

2KINGS 7: 1 Elisha said, "Hear the LORD's word. Thus says the LORD, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.'"

Elisha foretells abundant relief to the besieged inhabitants of Samaria, 2Kgs 7:1. One of the lords questions the possibility of it; and is assured that he shall see it on the morrow, but not taste of it, 2Kgs 7:2. Four lepers, perishing with hunger, go to the camp of the Syrians to seek relief and find it totally deserted, 2Kgs 7:3-5. How the Syrians were alarmed, and fled, 2Kgs 7:6, 2Kgs 7:7. The lepers begin to take the spoil, but at last resolve to carry the good news to the city, 2Kgs 7:8-11. The king, suspecting some treachery, sends some horsemen to scour the country, and see whether the Syrians are not somewhere concealed; they return, and confirm the report that the Syrians are totally fled, 2Kgs 7:12-15. The people go out and spoil the camp, in consequence of which provisions become as plentiful as Elisha had foretold, 2Kgs 7:16. The unbelieving lord, having the charge of the gate committed to him, is trodden to death by the crowd, 2Kgs 7:17-20.

Verse 1

To-morrow about this time - This was in reply to the desponding language of the king, and to vindicate himself from the charge of being author of this calamity. See the end of the preceding chapter, 2Kgs 6:33 (note).

A measure of fine flour - for a shekel - A seah of fine flour: the seah was about two gallons and a half; the shekel, two shillings and four-pence at the lowest computation. A wide difference between this and the price of the ass's head mentioned above.

2KINGS 7: 2 Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, "Behold, if the LORD made windows in heaven, could this thing be?" He said, "Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat of it."

Verse 2

Then a lord - שַׁלִּישׁ shalish. This word, as a name of office, occurs often, and seems to point out one of the highest offices in the state. So unlikely was this prediction to be fulfilled, that he thought God must pour out wheat and barley from heaven before it could have a literal accomplishment.

But shalt not eat thereof - This was a mere prediction of his death, but not as a judgment for his unbelief; any person in his circumstances might have spoken as he did. He stated in effect that nothing but a miracle could procure the plenty predicted, and by a miracle alone was it done; and any person in his place might have been trodden to death by the crowd in the gate of Samaria.

2KINGS 7: 3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate. They said one to another, "Why do we sit here until we die?"

Verse 3

There were four leprous men - The Gemara in Sota, R. Sol. Jarchi, and others, say that these four lepers were Gehazi and his three sons.

At the entering in of the gate - They were not permitted to mingle in civil society.

2KINGS 7: 4 If we say, 'We will enter into the city,' then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. If we sit still here, we also die. Now therefore come, and let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we will live; and if they kill us, we will only die."

2KINGS 7: 5 They rose up in the twilight, to go to the camp of the Syrians. When they had come to the outermost part of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no man there.

Verse 5

The uttermost part of the camp - Where the Syrian advanced guards should have been.

2KINGS 7: 6 For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great army: and they said one to another, Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come on us.

Verse 6

The Lord had made the - Syrians to hear a noise - This threw them into confusion; they imagined that they were about to be attacked by powerful auxiliaries, which the king of Israel had hired against them.

2KINGS 7: 7 Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their donkeys, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

2KINGS 7: 8 When these lepers came to the outermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and ate and drink, and carried there silver, and gold, and clothing, and went and hid it. Then they came back, and entered into another tent, and carried there also, and went and hid it.

2KINGS 7: 9 Then they said one to another, "We aren't doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we keep silent. If we wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household."

2KINGS 7: 10 So they came and called to the porter of the city; and they told them, saying, "We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but the horses tied, and the donkeys tied, and the tents as they were."

2KINGS 7: 11 He called the porters; and they told it to the king's household within.

2KINGS 7: 12 The king arose in the night, and said to his servants, "I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we are hungry. Therefore are they gone out of the camp to

hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive, and get into the city.'"

Verse 12

The king arose in the night - This king had made a noble defense; he seems to have shared in all the sufferings of the besieged, and to have been ever at his post. Even in vile Ahab there were some good things!

They know that we be hungry - This was a very natural conclusion; the Syrians by the closest blockade could not induce them to give up the city, but knowing that they were in a starving condition, they might make use of such a stratagem as that imagined by the king, in order to get possession of the city.

2KINGS 7: 13 One of his servants answered, "Please let some take five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city. Behold, they are like all the multitude of Israel who are left in it. Behold, they are like all the multitude of Israel who are consumed. Let us send and see."

Verse 13

And one of his servants answered - This is a very difficult verse, and the great variety of explanations given of it cast but little light on the subject. I am inclined to believe, with Dr. Kennicott, that there is an interpolation here which puzzles, if not destroys, the sense. "Several instances," says he, "have been given of words improperly repeated by Jewish transcribers, who have been careless enough to make such mistakes, and yet cautious not to alter or erase, for fear of discovery. This verse furnishes another instance in a careless repetition of seven Hebrew words, thus: - הנשארם אשר נשאר בה הנם ככל ההמון ישראל אשר תמי

The exact English of this verse is this: And the servant said, Let them take now five of the remaining horses, which remain in it; behold they are as all the multitude of Israel, which [remain in it; behold they are as all the multitude of Israel which] are consumed; and let us send and see. "Whoever considers that the second set of these seven words is neither in the Septuagint nor Syriac versions, and that those translators who suppose these words to be genuine alter them to make them look like sense, will probably allow them to have been at first an improper repetition; consequently to be now an interpolation strangely continued in the Hebrew text." They are wanting in more than forty of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. In some others they are left without points; in others they have been written in, and afterwards blotted out; and in others four, in others five, of the seven words are omitted. De Rossi concludes thus: Nec verba haec legunt Lxx., Vulg., Syrus simplex, Syrus Heptaplaris Parisiensis, Targum. They stand on little authority, and the text should be read, omitting the words enclosed by brackets, as above.

They are consumed - The words אשר תמו asher tamu should be translated, which are perfect; i.e., fit for service. The rest of the horses were either dead of the famine, killed for the subsistence of the besieged, or so weak as not to be able to perform such a journey.

2KINGS 7: 14 They took therefore two chariots with horses; and the king sent after the army of the Syrians, saying, "Go and see."

Verse 14

They took - two chariot horses - They had at first intended to send five; probably they found on examination that only two were effective. But if they sent two chariots, each would have two horses, and probably a single horse for crossing the country.

2KINGS 7: 15 They went after them to the Jordan; and behold, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. The messengers returned, and told the king.

Verse 15

All the way was full of garments and vessels - A manifest proof of the hurry and precipitancy with which they fled.

2KINGS 7: 16 The people went out, and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the LORD's word.

2KINGS 7: 17 The king appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to be in charge of the gate: and the people trod on him in the gate, and he died as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him.

Verse 17

And the people trode upon him - This officer being appointed by the king to have the command of the gate, the people rushing out to get spoil, and in to carry it to their houses, he was borne down by the multitude and trodden to death. This also was foreseen by the spirit of prophecy. The literal and exact fulfillment of such predictions must have acquired the prophet a great deal of credit in Israel.

Dr. Lightfoot remarks that, between the first and last year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, there are very many occurrences mentioned which are not referred nor fixed to their proper year; and, therefore, they must be calculated in a gross sum, as coming to pass in one of these years. These are the stories contained in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, of this book; and in 2Chr 21:6-19. They may be calculated thus: In the first year of Jehoram, Elisha, returning out of Moab into the land of Israel, multiplies the widow's oil; he is lodged in Shunem, and assures his hostess of a child. The seven years' famine was then begun, and he gives the Shunammite warning of its continuance.

The second year she bears her child in the land of the Philistines, 2Kgs 8:2. And Elisha resides among the disciples of the prophets at Gilgal, heals the poisoned pottage, and feeds one hundred men with twenty barley loaves and some ears of corn. That summer he cures Naaman of his leprosy, the only cure of this kind done till Christ came.

The third year he makes iron to swim, prevents the Syrians' ambushments, strikes those with blindness who were sent to seize him, and sends them back to their master.

The fourth year Jehoshaphat dies, and Edom rebels and shakes off the yoke laid upon them by David: Libnah also rebels.

The fifth year Samaria is besieged by Ben-hadad, the city is most grievously afflicted; and, after being nearly destroyed by famine, it is suddenly relieved by a miraculous interference of God, which had been distinctly foretold by Elisha.

The sixth year the Philistines and Arabians oppress Jehoram, king of Judah, and take captive his wives and children, leaving only one son behind.

The seventh year Jehoram falls into a grievous sickness, so that his bowels fall out, 2Chr 21:19. And in the same year the seven years' famine ends about the time of harvest; and at that harvest, the Shunammite's son dies, and is restored to life by Elisha, though the story of his birth and death is related together; and yet some years must have passed between them. Not long after this the Shunammite goes to the king to petition to be restored to her own land, which she had left in the time of the famine, and had sojourned in the land of the Philistines.

This year Elisha is at Damascus, Ben-hadad falls sick; Hazael stifles him with a wet cloth, and reigns in his stead. All these things Dr. Lightfoot supposes happened between A.M. 3110 and 3117. - See Lightfoot's Works, vol. i., p. 88. In examining the facts recorded in these books, we shall always find it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to ascertain the exact chronology. The difficulty is increased by a custom common among these annalists, the giving the whole of a story at once, though several incidents took place at the distance of some years from the commencement of the story: as they seem unwilling to have to recur to the same history in the chronological order of its facts.

2KINGS 7: 18 It happened as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria";

2KINGS 7: 19 and that captain answered the man of God, and said, "Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?" and he said, "Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat of it."

2KINGS 7: 20 It happened like that to him; for the people trod on him in the gate, and he died.
