



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR.
ADINA SHMIDMAN



(SHOFTIM 13:2-25)

וַיַּעֲתֵר מְנוּחַ אֶל־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר בֵּי אָדָם לֵי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר
 שָׁלַחְתָּ יְבוֹאֵנָה עִוְד אֶלֵינוּ וַיִּוְרְטֵנוּ מִה־נִּעְשָׂה לְנַעַר הַיּוֹלֵד:
Manoah prayed with the L-RD. "Oh, my L-rd!" he said, "please let the man of G-d that You sent come to us again, and let him instruct us how to act with the child that is to be born." (Shoftim 13:8)

In this week's Haftorah, we read about Shimshon's birth story, his family narrative. The events precipitating his birth are both dramatic and intimate at the same time. The Posuk states that "וַיַּעֲתֵר מְנוּחַ" and *Manoach prayed*. The Midrash Rabba (10:17) shares that Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish questions the term used for Manoach's prayer. It is an unusual word for prayer and interestingly the same term used when Yitzchok prayed with Rivka for a child when they were barren. Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish shares that the Tefillos of Tzadikim are compared to a pitchfork (עֵתָר), as just as a pitchfork turns over the grain on the threshing floor, so too, the prayers of the righteous can turn over G-d's decree from one of cruelty to mercy. When davening for a child, this word is employed as there needs to be a reversal of barrenness. Rav Pam in his sefer on Haftoros emphasizes that the power of Tefillah is not exclusive to Tzadikim, but rather, all people have the power to pray and connect with Hashem and impact G-d's will. We all have the ability to reach out... ■

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