

I Samuel 1:1 -19

טוֹתֶקֶם חֲנָה אַחֲרֵי אֲכָלָהּ בְּשִׁלָּה וְאַחֲרַי שִׁתָּהּ וְעַלִּי הִכְהִין יֹשֵׁב עַל־הַכֹּפֶּסֶא עַל־מִזְבֹּחַת הַיֵּכֶל יְהוָה: יוֹהִיא מִרַת נַפְשׁ וְתִתְפַּלֵּל עַל־יְהוָה וּבְכָה תִבְכֶּה: יֹאמְרֵד לְדָר וְתֹאמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אִם־רָאָה תִרְאֶה אִי בָעֵינַי אֲמַתְךָ וְזִכְרֵתְנִי וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּח אֶת־אֲמַתְךָ וְנִתְתָּה לְאֲמַתְךָ זָרַע אֲנָשִׁים וְנִתְתִּיו לַיהוָה כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּו וּמוֹרָה לֹא־יַעֲלֶה עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ: יְבוֹהֶיָה כִּי הָרַבְתָּה לְהִתְפַּלֵּל לְפָנַי יְהוָה וְעַלִּי שָׁמַר אֶת־פִּיָּהּ: יְגוּחֲנָה הִיא מִדְּבַרְתָּ עַל־לִבָּהּ בַּק שִׁפְתֶיהָ נְעוּת וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא יִשְׁמַע וַיִּחְשְׁבָה עַלִּי לְשִׁכְרָה: יְדוּלְאִמָּר אֵלֶיהָ עַלִּי עַד־מַתִּי תִשְׁתַּכְרִין הַסִּירִי אֶת־יַיִנְךָ מֵעַלְיָ: טוֹוֹתֵעַן חֲנָה וְתֹאמַר לֹא אֲדַנִּי אִשָּׁה קִשְׁת־רִיחַ אֲנֹכִי וַיֵּן וְשָׁכַר לֹא שִׁתִּיתִי וְאִשְׁפָּךְ אֶת־נַפְשִׁי לְפָנַי יְהוָה: טוֹאֲל־תֵתֵן אֶת־אֲמַתְךָ לְפָנַי בַּת־בְּלִיעַל כִּי־מֵרַב שִׁיחִי וְכַעֲסִי דְבַרְתִּי עַד־הֵנָּה: יוֹוֹעַן עַלִּי וַיֹּאמֶר לְכִי לְשִׁלוֹם וְאֵלֶיהָ יִשְׁרָאֵל יִתֵּן אֶת־שְׁלֹתְךָ אֲשֶׁר שְׁאַלְתָּ מֵעַמּוֹ: יחִוֹתֹאמַר תִּמְצָא שִׁפְחָתְךָ חַן בְּעֵינַיִךְ וְתִלְדִּי הָאִשָּׁה לְדָרְפָה וְתֹאכֵל וְפָנֶיהָ לֹא־הִיוּ־לָהּ עוֹד: יטוֹיִשְׁכְּמוּ בַבֶּקֶר וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְפָנַי יְהוָה וַיָּשֻׁבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בֵּיתֶם הָרַמְתָּה וַיִּדַע אֶלְקָנָה אֶת־חֲנָה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּזְכְּרָהּ יְהוָה:

<sup>9</sup> ...After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose. — The priest Eli was sitting on the seat near the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. — <sup>10</sup> In her wretchedness, she prayed to the Lord, weeping all the while. <sup>11</sup> And she made this vow: "O Lord of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the Lord for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head."

<sup>12</sup> As she kept on praying before the Lord, Eli watched her mouth. <sup>13</sup> Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. <sup>14</sup> Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up!" <sup>15</sup> And Hannah replied, "Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy woman. I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the Lord. <sup>16</sup> Do not take your maidservant for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress." <sup>17</sup> "Then go in peace," said Eli, "and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him." <sup>18</sup> She answered, "You are most kind to your handmaid." So the woman left, and she ate, and was no longer downcast. <sup>19</sup> Early next morning they bowed low before the Lord, and they went back home to Ramah.

Talmud Bavli, Brakhot 31a-b

אָמַר רַב הַמְנוּנָא: כַּמָּה הִלְכְתָא גְבֵרוּתָא אִיכָא לְמִשְׁמַע מִהֲנִי קִרְאִי דְחֲנָה. וְחֲנָה הִיא מִדְּבַרְתָּ עַל לִבָּהּ — מִכָּאן לְמִתְפַּלֵּל צְרִיךְ שִׁיכּוּן לִבּוֹ. רַק שִׁפְתֶיהָ נְעוּת — מִכָּאן לְמִתְפַּלֵּל בְּשִׁפְתָיו. וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא יִשְׁמַע — מִכָּאן שְׁאִסוּר לְהַגְבִּיחַ קוֹלוֹ בְּתַפְלָתוֹ. וַיִּחְשְׁבָה עַלִּי לְשִׁכְרָה — מִכָּאן שְׁשִׁכּוּר אִסוּר לְהִתְפַּלֵּל.

**Rav Hamnuna said: How many significant halakhot can be derived from these verses of the prayer of Hannah?** As it says: "And Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved and her voice could not be heard, so Eli thought her to be drunk" ([I Samuel 1:13](#)). The Gemara

elaborates: **From** that which is stated **here: “And Hannah spoke in her heart,”** the *halakha* that **one who prays must focus his heart** on his prayer is derived. And **from** that which is stated **here: “Only her lips moved,”** the *halakha* that **one who prays must enunciate** the words **with his lips**, not only contemplate them in his heart, is derived. **From** that which is written **here: “And her voice could not be heard,”** the *halakha* that **one is forbidden to raise his voice in his Amida prayer** as it must be recited silently. **From** the continuation of the verse **here: “So Eli thought her to be drunk,”** the *halakha* that **a drunk person is forbidden to pray.** That is why he rebuked her.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ עַל־יְדֵי מַתִּי תִשְׁתַּכְּרִין וְגוֹ. אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מִכָּאן לְרוֹאֵה בַחֲבֵרוֹ

On the subject of Eli’s rebuke of Hannah, as it is stated: **“And Eli said to her: How long will you remain drunk? Remove your wine from yourself”** ([I Samuel 1:14](#)); **Rabbi Elazar said: From here** the *halakha* that **one who sees in another**

לא בב31

דָּבָר שְׂאִינוֹ הַגּוֹן, צָרִיד לְהוֹכִיחוֹ. וְתַעֲן חַנָּה וַתֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲדוֹנִי. אָמַר עוֹלָא וְאִיתִימָא רַבִּי יוֹסִי בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא: אָמְרָה לִיה: לֹא אֲדוֹן אַתָּה בְּדָבָר זֶה, וְלֹא רוּחַ הַקּוֹדֶשׁ שׁוֹרֵה עָלֶיךָ, שְׂאֵתָה חוֹשְׁדִּנִי בְּדָבָר זֶה.

**an unseemly matter, he must reprimand him,** is derived. **“And Hannah answered and she said no, my master, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit, and I have drunk neither wine nor liquor, but I pour out my soul before the Lord”** ([I Samuel 1:15](#)). Regarding the words: **“No, my master,” Ulla, and some say Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina, said that she said to him,** in an allusion: **With regard to this matter, you are not a master, and the Divine Spirit does not rest upon you, as you falsely suspect me of this.**

אִיכָּא דְאָמְרִי, הֲכִי אָמְרָה לִיה: לֹא אֲדוֹן אַתָּה? לֹא אִיכָּא שְׂכִינָה וְרוּחַ הַקּוֹדֶשׁ גְּבָדָה, שְׂדִנְתִּנִי לְכַף חוֹבָה וְלֹא דִנְתִּנִי לְכַף זְכוּת? מִי לֹא נִדְעַת דְאִשָּׁה קִשְׁת רוּחַ אֲנוּכִי??

**Some say** another version of her response. **She said to him,** questioning: **Aren’t you a master? Aren’t the Divine Presence and Divine Spirit with you that you judged me to be guilty, and you did not judge me to be innocent? Didn’t you know that I am a woman of distressed spirit?**

וַיִּזְן וְשָׂכַר לֹא שְׂתִיתִי. אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מִכָּאן לְנַחֲשֵׁד בְּדָבָר שְׂאִין בּוֹ, שְׂצָרִיד לְהוֹדִיעֵנו.

With regard to Hannah’s explanation that **“I have drunk neither wine nor liquor,”** **Rabbi Elazar said: From here** the *halakha* is derived that **one who is suspected of something of which he is not guilty cannot suffice merely with the personal knowledge of his innocence, but must inform** the one who suspects him that he is innocent and clear himself of suspicion...

...וַיַּעַן עָלַי וַיֹּאמֶר לְכִי לְשִׁלּוּם, אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מִכָּאן לְחוֹשֵׁד אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ בְּדָבָר שְׂאִין בּוֹ, שְׂצָרִיד לְפַיִּסוֹ. וְלֹא עוֹד, אֶלָּא שְׂצָרִיד לְבָרְכוֹ. שְׂנֵאמַר וְאֵלֵהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתֵּן אֶת שְׁלֵתָהּ.

The verse continues: **“And Eli answered and said: May you go in peace”** ([I Samuel 1:17](#)). **Rabbi Elazar said: From here** the *halakha* is derived that **one who suspects another of something**

that he has not done, he must appease him. Moreover, the one who suspected him must bless him, as Eli continued and offered Hannah a blessing, as it is stated: “And may the God of Israel grant your request that you have asked of Him” ([I Samuel 1:17](#)).

ותגיד נדר ותאמר ה צבאות, אמר רבי אלעזר: מיום שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את עולמו, לא היה אדם שקראו להקדוש ברוך הוא צבאות, עד שבאתה חנה וקראתו צבאות.

Incidental to this discussion of Hannah’s prayer, the Gemara explores related topics. In her prayer, Hannah said: “**And she swore an oath and said, Lord of Hosts [Tzeva’ot]** if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant and will give Your maidservant a male child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall be no razor come upon his head” ([I Samuel 1:11](#)). **Rabbi Elazar said: From the day that the Holy Blessed One created the world, there was no person who called the Holy Blessed One ‘Lord of Hosts’ until Hannah came and called the Holy One ‘Lord of Hosts.’** This is the first time in the Bible that God is referred to by this name.

אמרה חנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבונו של עולם, מכל צבאי צבאות שבראת בעולמך קשה בעיניך שיתנו לי בן אחד?

Rabbi Elazar explains that **Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, are You not the Lord of the Hosts, and of all of the hosts and hosts of creations that You created in Your world, is it difficult in Your eyes to grant me one son?**

משל למה הדבר דומה | למלך בשר ודם שעשה סעודה לעבדיו. בא עני אחד ועמד על הפתח, אמר להם: תנו לי פרוסה אחת! ולא השגיחו עליו. דחק ונכנס אצל המלך. אמר לו: אדוני המלך, מכל סעודה שעשית קשה בעיניך ליתן לי פרוסה אחת!!

The Gemara suggests a **parable: To what is this similar?** It is similar to a **flesh and blood king who made a feast for his servants. A poor person came and stood at the door. He said to them: Give me one slice of bread! And they paid him no attention. He pushed and entered before the king. He said to him: My lord, the King, from this entire feast that you have prepared, is it so difficult in your eyes to give me a single slice of bread?**

אם ראה תראה, אמר רבי אלעזר: אמרה חנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבונו של עולם, אם ראה | מוטב, ואם לאו | תראה.

As for the double language in the verse, “**if you will look upon [im ra’o tireh],”** Rabbi Elazar said: **Hannah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, if You will look upon [ra’o] me now, fine, and if not, in any case You will see [tireh].**

אלך ואסתתר בפני אלקנה בעלי, וכיון דמסתתרנא משקו לי מי סוטה, ואי אתה עושה תורתך פלסתר, שנאמר ונקתה ונזרעה זרע.

What was Hannah threatening? She said: **I will go and seclude myself with another man before Elkana, my husband. Since I secluded myself, they will force me to drink the sota water to determine whether or not I have committed adultery. I will be found innocent, and since You will not make Your Torah false [pelaster], I will bear children.** With regards to a woman who is

falsely suspected of adultery and drank the *sota* water, the Torah **says**: “And if the woman was not defiled, but was pure, then **she shall be acquitted and she shall conceive**” ([Numbers 5:28](#)).

***On Prayer, Abraham Joshua Heschel, 1969***

Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. The liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement, seeking to overthrow the forces that continue to destroy the promise, the hope, the vision.