

NAAMAN'S AWAKENING

2 Kings 5:1-15 (to :)

My name is Naaman.
You will have heard of me.

By my valour the Lord has given deliverance unto Syria.
I am now second only to the king in the whole of my country.
Life would be perfect but for one thing:
I have leprosy.
I have conquered many peoples, many kings;
I know how to fight, how to win.
But this one thing is defeating me.
I will have to do something.

A servant girl captured from Israel has come forward,
Spoken to my wife. She knows a prophet in Israel called Elisha that can heal me.
I will go to him, with the king's sanction.
He is certain to know of me and with the gifts I will bring him this looks straightforward.
I am sure he will feel honoured to meet someone of my reputation.
I wonder what grand thing he'll do.
I'll make sure there's plenty of people around to see.

I am bearing a letter from the king of Syria, with generous gifts, as I lead my army of warriors from my gold-adorned chariot down into Israel.
Their king is afraid of my coming and my expectations. I am directed to Elisha's house. We arrive in all our splendour..
This will be the great moment. At last I will be healed of this disease!

A lowly messenger emerges. Where is the prophet?!
"Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean"
He dares tell me what to do! How dare he treat me, Naaman, thus!! Has he forgotten who I am? Sends a mere messenger!?! And what! Bathe in Jordan! – Abana and Pharpar are far better than all their waters put together! Who does he think he is! I've not come all this way to be so insulted. What a waste of time!
I head back home insulted and enraged and frustrated.

I am Naaman! Naaman!

My servants dare to speak to me in my wrath. I will listen to them and not that prophet. They love me enough to risk my rejection ... My heart suddenly warms to their selflessness ...and, behold, their words knife through my pride.. They love me not because I am Naaman, who I am, but because of what I am, because their love is part of what they are, greater and grander than title and glory. Who is more worthy of love? And yes, the prophet must have loved me enough to see what I really needed. This is now the greatest challenge of my life.
What shall I do? For the first time I ask, What *should* I do? Is it really the great Naaman asking this? "Who is more worthy....?" The question repeats itself many times, insisting on an answer I do not want to give. Not who I am but how I live. Their love is real, mine has been me. Mine has been me.

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The river is cold. I dip myself once. The messenger said seven times. Twice. Five to go. Three times and the cold is strangely like a cleansing fire. Four times, and I feel the power of obedience washing through my body. Five. No longer Naaman of bow down to me fame. No longer Naaman how important am I. Six and revelation: Why must I wash seven times? *and the evening and the morning were the sixth day* ...what is the belief in Israel? What happened on the sixth day? – Didn't God make man in His image and likeness and everything that He made was very good? No one better than another? All equal. Is this Elisha's hidden message? I am suddenly at peace. I dip down in Jordan for the seventh time. I have forgotten myself in the breaking dawn of understanding: God rested on the seventh day in the completion of His creation! His is all the power! His the majesty! I emerge from the river rested and transformed. The leprosy is no more. I don't even need to look. I feel cleaned through. I am cleaned through.

I return to gratefully and publicly acknowledge Elisha and his God. I am a new man, complete, seeing others as myself and me so far greater than I ever was before. A child of God.

I kneel in awe and humility before the Father of all.

His name is Jehovah.
You will have heard of Him.

“the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.” Isaiah 12:2 the

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” James 4:10

“...I know even as also I am known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12 (2nd I know)