

# All The King's Horses

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It was hot and dry. The dust filled the horse's nostrils, making him shift uncomfortably in the blazing sun. Its rider, one of the king's horsemen, tried to comfort the beautiful black beast by stroking and gently talking to it. "Blast this heat, blast this famine and blast Elisha," he mumbled to his horse.

The famine in Samaria was beyond belief. The people had just eaten almost everything that was edible. Few had the odd dove or if blessed an ass but it was not safe to leave it in the street unguarded at night, it would disappear and be used for food. When faced with starvation, men were capable of doing almost anything!

The rider was about to mount his horse when his eye caught a woman running beneath the city wall crying out to someone walking on top of the wall. "Help, my lord, O king," she cried. It was the king of Israel walking on top of the wall. He was greatly distressed about the calamity that had befallen him and his people. "How can I help you?" his reply was to the woman. "If the Lord cannot help you, how can I?"

The rider watched the woman stumble over some rocks and drop on her knees. Her eyes were fixed upon the king above her. Trembling she raised her voice. "This woman... this evil neighbour of mine has cheated me. We are all hungry and she begged me to kill my son so we may eat him. So we killed him and boiled him for supper last night but today she was suppose to kill her son and we were to eat him but she has hidden him. What shall we eat!"

In horror the rider mounted his horse and watched the king tear his clothes, crying and cursing Elisha the prophet whom he blamed. "I'll have Elisha's head today!" the king groaned. "It's his fault... the famine, the war, everything. It's all his fault."

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Meanwhile in a small cottage just bordering the city, Elisha was talking to the elders. "Soon a king's messenger will come to this house, ready to cut off my head. When he enters I want you to grab him before he can do any harm because I have a message from the Lord for him."

Elisha had barely spoken the words when the door flew open and in stormed the king's messenger. The elders rushed at him and pinned him against the wall. "The evil that has befallen us has come from your God," the man grunted. "Why should we wait any longer for your God to deliver us."

"Hear what God has to say," Elisha beckoned. "Tomorrow, fine flour and barley shall be sold for a shekel in the gate of Samaria."

"Ridiculous!" the messenger shouted. "Unless your God is going to make food fall from the sky." Elisha lifted up his hands and calmly replied, "You will see with your own eyes that what I have told you is true but you will not eat the food because of your unbelief." The messenger was released and ordered by Elisha to return to his king.

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At the same time Elisha was talking to the king's messenger, four lepers sat just outside the city gate moaning about their lot. "If we stay here we shall die of hunger but if we go inside the city we will die too," one leper moaned. "There is no food anywhere!" another complained. "I don't know why we can't go to the Syrian camp and beg them for food," the third leper grumbled. "Why don't we," the fourth leper piped up. "They might kill us but we're going to die anyway." The other leprous men agreed and all four decided to make their way at dusk toward the Syrian campsite.

When the four lepers were walking to the Syrian camp the Lord was not idle. He already had caused the Syrians to hear tremendous noises of chariots, horses and the sound of a huge army marching across the fields.

The Syrians panicked, thinking that the king of Israel was coming with the kings of the Hittites and the king of Egypt. They became so afraid of the noise of rumbling chariots, galloping horses and the pounding footsteps of many men marching that they fled, leaving their tents, horses, asses and everything else in the camp behind as it was.

When the four lepers came into the camp they did not see a soul. First they went carefully into one tent calling out but no one answered. It became apparent to them that the camp was completely deserted. Soon they gathered enough courage to laugh and eat of the delicious meats that were roasting over the hot campfires. They drank the sweet wines left in big stone jugs and wore the beautiful clothes left in the tents. They scooped up silver and gold ornaments and hid what they could carry outside the campsite.

Then they said to each other, "We have done well, this is a miracle but we should go and tell the king what is happening here or our luck might run out." So they went to the guards at the city gate and told them how they had come to the Syrian camp and there was no man there.

"I suppose the Syrians saw you lepers coming and ran for their lives," one guard laughed. "It is true what we tell you. Please believe us. Their horses are tied up, their tents are there, fires are cooking the best meats we have seen for years but there is not a soul in the entire camp."

Finally the guards thought it better to tell the king so the leper's story could be checked out. The king was not happy at all when they pulled him out of bed in the middle of the night.

"The Syrian dogs know we are hungry," he grumbled. "What's a bet they have hidden themselves outside the camp, waiting for us to come out of the city so they can attack us easily."

The poor king paced up and down for quite some time before one of his servants suggested to send horsemen to the Syrian camp to check if the lepers had spoken the truth. "Fine, go and see!" the king bellowed.

All the king's horses sped in full gallop to the camp and the riders found it empty. They followed the trail the Syrians had left behind. In their haste the Syrians had thrown away clothes, silver and gold cups, jugs and other items which had slowed them down on their flight from the camp.

The messengers couldn't believe their eyes and rushed back to their king to tell him the exciting news. Soon the whole city heard of the miracle of the Syrians fleeing and many people rushed to the Syrian camp to get food, clothes, silver, gold and anything else they could carry.

Early in the morning, flour and barley was being sold in the gate of the city to those who were unable to get to the camp that night. The king called the messenger whom he had the previous day sent to Elisha, to stand in the gate and take charge there.

The messenger was amazed when he entered the city gate. He suddenly remembered Elisha's words: *Tomorrow, fine flour and barley shall be sold for a shekel in the gate of Samaria.* He shook his head and smiled. That foxy old man, how did he know.

Suddenly a large crowd pushed forward and the messenger was thrown down on the ground. He struggled to get up but more and more people rushed across the top of him, treading upon him as they rushed on to get the food that was being sold in the gate.

Suddenly a sharp kick on the side of his head sent him spinning and he blacked out. In the rush for food the people trod upon him and trampled him to death. The words that Elisha had spoken came true: *You will see with your own eyes that what I have told you is true but you will not eat the food because of your unbelief in the Almighty God.*

**This story can be found in the Bible in:  
2 Kings chapter 6 verses 24 - 33 and chapter 7 verses 1 - 20**