

Elijah and the Widow



1 Many years had passed since the Israelites divided into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. A man named Ahab was now king of Israel. His capital was the city of Samaria.



2 Ahab was more evil than any king before him. He married a foreign woman named Jezebel and worshiped her gods. He built a temple for Baal in Samaria and set up an image of the goddess Asherah.



3 Then a prophet named Elijah came to King Ahab and said, "In the name of the Lord I tell you that there will be no dew or rain during the next few years unless I say so."



4 God told Elijah to go to the brook Cherith. There, just as God had promised, the ravens brought him food every morning and evening. But soon the brook dried up, for there had been no rain.



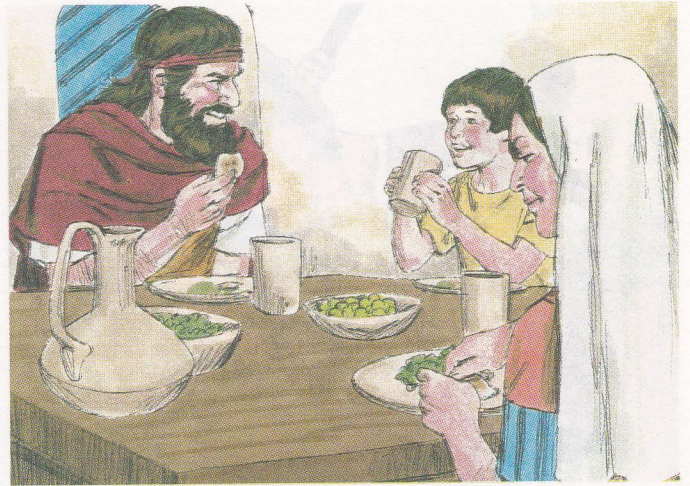
5 So God said to Elijah, "Go to the town of Zarephath, near Sidon, and stay there. I have commanded a widow who lives there to feed you."



6 When Elijah got to Zarephath, he saw a widow gathering firewood near the town gate. He asked her for a drink of water and some bread.



7 She replied, "I'm sorry, but we don't have any bread. I have only a handful of flour and a little olive oil. After I cook that for my son and myself, we will die."



8 "Go ahead," Elijah said, "but first bake a small loaf for me. God has promised that you will not run out of food before he sends rain again." Indeed, there was enough for the three of them for a long time.



9 Some time passed. The widow's son became very sick. He grew worse and worse until he died. The woman was very unhappy with Elijah and blamed him for her child's death.



10 Elijah carried the boy upstairs to the bed. Then he prayed aloud: "O Lord, why have you done such a terrible thing to this poor widow? She has been kind to me but you have caused her son to die!"



11 Then Elijah stretched himself out on the boy three times and prayed, "O Lord, please restore this child to life!"

12 The Lord answered Elijah's prayer and caused the child to breathe again! Elijah took him down to his mother. She said, "Now I know that you really are a prophet through whom the Lord speaks."