detail. He reads this into the meaning of the names Chanah and Peninah, and teaches that both elements exists within each one of us.

(3) שמואל שם, 1.
(4) פרש"י בבא בתרא שם.

Chanah - Holiness, Peninah - Materialism

The relevance of this concept in our Divine service is as follows.

The names Chanah and Peninah represent two forms of conduct. Chanah is etymologically related to *chen*, which means grace or favor, as in “found favor in G-d’s eyes.” This represents proper conduct in accordance with Torah and mitzvot, which is the clear path to finding favor in G-d’s eyes. Peninah comes from the word *peninim*, pearls, as in “it is more precious than pearls.” Pearls are precious gems, representing conduct that focuses on material matters, considering them of great importance.

The name Chanah means “favor,” a woman who seeks favor in G-d’s eyes through Torah study and mitzvah observance. The name Peninah means pearls, worldly pleasures.

(It should be pointed out that “pearls” can also be utilized for Divine service - refining the world and making material matters worthy of being “pearls in G-d’s crown.” But before they have been refined they are worldly matters, and therefore great caution is needed so that one isn’t drawn after them.)

The Rebbe clarifies that “pearls” can also be utilized for Divine service, if they are used with the proper spiritual intentions.

ויש לומר הביאור בזה - בנוגע לעבודת ה':

השמות חנה ופנינה - שהרי שם דבר הוא - מורים על שתי דרכי הנהגה: חנה - מלשון "מצא חן בעיני ה'" - מורה על הנהגה הראויה על פי התורה והמצוות, כיון שיודעים שזוהי הדרך למצוא חן בעיני ה'; ואילו פנינה - מלשון פנינים (כמו "יקרה היא מפנינים"⁸), אבנים טובות ומרגליות - מורה על הנהגה באופן שעיקר ההשתדלות היא בעניני עולם הזה, שתופסים מקום כו'.

(ולהעיר, שגם ענין הפנינים יכול להיות באופן שמנצלים זאת לעבודת ה', שזהו כללות הענין דבירור העולם, שעל ידי זה נעשים עניני העולם ראויים להיות פנינים בכתרו של מלך מלכי המלכים הקב"ה; אבל בינתיים, קודם הבירור, הרי הם עניני עולם הזה, ולכן יש צורך בזהירות יתירה שלא להימשך אחריהם כו').

ריש ע' תתקכב.
(8) משליג, טו.

(5) ברשימה נוספת: שזוהי הוראה מיוחדת לגשי ישראל.
(6) ראה ברכות ז, ב. יומא פג, ב. זהר ח"א ו, סע"א. ח"ב קעט, סע"ב. ועוד.
וראה גם אג"ק ח"א ע' ס"ע רפח ואילך. לקו"ש ח"ו ס"ע 35 ואילך. וש"נ.
(7) ס"פ בראשית. וראה גם לקו"א להה"מ ס"ד. מאמרי אדה"ז תקס"ה ח"ב

Materialism enjoys popularity

Due to the state of concealment our world is in, it is possible for it to be that “Peninah ha[s] children, and Chanah ha[s] no children.” Moreover, it can even be the case that “her rival would anger her,” that “Peninah” can’t stand the conduct of “Chanah,” who endeavors to find favor in G-d’s eyes.

Due to the lowly spiritual state of our world, not only is “Peninah” more popular, but when someone acts like “Chanah” and seeks favor in G-d’s eyes, people may be upset with them and cause them distress.

Chanah insists on influencing

Elkanah attempted to comfort Chanah by saying “I am better to you than ten sons.” The deeper meaning here is that Elkanah argued that Chanah could suffice with the Divine service of Elkanah—which means Divine wisdom—the private form of Divine service practiced by righteous people. But Chanah refused to suffice with this, and asked that G-d give her “offspring of men,” which means offspring who, even as they mingle among men in this world, conduct themselves according to Torah and find favor in G-d’s eyes.

Elkanah attempts to comfort “Chanah” - the Jew that is trying to find favor in G-d’s eyes - that he shouldn’t be troubled by his lack of supporters and subjects of influence. He should suffice with the fact that he is a righteous person doing the right thing. But Chanah responds that she wants “offspring of men,” she wants to influence the world!

G-d indeed heard Chanah’s prayer, as she concludes “this is the child I prayed for,”

ומצד ההעלם וההסתר שבעולם יכול להיות מעמד ומצב ש"ויהי לפנינה ילדים ולחנה אין ילדים", ולא עוד אלא ש"כעסתה צרתה גו", היינו, שפנינה איננה יכולה לסבול את הנהגתה של חנה שמשדלת למצוא חן בעיני ה'.

וכאשר אלקנה מנסה לנחם את חנה באמרו "הלא אנכי טוב לך מעשרה בנים"¹⁰, היינו, שיכולים להסתפק באופן העבודה של "אלקנה", קנה (חכמה של) א-ל¹¹, שזוהי עבודתו של הצדיק בינו לבין קונו בלבד - אומרת חנה שאינה מסתפקת בזה, אלא רצונה ובקשתה שהקב"ה יתן לה "זרע אנשים"¹², "זרע שמובלע בין אנשים"¹³, היינו, שגם "בין אנשים", בהיותו בעולם, תהיה הנהגתו על פי התורה, באופן של נשיאת חן בעיני ה'¹⁴.

ואכן הקב"ה שמע לתפלתה, וכפי שאמרה בתפלתה: "אל הנער הזה התפללתי"¹⁵,

(12) שם, יא.

(13) ברכות לא, ב.

(14) ראה גם תר"מ חכ"ז ס"ע 340.

(15) שם, כז.

(9) שמואל שם, ב.

(10) שם, ה.

(11) ראה סידור (עם דא"ה) קטז, א. שיחת יום שמוח"ת תש"ד ס"ו (סה"ש)

תש"ד ריש ע' 35.

and “I have lent him to G-d for all his days.”

Chanah thanked G-d for this in her song of thanks, saying “the barren woman has born seven.” The Hebrew word for seven, shivah, has the same letters as the word for “satisfied,” savah. Meaning, Chanah was fully satisfied with her child.

Chanah thanked G-d for this in her song of praise, “the barren woman has born seven.” Seven in Hebrew is shivah, which is associated with the word savah, satisfaction. This means that she was fully satisfied with her child.

משיחת ליל שמחת תורה (קודם הקפות), ה'תשכ"ד
תורת מנחם חלק ל"ח עמ' 113

>> The Rebbe

The literal meaning of the verse remains primary, and also teaches us a lesson.

In order to properly fulfill the Baal Shem Tov's teaching about the spiritual meaning of Chanah and Peninah as Torah and mitzvot, it is necessary to fulfill it in the literal sense as well. Meaning, that the previous state of affairs, in which Peninah had children and Chanah did not, should be changed, and Chanah should have many children.

In order to fulfill the deeper meaning of the story of Chanah—which alludes to the spiritual impact on the nation—we first need to ensure that there will be a nation, through having many children.

”וגם אנכי השאלתיהו לה' כל הימים
גו”¹⁶.

ועל זה הודתה חנה לה' באמרה בשירתה
ש”עקרה ילדה שבעה” - שבעה (גם)
מלשון שובע¹⁷, והיינו, שענין הבנים היה
אצלה באופן של שובע, די והותר¹⁸.

ומזה מובן גם בנוגע לפשטות
הענינים - ”אין מקרא יוצא מידי
פשוטו”¹⁹.

כדי לפעול בשלימות את תוכן
תורת הבעל-שם-טוב בעניין חנה
ופנינה בנוגע לפעולות בתורה
ומצוות - יש לפעול ענין זה כפשוטו,
היינו, שתמורת המצב שהיה בעבר,
שלפנינה יש ילדים ולחנה אין ילדים,
יהיו לחנה ריבוי ילדים.

(19) שבת סג, א. וש”נ.
(20) שם א, י”ד.
(21) שם, כז.

(16) שם, כח.
(17) ראה ויק”ר פכ”ט, ה.
(18) ע”פ לשון הכתוב - ויקהל לו, ז.

The simple reason why Chanah's prayer for a child was answered on Rosh Hashanah is also compatible with the allegorical reading of the story.

When a person conducts themselves properly on Rosh Hashanah, praying "with a bitter spirit" for children ("this is the child that I prayed for"), who will always be connected to G-d's Temple ("and he will remain in the Temple forever"), G-d fulfills this request. Such a person is blessed with a year filled with sons and daughters studying Torah and observing mitzvot, and "all that see them will recognize that they are seed blessed by G-d."

וזוהו גם פשטות הענין שבראש השנה נפקדה חנה, באופן שמתאים גם עם תוכן הענין על דרך הדרוש:

כאשר ההנהגה בראש השנה היא כראוי, שאז מתפללים באופן של "מרת נפש"²⁰ עבור ילדים, "אל הנער הזה התפללתי"²¹, להעמיד ילדים באופן שיהיו קשורים לעולם עם מקדש ה' ומשכן ה', "וישב שם עד עולם"²² - אזי ממלא הקב"ה את הבקשה (בראש השנה נפקדה חנה), ונעשית שנה שמרובה בבנים ובנות לומדי תורה ועוסקים במצוות, ש"כל רואיהם יכירום כי הם זרע ברך ה'"²³.

The literal and allegorical meanings converge here, like intertwined threads of a cord. On Rosh Hashanah, the year's main day of prayer, we implement Chanah's prayer for a child, which alludes to the two realms of our lives: Firstly, actual birth - material matters, and also committed Jewish life - spirituality.

When we pray properly, G-d blesses the Jewish people in both of these worlds.

משיחת ו' תשרי, ה'תשכ"ז, הנחת השומעים בלתי מוגה.

תורת מנחם חלק מ"ח עמ' 50