

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON SIXTEEN

by Sandy Harber

**"And she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah." I Kings 17:15b-16**

The widow took the Prophet Elijah home with her. She used the little bit of meal left in her barrel and combined it with the drop of oil left in her cruse to make a small cake for her guest. Then, she went back to the barrel and cruse for the last of her supplies to make two more cakes - one for herself and one for her son. That should have been the end of the meal and oil. But it wasn't! Just as Elijah had said, the meal and the oil did not fail. Every time the widow went back to the barrel she found meal in it. Every time she tipped the cruse, oil flowed out. Surely the widow recognized that the God of Israel, Who Elijah served, was the one true God. Salvation had come to her house.

Elijah had his own room, which was located on the roof of the house (I Kings 17:19). It could be reached by an outside staircase. He took his meals with the widow and her son, and the Lord sustained this trio "many days." Most Bible commentators agree that Elijah was fed at the brook Cherith for about a year. Therefore, he must have spent two and a half years of the three and a half year drought with the widow.

Scripture does not give us many details about the time Elijah sojourned in Zarephath. We know very little about the widow herself or her son. We don't know their names or ages. The boy is referred to as a "child" in verse 21-23. The Hebrew word translated "child" means "something born." It is akin to a word meaning "to bear young; beget; act as midwife." The language seems to indicate a relatively young child, either a toddler or elementary school age boy. The widow herself, then, was likely young since women in that culture married and bore children in their teens.

How did the prophet, the widow, and the child pass the time? Certainly, the widow cleaned the house, cooked the meals, etc. Perhaps Elijah chopped wood for the fire and repaired whatever was broken around the house. It seems likely that Elijah taught the widow and her son about God and recited stories from Scripture. He may have taught them portions of the Law, including the Ten Commandments. In return, the widow may have shared information about her culture, including Baal worship. Perhaps the information that Elijah gleaned in Zarephath fueled his desire to eradicate that false religion from his own nation.

Jesus used the widow's story to teach the people of Nazareth that God extends His grace to the Gentiles (Luke 4:25-26). He pointed out that there were many widows in Israel during the three and a half year famine. But God did not choose one of them. Why? Perhaps because the people of Israel had turned their backs on Him. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel promoted Baal worship and the people followed their lead. Still, of all the Gentile widows, why choose this one? Maybe she was not satisfied with her religion and was searching for something more. Perhaps she was open to receiving the truth. God chose David because of what was in his heart (I Sam. 16:7). Did God see something in the widow's heart that warranted a miracle? What does He see in your heart?

*"I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore."  
Psalm 86:12*