



## פרשת תזריע-מצורע

**W**e have learned many times, that the word “Torah” means to teach. The Torah teaches us the Halachos that the truel דרך החיים is paved with, the חוקים which are designed to teach us obedience and the דרך ארץ which the chosen people are expected to adhere to. We all know, that the Minhag of saying/learning פרקי אבות during the weeks leading up to the receiving of the Torah, is based on the golden precept of לתורה דרך ארץ קדמה. How important it is for any Yid to pursue that elusive Mentchlichkeit that has seemingly fallen on the wayside – I hope I’m wrong. How vital it is to learn the lessons of the Baalei Mussar which enable us to understand ourselves, to realize what makes us tick and to try and eliminate our flawed מדות.

Let us focus on the Haftorah of Tazriah, the one that the Minhag is almost never to Lain (in contrast to the opinion of the Rokeach (ס"ל נג') that it is always to be read). The lessons are awesome! The Haftorah deals with the incident of Elisha and Naaman the general of ארם. But first, some background information. The Pasuk describes Naaman as והאיש היה גיבור חיל מצרע, a war hero with צרעה. Many Mefarshim follow the approach of Chazal (Bamidbar Rabbah 7:5) that he got צרעה because of גסות הרוח, his arrogance. The Gemara (Erachin 16a) lists seven causes for צרעה and גסות הרוח is among the listed. Rashi (Melachim II 5:1) teaches that his glorification was rooted in the incident where it was his arrow that killed Achav, the Jewish King (the infamous one of the Achav – Ezevel team that fill the Navi with their misdeeds and deemed by the Mishna (Sanhedrin 90a) as being חלק בעולם אין להם חלק בעולם). Let's turn to Melachim I (22) where Achav (Melech Yisroel) convinced Yehoshafat (Melech Yehuda) to join him in war against Aram, misleading him with the four-hundred נביאי השקר into thinking that it was all divinely instructed. (See Pirkei D'Reb Eliezer 43 and Radak there (בד"ה ולא חזר ואיש משך בקשה). In that battle, the Pasuk states ותמו יוכה את מלך ישראל, and a man of Aram drew his bow,

without intent, yet it struck the King of Israel (who was dressed as an ordinary soldier and not in royal garb). It was for this unintentional act – ממש דבר שאינו מתכוין – that Naaman used to achieve fame. A lucky shot, that indicated no extraordinary military prowess and yet it made him a hero in Aram.

Sorry, but I can't resist throwing out a beautiful tidbit of information, based on a diversion that often opens up so many doors of understanding. Many Sefarim (see , for one, הנאמרים באמת מלאכים כב', teach that Achav was the Neshama of Kayin and Naaman was the Neshama of Lemech. Rashi (Beraishis 4:23) teaches that Lemech was blind and Tuval Kayin, his son, was his assistant. Tuval Kayin observed Kayin moving in the field, mistakenly took him to be an animal and told Lemech to shoot, murdering Kayin. When Lemech realized he had killed his grandfather, he began waving and clapping his hands in sorrow, mistakenly hit Tuval Kayin and killed him as well. So Naaman killing Achav is a replay of what happened – as they say, in another גילגול.

Back to our Haftorah. Naaman had צרעה and it would not go away – because he was still a גס רוח. Let's understand this. His pumped-up pride comes from an accomplishment that he really – almost – had nothing to do with. Unfortunately, we all know such people who pride themselves with sneering arrogance about things they either imagine (even repeating Reb Yisroel Salanters חפשי בדמיונו, that man is ואסור במושכלי - unlimited in his imagination but severely limited in his שכל. This insight and intellect of Reb Yisroel, exhibit the expression of (חכם עדיף מנביא, or even actual accomplishments, which they may have just been in the right place at the right time. Picture for a moment a man who mistakenly received ten million masks two years ago and the sender told him to keep it rather than sending it back. Would you to go to him for business





advice? Rabbeinu Yonah was also aware of such people, see Shaarei Teshuva (3:185) where he counts them among the כת שקרנים - society of liars. His words are, מי שמתבח, במעלות שאינן נמצאת בו.

So Naaman listened to the advice of a young Jewish captive who suggested that he to go to the Navi for healing, but first he tries to use his "Protectzia" (he did become a גר תושב at the end) with the King Aram, who sent a letter to Melech Yisroel, Yehoram, to provide a cure for Naaman. The Malbim explains that he thought Elisha had sent the צרעה to Naaman as a punishment for killing Achav, as per the request of Yehoram ben Achav. Elisha tells Yehoram, no problem, send him to me. Naaman shows up at Elisha's house as a V.I.P - ויבא נעמן בסוסו וברכבו - on his horse and chariots. Elisha does not even come out of his house; not the reception Naaman had expected, after all he is a hero. But a message was sent to him. He was instructed to immerse into the waters of the Yarden seven times. The Toras Chaim (Sanhedrin 107a, 'אות יב' - quoted in מרגליות הים) suggests, that the seven times correspond to the seven עבירות which cause צרעה. The Ozrover (Baer Moshe), says the message was to learn from the water, which symbolizes ענוה, because it always flows to the lowest point. Naaman then loses himself in anger (people who think they should get more honor usually react with anger when they don't get it), and says, we have better rivers in Aram and turns to go home - with his צרעה still present. Thankfully for him, he exhibits some sort of הכנעה and listens to his entourage and obliges. He then proceeds to, like we used to say, jump in the lake, and is miraculously cured. Naaman was completely taken by what had just transpired and realizes that אין אלוקים כי אין אלוהים (5:15), there is no God like the God of Israel. He then becomes a גר תושב (Gittin 57b), a discussion that is deserving of an article of its own. It seems, that one who is not so enthused with their own greatness, has room for Hashem. Similarly, Rabeinu Yona (Shaarei Teshuva 1:27) writes, that in addition to נאווה causing Aveiros, the characteristic itself, is an Aveirah as

well, as it turns us into an abomination (Mishlei 16:5). Additionally, he writes, ובעל הגאווה נמסר ביד יצרו כי אין עזר השם, עמו, if there is no room for Hashem - then the arrogant one is left all alone to battle the יצר הרע. No one wants to be in the underdog position, left without the הקב"ה עוזרו.

One very, very important word. I have been shouting about this for decades. To talk about ענוה to any elementary school child, even nearly all adolescents and even some adults is absolutely criminal. It is a topic that requires acute sophistication of thought, because without that, all it does is breed a negative self-image, השם ירחם. How many sad people have we met - of all ages - that suffer and languish their whole lives, from what even a well-intentioned adult may have told them as a child? Moshe Rabeinu, the greatest ענו, did not think of himself as a לשאול. He knew exactly how beyond great he was, but he also knew it was NOT HIM but rather a gift from above. We all need reminders - the Torah reminds us - ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה' - to realize our strengths and our talents - EVEN THE REAL ONES - are only gifts from Hashem. Naaman showed us how easy it is to forget that lesson. But even good Jews need to remember - whether its brains, musical talent, being artistic or even being good-looking - whatever else we may pride ourselves with - it is a gift and needs to be appreciated as such.

May we all be Zocheh to understand what being an ענו really means and never fall into the trap of the Yetzer Hara and think we are "nothing". I once saw, that Rav Nachman says, the Yetzer Hara originated from the Nachash. The most potent weapon of his arsenal is to make us have a negative self-image. נחש עפר להמו, which means, that the Nachash is nourished by making man think that he is nothing - LIKE עפר, sand. We should all be Zocheh.

Among those who are מצפים לישועה

מאת דאוקרה  
חיים טובים לכולנו

