

A HIGHER HOLIDAY

by Rabbi Label Lam

Remember us for life, O King Who desires life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life- for Your sake O Living G-d. (Inserted into Prayers during the Ten Days of Repentance)

A young lady asked me a question after a class the other night, "Rabbi, what do I ask for on Rosh HaShana?" It was a very sincere and honest question that deserved a direct answer, so I told her, "Nothing!" She was a little stunned and that gave me an opportunity to explain. On Rosh HaShana many critical things are scripted that effect all aspects of and life itself. The livelihood of a person is determined on Rosh HaShana. Who will live and who will die? That too is reckoned on the awesome day of Rosh HaShana. How do ready ourselves? It could well be that Rosh HaShana is more like a job interview than anything else. We want desperately to gain an active role in G-d's universe and accordingly our appeal is to be organized. There is a secret to the art of prayer that advises us how to maximize our bargaining position when so much lies in the balance.

If one wants to succeed in any field they would be well advised to seek out someone who has already achieved in that endeavor. If you want to know how to golf better stalk the Tiger (Woods) and if you want to know about investing chart the moves of Mr. Buffet. If you want to know how to pray then study the words uttered from the holy lips of Chana. From the excellence of a single prayer she was granted a child, Shmuel that altered landscape of Jewish History for all time. The Talmud therefore analyzed carefully the many details and factors surrounding that episode we read about on Rosh HaShana. It's no surprise then that many of those features are fixtures in our daily prayers. The verse testifies, "She was feeling bitter and she prayed to HASHEM weeping continuously. She made a vow and said, "HASHEM, Master of Legions, if You take note of the suffering of Your maidservant, and give Your maidservant male offspring, then I shall give him to HASHEM all the days of his life, and a razor shall not come upon his head." (Shmuel 1:10-11) Chana made what may amount to an irresistible prayer. What did she say that was so magical? She dedicated her son before he was ever to be born. Chana requested a child not for herself but for HASHEM's sake.

When my son Shmuel was born 19 years ago on the eve of Rosh HaShana I was reminded of Chana's words when speaking at his Bris. When the Talmud Chulin wants to rank the greatness of Avraham and Dovid and Moshe they order them according to their words. King David said, "I am a worm and not a man". Still a worm is a living thing. Avraham said, "I am dust and ashes". He considered himself something much less. Moshe said about himself and his brother Aharon, "We are

what". "What" is substance-less and therefore they are considered greater in selflessness. The Talmud tells us, though, that Shmuel was equal in stature to both Moshe and Aharon because the verse states, "Moshe and Aharon with His service and Shmuel with the calling of his name." Shmuel means two things. "I requested him (Shoel M)-from HASHEM." His name, his sake is for HASHEM (SHMO-E-L) Moshe and Aharon shrunk through service but Shmuel was dedicated and nullified prior to conception and with the calling of his name.

When Chana's child was yet a child she delivered on her promise. She brought her son Shmuel to Eli the Kohen showing that she meant business. Anyone's prayer for a child, a spouse, a house, or whatever is certainly amplified by a sincere desire to serve HASHEM- This life, these resources are pre-dedicated. This may be the secret of the irresistible prayer and the key to **a Higher Holiday**.
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