

2 Kings 7 — The Noise That Emptied a Camp — Flour for a Shekel, Windows in Heaven, Four Lepers at Twilight, and the Day of Good Tidings

2 Kings 7: Samaria is starving under Ben-hadad's siege when Elisha names tomorrow's grain prices in the gate; a scoffing lord is told he will see it but not eat of it; four lepers walk into a Syrian camp emptied by a noise the Lord made, and their 'day of good tidings' feeds the city; the word is fulfilled to the letter, blessing and judgment both; Elisha's ministry under Joram, c. 846 BC (scriptural chronology; scholars date Joram's reign c. 852–841 BC).

Chapter 6 left Samaria in the dark, and you need its darkness to feel this chapter's dawn. Ben-hadad king of Syria has ringed the city until the market tells the whole story: "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver" (2 Kgs. 6:25) — eighty shekels for the least edible part of an unclean animal, and dung, or at best seed pods nicknamed for it, selling like grain. Then a woman on the wall cries "Help, my lord, O king" (6:26), and her case is the one Moses warned siege would someday produce (Deut. 28:53–57): two mothers, a pact, a boiled child. The king rends his clothes — the crowd glimpses sackcloth underneath, private despair worn against the skin — and he aims all of it at the prophet: "God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day" (6:31). The chapter's final sentence is the theology of a man at the end: "Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?" (6:33).

Hebrew Word Studies

arubbah (H699) (אַרְבָּּה) — **window, lattice, floodgate, chimney-opening vv. 2, 19.** The scoffer's sneer accidentally quotes scripture at itself. *Arubbah* is not the ordinary house window (that's *challan*); it is the floodgate, the sluice-opening in the sky — and it belongs to exactly two great biblical moments. At the flood, "the windows of heaven were opened" (Gen. 7:11) and the world drowned in what came through them. And in Malachi, the Lord turns the same word into his most famous dare: "prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10) — words the risen Christ valued enough to give the Nephites again (3 Ne. 24:10). So when the king's officer says *even if the LORD made arubbot in heaven*, he thinks he is naming an absurdity; he is actually naming the precise aperture God delights to open. His sarcasm is better theology than his belief. That is the quiet horror of the verse: he knows the vocabulary of the covenant and uses it only to mock the covenant's power. Malachi's promise and this man's sneer are the same sentence spoken in two spirits — one proves the Lord and receives more than it can hold; the other is proven wrong with its eyes open and its mouth empty.

qol (H6963) (קוֹל) — **voice, sound, noise vv. 6, 10.** Three times in one verse: a *qol* of chariots, a *qol* of horses, the *qol* of a great host. *Qol* is Hebrew's all-purpose word for voice and sound — the voice of the LORD walking in the garden (Gen. 3:8), the thunder-voices of Sinai, and, most famously in this very prophetic circle, the "still small voice" (*qol demamah daqqah*) that reached Elijah at Horeb (1 Kgs. 19:12). Hold those two texts side by side and you have the full dynamic range of God's speech: to his discouraged prophet, a *qol* thinned down to almost silence; to a besieging army, a *qol* swollen into phantom thunder. Same instrument, opposite settings — heaven speaks to each hearer at the volume its purposes require. Then verse 10 turns the word over once more: the lepers report a camp with "neither voice (*qol*) of man" — God's sound gave way to God's silence, an emptiness as eloquent as the noise. The Syrians heard chariots that were not there and ran from safety; Israel would soon hear silence where an army had been and walk into abundance. Nothing in this chapter is decided by anything heavier than sound waves. When the psalmist says "the voice of the LORD is powerful" (Ps. 29:4), 2 Kings 7 is what that looks like deployed: no other weapon in the account, and no other weapon needed.

besorah (H1309) (בְּסוֹרָה) — **good tidings, glad news v. 9.** This is the chapter's beating heart, and one of the most consequential nouns in the Bible. *Besorah* — from the verb *basar*, to bear news, to gladden with tidings — is the word the lepers use: "this day is a day of *besorah*." It is the same root Isaiah gives his herald: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isa. 52:7; echoed in Nahum 1:15). When Israel's scriptures went into Greek, this root's family became *euangelion* — the word the New Testament writers seized for their message (Rom. 10:15 quotes Isaiah's herald directly), and which came into English as *gospel*: good news. So when the lepers say "day of good tidings," they are — in the strictest lexical sense — announcing a day of gospel. Abinadi built a whole doctrine on Isaiah's verse: "these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good" (Mosiah 15:14), a company

he defines to include every soul that ever spread the message. Ammon lived the lepers' discovery from the inside — found among enemies, fed at a king's table, and so full of the news that "I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16). And the Doctrine and Covenants states the lepers' conclusion as standing law: "it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" (D&C 88:81). The arc is unbroken from a Syrian tent to the mission field: the one who finds the food does not own it; he owes it. Beautiful feet start as hungry ones.

sha■an (H8172) (שׂוֹכֵן) — **to lean upon, rely on, support oneself vv. 2, 17.** Twice the narrator identifies the doomed officer the same way: "the lord on whose hand the king *leaned*." The verb is **sha■an**, and it is never idle in scripture — it is the Old Testament's standard metaphor for trust. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and *lean* not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5) is this verb. So is the seer Hanani's indictment, aimed at another king, in this same Aramean theater: "thou hast *relied* on the king of Syria, and not *relied* on the LORD thy God" (2 Chr. 16:7). So is Isaiah's counsel for the man walking in darkness: "let him trust in the name of the LORD, and *stay* upon his God" (Isa. 50:10). The narrator, in other words, is not giving us court protocol; he is drawing a diagram of misplaced weight. The king of Israel steadies himself on the arm of a man who cannot bear the weight of a single prophetic sentence — while the word of the LORD, the one support in the chapter that holds, stands in the gate unbelieved. Put your hand on the wrong support and you fall with it; verse 17 is simply that proverb performed in public. Everyone leans on something. The chapter's whole quarrel is about what can actually take the weight — and the flour came in on schedule while the leaned-upon man went under the crowd's feet.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Two structural grace notes deserve naming. First, twilight: the lepers "rose up in the twilight" (v. 5) and the Syrians "fled in the twilight" (v. 7) — the same word, the same hour, one camp emptying in terror at the very moment four outcasts shuffle toward it in hope. Deliverance and desperation passed each other in the dusk, and neither saw the other. Second, the gate: the prophecy is spoken for the gate (v. 1), the lepers sit at the gate (v. 3), the news enters by the gatekeepers (vv. 10–11), the price falls in the gate (vv. 16, 18), and the scoffer dies in the gate (vv. 17, 20). One doorway carries the entire chapter — **sha■ar (H8179)**, the place of exchange, where grain, news, judgment, and men all pass through, or fail to. And notice, finally, how sparing God is with himself here: he speaks once (v. 1) and acts once (v. 6), and everything else is carried by lepers, porters, servants, and scouts. The chapter runs on delegated momentum — which is to say, it looks exactly like the dispensations we actually live in.