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THE *Shunamite* WOMAN

*A Profound
Affirmation of Faith*





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AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Written by
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The phrase “It shall be well” resonates deeply within the narrative of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-37. Her story serves as a powerful reminder of the strength that can be found in trusting God during the most challenging times.

The Hebrew phrase for “It is well” is “אוֹהַ בּוֹט” (pronounced “tov hu”) or simply “רַדְסָב לוֹכָה” (pronounced “hakol beseder”), which translates to “everything is okay” or “everything is in order.”

Contextual Meaning

1. “אוֹהַ בּוֹט” (Tov Hu): This phrase literally means “it is good.” It can be used to express a sense of contentment or acceptance regarding a situation.

2. “רַדְסָב לוֹכָה” (Hakol Beseder): This phrase translates to “everything is okay” and conveys reassurance and calmness in the face of challenges or difficulties.

Biblical Reference

The phrase “It is well” is often associated with the story of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:26, where she responds to the prophet Elisha’s inquiry about her well-being by saying “It is well” (in Hebrew, “שָׁלוֹם” - “shalom,” which can also mean peace or well-

being).

Summary

In Hebrew, “It is well” can be expressed as “בוט אוה” (Tov Hu) or “רדסב לוכה” (Hakol Beseder), both of which convey a sense of peace, acceptance, or reassurance in various contexts.

Summary of the Shunammite Woman’s Story

The Shunammite woman, known for her hospitality towards the prophet Elisha, experiences an unimaginable tragedy when her son dies. Despite her overwhelming grief, she chooses to respond with faith rather than despair. Her declaration, “It is well,” reflects her deep-seated trust in God’s ability to intervene in her situation. When she seeks out Elisha, she does so with the conviction that something good will come from her faith, even in the face of death.

Themes and Insights

1. Faith Amid Trials: The Shunammite woman’s declaration serves as a powerful testament to the strength of faith. She does not allow her circumstances to dictate her belief in God’s goodness. This theme encourages believers to maintain hope and confidence in God’s promises, even when

situations appear bleak.

2. **Courage and Strength:** Her journey to find Elisha demonstrates remarkable courage. She refuses to succumb to despair, instead choosing to act on her faith. This illustrates the importance of seeking help and support in times of trouble, reinforcing the idea that faith can motivate action.

3. **Divine Intervention:** The story culminates in a miraculous act of God, as Elisha, empowered by God, raises her son from the dead. This highlights the theme of divine intervention and the belief that God can bring life and hope even in the most desperate circumstances.

Related Biblical Phrases

The concept of assurance and peace in faith can be found in various scriptures:

- Job 22:21: This verse encourages believers to align themselves with God, suggesting that peace and goodness will follow.
- Psalm 37:37: This passage calls attention to the future of the righteous, reinforcing the notion that those who live uprightly will ultimately find peace.
- Isaiah 41:10: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous

right hand.” This verse emphasizes God’s presence and support in difficult times.

Locations of Significance

- Shunem: The setting of the Shunammite woman’s story, representing a place of hospitality and divine encounters.
- Mount Carmel: The site of many of Elisha’s miracles, symbolizing the power of God at work through His prophet.
- Zarephath: The location of another miraculous story involving the prophet Elijah and the widow, highlighting God’s provision during times of need.

Illustrative Examples and Fables

1. The Tale of the Two Wolves: This Native American fable tells of a grandfather teaching his grandson about the internal struggle between good and evil. He explains that within each person, there are two wolves fighting: one represents fear, anger, and despair, while the other embodies love, hope, and faith. The grandson asks which wolf wins, and the grandfather replies, “The one you feed.” This fable emphasizes the importance of choosing faith and positivity, much like the Shunammite woman chose to declare “It is well” despite her dire circumstances.

2. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 17:20): In this parable, Jesus teaches that even faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains. This illustrates that faith does not need to be immense to be powerful. The Shunammite woman's faith, though tested by tragedy, was potent enough to seek help and believe in restoration.

3. The Story of Job: The biblical figure Job faced immense suffering, losing his wealth, health, and family. Throughout his trials, Job maintained his faith in God, famously declaring, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15). Like the Shunammite woman, Job's story highlights the theme of unwavering faith amid adversity and the ultimate restoration that comes from trusting God.

4. The Legend of the Phoenix: In various cultures, the phoenix is a mythical bird that rises from its ashes after being consumed by flames. This tale symbolizes rebirth and renewal, illustrating that after destruction or despair, there can be new life and hope—mirroring the Shunammite woman's son being brought back to life.

5. The Story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32): This parable illustrates themes of forgiveness, redemption, and the unwavering love of a father. The son, after squandering his inheritance, returns home in shame, but his father welcomes him back with open arms. This story reminds us that no matter how far we stray

or how dire our situation becomes, there is always the possibility of restoration and hope—similar to the Shunammite woman’s faith in her son’s return to life.

Historical Figures Who Exemplified “It Shall Be Well”

1. Winston Churchill: As the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II, Churchill often spoke about resilience and hope in the face of adversity. His famous speeches rallied the British people during the darkest days of the war, emphasizing that they would ultimately prevail. Phrases like “We shall never surrender” encapsulate his belief that despite challenges, a positive outcome was possible.

2. Martin Luther King Jr.: A leader in the American civil rights movement, King often spoke of hope and faith in the face of oppression. His famous “I Have a Dream” speech conveys a vision of a better future, where justice and equality prevail. His belief that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice” reflects the idea that, despite current struggles, there is hope for a better tomorrow.

3. Helen Keller: Despite being deaf and blind, Helen Keller became an advocate for people with disabilities and a symbol of perseverance. She said, “Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.

Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.” Her life exemplifies the notion that even in the most challenging circumstances, one can maintain hope and work towards positive change.

4. Nelson Mandela: After spending 27 years in prison for opposing apartheid in South Africa, Mandela emerged as a leader advocating for reconciliation and equality. He famously stated, “It always seems impossible until it is done.” His journey from imprisonment to presidency embodies the belief that, despite struggles, hope and perseverance can lead to significant change.

5. Mother Teresa: Known for her unwavering faith and compassion for the poor, Mother Teresa often spoke about the importance of hope and love. She once said, “I know God will not give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish that He didn’t trust me so much.” Her life’s work exemplifies the belief that, regardless of circumstances, one can find peace and purpose.

6. Rosa Parks: Often called the “mother of the civil rights movement,” Parks’ refusal to give up her seat on a segregated bus was a powerful act of defiance. She believed in the possibility of change and said, “I have learned over the years that when one’s mind is made up, this diminishes fear.” Her actions and words reflect a steadfast hope for justice and equality.

7. Victor Frankl: A Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist, Frankl wrote about finding meaning in suffering in his book “Man’s Search for Meaning.” He famously stated, “When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.” His insights emphasize the power of hope and meaning, even in the direst circumstances.

8. Anne Frank: The young Jewish diarist who wrote about her life in hiding during the Holocaust, Anne Frank famously said, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” Her words and spirit reflect a deep hope for humanity, even in the face of overwhelming darkness.

The Hymn: “It Is Well with My Soul”

One of the most famous hymns that encapsulates the sentiment of “It is well” is “It Is Well with My Soul” by Horatio Spafford. Written in the late 19th century, the hymn was born out of tragedy when Spafford lost his four daughters in a shipwreck. Despite his immense grief, he penned these powerful words:

Verse 1:

When peace like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.

Chorus:

It is well (it is well), With my soul (with my soul); It is well, it is well with my soul.

This hymn serves as a profound reminder that, even in the depths of sorrow and loss, one can find peace and assurance in faith.

Examples of Individuals Who Declared “It Is Well” in Trials

1. Horatio Spafford: After losing his daughters in a tragic shipwreck, Spafford’s declaration, “It is well with my soul,” became a testament to his faith. His life story is a powerful example of how God can provide peace even amid profound loss.
2. Job: In the midst of his suffering and loss, Job declared his faith in God, saying, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15). Job’s story illustrates how God ultimately restored him, blessing him with even greater prosperity than before.
3. Paul and Silas: While imprisoned for their faith, Paul and Silas sang hymns and prayed, declaring their trust in God despite their circumstances (Acts 16:25). Their faith led to a miraculous earthquake that opened the prison doors, resulting in the salvation of the jailer and his family.
4. Mary and Martha: In the story of Lazarus, when

Jesus arrived after Lazarus had died, both sisters expressed their faith by saying, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21, 32). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, demonstrating His power over death and affirming their faith.

5. The Woman with the Issue of Blood: In Mark 5:25-34, a woman who had suffered for twelve years believed that if she could just touch Jesus’ garment, she would be healed. Her faith led to her miraculous healing, showcasing the power of belief in the face of prolonged suffering.

6. The Blind Man at Jericho: In Luke 18:35-43, a blind man cried out to Jesus for mercy, declaring his faith in Jesus’ ability to heal him. Jesus restored his sight, demonstrating that faith can lead to miraculous outcomes, even in desperate situations.

Hebrew and Greek Meanings of “It Shall Be Well”

Hebrew Meaning

In Hebrew, the phrase “It shall be well” can be expressed as טוב (Tov) or מוֹלֵךְ שָׁלוֹם (Yesh Shalom).

- טוב (Tov): This word means “good” or “well.” It conveys a sense of positivity and goodness in circumstances. In the context of the Shunammite woman’s declaration, it reflects her faith in God’s goodness despite her tragic situation.

- יֵשׁ שְׁלוֹם (Yesh Shalom): This phrase translates to “there is peace.” It encapsulates the idea of tranquility and assurance, suggesting that even in turmoil, one can find peace through faith.

Greek Meaning

In Greek, the phrase can be translated as ἔσται καλῶς (estai kalōs), which means “it will be well” or “it will be good.”

- ἔσται (estai): This is the future tense of the verb “to be,” indicating a promise or assurance of a positive outcome.
- καλῶς (kalōs): This word means “well” or “good,” emphasizing the quality of the outcome.

Commentary from Rabbis and Sages

1. Rabbi Menahem ben Saruk: In his commentary, Rabbi Menahem emphasizes the Shunammite woman’s faith as a model for all believers. He notes that her declaration “It is well” in the face of her son’s death exemplifies unwavering trust in God’s providence. He suggests that her faith was not merely verbal but was rooted in her deep relationship with God, which enabled her to maintain hope.

2. Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki): Rashi comments

on the Shunammite woman's response to Elisha when she says, "It is well." He interprets this as an expression of her faith that God would intervene. Rashi highlights her strength and composure, noting that she did not reveal her grief until she was in the presence of the prophet, demonstrating her belief that God could restore her son.

3. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik: In his teachings, Rabbi Soloveitchik discusses the theme of faith amid adversity, using the Shunammite woman as an example. He points out that her declaration serves as an affirmation of hope, suggesting that true faith allows individuals to confront despair without losing sight of God's ultimate goodness.

4. Midrash: The Midrashic literature often reflects on the narratives of biblical figures, including the Shunammite woman. It notes that her actions—seeking out Elisha and declaring "It is well"—demonstrate the power of faith in God's promises. The Midrash teaches that her faith was rewarded, illustrating the principle that trust in God can lead to miraculous outcomes.

5. Talmud: The Talmud discusses the importance of faith and trust in God during difficult times. The story of the Shunammite woman is cited as an example of how faith can lead to divine intervention. The sages encourage believers to maintain hope, as seen in her response, which resonates with the idea

that God is always present and attentive to the needs of His people.

Conclusion

The phrase “It shall be well” encapsulates a profound spiritual truth that transcends the circumstances of life. The Shunammite woman’s story is a powerful reminder of the importance of faith, courage, and the expectation of God’s intervention. The Hebrew and Greek meanings of the phrase emphasize the themes of goodness and peace, while the commentary from Jewish sages highlights the depth of her faith.

These illustrative narratives and historical figures reinforce the themes of her story, emphasizing the power of faith and the belief in divine intervention. In our own lives, we can draw strength from her example and the examples of those who have come before us, declaring with confidence that, no matter the trials we face, “It is well.” This declaration not only affirms our faith but also positions us to witness the extraordinary ways in which God can work in our lives.

This expanded presentation weaves together the narrative of the Shunammite woman, the significance of her declaration, the hymn “It Is Well with My Soul,” examples of individuals who declared similar

sentiments in the face of of Tragedies. It is well with
my soul.

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