

SECOND KINGS

Chapter 7

Elisha said, “Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the LORD says: About this time tomorrow, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.” ² The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, “Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?” “You will see it with your own eyes,” answered Elisha, “but you will not eat any of it!”

7:1 *a seah of flour will sell for a shekel.* See NIV text notes. This was about double the normal cost of flour, but a phenomenal improvement. (CSB)

shekel. Prices would drop drastically. (TLSB)

at the gate. Where business was transacted. (TLSB)

7:2 *on whose hand the king leaned.* A high official. (TLSB)

floodgates of the heavens. See v. 19; Ge 8:2; Isa 24:18. (CSB)

Coming through the “windows of the heavens” (Gn 7:11; 8:2), rain would raise crops and eventually supply food. But the captain doubted that more immediate relief from the famine could be forthcoming. (TLSB)

you shall not eat of it. Because he doubted. (TLSB)

7:1–2 Elisha boldly prophesies that the Lord will feed the people, but the king’s commander expresses doubt. God’s promises always seem too good to be true. Yet He provided bread from heaven to Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16:4–31) and today sustains us with the true bread of heaven, the life-giving body of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. • Sustain me, O Lord, against the devil’s siege, my doubts, and the world’s temptations. Amen. (TLSB)

The Siege Lifted

³ Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, “Why stay here until we die? ⁴ If we say, ‘We’ll go into the city’—the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die.” ⁵ At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, not a man was there, ⁶ for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!” ⁷ So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives. ⁸ The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp and entered

one of the tents. They ate and drank, and carried away silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also.⁹ Then they said to each other, “We’re not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let’s go at once and report this to the royal palace.”¹⁰ So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, “We went into the Aramean camp and not a man was there—not a sound of anyone—only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were.”¹¹ The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported within the palace.¹² The king got up in the night and said to his officers, “I will tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know we are starving; so they have left the camp to hide in the countryside, thinking, ‘They will surely come out, and then we will take them alive and get into the city.’ ”¹³ One of his officers answered, “Have some men take five of the horses that are left in the city. Their plight will be like that of all the Israelites left here—yes, they will only be like all these Israelites who are doomed. So let us send them to find out what happened.”¹⁴ So they selected two chariots with their horses, and the king sent them after the Aramean army. He commanded the drivers, “Go and find out what has happened.”¹⁵ They followed them as far as the Jordan, and they found the whole road strewn with the clothing and equipment the Arameans had thrown away in their headlong flight. So the messengers returned and reported to the king.¹⁶ Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So a seah of flour sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, as the LORD had said.¹⁷ Now the king had put the officer on whose arm he leaned in charge of the gate, and the people trampled him in the gateway, and he died, just as the man of God had foretold when the king came down to his house.¹⁸ It happened as the man of God had said to the king: “About this time tomorrow, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.”¹⁹ The officer had said to the man of God, “Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?” The man of God had replied, “You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it!”²⁰ And that is exactly what happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gateway, and he died.

7:3 *entrance of the city gate.* Pentateuchal law excluded persons with skin diseases from residence in the community (Lev 13:46; Nu 5:2–3). (CSB)

Excluded from the city, as required in Lv 13:45–46. (TLSB)

Why. They did not know where to go. (TLSB)

7:4 Lepers would be unwelcome in the city (cf Lv 13:45–46). The gate would soon be a battleground. Though it was unlikely the Syrians would welcome the lepers, it was their best option. (TLSB)

7:5 *twilight.* Before dawn. (TLSB)

7:6 *the LORD had caused the Arameans to hear the sound.* See 2Sa 5:24 and note. (CSB)

Hittite ... kings. Kings of small city-states ruled by dynasties of Hittite origin, which had arisen in northern Aram after the fall of the Hittite empire c. 1200 B.C. (CSB)

Hbr is similar to a term that in Assyrian records designates a territory bordering on Hittite territory. If this northern area is meant, the Syrians fled because they were hopelessly outnumbered by a “great army” of confederates. (TLSB)

come against us. If the Hittites came upon them from the north and the Egyptians from the south, the Syrians could be ground to pieces like grain between the upper and the lower millstone. (TLSB)

7:7 *abandoned.* Packing and saddling animals would delay the retreat. They believed the attack was immediate.

7:9 *not doing right.* The lepers believed it was a crime to let the people in the city die of starvation when food in abundance was available. Failure to share material or spiritual blessings with others is no less reprehensible today (Heb 13:16). Ambr: “Why need we wonder that the people of the Lord had regard for what was seemly and virtuous when even the lepers ... showed concern for what is virtuous?” (NPNF 2 10:86). (TLSB)

the king’s household. King could organize the gathering of the spoil and dispatch messengers and troops for guiding the work. (TLSB)

7:12 *in the night.* Things had happened quickly, since the sun was still not up (cf v 5). (TLSB)

what the Arameans have done to us. Joram’s unbelief caused him to conclude that the report of the four leprous men was part of an Aramean war strategy rather than an evidence of the fulfillment of Elisha’s prophecy (see v. 1). (CSB)

7:13 *remaining horses.* Other animals were probably devoured. (TLSB)

will fare like the ... perished. If the scouting party did not risk death at the hands of the Syrians, they would die of starvation in the city. (TLSB)

7:14 *two horsemen.* Lit, “two chariot[s] of horses,” apparently drawn by teams of two and three horses. Number of men assigned to the chariots is not actually specified. (TLSB)

7:15 *Jordan.* C 20 mi E, the direction Syrians would flee on their way toward Damascus. (TLSB)

7:16–20 *as the LORD had said ... as the man of God had foretold ... as the man of God had said ... that is exactly what happened to him.* Emphasizing the trustworthiness of the prophetic word spoken by Elisha. In the fulfillment of Elisha’s prophecy Israel was reminded that deliverance from her enemies was a gift of God’s grace and that rejection of God’s word provoked the wrath of divine judgment. (CSB)

7:16 *fine flour*. One word in Hbr. Ground wheat flour was more expensive than barley. (TLSB)

7:17 *man of God*. Elisha. (TLSB)

had said. Cf v 2. (TLSB)

7:3–20 Ironically, the Lord works through helpless, outcast beggars to bring word to Samaria of His victory over Syria and to reveal the bounty of provisions left for the city. As God blesses you with bounty, act honorably and generously toward others, according to His Word. The Lord will fulfill His Word for your sake, providing for all your needs through Christ Jesus, the Lord (Php 4:19). • Lord, grant me a generous heart to share Your bounty and the good news of the promised mercy in Jesus, the bread of life. Amen. (TLSB)