



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

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The Impossible is Possible

This week's Haftorah is rarely read, as Parshat Tazria is generally read as part of the double parsha of Tazria-Metzora. Even when it is read, the Haftorah is often Parshat HaChodesh. The last time this Haftorah was read was in 2003 and the next time will be in 2040.

The Haftorah describes two miracles performed by Elisha Hanavi. A man from Shalisha brought him 20 loaves of bread and a sack of grain. The Gemara expounds that while the literal read suggests that there were 20 loaves for 100 people, in fact there was one loaf for 100 people. While Elisha's servant discouraged the distribution, the loaves fed all 2400 students with leftovers to spare. The narrative then transitions to the story of Naaman, a leprous Aramean general. Upon the advice of a young Jewish captive girl, Naaman seeks healing from Elisha. Initially reluctant to follow Elisha's instructions to dip in the Jordan River seven times, Naaman eventually complies and finds himself cured. Grateful, he acknowledges Hashem as the ultimate God and wishes to reward Elisha, who humbly refuses.

Why introduce the miraculous healing of Na'aman the Aramean general with the gift of bread that fed Elisha's students with loaves to spare? The practical answer is that every Haftorah portion must be at least 21 verses. The reading would end off on an unfavorable note if it included the three verses which follow the story of Na'aman's healing, the greedy advances of Gechazi, Elisha's servant who sought monetary compensation from Na'aman. Therefore, the additional three verses are appended to the start of the Haftorah highlighting Elisha's miracle of the loaves.

Perhaps there is a more profound message for us to learn from both miracles shared in our rarely read Haftorah. Skepticism is rooted in doubt and distrust. It breeds inaction and confrontation. By contrast, faith is taking a chance, knowing and trusting that there is an Ultimate Being who is ever watching.

The two stories in our Haftorah message to us that trust is the bedrock of our actions and interactions. The impossible is possible when you believe. Despite the limited loaves, Elisha directs the distribution and the loaves last. Na'aman didn't believe that the Jordan River was any different than the rivers of Aram and didn't want to follow Elisha's directive to dip. Taking a leap of faith takes fortitude, even when our rational thinking tells us not to believe. In our own times there are many reasons to be skeptical. yet we must maintain our faith. ■