



"AL HAPEREK"

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Shmuel Perakim 1-2

The story of Shmuel's birth begins a new chapter in the history of the Jewish people. Both the book and the influential character of Shmuel serve as the transition between the national tragedies recounted at the end of Shoftim and the glorious heights the nation reached during the early days of the monarchy.

General Overview < "ויקראו בספר בתורת האלהים"

Perek 1

- ❶ *"Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim"* (1:1). Elkanah and Channah represent a personal, familial, and national alternative to the lives of the people encountered in the book of Shoftim. Discuss the changes heralded by both Elkanah and Channah's approaches to personal dialogue with God, the Mishkan (Tabernacle) in Shiloh, and their overall religious outlooks as reflected in this perek.
- ❷ *"I am the woman that stood by you here, praying to the Lord; For this child I prayed . . ."* (1:26-27). Channah opens with a painful, personal prayer, and closes with a majestic song of thanksgiving (2:1-10). Compare the two prayers, examining the similarities and differences between them. How do the differences contribute to our understanding of Channah's character and the objectives of each prayer?
- ❸ a) The root *"sha-a-l"* [שא"ל], which alludes to the name of Shmuel, appears nine times in these chapters (1:17, 20, 27, and 28; and 2:20). Examine the different appearances of this verb, noting how each sheds light on the unique figure of Shmuel and his future destiny.
 b) Shmuel's spiritual ascent takes place in a series of stages. Look at the following pesukim: 2:11, 18, 21, 26; 3:1, 10, and 19, paying attention to the prepositions, terms, and descriptions used in each pasuk.

Perek 2

- 4 The waning influence of Eli's household and the rise of Shmuel are described as two intertwined processes. See the following pairs of pesukim: 11-12, 17-18, 21-22, and 25-26. Discuss the various stages in the decline of Eli's household in comparison to the rise of Shmuel.
- 5 The sins of Eli's sons and the punishment on his household are detailed in 2:12-17 (the sin), 22-25 (the warning), and 27-31 (the punishment). What were the sins of Eli's sons? Was their sin connected to their work in the Mishkan (Tabernacle), or was it an ethical sin? Examine the following sources: Compare 2:13-14 with Devarim 18:3; 2:16-17 with Vayikra 7:31; and 2:22 with Shemot 38:8. To understand the term "knowledge of God" [דעת ה'], see Hoshea 4:1-2; Yeshayahu 11:9; Yirmiyahu 2:8 and 9:23.

In-depth Study < "מִפְּנֵי שׂוֹם שְׂכָל"

- 6 Chazal (the Sages) learned the laws of the *amidah* (eighteen benedictions) from Channah. Study the following passage from the Talmud, taking note of which laws Chazal derive from Channah's prayer. Why is Channah's personal petition transformed into the model of prayer for all future generations?

R. Hammuna said: How many most important laws can be learned from these verses relating to Channah! (I Shmuel 1:13). "Now Channah spoke in her heart"--from this we learn that one who prays must direct his heart. "Only her lips moved"--from this we learn that he who prays must frame the words distinctly with his lips. "But her voice could not be heard"--from this, it is forbidden to raise one's voice in the tefillah [eighteen benedictions]. "Therefore Eli taught she had been drunk"--from this, that a drunken person is forbidden to say the tefillah. "And Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk, etc"-- R. Elazar said, From this we learn that one who sees in his neighbor something unseemly must reprove him.

(Talmud Bavli Massechet Brachot 31a)

Appendix < "וַיְבִינּוּ בַּמִּקְרָא"

"And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of Hosts"--R. Elazar said, from the day that God created his world, no man called the Holy One "Hosts (צבאות)" until Channah came and called him "Hosts." Said Channah before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, of all the hosts and hosts that You have created in your world, is it so hard in your eyes to give me one son? A parable: To what is this matter like? To a king who made a feast for his servants, and a poor man came and stood by the door and said to them, "Give me a bite", and no one took an notice of him. So he forced his way into the presence of the king and said to him, Your Majesty, out of all the feast which you have made, it is so hard in your eyes to give me one bite?

"If You will indeed look"--R. Elazar said, Channah said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, if You will look, it is well, and if You will not look, I will go and shut myself up with someone else in the knowledge of my husband Elkanah, and as I shall have been alone, they will make me drink the water of the suspected wife, and You can not falsify Your law, which says, "*She shall be cleared and shall conceive seed*" (Bamidbar 5:28).

"Now Channah, she spoke in her heart." R. Elazar said in the name of R. Yose the son of Zimra: She spoke concerning her heart. She said before Him: Sovereign of the Universe, among all the things that You have created in a woman, You have not created one without a purpose, eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a mouth to speak, hands to do work, legs to walk with, breasts to nurse with. These breasts that You have put on my heart, are they not to nurse? Give me a son that I may nurse with them.

R. Elazar also said, Channah spoke insolently toward heaven, as it says, "*And Channah prayed to the Lord.*" This teaches that she spoke insolently toward heaven.

(Talmud Bavli Massechet Brachot 31b)