

2 Kings 04 - Annals of Israel: Elisha and the Widow's Oil; Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son; Elisha Purifies a Pot of Stew, Feeds 100 Men

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(13) Israel during Elisha's Ministry (2 Kings 2:1—8:15)

(D) Elisha's miracles reveal Yahweh as both provider and life giver (2 Kings 4:1—6:7)

(a) Provision of oil to the widow (4:1-7)

(b) Provision of the child to the barren couple (4:8-17)

(c) Resuscitation of the child (4:18-37)

(d) Elisha purifies the poisonous pot of stew (4:38-41)

(e) Elisha multiplies the loaves (4:42-44)

2 Kings 4

(D) Elisha's miracles reveal Yahweh as both provider and life giver (2 Kings 4:1—6:7)

(a) Provision of oil to the widow (4:1-7)

1 Now a woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."

1 Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."

1 Now there happened to be a certain woman who had been the wife of a member of the Guild of Prophets. She cried out to Elisha, "My husband who served you has died, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. But a creditor has come to take away my children into indentured servitude!"

1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

- The place where this incident took place is not stated, but probably the widow lived in one of the cities where the schools of the prophets were situated, perhaps Bethel, Gilgal, or Jericho.
- It was common in the ANE for creditors to enslave the children of debtors who could not pay
- This widow turned to Elisha for help in her hour of need. She appealed to him on the basis that her husband had been faithful to the Lord.

2 So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil."

2 Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil."

2 Elisha responded, "What shall I do for you? Tell me what you have in your house." She replied, "Your servant has nothing in the entire house except for a flask of oil."

2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

- Jewish tradition holds that she was the widow of Obadiah, King Ahab's steward who had secretly provided for God's prophets (Cf. 1 Kings 18:3-4)

- Elisha was eager to help the widow. His miracles, as contrasted with Elijah's, frequently involved meeting the needs of individuals. Her little bit of oil was olive oil used for food and fuel.

— God often begins with what we already have...

3 Then he said, "Go, borrow containers elsewhere for yourself, empty containers from all your neighbors—do not get *too* few.

3 Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, *even* empty vessels; do not get a few.

3 He told her, "Go out to all of your neighbors in the surrounding streets and borrow lots of pots from them. Don't get just a few empty vessels, either.

3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

- Elisha told her to collect empty jars; they would be filled with oil that God would provide

— The widow's faith can be "measured" by the number of jars she collected in response to the prophet's instructions

4 Then you shall come in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour into all these containers; and you shall set aside what is full."

4 And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full."

4 Then go in and shut the door behind you, taking only your children, and pour oil into all of the pots. As each one is filled, set it aside."

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

- Shutting the door provided privacy for the task of pouring the oil. Not everyone was to see the miracle take place; only the widow and her sons, the direct beneficiaries of God's grace.

5 So she left him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they *began* bringing *the containers* to her, and she poured *the oil*.

5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing *the vessels* to her and she poured.

5 So she left Elisha, shut the door behind her and her children, and while they kept on bringing vessels to her, she kept on pouring oil.

5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out.

6 When the containers were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another container." But he said to her, "There are no more containers." Then the oil stopped.

6 When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped.

6 When the last of the vessels had been filled, she told her son, "Bring me another pot!" But he replied, "There isn't even one pot left." Then the oil stopped flowing.

6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed

- God provided oil enough to fill all the jars the woman had collected, all she felt she needed

— The miraculous multiplication of oil symbolized the adequacy of God's Spirit to provide all that the widow needed

The vessels were the measure of the oil. In other words, divine power waited on faith—faith measured the active resources of God on the occasion.

7 So she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you *and* your sons can live on the rest."

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you *and* your sons can live on the rest."

7 After this, she went and told the man of God what had happened. So he said, "Go sell the oil, pay your debt, and you and your children will be able to live on the proceeds."

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

- She returned to Elisha with a report of the miracle and he told her to sell the oil and pay her debts

— The debt could now be paid without the loss of needed sons. There was enough money left over for her to live on after all her financial obligations had been met.

- Elisha is called a man of God, a term used of several prophets in 1 and 2 Kings. This story demonstrates God's care for His faithful ones who lived in apostate Israel at this time.

- Widows were always vulnerable, and the widow of a prophet would have been even more needy. Yet God miraculously cared for this faithful, dependent believer.

— God's concern for women and their special needs can be seen clearly in both the preceding and the following incident

(b) Provision of the child to the barren couple (4:8-17)

8 Now a day came when Elisha went over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she urged him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, *that* he turned in there to eat food.

8 Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food.

8 Some time later, Elisha went to Shunem, where he met a prominent and wealthy woman who persuaded him to have a meal with her. As a result, whenever he was in the area, he stopped by to eat with her.

8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

- In contrast with the poor widow in the previous story, this woman in Shunem (near Jezreel) was well-to-do and had a husband

— Elisha evidently stopped at her house regularly at her invitation as he traveled between Samaria, Jezreel, and other cities

9 And she said to her husband, "Behold now, I am aware that this is a holy man of God passing by us repeatedly.

9 She said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually.

9 So she had a talk with her husband. "Look here! I've learned that this is a holy and godly man who comes by here on a regular basis.

9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

10 Please, let's make a little walled upper room, and let's set up a bed for him there, and a table, a chair, and a lamp stand; then it shall be, when he comes to us, *that* he can turn in there."

10 Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, *that* he can turn in there."

10 Now then, let's build a small upper room and put a bed in it for him there, along with a table, a chair, and a lamp stand. That way, when he comes to visit, he can rest there."

10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

- The woman's faith in *Yahweh* is seen in her desire to be a blessing to the man of God — Apparently she was more spiritually sensitive and outgoing than her husband (Cf. v23). He did, however, consent to his wife's proposal to build a guest room on the typically flat roof of their house and to furnish it for Elisha's comfort.

11 Now one day he came there, and turned in to the upper room and rested.

11 One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested.

11 One day, Elisha came by to visit and stopped in to rest in the upper chamber.

11 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

12 Then he said to his servant Gehazi, "Call this Shunammite." And when he had called her, she stood before him.

12 Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." And when he had called her, she stood before him.

12 He told his attendant Gehazi, "Call this Shunammite." So when he had summoned her, she stood in front of him.

12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

13 And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'Behold, you have taken trouble for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you like me to speak for you to the king or to the commander of the army?'" But she answered, "**I live among my own people.**"

13 He said to him, "Say now to her, 'Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?'" And she answered, "I live among my own people."

13 Elisha told him, "Ask her, 'Look how you've gone to all this trouble to care for us! What can I do for you? Do you wish to be mentioned to the king or to the head of the army?'" She replied, "I'm at home living among my own people."

13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

- After Elisha had enjoyed this couple's hospitality for some time, he desired to do something for them in return

— He asked his servant Gehazi to express his offer to the woman. God's grace to His faithful ones can be seen in Elisha's offer.

— Elisha obviously enjoyed a position of some influence in the palace even though he opposed Jehoram's religious policies

- "...I live among my own people" - the woman's reply expressed contentment with her lot in life; she was at peace and felt no special needs

14 So he said, "What then is to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "It is a fact that she has no son, and her husband is old."

14 So he said, "What then is to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Truly she has no son and her husband is old."

14 He responded, "What, then, is to be done on her behalf?"

Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son and her husband is growing old."

14 And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

- Determined to return her favors, Elisha discussed with Gehazi after she left his room what he might do for her

— Gehazi observed that she had no son and probably never would have one since her husband was old

15 He then said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway.

15 He said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway.

15 "Call her," Elisha ordered. After he called her, she came and stood in the doorway,

15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16 Then he said, "At this season next year, you are going to embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, you man of God, do not lie to your servant."

16 Then he said, "At this season next year you will embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant."

16 and he told her, "About this time next year you will be embracing a son."

"No, sir! Please, as a godly man, don't mislead your servant!"

16 And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

- Elisha called her back and told her that she would have a son in about a year

— This miraculous birth would be God's gift to her for her goodness to His servant

— The woman's response to this announcement does not mean that she did not want a son: every Israelite woman did. To be childless was regarded in Israel as a great personal tragedy. Her reply simply indicates that she felt having a son was impossible.

— She urged Elisha not to build up her hopes only to disappoint her later

17 Now the woman conceived and gave birth to a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had told her.

17 The woman conceived and bore a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had said to her.

17 But the woman did conceive and did bear a son at that very same time the next year, just as Elisha had told her.

17 And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

(c) Resuscitation of the child (4:18-37)

18 When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father, to the reapers.

18 When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father to the reapers.

18 After the child had grown up a bit, one day he went out to visit his father, who was with the harvesters.

18 And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19 And he said to his father, "My head, my head!" And *his father* said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother."

19 He said to his father, "My head, my head." And he said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother."

19 He told his father, "My head! My head!"

So his father ordered his servant, "Carry him over to his mother!"

19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

- But, one morning while the child, still quite young, was out in the fields with his father in the heat of harvest time, a violent headache overtook him

20 When he had carried him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and *then* he died.

20 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and *then* died.

20 So the servant carried him over to his mother, where he rested on her lap until mid-day, and then he died.

20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

- He was carried back to his mother but failed to improve and died shortly thereafter, perhaps from sunstroke

— Clearly the lad was dead, not just sick (Cf. v32), and his mother knew it

21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* behind him and left.

21 She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* behind him and went out.

21 The woman went upstairs, laid him on the bed belonging to the man of God, and shut the door, leaving him behind as she left.

21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

22 Then she called to her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so that I may run to the man of God and return."

22 Then she called to her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and return."

22 Then she called to her husband and asked him, "Please send me one of the servants, along with one of the donkeys, so I can ride quickly to see that godly man. I'll be right back."

22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

- Her thoughts turned immediately to Elisha and she prepared to seek his help

— Perhaps she did not tell her husband that her son had died because she feared he would not let her go if he knew the boy was dead

23 But he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." So she *just* said, "*It will be fine.*"

23 He said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." And she said, "*It will be well.*"

23 He asked her, "What's the point of visiting him today? It's not a New Moon, and it isn't the Sabbath!"

But she kept saying, "Things will go well."

23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

- When she told him she wanted to see Elisha (the man of God; Cf. v9,16,21,25 [2x], 27 [2x]), he questioned the need since it was not the New Moon or the Sabbath, occasions for religious festivals

— The husband's spiritual concerns seem to have been superficial and ritualistic

— Her words, "*It will be fine*" were designed to avoid further explanation and delay

24 Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Drive *the donkey* and go on; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you."

24 Then she saddled a donkey and said to her servant, "Drive and go forward; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you."

24 So she saddled a donkey and told her servant, "Forward, driver! Don't slow down on my account, unless I tell you!"

24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

- Quickly the woman rode her donkey, while her servant led

— Elisha was only a few miles away at Mount Carmel. Interestingly, she knew where to find him.

25 So she went on and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Behold, that person there is the Shunammite.

25 So she went and came to the man of God to Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Behold, there is the Shunammite.

25 So out she went and eventually she arrived at Mount Carmel to visit the man of God.

When the man of God noticed her from a distance, he told his attendant Gehazi, "Look! There's the woman from Shunem!"

25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

26 Please run now to meet her and say to her, 'Is it *going* well for you? Is it *going* well for your husband? Is it *going* well for the child?'" Then she answered, "It is *going* well."

26 Please run now to meet her and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well."

26 Please run out quickly and greet her. Ask her, 'Are things going well with you? Are things going well with your husband? Are things going well with your child?'" She answered Gehazi, "Things are going well."

26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

- When the prophet saw her coming, he sent Gehazi to intercept her. But she would not be delayed with explanations; she hurried on to Elisha.

27 But she came to the man of God at the hill and took hold of his feet. And Gehazi came up to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone, for her soul is troubled within her; and the LORD has concealed *it* from me and has not informed me."

27 When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to push her away; but the man of God said, "Let her alone, for her soul is troubled within her; and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me."

27 As she came near the man of God on the mountain, she grabbed his feet. When Gehazi intervened to push her away, the man of God said, "Leave her alone! She is deeply troubled! The LORD has concealed the thing from me, and hasn't informed me."

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

- Arriving where Elisha was, she grasped his feet, a gesture indicating extreme humility, need, and desperation

— Gehazi felt that her behavior was improper, but Elisha recognized it as the expression of deepest grief

- The LORD sometimes informed his prophets beforehand of situations they would face (Cf. 1 Kings 14:5), but this time He did not

28 Then she said, "Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not give me false hope'?"

28 Then she said, "Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?"

28 Then she asked, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn't I beg you, 'Don't mislead me'?"

28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

- As is common under extreme stress, the woman's first words to Elisha did not tell him why she had come, but how she felt about what had happened

- She referred to the fact that having a son who died was a loss of her hopes, much like never having a son at all. She was so grieved at her son's death she felt it would have been better if he had never been born.

29 Then he said to Gehazi, "Get ready and take my staff in your hand, and go; if you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply to him. And lay my staff on the boy's face."

29 Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, do not salute him, and if anyone salutes you, do not answer him; and lay my staff on the lad's face."

29 At this he told Gehazi, "Get ready to run! Take my staff in your hand, and get on the road. Don't greet anyone you meet. If anyone greets you, don't respond. Just go lay my staff on the youngster's face."

29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

- Elisha probably understood that the lad had died; he probably would not have done anything without first learning what had happened

- He sent Gehazi with his staff, the symbol of his authority as a prophet of the Lord, and instructed him to lay it on the boy's face

— Either Elisha believed God would honor this method or he wanted to teach a lesson

30 The mother of the boy said, "**As surely as the LORD lives** and you yourself live, I will not leave you." So he got up and followed her.

30 The mother of the lad said, "As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." And he arose and followed her.

30 At this, the youngster's mother replied, "As long as you and the LORD live, I'm not leaving you!" So he got up and followed her.

30 And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

- The mother told Elisha that she would not leave him

- "...As *surely* as the LORD lives" - this or very similar phrases occur 7x each in 1 Kings and 2 Kings

31 Then Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound or response. So he returned to meet him and informed him, saying, "The boy has not awakened."

31 Then Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff on the lad's face, but there was no sound or response. So he returned to meet him and told him, "The lad has not awakened."

31 Meanwhile, Gehazi went on ahead of them and placed the staff on the youngster's face, but when there was no sound or reaction, he returned, met Elisha, and told him, "The youngster has shown no sign of awakening."

31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

- So Elisha got up and followed her back to Shunem. Gehazi went on ahead of Elisha, who apparently followed his servant at a slower pace.

— Gehazi followed Elisha's instructions but the boy did not awaken to life. So Gehazi returned to his master and reported what had happened.

32 When Elisha entered the house, behold the boy was dead, laid on his bed.

32 When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and laid on his bed.

32 When Elisha entered the house, there was the youngster, dead and laid out on Elisha's bed!

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

- That the boy was indeed dead is stated again (Cf. v20)

33 So he entered and shut the door behind them both, and he prayed to the LORD.

33 So he entered and shut the door behind them both and prayed to the LORD.

33 So he entered, shut the door behind them both, and prayed to the LORD.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

34 Then he got up *on the bed* and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, his hands on his hands, and he bent down on him; and the flesh of the child became warm.

34 And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself on him; and the flesh of the

child became warm.

34 Then he approached the child and lay down with his mouth near the child's, with his eyes near those of the child, and taking the child's hands in his. As Elisha stretched himself on the child, the child's flesh began to grow warm.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

- The earnestness of Elisha's entreaty to the LORD is reflected in his prone posture

— The boy's body grew warm from contact with Elisha; God was beginning to answer the prophet's prayer

35 Then he returned and walked in the house back and forth once, and went up and bent down on him; and the boy sneezed seven times, then the boy opened his eyes.

35 Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up and stretched himself on him; and the lad sneezed seven times and the lad opened his eyes.

35 Then he went downstairs, walked around back and forth inside the house once, went back up to his upper chamber, and stretched himself over the child again. The young man sneezed seven times and then opened his eyes.

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

- Elisha then paced back and forth in the room, apparently continuing to pour out his soul in fervent, persistent prayer

— He returned to prostrate himself on the body of the lad once again. These actions were not some kind of magic; they were the natural physical expressions of a man engaged in earnest prayer

— God restored the lad's life, air returned to his lungs, he sneezed seven times (indicating a work of God, Cf. 5:14), and opened his eyes. These were the first signs that God had restored his life.

36 And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, "Pick up your son."

36 He called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son."

36 He called out to Gehazi, "Go get the Shunammite woman!" So he called her. When she came in to see Elisha, he told her, "Take back your son!"

36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37 Then she came in and fell at his feet and bowed down to the ground, and she picked up her son and left.

37 Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and she took up her son and went out.

37 Then she approached him, fell at his feet, bowing low to the ground, took back her son, and went out.

37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

- When she entered the room and saw her son alive she first fell at Elisha's feet out of respect and gratitude (Cf. v27), and bowed to the ground before the Lord in worship.

— Then she took her son, probably in her arms, and left the room full of joy and gratitude for what God had done for her

- Throughout this story evidences of the woman's faith keep shining through (Cf. v8-10,16,21-22,24-25,27,30,37). God rewarded her trust with a miraculous birth and a miraculous restoration to life.

- Gehazi's failure to restore the boy to life by using Elisha's staff shows that the living God works in response to the requests of trusting people rather than magically through a fetish (Elisha's staff).

— Baal, a god of fertility, undoubtedly suffered ignominy as this story of Yahweh's provision of life circulated in Israel (Cf. 1 Kings 17:21-22)

(d) Elisha purifies the poisonous pot of stew (4:38-41)

38 When Elisha returned to Gilgal, *there was* a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting in front of him, he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets."

38 When Elisha returned to Gilgal, *there was* a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets."

38 Elisha returned to Gilgal during a time of famine in the land. While the Guild of Prophets were having a meal with him, he instructed his attendant, "Put a large pot on the fire and boil some stew for the Guild of Prophets."

38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

- The fact that this incident took place in a time of famine is important to a correct understanding of the story

- This famine may have been the same one(s) referred to later (6:25; 7:4; 8:1) or a different one (Cf. the famine in Elijah's days, 1 Kings 18:2)
- Though there was a famine, Elisha prepared to feed the prophets with whatever could be collected. He asked his servant (Gehazi or another person) to prepare the stew pot for a meal.

The stories of Elisha's ministry are evidently not in strict chronological order but were arranged by the writer in sequence for a variety of reasons: similar subject matter, related lessons, geographical connections, etc.

39 Then one went out into the field to gather mallow, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds; and he came and sliced them into the pot of stew, because they did not know *what they were*.

39 Then one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, for they did not know *what they were*.

39 Somebody went out into the fields to grab some herbs, found a wild vine, and gathered a lap full of wild gourds, which he came and sliced up into the stew pot, but nobody else knew.

39 And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not.

- One of the prophets went out to gather whatever he could find growing wild to put in the stew

— Finding a wild vine, he gathered some of its gourds cut them up, and put them into the pot: wild cucumbers, egg-shaped gourds having a bitter taste and producing colic and violent diarrhea when eaten. The young man mistook them for the edible variety (Cf. Num 11:5).

— The wild gourds were symbolic of Baalism...they looked attractive but proved disgusting and deadly when consumed

In Elisha's day, the people of Israel had turned from God and His Law. This had resulted in a spiritual famine. The people were hungry spiritually and, in order to satisfy their need, had "swallowed" Baalism. It looked harmless enough, but it proved fatal. God's prophets helped counteract the deadly effects of Baalism by making the Word of God available to the people.

40 So they poured *it* out for the men to eat. But as they were eating the stew, they cried out and said, "You man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they were unable to eat.

40 So they poured *it* out for the men to eat. And as they were eating of the stew, they cried out and said, "O man of God, there is death in the pot." And they were unable to eat.

40 When they served the men, they began to eat the stew. But they cried out, "That pot of stew is deadly, you man of God!" So they couldn't eat the stew.

40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

- The unknown gourds had a horrible taste and may have caused some violent physical reactions in those who tasted the stew

— They assumed that it was another similar plant, the colocynth, which also was poisonous and bitter tasting

— The prophets concluded that the gourds had poisoned the stew

41 Then he said, "Bring flour." And he threw it into the pot, and said, "Pour *it* out for the people that they may eat." Then there was nothing harmful in the pot.

41 But he said, "Now bring meal." He threw it into the pot and said, "Pour *it* out for the people that they may eat." Then there was no harm in the pot.

41 But he replied, "Bring me some flour." He tossed it into the pot and said, "Serve the people so they can eat." Then there was nothing harmful in the pot.

41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

- Elisha added some flour to the stew. Not much of it could have been available in a famine; but with this additive the stew became quite palatable and the prophets ate it without harm.

(e) Elisha multiplies the loaves (4:42-44)

42 Now a man came from **Baal-shalishah**, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh grain in his sack. And *Elisha* said, "Give *them* to the people that they may eat."

42 Now a man came from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, "Give *them* to the people that they may eat."

42 Later on, a man arrived from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God some bread as a first fruit offering. He had 20 loaves of barley and ripe ears of corn in his sack. So Elisha said, "Give them to the people so they can eat."

42 And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

- "...Baal-shalishah" - "House of Three Valleys" (1 Sam 9:4), a town close to Gilgal, so this incident may have taken place about the same time as the preceding one

— Evidently the famine still persisted. The man who brought the bread and grain to the man of God (Elisha, Cf. v21) was apparently a believer in the Lord, taking these items as the firstfruits offering of his harvest to God (Cf. Num 18:13; Deut 18:4).

43 But his attendant said, "How am I to serve this to a hundred men?" Nevertheless he said, "Give *them* to the people that they may eat, for this is what the LORD says: 'They shall eat and have *some* left over.'"

43 His attendant said, "What, will I set this before a hundred men?" But he said, "Give *them* to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have *some* left over.'"

43 Elisha's attendant asked, "What? Will this serve 100 men?"

But he replied, "Distribute it to the people so they can eat, because this is what the LORD says: 'They will eat and have a surplus!'"

43 And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.

- When Elisha suggested to his servant (Gehazi) that the food be given to feed the 100 men assembled (probably the company of the prophets, Cf. v38), the servant's response indicated that it was far too little.

— Nevertheless Elisha ordered him to distribute it anyway and assured him that the LORD had promised there would be plenty and some would be left over. The servant obeyed and God multiplied the food as He had promised.

44 So he served *it* to them, and they ate and had *some* left over, in accordance with the word of the LORD.

44 So he set *it* before them, and they ate and had *some* left over, according to the word of the LORD.

44 So he served them, and they ate and had some left over, just as the LORD had indicated.

44 So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

- This miracle instructed all who heard of it that God could multiply limited resources (Cf. 1 Kings 17:7-16) that were dedicated to Him and with them nourish and sustain a large

multitude

— Baal, a god of fertility known as “the lord of the earth” had no such power