

## Elisha ~ Part 18

In my last post, we continued to explore the ministry of **Elisha** by looking at **2 Kings 6:15-23** where we learned that **God Who Shows Mercy**. In this post, we continue with **2 Kings 6:24-33** where we see the **God Who Keeps His Covenant**.

**Warning:** What follows is one of the gut-wrenching passages in Scripture given the subject matter.

*"<sup>24</sup> But some time afterwards, Ben-Hadad king of Aram gathered all his army, went up and laid siege to Shomron. <sup>25</sup> At the time, there was a severe famine in Shomron; and they maintained their siege until a donkey's head sold for eighty pieces of silver and half a pint of doves' dung for five pieces of silver. <sup>26</sup> As the king of Isra'el was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, 'Help, my lord, king!' <sup>27</sup> He said, 'If Adonai isn't helping you, how do you expect me to help you? There isn't any grain, and there isn't any wine.' <sup>28</sup> Then the king asked her, 'What's troubling you?' She answered, 'This woman said to me, 'Give me your son, so that we can eat him today; and we'll eat my son tomorrow.' <sup>29</sup> So we boiled my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give your son, so that we can eat him,' but she has hidden her son.' <sup>30</sup> When the king heard what the woman said, he tore his clothes. At the time, he was passing by on the wall; and when the people looked, they saw him there with sackcloth against his skin. <sup>31</sup> Then he said, 'May God do terrible things to me, and worse ones too, if the head of Elisha the son of Shafat remains on his body by day's end.' <sup>32</sup> Elisha was sitting in his house, and the leaders were sitting there with him. The king sent a messenger ahead, but before he arrived, Elisha said to the leaders, 'Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent someone to remove my head? Look, when the messenger comes, close the door and keep it shut against him. You can hear his master's footsteps following right behind him!' <sup>33</sup> While he was still speaking, the messenger arrived with this message from the king: 'Here, this evil is from Adonai. Why should I wait for Adonai any longer?'" ~ 2 Kings 6:24-33 (CJB)*

The border raids had stopped, but **Ben Hadad** decided it was time again for war. Rulers have to prove themselves to their people and defeating and looting a neighbor is one of the best ways to reveal your strength and wisdom. This time he sent the full army, and he seems to have caught **Yoram** unprepared. Perhaps the peace along the borders lulled **Yoram** into thinking that **Aram** was no longer a threat.

The siege of **Shomron** lasted so long that the people in the city were starving. It seems that **Elisha** had counseled the king to wait (v. 33), promising that the Lord would do something, but the longer they waited, the worse the circumstances became. But it must be remembered that God warned that He would punish His people if they failed to live up to the terms of His covenant. In the past, among His punishments were military defeat and famine, and Israel was now experiencing both. Had **King Yoram** called his people to repentance and prayer, the situation would have changed (see 2 Chronicles 7:14). People were reduced to eating unclean food, such as a donkey's head and dove's droppings, and for these, they paid exorbitant prices.

But even worse, people were eating their children! This, too, was a predicted punishment for breaking God's covenant (Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:53-57). **King Yoram** met two such women as he walked on the wall and surveyed the city. One woman called to the king for help, and he thought she wanted food and drink. **Yoram's** reply blamed the Lord and not on the sins of the nation. God alone could fill the threshing floor and the winepress and provide food and drink. But the woman didn't want food and drink; she wanted justice. Her friend hadn't kept her part of the bargain but had hidden her son!

**Yoram** was appalled that the nation had fallen so low, and he publicly tore his robe, not as a sign of sorrow and repentance but as evidence of his anger at God and **Elisha**. When he did, he exposed the fact that he was wearing a rough sackcloth garment beneath the royal robe, but what good is sackcloth if there's no humility and repentance in the heart? His next words make it clear that he took no responsibility for the siege

and the famine and that he wanted to murder **Elisha**. He even used the oath that he learned from his evil mother, **Izevel**. **Yoram's** father, Ach'av, called **Elijah "the troubler of Israel"** (1 Kings 18:17), and **Yoram** blamed **Elisha** for the plight **Shomron** was in at that time. The king sent a messenger to arrest **Elisha** and take him out for execution.

The prophet wasn't upset or worried, for the Lord always told **Elisha** everything he needed to know. As the prophet sat in his house with the elders of the land, leaders who had come to him for counsel and help, he knew that the arresting officer was on his way. He also knew that the king would follow him to make sure the execution was a success. **Elisha** had already made it clear that he didn't accept the authority of the king of Israel because **Yoram** was not of the line of **David** (3:14).

**Elisha** commanded the elders to hold the door shut until both men were outside. Being kept waiting at the door didn't help the king's temper one bit, and he called to **Elisha**, *'Here, this evil is from Adonai. Why should I wait for Adonai any longer?'* He should have said, *"I am the cause of this great tragedy, and I repent of my sins! Pray for me!"* There was a provision in the covenant for confession and forgiveness if only **King Yoram** and his people had taken advantage of it.

*The Lord always keeps His covenant, whether to bless if His people obey or to discipline if they disobey.*

In my next post, we continue to explore the life of **Elisha**. In this post, we will pick up the story of **Elisha** in **2 Kings 7:1-17** where we hear some **Good News**.