

Discourse 10

“V’Ishah Achat MiNeshei Bnei Hanevi’im - One woman from the wives of the disciples of the prophets”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Vayera,
18th of Marcheshvan, 5725⁵⁶⁴
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,⁵⁶⁵ “One woman from the wives of the disciples of the prophets cried out to Elisha etc.” In a discourse of the Alter Rebbe,⁵⁶⁶ he explains all the particulars of this story, related in [this week’s] *Haftorah*, as they are in our service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as will be explained (in chapter two). However, we will with Reb Hillel of Paritch’s introduction to this in his discourse,⁵⁶⁷ (which apparently was based on the above-mentioned discourse of the Alter Rebbe).⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ Based on Likkutei Sichot Vol. 5, p. 332 and on.

⁵⁶⁵ Kings II 4:1 and on – The beginning of the *Haftorah* of this week.

⁵⁶⁶ In the booklets of manuscripts that was recently released from imprisonment. There is also a version that was printed some time ago (in Ginzei Nistarot Vol. 3, p. 64; Me’ah She’arim 12-13 (29b-30a); Likkutim Yekarim (Riga 1939) p. 6 (with additional notes included in parenthesis)) with minor variations. Subsequently printed in Maamarei Admor HaZaken, HaKtzarim p. 137, and see p. 136 there as well.

⁵⁶⁷ Printed in Pelach HaRimon, Parshat Vayera (58a and on) – To elucidate, it is known regarding the Chassidic discourses of Reb Hillel, that they were also studied in depth and learned. (See Torat Menachem – Reshimat HaYoman p. 182.)

⁵⁶⁸ Pelach HaRimon ibid. 58b

That is, as known, since “a verse never departs from its simple meaning,”⁵⁶⁹ all the stories in Tanach actually took place. Nonetheless, [we must ask] why these specific stories were written in Tanach. It must therefore be said that this is because there are hints to Supernal mysteries and secrets, and various ways of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in them. (This concludes Reb Hillel’s introductory statement.)

It thus is understood that just as the laws and rulings of Torah are eternal instructions that apply at all times and in all places, as the Alter Rebbe stated,⁵⁷⁰ “Torah is eternal,” [which is also the meaning of the words,⁵⁷¹ “For they are our life” (not only meaning that this is what gives a person vitality (by which he is vitalized), in that he learns Torah with vitality, but also) meaning that Torah brings to (the way of) life, (that is, how to live). In other words, at all times and in all places a Jew must live according to the instructions of Torah]. So likewise, the instructions conveyed in the stories of the Torah are eternal instructions.

This is because the Torah, in its entirety, is one Torah, and one matter cannot be separated from another matter, Heaven forbid. This is as in the Halachic ruling of Rambam,⁵⁷² that one who says that Torah is not from *HaShem*-יהו"ה, even if he only says this about a single verse or a single word, [and in this, there is no difference between the verse,⁵⁷³ “I am *HaShem*-

⁵⁶⁹ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 63a

⁵⁷⁰ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 17

⁵⁷¹ In the “*Ahavat Olam*” blessing in the evening prayers (based on Deuteronomy 30:20).

⁵⁷² Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:8

⁵⁷³ Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6

יהו"ה your God," and the verse,⁵⁷⁴ "And Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz"],⁵⁷⁵ or if he says that Moshe said this [verse] independently (even if he acknowledges that it is true and holy, except that he says that it does not have the same level of holiness as [the verse], "I am *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God"),⁵⁷⁶ such a person is in denial of the (entire) Torah, (and the same applies if one says the same about a single matter in the Oral Torah).

The same applies if a person does not consider the instructions contained in the stories of Torah as being eternal instructions. That is, not only does this cause a lacking in those particular instructions, but it also causes lacking in the instructions of the laws of Torah, up to and including "I am *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God."

This may be compared to a Torah scroll that is missing a single letter, thus causing blemish to the fitness of the entire

⁵⁷⁴ Genesis 36:12

⁵⁷⁵ Rambam commentary to Mishnah, Sanhedrin Ch. 10 (Perek Chelek), in the eighth of the thirteen fundamental principles of faith.

⁵⁷⁶ With respect to the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory (Megillah 31b), that Moshe said Mishneh Torah ("The Repetition of the Torah") [the book of Deuteronomy] on his own, he in fact received it at Sinai (Rashi entitled "*Ka'asher Tzivcha*" to Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 56b. This is in addition* to the fact that even the "of his own" of Moshe was with the Divine Inspiration (*Ru'ach HaKodesh*) as stated in Tosefot to Tractate Megillah ibid.) The difference between Mishneh Torah (Deuteronomy) and the first four books [of the Torah] is that Mishneh Torah manifested within his own grasp and comprehension (within his Divine Inspiration (*Ru'ach HaKodesh*)). The same likewise applies to the Oral Torah – as per the Rambam ibid. – that all novel teachings that were revealed by a seasoned Torah scholar in each and every generation were all given to Moshe at Sinai, and are literally the word of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, only that they manifested within their comprehension. (See at greater length regarding all of this in Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 4, Parshat Devarim and the citations there.) [* For, that which he heard at Sinai was like the entirety of the Torah, which transcends the aspect of the Divine Inspiration (*Ru'ach HaKodesh*) of Moshe. It is only that the first four books did not also manifest within his Divine Inspiration (*Ru'ach HaKodesh*), whereas Mishneh Torah (Deuteronomy) did. (See Likkutei Sichot ibid. note 9.)]

Torah scroll.⁵⁷⁷ For since, in his mind, a certain part of Torah is not eternal, meaning that in our times it does not apply, this blemishes all of Torah, as it is within him.

The same applies to the story related in this Haftorah. That is, though the story took place in physical actuality, in the most literal sense, [for, besides “a verse never departing from its simple meaning,” in addition, this story is one of the 16 wonders that Elisha wrought. (This is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught⁵⁷⁸ on the verse,⁵⁷⁹ “May twice as much as your spirit be mine,” that, “From here we derive that just as eight wondrous miracles were done by Eliyahu, sixteen were done by Elisha.”)]. Now, from the fact that this story is established [as part of Tanach, it is understood that there is instruction here, as it relates to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

Moreover, do not think that this story was only included in Torah to tell us that [his] request, “May twice as much [as your spirit be mine],” was fulfilled. For, if that was so, it would have been enough to simply state that sixteen miracles were wrought. However, since Torah relates this story to us with many details, it must be said that the general story, including all its details, were included in Torah as an eternal instruction of how to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

⁵⁷⁷ See Zohar III 71a; Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 25 (70a); Shaalot uTeshuvot Nodah b'Yehudah, Mahadura Tinyana, Orach Chayim, Siman 109; Shaalot uTeshuvot Avnei Nezer, Yoreh De'ah 371.

⁵⁷⁸ Radak to Kings II 2:14

⁵⁷⁹ Kings II 2:9

2.

The following are the words of the above discourse in the booklets [of manuscripts]:⁵⁸⁰

Just as in private, a person cries out over how far he is from the Living God, so too and even more so, upon the soul's ascent at night, the soul cries out with a voice of bitterness over her distance from the Living God.

He then continued on the verse, "One woman from the wives of the disciples of the prophets cried out to Elisha saying, 'your servant, my husband died, and you know that your servant feared *HaShem*-יהו"ה, and the creditor is coming to take my two sons as his slaves."

He states that the "woman-*Ishah*-אשה" refers to the aspect of the soul (*Neshamah*) called,⁵⁸¹ "A woman (*Ishah*-אשה) who fears *HaShem*-יהו"ה," and the word "One-*Achat*-אחת" means she is One (*Achat*-אחת) with *HaShem*-יהו"ה.

[The words] "from the wives of the disciples of the prophets (*Nevi'im*-נביאים)," refers to the matter of prophecy-*Nevu'ah*-נבואה, and the word prophecy-*Nevu'ah*-נבואה is the same as in "the speech-*Neev*-ניב of the lips,"⁵⁸² that their lips

⁵⁸⁰ As of this time I have located it in (1) the Horowitz manuscript [book 1201]; (2) the Wolf manuscript [book 94] (without demarcation points). The header there states, "From the Alter Rebbe, whose soul is in Eden, may his merit protect us, which he said in Liadi. He said the following:" (This is likewise so stated in the Horowitz manuscript, the Wolf manuscript, in Ginzei Nistarot etc. "That he responded [the following] to a person's question in a private audience (*Yechidut*).")

⁵⁸¹ Proverbs 31:30

⁵⁸² Isaiah 57:19

receive “the word of *HaShem*-יהו"ה.”⁵⁸³ This is because every Jewish soul is a receptacle for receiving comprehension and revelation of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness.⁵⁸⁴

[Now, about the words] “cried out to Elisha,” [the name *Elisha*-אלישע] is [a composite] *Notrikon* (permutation)⁵⁸⁵ of “My God, turn to me-*Eli Sha* שע-אלי,” as in the verse,⁵⁸⁶ “*HaShem*-יהו"ה turned (*Vayisha*-וישע) to Hevel etc.,” and means, “Turn to me, my God-*Sha Elai* אלי-שע.”

[About the words], “Your servant, my husband, has died,” the word “my husband-*Ishi* אישי” is “the fire of the *Yod-Aish Yod*-יד-אש,”⁵⁸⁷ meaning that “the fire of the *Yod-Aish Yod*-יד-אש” that I had before, this being the fire and passion of love like flames of fire to become subsumed and nullified in the aspect of the *Yod*-יד of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Supernal Wisdom-*Chochmah Ila’ah* – has died for me.

[About the words], “You know that your servant feared *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” the word “feared-*Yarei* ירא” shares the same

⁵⁸³ Psalms 33:6; Also see Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah, translated as The Gate of Unity and Faith, Ch. 1 and on.

⁵⁸⁴ With respect to the precise wording “the prophets’ **disciples**-*Bnei HaNevi'im* בני הנביאים” see Pelach HaRimon *ibid.* (64d and on).

⁵⁸⁵ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 3 (The Letters of Creation, Part 2), The gate explaining *Notrikon*-נטריקון which is called permutation-*Tziruf*-צירוף.

⁵⁸⁶ Genesis 4:4

⁵⁸⁷ (Based on what it states in *Likkutei Torah Shlach* (44d) perhaps it can be explained that:) The *Yod*-יד is the first letter of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, and the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה is the loftiest of all the names that are not to be erased, since the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה is His Explicit Name (*Shem HaMeforash*) and the Name of His Essential Self (*Shem HaEtzem*). Within the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה itself, the *Yod*-יד is its beginning and head. Also see the continuing words [of the discourse], “To add additional light in *HaShem*-יהו"ה.”

letters as “illuminate-*Ya'er* יאֵר.”⁵⁸⁸ That is, [that fear] had the capability⁵⁸⁹ to add illumination of light in *HaShem*-יהו"ה.

[About the words], “and the creditor has come to take my two sons as his slaves,” the word “and the creditor-*v'HaNosheh* וְהַנֹּשֶׂה” is of the same root as in the verse,⁵⁹⁰ “God-*Elohi*”מֵאלֹהֵי-ם has made me forget-*Nashani* נָשִׁי,” referring to the animalistic soul, which makes one forget *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness.

“[He] has come to take my two sons” refers to the love and fear of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, who the creditor wants to take to be his slaves,⁵⁹¹ to love alien loves, such as physical lusts that are alien [to love of *HaShem*], and alien fears that are alien [to fear of *HaShem*], such as being worried and concerned that he will be lacking in his livelihood.

“Elisha said to her, ‘What do you have in the house etc.’”⁵⁹² “She said, ‘I have nothing but a jar of oil,’” meaning that she has nothing but the essential point of the soul. “He said to her, ‘[Go collect...] empty vessels.’” The explanation is like the Head of the Academy in the Garden of Eden taught,⁵⁹³ “A wooden beam that does not catch fire should be splintered, and so too, a body into which the light of the soul does not penetrate

⁵⁸⁸ As in Numbers 6:25

⁵⁸⁹ In the “Horowitz” manuscript: “For every soul possesses such capacity.”

⁵⁹⁰ Genesis 41:51

⁵⁹¹ (Based upon what it states [in the verse] [Jeremiah 2:13], “Two evils... they have forsaken Me... to dig for themselves etc.,” perhaps it can be explained that) aside for the fact that the animalistic soul causes me to forget about *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Godliness, and desires to **nullify** the love and fear [of the side] of Godliness, Heaven forbid, in addition to this, “he comes to take my two sons to be his slaves,” meaning that the love and fear be [enslaved to foreign matters] etc.

⁵⁹² The Likkutim Yekarim there states: [meaning], “Internally-*b'Pnimiyut*-בפנימיות.”

⁵⁹³ Zohar III 168a; [Also see Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 29]

should be crushed⁵⁹⁴ and the light will penetrate and ascend etc.”

This is the matter of the “empty vessels” etc. That is, one must greatly contemplate⁵⁹⁵ that he is but an empty vessel, without any knowledge in his brain, and missing love and fear of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Through this he will come to be so embittered over his distance, that he will cry out to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, over his distance from the Living God, the Source of Life. He will then come to the “advantage-*Yitron*-יתרון of light that comes out of darkness.”⁵⁹⁶ For, ultimately, the truth is, that the advantage of light specifically comes out of the darkness.

This then, is the meaning of [the words], “You and your sons shall live on the remainder-*Notar*-נותר.”⁵⁹⁷ “*You-At*-את” refers to the essential self of the soul, and “your sons” refers to the love and fear of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that every Jewish soul has. “You shall live on the remainder-*Notar*-נותר” refers to the “advantage-*Yitron*-יתרון of the light that comes out of the darkness.” So may we merit, Amen! (This concludes his words.)

⁵⁹⁴ This also sweetens what it states in Targum and Aggada (cited in Radak to Kings II 4:6) that when the vessels were finished, they brought her broken vessels which were repaired by the word of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, and she poured the oil in them as well.

⁵⁹⁵ It appears that this is the explanation of the words – “**do not be sparing.**”

⁵⁹⁶ See Ecclesiastes 2:13; Sefer HaArachim Chabad, section entitled “*Ohr – b’Yachas L’Choshech*” Ch. 8.

⁵⁹⁷ Also see Likkutei Torah, end of the Torah portion of Masei.

3.

Now, it should be mentioned that based on what the above discourse explained, we can explain the connection and relationship between the beginning of the Haftorah (“One woman etc.”) and the beginning of the Torah portion of the week,⁵⁹⁸ “*HaShem* יהוה appeared to him.”

To begin with, on a simple level, the relationship between this Haftorah and this week’s Torah portion, is due to the fact that the Haftorah relates the story of the son of the Shunamite woman whom Elisha promised,⁵⁹⁹ “You will be embracing a son,” and the subsequent story of how her son was [resurrected and] sustained etc.⁶⁰⁰

This is because it is similar to the story related in the Torah portion about Yitzchak, that the angel brought the tiding,⁶⁰¹ “Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.” Likewise, in regard to the son being sustained, Midrash states ⁶⁰² on the verse,⁶⁰³ “Avraham made a great feast,” that Og and all the great men where there, and Og ridiculed Yitzchak, saying that he could crush him with his finger (meaning that Yitzchak is not something sustainable). The Holy One, blessed is He, said to him, “Why are you disparaging etc. and on the contrary, that man (Og) will meet his end only by his hand.” (Alternatively, Yitzchak was assumed as not being sustained because of the

⁵⁹⁸ Genesis 18:1

⁵⁹⁹ Kings II 4:16

⁶⁰⁰ Kings II 4:35

⁶⁰¹ Genesis 18:10

⁶⁰² Midrash Bereishit Rabba 53:10

⁶⁰³ Genesis 21:7

verse,⁶⁰⁴ “Bring him up there as an offering,” and was subsequently sustained, [with the verse],⁶⁰⁵ “Do not do anything to him.”)

However, based on this, only the story of the Shunamite woman relates to the Torah portion, and this being so, the Haftorah should have begun with that story. (This question is especially strengthened by the fact that there already are twenty-one verses⁶⁰⁶ in that story.) [This being so], why does the Haftorah begin with the story of “One woman from the wives of the disciple of the prophets’ etc.”

However, based on the explanation in the above discourse, we can explain the relationship between the beginning of the Haftorah (“One woman etc.”) and the Torah portion.

4.

The explanation is that when the verse states “*HaShem*-יהו"ה appeared to him” at the beginning of the Torah portion, even though this comes in continuation of the end of the Torah portion of Lech Lecha, because after Avraham underwent circumcision, *HaShem*-יהו"ה appeared to him “to visit the sick,”⁶⁰⁷ nonetheless, this is a new Torah portion, indicating that it is a new matter.

⁶⁰⁴ Genesis 22:2

⁶⁰⁵ Genesis 22:12

⁶⁰⁶ Talmud Bavli, Megillah 23a – Yet, here (even according to those who conclude with the words, “She replied ‘It is well’), in any event the topic is concluded.

⁶⁰⁷ Rashi to Genesis 18:1

For, at the end of the Torah portion of Lech Lecha it states,⁶⁰⁸ “Avraham was circumcised with Yishmael his son, and all the people of his household... were circumcised with him.” That is, they all were [circumcised] together. However, in the Torah portion of Vayera it states, “*HaShem*-יהוה” appeared **to him**,” specifically to Avraham, this being the matter of the verse,⁶⁰⁹ “I and Your people will be made distinguished.”

To explain, the revelation of, “*HaShem*-יהוה” appeared to him etc.,” is a most lofty revelation, for this revelation is in the matter of visiting the sick, and the word “sick-*Choleh*-חולה” has a numerical value of ט”ט מ”ט-49.⁶¹⁰ This is because [at this point] Avraham only had forty-nine of the [50] gates of Understanding-*Binah*, this being what is granted to the creations, so that they can go and continue to grow of their own strength and volition. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught,⁶¹¹ “Fifty gates of Understanding-*Binah* were created in the world, and all were given to Moshe, except for one (*Echad*-אחד).”

This is because the Fiftieth Gate (*Shaar HaNun*) does not relate to the created,⁶¹² but to the Creator - the aspect of [He who is] One-*Echad*-אחד, and this is something that must be received [as a gift] from Above.

⁶⁰⁸ Genesis 17:27

⁶⁰⁹ Exodus 33:16

⁶¹⁰ See Taamei HaMitzvot (of the Arizal), Parshat Vayera; Discourse entitled “*Chamishim Shaarei Binah*” 5653 (Kuntres Chai Elul 5703, printed in the additions to Sefer HaSichot 5703 p. 201, and subsequently in Sefer HaMaamarim 5653 p. 207 and on).

⁶¹¹ Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShanah 21b

⁶¹² See introduction of Ramban to his commentary on the Torah.

This then, is the meaning of “*HaShem*-יהו"ה appeared to him,” to “visit the sick-*Choleh*-חולה,” in that this revelation from Above healed⁶¹³ Avraham of his sickness. That is, the matter of his “sickness-*Choleh*-חולה” (מ"ט-49) was nullified, in that he received the Fiftieth Gate (*Shaar HaNun*) too.

Now, Avraham bestowed this as an inheritance to his son [Yitzchak] after him, and to Yisroel and every Jew thereafter. That is, not only does every Jew receive as an inheritance, everything that Avraham attained through his toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, but he also receives that which he received as the revelation of “*HaShem*-יהו"ה appeared to him,” from Above. This is because the heir receives everything.

However, all this stems from the Jewish soul, whereas the body covers and conceals etc. Nonetheless, about this the verse in the Haftarah states, “One woman from the wives of the disciples of the prophets cried out to Elisha etc.” That is, even when the soul, as it is in the body, which causes concealment, and moreover, the concealment is such that “Your servant, my husband, **has died**,” nonetheless, even then, she [the soul] is “**One** woman-*Ishah Achat*-אשה אחת,” in that she is one (and unified) with *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

This is the very reason she is bothered by the concealment and cares about it, as in the words of the discourse, “at night, she cries out with a voice of bitterness.” In other words, though it is a state of “night,” meaning a state of concealment and hiddenness, she nevertheless cries out etc. The effect of this crying out is that “You and your sons will live

⁶¹³ See the Sichah, Ch. 2 (Torat Menachem, Ch. 41, p. 237).

on the remainder-*Notar*-נוטר,” meaning that an “excess-*Yitron*-יתרון” is caused [over and above paying the debt].

This is like the teaching,⁶¹⁴ “Through the restraint of the other side, the glory of the Holy One, blessed is He, is elevated in all the worlds.” This is because the advantage of the light is specifically when it is drawn out of the darkness. May it be the will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is, that He grant us this merit, Amen!

⁶¹⁴ See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 27; Likkutei Torah, Pekudei; Chukat, discourse entitled “*Al Kein Yomru*” Ch. 2 (65c); Also see the beginning of the discourse entitled “*Bati LeGani* 5710 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5710, p. 111).