**| Elisha and the pot of pottage**

**II Kings 4:38–41**

38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

“*Now Elisha had returned*, commencing a new narrative. The word “return” refers to the prophet’s annual visit.

“**The sons of the prophets were sitting before him**.—As disciples before a master; probably in a common hall, which served for lecture, work, and dining-room.

“**His servant.**—Perhaps not Gehazi, but one of the sons of the prophets.” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“*here was a dearth in the land —*It continued seven years, just as long again as that in the time of Elijah” (Benson Commentary).

**Dearth** is *ra’ab* in Hebrew which means “excessive hunger, scarcity of grain.”

“There was a dearth in the land - Rather, "The famine was in the land." The seven years' dearth of which Elisha had prophesied had begun.

“The sons of the prophets - They were sitting before him as scholars before their master, hearing his instructions” (Barnes’ Notes).

39 And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not.

“*And one went out*- As the needful services were performed by the members of the college among themselves, it was no doubt one of them who went into the field to gather such herbs as he could find.

“*wild gourds*] The Hebrew word is explained as meaning ‘wild cucumber’, an egg-shaped fruit with very bitter taste. But the prickly fruit of this plant could hardly be thought fit for pottage. Others think that the ‘colocynth’ is meant, and this was the opinion of the LXX., which renders ‘wild pumpkin’. This fruit might be mistaken for a melon.  
  
*for they knew* them *not*-Nobody among the brotherhood had sufficient skill of plants to stop their comrade, and tell him the noxious nature of the herb he had brought home” (Cambridge Bible).

“lap full—The hyke, or large cloak, is thrown loosely over the left shoulder and fastened under the right arm, so as to form a lap or apron” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

“**There is death in the pot,**i.e. some deadly thing; which they gathered from its excessive bitterness, by which possibly some of them might discern what it was” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary).

“Either the bitter flavor alarmed them, or they began to feel ill effects from what they had swallowed, which, if it was colocynth, might very soon have produced stomachache or nausea. Rushing, therefore, at once to the worst possible supposition, they concluded that they were poisoned, and exclaimed, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!" "If eaten in any large quantity," says Keil, "colocynths might really produce death." And they could not eat thereof; **i.e.** they could not continue to eat the pottage - all stopped eating” (Pulpit Commentary).

41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

“*bring meal*] He employs something which is wholesome and nourishing as a sign of the change that was to be wrought in the pottage. But we are not to attribute healing virtue to the meal that was used, any more than we should think that the salt ([2 Kings 2:21](https://biblehub.com/2_kings/2-21.htm)) was the means of healing the waters at Jericho” (Cambridge Bible).

“ But he said, Then bring meal. Elisha seems not to have hesitated for a moment. Prompt measures must be taken, if poisoning is even suspected. He has meal brought - not that meal has any virtue in itself against colocynth, or against any other deleterious drug. But he acts, now as always, under Divine direction, and is instructed to use meal on this occasion, as he used salt in healing the waters of Jericho. The meal "might somewhat modify the bitterness and injurious qualities of the vegetable," whatever it was, but "could not possibly take them entirely away. The meal, the most wholesome food of man, was only the earthly substratum for the working of the Divine effluence which proceeded from Elisha, and made the noxious food perfectly wholesome."

“And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out now for the people - **i.e.**, the assembled company of sons of the prophets - that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot. Such as had faith in Elisha, and continued to eat of the pottage, found no ill result. What they ate did them no harm” (Pulpit Commentary).