

## 2 Kings 3:1-27

### Elisha's Miracle in the Battle Against the Moabites

**2 Kings 3:1-3** - "Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom."

Jehoram was the ninth consecutive bad king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

In what was probably a strategic move to win the alliance of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Jehoram put away the statue of Baal - a blatantly foreign influence - preventing the public worship of it. But he retained the idolatry of worshipping Yahweh in the form of the calves originally set up by Jeroboam in Dan and Bethel.

Jehoram represents another of those who Elijah accused of "halting between two opinions" regarding the true God (**1 Kings 18:21**).

### The Moabites Rebel

**2 Kings 3:4-5** - "And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."

The Moabites had been vassals of Israel since the time of David (**2 Samuel 8:2**). Now, with Ahab's death, they rebelled.

Jehoram asks Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to join him to help him put down the rebellion, since the Moabites were also a threat to Judah. (The ruler of Edom was also joining in because Edom was also a vassal state of Israel)

The coalition decides to go around Moab and attack from the south, but first they have to pass through the wilderness of Edom, a long stretch of blistering desert.

Apparently, there was less water available than they had counted on, and they soon found themselves in a crisis.

Jehoram panics and sort of freaks out.

**2 Kings 3:10** - "And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!"

His disheartening cry of doom and gloom is not well received by the other allies.

**2 Kings 3:11** - "But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah."

### **Servant Leadership**

"poured water" - Elisha was prepared for his ministry as a prophet by first serving Elijah, bringing water to wash his hands. Humility is an essential requirement to be used by God. This recalls Jesus washing the disciples' feet:

Read **John 13:1-20**

- **Matthew 20:26–28** - "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The three kings leave the majority of the army in place and hurry to find Elisha.

Elisha is initially not interested in helping Jehoram.

**2 Kings 3:13** - "And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab."

The Targum has Jehoram respond, "Please do not mention the sins of that wicked woman. Beg mercy for us, for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab."

Jehoram, who had initiated this military plan, was still panicking.

**2 Kings 3:14** - "And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee."

Then Elisha relents, agreeing to seek the Lord's guidance on their military venture.

**2 Kings 3:15** - "But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him."

### **Music Inspiring Prophecy**

The Targum says "the spirit of prophecy came upon him," which is a gift from the hand of God.

Examples: Samuel tells Saul...

- **1 Samuel 10:5-6** – And it will happen when you have come there to the city that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instruments, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man."

- **1 Samuel 16:14-23** – David's anointed music drove out the evil spirit that was harassing Saul.

- **1 Chronicles 25:1-7** – "Moreover, David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some of the sons of Asaph and of Heman and of Jeduthun, who were to prophesy with lyres, harps and cymbals"

- **Ephesians 5:18-21** - "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

**Revelation 5:8-9, 14:2-3, and 15:2-3** all describe music, singing and praise in the heavenlies. Perhaps our praises, songs and hymns on earth break down the separation between the two dimensions, opening the way to prophecy. "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." (**Psalm 22:3**).

### **Miracle of the Ditches**

**2 Kings 3:16**- - "And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones."

Fruit trees were forbidden in the Law to be cut down in war. "Are the trees people, that you should besiege them?" (**Deuteronomy 20:19**). But that may have applied only to besieged cities in the Promised Land. Or the law was simply ignored to further punish Moab.

The provision of water by supernatural means would give assurance that they would defeat the Moabites.

**2 Kings 3:20** - "And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with

water."

It doesn't say how the water arrived. The rabbis explain only that "The water began falling from heaven in the morning in the land of Edom." (R. Tanhuma's Midrash) Maybe storms beyond the horizon filled the wadis with water, which then flooded into desert, filling the pools they had prepared.

### **An Act of Faith**

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."  
(**Hebrew 11:1**)

To receive the power of the Spirit, we have to provide a place for Him. The soldiers were thirsty and near death. But they had to dig and make a receptacle for the promised flood. Sometimes hard work must precede a miracle. If they had waited until the water came, it would have been wasted as run-off. Digging ditches to receive something you can't see is the essence of faith.

The Old Testament example of Noah, building the Ark for years with no sign of rain. Stepping out on faith is the pattern set by Abraham, called the "father of faith." He left Ur "going without knowing" to a land God would show him. Paul says we "walk by faith not by sight." (**2 Corinthians 5:7**)

We must be prepared to receive God's blessings before they come.

### **Moabites Deceived**

The Moabites see the water as blood, think the invaders have turned on each other, and run to finish the job.

**2 Kings 3:22-23** - "And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil."

This turns into a disaster for Moab.

**2 Kings 3:24** - "And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country."

After a last, failed counterattack, the king of Moab takes a desperate action - the sacrifice of his firstborn son, not only to placate the gods but to show his remaining people his determination.

**2 Kings 3:27** - "And he took his first-born who would reign after him, and brought him up for a burnt-offering on the wall. And there was great wrath upon Israel, and they withdrew from him and returned to the land."

This is confusing, but probably refers to the three kings - they took this as a sign that further fighting wasn't needed, and they lifted their siege and returned to their own countries.

Remember that the Moabites and Ammonites were descended from Lot's drunken intercourse with his daughters after Sodom was destroyed, and they were related to the Israelites.

The rabbis said the Moabite king's action was indirectly inspired by a misunderstanding of the Akedah, the binding of Isaac in **Genesis 22**.

Rashi - In the Pesikta of the section of Shekalim it is expounded that he asked his servants ([in] Pesikta [and] Yalkut: his astrologers), "What is the character of this nation, that miracles such as these were performed for them?" They replied, "Their forefather, Abraham, had an only son. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, Sacrifice him before Me, and he wanted to sacrifice him to the Holy One, Blessed be He." He said to them, "I too have a first born son. I will go and sacrifice him to the gods."

God forbids human sacrifice:

- **Jeremiah 7:30-31** - "For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart."

The rabbis said Isaac was willing to be bound to the altar, believing that God would raise him up again - be resurrected - even if he was sacrificed. Instead, a ram was provided for sacrifice instead.

Similarly, Jesus gave up his own life willingly as an atonement for sin.

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again" (**John 10:17-18**).

## Summary

This story of Elisha shows us that we must dig out the remaining pieces of our old man Adam, empty ourselves to be filled with the new life of Jesus. Emptying this vessel of clay to be filled with water that we don't yet see.

- **Philippians 2:7** - Christ "made himself of no reputation," *ekenosen* - meaning He "emptied himself." When we empty, God is faithful to fill us.