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OU ISRAEL FACULTY

Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

בס"ד

Emet V'Emunah: The Legacy of Eliyahu and Elisha

It is difficult to think of a teacher and student more different from one another than Elyahu and Elisha. Consider the contrast between Eliyahu, the unyielding advocate of absolute loyalty to God, who preferred isolation to life in an imperfect society; and Elisha, the man of the people, who almost casually performed miracles to help those around him, creating a dynamic environment within which God's Presence would be felt palpably by those around him.

Despite their different personalities, we find many parallels between the two prophets, perhaps most blatantly the revival of a child from the dead. According to Hazal, the child revived by Eliyahu was Yonah ben Amitai. Yonah was called the son of Amitai from the root אמת, Truth, for upon his revival his mother cried out, "Now I know that the word of God in your mouth is indeed Truth". The child revived by Elisha was the prophet Habakuk, the Navi whose prayer is held up as a paradigm of successful dialogue with Hashem and who reduced the entire Torah to one fundamental principle: "צדיק באמונתו יחיה" - the righteous live by faith.

Together, reflecting the personae of their spiritual fathers, Yonah and Habakuk represent אמת ואמונה. Not coincidentally, these are the opening words of the concluding bracha

following Kriat Shema at Maariv. The morning bracha, אמת ויציב, refers to the chessed that Hashem performed for us in the past - taking us out of Mitzrayim, splitting the sea and sustaining us miraculously in the desert. In contrast, the bracha of אמת ואמונה recited at night refers to the future Geulah, which we await expectantly. The first part of this bracha is written in the present tense - all the actions that Hashem performed on our behalf in the past are still relevant and applicable, and re-occur on a daily basis, as Hashem continues to save us from the hands of our enemies.

Living with a foundation of Emunah means living with an awareness of Yad Hashem in our lives on a daily basis. This is the message of Eliyahu and Elisha, Yonah and Habakuk. If we feel a profound sense of attachment and connection to Hashem through the chessed that He performed for us in the past, which cemented our relationship in the realm of אמת, then we can continue to live each day with a feeling of אמונה, the expectation that the גאולה is imminent.

This explains the sudden departure from the narrative of the kings in Sefer Melachim, with its focus on the miracles of the prophets rather than on the continuing decline into complete spiritual dissolution on the part of the kings of Israel. We had reached a point

where it seemed as though the kingdom of Israel was approaching its end. The dynasty of Yerov'am was short-lived after his having deviated from the word of Hashem, as foretold by Ahiyah HaShiloni. It seemed as though Ba'asha had established his own dynasty, until his son Elah ruled for only two years before being conspired against by Zimri, who ruled for only 7 days before he himself was put to death, and the nation split their allegiance between Tivni ben Ginat and 'Omri. And then, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, 'Omri revealed himself to be a source of national strength; he built the foundation of a strong malchut, moving the capital to Shomron and fortifying the city. His son, Achav, followed in his father's footsteps, building roads and trying to improve the material welfare of the people. Nevertheless, the spiritual level of these kings and their subjects was abysmal, with the introduction of new powerful and diverse forms of Avodah Zara into the nation. It is precisely then that the narrative is interrupted with the miracles of Eliyahu and Elisha. Precisely when the situation is so dire, when the very kings who are meant to bring us closer to Hashem are the source of greater distance, we are reminded of His eternal Presence among the Jewish people. Even that which appears beyond hope, without any sign of life, may be revived. Before the

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Malchut declines and dissolves, we are taught that ultimately Emunah will carry the day, and the Geulah will come. Emet v'Emunah, the eternal truth of the Chessed of past salvation, and firm belief in the light of the future redemption which is being revealed daily, slowly but surely dispelling the darkness; this is the enduring legacy of Eliyahu and Elisha. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began it's fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.



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