

did not ask about Ahab. Ahab was king, but Elijah was the real leader. *Get thee hence . . . eastward* ; in the direction of Jordan and Gilead. *Hide thyself* ; from the anger of Ahab and Jezebel, who would look upon him as the cause, as well as the announcer of the drought. *Brook Cherith . . . before Jordan* ; that is, east of the river and flowing into it through some unknown part of Gilead. "Brook" signifies a deep ravine or "wady," dry for part of the year, but with a strong stream flowing through it in the rainy season, November to March or April. *Ravens* ; among the commonest birds of Palestine. *To feed thee* ; a miraculous provision.

Vs. 5-7. *He went* ; without delay or question, so strong was his faith in God. *Ravens brought him bread and flesh . . . morning, and . . . evening*. God overruled the natural greed and selfishness of these voracious birds, in order that His servant might be provided for. *The brook dried up*. The drought daily became worse and worse. No water could be found even in the brooks. It was a time of direst distress.

### III. At Zarephath, 8-16.

Vs. 8, 9. *The word of the Lord* ; which had sent him to the Cherith, and now ordered him to leave. *Zarephath* (or Sarepta, Luke 4 : 26), *which belongeth to Sidon* (or Sidon). Both places lay on the Phenician coast to the northwest of Palestine. Zarephath was 9 or 10 miles south of Sidon, on the way to Tyre. Sidon was the home of Jezebel, who was Elijah's fierce enemy.

Vs. 10, 11. *He . . . went* ; again without hesitation or question. A Phenician city might seem a strange place of refuge for the champion of Jehovah against the Phenician god ; but, on the other hand, this was the very region in which his enemies would not be likely to look for him. *Widow . . . gathering . . . sticks*. Fuel is exceedingly scarce in Palestine. To-day the fuel of

Jerusalem is largely composed of the roots of thorns grubbed up on every roadside and field corner and barren spot for a radius of 10 or 15 miles round the city. *He called to her* ; recognizing her as the widow to whom he had been sent. *A little water* ; the first need of a traveler through the drought-stricken land. *A morsel of bread*. He was hungry as well as thirsty.

Vs. 12-16. *Not a cake* ; the thin, flat circular or oval scone used in that country. *Barrel* ; an earthen jar. *A little oil* ; used with bread, as we use butter. *Eat it, and die* ; a sad picture of abject human suffering. *Fear not*. The prophet knew that there was no poverty with God. *She went and did*. Her faith made the wonder possible. *Wasted not, neither did . . . fail*. The divine goodness and mercy made sufficient the slender store.

The story of Elijah's restoring the widow's son to life is told in vs. 17-24.

### Light from the East

"THERE SHALL NOT BE DEW NOR RAIN," v. 1.—In Palestine at the present day rain is considered one of God's best gifts. You will find Moslem, Christian and Jew—who generally curse each other—joining in prayer for the "showers that water the earth" (Ps. 72 : 6). The old Israelites, too, recognized the gift of God (Deut. 11 : 11, 12) ; the produce of the fields depended on the rain from heaven. Through the long droughts of summer (from the beginning of May to the end of October), the heavy dews acquire an importance they have not with us. Dew and rain are therefore spoken of as "the precious things of heaven" (Deut. 33 : 13). To be able to bring rain by prayer was a signal mark of a holy man : Elijah "prayed earnestly that it might not rain ; and it rained not" (James 5 : 17). Josephus tells of a certain Onias, "righteous and beloved of God," who in the days of Aristobulus was able by his prayers to bring rain to the parched earth.

### THE GEOGRAPHY LESSON

It seems most probable, that the brook Cherith flowed through some unfrequented part of the Gilead highlands, but nobody knows precisely where. On the other hand,

traditions dating from medieval times associate the story of Cherith with a certain picturesque gorge in the Judean wilderness between Jerusalem and Jericho. Notice how