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Reading and Retelling Naaman's Story (2 Kings 5)*

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Abstract

Biblical interpretations of Naaman's story have focused on main characters such as Elisha or Naaman in order to highlight Naaman's conversion or God's universal love. But Naaman's story could not have been possible without the slave girl who sparked the events leading to Naaman's healing despite a situation that might have involved risks for her. Nevertheless, the slave girl has remained as an insignificant figure in the text as well as in biblical interpretations. By focusing on the important role of the slave girl, this article retells Naaman's story in order to draw a fresh message that can be used to provide a paradigm for women (and girls) in modern faith communities.

1. The Patriarchal Nature of Naaman's Story

When a story is told, there are two categories involved—storyteller and listener. When someone tells a story, he or she can change the way in which the story is received by what he or she chooses to include or exclude in order to stress or subordinate particular aspects of the story. Biblical stories are not exceptions to this. Owing to the androcentricity of both the Bible and its traditional interpretations, this process of exclusion or inclusion has been carried out from a male point of view. In biblical stories, male characters are more fully described than female characters. Even though female characters can sometimes be seen in biblical stories, they can seldom be heard.¹ The women's actions are used, at most, as an

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the SBL in Orlando, Florida.

1. Joanna Dewey, 'Women in the Synoptic Gospels: Seen but not Heard', *BTB* 27 (1997), pp. 53-60.

example to instruct men, and then the women disappear from the scene. Because of the patriarchal bias of the Bible and its generative functions, the limited portrayal of women in biblical stories continues to limit and deform the role of women as well as have a negative effect on women's self-esteem. The way in which a story is told can thus have a power over us because narrative emphases and selectivity can subtly determine how we understand ourselves and our positions in society. Stories told in the public sphere can thus shape us. Recognizing that not only does a story have a socially coercive power, but also that this power resides crucially in the narrator's social location and narrative choices, women need to reclaim women's stories and women's rights to tell stories.² In other words, in order to retell the stories in the Bible for the sake of reclaiming women's subjectivities, we not only need to be aware that the stories we hear have also been (and continually are being) reshaped in the public sphere for particular publics, but also that we can begin the process of retelling by questioning how particular narrative events occurred and by exploring narrative possibilities latent within female characters in the stories.

Naaman's story offers these possibilities for retelling. The biblical interpretations of this story have focused on main characters such as Elisha or Naaman in order to highlight Naaman's conversion or God's universal love, whereas the little captive girl has remained an insignificant figure in the text as well as in biblical interpretations despite her pivotal role in the events that led to Naaman's being cured. And these repeated interpretations have solidified into a timeless paradigm for Christian faith and conversion throughout the Church community.³ Yet Robert Alter has stated that an essential aim of the innovative literary techniques of the ancient Hebrew writers was to produce a certain indeterminacy of meaning, that is, 'a reading process requiring continual revision, continual suspension of judgment, weighing of multiple possibilities, and brooding over gaps in the information provided, especially in regard to motive and moral character'.⁴ Furthermore, the readers of the Bible are not monolithic; they change, rather, according to particular places and times. This means that the biblical stories must be reshaped for different readers of the stories and

2. Joanna Dewey, 'From Storytelling to Written Text: The Loss of Early Christian Women's Voices', *BTB* 26 (1996), pp. 71-78.

3. See Walter A. Maier, III, 'The Healing of Naaman in Missiological Perspective', *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61 (1997), pp. 177-96.

4. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 12.

for different social contexts. Even if Naaman's story presents a lesson about God's universal love, we cannot avoid looking more deeply at narrative content that reinforces male privilege and dominance. This article attempts to retell Naaman's story, a story in which a little captive girl plays an important role that can be brought to the fore through a feminist reading of 2 Kings 5.⁵ As a preliminary to retelling the story, it is therefore indispensable to analyze the skillful use of language, the shifting play of irony, conventions, and compositional units within Naaman's healing story in order to grasp the role of the little captive girl in all its implications.

2. *Reading Naaman's Story*

Alone among the prophetic stories, 2 Kings 5 concerns the healing of a leper and the worship of Yahweh by a non-Israelite.⁶ Owing to the bias toward male privilege, traditional analyses of this story have concerned themselves principally with male characters such as Elisha, Naaman, and Gehazi.⁷ At first glance, the story seems to be a single continuous narrative focusing on Naaman's conversion through his being cured, on the power of the Israelite prophet Elisha, and on the greediness of Gehazi. But a closer reading reveals that it is composed of four distinct units, and each unit is connected by plot, thematic and verbal repetition, especially the language of master-servant relationship, and employs several functional characters: in unit one (vv. 1-7), Naaman's journey to the prophet Elisha to be cured is set up by an opening servant's remarks; in unit two (vv. 8-14),

5. When female readers are engaged in the task of interpreting biblical texts, which were written and transmitted mostly by males in an androcentric milieu in which men were regarded as normative human beings, female readers are denied the possibility of dialogue with a female perspective. For a problem and a strategy of female readers in biblical interpretations, see Kerry M. Craig and Margaret A. Kristjansson, 'Women Reading as Men/Women Reading as Women: A Structural Analysis for the Historical Project', *Semeia* 51 (1990), pp. 119-36; Susan Durber, 'The Female Reader of the Parables of the Lost', *JSNT* 45 (1992), pp. 59-78.

6. It is believed that the healing story of Naaman locates in prophetic circles which intended to magnify Elisha's reputation. For more details, see Philip E. Satterthwaite, 'The Elisha Narratives and the Coherence of 2 Kings 2-8', *TynBul* 49 (1998), pp. 1-29.

7. Robert L. Cohn, 'Form and Perspectives in 2 Kings V', *VT* 33 (1983), pp. 171-84; D.P. O'Brien, "'Is this the Time to Accept...?' (2 KINGS V 26B): Simply Moralizing (LXX) or an Ominous Foreboding of Yahweh's Rejection of Israel (MT)?', *VT* 46 (1996), pp. 448-57; Lai Ling Elizabeth Ngan, '2 Kings 5', *RevExp* 94 (1997), pp. 589-97; Satterthwaite, 'The Elisha Narratives', p. 15.

Naaman's attempt to be cured, which almost fails at first, succeeds through the help of his servants; in unit three (vv. 15-19), Naaman returns to Elisha and becomes his servant; and in unit four (vv. 20-27), Elisha's servant Gehazi loses Elisha's trust because of his greediness.⁸ Through the repetitive usage of the language of master-servant relationship, the story deals with themes such as international intrigue, confession, monotheism, and the failure of conventional wisdom.⁹ Anonymous characters such as Naaman's wife, the little captive slave girl, and a servant of Elisha deliver messages that help Naaman achieve his goal. Nevertheless, these functional characters have received little attention from biblical scholars. Recognizing that the little slave girl is paradoxically incidental to and pivotal in the story, Walter Brueggemann has recently recognized the girl as a 'woman remnant' who made possible the prophetic performance lying at the heart of the narrative.¹⁰ Indeed, the story is full of irony in that it is not influential persons but insignificant slaves who make Naaman's healing possible, as Gerhard von Rad points out.¹¹

The narrative situation and tension are set up by the contrasting facts that Naaman, 'a great man' and 'valiant soldier', was commander of the army of the king of Aram, but that he also had 'leprosy'. The story begins with Naaman's powerful position, but the narrator suddenly shifts to his most disadvantageous feature. Then we are abruptly introduced to the Israelite captive girl. While Naaman is the subject of the sentence and the very first word of v. 1, the little girl is the direct object of the sentence in v. 2. This grammatical contrast reflects an actual contrast between them: 'great man' vs. 'little girl', 'Aramean commander' vs. 'Israelite captive' and 'master' vs. 'servant'. This antithesis is further highlighted by the

8. Cohn divides this story into three parts according to the different characters of each unit: Unit A, Elisha (vv. 1-14); Unit B, Naaman (vv. 15-19); and Unit C, Gehazi (vv. 20-27). Yet Wesley A. Kort suggests that a story is formed by four distinguishable but interdependent elements: atmosphere, character, plot, and tone. Even though this story seems to be led by several characters as Cohn suggests, it is not necessary to assume that each of the four elements dominate the others and deform them toward itself, since the four elements entangle with each other in the story. See Wesley A. Kort, 'Narrative and Theology', *Journal of Literature and Theology* 1 (1987), pp. 27-38.

9. W. Alan Smith, 'Naaman and Elisha: Healing, Wholeness, and the Task of Religious Education', *Religious Education* 89 (1994), pp. 207-19.

10. Walter Brueggemann, 'A Brief Moment for a One-Person Remnant (2 Kings 5:2-3)', *BTB* 31 (2001), pp. 53-59.

11. Gerhard von Rad, *God at Work in Israel* (trans. John H. Marks; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), p. 48.

anonymity of the little girl. We are not told who she is. At most, we can guess that she might be a war captive who has become a servant (נַעֲרָה) to the wife of general Naaman. The little captive girl is not important enough for even her name to be given, and must remain in obscurity. We are also not told how seriously and for how long Naaman had suffered from his leprosy.¹² Furthermore, we are not informed why the little girl suggests a means for Naaman—a master who might possibly have abused her—to be cured.¹³ Despite her insignificance and obscurity, the little girl becomes the first instrument of God in the narrative and introduces the narratively enticing possibility of Naaman's cure.

The narrator merely begins to open the narrative mode through the little girl's words, and supplies no other information. Yet this lack of information can be understood as a relevant absence to heighten the reader's sense of curiosity. Through the remarkable contrast, the narrator invites the reader to imagine how Naaman's leprosy might be cured. The narrator posits the role of this little girl as a functional character by so briefly introducing her remark to Naaman's wife (vv. 2-3). The narrator then skips over the transmission of the little girl's remark from Naaman's wife to Naaman himself and does not repeat it when Naaman reports it to the king of Aram (v. 4). In this way the little girl's remark moves from low to high until her words finally come before the highest, the king of Aram. It is surely ironic that such an insignificant little girl could deliver words of such profound importance.

After the rapid transmission of the little girl's remark to the king of Aram, the king announces that he will send Naaman with a letter of introduction to the king of Israel. The letter, only the outline of which is given, is blunt and imperious. It lacks mention of the prophet of Israel, but it causes the Israelite king to tear his robe—a sign of sorrow and mourning—because of the apparently uneasy political situation between Aram and Israel (v. 7). The narrator makes it plain that the king of Israel does not

12. The word 'leprosy' was used in the Hebrew Bible to describe a far wider range of diseases than it does today. Some might have been skin complaints which were not contagious and were curable. It was the duty of the priests to recognize leprosy (Lev. 13). In some cases a leper had to live apart from society. In other cases, as here, the disease was recognized as one which did not require such extreme measures. See J. Robinson, *The Second Book of Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 53.

13. See Brueggemann, 'A Brief Moment', p. 53; von Rad, *God at Work in Israel*, p. 48. For more information about the impact of war on women, see Jeanne Vickers, *Women and War* (London: Zed Books, 1993), pp. 18-37.

have the power of healing through the king's rhetorical question, 'Am I God?'—which further explains that such a power belongs to Yahweh alone.¹⁴ In this way, the narrator mocks the impotence of royal authority and of official channels. Naaman's journey would appear to have reached a dead end with this portrait of the impotence of the Israelite king. Yet at last, in v. 8, Elisha begins to initiate his action, although the story does not tell us how he comes to be aware of this situation. In filling this gap, we can guess that a servant of the Israelite king might have alluded to 'the prophet in Israel' just as the little girl had done, and that a servant must also have acted as a messenger between the king and Elisha. Through Elisha's rhetorical question—'Why have you torn your robes?'—the narrator again addresses the king's incapability to recognize the power of the prophet in Israel. The prophet Elisha issues orders to the king, not the reverse, after which the king fades from the scene.¹⁵ Naaman then responds to the message, even though the recipient of Elisha's message is the king of Israel.

This pattern repeats itself in Elisha's communication with Naaman. When Naaman arrives at Elisha's house, Elisha does not come out to meet Naaman, but rather he sends a messenger to Naaman telling him what he must do to be cured. Neither commission nor delivery is reported. The unnamed messenger's function is apparently to keep Elisha and Naaman apart during their first interchange (v. 10). Naaman may have expected Elisha to come to greet him because he comes to Elisha's house majestically with his horses and chariots demonstrating his superior status. Thus the narrator not only contrasts the impotent king of Israel with the confident prophet of Israel, but also insists upon Elisha's superiority by showing how Naaman is dismissed without an audience. In so doing, the narrator initiates the development of the theological point, which is already implied in the little girl's use of Israel's traditional vocabulary, 'the prophet'.¹⁶ Naaman expected a 'great thing' (v. 13), perhaps a personal or direct healing that would harmonize with his status as a great man, but he is unexpectedly instructed to do something that seems to be rather silly. In reaction to this, he briskly asks, 'Are not Abana and Phapar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel?' (v. 12a). After declaring the superiority of Aram's rivers, which implies the superiority of Aram over Israel, Naaman takes steps to end his journey (v. 12b).

14. Cf. Brueggemann, 'A Brief Moment', p. 56.

15. As elsewhere in the Elijah–Elisha Cycle the king of Israel is depicted as being an ineffectual power, the tool of his wife (1 Kgs 21), his allies (1 Kgs 22), or the prophets (2 Kgs 1).

16. Brueggemann, 'A Brief Moment', p. 54.

After Naaman turns away from Elisha, another functional character, similar to the little girl, enters to intervene between Naaman and Elisha (v. 13). This servant's role is to get the plot back on track through simple persuasion. Something small is easier to perform than something great. Yet, for Naaman, the opposite is the case. The servant's request reveals Naaman's obsession with greatness. At last, Naaman yields to the urgings of his servants as he had previously listened to the advice of the little girl, and he is cured. The expressions 'he went down' and 'he dipped himself', however, suggest more than Naaman's physical descent. As he lowers himself into the Jordan, he is also lowering himself in obedience to the prophet of Israel. In v. 14a, the narrator affirms the authority of Elisha's words by repeating his account of the promised cure (v. 10). Also, by adding the descriptive phrase 'like the flesh of a young (יָקָן) boy' (v. 14b), the narrator reminds the readers of the 'little (קטנה) girl' (v. 2),¹⁷ who stimulates Naaman's desire to be cured by Elisha. As he had listened to the wish of the little girl, he now yields to the urgings of his servants and is cured.

Only after Naaman has followed Elisha's instructions does the narrator use direct dialogue between Naaman and Elisha rather than a monologue or an announcement by another character. And through their dialogue Naaman comes to confess, 'Now I know there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant' (v. 15). Naaman has fulfilled the words of the little girl, so he now stands before Elisha as his servant (vv. 15, 17, 18), not as the servant of the Aramean king (v. 6), while Elisha in turn stands before Yahweh.¹⁸ The narrator seems to intend to emphasize a theological claim by using parallel phrasing for the purpose of establishing the line of authority. In his gratitude, Naaman wants to give presents to Elisha. Despite the fact that giving presents to prophets was the usual custom (1 Sam. 9.7; 1 Kgs 14.3), Elisha refuses to accept Naaman's presents (2 Kgs 5.16).¹⁹ This refusal plays a twofold role in advancing the story. First, it provides Naaman with a chance to ask for an additional favor: Naaman now asks for some of the

17. Burke Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL, 10; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 66-76.

18. It is worth noticing that a Hebrew word for 'servant' (עֶבֶד) is used in these verses.

19. For various suggestions regarding Elisha's refusal to take Naaman's gratuity, see O'Brien, "'Is this the Time to Accept?'" p. 449; Long, *2 Kings*, p. 73; T. Brodie, 'Towards Unraveling the Rhetorical Imitation of Sources in Acts: 2 Kgs 5 as One Component of Acts 8:9-40', *Bib* 67 (1986), pp. 41-67 (59).

Israelite soil to build an altar in order to worship in his country (v. 17). He then, as a man having loyalty to the king of Aram as well as to Yahweh, goes on to ask advance pardon for bowing to the god Rimmon when he must accompany his master to Rimmon's temple (v. 18). In this way, the narrator expresses how deeply Naaman was converted. Second, it serves as a bridge to Gehazi's fraud in the following section. Naaman's scene seems to end with Elisha's brief remark, 'Go in peace' (v. 19a). Yet the narrator continues this story with the enticing expression 'After Naaman had traveled some distance' (v. 19b), which suggests the narrator is not ready to end the story, but rather is ready to introduce another character, who turns out to be Gehazi, the servant (נֶעֱר) of Elisha.²⁰

The opening soliloquy of Gehazi exposes to the reader, but not to Naaman and Elisha, his deceitful plot to claim the reward that Elisha had refused (v. 20).²¹ Gehazi may have expected that Naaman would accept his suggestion without hesitation because he knew that Naaman had declared his faith in Yahweh. Also, in terms of the narrative flow, we can see here that talents of silver and sets of clothing are used as a sort of catchword between the first and the last units: these presents are used to repay the king of Israel (v. 5) and to entice Gehazi's fraud (v. 20). Gehazi's anticipation is absolutely right. As soon as Naaman saw Gehazi running toward him, Naaman 'got down' from the chariot to meet Gehazi. Getting down from the chariot to meet not Elisha himself, but the servant of Elisha, was a remarkable act of courtesy. In contrast to this, Gehazi is in an ascendant mood. When Naaman accepts Gehazi's request, he sends his servant to carry the presents before Gehazi so that Gehazi can march bombastically behind Naaman's servants (v. 23), but he has to hurry up in order to hide the loot away, and indeed the five consecutive brusque verbs show how fast he moves (v. 24). Then the departure of Naaman's servants

20. 2 Kings 5.20-27 has been regarded as a supplement or an addendum. Also, Gehazi has been understood as a counterpart of Naaman since Gehazi receives Naaman's leprosy by deceiving Naaman as well as Elisha (Smith, 'Naaman and Elisha', pp. 212-13; von Rad, *God at Work in Israel*, p. 54). Following the narrative point of view, however, there are remarkable contrasting features between the little girl and Gehazi. Thus, I consider this section to be the last unit rather than a supplement to the previous section, as Brueggemann regards Gehazi as the counterpoint of the little girl ('A Brief Moment', p. 56).

21. According to M. Niehoff, the soliloquy has been considered to be the most refined narrative depiction of a literary character's self-awareness; see M. Niehoff, 'Do Biblical Characters Talk to Themselves? Narrative Modes of Representing Inner Speech in Early Biblical Fiction', *JBL* 111 (1992), pp. 577-95 (577).

seems to mark the completion of Gehazi's crime. Whereas Elisha swears an oath on Yahweh's name to refuse Naaman's presents, Gehazi swears by the same name to take them from Naaman. Besides, while Elisha says 'As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!' (v. 16), Gehazi says simply 'As the Lord lives, I will...get something out of him' (v. 20). This means that Gehazi does not understand his servanthood. He does not 'stand before' (עמד לפני) Elisha, but rather he 'runs after' (רץ אחרי) Naaman because of his greediness (vv. 15, 20). So, at last, through his greedy and secret intention, Gehazi brings Naaman's leprosy down on himself. Gehazi's appearance in this unit is thus significant in the way that Gehazi's misunderstanding of his servanthood contrasts dramatically with the little girl's conviction that the prophet of Israel can heal Naaman's leprosy.²²

3. *Retelling Naaman's Story*

In the preceding pages I have shown that each literary unit of this story is carefully connected by plot, by thematic and verbal repetitions of the language of master-servant relationship, and by several functional characters: in unit one, Naaman's cure-seeking journey to the prophet is set up by a servant's opening remarks (vv. 2-3); in unit two, Naaman's desire to be cured, which almost fails at first, succeeds through the help of his servants (v. 13); in unit three, Naaman returns to the prophet and becomes his servant (v. 15); and in unit four, Gehazi loses Elisha's trust in him as Elisha's servant because of his greediness (vv. 26-27). The biblical interpretations of Naaman's story have focused on main characters such as Elisha or Naaman in order to highlight Naaman's conversion or God's universal love. The biblical world thus reinforces its patriarchal tendencies.²³ Even when a biblical story seems on the surface to end with the elevation of a woman, as Mary E. Shields points out in her analysis of Elisha's story in 2 Kings 4,²⁴ the story does not really end with the

22. The fact that the same word is used to describe the servanthood of Gehazi (עַבְדִּי) and that of the little captive girl (עַבְדָּהּ) is significant for my retelling of Naaman's story in which the girl replaces Gehazi as Elisha's servant.

23. Here 'biblical world' includes the ancient world behind biblical texts as well as the biblical interpretive world.

24. Mary E. Shields, 'Subverting a Man of God, Elevating a Woman: Role and Power Reversal in 2 Kings 4', *JSOT* 58 (1993), pp. 59-69. Also, if we consider the coherence of the Elisha narratives (2 Kgs 2-8), we can make assumptions about why the role of the little slave girl is diminished in Naaman's story.

elevation of woman but rather with a subversion of woman's power by deliberately ignoring her significant role. Yet if we focus on the important role of a functional character like the little captive Israelite who sparked Naaman's healing in spite of a situation that involved risks for her²⁵—a facet of the story which has been largely ignored by biblical scholars—we can draw a fresh message that can be used to encourage or provide a paradigm for women (and girls) in modern faith communities. With this goal, I would like to retell this story by focusing on the little girl who initiated the events which led to Naaman's being cured but who then faded away from the story.

Unit One: Naaman's Journey to the Prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5.1-7)

Naaman was a commander of the army and servant of the king of Aram. He was a great man in eyes of his master and highly regarded because, through him, the Lord had brought a victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but unfortunately he had leprosy. Because of his leprosy, he felt incomplete despite his public success, and he and his wife could not have a happy life together. One day, a little girl who had been taken when Naaman had waged a war against Israel and who served Naaman's wife came to see her mourn for her husband's illness. Suddenly, a great idea occurred to the little girl, and she said to herself, 'If the prophet of my land can cure my master's leprosy, and if I suggest this to my master, then maybe he would let me go home and see my family again. But, what if the prophet does not cure my master? What should I do?' So she prayed to God, 'O, my God, please help me through your servant, the prophet'. And then she said to her mistress, 'If my master would see the prophet who is in my land, he would cure the commander of his leprosy'. After a while, Naaman heard about the little girl's suggestion from his wife, and he said to the little girl, 'Is that true? Could this be possible? All right. As long as there is a chance that this prophet of yours can cure me, there is no reason not to listen to you. And if he does cure, I will let you be free to go home. But if not, I will shut you up in a prison throughout your life.' Then Naaman went to his master and told him what the little girl said. As soon as the king of Aram heard it, he said to Naaman, 'What are you talking about? Are not our own prophets much mightier than those of Israel? And can you believe the trivial words of a little girl? Oh, what a poor man you are to grasp at straws like that! Still, you have done me good service, and I

25. Brueggemann, 'A Brief Moment', p. 54, notes: 'The alternative she has to offer is risky precisely because it calls into question the Syrian arrangement of reality'.

will not deny you what you want. I will give you a letter to take to the king of Israel.' So Naaman left, taking with him several talents of silver, several thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of clothing, not to mention many pack animals and servants, including the little girl. The letter he took to the king of Israel reads as follows: 'With this letter I am sending my servant, Naaman, to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy'. As soon as the king of Israel read the letter he tore his robes and said to himself, 'Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does the king of Aram want to pick a fight with me?'

Unit Two: Elisha's Healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5.8-14)

When Elisha, the man of God, heard the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: 'Why have you torn your robes instead of asking for me? Have this man come to see me.' The servant of the king of Israel guided Naaman to the prophet of Israel and Naaman followed the servant with his horses and chariot and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent his servant Gehazi and gave him instructions for Naaman, 'Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed'. But Naaman got angry at Elisha and said, 'What? The water of Israel? Is this a prophet or a lunatic? I did not come here to see the Jordan River but to be cured. I thought that he would surely come out to greet me and then call on the name of his God, wave his hands, and then there would be a noise like thunder, or a great light, or a cloud of smoke, and my leprosy would be cured. But he wants me just to take a bath? Couldn't I wash in the great rivers of my own land and be cleansed? What a poor and silly man I was to believe that little girl's words. Where are you, little girl? You have made a fool out of me.' The little girl came before him, and trembled as she said, 'My master, you came here to be cured, and you know that I have never told a lie to you. I promise I have never told a lie to you in front of the prophet of my land. You were not a fool to come here, because the prophet can really cure you. My master, if the prophet had told you to do some great or difficult thing, would you not have done it? As you listened to me, please listen to him, and just do this easy thing that the prophet of my land tells you to do.' At this point, Naaman thought about how much he wanted to be cured, and he could not find a better choice. So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Unit Three: The Conversion of Naaman (2 Kings 5.15-19)

Then Naaman and his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before the man of God and said, 'Now, I know that there is no God in all the world except your God, the God of compassion. Please accept a gift from me, your servant.' The prophet Elisha answered, 'As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing'. And even though Naaman urged him, Elisha refused. 'If you will not', said Naaman, 'Please, let me be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry so that I can build an altar upon the soil of the God of compassion. But may the Lord forgive me for this one thing: when my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also, when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive me for this. As I promised, I will let this little girl be free, who led me to come to know you and your God of compassion and be cured.' 'Go in peace', Elisha said.

Unit Four: The Replacement of Gehazi with the Little Girl (2 Kings 5.20-27)

After Naaman traveled some distance, Gehazi said to himself, 'My master was too easy on Naaman by not accepting any presents from him. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something for myself.' So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw Gehazi running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. 'Is everything all right?', Naaman asked. Gehazi answered, 'Yes, everything is all right. My master sent me to say that two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to him from the hill country of Ephraim, so if you still wish to give your gift, you can give them as much as you want.' 'By all means, take it all', said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept all of the gifts and then tied the gifts up in two bags. He gave them to his servants and they carried the two bags ahead of Gehazi. When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from Naaman's servants and put them away in the house. He sent the servants away and they left. Then Gehazi went in and stood before Elisha, his master. 'Where have you been, Gehazi?', Elisha asked. 'Your servant did not go anywhere', Gehazi answered. But Elisha said to Gehazi, 'What do you think I am? Was not my spirit with you when the man from Aram got down from his chariot to meet you? Was it right to take money and clothes? Look at this little girl! How brave she was! Despite her trial and danger, she never gave up believing in our God of compassion and in God's power to work through me to cure leprosy,

and therefore she gave God an opportunity to show forth the power of our Lord. But you brought disgrace on my Lord and me. You do not deserve to be a servant of mine, nor a servant of God. From now on, this little girl will take your place as my servant, and Naaman's leprosy will be with you and your descendants forever.' Then Gehazi left Elisha's house in sorrow and he was leprous as white snow. And the former captive girl stayed with Elisha just as young Samuel had stayed with Eli and she went on to serve God as God's faithful servant.