

Haftarat Vayera: Emuna Sheleima

- Eliyahu Baruch Shulman.

The Shunamite and Elisha. The Zohar states that the child was the future Navi Chavakuk. Narrowing focus on what we need to redeem the world. Tzadik beemunato yichye - the importance of pure emuna today.

VAYERA: EMUNAH SHELEMA

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The Haftarah of Vayera

Let us review the events of the haftorah:

The ishah hashunamis extends her hospitality to Elisha, and builds for him an attic. In reward, he promises her: At chovekes ben, "You will give birth to a son."

The son goes out to his father in the field, has a sudden attack, and dies. The woman comes to Elisha. Elisha gives his staff - his mishenes - to Geichazi to put on the child. But the woman insists that Elisha come himself. Geichazi puts the staff on the child, to no avail. Elisha arrives and brings the child to life.

The Zohar identifies the child as the navi Chavakuk; the name Chavakuk is a doubling of at chovekes ben, because he was born twice. Is there any significance to this identification? Is there anything in the story that relates to the message of the navi Chavakuk?

Furthermore: Why did Elisha think that his mishenes, his staff, would be effective? Why did the woman insist that he come himself? And why, after all, wasn't the mishenes effective?

The Meshech Chachmah states that Elisha thought that he would revive the child in the zechus, in the merit of the support the woman had given him; through the mishenes, which means, "support".

But the woman felt that her zechus would not be enough. The child could be revived only in the merit of her emunah in Elisha himself, and therefore only Elisha could perform the miracle. And so it was.

This is the explanation of the Meshech Chachmah. If we take this line of thought further, we can understand the significance of the Zohar's identification of this child as Chavakuk.

The Gemara in Makos 23 says – Rav Simlai expounded: 613 mitzvos were commanded to Moshe; David came and established them (he'emidan) on 13; Yeshayahu came and established

them on 6; Micha came and established them on 3; Chavakuk came and established them on 1 - Vetzadik be'emunaso yichyeh - "A righteous person lives with his faith".

The Gemara certainly doesn't mean that the nevi'im abrogated the mitzvos. (Ein navi rasha'i lechadesh davar.) Certainly we are obligated to perform all of the mitzvos, to the best of our ability.

The Gemara is concerned with a different question, and it is a burning question – now, today, more than ever. Hashem is busy redeeming the world. And that process is painful and fraught with peril. And we need zechuyos to be part of that geulah.

And the burning question, therefore, is: Are we part of the solution - or part of the problem? With what zechus can we merit rachmei shamayim? With what merit can we – given that our fulfillment of the mitzvos is imperfect – be part of the process of geulah?

Each navi narrowed the focus – down to Amos who reduced it to asos mishpat (Din), ahavat chesed (Gemilas Chasadim) vehatznea leches (Hachnasas Kalah Vi'Halvayas Hames). But even that was not enough. And so Chavakuk came and revealed that emunah alone – if it is strong enough, and sincere enough, can carry us through.

And that was a lesson that Chavakuk was uniquely qualified to teach. Because he had been born – reborn – through the merit of his mother's emunah – her pure faith in Elisha and in Hashem whose navi he was. And so Chavakuk taught vetzadik be'emunaso yichyeh - through emunah we can merit life.

The world is changing before our eyes. Certainly we need zechuyos, perhaps as never before. And we certainly should look for opportunities to improve in Torah and Chesed. But perhaps most of all what is called for is emunah – pure faith in Hashem, faith that He alone is master of the house, that nothing – absolutely nothing – can happen, does happen, but by His will; emunah – that we are completely in His hands. We need to live emunah – practice emunah, study emunah, walk and talk and breathe emunah. Hashem is changing the world and we have to change along with it, or Chas Vishalom be left behind.

We ask Hashem for siyata deShmaya to help us absorb this lesson. Let us rise to the level of these tremendous events around us. And let us merit seeing the Geulah Sheleimah unfold before our eyes, speedily and soon.

(Submitted by Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman, 5763)