

Elijah ~ Part 8

In my last post, we explored **Elijah's** encounter with **Ach'av** setting the stage for **Elijah's Finest Hour ~ Let the Fire Fall** in **1 Kings 18:20-29**. In this post, 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**.

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." All the people came up to him, as he set about repairing the altar of Adonai that had been broken down. ³¹ Elijah took twelve stones, in keeping with the number of tribes of the sons of Ya'akov, to whom the word of Adonai had come, saying, "Your name is to be Isra'el." ³² With the stones, he built an altar in the name of Adonai. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough for half a bushel of grain. ³³ He arranged the wood, cut up the bull and laid it on the wood.

³⁴ Then he said, "Fill four pots with water, and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." They did it. "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he said, and they did it a third time. ³⁵ By now the water was flowing around the altar, and it had filled the trench. ³⁶ Then, when it came time for offering the evening offering, Elijah the prophet approached and said, "Adonai, God of Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Isra'el, let it be known today that you are God in Isra'el, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. ³⁷ Hear me, Adonai, hear me, so that this people may know that you, Adonai, are God and that you are turning their hearts back to you."

³⁸ Then the fire of Adonai fell. It consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones and the dust; and it licked up the water in the trench. ³⁹ When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "Adonai is God! Adonai is God!" ⁴⁰ Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Ba'al! Don't let one of them escape!" They seized them, and Elijah brought them down to Vadi Kishon and killed them there." ~ 1 Kings 18:30-40 (CJB)

Let the Fire Fall



Image courtesy of Google

Elijah now turned from the false prophets to the people. They were the ones he was determined to win over from **Ba'al**. He had already humiliated the prophets of **Ba'al** with the shenanigans they pulled trying to get **Ba'al** to burn up their offering. It's interesting to me that Elijah called for a total of twelve large jars of water be poured on the altar, the wood, and the bull until the trench around the altar was filled. During the draught, where did that much water come from? A miracle? **Elijah** took steps to avoid any appearance of trickery or fraud. If his God could get a drenching wet sacrifice to burn, his God was God indeed.

At the time of the evening sacrifice, he lifted his voice in prayer to the God of the covenant, the **God of Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Isra'el**. He requested that God be glorified as the God of Israel, the true and living God, and make it known that **Eliyahu** was His servant. But even more, by sending fire from heaven, the Lord would be telling His people that He had forgiven them and would turn their hearts back to the worship of the true God. **Eliyahu** may have been thinking of God's promise to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:12-15.

Eliyahu's prayer was a powerful statement of the theology of God's great works. Just as the temple singers declared God's great works so the world could know God (Psalm 66:3-4), **Eliyahu** prayed for a miraculous sign, so this people would understand that **Adonai** is God. The simplicity of **Eliyahu's** procedure is impressive. The prophet prayed, and the sacrifice was miraculously burned.

Suddenly, the fire fell from heaven and entirely devoured the sacrifice, the altar, and the water in the trench around the altar. (I picked the image above specifically because it visualizes this description.) There was nothing left that anybody could turn into a relic or a shrine. The altar to **Ba'al** still stood as a monument to a lost cause. The prophets of Ba'al were stunned, and the people of Israel fell on their faces and acknowledged, **"Adonai is God! Adonai is God!"**

But **Eliyahu** wasn't finished, for he commanded the people to take the false prophets of **Ba'al** and slay them. This was in obedience to the Lord's command in Deuteronomy 13:13-18 and 17:2-5. The test had been a fair one, and the prophets of **Ba'al** had been exposed as idolaters who deserved to be killed. The law required that idolaters be stoned to death, but **Eliyahu** had the prophets killed with the sword (1Kings19:1). This action, of course, angered Jezebel, from whose table these men had been fed (v. 19), and she determined to capture **Eliyahu** and kill him.

In my next post, we continue to explore the Biblical story of **Eliyahu**. In this passage, we learn that the **Rain Returns to Israel** in **1 Kings 18:41- 46**.