

2 Kings 4:42-44^{iv} ^v

A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.

^{iv} About 2 Kings 4:42-44

The books of 1 and 2 Kings, originally one work, tell of the monarchy from the death of David to the destruction of the kingdom—including the fall of Israel (the northern part of the divided kingdom) to Assyria and the fall of Judah (the southern kingdom) to Babylon. Though the author concerns himself with careful historical accounting, his intent is primarily religious. The background of the author's historical interpretations is always the covenant that bonded God and Israel in an ongoing relationship of fidelity.

This covenantal reflection is seen in the author's insistence on the centrality of the temple in Jerusalem as the only acceptable place of worship. This reflects Israel's developing monotheism, a belief system that began as an insistence on exclusive worship of one God, Yahweh (Deuteronomy 6:4), and came to full flowering as a recognition that there is no other god but Yahweh.

Thus, idolatry merits the harshest judgment. This idolatry takes the forms of shrines and altars built around the country, religious prostitution, the sacrifice of children and the fashioning of images for worship. Such practices deny true worship of the one true God.

Today's verses come from the Elisha cycle of stories that describe his prophetic ministry to the northern kings. In this short account, a man honors God, represented by the prophet, by offering him the first fruits of the new harvest. Elisha reflects God's compassion for the people and insists that the food be distributed to the hungry. The small offering is miraculously multiplied "according to the word of the Lord.

^v Psalm 145:10-19^v

All your works praise you, O LORD, *
and your faithful servants bless you.
They make known the glory of your kingdom *
and speak of your power;
That the peoples may know of your power *
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; *

your dominion endures throughout all ages.
The LORD is faithful in all his words *
and merciful in all his deeds.
The LORD upholds all those who fall; *
he lifts up those who are bowed down.
The eyes of all wait upon you, O LORD, *
and you give them their food in due season.
You open wide your hand *
and satisfy the needs of every living creature.
The LORD is righteous in all his ways *
and loving in all his works.
The LORD is near to those who call upon him, *
to all who call upon him faithfully.