

Faith in Action

Key Verse: *“The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.”*

—I Kings 17:16,
*New American
Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
I Kings 17:8-16

the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.”

After Elijah pronounced the drought to come upon the land, God instructed him to turn to the east and go “hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.” God also told the prophet that ravens would be sent there to feed him. Elijah, desiring to be faithful to God’s word, did as the Lord instructed. (I Kings 17:2-5) God carried out his promise to provide for Elijah’s survival with food brought by ravens, and by ensuring that the brook Cherith had not dried up.—vs. 6

After some period of time the brook dried up. The Lord then told Elijah to go to Zarephath, and that he had instructed a widow who lived there to sustain him.

THE EVENTS RECORDED

in I Kings chapter 17 relate to the ministry of the Prophet Elijah. He had been chosen by God to inform Ahab, king of Israel, that there would be no rain or dew upon the land for several years. (vs. 1) This was due to Ahab’s wicked reign over Israel’s ten-tribe kingdom. (I Kings 16:29-33) The evil reigns of the kings of Israel, of which Ahab was a descendant, had continued up to this time, and the record states that “Ahab did more to provoke

(vss. 7-9) Upon arriving at his destination, Elijah asked the woman for water to drink and bread to eat. This was a severe test of the widow's faith and generosity, and would appear to be a bold request for Elijah to make, especially considering that the drought had also reached her location.—vss. 10,11

The widow's initial response clearly showed her distress. "As the LORD your God lives, she replied, I don't have so much as a muffin, just a handful of flour in a bowl and some oil left in a bottle. Now I am going to find some sticks so I can cook a last meal for my son and for me. Then we're going to eat it and die." (vs. 12, *International Standard Version*) Now the poor widow had been asked to give away what she presumed would be her and her son's last meal.

Although she was a Gentile, the widow apparently had respect for God, for when Elijah gave her the Lord's promise that she would have enough food for her household until the drought ended, she believed, and granted the prophet's request for bread. Her faith was rewarded. The account states that "she, and he, and her house, did eat many days," until the drought ended. (vss. 13-15) As noted in our Key Verse, the small amount of food she had was not "exhausted," nor did her slight quantity of oil run out. All this was "according to the word of the LORD."

Elijah's request to have bread prepared for him first, prior to the widow providing food for herself and her son, was not because of greed or selfishness on his part. It was, rather, part of the lesson of faith which the Lord wished to demonstrate. Just as the widow's faith was tested, the Lord similarly tests our faith. (James 1:2-4) Our provisions may at times seem to run low, but God knows this and will overrule for both our spiritual and temporal welfare if we trust him. Especially along spiritual lines, let us be ever thankful that our Heavenly Father provides us with the bread of life and the oil of the Holy Spirit to sustain us each day.—John 6:35; Eph. 1:12-14 ■