

Parshas Tazria

This week's Parsha is Tazria discusses the laws of a woman who gives birth and the process after the birth until she becomes pure again. The remainder of the Parsha discusses the laws of a Metzora or a person afflicted with the Tzara'as skin condition. In the laws, we learn of the diagnosis process, what is considered and is not considered an affliction, quarantine periods, etc.

I want to focus on the Haftorah, which comes from Malachim 2. It is the story of Naaman, the general of Aram, who was afflicted with Tzara'as. The Haftorah begins with Elisha receiving gifts and food to support his students. The story continues that he had Tzara'as because Arameans would go into the land of Israel and capture people, and as is recounted in Malachim 2, a young girl was captured and given to Naaman as a wife. This young woman told Naaman that to rid himself of his leprosy, he should speak with Elisha, the prophet at the time.

Naaman told the King of Aram, who issued a letter to the King of Israel and provided Naaman with much gold and silver. When the letter came to the King of Israel, he got scared since he had a soured relationship with Elisha for not listening to Elisha about not serving idols.

Elisha, upon finding out that the King of Israel tore his garment, told the King to make an introduction to Naaman. Elisha didn't come out of his house and issued a message that Naaman had to immerse himself in the waters of the Jordan seven times. Naaman was angered, thinking that this suggestion was a slight, as he posited that there would be better rivers elsewhere

if he were to get medical attention. But Naaman's servants suggested he had nothing to lose by trying what he was told. So Naaman immersed himself and was healed.

Naaman tried giving the gift of all the gold, silver and other treasures to Elisha, who refused the gift. Naaman then asked for some earth to build an altar to serve Hashem in a foreign land, as Naaman wanted to serve Hashem, with the caveat that when he is made to serve the god of their country (Beit Rimon), he would comply, and he asked forgiveness for this. Elisha told him to go in peace, and since he wasn't a Jew, therefore prostrating himself to other gods wasn't a problem.

The first analysis is that this story could have occurred after Simchas Torah this year. This is not a new narrative we must resist and not feign as happening now in our time. On this, I would say the Torah gives us an approach to dealing with our enemy. Next, Rashi explains why the Haftorah brings out the first gifts Elisha accepted, whereas it stresses that he didn't take the gifts from Naaman. The main reason is that Elisha knew the money came from the sale of idols and, therefore, was tainted money, which he wouldn't accept.

Furthermore, Elisha didn't want people to think that he was the arbiter of the cure for Naaman and that money was paid for it; instead, Naaman and the people around him would recognize that everything was from Hashem. So, my first analysis is, how do we resist our enemies? By actively doing what Elisha did, recognizing that everything is from Hashem, we will usher our salvation sooner rather than later. Good Shabbos