

HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : מצורע

***This week's Haftorah is taken from the second Book of Melochim,
from Chapter 7 verse 3 till verse 20.***

***This is always the Haftorah of Sidra מצורע ,
whether Sidra מצורע is read together with Sidra תזריע or not.***

1. This Haftorah is really a continuation of the events reported in last week's Haftorah of Sidra תזריע. (Please refer to it.) Both of these Haftoras speak of Tsoraas (for an explanation of what Tsoraas is, please see **SIDRA OF THE WEEK : תזריע**) and that is the connexion with these Sidras which teach all about Tsoraas.
2. In last week's Haftorah, Elisha cured the Tsoraas of Naamon, the Arramean army commander-in-chief and this resulted in a great Kiddush HaShem. So as not to belittle the miracle, Elisha had refused to take any gift from Naamon, thus showing that Elisha was not some sort of mercenary doctor, and Naamon had left to go back to his country. On that note, the Haftorah ended.
3. But that wasn't the end of the episode, by any means. For after Naamon had left, Gaychazi, Elisha's factotum, had run after Naaman and lied to him saying that Elisha had sent him to ask for something after all. Gaychazi and his three sons had then secreted these goods away. But Elisha, prophet that he is, knows all about it and when Gaychazi returns, Elisha is angry at the Chillul HaShem that Gaychazi has made and he condemns him, together with his accomplice sons, to suffer the Tsoraas of Naamon forever. Immediately, Gaychazi and his sons are afflicted with Tsoraas and, in keeping with the Torah law of Tsoraas, they have to remove themselves from the town and live outside the walls in isolation. This is where we find them at the opening verses of our Haftorah.
4. Even a Metsorah (that is, someone stricken with Tsoraas) has to eat, and it would usually fall upon his family to bring out to him food and his other needs and requirements. But the city of Shomron is under siege by the Arrameans (unfortunately, their king, Ben-Haddad, did not have the same reverence for the Jewish People that Naamon, his army chief, had) and there is a cruel hunger in the town, tragically leading even to some horrific cases of cannibalism. There is no food for anybody, let alone for the four Metsoro'im and in any case there is no way that anyone can break out from the besieged town to bring them any food there might have been.
5. The four Metsoro'im come to the conclusion that they might as well give themselves up into the hands of the besieging army of Arram. "Staying here is not an option: we will die of starvation. If we give ourselves up to the Arrameans and they kill us, well, we'd have died of starvation anyhow. On the other hand, they might give us some food. So we've got nothing to lose and everything to gain!"

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6. They make their way down to the Arramean camp and are surprised that they are not challenged by any sentries. All is deserted. The animals are tethered but there is not even a single human being in the whole camp. They quickly feed themselves on the food there and then go from one tent to the other, completely mystified, taking away gold and silver and clothes and armour. They can't believe their eyes.
7. Unbeknown to Gaychazi and his sons, HaShem had brought upon the Arrameans the sound of a great army of men and cavalry and He had put it into their heads that the Israelite king had hired a vast mercenary army to come to his aid. As a result, the Arrameans had fled on foot in a mad panic, strewing their belongings as they ran, abandoning their camp with all its plentiful food supplies.
8. Having eaten their fill, the four Metsoro'im decide that it would be wrong not to inform the townspeople of Shomron. They come up to the city walls and call out to the gatekeeper what they have seen. He hurries to the king's palace to relay the news. The king, unbelieving cynic that he was, ever-so-cleverly interprets the events as he understands them. "I'll tell you what has happened. The king of Arram has taken his men out of the camp so that it appears as if they have fled, but they are hiding in the forests. As soon as we will come down to their camp, they will attack and be able to gain access to our undefended city! It's a trick as old as the hills!" But one of his courtiers advises that even though they cannot afford the men nor the horses, they should send a small troop to check things out.
9. The day before, king Yehorom had been walking about the besieged town trying to give encouragement to his people to hold on. A woman had approached him and asked him to adjudicate in a heartrending case of unfair cannibalism. When he had heard the details of the case, he was horrified. But instead of turning to HaShem in repentance, he took it into his head to try to kill Elisha, "because he could end all this if he but prayed to G-d, and he doesn't!" When the king had confronted Elisha a short time later, Elisha detected in the king, despite his defiant bravado, the beginnings of a return to HaShem. (Under his royal robes, he had noticed, the king was wearing sackcloth.) Because of these stirrings of Teshuvah, and because of the earnest prayers of the people, HaShem told Elisha that he was going to end the siege and bring food to His people. Elisha was to tell the king that, "Tomorrow, a *se'ah* of wheat (about six kilos) will be bought for a single *shekel* and two *se'ah* of barley for the same!" Standing with the king just then was an officer who scoffed out loud at the preposterousness of this prediction. "Bah! Even if G-d was to open skylights in the heavens and pour grain down from the sky, it is impossible for this to be!" Quick as a shot, Elisha had told him, "And you, sir, will see it with your very eyes but will never get any of it to eat!" That was yesterday.
10. The men return. There is no trick. The Arrameans have indeed fled — and have abandoned a huge amount of food and supplies. As soon as it becomes clear that there is food, there is a mad rush for the city gates and the people stream out of the town to grab what they can. The king, concerned that there should not be a stampede which could be dangerous, posted that officer at the gate. But he was trampled underfoot by the wild people — the only casualty in the whole mad rush. Just as Elisha had said.