



THE BIRTH OF A JEWISH CHILD - A G-DLY REVELATION

Rosh Hashanah prayers have a unique focus on G-d "remembering" various women in Jewish history. The common thread - He "remembered" them with a child. On the importance of bringing Jewish children into the world - both physically and spiritually.

G-d's True Blessing

Have you ever met a couple who are having a child that they did not plan for?

You know the story, it was an "accident!" They already have two children, boruch Hashem, and they were not planning on having another. But the wife is pregnant with a third child and the parents become very worried over things like, "we're too old to raise another child," or, "where will we find enough money to put a third one through college?"

The pressure is on!

On Rosh Hashanah we read the stories of three women who were remembered and blessed with conception on Rosh Hashanah. On the first day of the holiday we read about the birth of Isaac, where G-d changes Sarai's name to Sarah and tells Abraham that, "She will bear for you a child." And like any good father would, Abraham responds, "I don't need another child, just let Ishmael walk in your ways." But G-d insists and says that Ishmael would also be blessed but that that was not enough. There needed to be a Jewish child born.

In the first Haftorah we read about Chana's prayer and the birth of Samuel. On the second day we read the story of Rachel.

As I said, these three women were remembered on Rosh Hashanah, and Torah uses the word remembered. "And G-d remembered Rachel and opened her womb." Or, "and Elkanah knew Chana and G-d remembered her."

So we see very clearly that when G-d grants a child to a couple, it is a clear sign that G-d has remembered them. When a couple creates a "planned family" the children are definitely a blessing from G-d – but these children are born also because the parents wanted him to be. But when a child is born unplanned, this is a clear signal that the couple has been remembered by G-d for the good.

The Greatest Revelation

In the Haftorah we read the story of Chana, the wife of Elkanah. She had not been granted any children for many years. When the family would go up to Shiloh to spend the Holidays near the Temple, her heart was very bitter and she would cry over her lot. Her husband Elkanah tried to comfort her and he said, "Why do you cry, why don't you enjoy yourself **לך מעשרה בנים** טוב **הלא אנוכי** which means, "Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Now these words make a very strange impression. The woman is crying that she does not have any children and her husband comforts her by saying basically, "Who needs children when you've got a guy like me?!" Is that how one comforts a bereaved woman?

The Rebbe once beautifully explained the meaning of Elkanah's words. He explained that usually when people speak about themselves they use the word, "Ani" meaning "me". But Elkanah used a peculiar word. Elkanah said, "Isn't **אנוכי** better for you than ten children?" the word **אנוכי** is reminiscent of the first **אנוכי** as in:

“אנוכי ה' אלקיך” “I am G-d your G-d” from the Ten Commandments.

Chana was a prophetess. She was one of the seven prophetesses in our history.

She merited G-dly revelations every day.

Women have always referred to “the new life” they brought into the world as a miracle or a spiritual experience.

Elkanah wasn't trying to comfort his wife by his own merit. He meant the אנוכי of G-d which Hannah merited to see every single day!! He was telling her, you have a spiritual experience every day. You get a revelation all the time. . That is ten times greater than having a child. That should be a cause of greater joy than ten children could give you!

But Chana was willing to give all that up if that's what it would take to merit bringing a physical child into this world.

Children: Physical and Spiritual

The lesson is that bearing and raising Jewish children is more important and more special than even the highest form of prophecy. After all this is the true purpose of every Jewish parent and indeed every Jewish person.

I'm sure some of you are thinking, “C'mon rabbi what do you want from us. You may still be young, but we already closed up shop”. Allow me therefore to remind you of the famous saying of the Baal Shem Tov, “The mitzvah to be fruitful and multiply means that one Jew should make another Jew. This includes helping another person to bear and raise Jewish children. It includes making sure that Jewish children should be able to receive a Jewish education. The Mishnah states, “One who teaches his friend's son Torah is as if he bore the child.” And each and everyone can contribute. Any time you take upon

yourself responsibility for a Jewish child, G-d will take up His responsibility for us – for we are all G-d's children.