

It used to be that we looked at maps to see how to get where we wanted to go. Today, we've got GPS to get us there. GPS or a global positioning system tells us where we are in relation to another place. We can use it to figure out how to get where we want to go.

I recommend something better...a different kind of GPS, one that not only tells you how to get where you want to go, but also helps you to 'be' the way you'd like to be. This GPS is "God's Positioning System".

You do have to plug in, but it doesn't work by your simply typing in an address. It's much more personal than that. It certainly does take into account where you are right now. (And also 'how' you are right now.) It will register that you're at 180 York Street and also take note of your general health and wellbeing. It will know if you've got comfortable housing and a good size portfolio. It will also know if you're harboring any guilt or pain or regret. It will scan for physical disease and emotional dis-ease. God's Positioning System sees exactly where you are in life. Glorious and giving--or burned out and bitter. This GPS can take you to a place where the garbage that's been piling up is all removed. The dirt on the windshield washed away. The scuff marks gone. The bruises healed. You will be well.

With this GPS, God may put you in a position to guide someone else where they're headed on their journey. God may put someone in your path to guide you and to get you where you want to be—whether it's to Bar Harbor or Cape Cod. Or to being free of relationships that drag you down, or a job you don't love, a feeling of helplessness or addiction, or to restored physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

Let me briefly unpack the passage that we just heard. There's a man named Naaman, who despite having power and prestige by virtue of his job, and despite his wealth and connection to the king, has leprosy. Despite all he's got going for him, he still had this skin disease that caused scaling and scabbing and it was something he couldn't hide. It was there for all to see.

This is true of us, too. It doesn't matter what we own or what our portfolios look like or what club memberships we hold. Neither money, nor prestige, nor connection can keep us from getting cancer or having a child with a congenital condition.

Some of the physical diseases in our lives are quite apparent like Naaman's leprosy, while others are hidden. That's true, also, of dis-eases or things that get in the way of our comfort or 'ease' of life. Whether it's an addiction, or adult children living at home, or caring for an aging parent or dealing, with a negative friend. I could go on an on. God can bring you to a place of healing.

Naaman has this disease and his wife's servant shares information about a cure. It's interesting to note three things about the servant girl. First, she's "from away"...she's a foreigner and has knowledge of someone elsewhere who can cure Naaman. Second, she came to serve by being taken captive, yet she doesn't withhold information out of spite. In fact, she intervenes and graciously offers what she knows. Third, she's a servant, not a physician, not a king, not even a man. We already know that God works in mysterious ways. Could it be that through this story, we're given to understand that we ought to listen to those who are from other places? Who have had other experiences? Who don't look or sound or act in the same way we expect those with power and answers to look?

Naaman's wife speaks to him and he speaks to the King. (Please note that we've already had two others—the servant and the wife—involved in his healing.) Do you see how Naaman accepts the responsibility to go search out this person and get his cure? The work is his and he's taking it on. And you'll see that he does it the same way he's probably always done things. He takes it up the power chain by going to the king. His pal writes to the other king and requests the cure. But the king of Israel can't cure Naaman. He's so distraught that he rents (tears) his clothing. It's not always the person up the chain who can take care of things. Elisha catches word that his

king is feeling helpless and he intervenes. (Notice that we've now got the servant, the wife, the king, another king, and a prophet all involved in Naaman's cleansing.)

Naaman pulls up with his horses and chariots (likely the Biblical equivalent of a Rolls or Bentley), but Elisha doesn't come out and call God down from the sky. Instead, he sends a servant out to give Naaman some simple instructions: Wash seven times in the Jordan and you'll be all set.

Naaman is incensed! A servant is telling him what to do? Elisha couldn't be bothered to come out himself? God wasn't pulled from the Heavens to miraculously cure him? This is not at all what he expected. He wasn't going to comply. Until, that is, that another lowly servant said to him, “Why not just try it? If he'd given you difficult instructions, wouldn't you have followed? Even though this seems simple, why not try?” He does and he's cleansed.

You may have heard of a story of a man who prayed to God to be saved from a terrible rainstorm. The threat came quickly and triggered the Emergency Alert Systems. All people were told to evacuate, but instead stayed and prayed, “God save me”. The ground couldn't soak in all the rain and the water crept higher and higher. The man was forced to move to his second floor. Some neighbors came by in a canoe and shouted for the man to come with them. He refused, saying, “God will save me”. The rain continued and the national guard was deployed. The guards used a megaphone to get the man out of his home to safety. He refused saying, “God will save me.” Then finally, he was forced to go out a window and climb onto his roof. Out there, in the pouring rain, he heard then saw a helicopter. They tossed down a netted basket for him to climb into, but he refused, saying “God will save me.” Another day into the storm the man died and found himself standing in front of God. Cold, wet, and bedraggled, he exclaimed, “God, I expected you to save me. What happened?”. God replied, “I sent you a canoe, the national guard, and a helicopter. What more did you want?!”

This simple joke shows us that God does work, sometimes in simple ways, and that God does use people—ordinary folks like you and me to do God's work.

Naaman was told to wash seven times and there are two things that people of the day would have known that we don't necessarily know. First, in those times, lepers were thought to be very contagious and they were quarantined for seven days. If their symptoms disappeared, they were declared clean. Seven was significant. Also, the Hebrew word for 'wash', “rachas” sounded very similar to the Aramic word for 'trust'. Naaman would have listened to wash, but also heard trust. By the way, the word for 'seven' also has another meaning. It means 'to take an oath'. And that really is key. Trust God. Even when you can't see how something can possibly work out. Trust God even when your heart is breaking. Trust God even when you're waking up in the middle of the night with fear so intense it takes your breath away. Trust God. And swear to God that you do.

Then, tell your story and tell of God's grace. Who you were (including that dis-ease that you had) is part of who you are today. Every time I go to the doctor, I have to say that I'm a former smoker (even though I haven't had a cigarette in over 30 years). My sister will always be a cancer survivor--five years from now and twenty-five years from now. So tell your story and tell of those who served God and served you along the path. Until an affliction hits home, we don't always accept God's movement in our lives. We don't always see God's grace and love and involvement.

As Albert Einstein said, “There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is to live as though everything is a miracle.” What if the kingdom of God is here, now, whenever you trust God and whenever you gratefully acknowledge the Source of your cure, healing, or reconciliation? How could your life change if you viewed everyone as a possible servant of God--custodian or CEO? Just as the GPS in your car or on your phone is connected to something in the heavens, you can connect to something in Heaven. Take responsibility for changing your circumstances, pay attention to how God may speak to you through others, set aside your pride, and don't expect a particular outcome. Finally, accept the miracle. It may be simpler than you think. Blessed be and amen. Source consulted: <https://www.chaimbentorah.com/2013/11/word-study-wash-times/>