



This series is sponsored by Rhoda Waxman to honour the memory of her grandparents, Robert and Ida Kurtz z"l

Fight #2: Hannah vs. G-d

1. Talmud, Berachot 31b-32a

And Rabbi Elazar said: Hannah launched words heavenward, as Samuel I 1:10 says, "And she prayed upon Gd" – this teaches that she launched words heavenward.

2. Talmud, Berachot 31b

Hannah said before Gd, "Master of the Universe! Of all of the multitudes of multitudes You created in Your world, would it be difficult in Your eyes to give me one child?" To what may this be compared? To a human king who made a feast for his servants, and a pauper came to the door and said, "Give me one morsel," and they did not pay attention to him. He pushed his way in to the king and said, "My master the king! From the entire meal you made, would it be difficult in your eyes to give me one morsel?"

3. Talmud, Berachot 31b

Im ra'oh tireh – Rabbi Elazar said: Hannah said before Gd: Master of the Universe! If You will see – good. If not, then You will see! I will go seclude myself [with a male] before my husband Elkanah, and since I will be secluded they will give me the sotah water. You will not show Your Torah to be a lie; it says, "And she will be exonerated, and she will conceive! (Bamidbar 5:28)"

4. Evidence for Hannah's Anger

- 1:6 Thundering
- 1:10 Prayer "upon" Gd
- 1:10 "Of bitter spirit" – Judges 18:25, Samuel I 22:2, Samuel I 30:6, Samuel II 17:8
- 1:11 Doubled verbs, twice
- 1:11 Remember, and do not forget!
- 1:11 Taking a vow
- 1:12 Praying at length
- 1:16 My sorrow and anger

5. Samuel I 1:24-28

And she brought him up with her once she had weaned him, with three bulls and an *ephah* of flour and a flagon of wine. And she brought him to the House of Gd in Shiloh, and the child was young. And they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the youth to Eli. And she said, "Mine, my master! By your life, my master! I am the woman who stood here with you, praying to Gd. For this child I prayed, and Gd gave me my request which I asked of Him. And I have also lent him to Gd; for all of the days he shall be, he shall be lent to Gd." And she bowed to Gd there.

6. Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser, Malbim Commentary to Samuel I 1:25

And before sprinkling the blood, "And they brought the youth to Eli," hinting that just as they brought the bull as a korban for Gd, so the youth would be entirely for Gd, to serve.

7. Talmud, Menachot 110a

I did not tell you to sacrifice such that you would say, "I will perform His will, and He will perform my will." You do not sacrifice for My will, but you sacrifice for your will, as the Torah says, "Sacrifice it per your will."

8. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Samuel I 1:26-27

Hannah said, "My master: Do not think that because we are bringing this youth together, that we were equal partners in him, my husband Elkanah and me his wife. It is not so, for the youth was born because of me, due to me." This is

"*Mine* my master," meaning "Because of me, my master, the aforementioned youth exists." And she explained why it was due to her and not due to her husband, saying, "I am the woman who stood with you in this place, and prayed to Gd," and since I stood here and not Elkanah, if so, the youth is due to me, because of me... Elkanah did not pray for him, not here and not at home and not anywhere else...

Fight #3: Hannah vs Peninah

9. Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser, Malbim Commentary to Samuel I 1:2

It didn't mention both of them with the definite object... Teaching that he married Hannah first, and at first she was the only woman in the marriage, and then he married Peninah as well... And the Sages were correct in saying that when Hannah saw she could not produce a child, she counseled him to take Peninah as well, and perhaps [Hannah] would be built up through her, as Sarah did with Hagar.

10. Talmud, Bava Batra 16a

Rabbi Levi said: The Satan and Peninah had altruistic intentions... Peninah, as in Samuel I 1:6.

11. Samuel I 1:13

And Hannah spoke upon her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not audible. And Eli thought she was intoxicated.

12. Samuel I 2:5

Those who had been full with bread will be hired out [for bread], those who had been hungry will be so no longer, to the point that the childless one will birth seven, and the one with many children will be cut off.

Review Questions

- 1> How do we know that few people attended the Mishkan in Hannah's time?
- 2> What are two ways to explain why Hannah's family went to the Mishkan annually?
- 3> How do we know that Hannah was personally invested in the fight to promote the Mishkan?
- 4> How does the Talmud interpret Hannah's prayer to be aggressive?
- 5> In Hannah's fight for her vision of Gd, which figures from Tanach does she resemble?
- 6> Why did Penina torment Hannah?
- 7> Why didn't Hannah react to Penina's torture directly?

Lessons of Hannah's Prayer

13. Talmud, Berachot 31a

Rav Hemnuna said: How many mighty laws we can learn from the verses of Hannah!

- "Hannah spoke upon her heart" – we see that one who prays must focus his heart.
- "Only her lips moved" – we see that one who prays must form [words] with his lips.
- "Her voice was not heard" – we see that one may not elevate his voice in prayer.

14. Maimonides, Laws of Prayer 4:16

What is *kavvanah*? To clear one's mind of all thoughts, seeing himself as though standing before Gd.

15. Rabbi Menachem Meiri, Commentary to Berachot 31a

So that one's speech will be clear to him, and so his focus will be more readily available.

Why is silent prayer better?

16. Zohar, Genesis pg. 209b

One who prays before his Master should not raise his voice in his prayer; one who raises his voice in his prayer will not be audible. Why? Because prayer is not the voice that is audible... And so one need not make his voice audible in his prayer, but pray silently, in the voice that is not audible. This is the prayer that is always accepted.

17. Kings I 19:9-12

And he came there [Mount Horeb], to the cave, and he rested there, and the word of G-d came to him, saying to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been zealous for G-d, Master of multitudes, for the children of Israel have left Your covenant, they have ruined Your altars, they have killed Your prophets, and only I remain, and they seek to take my life." And He said, "Depart, and stand upon the mountain before G-d." G-d passed before him, and [there was] a great and mighty wind before G-d, breaking mountains and smashing stones, and G-d was not in the wind. And after the wind came an earthquake, and G-d was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake came a fire, and G-d was not in the fire. And after the fire, a voice, silent, small.

Rashi: The voice of those who praise in silence.

18. Psalms 89:10

אתה מושל בגאות הים בשוא גליו אתה תשבתם:

You reign over the might of the sea; when its waves rise up, You make them still.

Review Questions

- 1> What three lessons does the Talmud deduce from the biblical description of Hannah's prayer?
- 2> What are some reasons to pray aloud?
- 3> What are some reasons to pray in a low voice?
- 4> What lesson can we draw from the "small, still voice" that Elijah heard?