

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON TWELVE

by Sandy Harber

**"And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." I Kings 17:12**

Our unnamed widow was not having a good day. She had enough supplies to make one last meal for herself and her son. After that they would surely starve to death. Her friends and neighbors did not have extra food that they could share with her. They had their own families to take care of. She had no one to turn to. She didn't even have the means to start a fire on which to cook that last meal. She had to go out and gather sticks to burn. And while she was doing that she was accosted by a stranger who asked her to give him bread and water. As if she had food and water to spare!

The widow was willing to fetch water for the prophet. But when he asked for a morsel of bread, too, she felt compelled to explain her situation. She was obviously a kind woman and she wanted to help this stranger. We can tell that by her response to Elijah's request for water. She immediately abandoned her task of gathering sticks to go for water. But she was not able to satisfy his request for food.

She only had a handful of grain and a few drops of oil available. It wasn't even enough to make a cake of bread for the prophet and still have something left over for herself and her son. "Cake" comes from a Hebrew root word which means "to be round." A cake of bread was grilled in a pan on one side and then turned over to continue baking on the other side. We get the expression "half-baked" from this process. In Hosea 7:8, God refers to Ephraim (Israel) as a "cake not turned." In other words, something that is incomplete or half-baked.

There were a number of methods for baking bread in ancient times including the use of a bread oven (shaped like a beehive) or a "griddle" made of clay or iron. But the easiest method was to mix grain with water or oil, knead the mixture, add a small amount of fomented dough for leavening, and season with salt. Next a fire would be kindled on top of a flat stone. When the wood had burned down to ashes the dough would be laid atop the stone and covered with the hot ashes. The bread would bake between the hot stone and hot ashes. After a while the ashes would be removed of the bread was ready to eat. This may have been the method the poor widow used with the two sticks she gathered.

Whatever method the widow intended to use to bake bread, her concern was that there would not be enough food for three people. She wanted to accommodate the prophet but feared that she did not have the means to do so. She had to put her son's needs first. Jesus told His disciples not to worry about the staples of life. The Heavenly Father knows what we need and He provides it (Mt. 6:25-32). He concludes, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," (Mt. 6:33). Get your priorities straight! Set your focus first on spiritual things. God will see to it that you have the material things you require.

Perhaps the widow was so focused on the material needs she did not realize her spiritual needs were being neglected. The physical world is always right here in our faces, demanding attention. It's easy to forget our spiritual side needs nurturing, too. It is especially difficult to concentrate on the unseen world during times of trial and upheaval in this world.

God sent the widow the answer to her physical and spiritual needs in the form of a man: the Prophet Elijah. As long as Elijah was with her the grain and oil continued to flow meeting their physical needs. In addition, the widow had access to the knowledge and teaching of a man of God who could assist with her spiritual needs. Today we have the completed Word of God to assist with our spiritual needs. And, we have something better than a live-in prophet. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Access your resources and get started today.

*"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."  
Philippians 4:19*