

HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : תזריע

***This week's Haftorah is taken from the Second Book of Melochim,
Chapter 4 verse 42 till Chapter 5 verse 19.***

When the Sidras תזריע and מצורע are read together, only the Haftorah of מצורע is read. This is the Haftorah for when only Sidra תזריע is read.

1. One of the main topics in this week's Sidra is Tsoraas and the Haftorah tells of the time when Elisha HaNovvi cured the Tsoraas of Naamon.
2. The Haftorah is taken from that part of the second Sefer Melochim which recounts the various miracles that Elisha wrought when he assumed the mantle of leadership of the Jewish People after his teacher Eliyohu. The first miracle in the Haftorah occurs when a man comes with a gift of some twenty rolls of barley bread for Elisha. At the time, there is a cruel famine in Eretz Yisroel because of the idolatry spread throughout the land by king Achov and his Phœnician wife Izevvel and this gift of food is very much needed. (The king at the time of this event is Yehorom, the son of Achov.) But Elisha doesn't keep it for himself but orders that the bread should be put down in front of the hundreds of hungry Torah students. Elisha's factotum, Gaychazi, thought that perhaps Elisha didn't realize that there was not that much bread for all the students and he asked him, "What? Should I share these bread rolls with hundreds of people?" But Elisha tells him, "Yes! For so says HaShem: 'Eat — and there will be enough for you to leave over, too.'" — and so it was.
3. Throughout our history in the Land of Israel, we have been surrounded by enemies. But so long as we faithfully kept the Torah and Mitzvos, HaShem guarded us and there were no incursions or trouble. Only when the people neglected HaShem and His Torah and Mitzvos — then there was trouble. The next part of our Haftorah speaks of such a time. Yehorom was a son of his idolatrous father and mother and this time it is Arram (modern-day Syria) that were attacking. Sometimes it was open battle but mostly it was a war of attrition with mujahidin burning down Jewish homesteads and taking captives back with them, to be their slaves.
4. On the border with Eretz Yisroel lived Naamon, the Syrian commander-in-chief. He was a brave man who was a favourite of the king of Arram because he it was who had — quite fortuitously, as it so happens — killed king Achov in battle. But Naamon has a problem: he has Tsoraas. Now, in the ordinary way of things, the laws of Tsoraas do not apply to non-Jews as indeed none of the laws of Tum'oh and Taharoh apply to non-Jews. Be that as it may, this Tsoraas was unsightly and the slave girl of Naamon's wife, a captive taken during one of their raids into Eretz Yisroel, told her mistress that back

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home, in the country of the Jews, Tsoraas is something ugly and unclean. She told her mistress that Naamon should go to Eretz Yisroel and ask Elisha, the man of G-d, to heal him. Naamon told his king what “the girl from Eretz Yisroel” had said and asked him to give him a letter for the king of Israel, ordering that he should command the prophet to heal him. The king did so and Naamon, together with a large entourage of soldiers and bearing valuable gifts, travels to Eretz Yisroel and presents himself at the court of the king, in his capital city, Shomron.

5. When Yehorom read the letter he went into a frenzy. He rent his garments, mourning the war that was sure to follow his failure to do the bidding of his belligerent antagonist. “Am I then G-d,” he exclaims to his court, “to heal a person’s Tsoraas? See how he’s looking for an excuse to start up with me!” But when Elisha, who was in Shomron at that time, heard of Yehorom’s panic reaction, he sent a message to him. “Send the man to me and he will see (even if you, Yehorom, the Jewish king, refuse to see it!) that there is a Novvi in the Jewish people and that G-d Almighty is always close to His People.”
6. The king tells Naamon to go to the Novvi and, feeling somewhat insulted at this apparent brush-off, Naamon (with all his party) presents himself at the door of Elisha’s house. When Naamon arrived there, Elisha is giving a Shiur and rather than disturb the Torah learning of his Talmiddim, he merely sends word that Naamon should go and immerse himself in the waters of the Yardayn seven times — and he will be cured of his Tsoraas.
7. At this obvious rebuff, Naamon is incensed. “Look at this insult!” he says to his soldiers. “I thought that the man of G-d would come out to me and speak incantations and pray to his G-d and place his hands upon me — but what does he tell me to do? To wash in the Yardayn! Pah! The rivers of Damascus are better than all the waters of Israel: I can wash in them!” And he made to return to his land and his king to report this open insult — with the implied dire consequences. But one of his party said to him: “My lord! If the man of G-d would have ordered a long process of purification, would you not have complied? So now that he tells you merely to immerse yourself in the River Yardayn, why not do it?” The voice of reason prevails and Naamon goes down to the Yardayn. He immerses himself seven times as the Novvi has ordered and immediately he is completely cured.
8. At this open miracle, Naamon is transformed from the haughty and threatening army man into a contrite and humble person. He comes before Elisha and tells him: “Now I know that there is no god anywhere other than the G-d of Israel, and his prophets are holy people!” He urged Elisha to take the gifts he had brought with him but Elisha, not wanting to belittle the effect of the Kiddush HaShem, swore that he would take nothing. It was all G-d’s work, not his.

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9. Naamon is truly impressed. There and then, he resolves not to worship or to pray to any other than HaShem. He accepts upon himself the Seven Noachide Laws — and even more. (The Seven Noachide Laws are: Not to worship other gods to the exclusion of HaShem; not to blaspheme the Name of HaShem; not to commit murder; not to steal; not to transgress the laws of morality; not to eat the meat of a living creature nor to be at all cruel and finally, to establish and maintain institutions of law and order and courts of law to ensure obedience to these laws of HaShem to all Mankind.) Naamon takes upon himself to be even more stringent than is required for whereas the non-Jew is permitted to worship idols so long as he acknowledges that HaShem is the Supreme G-d, Naamon said that he would worship and pray to HaShem alone. If Elisha should hear reports that he, Naamon, has been seen in the temple of the idols, he should please understand — and for this he craves Elisha's forgiveness in advance — that he bows down to the idols there only because he must accompany the king. Because he is the officer upon whose arm the king leans, therefore he must bow down to the idols with his king. But he knows truly that HaShem is the only power on earth and He is the G-d of Israel.
10. Naamon asks further that Elisha should grant permission to take back with him a cartload of earth of the holy Land of Israel so that he might build an altar to the glory of HaShem. Elisha grants his request and he bids him to go back to his country in peace.