

## 21.08 Samaria under Siege (2 Kings 6:24–7:20)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. They also indicate answers to questions.

Many quotations are taken from the NIV or ESV. The modern measurements in this story are found in NIV notes, and modern monetary equivalents are found at [http://biblestudio.com/weights\\_and\\_measures/weights.htm](http://biblestudio.com/weights_and_measures/weights.htm).

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- A one-cup measure; a one-quart carton or container; a gallon container
- 1 cup of pea pods, if possible
- A gunny sack or burlap fabric

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- Review definitions of *raids* (small groups of soldiers take over a city or territory) and *wars* (whole army wages war against a whole country).
- *siege*: the war tactic of surrounding a city with an army so that no one can go in or come out. This starves the people, who need to get food and water from the surrounding areas.
- *sackcloth*: [show burlap] Those in Bible times who were repenting (being very sorry for their sin) or sad would wear this. It irritated their bodies and perhaps reminded them to pray to God for mercy.
- *leper*: a person with the terrible skin disease called leprosy
- *to spoil*: to take the goods of an enemy after winning a battle
- *mercy*: not getting the punishment one deserves

### Scripture: (ESV)

2 Kings 6:24 Afterward Ben-hadad king of Syria mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria. 25 And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey’s head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove’s dung for five shekels of silver. [Verses 26–30 are not included in this story.] . . . 31 and he said, “May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today.”

32 Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Now the king had dispatched a man from his presence, but before the messenger arrived Elisha said to the elders, “Do you see how this murderer has sent to take off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door fast against him. Is not the sound of his master’s feet behind him?” 33 And while he was still speaking with them, the messenger came down to him and said, “This trouble is from the Lord! Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?”

7:1 But Elisha said, “Hear the word of the Lord: thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.” 2 Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned said to the man of God, “If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?” But he said, “You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.”

3 Now there were four men who were lepers at the entrance to the gate. And they said to one another, “Why are we sitting here until we die? 4 If we say, ‘Let us enter the city,’ the famine is in the city, and we shall die

there. And if we sit here, we die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die.” 5 So they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians. But when they came to the edge of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no one there. 6 For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses, the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, “Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to come against us.” 7 So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys, leaving the camp as it was, and fled for their lives. 8 And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank, and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them.

9 Then they said to one another, “We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now \*therefore come; let us go and tell the king’s household.” 10 So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city and told them, “We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied and the donkeys tied and the tents as they were.” 11 Then the gatekeepers called out, and it was told within the king’s household. 12 And the king rose in the night and said to his servants, “I will tell you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we are hungry. Therefore they have gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the open country, thinking, ‘When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.’” 13 And one of his servants said, “Let some men take five of the remaining horses, seeing that those who are left here will fare like the whole multitude of Israel who have already perished. Let us send and see.” 14 So they took two horsemen, and the king sent them after the army of the Syrians, saying, “Go and see.” 15 So they went after them as far as the Jordan, and behold, all the way was littered with garments and equipment that the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. And the messengers returned and told the king.

16 Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. 17 Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. And the people trampled him in the gate, so that he died, as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. 18 For when the man of God had said to the king, “Two seahs of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria,” 19 the captain had answered the man of God, “If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?” And he had said, “You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.” 20 And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate and he died.

### **Introduction/Review:**

We’ve learned about so many miracles that Elisha did by God’s strength. Tell me about some of them. [Give hints to help students recall these miracles or use the chart found at the end of this lesson.]

1. Crossing the Jordan River
2. Bears coming out of the woods to slay mockers
3. Making Jericho’s water good
4. Ditches of water when warring against Moab
5. Oil for the widow and her two sons
6. Shunammite woman’s having a son
7. Bringing Shunammite’s son to life
8. Making the poison soup healthful
9. Providing enough food for 100 sons of the prophets
10. Making the axe head float
11. Healing Naaman’s leprosy
12. Syrians made blind and then let go

God certainly was with Elisha, wasn’t He?

Those Syrians [locate Syria in the north], despite God’s signs to them, were still a constant problem to

Israel. They would come and raid Israel's cities and occasionally they would actually war against Israel.

## Story:

### *Samaria besieged*

In today's story the Syrians came all the way to the capital city of Samaria [locate]. Did they try to batter down the walls? No. Did they try to come through the gates? No. What do you think they did—one of the terms we had? They laid siege to or besieged the city—surrounded it so that no one could go in or out.

Samaria was in big-time trouble! Because they couldn't get any food, a terrifically bad famine took over the city. It was *serious*! The people did *not* have food to eat! Some even died of starvation.

Now, when food is scarce, it costs lots of money. The situation was so bad in Samaria that people were eating their work animals—horses and donkeys. Do you suppose there is much meat on the head of a donkey? [No.] A donkey was not a food approved by God, and it probably did not taste good. Yet, people were eating donkeys' heads. ✓ In fact, a donkey's head cost 2 pounds of silver—almost \$500 today.<sup>1</sup>

Do you like to eat the pods that peas grow in? Neither do I unless they are sugar peas. ✓ In famine-ridden Samaria one cup of pea pods cost \$30.<sup>2</sup>

### *Joram seeks revenge*

The king of Israel, Joram by name, walked around his city and heard about even worse things than eating donkeys' heads. He tore his robes. Why? [Because he was sad.] As the king walked along the wall of the city, the people could see under his torn robes that he, the king, was actually wearing sackcloth. One would think he was repenting of his sins, maybe, but his words didn't sound as if he was seeking God's will and mercy. He said, "May God deal with me severely if Elisha's head remains on his shoulders today."

What does that mean? [He wanted Elisha to die that day; he would see to it that Elisha was slain, and if Elisha didn't die, great punishment would come on himself.] Why would he want Elisha dead? Was it Elisha's fault that the Syrian king had besieged the city? No, but people sometimes blame God's workers instead of outright blaming God for something that happens to them. This isn't right, but it does happen.

### *Elisha remains calm*

Now, Elisha was sitting in his house with some of the older sons of the prophets, and before King Joram's messenger came to take off Elisha's head, Elisha knew he was coming and why. God had shown him. Elisha said to his servant, "That murderer, the king, is sending someone to cut off my head. When he comes, shut the door and hold it shut so that the messenger can't come in. The king is coming right behind him."

We don't know why King Joram followed, leaning on the arm of one of his officers.<sup>3</sup> ✓ Maybe he wanted to see Elisha executed, or maybe he was changing his mind about taking off Elisha's head. ✓ I think he wanted to ask Elisha's opinion about what to do in this dreadful famine.

When the king arrived at Elisha's house and Elisha met him, King Joram complained, "This terrible trouble is from the Lord, Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"

✓ It sounds as if King Joram was ready to surrender and say to the Syrians, "Okay. Take us as captives. We can't hold out any longer. You win; we lose. We surrender."

### *Elisha prophesies*

But Elisha had good news, saying, "Hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Lord says. 'About this time tomorrow, seven quarts (almost 2 gallons) of flour will sell for a shekel—\$6.00. And tomorrow about three gallons (13 quarts) of barley will also sell for \$6.00 at the gate of Samaria.'"

Wow! That's a big difference in price! On the day Elisha prophesied, no one could even *find* flour to buy but had to pay a high price for just a few pea pods. On the next day, Elisha was saying they would pay a small amount, about 1/30<sup>th</sup> or 20¢, with an abundance of food they didn't even *have* now! This was hard to

believe! How could this happen?

### ***The officer disbelieves***

“Why!” exclaimed the officer on whose arm the king was leaning, “if the Lord Himself would open the windows of heaven and dump out food, could this happen?”

Did this officer believe Elisha? [No.] Did he believe God could do this? [No.] Do you believe God could do as Elisha said?

Elisha told this officer, “You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not be able to eat any of the food.” (Tuck these words from Elisha in your brain: “You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not be able to eat any of the food.” This statement will be important later.)

### ***Four lepers consider their options***

Meanwhile, at the end of the day four lepers were sitting at the gate of Samaria. What is a leper? [A person who has leprosy.] These four men were just as hungry as the rest of the people in Samaria. In fact, they might have been hungrier. The sun had just gone down. They sat and discussed their options.

“No matter what we do, we will die,” said one.

“What do you mean?” asked another.

“Well, if we go into the city of Samaria, the famine is there, and we will die. If we sit here, we won’t get any food, and we will die. If we go to the Syrians outside the city, they will slay us so that we will die. No matter what we do, we will die.”

“Hey! Just a minute!” said another leper thoughtfully. “The city doesn’t have food, but the Syrians do. We could take our chances and go to them. If they don’t slay us, maybe they’ll give us food to eat.”

“Good observation,” answered the fourth leper. “If they spare us, we live; if they slay us, we die. But there might be a chance they will spare us. I say we go to the Syrian camp. What do you say?”

“I agree,” answered the first, second, and third lepers, and they went out the city gate and over to the Syrian camp.

### ***Four lepers find abundance***

But when they got there, the camp was strangely quiet. No one was anywhere to be found. Every single soldier was gone! What had happened?

Those lepers didn’t know it then, but God had made the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and horses—the sound of a great army—so that they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to attack us. Run, run for your lives!!” And they did run. They didn’t take down their tents, they didn’t take their clothes, they didn’t take all the horses and donkeys, *and* they didn’t take their food! They just ran away as fast as they could skedaddle.

Well, those four lepers had a feast! They entered one of the tents. They ate and drank and carried away silver and gold and clothes and went off and hid those things. They came back, entered another tent, took away good things from that tent, and hid them also.

But then they stopped to talk. “You know, we really aren’t doing right. This is a day of good news, and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until morning to tell the people of the city, we will likely be punished. Let’s go right now and report this to the royal palace, the king’s house.”

So they went back to the city gates and called to the gatekeepers, “We went to the Syrian camp and not a man was there—only tethered horses and donkeys and the tents left just as they were.”

The gatekeepers shouted this good news to others, word spread, and the king was notified.

### ***Joram checks out the report***

The king got out of bed, called his officers, and said, “I don’t know about this. The Syrians know we are starving; so they have left the camp to hide in the countryside. They think we will surely come out, and then they will take us alive and get into the city.”

“Well, sir,” said one of the officers, “why don’t we have some men take five of the horses that are left in the city. Send them to find out what has happened.”

“Yes, it shall be done,” answered King Joram, and the men set out to find five horses. ✓ Apparently, only two horses were left in the city, for that is the number of men who went to find the Syrians. “Find out what has happened,” ordered the king as the chariot drivers left Samaria.

When the chariots returned, the horsemen said, “We followed the Syrians all the way to the Jordan River. All along the way clothes and equipment were in the road because the Syrians had thrown it away in their hurry to get out of here.”

### ***Food supplied***

“Officer,” called the king to the man who had helped him go see Elisha, “go to the gate. Take charge, for the people will be going through it to spoil the tents of the Syrians. Go.”

That officer went to take charge of the gate, but he didn’t last long. The starving multitudes, eager to get food, rushed out the gate—so many at a time that they trampled that officer to death. He fell under their feet, and there he died, seeing, as Elisha had said, that the food was plenteous but not being able to eat any of it.

Israel went through a very difficult time, but God supplied in the end.

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<sup>1</sup>According to an NIV note, a 100-lb. silver talent had a modern value of \$24,000. A mere two pounds of silver (2/100 or 1/50 of a silver talent) times \$24,000 equals \$480.

<sup>2</sup>If five shekels equaled 2 ounces (NIV), then that is 1/800 of a 100-lb. silver talent; \$24,000 divided by 800 equals \$30.

<sup>3</sup>The phrase, “the captain on whose hand the king leaned,” is not used figuratively, meaning someone “in whom the king confided, but literally, on whose hand he rested, and by whom he was supported, being a form and matter of state, while he and Elisha were talking together, or on whom he leaned as he came to him; this was a principal lord, the third to the king, as his title seems to denote” ([2 Kings 7:2 - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).

### **Lessons from This Lesson:**

- We see Jesus:  
There is a lot of talk about *talents* in this story. Jesus, too, spoke of talents in two of His parables (Matthew 18:23–35; 25:14–35).
- ✓ I wonder how much sooner the siege would have been lifted if King Joram and his people had repented. We don’t read that they ever repented; yet, God showed mercy. Our God is merciful. Stay close to Him. Confess your sins to Him, and repent of your wrongdoing.

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: donkey’s head; cup; quart; gallon
- Snack: Dried sugar peas, for a snack. (These may be found in the specialty snacks section of a larger grocery store.) Or eat a “starvation” snack—one small cracker and a small amount of water.
- Play a game called “Keep Them In” or “Besieged.” Students hold hands, forming a circle. One person is

inside the circle, trying to get out. Those holding hands prevent an escape. If the person escapes the circle, s/he is taken to the “Syrian camp,” a designated area that is no fun.

- For students who know how to count, use play money in order to demonstrate the cost of items before and after the siege. Use the ratio 31:1.
- Teach/review a little math regarding measurements. Use the gallon-, quart-, pint-, cup-visual found below.
- Remind students that we have learned about another officer on whom a king leaned. It was Naaman, on whom the former king of Syria had leaned. Naaman’s faith outcome was to live, while the outcome for King Joram’s doubting officer was to die.
- Review questions: (Game: Students who answer questions correctly may rub burlap on their arms to see how King Joram must have felt while wearing sackcloth.)
  1. What country was besieging the city of Samaria? [Syria.]
  2. What was the condition of Samaria during the siege? [Terrible famine.]
  3. What did Joram, king of Israel want to do to Elisha? [Take off his head.]
  4. What did Joram’s officer ask when Elisha said plenty of food would be available the next day? [“If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?”]
  5. Why had the Syrians left their camp? [The Lord had made their army hear the sound of chariots and of horses, so they thought the king of Israel had hired the Hittites and Egypt to come against them.]
  6. Who discovered the empty Syrian camp? [Four lepers.]
  7. What happened to King Joram’s unbelieving officer? [He was trampled to death when the people rushed out to get the Syrian spoil.]

### Memory Verse[s]:

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 10 “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

### Handwork:

- Make a Syrian tent as found at [\(835\) Pinterest](#). Note: This page has a whole lesson for this story. Look for *ACTIVITY* about 2/3 down the page for craft instructions.

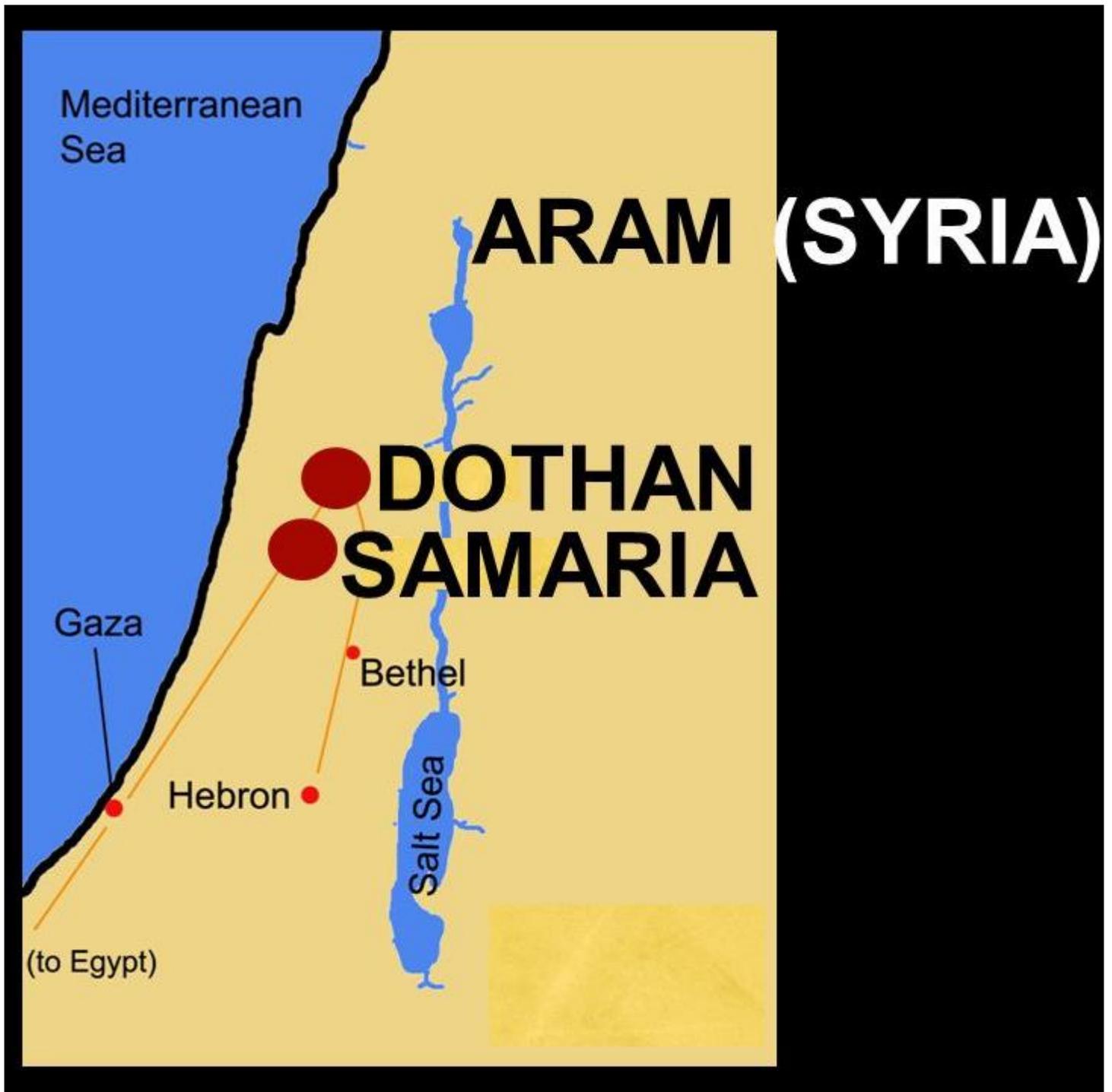
***siege***

***sackcloth***

***leper***

***to spoil***

***mercy***

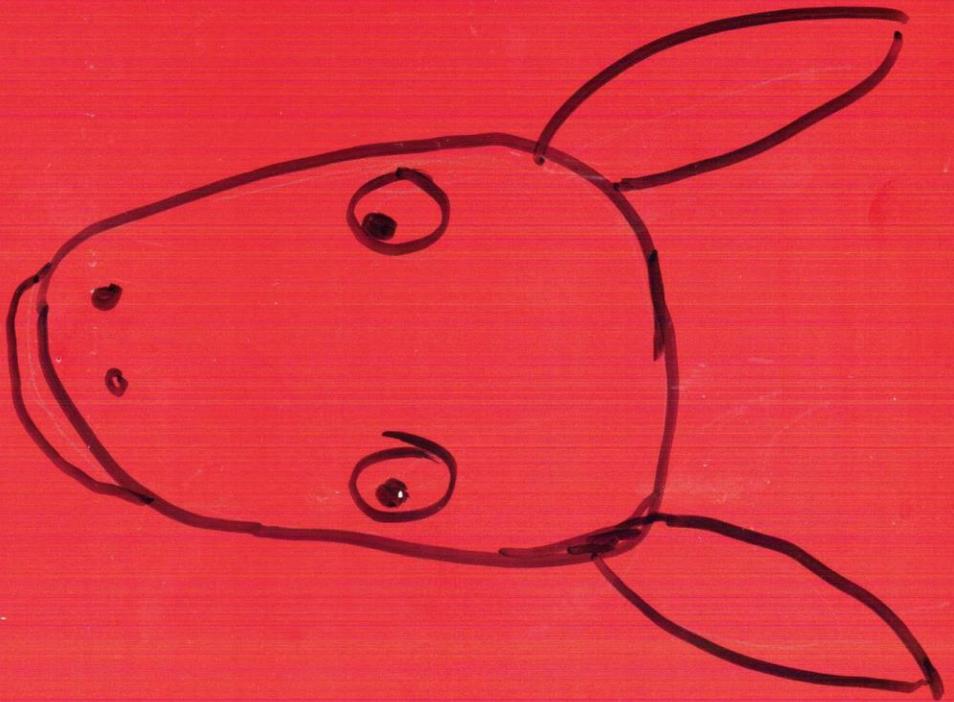


["It's Not Always As I See It" II Kings 6: ppt video online download \(slideplayer.com\)](#)

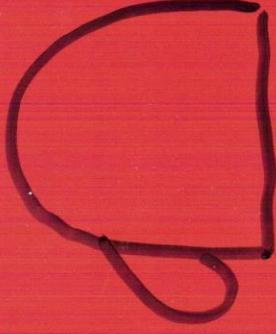
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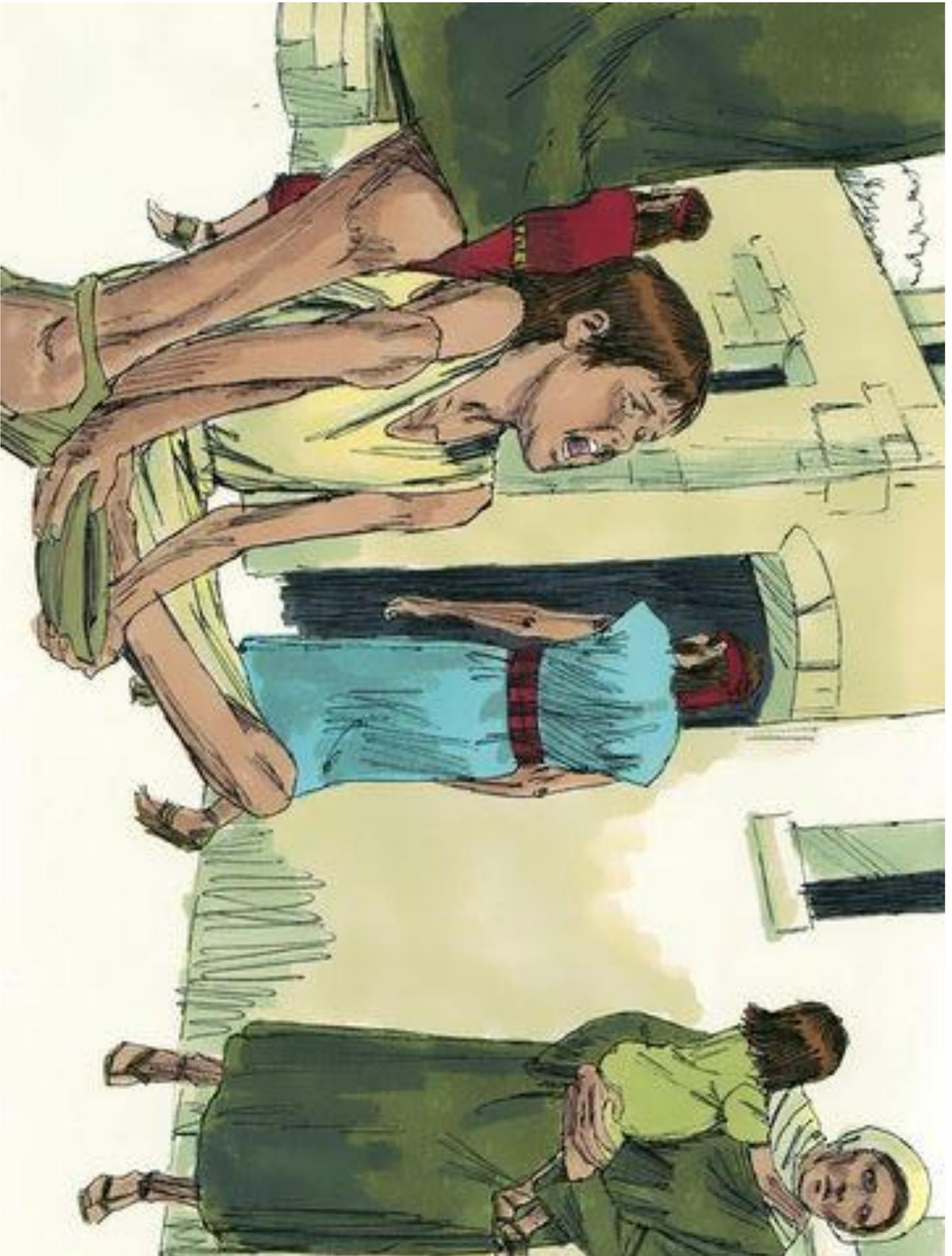
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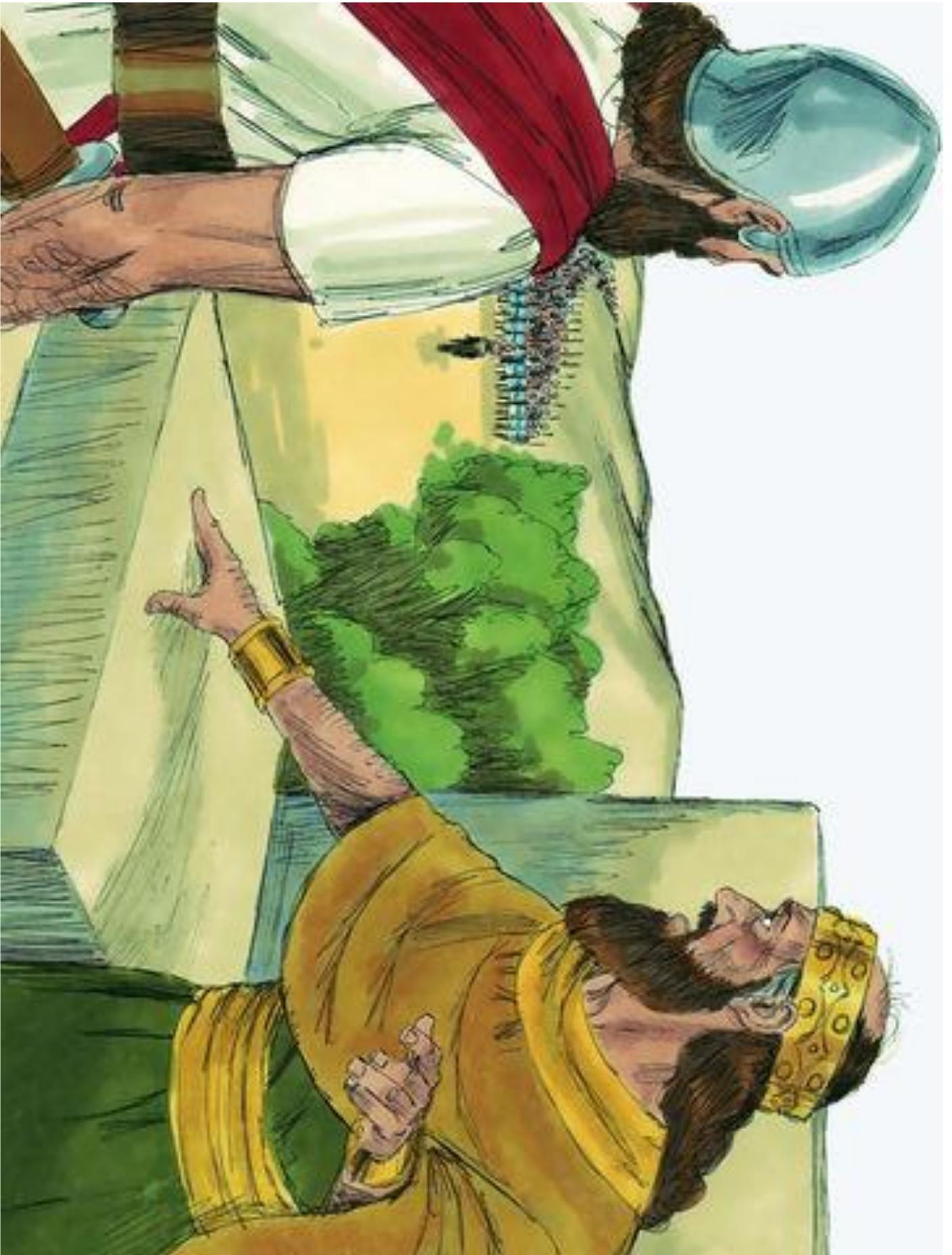
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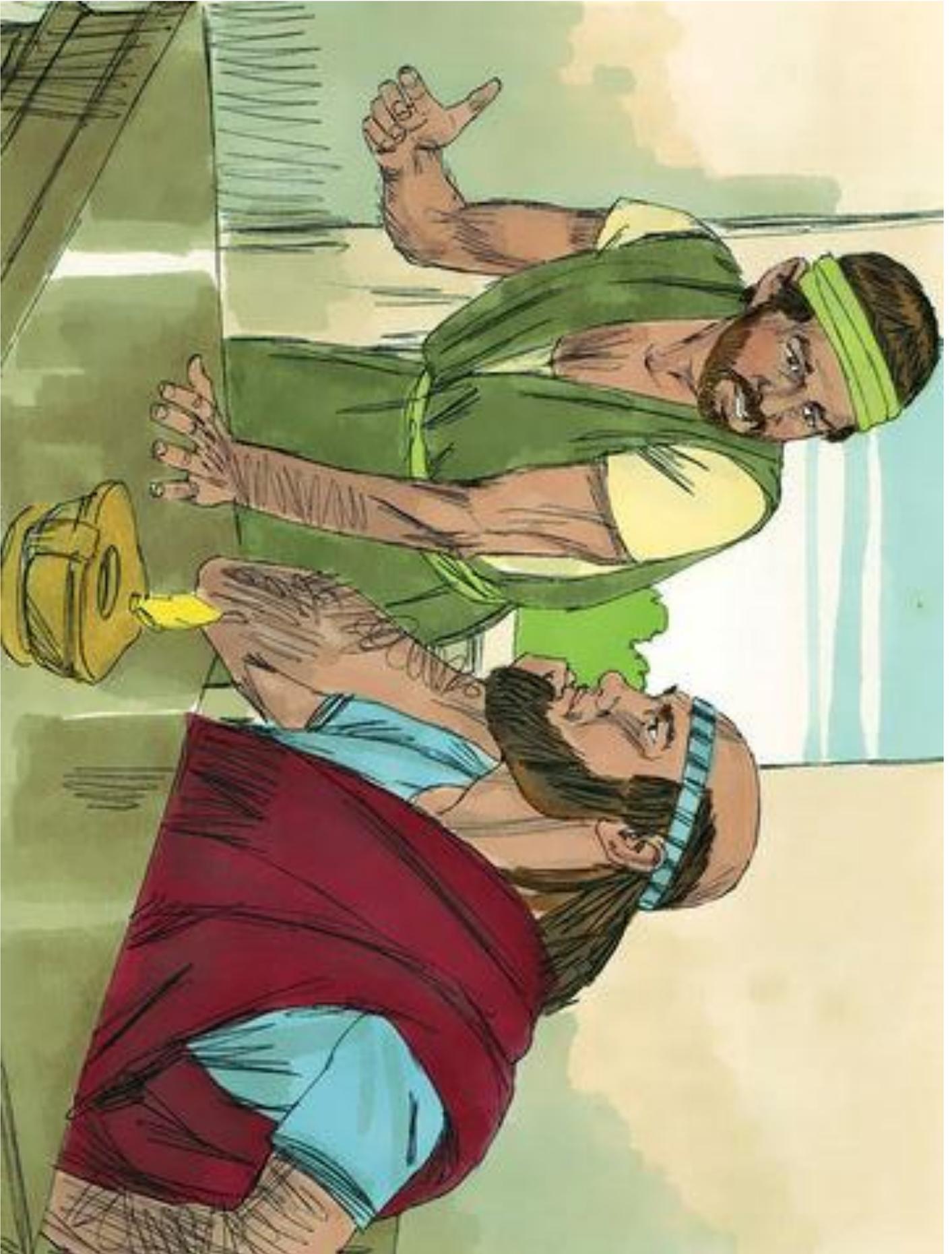
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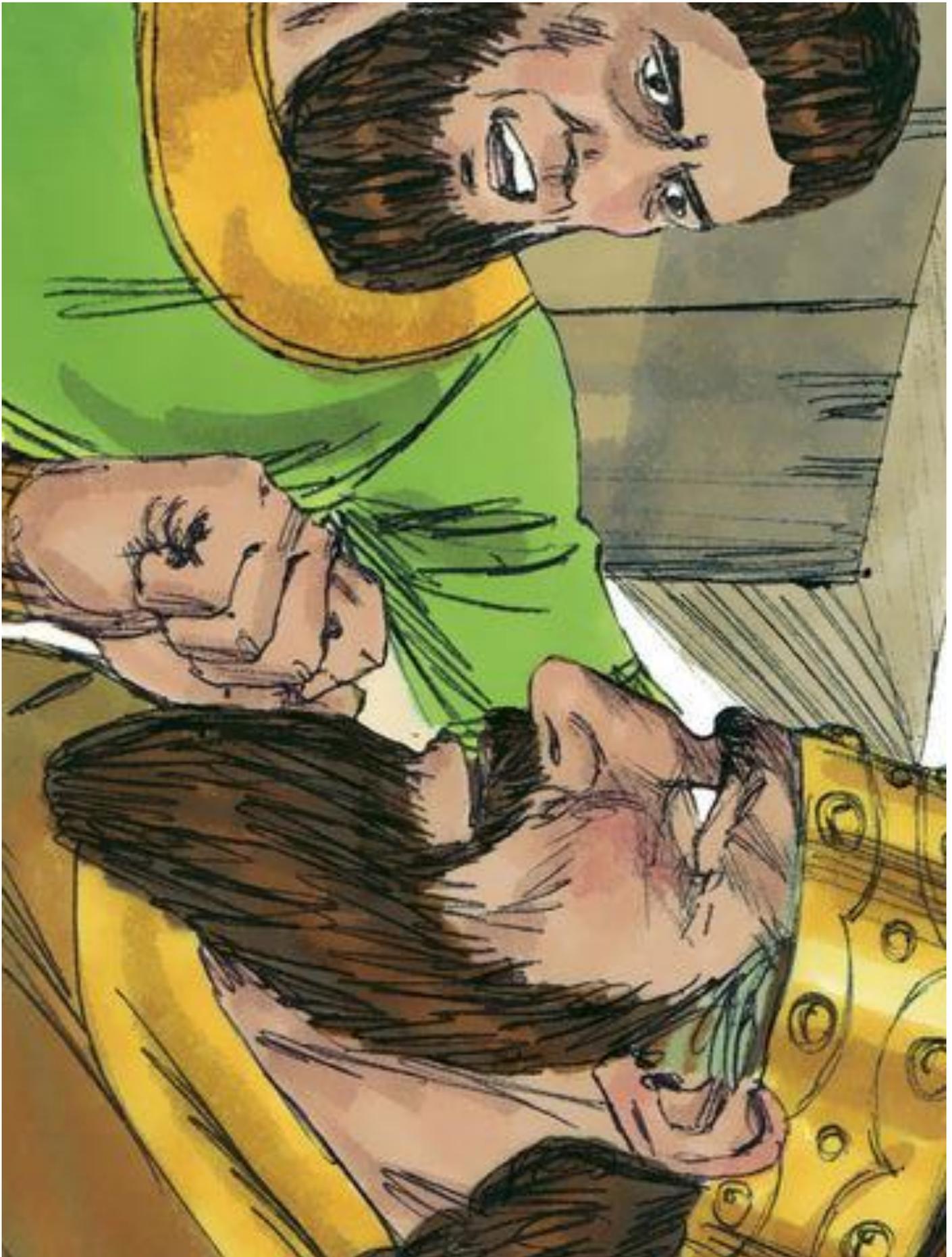
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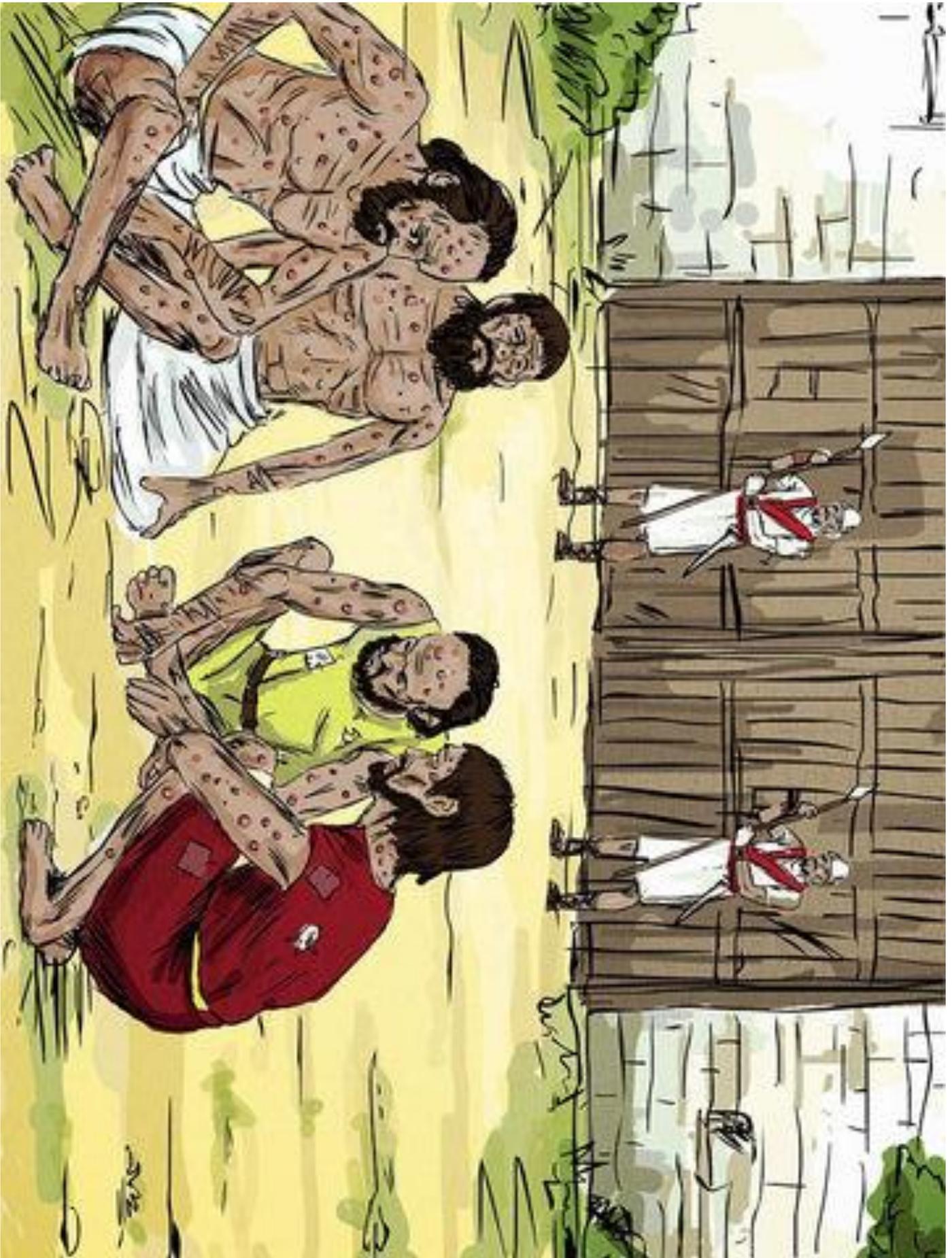
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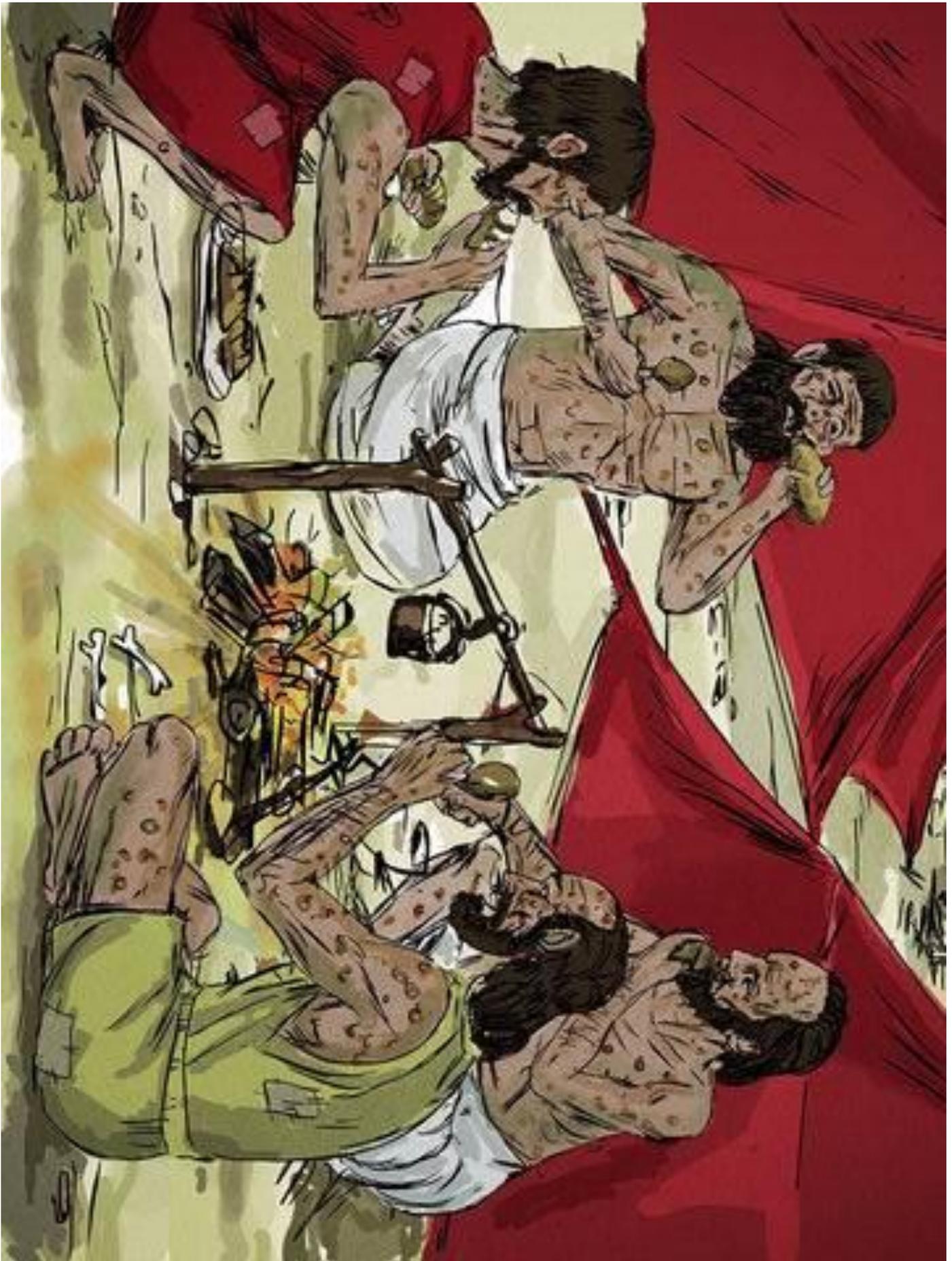
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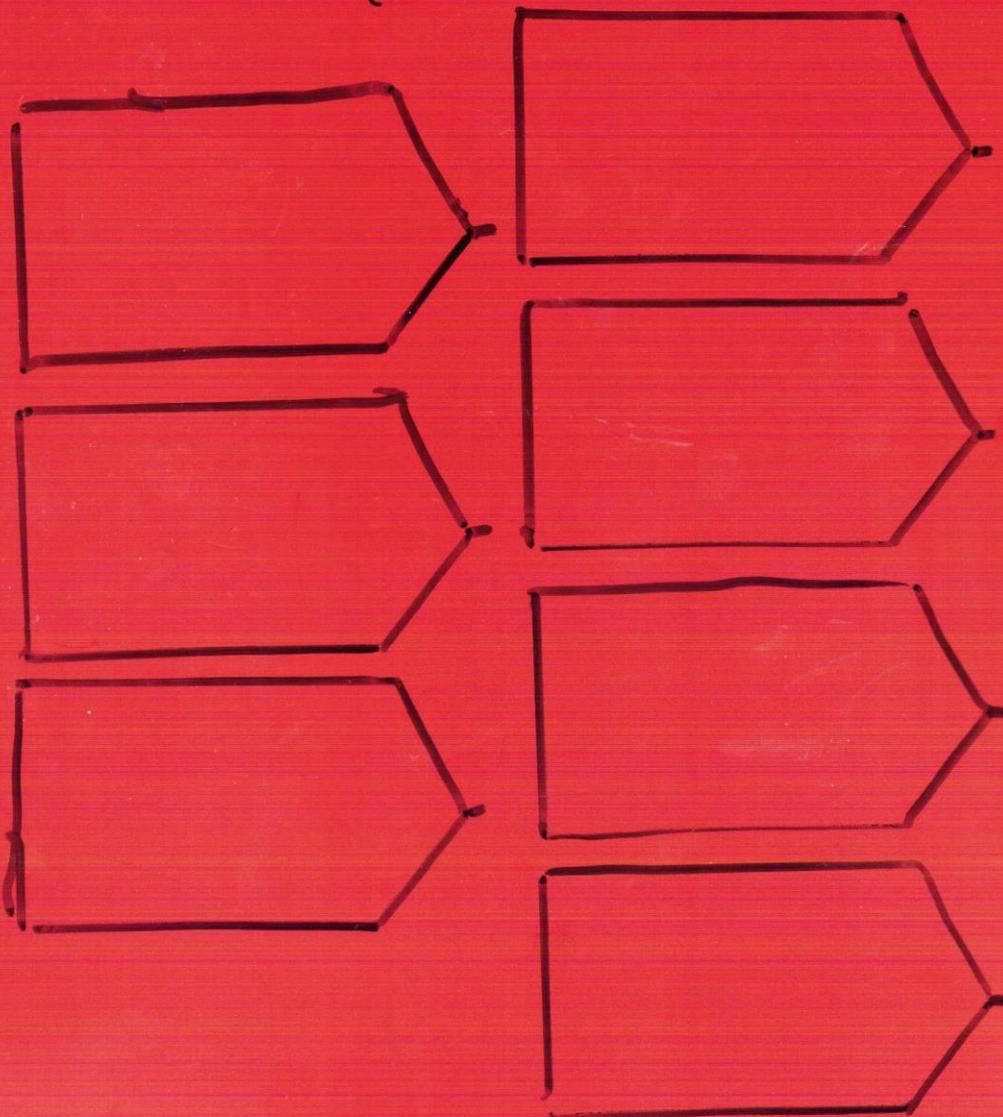
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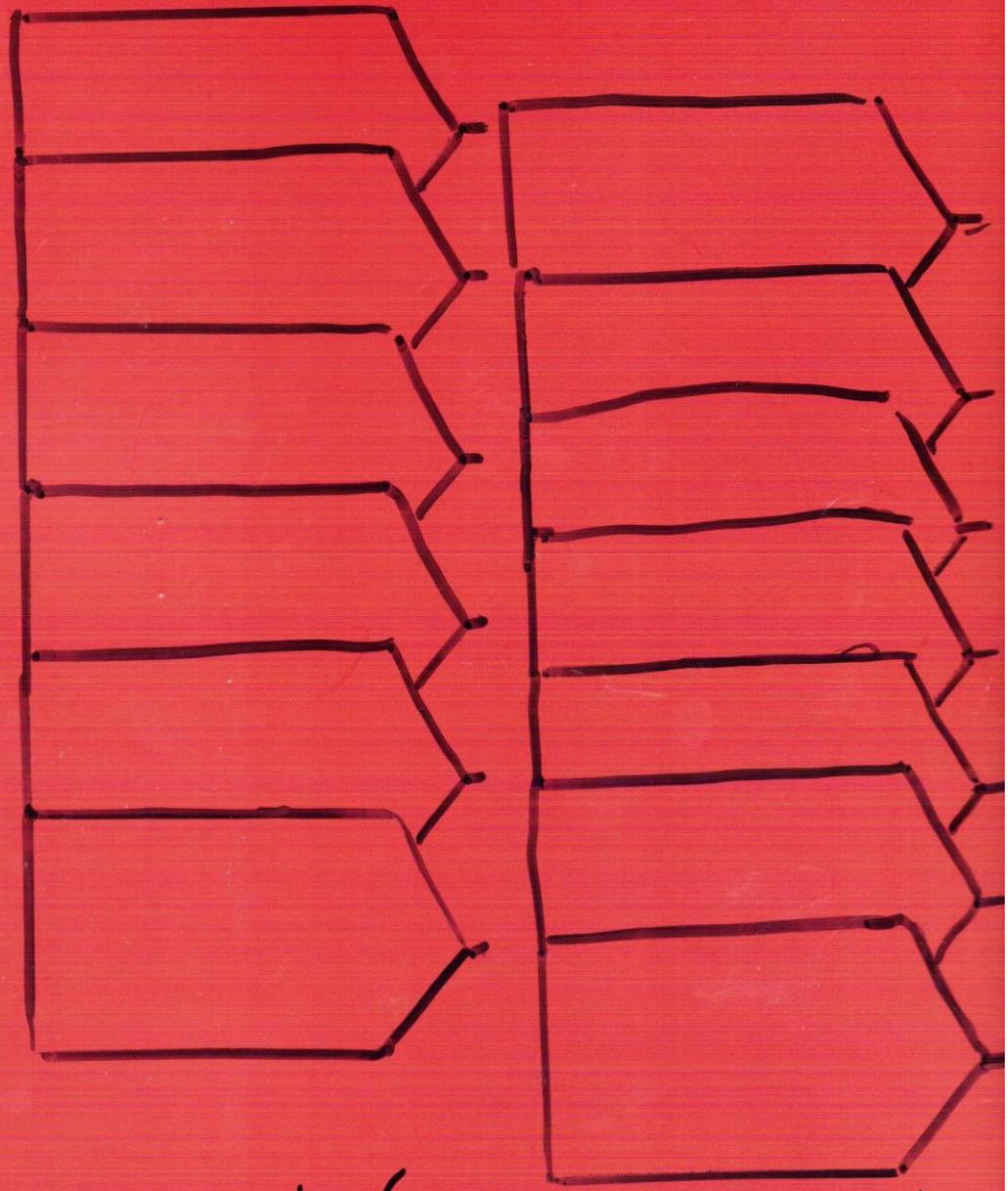
<http://biblestudyoutlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/the-four-lepers-that-discovered-the-empty-syrian-camp.jpg>

After: Fine Flour  
(quarts)

9  
~~6~~



After: Barley (quarts)



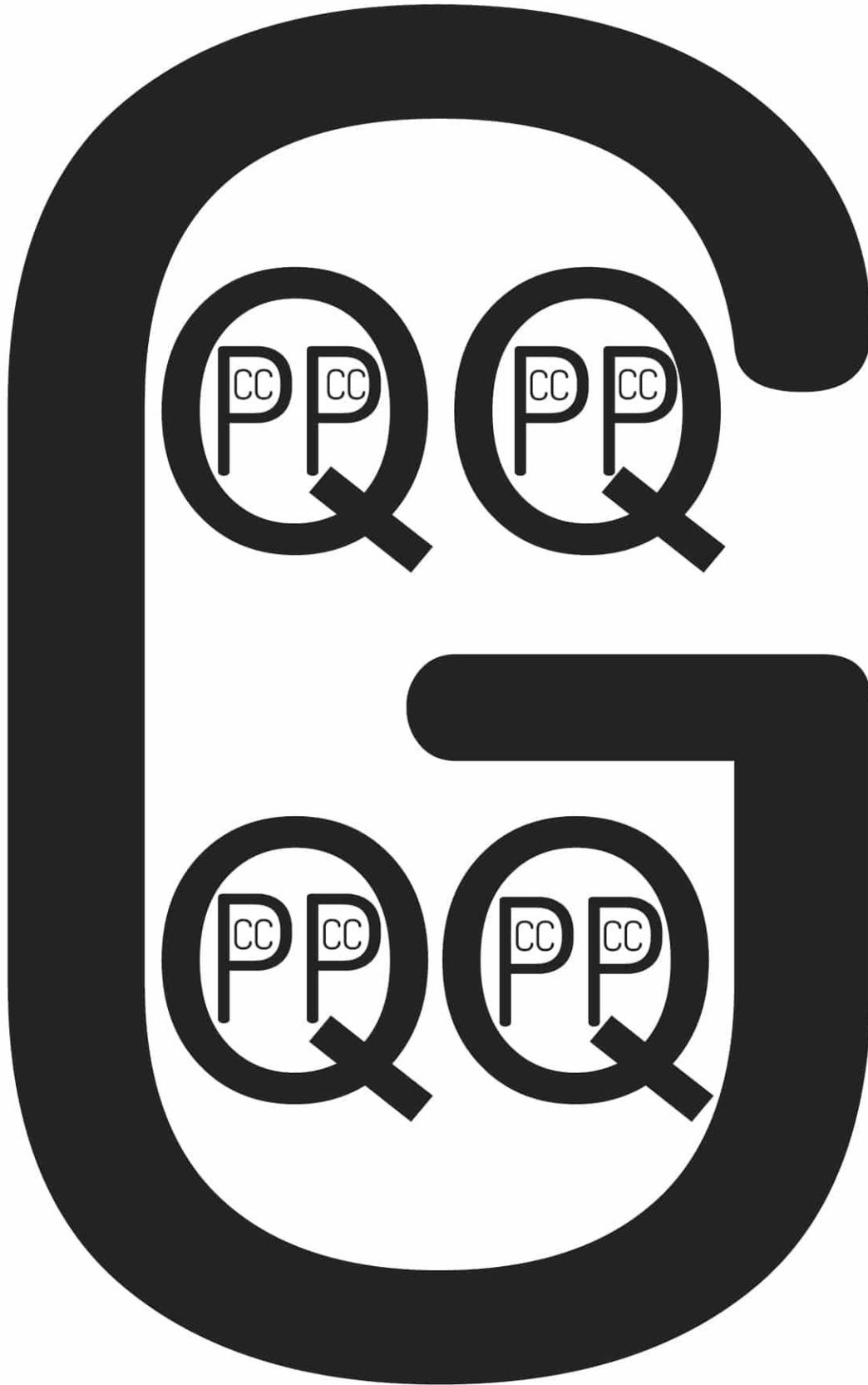
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# **Elisha's Miracles**

1. Crossing the Jordan River
2. Bears coming out of the woods to slay mockers
3. Making Jericho's water good
4. Ditches of water when warring against Moab
5. Oil for the widow and her two sons
6. Shunammite woman's having a son
7. Bringing Shunammite's son to life
8. Making the poison soup healthful
9. Providing enough food for 100 sons of the prophets
10. Making the axe head float
11. Healing Naaman's leprosy
12. Syrians made blind and then let go

Gallons, quarts, pints & cups!



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