

2 KINGS 7

7:1-2

Elisha prophesied that the cost of food would go down, but only if the siege were lifted. The word translated as “measure” here is the Hebrew word *seah*, and a *seah* of flour is about eight pounds. Normally a shekel would buy far more flour, possibly around one hundred pounds. But compared to the prices in the previous chapter, the price is unbelievable enough that one of the rulers didn’t believe it. Note that the phrase “a lord on whose hand the king leaned” (verse 2) is the same phrase describing Naaman’s role to the king of Syria in 2 Kings 5:18. Elisha’s statement that “the Lord would make windows in heaven” (7:2) probably means the Lord would stop the famine by causing it to rain. Unlike Jerusalem, Samaria did not have a constant supply of water within the city walls. The city’s water would have come from rainfall collected in cisterns.

7:3-4

The four lepers were not allowed in the city and were trapped near the gate. Here the verb “to fall” should be taken as “to defect,” similar to the way the word is used in Isaiah 14:12 to describe how Lucifer was “fallen from heaven.” It’s the same word used in both passages. But another way the lepers would “fall” is by leaving the city: Samaria was located on a hill with steep slopes, so the lepers would literally descend or “fall” down the hill.

7:5-6

In the previous chapter chariots surrounded the Syrians, but no one could see them except Elisha and his servant. Then the Syrians could not see they were being led to Samaria, where they would be surrounded by an army. The miracle of the Syrians hearing chariots was enough to drive them from the camp.

7:7–11

The miracle was not just that the Syrian army fled but also that the soldiers did not take their tents, horses, or donkeys with them. Armies, like other crowds, can act irrationally, and fleeing from possible battle without taking horses seems irrational. However, it is likely the soldiers on siege duty were not mounted warriors, and it's possible that they did not know how to ride and that the animals they had with them were only there to haul supplies. We can also imagine that many of the soldiers were aware of Elisha's abilities and possibly only needed some pretext like the rumor of another army to induce the panic of this retreat.

7:12–14

Jehoram believed the retreat was some sort of trick to get the Israelites in Samaria to leave the protection of the city. Jehoram and his servant decided to take five horses (possibly the last horses left alive in the city) to follow the Syrians and make sure they were not planning on rushing back once the Israelites had opened the gates.

7:15–20

Probably because of the rumors of food outside the city, the besieged Samarian citizens trampled the king's servant who doubted Elisha's prophecy. It is ironic that he died from a rush out of the city and not from a Syrian attack into the city. The story is told twice in a chiasmic structure and without naming Elisha.

(verse 16) **A** And **the people went out**, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians.

B So a measure **of fine flour** was sold for a shekel,

C and two measures **of barley** for a shekel,

D according to **the word of the Lord**.

(verse 17) **E** And **the king** appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned

F to have the charge **of the gate**:

G **and the people trode upon him**

F' **in the gate**,

G' and he **died**,

E' as the man of God had said who spake when **the king** came down to him.

(verse 18) **D'** And it came to pass as the man of **God had spoken to the king**,

C' saying, Two measures **of barley** for a shekel,

B' and a measure **of fine flour** for a shekel,

A' shall be to morrow about this time **in the gate of Samaria**. (emphasis added)

This change of genre from historic to poetic might indicate that this part of the story was an older version that was handed down orally and then fitted into this text.

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