

D'var Haftarah  
Rosh Hashanah Morning  
September 5, 2013  
Cantor Wally Schachet-Briskin

## "It Couldn't Hurt..."

Walking on Granby recently we struck up a conversation with a teen who had just returned from a Christian Bible camp. As we parted, he asked if he could pray for us. Tammy and I looked at each other, shrugged, and said, "It couldn't hurt." I consider myself to be more of a rational thinker, but I also believe in good karma. Often I'll find myself saying yes to what I consider a little extra insurance that things should go well with me, and with my loved ones, when considering that which is outside my control – silently thanking a Higher Power when arriving safely at my destination; thinking twice before saying something will absolutely happen, and instead, saying "God-willing"; trusting that things will be OK, because it helps me to believe that the universe favors the good.

The Haftarah for Rosh Hashanah Morning is taken from First Samuel, Chapter One. In this story, a woman named Hannah is praying earnestly in God's Temple. She has been suffering, and now she is weeping bitterly, and offering prayers to God just by forming words on her lips in silence. She believes to her core that her fate depends on these utterances. Her prayers are the most sincere anyone can offer – they are the *"imrei fi v'hegyon libi"*, the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, that we humbly ask that God accept. She teaches us the practice, which we still use today, of offering our petitions and blessings privately, while in a public space. We are invited to do this during the meditative parts of every prayer service.

Even if we don't fully believe that our fate depends on how sincerely we pray, should we still invest our time and efforts into prayer and rituals that bring us closer to God? (Well, you're here, aren't you? That's evidence that it's working on some level.) And hopefully you'll join us for the rest of the Holy Day experiences, including *Tashlich* this afternoon (where we toss breadcrumbs into the sea to symbolically cast away bad habits), *Shabbat Shuva* tomorrow night, *Yom Kippur* eight days from now, and our *Sukkot* and *Simchat Torah* celebrations in the coming weeks. We also offer wonderful Sabbath Services every week!

Finding herself in strife, Hannah prayed. Is offering prayers, out loud or silently, and going through rituals, an effective response to what's going on, in and around us? Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't, but my advice is: it couldn't hurt.