SECOND KINGS

Chapter 6

***An Axhead Floats***

**The company of the prophets said to Elisha, “Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. 2 Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to live.” And he said, “Go.” 3 Then one of them said, “Won’t you please come with your servants?” “I will,” Elisha replied. 4 And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. 5 As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. “Oh, my lord,” he cried out, “it was borrowed!” 6 The man of God asked, “Where did it fall?” When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. 7 “Lift it out,” he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.**

**6:1** *company of the prophets.* See note on 2:3. (CSB)

**6:2** *a place there for us to live.* Some have suggested that the company of prophets lived in a communal housing structure. The Hebrew for this phrase, however, could be translated “a place there for us to sit,” referring to some type of assembly hall. It is implied in 4:1–7 that there were separate dwellings for the members of the prophetic companies (see note on 1Sa 19:18). (CSB)

**6:5** *it was borrowed.* At that time an iron axhead was a costly tool, too expensive for the members of the prophetic company to purchase. Having lost it, the borrower faced the prospect of having to work off the value as a bondservant. (CSB)

**6:6** *Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float.* The Lord demonstrated here his concern for the welfare of his faithful ones. (CSB)

***Elisha Traps Blinded Arameans***

**8 Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, “I will set up my camp in such and such a place.” 9 The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: “Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.” 10 So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. 11 This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, “Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?” 12 “None of us, my lord the king,” said one of his officers, “but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.” 13 “Go, find out where he is,” the king ordered, “so I can send men and capture him.” The report came back: “He is in Dothan.” 14 Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. 15 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh, my lord, what shall we do?” the servant asked. 16 “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” 17 And Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 18 As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, “Strike these people with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked. 19 Elisha told them, “This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.” And he led them to Samaria. 20 After they entered the city, Elisha said, “Lord, open the eyes of these men so they can see.” Then the Lord opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria. 21 When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, “Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?” 22 “Do not kill them,” he answered. “Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.” 23 So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.**

**6:8** *king of Aram.* Probably Ben-Hadad II (see note on 5:1). *war with Israel.* A reference to border clashes rather than full-scale hostility (see v. 23; see also note on 5:2). Some indication of Israelite weakness and Aramean strength is seen in the ability of the Arameans to send forces to Dothan (only about 11 miles north of Samaria) without apparent difficulty (see vv. 13–14). (CSB

**6:9** *man of God.* Elisha (see v. 10). (CSB

*king of Israel.* Probably Joram (see 1:17; 3:1; 9:24). (CSB

**6:11** *which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?* Repeated evidence that Israel possessed advance knowledge of Aramean military plans led the king of Aram to suspect that there was a traitor among his top officials. (CSB

**6:13** *capture him.* The king of Aram thought he could eliminate Elisha’s influence by denying him contact with Israel’s king. (CSB

*Dothan.* Located on a hill about halfway between Jezreel and Samaria, where the main royal residences were (see 1:2; 3:1; 8:29; 9:15; 10:1; 1Ki 21:1). (CSB

**6:16** *Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.* Elisha knew that there was greater strength in the unseen reality of the hosts of heaven than in the visible reality of the Aramean forces (see 2Ch 32:7–8; 1Jn 4:4). (CSB

**6:17** *saw the hills full of horses and chariots.* In response to Elisha’s prayer, his servant was able to see the protecting might of the heavenly hosts gathered about Elisha (see Ge 32:1–2; Ps 34:7; 91:11–12; Mt 18:10; 26:53; see also note on 2Ki 2:11). (CSB

**6:18** *Strike these people with blindness.* Elisha had prayed for the eyes of his servant to be opened to the unseen reality of the heavenly hosts; now he prays for the eyes of the Aramean soldiers to be closed to earthly reality (see Ge 19:11). (CSB

**6:19** *This is not the road and this is not the city.* Elisha’s statement led the Aramean soldiers to believe that they were being directed to the city where Elisha could be found. Technically this statement was not an untruth, since Elisha accompanied them to Samaria, but it was a means of deceiving the Aramean soldiers into a trap inside Samaria, the fortress-like capital city of the northern kingdom (see Ex 1:19–20; Jos 2:6; 1Sa 16:1–2 for other instances of deception recorded in the OT). (CSB

**6:20** *there they were, inside Samaria.* The power of the Lord operative through Elisha turned the intended captors into captives. (CSB

**6:21** *king of Israel.* Joram (see note on v. 9). (CSB

**6:22** *Do not kill them.* In reality the Aramean soldiers had been taken captive by the power of the Lord, not by Joram’s military prowess. The Lord’s purpose was to demonstrate to them and their king and to the Israelites and their king that Israel’s national security ultimately was grounded in the Lord, not in military forces or strategies. (CSB

**6:23** *bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.* See notes on v. 8; 5:2. Temporarily the Arameans recognized the futility of opposition to the power of the God of Israel. (CSB

***Famine in Besieged Samaria***

**24 Some time later, Ben-Hadad king of Aram mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. 25 There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey’s head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five shekels.26 As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him, “Help me, my lord the king!” 27 The king replied, “If the Lord does not help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing floor? From the winepress?” 28 Then he asked her, “What’s the matter?” She answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we’ll eat my son.’ 29 So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, ‘Give up your son so we may eat him,’ but she had hidden him.” 30 When the king heard the woman’s words, he tore his robes. As he went along the wall, the people looked, and there, underneath, he had sackcloth on his body. 31 He said, “May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today!” 32 Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger ahead, but before he arrived, Elisha said to the elders, “Don’t you see how this murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold it shut against him. Is not the sound of his master’s footsteps behind him?” 33 While he was still talking to them, the messenger came down to him. And the king said, “This disaster is from the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?”**

**6:24** *Ben-Hadad.* The same Ben-Hadad who had besieged Samaria on a previous occasion (see notes on 13:3; 1Ki 20:1). This siege is probably to be dated c. 850 b.c. (CSB

**6:25** *donkey’s head.* According to Pentateuchal law the donkey was unclean and not to be eaten (see Lev 11:2–7; Dt 14:4–8). The severity of the famine caused the inhabitants of Samaria not only to disregard the laws of uncleanness, but also to place a high value on the least edible part of the donkey. (CSB

*eighty shekels of silver.* See NIV text note; see also note on 5:5. (CSB

**6:27** *If the Lord does not help you, where can I get help for you?* Joram correctly recognized his own inability to assist the woman if the Lord himself did not act in Israel’s behalf, but he wrongly implied that the Lord was to be blamed for a situation brought on by Israel’s own disobedience and idolatry. (CSB

**6:28** *tomorrow we’ll eat my son.* The sins of the king and people were so great that the covenant curses of Lev 26:29 and Dt 28:53, 57 were being inflicted (cf. La 4:10). (CSB

**6:30** *tore his robes.* More an expression of anger toward Elisha and the Lord (see v. 31) than one of repentance and sorrow for the sins that had provoked the covenant curse. (CSB

*sackcloth.* A coarse cloth usually worn as a sign of mourning (see note on Ge 37:34). It is not clear why Joram wore sackcloth hidden under his royal robe. Perhaps it was a testing of the Lord, a private ritual to attempt to gain divine favor. (CSB

**6:31** *May God deal with me, be it ever so severely.* A curse formula (see note on 1Sa 3:17). (CSB

*if the head of Elisha … remains on his shoulders today!* Joram considered Elisha in some way responsible for the conditions in the city. Cf. Ahab’s attitude toward Elijah (1Ki 18:10, 16; 21:20). (CSB

**6:32** *elders.* Leaders of the city (see notes on Ex 3:16; 2Sa 3:17). They sit with Elisha rather than with the king. (CSB

**6:33** *Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?* Joram felt himself deceived by Elisha and abandoned by the Lord, whom he blamed for the disastrous conditions in the city. (CSB