

Eliyahu ~ Part 2

In my last post, I introduced a new series dealing with the ministry of **Eliyahu**. We explored some background information on him as well as the other two main characters in this saga: King **Ach'av** and Queen **Izevel**. In this post, we will begin to explore the actual Biblical story of **Eliyahu**.

God Stops the Rain

"Eliyahu from Tishbe, an inhabitant of Gil'ad, said to Ach'av, 'As Adonai the God of Isra'el lives, before whom I stand, there will be neither rain nor dew in the years ahead unless I say so.'" ~ 1 Kings 17:1 (CJB)

How would like to be in his shoes? Here he has a word from the Creator of the Universe that he is to go to the King and proclaim that there will be a drought for *the years ahead unless I say so*. Living in the San Joaquin Valley of California, I can certainly relate to this story. In recent years, we have experienced devastating drought conditions.

The people depended on the seasonal rains for the success of their crops. If the Lord didn't send the early rain in October and November and the latter rain in March and April, there would soon be a famine in the land. But the blessing of the seasonal rains depended on the people obeying the covenant of the Lord. God warned the people that their disobedience would turn the heavens into bronze and the earth into iron (D'varim 28:23-24). The land belonged to the Lord, and if the people defiled the land with their sinful idols, the Lord wouldn't bless them.

It's likely that **Eliyahu** appeared before King **Ach'av** in October, about the time the early rains should have begun. There had been no rain for six months, from April to October, and the prophet announced that there would be no rain for *the years ahead!* The people were following Ba'al, not God, and the Lord could not send the promised rain and still be faithful to His covenant. God always keeps His covenant, whether to bless the people for their obedience or to discipline them for their sins.

God had held back the rain because of the fervent prayers of **Eliyahu**, and He would send the rain again in response to His servant's intercession (see James 5:17-18). For the next three years, the word of **Eliyahu** would control the weather in Israel! The three and a half years of drought would prepare the people for the dramatic contest on Mount Carmel between the priests of Ba'al and the prophet of the Lord. Like a faithful servant, attentive to his master's commands, **Eliyahu** stood before the Lord and served him. An extended drought announced and controlled by a prophet of God, would make it clear to everybody that Ba'al the storm god was not a real god at all.

R.T. Kendall makes this interesting observation on **Eliyahu**:

*What strikes me most about Elijah is that he was both extraordinary and ordinary. He was spectacular ~ stating boldly, for example, that it would not rain until he gave the word; and there was not a drop of rain for three and a half years. Yet James noted that Elijah was a man "just like us" because he was so very, very human (James 5:17). Elijah took himself too seriously; he felt he was the only prophet around who was worth a grain of salt and fancied he was a cut above all before him. He was very human indeed. This is what makes a study of Elijah so thrilling. If God could use a man as human as Elijah was, there is hope for all of us!*¹

¹ These Are the Days of Elijah by R.T. Kendall.

Eliyahu, Get Out of Town

After delivering this message to King **Ach'av**, **Eliyahu** received the following message:

"² Then the word of Adonai came to him: ³ 'Leave here, turn to the east, and hide in Vadi K'rit near the Yarden. ⁴ You are to drink from the stream, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there. ⁵ So he went and acted according to the word of Adonai ~ he went and lived in Vadi K'rit near the Yarden. ⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the stream. ⁷ After a while the stream dried up because there was no rain in the land." 1 Kings 17:2-7 (CJB)

After **Eliyahu** left the king's presence, **Izevel** probably instigated her campaign to wipe out the prophets of the Lord. As the drought continued and famine hit the land, **Ach'av** began his search for **Eliyahu**, the man he thought caused all the trouble. In one sense, **Eliyahu** did cause the drought, but it was the sins of **Ach'av** and **Izevel** that led the nation into disobeying God's covenant and inviting His chastening.

The Lord had a special hiding place for His servant by a brook east of the **Yarden**, and He also had some unusual "servants" prepared to feed him. The Lord usually leads His faithful people a step at a time as they tune their hearts to His Word. God didn't give **Eliyahu** a schedule to follow. Instead, He directed His servant at each critical juncture in his journey, and **Eliyahu** obeyed by faith.

At the **Vadi K'rit**, **Eliyahu** had safety and sustenance. Until it dried up, the brook provided water, and each morning and evening the ravens brought him bread and meat. The raven was considered "unclean" and "detestable" on the Mosaic list of forbidden foods (Leviticus 11:13-15), yet God used these birds to help sustain the life of His servant. The ravens didn't bring **Eliyahu** the carrion that they were accustomed to eating, because such food would be unclean for a dedicated Jew. The Lord provided the food, and the birds provided the transportation! Just as God dropped the manna into the camp of Israel during their wilderness journey, so He sent the necessary food to **Eliyahu** as he waited for the signal to relocate.

We can't be sure how long **Eliyahu** was at the **Vadi K'rit**, but we do know it must have been pretty lonely hiding out. What would you do with that kind of solitude? Personally, I'm much too gregarious to tolerate much seclusion. Sure, I like my quiet times, but usually, a half-day here or there will do.

Kendall observes that:

A person who is highly gifted needs to pray more than anyone. You develop intimacy with your heavenly Father. You develop sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. You get to know God's ways. You and I are required to know essentially two things: God's Word and His ways. You know His Word by reading the Bible. You know His ways by spending time with Him. ²

As the drought grew worse, the brook dried up, leaving the prophet without water; but he never made a move until the Word of the Lord came to tell him what to do. It has well been said that the will of God will never lead us where the grace of God cannot keep us and care for us, and **Eliyahu** knew this from experience.

In my next post, we will continue to explore the Biblical story of **Eliyahu** by looking at how he helped a widow in **1 Kings 17:8-15**.

² Ibid.