

THE DAYS OF ELIJAH

LESSON 4: JEHOVAH PROVIDES FOR HIS PEOPLE (1KINGS 19)

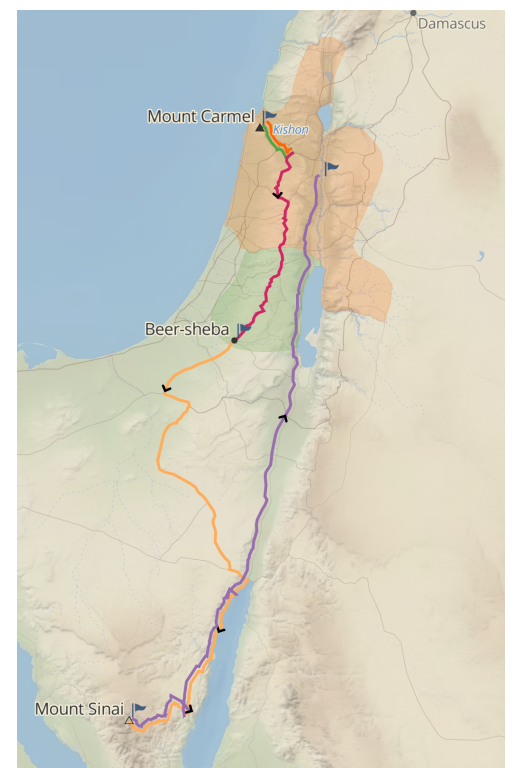
So far our studies have focused on Jehovah's triumph over Baal. The episodes in 1Kings 18 and 2Kings 1 should have convinced Israel's kings and her people to place their trust in the Lord. And if they had, they would have experienced the Lord's care and provision (Deuteronomy 28.1-14). But even though Israel as a nation had turned away from the Lord, Jehovah was still providing for His people.

Recall that due to Israel's following after Baal, the Lord withheld the rain (1Kings 17.1). However, He was still providing for Elijah, His faithful prophet (1Kings 17.3-9). First, the Lord provided for him at the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan River. And when the drought became so severe that the brook dried up, the Lord sent Elijah to Sidon. And if being provided food by a raven wasn't impressive enough, the Lord would use a poor widow to provide for His prophet at Zarephath. The point: the Lord could provide for His faithful no matter where they were or how dire the circumstances!

But what about when faithfulness to the Lord led to severe consequences... even to having your life threatened? This lesson looks at how the Lord provided for Elijah once Jezebel swore that she would end Elijah's life (1Kings 19.2).

NOTES FROM THE TEXT...

- Vs. 2, the names of the protagonists are worthy noting: Jezebel means "where is the prince (Baal)?" whereas Elijah means "Yahweh is my God"
- Vs. 3, Beersheba was located in the far south of Judah, thus well beyond the reach of Ahab.
- Vs. 4
 - » The juniper or broom-tree can grow to a height of 10 feet and is the only shade in this wilderness.
 - » Compare Elijah's complaint to that of Moses in Numbers 11.15. One commentator speculates that "Elijah exhibited symptoms of manic depression, wishing for death, together with loss of appetite, an inability to manage and with excessive self-pity." (Tyndale)
- Vss. 5-6, the Lord's care for Elijah is similar to what He



had provided for the prophet in 1Kings 17.2-16.

- Vs. 8, Horeb (Mt. Sinai) lay ~ 250 south of Beersheba. The 40 days makes a parallel with Moses (Exodus 24.18) and later on with Christ (Matthew 4.2).
- Vs. 9, some speculate that the cave was the same “cleft” where the Lord appeared to Moses (Exodus 33.22). The Lord’s question is similar to the question He asked of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3.9). It provides Elijah with the opportunity to reflect and even confess.
- Vss. 11-12
 - » The wind, earthquake and fire hearkens back to the Lord’s appearance at Sinai when He entered a covenant with Israel (Exodus 19.16). These were also classic features of theophanies (divine appearances) in various cultures, particularly at times of war.
 - » So, the “sound of a gentle blowing” is meant to be juxtaposed against the mighty demonstrations of God’s power. “Here it is made plain to Elijah that Yahweh is not simply a hot-blooded warrior defending or dethroning kings on an arbitrary whim like the gods of the ancient Near East. He has an agenda for history. His warfare is not just wrathful blood-letting—there is a long-term plan that is being carefully worked out. Once all the fire and storm and earthquake are past, the plan can be articulated. The “gentle whisper” in verse 12 is not describing how the Lord speaks. It is descriptive of the resonating silence after all the clamor of destruction. It is with silence hanging in the air that Yahweh’s voice of direction may be heard.” (IVPB-BC)
- Vss. 15-17
 - » Undoubtedly, the episode at Mount Carmel had convinced Elijah that Jehovah’s cause had won, but the threats by Jezebel had shattered that hope. The Lord’s message in this passage would reassure Elijah that Jehovah would be victorious over Baal and Ahab, and He would be victorious using men other than Elijah!
 - » Hazael would be the most powerful king of Aram, taking away much of Israel’s territory (see 2Kings 10.32-33). Jehu would purge Israel of Ahab’s dynasty (2Kings 9.14-10.28). Elisha would carry on the prophetic work of Elijah.
- Vs. 18, Not only would the Lord use others to carry out His will, Elijah is now told that he is NOT the only one still faithful to Jehovah (cf. vss. 10,14).
- Vs. 19
 - » The 12 pair of oxen show that Elisha’s family was well off. He was leaving much to follow Elijah.
 - » Throwing the mantle on Elisha was a call to follow in the prophetic work.
- Vs. 20, Elisha is allowed to go to his home. Contrast with Luke 9.61-62, where perhaps the Lord is showing how much more important it was to follow Him.



TAKEAWAYS

In Matthew 6.25-34 Jesus exhorted His disciples to not worry about what they would eat, drink or wear. The reason? Because their heavenly Father already knew what they need-

ed and if they would "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" they would have all of those things. The Lord providing for Elijah during the drought (1Kings 17.1-16) and on his journey to Horeb (1Kings 19.4-8) is further proof that our Father can and will provide for His people. Yet, it's not just basic necessities that the Lord provides for His people. Consider that the Lord also provided encouragement and purpose for Elijah (1Kings 19.15-18). Elijah may have believed that he alone was faithful, but no there were 7000 more! Elijah may have worried that Israel was destined to reject the Lord forever, but the Lord had a plan! Elijah left Horeb strengthened; the Lord had provided.

And perhaps we should appreciate that the Lord's plan being fulfilled is the greatest way He can provide for His people. The crux of the Lord's message to Elijah was that Hazael, Jehu and Elisha would help fulfill the Lord's plan. Elijah needed to hear and know this, so that he could regain courage. Perhaps the greatest provision the Lord can make for us is to let us know His plan will be accomplished (Revelation 2.10).