

YOUTH



LEVEL 6

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 9



Elisha Succeeds Elijah

ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH

The sons of the prophets had tried to find Elijah, whom God had taken away in a whirlwind. But after three days, they gave up the search and returned to Jericho where Elisha was staying. They now realized that God had chosen Elisha to succeed Elijah as prophet to the nation of Israel.

POLLUTED WATER BECOMES FRESH

The people of Jericho had a very serious problem with their water supply. The city leaders asked Elisha for help. "This city is a pleasant place to live," they said to Elisha, "but our water supply is bad. It is affecting our crops and the health of our people."

"Bring me a new container and fill it with salt," Elisha instructed the city officials. They soon fulfilled his request.

Elisha then went over to the polluted spring and threw the salt into it. This was a symbolic act, for Elisha knew that God, and not the salt, would purify the

waters. "From now on," Elisha informed the people, "these waters will bring good health to you and produce bountiful crops!" (II Kings 2:19-21.)

Soon afterward, Elisha left Jericho and went to Bethel, where there was a college for prophets that Elijah had established. Along the route, a group of young men came out from Bethel, shouting insults at Elisha. "Look at the old bald head!" they mocked.

Elisha looked at the men and pronounced a curse on them in God's name. Their jeering abruptly ceased when two growling bears suddenly appeared out of the nearby woods. Before the young men could escape, the bears clawed and tore at them, mauling 42 of them.

From Bethel, Elisha traveled to Mt. Carmel, in the northern part of Israel, and from there he went down to Samaria, the capital of Israel.

MOAB REBELS AGAINST ISRAEL

Jehoram (also called Joram, II Kings 8:16), a son of King Ahab, became king over Israel after the death of his brother Ahaziah, who reigned for two years. Jehoram tore down the statue of Baal his father had made, but otherwise

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

Two juglets dating shortly after the time of Elisha (Iron IIC). The widow whose oil was miraculously multiplied may have used juglets similar to these.

Courtesy of Department of Antiquities/Israel

displeased God by continuing in the sins of Jeroboam.

Do you remember what Jeroboam's sins were? (Read and summarize I Kings 12:26-32) _____

While Ahab was king, the neighboring country of Moab paid a heavy tribute to Israel. But soon after Ahab's death, Mesha, king of Moab, rebelled. Jehoram decided to send his army to Moab to force the nation into resuming its tribute payments. Before going, however, he asked righteous Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, for military assistance.

At the time, both nations were friendly toward one another because of a marriage between Ahab's daughter and Jehoshaphat's son. Jehoshaphat willingly offered his army and supplies to help Israel. The nation of Edom also joined the alliance.

Together the kings of Judah, Israel and Edom traveled toward Moab with their armies and supplies. They took an indirect route to Moab, around the south end of the Dead Sea.

But after seven days of marching through the hot, dry desert their water supply ran out. Frightened that God was against them, King Jehoram said, "Alas! that the _____ hath _____ these three _____ together, to _____ them into the _____ of _____!" (II Kings 3:10.)

Jehoshaphat agreed that the situation

looked grim, but he knew God could deliver them. He asked Jehoram if one of God's prophets was present that they might inquire of God.

One of Jehoram's servants said that Elisha the prophet was with the army. The kings quickly found Elisha and questioned him.

Elisha did not appreciate a visit from the king of Israel, whom he knew to be a wicked man. "What have I to do with you?" he asked the king. "Why don't you go to the prophets of your father and mother? Were it not for the fact that I respect King Jehoshaphat, I would not tolerate your presence!" (II Kings 3:13-14.)

"Here is a message from God," Elisha then told the three kings. "Make this _____ full of _____. For thus saith the _____, Ye shall not see _____, neither shall ye see _____; yet that _____ shall be _____ with _____, that ye may _____, both ye, and your _____, and your _____. And this is but a _____ thing in the _____ of the _____: he will _____ the _____ also into your _____" (II Kings 3:16-18).

The kings immediately put the soldiers to work digging ditches in the valley where they were camped. Early the next morning, a torrent of water came flowing into the valley from the direction of Edom, filling the ditches with water.

Meanwhile, the Moabites, who learned of the advancing armies, organized an army on their border close to

the Israelite camp. When they saw the early morning sun shining brightly on the water in the ditches, they thought they were seeing blood. The reflection of the sunlight on the water made it appear red like blood!

Thinking that Israel, Judah and Edom had quarreled and fought one another, the Moabites rushed into the Israelite camp, eager to gather the spoil left from the battle they supposed had taken place.

But to their great surprise, the camp was not empty! The Israelites attacked and chased the startled soldiers, who turned and rushed back toward their country.

During the pursuit, the Israelites and Edomites swarmed through Moabite towns and villages, destroying buildings, plugging up water wells, tossing tons of stones into fertile fields and chopping down the best trees of the land (II Kings 3:24-25).

King Mesha and what was left of his army fled to Kir-haraseth, the capital of Moab. In desperation, he took his oldest son, who was heir to the throne, and burned him as a sacrifice to his pagan god—within view of the armies! This act was so repulsive that the armies of Israel, Judah and Edom ended their assault and returned home.

Although God intervened for Judah and Israel in the battle with Moab, He still planned to end Ahab's royal line as prophesied by Elijah years earlier.

A WIDOW'S OIL MULTIPLIED

One day, a young woman came to see

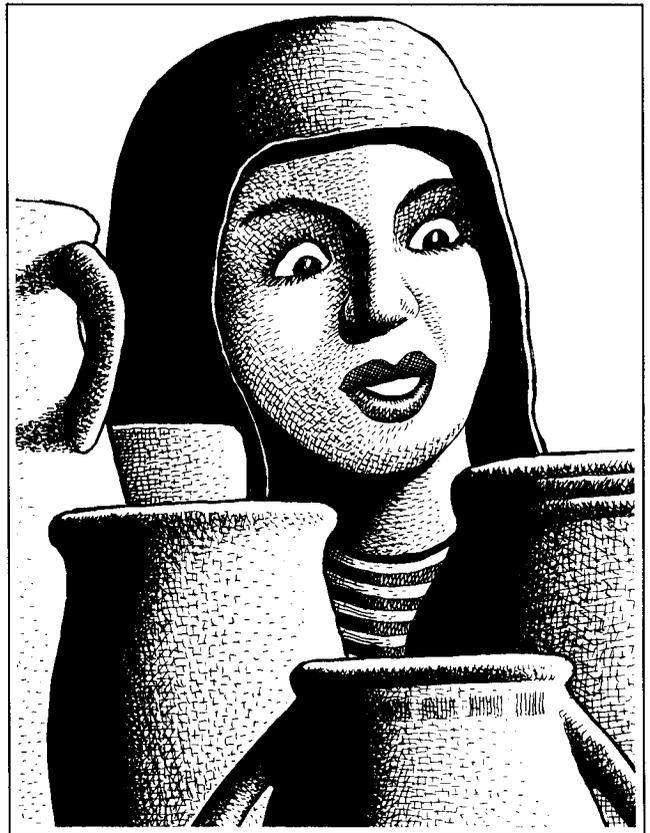
Elisha. Her husband, who was one of the sons of the prophets, had recently died.

"My husband is dead," the woman tearfully informed Elisha. "You know he was a man who feared God. Now that he is dead, a creditor has come to take my two sons as servants in payment for a debt."

"What do you want me to do for you?" Elisha asked. "Tell me, what do you have in your house?"

"All I have is one jar of oil," she replied.

"Go to all your neighbors and borrow as many empty vessels as you can," Elisha told the woman. "Take them into your house and close your doors. Then pour oil from your jar into all the vessels



The widow was amazed to see how many vessels she had filled with her single jar of oil.

and, as each is filled, put it to one side.”

The widow obeyed Elisha. Her sons brought the vessels to her and she poured oil into each one. She continued until they were all completely filled! The widow was amazed to see how many jars, bowls, vases and other containers she was able to fill with her single jar of oil. She quickly found Elisha and told him about the miracle.

“Sell the oil and pay your debt,” Elisha instructed the woman. “There will be enough money remaining for you and your sons to live on.”

GOD BLESSES A SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

A few miles north of Samaria, in the city of Shunem, there lived a wealthy woman who wanted to please God. Each time Elisha visited the city, the woman invited him to eat in her home. Elisha appreciated her gracious hospitality and enjoyed a pleasant meal with her and her husband.

After Elisha had visited several times, the woman asked her husband if she could do something special for Elisha. “I know that he is a man of God,” she said. “Let us make a little _____, I _____ thee, on the _____ [with walls]; and let us _____ for _____ there a _____, and a _____, and a _____, and a _____: and it shall be, when he _____ to us, that he shall _____ in _____” (II Kings 4:10).

When the room was completed, Elisha and his servant, Gehazi, grateful-

ly accepted their hosts’ generosity. On their trips to Shunem, the room proved to be a great blessing, a place where Elisha could rest comfortably.

Elisha was resting in the room one day thinking about the woman’s helpful attitude. “Call for the Shunammite woman,” Elisha told Gehazi. “Ask her if there is something we can do to reward her for her special concern for us. Perhaps we can ask a favor of the king or of some other high official.”

Gehazi told the woman Elisha’s words. Although grateful for Elisha’s offer, she replied, “I am quite satisfied with my life here among my people.”

Her answer impressed Elisha. Now he knew that her generosity was genuine. There was nothing she hoped to gain by her kindness to God’s servant.

But Elisha still desired to do something nice for his hostess. “Do you have any ideas, Gehazi?” Elisha asked.

Gehazi did have a suggestion. “She has no son and her husband is old. She might like to have a child.”

“Call her,” Elisha said.

When the woman stood in Elisha’s doorway, he announced the good news. “In less than one year, you shall have a son!”

The woman found the prophet’s words difficult to believe. “You must be mistaken. Do not lie to me!” she exclaimed.

Months later, however, just as Elisha announced, the woman did have a son. She was very thankful to God for allowing her and her husband to have the child.

THE WOMAN'S SON RESTORED TO LIFE

Several years passed as Elisha continued to do God's Work in Israel. He was now residing in the area of Mt. Carmel.

The son, who was God's gift to the Shunammite woman, was now a young boy. One day he went out to the field where his father and servants were reaping.

The sky was clear. The morning was exceptionally warm and the boy started feeling weak and faint.

"My head, my head!" he cried as he collapsed.

"Carry the boy to his mother," the father ordered a servant.

While the father continued working, the mother held her young son. At noon the boy died.

The woman knew only one thing to do. After placing her dead son on Elisha's bed, she left the room, closing the door behind her.

She hurriedly went out to her husband in the field. "Please send me one of our servants with a donkey," she told her husband. "I must go see the man of God at once!"

Her husband did not know why his wife suddenly wanted to see Elisha, but he provided the servant and donkey that she requested. The woman and servant then headed for Mt. Carmel to see Elisha.

From a high place on Mt. Carmel, Elisha saw the woman off in the distance. "Look! There is the Shunammite woman!" he exclaimed to Gehazi.

"Go ask her if everything is all right."

Gehazi quickly ran to meet the woman. "Is it well with your family?" he asked. Not wanting him to know what happened to her son, she replied, "All is well."

When she finally reached Elisha, the Shunammite woman fell down before his feet. Gehazi was quite disturbed at this and came near to push her away from the prophet.

"Leave her alone," Elisha said. "She is deeply troubled and God has not shown me why."

"I never asked for a son," she said tearfully. "Didn't I ask you not to deceive me?"

Elisha realized something dreadful had happened to the child. "Go and place my staff upon the face of the child!" he ordered Gehazi. Gehazi quickly left for her home in Shunem.

The woman pleaded with Elisha. "I will not leave unless you come with me," she said. Elisha had little choice except to return with the woman.

Before Elisha and the woman arrived at her home, they saw Gehazi running toward them. "I touched the boy with your staff, but he did not awake," Gehazi said.

Upon reaching the house, Elisha went into the room where the child was and shut the door. He prayed fervently to God and then breathed into the child's mouth. He also stretched his own body over the boy's to impart his own body heat.

God heard Elisha's fervent prayer and miraculously restored life to the child. Elisha called for the woman and told her

to take her son. She was very grateful to God for performing this marvelous miracle! (II Kings 4:18-37.)

POISONOUS STEW MADE HARMLESS

Later, Elisha went to the town of Gilgal. There he met with a group of young prophets. At meal time, Elisha sent his servant to prepare a vegetable stew for everyone. But because of a famine in the area, food was very scarce.

One of the men helping to gather food in the field found a wild vine that held a great deal of fruit. He thought the fruit was an edible gourd, but it was actually poisonous. He gathered a lapful and shredded them into the stewpot.

When the stew was ready, Elisha had it served to the hungry young men. Expecting a hearty meal in the middle of a severe famine, they began eating the stew.

Suddenly, the men realized the mistake. "The stew is poisoned!" they cried out.

"Quickly bring me some flour!" Elisha ordered. He sprinkled it into the pot and then had new portions given to the men. This time the stew tasted good. God had blessed their food and removed all of the poison (II Kings 4:38-41).

Do You Remember?

1. What did Elisha throw into the



The men suddenly realized that the vegetable stew was poisoned.

-
- spring to make the water fresh?
_____.
2. What happened to the young men from Bethel who mocked Elisha? _____
_____.
 3. The armies of Israel, Judah and Edom dug _____ which God caused to be filled with _____.
 4. The sunlight shining on the water in the ditches appeared to the Moabites as _____.
 5. God _____ the widow's _____ so that she could pay her debt.
 6. What was God's gift to the Shunammite woman? _____.
 7. God made the _____ stew good to eat after Elisha put _____ into it.

ELISHA MIRACULOUSLY FEEDS 100 MEN

God is able to take care of any need His people have, often providing for them in unexpected ways. One day Elisha was gathered with a large group of people. While there, a man brought him 20 loaves of barley bread and a few ears of corn. This was the firstfruits gathered from his crops.

"Give the food to the people to eat," Elisha told his servant.

The servant was astounded. "We don't have enough for everyone," he answered. "There are a hundred hungry people here!"

Again Elisha told him to serve the food. "The Eternal says they shall eat

and leave extra food." The servant obeyed.

God miraculously multiplied the amount of food so that after the people ate, much of it still remained.

NAAMAN HEALED OF LEPROSY

God used Elisha in many ways. He often had Elisha deal with the most important people in the nations of the area.

In Syria, a nation to the north of Israel, there lived a powerful army commander named Naaman. He was highly regarded by the king of Syria as a valiant soldier and brilliant military leader. But Naaman suffered from the dreaded disease of leprosy.

One day a captive Israelite girl, who served in Naaman's house, told his wife about Elisha. "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy," the girl said.

Eventually, Naaman was told about what the young Israelite girl had said. He asked the king of Syria to send him to Israel. Before sending Naaman, the Syrian king wrote a letter to the king of Israel which said, "I have sent Naaman my servant to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

When Naaman arrived in Samaria, he gave the letter to King Jehoram to read. "The king of Syria sends me a leper to be healed!" Jehoram exclaimed after reading the letter. "He must be trying to start a war! What can I possibly do for a leper?"

Elisha heard about Naaman and sent word to King Jehoram. "Do not worry,"

he assured the king. "Send Naaman to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel!"

So Naaman and his servants traveled to Elisha's house. Instead of personally going out to meet Naaman, Elisha sent a servant to him with a message. "Go wash seven times in the Jordan River and you will be healed," the servant said to Naaman.

Naaman was insulted! He did not like the fact that Elisha sent a messenger to him. "He could have at least met me personally," Naaman complained. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?"

Naaman turned and walked away in a rage. A little later one of his aides convinced him to at least try what Elisha instructed. "After all, if Elisha had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it?" the servant asked.

Naaman agreed. Upon reaching the Jordan River, he dipped himself seven times in the water. To his great surprise, he walked out completely healed! Overjoyed, he returned to thank Elisha.

"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel," he told Elisha. The Syrian commander then offered him money as thanks. But Elisha refused the gift.

"I will only worship the one true God from now on," Naaman said gratefully, and then left to return to Syria.

GREEDY GEHAZI BECOMES A LEPER

Gehazi, Elisha's servant, overheard

Naaman's generous offer and allowed greed to fill his heart. He ran to catch up with the Syrian commander.

"My master sent me to tell you that two young students arrived just after you left," Gehazi lied. "We need a talent of silver and two changes of clothing for them."

Naaman happily sent money and clothing back with Gehazi. Gehazi hid the money and clothing, then returned to Elisha's home.

"Where have you been, Gehazi?" asked Elisha. "I went nowhere," he replied.

But God had somehow let Elisha know about Gehazi's actions. "Is this a time to accept money and clothing?" Elisha asked. "Because you have done this, Naaman's leprosy shall be upon you and your descendants forever."

Gehazi was horrified. In a few seconds his skin became white with



Gehazi quickly hid the money and clothing he had received from Naaman.

leprosy. He ran from Elisha's presence in anguish.

THE FLOATING AX HEAD

One day the sons of the prophets came to Elisha with a special request. "The place where we now live is too small. Could we go to the Jordan River and build a house there?"

Elisha agreed, and the young men soon began cutting down trees by the river to make beams for the house. As one man was felling a tree, the ax head separated from its handle and fell into the water. The young man was very distraught because the ax was borrowed.

"Where did it fall," Elisha inquired. The man pointed to a place near the water's edge.

Elisha cut a stick from a nearby tree and tossed it into the water. Suddenly the ax head floated to the surface next to the stick. The young man was amazed and overjoyed as he plucked it from the river (II Kings 6:1-7).

SYRIA BESIEGES SAMARIA

While Elisha continued to do God's Work in Israel, King Jehoram and the Israelites continued to displease God. Because of their sins, God allowed many troubles to come upon them.

At one point, Ben-hadad, king of Syria, besieged the capital city of Samaria. The siege lasted such a long time that food became very scarce—people began to eat anything they could find. Some even turned to cannibalism! (II Kings 6:24-30.)

King Jehoram knew that the city could not last much longer. He blamed Elisha for the terrible situation, and decided to have the prophet beheaded.

Jehoram sent soldiers on ahead of him to Elisha's house. When he and his soldiers arrived, Jehoram said to Elisha, "This trouble is from God. Why should I wait any longer for help from Him?"

Then Elisha said, "Listen to what God has to say, 'About this time tomorrow you will have so much food that a large amount of flour and barley will sell for pennies.'"

Jehoram changed his mind about having Elisha beheaded, but one of his soldiers sarcastically inquired, "Will God pour food from heaven?"

"No," Elisha replied. "But because of your attitude of disbelief and ridicule, you will see but not get to eat the food God will provide!"

During the night, God caused the Syrians to hear thundering noises that sounded like chariots, horses and a great army. Fearing that a fierce army was coming to Israel's aid, the Syrians fled in terror.

The next morning, several lepers, who lived outside the city walls, informed King Jehoram that the Syrian camp was abandoned. Suspecting that the Syrians were pretending to leave in order to lure his army from the city into battle, Jehoram sent out scouts to investigate.

"The Syrians fled beyond the Jordan, littering the way with garments and equipment," the scouts later informed Jehoram. "They also left a large quantity of food behind in their camp."

The people anxiously waited for the city gate to open. To help maintain order, King Jehoram stationed a guard at the gate. The guard was none other than the person who ridiculed Elisha the day before.

When the gate opened, hundreds of starving people pushed and shoved their way through, mercilessly trampling the guard to death, thus fulfilling Elisha's prophecy. Although the officer saw God's deliverance, he did not get to eat the food! (II Kings 6:30-7:20.)

During Elisha's service to Israel, the nation did not repent of its sins and turn to God. The condition of the nation continued to get worse and worse. God allowed this because the nation continued to sin against Him.

Warning messages from Elisha and other of God's prophets fell on spiritually deaf ears. This refusal to heed eventually led to the captivity of the ten-tribed nation of Israel by the

Assyrian Empire. We'll learn about that captivity in our next lesson.

Do You Remember?

1. God miraculously fed 100 men with _____ loaves of barley _____ and a few ears of _____.
2. What person did Elisha restore to life? _____.
3. What did Naaman have to do to be healed by God of leprosy? _____.
4. Why did Gehazi become a leper? _____.
5. Elisha tossed a small _____ into the water causing the _____ to float.
6. Why did the Syrians suddenly flee from their camp? _____.



The lepers were excited to find food and many valuables left by the Syrian soldiers.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

Look up each scripture below and briefly summarize on the lines that follow the miracle that God performed through His servant Elisha.

1. (II Kings 2:21) _____

2. (II Kings 3:16-20) _____

3. (II Kings 4:1-7) _____

4. (II Kings 4:12-17) _____

5. (II Kings 4:32-35) _____

6. (II Kings 4:38-41) _____

7. (II Kings 4:42-44) _____

8. (II Kings 5:1-14) _____

9. (II Kings 5:25-27) _____

10. (II Kings 6:1-7) _____
