

THE SHUNAMMITE: "IT IS WELL".

2 Kings 4:8-37

Strange how chance encounters lead to long term relationships. I met this traveller on his way to Shunem, passing by our home. He looked like he'd had a good long walk, and I offered him our hospitality. Perhaps our home was too grand for him, for he initially declined, but I urged him to join with us, and share bread at our table.

Walking up to our home, his humility shone before him, and my heart went out. We talked and talked, and it was so natural to say to him that whenever he passed by he should turn aside and share bread at our table. I so looked forward to his visiting, and yes, he came to us every time he passed by.

In agreement with my husband, and with the knowledge that this was a holy man of God, we built him a chamber against our wall, - a proper resting place with bed, table and stool, and next time he came he turned in there. How grateful he was! And how blessed we felt. Gehazi, his dear servant, asked us on his behalf if there was anything we wanted. However, we were comfortably provided for, - the only thing we lacked was a male child to inherit.

Elisha called for me to stand before him. I felt his gratitude, but his words, words I will remember for ever, shook me deep: ***"About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son."*** I knew he was a great prophet, I knew about Sarah and Abraham, but this, for me, for us? I could not believe it. Was he teasing me?

A week before my due time Elisha dropped by and again stayed overnight. He was so caring. I remember so clearly him holding my hands, saying that there was nothing to fear, sharing the beautiful thought that what God ordains, God delivers, that God is Life, and that life was harmonious and free born. The birth was indeed painless, and my husband and I rejoiced. Next time Elisha came, he held the baby in his arms, and smiled so lovingly at all three of us, sharing our joy!

Over the next several years his visits continued. It was such a happy friendship. We'd sit and talk about the Scriptures, his time spent with Elijah, the Father -Mother love of God. I never knew when he would come, - his visits had no pattern, but his chamber was always ready and waiting, new laid, and always with a fresh candlestick! Our boy would run to greet him! And our little one grew, showing a great love for the outdoors, being with his dad, helping us both in every way he could.

Then one day was my faith tested! My dear husband appeared at the door, urgently calling for me. He was carrying our beloved son, beseeching me to care for him. I took him and held him tight on my knees, with such mixed emotions, fearful yet praying so hard, with all my heart and yearning. I surrendered him to God, but at noon, he stopped breathing.

A mother's love is unique. I just held him tight. I remembered Elisha's words "God is Life". I prayed to know what to do. I was led to place our boy on the bed of Elisha, out of sight, but still visible to God, away from the concerns of others, still held in love. Elisha's words came to me again "God is Life". I needed to see Elisha, hear those words directly, know them to be true. I sought my husband, told him I had to see Elisha, the man of God. I needed one of the young men and one of the asses. He looked at me with questioning eyes, for it was neither new moon nor sabbath. I said quite simply ***"It shall be well."*** I told the servant to make utmost haste, and get me to Mount Carmel as quickly as he could. I waved my husband goodbye and he, though puzzled, waved back lovingly.

The servant, bless him, made fast progress! My thoughts were tumbling over, but faith in God kept me going. We were not far off when I saw Gehazi in the distance, running up to meet us, asking earnestly and with hurried breath, was it well with me, my husband, my child. I sensed this was direct from Elisha. My trust in God spoke out **"It is well"** and I held fast to what I heard myself saying.

We reached Elisha. I dismounted and ran to him, catching him by his feet, - I felt Gehazi trying to pull me away, but I was not letting go. Elisha told him to let me alone, he needed me to be at peace, for he knew not what vexed me so. He perceived well my need but not its cause. I blurted out **"Did I desire a son of my lord? Did not I say, do not deceive me?"** I was seeking to understand, mentally reaching out, clinging fast to him. He instructed his servant to make all haste to go to our home, to go straight there, without any diversion, and lay his staff on the face of the child. I spoke again **"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee"**. His hand gently touched my head, and he said to come on, to lead him where he needed to be.

The journey back sped by so quickly. Elisha walked next to me, his confident purpose helping me to hold fast to my faith. Gehazi returned, and said that the child had not awaked. I was unmoved, - I was with Elisha, he knew what he was doing, sharing that what God gave was never taken away. I kept repeating and knowing "It is well, it is well" . When we got to his chamber, he told me to wait outside. I sensed his love, his sense of life, trusting him and trusting God. I waited, waited, kept my prayers focused, - knowing that the only reason Elisha would be here was to prove the boy still lived. I remembered again his words those several years earlier, - what God ordains, God delivers.

Time seemed to stand still.

Gehazi suddenly called to me to come in, - I ran into the room, saw Elisha, and he said: "Take up thy son". And there was my little boy sitting on the bed, happy and smiling just as though he'd just woken up, and was now already set to start the day. He was not sure why he was in Elisha's chamber, - but did that matter? I fell down once more at Elisha's feet, gratitude overwhelming me. His words were simple and direct : "Take up thy son."

We embraced as we ever did, I felt renewed. Our son ran off to be with his Dad. It was as if nothing had ever happened. I looked again at Elisha. His eyes were shining with the light of Love, the proof of Life. The angel thought came once again "It is well", and I sensed his thought **"With God, it always is well"**.

Elisha, Gehazi and I watched for several lovely minutes as my husband and child worked happily together in the nearby field. He and Gehazi then set off back to Mount Carmel. I breathed deeply. It always is well. Thank you Elisha. Thank you Father. Thank you Father-Mother God.

As I watched them disappearing into the distance, I suddenly felt that chance encounter years ago was no chance, but ordained by Love, and the presence of God filled my heart.