

## 2 Kings 2-7 Quotes and Notes

### 2 Kings 1: Elijah's Fire

1. Moab rebels (2 Kgs. 1.1)
2. Ahaziah, son of Ahab, falls out of a window.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. He inquires of Baal-zebub of Ekron (1 Kgs. 2.3).<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Elijah prophesies Ahaziah's doom (1 Kgs. 2.4).
3. Elijah brings fire from heaven upon those Ahaziah sends to take him (2 Kgs. 2.5-12).
  - a. Elijah and God's power consumes the "fifty" – see also 1 Nephi 5.31.<sup>3</sup> The fifty also accompany Gilgamesh and Heracles, as well as Elijah. The fifty could represent the choral arrangement of ancient myth.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> There are two kings named Ahaziah in the Bible; one ruled in the northern kingdom of Israel and the other in the southern kingdom of Judah (see chart). In a long line of righteous and unrighteous kings that ruled in the northern and southern kingdoms, these men were both evil kings. The Ahaziah in the text of 2 Kings 1 was the king of Israel from 853—852 BC and was the son of Ahab and Jezebel, who were described as being among the most wicked rulers of Israel. Ahaziah's parents brought Baal worship into the land and turned Israel away from Yahweh; although Ahaziah reigned for only two years, he was just as evil as his parents. He "aroused the anger of the LORD" (1 Kings 22:53) due to his own worship of Baal, which continued to lead the people into sin and idolatry. At one point King Ahaziah of Israel tried to ally with King Jehoshaphat of Judah, but, after a warning from one of God's prophets, Jehoshaphat severed ties with the wicked king (verse 49; cf. 2 Chronicles 20:37). At some point during his reign, King Ahaziah of Israel **fell out of a window, injuring himself**. He was confined to bed, and, rather than inquire of the Lord, Ahaziah sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the "god" of Ekron, to see if he would recover (2 Kings 1:2). The Lord sent His prophet, Elijah, to confront the messengers and give them God's message for King Ahaziah: **he would never recover from his injuries** and would die in his bed (2 Kings 1.4).

<sup>2</sup> **Baal-Zebub**. This appears to mean "Lord of the flies," and in the New Testament Baal-Zebub, or Beelzebub, is demoted from pagan deity to demon. A plausible scholarly proposal is that the original name was Baal-Zebul, "Baal the Prince," and that the final consonant was changed by the Hebrew writers in order to make it a term of opprobrium. Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, p. 529.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Nibley has this to say regarding the reference to Laban's ability to command fifty: As to the garrison of fifty, it seems pitifully small for a great city. It would have been just as easy for the author of 1 Nephi to have said "fifty thousand," and made it really impressive. Yet even the older brothers, though they wish to emphasize Laban's great power, mention only fifty (3:31), and it is Nephi in answering them who says that the Lord is "mightier than Laban and his fifty," and adds, "or even than his tens of thousands" (4:1). As a high military commander Laban would have his tens of thousands in the field, but such an array is of no concern to Laman and Lemuel: it is the "fifty" they must look out for, the regular, permanent garrison of Jerusalem. **The number fifty suits perfectly with the Amarna picture where the military forces are always so surprisingly small** and a garrison of thirty to eighty men is thought adequate even for big cities. It is strikingly vindicated in a letter of Nebuchadnezzar, Lehi's contemporary, wherein the great king orders: "As to the fifties who were under your command, those gone to the rear, or fugitives return to their ranks." Commenting on this, Offord says, "**In these days it is interesting to note the indication here, that in the Babylonian army a platoon contained fifty men**"; also, **we might add, that it was called a "fifty," hence, "Laban and his fifty."** Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952, 111-12.

<sup>4</sup> Lundwall, *Oedipus and the Underworld: Mystery Cosmography in Ancient Myth and Ritual*, dissertation, Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2013, p. 114-126. Lundwall sees the connection between the 50 and the choral arrangements of the earliest myths and rituals associated with the ancient Near East. Examples include Gilgamesh and the Anunnakku "the knowers of the way," as well as Jason and the 50 Argonauts. Lundwall also brings in Irish myth of Cessair and her founding of Ireland on a boat oared by 50 female sailors. Eridu, long considered to be the most ancient city established in southern Mesopotamia, was known to have 50 Anuna or Anunnakku. According to some

4. Elijah pities the third captain of fifty, and he tells him of Ahaziah's upcoming death (2 Kgs. 1.13-16).
5. Joram/Jehoram succeeds Ahaziah as king of Israel (2 Kgs. 1.17-18).

## 2 Kings 2: Elijah's Ascent and Elisha's Succession

1. Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal, then to Beth-el, down into Jericho, with his 50 "the sons of the prophets" (2 Kgs. 2.1-7).
2. Elijah divides the waters, walking on dry ground (2 Kgs. 2.8).
  - a. "Elijah took his mantle" (2 Kgs. 2.8).<sup>5</sup>
3. Elijah is taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kgs. 2.9-11).<sup>6</sup>

---

texts, there were 600 Anunnaku of the underworld, and 300 of heaven. This seems to imply that the idea of these divine beings evolved over time in the ancient world as their conception of the underworld and heaven developed. See: Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, [Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia](#), The British Museum Press, 2004, p. 34. Though another author makes no mention of Elijah, Jason Colavito also sees many important parallels to the stories of Jason and Gilgamesh. See: [Jason and the Argonauts Through the Ages](#), McFarland and Company, 2014, p. 21. Colavito's brief list of parallels to the two myths bring to mind the similarities with Elijah. Among those parallels are the following:

Immediately, several parallels (between Gilgamesh and Jason) attract out attention:

1. Both (the Sumerian version of) Gilgamesh and Jason have **fifty companions** and are associated with healing.
2. **Both receive divine protection** (from the sun god and from Hera).
3. Both are involved in the slaying of a giant (Humbaba and Talos), with help from others (from Enkidu and Medea).
4. **Both journey to a realm beyond the known world by water** (to the Netherworld and Colchis/Aea).
5. Both are at first refused the prize they seek (the plant of immortality and the Fleece).
6. Both must battle a **bull** (the Bull of Heaven and the fire-breathing bulls).
7. **Both defeat a series of men** with earth-like qualities (the stone men and the dragon's tooth warriors who spring from the ground).
8. **Both face the wrath of a powerful female figure** (the goddess Ishtar/Inanna and the sorceress Medea)

<sup>5</sup> The same Spirit of revelation that Moses had...has rested upon men that have held the keys of this kingdom, whether it was during President [Brigham] Young's life or at the present time—**that same Spirit of revelation rests upon him who holds the presidency as senior apostle in the midst of the people of God**. The apostles of this Church have all the authority, they have all the keys, and it is within the preview of their office and calling to have all the Spirit of revelation necessary to lead this people into the presence of the Lamb in the celestial kingdom of our God. Elder George Q. Cannon, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:264-271.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith asserted reasons for Elijah's "translation" in this statement:

**"Now, there was a reason for the translation of Elijah. Men are not preserved in that manner unless there is a reason for it.** Moses was likewise taken up, though the scriptures say that the Lord buried him upon the mountain. Of course, the writer of that wrote according to his understanding; but Moses, like Elijah, was taken up without tasting death, because he had a mission to perform. **They had to have tangible bodies...** The Lord preserved [Moses], so that he could come at the proper time and **restore his keys**, on the heads of Peter, James, and John, who stood at the head of the dispensation of the meridian of time. **He reserved Elijah from death that he might also come and bestow his keys upon the heads of Peter, James, and John** and prepare them for their ministry...

4. Elisha, succeeding Elijah, takes the mantle given to him, and parts the waters in the view of the 50 sons of the prophets (2 Kgs. 2.12-15).
5. 50 searchers go looking to see if they can find Elijah, but after searching 3 days, report that he is gone! (2 Kgs. 2.16-18).
6. Elisha heals waters with salt so that the town has water to drink (2 Kgs. 2.19-22).
7. Elisha, the mockers, and the “she-bears” (2 Kgs. 2.23-25).<sup>7</sup>

### 2 Kings 3: The Coalition against Mesha, king of Moab

1. Jehoram’s reign (2 Kgs. 3.1-3). He rules Israel from approx. 849-843 B.C.E.
2. Mesha, king of Moab, rebels against Israel (2 Kgs. 3.4-5).<sup>8</sup>
3. Three kings unite against Moab: Judah, Israel, and Edom. **The problem:** there is not **water** enough for their forces (2 Kgs. 3.6-10). The allied forces of these three nations, instead of taking a direct route by crossing the Jordan and then driving south to Moab, swing round in a long arc through the [Negev Desert](#) and then the wilderness of Edom to the east of the Dead Sea, thus approaching Moab from the south. Their likely intention would have been to avoid Moabite troops stationed along the northern and western perimeters of Moabite territory. But this move takes them on a seven-day march through the desert, during which they run out of water.<sup>9</sup>
4. Elisha’s response to Jehoram, king of Israel, “What have I to do with thee? Get to the prophets of your father!” (2 Kgs. 3.13). Here Elisha is referring to the pagan prophets of Ahab and Jezebel, this is a sarcastic statement. The only reason Elisha engages with these men seems to have to do with the fact that the king of Judah is present.

---

**Why was Elijah reserved? What keys did he hold?** What keys did he bestow on Peter, James, and John? Exactly the same keys that he bestowed upon the head of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. And what were they? Some of you may be saying the keys of baptism for the dead, No, it was not just that. Some of you may be thinking it was the keys of the salvation of the dead. No, it was not just that, that was only a portion of it. **The keys that Elijah held were the keys of the everlasting priesthood, the keys of the sealing power, which the Lord gave unto him.** And that is what he came and bestowed upon the heads of Peter, James, and John; and that is what he gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith; and that included a ministry of sealing for the living as well as the dead—and it is not confined to the living and it is not confined to the dead, but includes them both. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Bookcraft, 1954-56, 2: 107.

<sup>7</sup> The bears did not kill and eat. The large carnage is mentioned as an indication that their behavior was not natural. This story, like the Elijah story in 1.9-16, emphasizes that the man of God must be treated with proper respect. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 730. Robert Alter shares an alternate view of this bit from Elisha’s life: This murderous response to the boys’ mockery is morally scandalous. Is it meant to suggest that Elisha does not make responsible use of his prophetic powers, that after turning death to life at the spring he now spreads death? **The early rabbis were so outraged by this story that they felt constrained to assert it never really happened. Their formulation, “neither bears nor forest,” became idiomatic in Hebrew for a cock-and-bull story.** Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, Volume 2, W.W. Norton & Co., 2019, p. 534, emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> Mesha is supposed to pay tribute to Israel, as King David had forced Moab into vassal status. At some point during the reign of Baasha (900-877 BCE), Moab was able to drive out the Israeli overlords. Omri, the father of Ahab, was able to subjugate Moab and reinstate the tribute system established by David.

<sup>9</sup> Alter, p. 535-536.

5. Elisha, seeing the problem of the lack of water, calls for a minstrel (2 Kgs. 3.14-15).<sup>10</sup>
6. And he said, “This wadi shall be full of pools” (Tanakh JPS translation, 2 Kgs. 3.16).<sup>11</sup>
7. Elisha prophesies victory over Moab’s forces (2 Kgs. 3.17-18), despite the fact that they will not see any rain.
  - a. The country was “filled with water” (2 Kgs. 3.20).
  - b. The Moabites, seeing the redness appearance of the water, assume that the three nations were in conflict, killing their leaders. This encouraged them to attack the coalition, and in so doing, they were defeated (2 Kgs. 3.21-25).
    - i. Kir-haraseth: This is an alternate name for Kir-Moab, the capital of Moab.<sup>12</sup>
  - c. The King of Edom, in desperation, sacrifices his son to his god Chemosh, and is able to escape (2 Kgs. 3.26-27).
    - i. **וְיָהִי קֶצֶף-גְּדוֹל עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל** “There was great *qetsef* against Israel” (2 Kgs. 3.27).<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> “As the lyre player played, the hand of the LORD was upon him.” The use of stringed instruments and percussion instruments to induce a vatic trance through their hypnotic rhythm is known in many different traditions of ecstatic religion. In the Bible, it is typically linked with bands of professional prophets (see, for example, 1 Samuel 10:5–6). What is unusual here is that an individual prophet feels he has to have recourse to these musical stimuli in order to gain access to God’s word. Alter, p.536.

<sup>11</sup> Alter translates **עָשָׂה הַנְּחָל הַזֶּה גְּבִים גְּבִים** as “dig out this wadi into hollows” (2 Kgs. 3.16). He adds, “In the rocky gulches in this region, rainwater would gather in the little hollows and crevices in the rock. In this miraculous instance, however, there will be no rain.” Alter, p. 536. The Greek command reads ποιήσατε τὸν χειμάρρου τοῦτον βοθύνους βοθύνους.

<sup>12</sup> Alter, p. 537.

<sup>13</sup> To some scholars, this story represent the worldview of the authors of the Hebrew Bible, one that allowed for multiple gods, a view known today as monolatry. In this view, many gods existed, and from the view of the authors of kings, they acknowledged these gods, while also asserting that Yahweh was their god, and he was pre-eminent among the many gods that existed. Peter Enns puts it this way:

Around the year 850 BCE, almost one hundred years after Israel split into the northern and southern kingdoms, King Mesha of Moab rebelled against the north. Moab was one of Israel’s eastern neighbors, on the other side of the Jordan River, and had been under the thumb of the north for about a century. The northern king, Jehoram, understandably couldn’t let this go, so he mustered his troops and, along with the help of the king of the southern kingdom, Jehoshaphat (as in “jumpin’ Jehoshaphat”), and an unnamed king of nearby Edom, went to put Mesha in his place.

The story, told in 2 Kings 3, may sound as interesting as watching plaque form on your teeth, and for the most part it is—until we get to the end of the story. The outnumbered Moabites were pinned inside a walled city. Out of conventional options, Mesha did what any of us would have done in his position: he sacrificed to his god his firstborn son on the city wall.

Ha. Just kidding. We’d never do that. But, wow, what a zany pagan king that Mesha was, thinking that sacrificing his son and successor to his fictional god (Chemosh) would actually do any good!! **Can you believe these people? Well, thank goodness the Bible will set him right. There are no other gods, child sacrifice is barbaric, and—obviously—this won’t work.**

**Except it does.**

## 2 Kings 4: Elisha and the Widow

1. Elisha multiplies the widow's oil (2 Kgs. 4.1-7).
  - a. "Now a creditor is coming to seize my two children as slaves!" (2 Kgs. 4.1).<sup>14</sup>

---

After Mesha sacrifices his son, we read: And great wrath came upon Israel, so they [the Israelite-led coalition] withdrew from him [Mesha] and returned to their own land (2 Kings 3:27).

And that's how this story ends. No explanation. As if this is just what happens now and then when an enemy king sacrifices his son to a god. The biblical writers really should have thought ahead and included "footnotes for modern Christians." ... **Mesha's move, though hardly easy for him, made sense in his world. He appeased his high god, Chemosh, with a sacrifice the deity couldn't refuse.** With divine pleasure restored, a wrath fell upon the Israelite-led coalition, and they were repelled.

And all of this leads me to my point for bringing up the wild and wacky world of Iron Age religion. **The biblical storyteller not only is clearly on board with the idea that Mesha's sacrifice worked, but didn't even feel the need to explain the concept to his readers.**

Neither does the writer explain why Yahweh didn't interfere at that point and give the Israelites a glorious victory despite the sacrifice. I mean, I would expect to read, "And yet, Chemosh was still powerless to stop Israel's Yahweh-backed victory." Perhaps Yahweh didn't want to back a coalition led by the northern kingdom (the writers of 1 and 2 Kings have nothing good to say about the north). **We don't know, but what we do know is that the writer accepted without explanation or hesitation the notion that other gods actually exist, can be appeased, and have the power to affect the course of human affairs. It's just a given.**

Yes, Virginia, other gods do exist—at least the Israelites thought so, along with all their ancient neighbors. That notion takes some getting used to for us, but it might (or might not) help to remember that the ancient biblical writer really had no choice about what to make of Mesha's last-minute rescue.

**The writer was part of a world that imagined the divine realm this way, and he can hardly be faulted.** Any of us would have done the same. Peter Enns, [\*How the Bible Actually Works: In Which I Explain How An Ancient, Ambiguous, and Diverse Book Leads Us to Wisdom Rather Than Answers—and Why That's Great News\*](#), HarperOne, 2019, p. 99/281 electronic version, emphasis added.

Robert Alter explains this verse thus: "This denouement is surely perplexing from a monotheistic point of view. **"Fury" (qetsef) is usually the term for God's devastating rage against Israel when the people has transgressed.** Here, however, Israel has done no wrong. And the descent of the fury explicitly reverses Elisha's favorable prophecy. This turn of events might reflect an early tradition that accords Chemosh, the Moabite god, power that must be propitiated by human sacrifice, so that he will then blight the enemies of Moab. In any case, the story means to explain why Israel and its allies, after an initial victory, were obliged to retreat. A Moabite inscription on a stele, discovered in 1868, in which Mesha speaks in the first person, triumphantly proclaims a sweeping victory over Israel, though it is not altogether clear whether this victory is over Jehoram or his predecessor." Alter, p. 538.

Berlin and Brettler put it this way, "Although interpreters are unsure what the author meant by *a great wrath came upon Israel*, it suggests that Mesha achieved his objective, and the human sacrifice was efficacious. The coalition abandoned the field and returned home. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 732.

<sup>14</sup> This woman has a dilemma, as she is poor and her two children are to be taken as slaves. See also Ex. 21.2-11; Lev. 25.39-55; Deut. 15.12-15; Nehemiah 5.1-5. This was a long established reality of the ancient Near East. Elisha's response was to help the woman to pay her debts so that her children could stay free (2 Kgs. 4.7).

- b. "Go, borrow thee vessels!" (2 Kgs. 4.3).<sup>15</sup>
- c. She is able to pay the debts with the oil to keep her children's freedom (2 Kgs. 4.7).
2. Elisha prophesies of a son for the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs. 4.8-17).
  - a. אִשָּׁה גְדוֹלָה "A great woman" (2 Kgs. 4.8).<sup>16</sup>
3. Elisha raises the son of the Shunammite woman from the dead (2 Kgs. 4.18-37).<sup>17</sup>
  - a. Gehazi tries to raise the son but is unable (2 Kgs. 4.25-31).
  - b. Elisha's sacred embrace revives the boy (2 Kgs. 4.32-37).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> All these stories about Elisha's performing miracles to aid people in distress have a strong folkloric character. They would provide direct inspiration for the stories about Jesus's miracles in the Gospels—the cruse of oil that is constantly full, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the multiplication of the fish and loaves. Alter, p. 538-539.

<sup>16</sup> אִשָּׁה גְדוֹלָה *isha gadolah* - The usual sense of the Hebrew adjective *gadolah* is "great," but it also has the meaning of "wealthy." The fact that she has the means to add a room to her house and furnish it argues for the sense of "wealthy." See: Alter, p. 539.

<sup>17</sup> This is similar to the experience of Elijah and his raising of the widow's son in 1 Kings 17.21-22.

<sup>18</sup> This is most likely related to the ritual embrace discussed in Hugh Nibley's [The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, An Egyptian Endowment](#), pages 242-250. Some bits from these pages may be helpful: The cosmic implications of the scene are recalled ... : **"He placed me upon his neck; he would not let me depart from him. My name lives: Son of the Primordial God. I live in the members of my father Atum; I am the living one upon his neck....** he sent me down to this earth even to the Isle of Flame when my name became Osiris, son of Geb.... My father Atum embraced me (sn.wy) when he came from the horizon of the East; his heart was pleased at seeing me...."

One of the most puzzling episodes in the Bible has always been the story of Jacob's wrestling with the Lord. When one considers that the word conventionally translated by "wrestled" (yeaveq) can just as well mean "embrace," and that it was in this ritual embrace that **Jacob received a new name and the bestowal of priestly and kingly power at sunrise (Gen. 32:24ff), the parallel to the Egyptian coronation embrace becomes at once apparent.** One retained his identity after **the ritual embrace, yet that embrace was nothing less than a ... a fusing of identities, of mortal with immortal, of father with son, and as such marked "the highpoint of the whole mystery-drama"** ... In the mysteries of many sects, **wrapping in a holy garment is the equivalent of embracing...** The two arms here do not represent a confining embrace, but a means of passage to the beyond, as in Book of the Dead Ch. 26, a passage also found in the tomb of Tutankhamen: "The two arms of the Temple are open, Geb the Prince throws wide his limbs. He opens thy two eyes ... I have taken away thy veil over thee.... Lift thy head, stand on thy feet ..." ... , for the veil is the last barrier to the infinite—what lies beyond is endless space... **Properly speaking, one did not go "through" the temple—in one door and out another; for one enters and leaves by the same door—but in opposite directions,** as Helck makes clear in a diagram (Ritualszenen, p. 185). The Two Ways of Light and Darkness are but one way after all, as the wise Heraclitus said: **"The up-road and the down-road are one";** which one depends on the way we are facing.

The classic robe of the initiate throughout the East has always been and still is the pure white (Plut., de Isid., 77) **wrap thrown over the shoulder, which also represents an embrace** (Mayassis, pp. 404f, 425), everything should be white (Plut., de Isid., 77). The well-known shifting of garments from left to right in initiation ceremonies (e.g., of the tassel on the mortarboard at graduations) is a reminder, according to St. Hippolytus of Rome, that **"nature consists of opposites, good and bad,** even as right and left—light and darkness, night and day, life and death"... From the very first, as Rusch points out, the text makes it clear that **a real physical embrace took place.** At his coronation, the new king, following his purification, was led by the hand of two gods (priests in masks), one of whom was Atum, to his throne; from there he proceeded to the holy of holies "to behold his Father"; there his father embraced him and crowned him. Nibley, [Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment](#), Deseret Book, 2005, p. 242-250. See also Stephen D. Ricks, [The Sacred Embrace and the Sacred Handclasp in Ancient Mediterranean Religions](#).

4. Elisha neutralizes the poison in the pot at Gilgal (2 Kgs. 4.38-41).
5. Elisha multiples loaves of bread (2 Kgs. 4.42-44).

### 2 Kings 5: Elisha and Naaman the Leper

1. Naaman, by the report of a captive maid, goes to Samaria to be cured of his leprosy (2 Kgs. 5.1-7).
2. Elisha sends a message to Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan River (2 Kgs. 5.8-12).
  - a. Naaman is not happy with this message (2 Kgs. 5.11-12).
3. A servant convinces Naaman to try what Elisha's servant commands (2 Kgs. 5.13).
4. Naaman dips seven times and is cured of his leprosy (2 Kgs. 5.14).
5. Naaman offers Elisha gifts, which are refused, then he requests soil from the land, assuming that Yahweh can only be worshipped on soil where the experience of the miracle occurred (2 Kgs. 5.15-19).<sup>19</sup>
  - a. "The house of Rimmon" (2 Kgs. 5.18). Rimmon is an alternate name for the storm god Hadad.
  - b. "And he leaneth on my hand" (2 Kgs. 5.18). Given Naaman's position as accompanier of the king in the temple, which would be an official duty, he can scarcely avoid going through the outward motions of Rimmon worship.<sup>20</sup>
6. Gehazi, abusing his privilege as a servant of Elisha, takes gifts from Naaman. In so doing, Gehazi then becomes cursed with leprosy (2 Kgs. 5.20-27).<sup>21</sup>

### 2 Kings 6: The ax head, the Aramean raiders, and the siege of Samaria

1. Elisha, giving leave of the young prophets to enlarge their living space, causes an ax head to float (2 Kgs. 6.1-7).<sup>22</sup>
2. Elisha reveals to the king of Israel the plans of the Syrian king (2 Kgs. 6.8-12).

---

<sup>19</sup> Naaman assumes that proper sacrifice to YHWH can be offered only on the soil of Israel, and so he requests permission to take some of it back with him to Aram. Some scholars see in this a reflection of the quandary of the Israelites exiled after 721 B.C.E., though that is not a necessary inference. Alter, p. 545.

<sup>20</sup> Alter, p. 545.

<sup>21</sup> Gehazi is obliged to implement his greedy act by an outright lie: that his master needs some of the proffered gift for two newly arrived acolyte prophets. He does not dare ask for the whole splendid gift, though Naaman generously gives him twice the amount of silver he requested. Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Orson Pratt said, "**The same Being, who gave the law to materials by which they act, can counteract the law.** He did so in the instance when Elisha caused iron to swim. 2 Kgs. 6:6 We read, that as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water. The man, was much concerned, because it was a borrowed axe. 2 Kgs. 6:5 "And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim." 2 Kgs. 6:6 Now what was it that caused the axe to rise in the water? The same Being who gave the law of gravitation, which caused the axe to sink, counteracted that law, and caused the axe to swim. The same Being who gave the law of universal gravitation, can counteract this law. He did it, in many instances, in ancient times. He divided the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to pass." Orson Pratt, "Man to be Judged by Law," *Journal of Discourses* 21.232, emphasis added.

- a. וּמֶלֶךְ אַרָם הָיָה נֹלָחֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל “The King of Aram (Syria – KJV) warred against Israel” (2 Kgs. 6.8).<sup>23</sup>
3. The Syrian forces sent to [Dothan](#)<sup>24</sup> to capture Elisha are smitten with blindness (2 Kgs. 6.13-18).<sup>25</sup>
  - a. “They that be with us are more than they that be with them!” (2 Kgs. 6.16).<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> וּמֶלֶךְ אַרָם הָיָה נֹלָחֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל “And the king of Aram had been battling against Israel” (2 Kgs. 6.8). **It is not possible to determine with any confidence which kings they are from these generalized terms. It also looks as if these episodes in sequence were originally independent stories collected and strung together editorially. There is no hint here that in the previous episode an Israelite prophet cured an Aramean general, who then went off happily, converted to monotheism.** Alter, p. 547, emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> Dothan (Hebrew: דֹּתָן) (also Dotan) was a location mentioned twice in the Hebrew Bible (once in the narrative of the sale of Joseph in Genesis 37.17, and again here in 2 Kings 6). It has been identified with Tel Dothan, also known as Tel al-Hafireh, located adjacent to the [Palestinian town of Bir al-Basha](#), and ten kilometers (driving distance) southwest of Jenin, near Dotan Junction of Route 60.

<sup>25</sup> הַכִּיּוֹרִים אֶת־הַגּוֹיִם הַזֶּה בְּסִנְיָרִים Strike this nation with blinding light! (2 Kgs. 6.18). Robert Alter explains, “Blinding light, *sanweirim*, is also what the divine messengers at Sodom (Genesis 19:11) use to disable the mob of would-be rapists, and a connection between these two groups impelled by nefarious intention may be suggested.” Alter, p. 548.

<sup>26</sup> Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, “Uncertainty as to world conditions does not justify moral uncertainty, and distracting churn will not cover our sins nor dim God’s all-seeing eye. Furthermore, military victories are no substitute for winning our individual wars for self-control. Nor do the raging human hatreds lessen God’s perfect and redeeming love for all His children. Likewise, the obscuring mists of the moment cannot change the reality that Christ is the Light of the World!

Let us, therefore, be like the young man with Elisha on the mount. At first intimidated by the surrounding enemy chariots, the young man’s eyes were mercifully opened, and he saw “horses and chariots of fire,” verifying “they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kgs. 6:16) Brothers and sisters, the spiritual arithmetic has not changed!

**Our own intellectual shortfalls and perplexities do not alter the fact of God’s astonishing foreknowledge, which takes into account our choices for which we are responsible. Amid the mortal and fragmentary communiques and the breaking news of the day concerning various human conflicts, God lives in an eternal now where the past, present, and future are constantly before Him (D&C 130:7). His divine determinations are guaranteed, since whatever He takes in His heart to do, He will surely do it (Abr. 3:17). He knows the end from the beginning! (Abr. 2:8). God is fully “able to do [His] ... work” and to bring all His purposes to pass, something untrue of the best-laid plans of man since we so often use our agency amiss! (2 Ne. 27:20)**

God has assured us:

“I will lead you along” D&C 78:18

“I will be in your midst” D&C 49:27

He will be “with [us],” brothers and sisters, “in [our] time of trouble” D&C 3:8 including through the guidance of His living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Neal A. Maxwell, “Care for the Life of the Soul,” April 2003 General Conference.



4. The Aramean (Syrian- KJV) forces, having been brought to Samaria, are fed by the Israelite tribes and are peacefully allowed to return to their land (2 Kgs. 6.19-23).<sup>27</sup>
5. A great famine arises in Samaria,<sup>28</sup> and at the same time the land is under siege by Ben-Hadad of Aram. The text states that the famine causes women to eat their own children (2 Kgs. 6.24-29).
  - a. We can evidently see from this verse (v. 24) that there is a real problem with this story. 2 Kgs. 6.24 directly contradicts verse 23, which states that “Syria went no more into the land of Israel.”<sup>29</sup>
  - b. “An ass’s head was sold for 80 pieces of silver” (2 Kgs. 6.25).<sup>30</sup>
  - c. A woman cried out הוֹשִׁיעָה אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ *hoshia adoniy hamelek!* Save! My Lord, O king! (2 Kgs. 6.26).<sup>31</sup>
6. The Israelite king blames Elisha for the famine and the siege and seeks to kill Elisha (2 Kgs. 6.30-33).<sup>32</sup>

## 2 Kings 7: The end of the siege and plenty in Israel

1. Elisha prophesies of plenty in the land of Israel (2 Kgs. 7.1-2).
  - a. “a measure of fine flour for a shekel” (2 Kgs. 7.1).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> We are not told the names of the Aramean or the Israelite kings in this story, which makes it difficult to pinpoint this to a chronological setting. See: *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 737.

<sup>28</sup> Starvation in besieged towns cut off from all food supplies was one of the great terrors of ancient warfare, a fact reflected in many biblical texts. The famine here is a counterpoint to the royal feast at the end of the preceding episode. Alter, p. 548-549.

<sup>29</sup> It is for this reason that Berlin and Brettler suggest that “these stories have not been combined in historical order.” *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 738.

<sup>30</sup> **Till a donkey’s head cost eighty pieces of silver and a quarter of a qab of pigeon-droppings five pieces of silver** (2 Kgs. 6.25). The besieged population is so desperate for food that even the most inedible part of an unclean animal commands a prince’s ransom. Some scholars understand the term for pigeon-droppings as a reference to carob pods, but that dilutes the hyperbolic power of the statement—that even animal filth was consumed by the starving people, and at a stiff price. Qab is a unit of dry measure, probably a little over a liter. Alter, p. 549.

<sup>31</sup> This image of a woman crying out to the king for salvation reminds me (Mike Day) of the hosanna shout. We are all, in type fashion, this woman. We are all crying out to the heavenly king to be saved. See [3 Nephi 11.16-17](#): And they did cry out with one accord saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.

<sup>32</sup> **So may God do to me and even more, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stays on him today** (2 Kgs. 6.31). The king’s fury against Elisha may be triggered by his recognition of the prophet’s supernatural powers. If the man of God is able to blind and capture a heavy force of Aramean warriors, his failure to intervene on behalf of the besieged town must be a deliberately hostile act. Alter, p. 549.

<sup>33</sup> **A seah of fine flour will sell for a shekel.** The prices stipulated here are the antithesis of the astronomic prices for virtually inedible stuff mentioned in 6:25. This is, then, a concrete way of saying that the deadly famine will suddenly come to an end. **It should be kept in mind that in this early period, the shekel is not a coin but a weight of silver (about 11.5 grams).** A seah is roughly 7.3 liters. Alter, p. 550, emphasis added.

2. Four hungry lepers outside the gate decide to risk coming to the Aramean camp. When they get to the camp, they see that they have fled, and so they tell the news to the king's servants (2 Kgs. 7.3-11).<sup>34</sup>
3. The king, finding the report of the lepers to be true, takes the spoil from the Aramean/Syrian camp (2 Kgs. 7.12-16).
4. The man who would not believe the prophecy of Elisha regarding plenty, having charge of the gate, is trampled and killed (2 Kgs. 7.17-20).<sup>35</sup>
5. In this podcast I (Mike Day) make mention of Heber C. Kimball's "States Goods Prophecy." You can read more about Heber's prophecy here:  
<https://www.ldsscriptureteachings.org/2016/11/25/the-miracle-of-the-seagulls-and-the-states-goods-prophecy/>

---

<sup>34</sup> The diseased men are thus outside the town, in a liminal space between the besieged city and the Aramean camp. **The [schadenfreude](#) in this account of the flight of the Arameans is heightened by the fact that the discovery of their precipitous retreat is made by outcasts.** Ibid, p. 551, emphasis added.

<sup>35</sup> This is a credible detail: the people, on the point of death by starvation, stampede through the gate to get at the food and riches they have heard are available in the Aramean camp (or to get to those who have already expropriated the flour and are selling it at the prices announced in the previous verse), and so they inadvertently trample the official. Elisha's obscure prophecy is now violently fulfilled. Ibid, p. 553.