



GOD OF FIRE & RAIN

—THE STORY OF—
ELIJAH & GOD

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YES, NO & MAYBE

1. I'm less superstitious than the people sitting near me.
2. In my lifetime, I've been cheated on by people more than once.
3. God likes having showdowns between other gods in church.
4. We make more sacrifices in our spiritual walk than we need to.
5. God's miracles tend to use non-kosher methods.

DIG DEEPER

◦ How have people been disloyal or unfaithful to you? How did you teach them a lesson?

› **READ 1 Kings 16:29-17:6** (NIV)

29 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. 30 Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. 31 He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. 32 He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. 33 Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.

34 In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

17:1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

2 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 3 "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there."

5 So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

» **31 Considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam** - Except for Asa, the kings are not positive figures in these stories. Jeroboam in particular serves as an example of how pervasive sin can be. Disregarding Moses' command to be different from the Canaanite kings, they adopt pagan practices for political reasons. None of these decisions fulfills Moses' ideal of a king who honors and safeguards God's word (cf. Deut 17:14-20). The kings too often use theology as a political tool. Only Asa acts on behalf of Yahweh. He is not perfect, but he is faithful.

» **31 He also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him.** - The name of this queen, Jezebel, which may be derived from a compound of “where?” and “Baal,” thus means: Where is Baal?, a seeker of Baal. Also her father’s name, Ethbaal, which means, “Living with Baal, i.e., enjoying the favor and help of Baal.” Ahab built a temple in Samaria, the royal city, because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the royal city of the other kingdom. He would have Baal’s temple near him, that he might the better frequent it, protect it, and put honor upon it. He placed an altar in that temple, on which to offer sacrifice to Baal, by which they acknowledged their dependence upon him and sought his favor.

• What does it say about God that He would remain concerned and faithful to the Israelites who had chosen other gods over Him?

» **34 [Hiel] laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub** - The foundation sacrifice, revealed by modern archaeology, is probably what was involved. The children named were probably infants, dead or alive, placed in jars and inserted into the masonry, to please the gods and ward off evil.

• Why do you think humanity regularly chooses personal sacrifices instead of receiving the gifts that come from God’s sacrifices?

» **17:1 Elijah the Tishbite** - Elijah, the prophet, barges into the story unannounced. His name declares his theological mission, for it means “Yahweh is my God.” Quite dramatically, he claims there will be no rain until he says so. He bases this declaration on the fact that his God lives and on the notion that he serves this living God, which means his prayers will be heard.

» **17:1 There will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years** - Why choose a drought? Why emphasize that Yahweh lives? Elijah determines to attack Baalism at its theological center. Baal worshipers believed that their storm god made rain, unless, of course, it was the dry season and he needed to be brought back from the dead. To refute this belief Elijah states that Yahweh is the one who determines when rain falls, that Yahweh lives at all times, and that Yahweh is not afraid to challenge Baal on what his worshipers consider his home ground.

« What does it say about God that he would choose to cause a drought in this showdown with the pagan gods? Does God bring other kinds of droughts into our lives to wake us up today?

» **17:4-6 I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.** - Elijah obeyed the LORD, who miraculously provided for him as He had promised. God directed ravens, birds that normally neglect their own young (cf. Job 38:41), to bring bread and meat faithfully to Elijah every morning and evening. And he drank water from the brook. The Hebrew word for “bread” (lehem) means food in general, possibly including berries, fruit, nuts, eggs, etc. Perhaps they were brought from a distance where the drought had not yet affected the vegetation. Through this unusual manner of nourishing His prophet physically, God was also nourishing Elijah’s faith for later feats of spiritual strength.

« What does it say about God that He would employ ravens (who not only neglect their own young, but were also considered “unclean” by the Hebrews) to feed Elijah? Does God still use similar methods today to work miracles?

« What does this story reveal to you about God’s character?



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MY PRAYER...

1. How am I remaining loyal to God?
2. What things am I doing to supplement what I am not receiving from God?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?