

Elisha ~ Part 12

In my last post, we continued to explore the ministry of **Elisha** by looking at **2 Kings 4:42-44**, where we learned about a **Grace Satisfies the Hungry** in **2 Kings 4:42-44**. In this post, we learn about **Na'aman** who both **Needed and Sought the Lord** in **2 Kings 5:1-10**.

¹ Na'aman, commander of the king of Aram's army, was highly respected and esteemed by his master; because through him, Adonai had brought victory to Aram. But although he was a brave warrior, he also suffered from tzara'at [commonly translated as leprosy]. ² Now on one of their raids into Isra'el's territory, Aram carried away captive a little girl, who became a servant for Na'aman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, 'I wish my lord could go to the prophet in Shomron! He could heal his tzara'at.' ⁴ Na'aman went in and told his lord, 'The girl from the land of Isra'el said such-and-such.' ⁵ The king of Aram said, 'Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Isra'el.'

He set out, taking with him 660 pounds of silver, 6,000 pieces of gold and ten changes of clothes. ⁶ He brought the king of Isra'el the letter, which said, 'When this letter reaches you, you will see that I have sent my servant Na'aman to you so that you can heal his tzara'at.' ⁷ When the king of Isra'el finished reading the letter, he tore his clothes. 'Am I God, able to kill and make alive,' he asked, 'so that he sends me a man to heal of tzara'at? You can see that he is only seeking an excuse to quarrel with me.' ⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Isra'el had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king: 'Why did you tear your clothes? Just have him come to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Isra'el.'

⁹ So Na'aman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, who said, 'Go and bathe in the Yarden seven times. Your skin will become as it was, and you will be clean.' ~ 2 Kings 5:1-10 (CJB)

Elisha was a miracle-working prophet who ministered to all sorts of people who brought him all kinds of needs. In Chapter 5, we will see **Elisha** healing a distinguished commander, judging his servant, and helping a lowly student get back to work. It may seem a long way from the high head of the army to a lost ax head, but both were important to God and God's servant. Like our Lord when He ministered here on earth, **Elisha** had time for individuals, and he was not influenced by their social standing or their financial worth.

However, as important as the miracles are in this chapter, the theme of *ministry* is even more critical. The Lord not only gave new life to **Na'aman**, but He also gave him a new purpose in life, a new ministry. He would return to Syria (Aram) as much more than a commander, for now, he was an ambassador of the true and living God of Israel.

Na'aman Needed the Lord

The king of **Syria** was **Ben Hadad II**, and as commander of the army, **Na'aman** was the number two man in the nation. However, with all his prestige, authority, and wealth, **Na'aman** was a doomed man because under his uniform was the body of a leper. It appears from verse 11 that the infection was limited to one place, but leprosy tends to spread, and if left unchecked, it ultimately kills. Only the power of the God of Israel could heal him.

Although **Na'aman** did not realize it, the Lord had already worked on his behalf by giving him victory over the Assyrians: **Adonai** is the covenant God of Israel, but He is also Lord of all the nations and can use any person, saved or unsaved, to accomplish His will. The Lord also did a gracious thing when He permitted **Na'aman** to bring the captive Jewish girl into his house to be his wife's servant. The girl was a slave, but because she trusted the God of Israel, she was free. Even more, she was a humble witness to her mistress. Her words were so convincing that the woman told her husband and he, in turn, informed the king. Never underestimate the

power of a simple witness, for God can take words from the lips of a child and carry them to the ears of a king.

Na'aman Sought the Lord

Na'aman could not leave Syria without the king's permission, and he also needed an official letter of introduction to **Yoram**, king of Israel. After all, Syria and Israel were enemies, and the arrival of the commander of the Syrian army could be significantly misunderstood. Both **Na'aman** and **Ben Hadad** wrongly assumed that the prophet would do whatever the king commanded him to do and that both the king and the prophet would expect to receive expensive gifts in return. For that reason, **Na'aman** took along *660 pounds of silver, 6,000 pieces of gold and ten changes of clothes*. The servant girl had said nothing about kings or gifts; she only pointed to **Elisha** the prophet and told her mistress what the Lord could do. Unsaved people know nothing about the things of the Lord and only complicate that which is so simple (1 Corinthians 2:14). We are not saved by bringing gifts to God, but by receiving by faith His gift of eternal life.

This was **King Yoram's** opportunity to honor the Lord and begin to build peace between Syria and Israel, but he failed to take advantage of it. Although 3:11 suggests that **Yoram** and **Elisha** were not close friends, the king did know who **Elisha** was and what he could do. He also surely knew that Israel's task was to bear witness to the heathen nations around them (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). However, **Yoram's** concerns were personal and political, not spiritual, and he interpreted the letter as a declaration of war. Alarmed by the thought, he impulsively tore his clothes, something that kings rarely did; but his mind was blinded by unbelief and fear, and he did not understand what the Lord was doing.

The prophet was in his home in the city of **Samaria**, but he knew what the king had said and done in his palace, for God hides from His servants nothing they need to know (Amos 3:7). His message to **Yoram** must have irritated the king, but at the same time, **Elisha** was rescuing **Yoram** from personal embarrassment and possible international complications. Yes, there was a king on the throne, but there was also a prophet in Israel! The king was helpless to do anything, but the prophet was a channel of God's power.

Elisha knew that **Na'aman's** pride had to be humbled before he could be healed. Accustomed to the protocol of the palace, this esteemed leader expected to be recognized publicly and his lavish gifts accepted with exaggerated appreciation, because that is the way kings did things. However, **Elisha** did not even come out of his house to welcome the man! Instead, he sent a messenger (**Geichazi**) instructing him to ride thirty-two miles to the **Yarden River** and immerse himself in it seven times. Then he would be cleansed of his *tzara'at*.

Na'aman had been seeking help, and now his search was ended.

In my next post, we continue to explore the life of **Elisha**. In this post, we continue with **Na'aman** as he **Resists and Then Trusts the Lord** in **2Kings 5:11-15a**.