Chomer Lidrush

Some ideas to turn your gears heading into Parshas Vayeira.

The Prophet in the Room

Sometimes the haftarah's story, simply told, is the derasha, and Vayeira's is a fine example. The Isha HaShunamis's hospitality, Elisha's unexpected promise of a son, the child's sudden death and his mother's determined ride to the prophet need little embellishment. Tell the story, let its drama unfold, and then stop at one puzzling detail: Elisha sends Gechazi ahead with his staff to revive the boy, and nothing happens. Why does it fail, and what changes when Elisha comes himself?

Rav Yigal Ariel, in *Mikdash Melech*, explains that Elisha first tried to act from a distance, through a messenger and an instrument, and this time that was not enough. Three things were missing: the prophet's own presence, direct contact in place of a tool, and *tefillah*. So Elisha goes into the room, closes the door and davens, and then stretches himself over the child, his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands. To bring this child back, he has to come close and take the task on himself.

The application is the difference between arranging help and showing up. Donations, referrals, meals and messages accomplish a great deal, but a struggling child, a grieving friend or a lonely parent may also need our presence, our attention and our willingness to step into their pain. Leave the congregation with a question: where in our lives have we sent the staff ahead, when what is really needed is for us to walk into the room ourselves? Read Rav Ariel's piece here.