

## Eliyahu ~ Part 7

In my last post, we explored **Eliyahu Reencounters King Ach'av** in **1 Kings 18:16-19**. In this post, we continue to examine **Eliyahu's** encounter with **Ach'av** setting the stage for **Eliyahu's Finest Hour ~ Let the Fire Fall** in **1 Kings 18:20-29**.

*<sup>20</sup> Ach'av sent word to all the people of Isra'el and assembled the prophets together on Mount Karmel. <sup>21</sup> Eliyahu stepped forward before all the people and said, "How long are you going to jump back and forth between two positions? If Adonai is God, follow him; but if it's Ba'al, follow him!" The people answered him not a word. <sup>22</sup> Then Eliyahu said to the people, "I, I alone, am the only prophet of Adonai who is left, while Ba'al's prophets number 450. <sup>23</sup> Let them give us two young bulls, and they can choose the bull they want for themselves. Then let them cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood but put no fire under it. I will prepare the other bull, lay it on the wood and put no fire under it. <sup>24</sup> Then, you, call on the name of your god; and I will call on the name of Adonai; and the God who answers with fire, let him be God!" All the people answered, "Good idea! Agreed!"*

*<sup>25</sup> Then Eliyahu said to the prophets of Ba'al, "Choose one bull for yourselves, and prepare it first; because there are many of you. Then call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it." <sup>26</sup> They took the bull that was given to them, prepared it and called on the name of Ba'al from morning till noon — "Ba'al! Answer us!" But no voice was heard; and no one answered, as they jumped around on the altar they had made. <sup>27</sup> Around noon Eliyahu began ridiculing them: "Shout louder! After all, he's a god, isn't he? Maybe he's daydreaming, or he's on the potty, or he's away on a trip. Maybe he's asleep, and you have to wake him up." <sup>28</sup> So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and knives, as their custom was until blood gushed out all over them. <sup>29</sup> By now it was afternoon, and they went on ranting and raving until it was time for the evening offering. But no voice came, no one answered, no one paid any attention." ~ 1 Kings 18:20-29 (CJB)*

### The Prophets of Ba'al Meet the God of Israel

Representatives were present from all ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom, and it was this group that **Eliyahu** addressed as the meeting began. His purpose was not only to expose the false god **Ba'al** but also to bring the compromising people back to the Lord. Because of the evil influence of **Ach'av** and **Izevel**, the people were vacillating between two opinions and trying to serve both God and **Ba'al**. Like **Moshe** (Exodus 32:26) and **Y'hosua** (Joshua 24:15) before him, **Eliyahu** called for a decision on their part, but the people were speechless. Was this because of their guilt (Romans 3:19) or because they first wanted to see what would happen next? They were weak people, without real conviction.

**Eliyahu** weighted the test in favor of the prophets of **Ba'al**. They could build their altar first, select their sacrifice and offer it first, and they could take all the time they needed to pray to **Ba'al**. When **Eliyahu** said he was the only prophet of the Lord, he didn't forget the prophets that **Ovadyah** had hidden and protected. Instead, he was stating that he was the only one openly serving the Lord, and therefore he was outnumbered by the 450 prophets of **Ba'al**. But one plus God is a majority, so the prophet had no fears. Surely the prayers of 450 zealous prophets would be heard by **Ba'al**, and he would answer by sending fire from heaven! (See Leviticus 9:24 and 1 Chronicles 21:26.)

By noon, **Eliyahu** was taunting the prophets of **Ba'al** because nothing had happened. The prophets of **Ba'al** were dancing frantically around their altar and cutting themselves with swords and spears, but still, nothing happened. **Eliyahu** suggested that perhaps **Ba'al** couldn't hear them because he was deep in thought, or

busy in some task, or even traveling. His words only made them more fanatical, but nothing happened. I loved how Stern stated in verse 27 that **Ba'al** might have been *on the potty*.<sup>1</sup> Very visual.

At three o'clock, the time of the evening sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem, **Elijah** stepped forward and took charge. We are now approaching **Elijah's** finest hour. It would become the high-water mark of his ministry. Elijah was waiting for the holy fire to fall. God would use this frail prophet to show the people of Israel that He is still a consuming fire.

In my next post, we continue to explore the Biblical story of **Elijah**. In this passage, we continue to examine **Elijah's** encounter with the **Prophets of Ba'al** in **Elijah's Finest Hour ~ Let the Fire Fall** in **1 Kings 18:30-40**.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Stern has paraphrased the Jewish Publication Society's edition of the Tanakh. That said, several modern English translations render the phrase as "*relieving himself*."