



Second Kings - Chapter Five

II 2 Kings 2:1-10:36 - Elisha and Israel (continues)

Summary of Chapter Five

It is the account of the faith of a young Israelite slave girl who dared suggest that her Aramæan master Naaman go to Elisha in Samaria to be healed of his leprosy. It is the only account of such a healing in the OT.

Following the healing the Aramæan offered Elisha a gift but he declined to accept it as he was serving the Lord in his actions. However, his servant Gehazi went after Naaman and lied to him that Elisha would take a reward after all. Although Gehazi hid the reward Elisha knew that he had taken it and so he dismissed him from his service and was also afflicted with leprosy.

II.d 2 Kings 5:1-27 - A Syrian is Healed of Leprosy

Refer to the chapter summary above.

II.d.i 2 Kings 5:1-19a - The Healing of Naaman

The account of Elisha's miracles continues with the story that again picks up themes from the Elijah story: the Lord is seen to be God, not only of the Israelites, but also of foreigners (1 Kings 17:17-24), and is in fact acknowledged as the only real God there is (1 Kings 18:20-40).

¹ Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.

2 Kings 5:1

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master. Naaman was the chief military commander of a persistent enemy to both Israel and Judah. As recently as the days of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, Syria had fought and won against Israel; refer to 1 Kings 22:35-36.

The Lord had given victory to Syria. It was common throughout the ancient Near East for peoples to claim that their gods had given them victory in battle, but the claim here is of a distinctively monotheistic kind; here, as always in the Bible, Israel's God is responsible for victory or defeat in battles, no matter which gods may be worshipped by the victorious or defeated peoples: <<*In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods*>> (Daniel 1:1-2). The vanquished here are not specified but may have included Israel, which was defeated at Ramoth-gilead in 1 Kings 22:29-36.

The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. His position and success made him a great and honourable man, and personally he was a mighty man of valour. This same title was applied to Gideon (Judges 6:12), Jephthah (Judges 11:1), David (1 Samuel 16:18), Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:28), and Eliada (2 Chronicles 17:17). It seems that this is the only specific gentile mentioned as a mighty man of valour. However, the general by whom God had given the Syrians victory on this occasion was himself a leper, Hebrew *metsora*; he suffered from some kind of disfigurement of the skin but not necessarily what is known by modern people as leprosy or Hansen's disease, as commented on at Luke 5:12, rendering him ritually unclean from an Israelite point of view; refer to Leviticus Chapters 13-14, Numbers 12:1-15 and 2 Samuel 3:28-29.

According to Jewish legend it was Naaman who shot the arrow that killed Ahab. However, the soldier is not named in Scripture: <<*But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale-armor and the breastplate; so he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded'*>> (1 Kings 22:34).

Naaman had a lot going for him, but what he had against him was devastating. He was a leper, which meant that he had a horrible, incurable disease that might slowly result in his death. No matter how good and successful everything else was in Naaman's life, he was a leper. Ancient leprosy began as small, red spots on the skin. Before too long the spots got bigger and started to turn white, with a sort of shiny or scaly appearance. Quickly, the spots spread over the whole body and hair began to fall out - first from the head, then even from the eyebrows. As things got worse, finger nails and toenails became loose; they

started to rot and eventually fell off. Then the joints of fingers and toes began to rot and fall off piece by piece. Gums began to shrink and they could not hold the teeth anymore, so each of them is lost. Leprosy kept eating away at the face until literally the nose, the palate, and even the eyes rotted and the victim wasted away until death.

² Now the Aramæans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, 'If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'

2 Kings 5:2-3

Now the Aramæans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. This slave girl was an unwilling missionary, taken captive from Israel and now in Syria. Yet God allowed the tragedy of her captivity to accomplish a greater good. The young girl illustrates the mysterious ways that God works. She was probably raised in a godly home, yet taken from her family at a young age. It was an irreplaceable loss for her parents, and one they no doubt grieved over every day. Yet, she was greatly used in a simple way.

These bands of raiders were a frequent menace to the Israelites. They were recorded in early times: <<Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Outlaws collected around Jephthah and went raiding with him>> (Judges 11:3), in the days of King Saul: <<And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies; one company turned towards Ophrah, to the land of Shual, another company turned towards Beth-horon, and another company turned towards the mountain that looks down upon the valley of Zeboim towards the wilderness>> (1 Samuel 13:17-18), and would continue to be a problem in days to come: <<So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year>> (2 Kings 13:20), and: <<The Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, bands of the Aramæans, bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites; he sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by his servants the prophets>> (2 Kings 24:2).

If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! This young girl was an outstanding example of a faithful witness in her current circumstance. She cared enough to speak up, and she had faith enough to believe that Elisha would cure him of his leprosy.

⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ^{5a} And the king of Aram said, ‘Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.’

2 Kings 5:4-5a

So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. Although Naaman was in charge of the army he would not have even considered going on such an expedition into foreign territory without first discussing it with his king.

Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel. Considering the record of wars between Israel and Syria described in the previous chapters, it seems strange that the king of Syria would send a letter of recommendation with his general Naaman. It seems that Second Kings is not necessarily arranged chronologically, so this probably occurred during a time of lowered tension between Israel and Syria. It is generally considered that Ben-Hadad II was the king of Syria or Aram-Damascus and Jehoram was the king of Israel.

^{5b} He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, ‘When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.’ ⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, ‘Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.’

2 Kings 5:5b-7

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. Ten talents of silver represents about 750 lbs or 340 kg of this metal, compared with the six thousand shekels or two talents of gold, reflecting the much greater value of the gold, which here was equivalent to the combined annual wages of 600 common labourers. All this together shows how desperate Naaman’s condition was, and how badly the King of Syria wanted to help him. The king clearly valued his military commander and did not want to lose him.

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes. The tearing of clothes, as well as indicating sorrow as commented on at 2 Kings 2:11-13, could also signify consternation: <<*When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary, and the king’s servant Asaiah, saying, ‘Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people, and*

for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us’>> (2 Kings 22:11-13).

Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me. An uneasy truce appears to be in force between Syria and Israel. There is sufficient peace for Naaman to travel safely to Israel with his letter and his various gifts. There is sufficient tension, however, for the king of Israel to be concerned that the king of Syria is seeking a quarrel in asking him to perform a task, i.e. cure him of his leprosy, that only a divine being could accomplish, akin to the raising of someone from the dead, which is intended when the king says to give death or life. When the king of Israel, Jehoram, read the letter, he was understandably upset. First, it was obviously out of his power to heal Naaman’s leprosy. Although he was not a Baal worshipper like his parents he was still an apostate king. Second, he had no relationship with the prophet of the God who did have the power to heal. He thought the king of Syria sought a quarrel.

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, ‘Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.’

2 Kings 5:8

Why have you torn your clothes? Elisha gave a gentle rebuke to the king of Israel, “This is a crisis to you, because you have no relationship with the God who can heal lepers. But it is a needless crisis, because you could have relationship with this God.”

Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel. Naaman would never know there was a prophet in Israel by visiting the royal palace. The true prophet in Israel was not welcome at the palace. As Jesus later remarked: <<*Then Jesus said to them, ‘Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house’>> (Mark 6:4).*

⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.’ ¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, ‘I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over

the spot, and cure the leprosy! ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?’ He turned and went away in a rage.

2 Kings 5:9-12

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. Elisha sent a messenger to him. Naaman clearly expects personal and immediate attention from Elisha, but Elisha addresses him only through a messenger and sends him to wash in the Jordan; moreover, Naaman was looking for a cure, and Elisha apparently offers only ritual cleansing, i.e. wash, be clean; note the cleansing ritual of Leviticus Chapters 13-14 with its use of the same Hebrew verbs especially: <<*The one who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall live outside his tent for seven days. On the seventh day he shall shave all his hair: of head, beard, eyebrows; he shall shave all his hair. Then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean*>> (Leviticus 14:8-9). These were simple, uncomplicated instructions. Yet as Naaman’s reaction demonstrates, these were humbling instructions. This he could have had at home, by bathing in the rivers of Damascus, which were in his opinion even better than all the waters of Israel. Why then should he travel to a foreign country?

I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Naaman took the trouble to come to the home of Elisha, but Elisha refused to give him a personal audience. He simply sent a messenger. This was humbling to Naaman, who was accustomed to being honoured. Naaman clearly thought that he had it all figured out. In his great need, he anticipated a way in which God would work, and he was offended when God did not work in the way that he expected.

He turned and went away in a rage. Because his expectation of how God should work was crushed, Naaman wanted nothing to do with Elisha: <<*One who is quick-tempered acts foolishly*>> (Proverbs 14:17a). If the answer was in washing in a river, Naaman knew there were better rivers in his own land.

¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, ‘Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, “Wash, and be clean”?’

2 Kings 5:13

But his servants approached and said to him. Thank God for faithful subordinates who will speak to their superiors in such a way. Naaman was obviously angry, yet they were bold enough to give him the good advice he needed to hear. As Winston Churchill once remarked, “It is not always enough to do your best. Sometimes you have to do what is right!”

Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? The servants of Naaman used a brilliantly logical approach. If Elisha had asked Naaman to sacrifice 100 or 1,000 animals to the God of Israel, Naaman would have done it immediately. Yet because his request was something relatively easy to do and it would be humbling to do it, Naaman at first refused.

Father is a term used to denote someone who is respected either for their character, their role or their authority. Even the king of Israel used this term for Elisha when he brought Aramæan prisoners to him: <<**When the king of Israel saw them he said to Elisha, ‘Father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?’**>> (2 Kings 6:21).

When all he said to you was. Naaman’s servants had been listening more attentively, for Elisha did not speak only of ritual cleansing but of healing, <<**your flesh shall be restored**>> (v.10). They urge Naaman to consider Elisha’s actual words and act on them.

¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

2 Kings 5:14

So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan. In Hebrew texts and understanding, the number seven meant completion or perfection. Thus the number seven or groups of seven objects have special meaning throughout the Scriptures. This is especially noted in the Book of Revelation that has around thirty such groups or objects.

According to the word of the man of God. Naaman did exactly what Elisha told him to do. Therefore it can be said that each immersion in the Jordan was a step of faith, trusting in the word of God through his prophet.

Spurgeon saw Naaman attacked by two enemies: Proud Self, who internally demanded that Elisha come out and see him, and Evil Questioning, who questioned why he should wash in the Jordan when he had better rivers back in his homeland. Naaman overcame these two enemies and did what God told him to do. The result was both spectacular and life changing.

His flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean. Naaman's response of faith was generously rewarded. God answered his faith with complete and miraculous healing. The Hebrew is *na'ar qaton*, and there is evidently a play on the phrase *na'arah qetannah* or 'young girl' in v.2. The 'great man' (v.1) had a problem, to which the 'young girl' had the solution; but the solution involved Naaman's becoming, like her, a young boy – someone under prophetic authority, humbly acknowledging his new faith: <<***Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel***>> (v.15). He had looked to the prophet himself for a cure, in line with the words of his Israelite informant (v.3); but the way in which the cure has been wrought has made it clear to him that Elisha's God is a living and compassionate God, not simply a convenient metaphor for unnatural prophetic powers.

The result of Naaman's healing is similar to the words of Elihu spoken to Job: <<***and he is gracious to that person, and says, "Deliver him from going down into the Pit; I have found a ransom; let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigour"; then he prays to God, and is accepted by him, he comes into his presence with joy, and God repays him for his righteousness***>> (Job 33:24-26).

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.'

2 Kings 5:15

Then he returned to the man of God. This was a fine display of gratitude. Naaman was like the one leper out of the ten Jesus healed who came back to thank Jesus in Luke 17:12-19. He was also a foreigner, like the one thankful leper of Luke Chapter 17. Before, Naaman expected the prophet to come to him. Now he returned to the man of God and stood before him.

Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. It was not just the healing that persuaded Naaman of this. It was the healing connected with the word of the prophet. Together, this was convincing evidence to Naaman that the God Elisha represented was the true God in all the earth. This message is similar to given to the Philistines when David killed Goliath despite the clear mismatch: <<***This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel***>> (1 Samuel 17:46).

Please accept a present from your servant. It can be said that Naaman only meant well by this gesture. He felt it was appropriate to support the ministry of

this man of God whom the Lord had used so greatly to bring healing. However, Elisha steadfastly insisted that he would receive nothing from Naaman. Others acted in the same way including Abraham: <<*But Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the Lord, God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thong or anything that is yours, so that you might not say, "I have made Abram rich"'*>> (Genesis 14:22-23), and Daniel to King Belshazzar: <<*Then Daniel answered in the presence of the king, 'Let your gifts be for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else! Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and let him know the interpretation'*>> (Daniel 5:17).

¹⁶ But he said, 'As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!' He urged him to accept, but he refused.

2 Kings 5:16

As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing! For Elisha to accept a gift would have been to risk the impression that he was personally responsible for what has happened or that he was only serving his own interests. It is not that Elisha did not deserve payment for his work: <<*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching*>> (1 Timothy 5:17), but he considered it inappropriate to take it in case his motives were misconstrued; again, Paul writes: <<*For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labour we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9).

¹⁷ Then Naaman said, 'If not, please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt-offering or sacrifice to any god except the Lord.

2 Kings 5:17

Please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant. The earth was to be used in the construction of a mud-brick altar for Naaman's worship of the Lord: <<*You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt-offerings and your offerings of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you*>> (Exodus 20:24). Like many new believers, Naaman was superstitious in his faith. He held the common opinion of the ancient world, that particular deities had power over particular places. He thought that if he took a piece of Israel back with him to Syria, he could better worship the God of Israel who would respond to him because of the altar he worshipped at. He did not understand that it was the

presence of God that made a place holy rather than the place itself, as Stephen recounts of the time when God met with Moses: <<*Then the Lord said to him, “Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground”*>> (Acts 7:33).

The transporting of holy soil was a widespread custom. Naaman’s faith was yet untaught; and with his personal need to follow publicly the state cults, Elisha may have felt that available Israelite soil may have afforded Naaman with some tangible reminder of his cleansing and new relationship to God.

¹⁸ But may the Lord pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the Lord pardon your servant on this one count.’ ^{19a} He said to him, ‘Go in peace.’

2 Kings 5:18-19a

May the Lord pardon is reminiscent of Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kings 8:22-53, with its frequent requests to forgive and its consideration of the foreigner who prays toward the temple, as Solomon asks for specifically in 1 Kings 8:41-43.

When I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the Lord pardon your servant on this one count. Naaman’s dilemma is that he will still be required in the course of his official duties to attend the temple of Rimmon – a reference to the storm god Baal-hadad under a name that has not been previously encountered; refer to the comments made on 1 Kings 16:31-33 and Zechariah 12:11. He asked Elisha for allowance to direct his heart to Yahweh even when he was in the temple of Rimmon.

Go in peace. By generally approving but not saying specifically yes or no, it seems that Elisha left the matter up to Naaman and God. Perhaps he trusted that the Lord would personally convict Naaman of this and give him the integrity and strength to avoid idolatry.

Some commentators believe that Naaman asked forgiveness for his previous idolatry in the temple of Rimmon instead of asking permission for future occasions. Apparently, the Hebrew will allow for this translation, although it is not the most natural way to understand the text.

A similar blessing of peace was given by the priest Eli to Samuel’s mother Hannah: <<*Then Eli answered, ‘Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him’*>> (1 Samuel 1:17), and to Paul and Barnabas by the church in Antioch after they had delivered the verdict of the Jerusalem

Council: <<After they had been there for some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers to those who had sent them>> (Acts 15:33).

The expression peace, the Hebrew word shalom, has a much richer connotation than the English word does, since it conveys, not merely the absence of conflict and turmoil, but also the notion of positive blessing, especially in terms of a right relationship with God, and, as a result, the idea that 'all is well' in one's life. This may be manifested most clearly amid persecution and tribulation. Peace is the peace of salvation that God gives through his Son, for Jesus is the 'Prince of Peace' prophesied in Isaiah 9:6.

II.d.ii 2 Kings 5:19b-27 - Gehazi's Greed

Gehazi sees Elisha's rejection of a gift as an opportunity to line his own pockets and so goes after Naaman to request a gift on behalf of Elisha. His deception is known, which not only costs him his position as Elisha's servant but also his health, for he becomes leprous.

^{19b} But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, ²⁰ Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, 'My master has let that Aramæan Naaman off too lightly by not accepting from him what he offered. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something out of him.' ²¹ So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and said, 'Is everything all right?' ²² He replied, 'Yes, but my master has sent me to say, "Two members of a company of prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" ²³ Naaman said, 'Please accept two talents.' He urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them in front of Gehazi. ²⁴ When he came to the citadel, he took the bags from them, and stored them inside; he dismissed the men, and they left.

2 Kings 5:19b-24

I will run after him and get something out of him. As Gehazi heard Naaman and Elisha speak, he was shocked that his master refused to take anything from such a wealthy, influential, and grateful man. He figured that someone should benefit from such an opportunity, and he took the initiative to run after Naaman and take something from him. Gehazi either had not grasped the meaning of what has happened or does not care; he tries to 'cash in' on an act of God by means of a story designed to explain a change of heart on Elisha's part for he has two new

arrivals from a company of prophets to provide for. Similar examples of such personal greed can be seen in the story of the sin of Achan in Joshua Chapter 7, and Simon the magician in Acts 8:18-24.

Please accept two talents. Gehazi probably thought that God was blessing his venture. After all, he asked for a talent of silver and Naaman was happy to give him two talents. The fact that he handed them to two of his servants shows that this was a lot of silver. It required two servants to carry these two talents, for, according to the computation above, each talent weighed about 75 lbs.

When he came to the citadel, he took the bags from them, and stored them inside. He deliberately hid the items from Elisha. Gehazi knew that what he had just done was essentially wrong.

²⁵ He went in and stood before his master; and Elisha said to him, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?' He answered, 'Your servant has not gone anywhere at all.'²⁶ But he said to him, 'Did I not go with you in spirit when someone left his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves?'²⁷ Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants for ever.' So he left his presence leprous, as white as snow.

2 Kings 5:25-27

Your servant has not gone anywhere at all. The deception deepens. Not only had he hidden his gift but now he lied to his master. The final outcome may have been different if he had confessed and asked for Elisha and the Lord to forgive him.

Did I not go with you in spirit? Elisha knew. It is not known whether this was supernatural knowledge, or simply gained from observation and knowing Gehazi's character. One way or another, Elisha knew. All Gehazi's attempts to cover his sin had failed.

Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing? Gehazi's aspirations to wealth and status have led him to forget the Lord, a warning given to the entire nation by Moses: <<***When the Lord your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you – a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant – and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery***>> (Deuteronomy 6:10-12); also compare the list of items here with the catalogue of royal wealth that Samuel spoke of in

1 Samuel 8:14-17. Just as kings can misuse their power for self-enrichment, so can the servants of prophets. It seems that Elisha had no absolute law against receiving support from those who were touched by his ministry. Yet it was spiritually clear to Elisha, and should have been just as clear to Gehazi, that it was not appropriate at this time or in this circumstance.

Money, clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves. Obviously Gehazi did not bring all of these things home with him from Naaman. Yet he wanted all of these things, and Elisha exposed his greedy heart. The deepest wrong in the action of Gehazi was that it involved the divine witness which had been borne to the Syrian Naaman by the action of the little serving maid in his house, and then by the prophet Elisha. Their action had been wholly disinterested, and for the glory of God alone.

Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants for ever. This was a severe judgement, but as a man in ministry Gehazi was under a stricter judgement. When he allowed himself to covet what Naaman had, he thought only in terms of the money Naaman possessed. God allowed him to keep the riches, but also gave him the other thing Naaman had - severe leprosy.

So he left his presence leprous, as white as snow. As with Moses' sister Miriam, the affliction was immediate: <<***When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was leprous***>> (Numbers 12:10). Unlike Miriam, Gehazi's condition was lifelong and it would also impact his descendants. It is a good example of the way that sin has cause and effect, and that the effect often goes beyond the sinner.