In war, the healing voice of a girl

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Like a warm breeze on a perfect summer morning, a voice of grace and compassion rings across more than 3,000 years in [this Sunday's reading from the Hebrew Bible](#). The voice doesn't belong to a grown man or to a woman full of years. It is the voice of a child—a girl who was kidnapped and carried away as a spoil of war.

We don't know if she is eight or 12 or in between; we don't even know her name. We do know that she is a child of the covenant: a daughter of the Hebrew people. Carted off to enemy territory, she was put into service as a slave, working for the wife of Naaman, the commander-in-chief of the Aram-Damascus army.

Did Naaman pick her off as she was fleeing the carnage of her village? Did he look over a field of dozens, perhaps hundreds of captive girls, and select her? Did his soldiers kill her father and brothers? We will never know.

Yet, even in the mist of deep grief over never seeing her family again, she retains her faith. And like so many women and girls in the Bible who experience desperate circumstances, she chooses the path of healing and shalom. She chooses to do what she can to set things right.

Naaman, it turns out, is a leper. Picture how the seemingly invisible girl might have witnessed his suffering. Maybe she had to wash his soiled clothes, risking infection herself. Perhaps she saw her mistress crying. Or perhaps she passed invisibly through the house, as servants seem to do, and saw his lesions.

She could have rejoiced in his suffering; it would be a normal reaction for one held against her will. But instead, she thought of how he might be healed.

"I wish my master was in Samaria," she tells Naaman's wife, "for there lives a man of God, a prophet, and he would cure him of his leprosy!" Once Naaman hears the news, he travels to Samaria to find the prophet Elisha.

Naaman, corporate leader that he is, makes the process much too complicated (although he is making himself vulnerable by showing up at the enemy's home). Instead of reporting straight to Elisha, he goes to the king with special papers. He arrives with his motorcade (in those days, horses and chariots). He takes gold and silver and clothes as gifts. The king is angry. "Am I God, to be able to heal him? This man is out for a fight, and we cannot trust him!"

When Elisha hears of the man's plight, he sends a messenger saying: "Tell Naaman to wash in the Jordan River seven times, and the leprosy will be washed away."

"What?" says Naaman. "I would have thought that the prophet himself would come out and invoke the name of God!"

Self-important and expecting the best of all medical plans, Naaman cannot believe a simple word from Elisha, *especially via messenger,* will lead to healing. But as the prophet knows, it is God who heals, not him. Eventually Naaman does what Elisha suggests. He bathes in the River Jordan, is healed, and comes to believe in God.

Both the servant girl and Elisha helped Naaman to turn his life around because of their common denominator: a simple and strong belief in a God who acts, a God who heals. And they weren't making a big deal of it. Elisha couldn't even be bothered to show up. They simply shared what they knew to be true.

Perhaps that is the real lesson here: being healed may not be as complicated as we think. If we are open to looking in unexpected places, healing may wash over us like a soft summer breeze, mild and true–like a girl's soft voice, pointing us in a new direction.

The unnamed servant girl had no worldly power—yet across the centuries, she has been a mighty evangelist, leading others, even her enemies, to God. Because she kept her faith even in isolation and hardship, God looked to her to reach the hardened hearts of others.

Over a thousand years later, perhaps Jesus would think of this particular young soul when he said: "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" ([Matthew 19:14](#)).

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