

## “Enemy Love”

Begin with video clip

<https://twitter.com/Channel4News/status/1057010272836247552>

“My job is to take care of him”

Words from hospital president, Doctor Cohen  
And parishioner of the Tree of Life Synagogue

Whose team, many of which are Jewish  
Cared for Robert Bowers, the accused killer of 11  
At the synagogue in Pittsburgh.

“Orthodox Christian author and political commentator Rod Dreher admitted on his The American Conservative website that it is unlikely he could have shown such mercy to the suspected shooter.”

“‘What Dr. Cohen — who is a member of Tree of Life synagogue — and his Jewish staff showed is moral courage, but more than that, it is holiness. I am a weak and vengeful man; I know I couldn't have done that for that scum of the earth,’ Dreher wrote” (The Christian Post).

But isn't it true it was Jesus who said:

**Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Mt 5:44 NIV).**

And so, in a time when xenophobia and racism  
Is on the rise

Examples like Dr. Cohen inspire us all  
To try and be more Christ-like  
To reach out in support of  
All who are marginalized.

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Before us is the story of the healing of Naaman

## “Enemy Love”

And the crossing of national and ethnic boundaries  
In pursuit of the common good for all humanity.

**2 Kings 5 (CEV) <sup>1</sup> Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army. The Lord had helped him and his troops defeat their enemies, so the king of Syria respected Naaman very much. Naaman was a brave soldier, but he had leprosy.**

**<sup>2</sup> One day while the Syrian troops were raiding Israel, they captured a girl, and she became a servant of Naaman’s wife. <sup>3</sup> Some time later the girl said, “If your husband Naaman would go to the prophet in Samaria, he would be cured of his leprosy.”**

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During this period in Israel’s history  
Israel and Syria were like Russia and the USA.

They were rival nations  
Eyeing each other’s wealth and power;  
Occasionally raiding one another’s territory.

Naaman was commander of the Syrian army,  
First in command,  
Under Ben Hadad, the king of Syria.

He had everything going for him  
He was a hero in the eyes of the people.

But he had leprosy.

In his house was an Israeli slave girl.

She was a servant of Naaman’s wife.

She was captured and enslaved.

## “Enemy Love”

Yes, Naaman was a great and powerful man  
But he stood helpless  
Before a lowly servant.

Here she was  
A young girl taken into captivity  
A young girl, to him, of no significance.

And yet, it was she  
Who took pity on him and his condition.

Despite the fact Naaman was an enemy  
To her nation of Israel.  
She mentions the Prophet Elisha to Naaman’s wife,  
Who then mentions it to Naaman,  
Who then mentions it to his king.

The king, in turn,  
Writes a letter and sends him off to Israel,  
With his entourage and his escort.

**<sup>4</sup>When Naaman told the king what the girl had said, <sup>5</sup>the king replied, “Go ahead! I will give you a letter to take to the king of Israel.”**

**Naaman left and took along seven hundred fifty pounds of silver, one hundred fifty pounds of gold, and ten new outfits. <sup>6</sup>He also carried the letter to the king of Israel. It said, “I am sending my servant Naaman to you. Would you cure him of his leprosy?”**

**<sup>7</sup>When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in fear and shouted, “That Syrian king believes I can cure this man of leprosy! Does he think I’m God with power over life and death? He must be trying to pick a fight with me.”**

## “Enemy Love”

Armed with enough gifts  
 To buy his way out of anything

Naaman travels to Jerusalem  
 And stands before King Jehoran with his letter.

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Just a quick word on the amount of wealth he took.

At today's prices, silver's worth is \$175/lb.  
 So about \$131,000 dollars worth of silver.

A pound of gold today is valued at 18,000 dollars.

150 lbs. at \$18,000/lbs. = 2,700,000.

By today's standards it's a chunk of money!

As far as the ten new outfits are concerned . . .  
 What up with that?

Maybe it's like Paul Manafort and his suits.

Manafort's wardrobe included  
 A \$15,000 ostrich jacket

And a Bottega Veneta worth a cool \$27,000.

Naaman came prepared.

And so, he takes the letter to the king of Israel,  
 With the request to heal his Secretary of Defense.

The King of Israel reads the letter  
 And tears his clothes.

That's why Naaman carried an extra set of suits

## “Enemy Love”

He anticipated the king’s reaction.

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**<sup>8</sup>As soon as Elisha the prophet heard what had happened, he sent the Israelite king this message: “Why are you so afraid? Send the man to me, so that he will know there is a prophet in Israel.”**

And so, the king sent the Syrian Army Commander.

**<sup>9</sup>Naaman left with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house.**

Here’s quite the scene!

We know the Prophet Elisha  
Was a simple and unassuming man.

And so, picture the ancient Palestinian equivalent to  
Let’s say, an old rundown trailer  
Down along the edge of the river.

It’s all overgrown  
And a dirt path leads up to it.

Laundry is on the line  
And chickens are free-ranging  
Among the junk cars in the front yard.

Now picture the presidential motorcade  
With its police escorts  
Sirens blaring, lights flashing

Secret service, and the black limo  
Pulling into the overgrown driveway.

That’s about what the contrast may be like  
With Naaman’s chariots and attendants,

## “Enemy Love”

All arriving at the home of Elisha.

Here he is the second most powerful man in Syria,  
An enemy to the nation of Israel

Stepping out of his chariot,  
Tip-toeing around the chicken droppings  
Standing at the door of the mobile home.

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**<sup>10</sup> Elisha sent someone outside to say to him, “Go wash seven times in the Jordan River. Then you’ll be completely cured.”**

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No add insult to injury . . .

If it wasn’t humiliating enough  
For the Commander-in-chief.

There stands Naaman.

The door opens a crack  
And with the security chain still across the door

A servant peaks out  
And gives Naaman a message from Elisha  
“Go and wash in the Jordan seven times.”

**<sup>11</sup> But Naaman stormed off, grumbling, “Why couldn’t he come out and talk to me? I thought for sure he would stand in front of me and pray to the Lord his God, then wave his hand over my skin and cure me.**

**<sup>12</sup> What about the Abana River or the Pharpar River? Those rivers in Damascus are just as good as any river in Israel. I could have washed in them and been cured.”**

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I mean seriously, can you blame Naaman?

## “Enemy Love”

Is this a way a five star general is to be treated?

Elisha won't even give him the courtesy  
 To meet him at his door  
 To invite him in for coffee?

Rather, he sends his servant out!

And then, adding to his humiliation,  
 He tells him to go jump in the river?

Imagine?!

This is too much for old Naaman,  
 Who is about to declare war on Israel,  
 For the way he's been treated.

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**<sup>13</sup> His servants went over to him and said, “Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would have done it. So why don't you do what he said? Go wash and be cured.”**

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Obviously, Naaman was expecting  
 Some serious medical treatment.

Feeling beyond mistreated  
 Naaman does as his servants request.

**<sup>14</sup> Naaman walked down to the Jordan; he waded out into the water and stooped down in it seven times, just as Elisha had told him. Right away, he was cured, and his skin became as smooth as a child's.**

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And so Naaman  
 The second most powerful man in Syria

## “Enemy Love”

Whose power, position, prestige and wealth  
 Couldn't even buy him a visit to the prophet

Steps into the river Jordan as he was told  
 Not once but seven times  
 And comes out a new man!

Healed!

No little thanks to a poor, little, slave girl,  
 And a man who lives in a rundown trailer.

**<sup>15</sup> Naaman and his officials went back to Elisha. Naaman stood in front of him and announced, “Now I know that the God of Israel is the only God in the whole world. . . .”**

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You can look at this story  
 In a number of different ways.

It's a story of healing.  
 God healed Naaman.

Naaman story is a story of conversion.  
 He came to believe in God.

It is a story that prefigures baptism  
 As a healing and spiritual cleansing  
 As act of faith in God.

It is also a story on love of enemy.

From the little slave girl  
 To the King of Israel  
 To Elisha the prophet

Care for the other extended beyond ethnic, racial,

## “Enemy Love”

Tribal and national boundaries.

The slave girl extended enemy love  
 To her slave master’s husband  
 When she could have let him suffer.

The king of Israel could have sent Naaman packing  
 Or worse yet captured and executed  
 The whole entourage.

Elisha, perhaps showing some disdain, for his enemy  
 None the less, gave Naaman  
 A prescription for healing.

It’s an Old Testament lesson on loving our enemies.

We think of the teaching to love our enemies  
 As a teaching strictly from Jesus  
 And the New Testament.

But the story of Naaman is an oddity in the OT  
 That also considers enemy love  
 And the positive outcome of it.

**Proverbs 25:21-22 NIV If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head and the Lord will reward you.**

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When the EMTs brought Robert Bowers  
 Into the Emergency Room  
 He was still shouting  
 “I want to kill all the Jews.”

According to the Washington Post

## “Enemy Love”

“At least three of the doctors and nurses who cared for Robert Bowers at the Allegheny General Hospital were Jewish, according to President Jeffrey K. Cohen.”

“We’re here to take care of sick people,” Cohen, who is a member of the congregation where the massacre happened . . .

“We’re not here to judge you. We’re not here to ask ‘Do you have insurance?’ Or ‘Do you not have insurance?’ We’re here to take care of people that need our help.”

Dr. Cohen lived so close to Tree of Life synagogue  
     That he heard the gunshots  
         As the massacre unfolded.  
 He knew nine of the people who were killed.

He and his staff cared for Robert Bowers  
     As well as the victims of his hostility.

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In my opinion  
     Love of enemy is by far,  
         The most difficult teaching in the Bible.

Not many can do it.

But we see traces of it, here and there.

We saw it when the relatives of the victims  
     In the South Carolina church shooting  
         Offered forgiveness to the young man  
             Who murdered their loved ones.

We saw it when the Amish  
     Forgave the family of Charlie Roberts.

Roberts is the one  
     Who barricaded himself in an Amish schoolroom

## “Enemy Love”

Killing five children and injuring five others  
Before killing himself.

When Roberts’ parents went to bury him  
And were standing at his graveside  
As many as 40 Amish stepped out  
And surrounded them.

"Love just emanated from them,"  
Robert’s mother said.  
"It’s a message the world needs."

Martin Luther King Jr. said

“Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness. We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love . . . .”

And indeed, it was the power of love  
That broke through the forces of evil  
On a hill called Calvary.

The cross being the fullest expression of God’s love.

**I John 4:10 NIV This is love: not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

It’s a message the world needs to hear!