

Haftarah Tazri`a-Metzora`

II Kings 7:3-20.

This week's *haftarah* discusses the story of four men stricken by *tzara'at*, a skin ailment caused by sins — one of the main topics of this week's Torah reading.

Haftarah's backdrop: King Ben-Hadad of Aram besieged Samaria (the Northern Kingdom of Israel). The resulting famine was catastrophic, reducing many to cannibalism. King Jehoram of Israel wanted to execute the prophet Elisha, considering that his prayers could have prevented the entire tragedy.

<p>(1) And Elisha said: 'Hear ye the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord: To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.' (2) Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said: 'Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?' And he said: 'Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.'</p>	<p>(א) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלִישָׁע שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר יְיָ כֹּה אָמַר יְיָ כָּעֵת מָחָר סָאָה סִלְתָּ בִשְׁקָל וְסִאתִים שְׁעָרִים בִּשְׁקָל בִּשְׁעָר שְׁמֵרוֹן. (ב) וַיַּעַן הַשְּׁלִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ נִשְׁעַן עַל יָדוֹ אֶת אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנֵה יְיָ עֹשֶׂה אַרְבּוֹת בַּשָּׁמַיִם הֲיִהְיֶה הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲנִכְהָ רֹאֵה בְעֵינֶיךָ וּמִשָּׁם לֹא תֹאכַל.</p>
--	--

Now, four men suffering from *tzara'at* dwelled in quarantine outside the city. They too were hungry, victims of the famine. They decided to approach the enemy camp to beg for food.

<p>(3) Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said one to another: 'Why sit we here until we die? (4) If we say: We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Arameans; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.' (5) And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Arameans; and when they were come to the outermost part of the camp of the Arameans, behold, there was no man there.</p>	<p>(ג) וְאַרְבַּעַה אַנְשִׁים הָיוּ מִצְרָעִים פָּתַח הַשְּׁעָר וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ מָה אֲנַחְנוּ יֹשְׁבִים פֹּה עַד מָתָנּוּ. (ד) אִם אָמַרְנוּ נָבּוֹא הָעִיר וְהָרַעַב בְּעִיר וּמָתָנוּ שָׁם וְאִם יֹשְׁבָנוּ פֹה וּמָתָנוּ וְעָתָה לָכּוּ וְנִפְלָה אֶל מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם אִם יַחֲיֵנוּ נַחֲיָה וְאִם יָמִיתָנוּ וּמָתָנוּ. (ה) וַיִּקְמוּ בַנֶּשֶׁף לָבוֹא אֶל מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד קֶצֶה מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם וְהִנֵּה אֵין שָׁם אִישׁ.</p>
--	---

רש"י

וארבעה אנשים – גיחזי ובניו (בבלי סוטה מ"ז). פתח השער – כמו שנאמר: "בדד ישב מחוץ למחנה מושבו" (ויקרא י"ג:מ"ו).

There were four men. Geichazi and his sons. At the entrance of the gate. As it is stated, "He shall live alone; outside the camp shall be his habitation".

<p>(15) And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him; and he said: 'Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; now therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant.' (16) But he said: 'As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none.' And he urged him to take it; but he refused.</p>	<p>טו (וַיָּשֶׁב אֶל אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא וְכָל מַחֲנֵהוּ וַיָּבֹא וַיַּעֲמֵד לְפָנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה קַח נָא בְרִכָּה מֵאֵת עַבְדְּךָ. טז (וַיֹּאמֶר חִי י"י אֲשֶׁר עִמָּדְתִּי לְפָנָיו אִם אֶקַּח וַיִּפְצַר בּוֹ לִקְחַת וַיִּמָּאֵן.</p>
--	---

<p>(20) But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said: 'Behold, my master hath spared this Naaman the Aramean, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought; as the Lord liveth, I will surely run after him, and take somewhat of him.'</p> <p>(23) And Naaman said: 'Be content, take two talents.' And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of raiment, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bore them before him.</p> <p>(27) The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever.' And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow</p>	<p>כ (וַיֹּאמֶר גִּיחֲזִי נַעַר אֱלִישָׁע אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה חֲשָׁךְ אָדָנִי אֵת נַעֲמָן הָאֲרָמִי הַזֶּה מִקְחַת מִיָּדוֹ אֵת אֲשֶׁר הָבִיא חִי י"י כִּי אִם רִצְתִּי אַחֲרָיו וְלִקְחַתִּי מֵאֵתוֹ מֵאוֹמָה.</p> <p>כג (וַיֹּאמֶר נַעֲמָן הוּאֵל קַח כִּפְרָיִם וַיִּפְרֹץ בּוֹ וַיִּצַר כִּפְרָיִם כֶּסֶף בְּשָׁנֵי חָרָטִים וּשְׁתֵּי חֲלָפוֹת בְּגָדִים וַיִּתֵּן אֶל שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו וַיִּשְׂאוּ לְפָנָיו.</p> <p>כז (וַצִּרְעַת נַעֲמָן תִּדְבַק בְּךָ וּבְזַרְעֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וַיֵּצֵא מִלְּפָנָיו מִצִּרְעַת כְּשֵׁלֵג.</p>
--	---

They arrived only to find a deserted camp. For "G-d had caused the Aramean camp to hear the sound of chariots and the sound of horses, the sound of a great army. And they said to one another, 'Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us.'" The entire enemy army fled, leaving behind their tents, horses, donkeys and provisions.

<p>(6) For the Lord had made the host of the Arameans to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host; and they said one to another: 'Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.'</p> <p>(7) Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. (8) And when these lepers came to the outermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence</p>	<p>ו (וַאֲדָנִי הַשָּׁמִיעַ אֵת מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם קוֹל רֶכֶב קוֹל סוּס קוֹל חֵיל גָּדוֹל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אַחִיו הִנֵּה שָׁכַר עָלֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת מַלְכֵי הַחִתִּים וְאֵת מַלְכֵי מִצְרַיִם לְבוֹא עָלֵינוּ. ז) וַיִּקְוּמוּ וַיִּנְסוּ בַּנֶּשֶׁף וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֵת אֹהֲלֵיהֶם וְאֵת סוּסֵיהֶם וְאֵת חֲמֹרֵיהֶם הַמַּחֲנֵה כְּאֲשֶׁר הָיָא וַיִּנְסוּ אֶל נַפְשָׁם. ח) וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמִּצְרָעִים הָאֵלֶּה עַד קֶצֶה הַמַּחֲנֵה וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל אֹהֶל אֶחָד וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׂתּוּ וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִשָּׁם כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וּבְגָדִים</p>
--	--

silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and they came back, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. (9) Then they said one to another: 'We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, punishment will overtake us; now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household.'

וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיִּטְמְנוּ וַיָּשׁוּבוּ וַיָּבֵאוּ אֶל אֶהֱל אַחֵר וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִשָּׁם וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיִּטְמְנוּ. (ט)
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ לֹא כֵן אֲנַחְנוּ עֹשִׂים הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יוֹם בְּשִׂרָה הוּא וְאֲנַחְנוּ מַחֲשִׂים וְחִפְיָנוּ עַד אוֹר הַבֶּקֶר וּמִצְאָנוּ עוֹוֹן וְעֵתָה לָכוּ וְנִבְאָה וְנִגִּידָה בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ.

רש"י

השמיע את מחנה ארם – נדמה להם כאלו שומעין.

Had caused the camp of Aram to hear. It seemed to them as though they were hearing.

מלבי"ם

וחכינו עד אור הבקר – כי אם לא יגידו עתה יצטרכו להמתין עד הבקר, שאם יגידו בחצות הלילה ידעו כי גנבו וכחשו ושמם בכליהם כי אין דרך ליפול אל מחנה האויב באמצע הלילה ויבינו שהלכו אל המחנה בתחלת הלילה, וישאלו אותם מדוע אחרו עד עתה ולא הגידו תיכף ויבינו כי נשאו משם שלל, ולפי זה יצטרכו לחכות עד אור הבקר שלא יהיה עליהם חשד, וימצאו עון שבתוך כך **יש פקוח נפשות העטופים ברעב**.

If we wait until the morning light: If they did not report now, they would have to wait until morning, because if they reported at midnight it would be apparent that they had helped themselves to the spoils because it is unheard of to surrender to the enemy at midnight so it would be understood that they had gone to the enemy camp at twilight. They would then be asked why they had waited so long and had not reported immediately, with the implication that they had carried away spoils. Therefore, they would have to wait until morning in order not to arouse suspicion on themselves, and, as a result, they would be guilty because the lives of the famished were at stake.

The four men went to the city and reported their findings to the gatekeepers who, in turn, informed King Jehoram. Though originally thinking that this was an ambush planned by the enemy, the king sent messengers who confirmed the miracle. The people swarmed out of the city and looted the enemy camp, thus breaking the famine and fulfilling Elisha's prophecy.

(10) So they came and called unto the porters of the city; and they told them, saying, 'We came to the camp of the Arameans, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but the horses tied, and the asses tied, and the tents as they were.' (11) And the porters called, and they told it to the king's household within. (12) And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants: 'I will now tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying: When they come out of the city, we shall

(י) וַיָּבֵאוּ וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל שַׁעַר הָעִיר וַיִּגִּידוּ לָהֶם לֵאמֹר בָּאנוּ אֶל מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם וְהִנֵּה אֵין שָׁם אִישׁ וְקוֹל אָדָם כִּי אִם הַסּוּס אָסוּר וְהַחֲמוֹר אָסוּר וְאֵהֱלִים כַּאֲשֶׁר הָמָה. (יא) וַיִּקְרָא הַשַּׁעֲרִים וַיִּגִּידוּ בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּנִימָה. (יב) וַיִּקֶם הַמֶּלֶךְ לֵילָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל עֲבָדָיו אֲגִידָה נָא לָכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לָנוּ אֲרָם יָדְעוּ כִּי רָעִבִים אֲנַחְנוּ וַיֵּצְאוּ מִן הַמַּחֲנֵה לְהִחָבֵה [בְּשִׂדָה] (בַּהֲשָׁדָה) לֵאמֹר כִּי יֵצְאוּ

take them alive, and get into the city.' (13) And one of his servants answered and said: 'Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city — behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are consumed — and let us send and see.' (14) They took therefore two chariots with horses; and the king sent after the host of the Arameans, saying: 'Go and see.' (15) And they went after them unto the Jordan; and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Arameans had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king. (16) And the people went out, and spoiled the camp of the Arameans. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

מִן הָעִיר וְנִתְפָּשׂוּ חַיִּים וְאֵל הָעִיר
 נָבֵא. (יג) וַיַּעַן אֶחָד מֵעֲבָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר
 וַיִּקְחוּ נָא חֲמֵשֶׁה מִן הַסּוּסִים
 הַנִּשְׁאָרִים אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאָרוּ בַּה הַנֶּם
 כְּכֹל [הַמּוֹן] (הַהֲמוֹן) יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר
 נִשְׁאָרוּ בַּה הַנֶּם כְּכֹל הַמּוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל
 אֲשֶׁר תָּמוּ וְנִשְׁלַחַה וְנִרְאָה. (יד)
 וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי רֶכֶב סוּסִים וַיִּשְׁלַח
 הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵי מַחְנֵה אָרָם לֵאמֹר לְכוּ
 וּרְאוּ. (טו) וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם עַד
 הַיַּרְדֵּן וְהִנֵּה כָּל הַדְּרֹךְ מְלֵאָה בְּגָדִים
 וּכְלִים אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁלִיכוּ אָרָם [בְּחַפְזָם]
 (בַּהֲחֻפְזָם) וַיָּשִׁבוּ הַמְּלָאָכִים וַיִּגְדּוּ
 לַמֶּלֶךְ. (טז) וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וַיִּבְזּוּ אֵת
 מַחְנֵה אָרָם וַיְהִי סָאָה סֶלֶת בְּשֶׁקֶל
 וְסָאֲתַיִם שְׁעָרִים בְּשֶׁקֶל כַּדְּבַר יְיָ.

And the officer? The king placed him in charge of the city gates. He was trampled to death by the rampaging crowds — after seeing the fulfillment of the prophet's words...

(17) And the king appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate; and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. (18) And it came to pass, as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying: 'Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria'; (19) and that captain answered the man of God, and said: 'Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?' and he said: 'Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof'; (20) it came to pass even so

(יז) וְהַמֶּלֶךְ הִפְקִיד אֵת הַשָּׁלִישׁ
 אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁעָן עַל יָדוֹ עַל הַשַּׁעַר
 וַיִּרְמָסוּהוּ הָעָם בְּשַׁעַר וַיָּמָת כְּאֲשֶׁר
 דָּבַר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר
 בְּרַדְת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלָיו. (יח) וַיְהִי כַּדְּבַר
 אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ לֵאמֹר
 סָאֲתַיִם שְׁעָרִים בְּשֶׁקֶל וְסָאָה סֶלֶת
 בְּשֶׁקֶל יְהִיָּה כְּעַת מָחָר בְּשַׁעַר
 שְׁמָרוֹן. (יט) וַיַּעַן הַשָּׁלִישׁ אֵת אִישׁ
 הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר וְהִנֵּה יְיָ עֹשֶׂה
 אַרְבּוֹת בְּשָׁמַיִם הִיְהִיָּה כַּדְּבַר הַזֶּה
 וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה רָאָה בְּעֵינַיִךְ וּמִשָּׁם לֹא

unto him; for the people trod upon him in the gate,
and he died.

תאכל. (כ) וַיְהִי לוֹ כֵּן וַיִּרְמְסוּ אֹתוֹ
הָעָם בַּשַּׁעַר וַיָּמָת.