



GOD OF FIRE & RAIN

—THE STORY OF—
ELIJAH & GOD

6



YES, NO & MAYBE

1. If there was a rat or a snake crawling around in here, I'd be running for the exit.
2. I try to fight it, but I get discouraged at work often.
3. If you run from God, He will not chase you.
4. I am exactly where God wants me to be.
5. God doesn't want you to move forward, but backwards.

> READ 1 Kings 19:1-18 (NIV)

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

11 The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

14 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

15 The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. 16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. 17 Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. 18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

» **4 A day's journey** - This is a very ancient method of estimating distances, and is still used in some parts of the Middle East. A "day's journey" varies, according to the circumstances and difficulty of traveling; it ranged from 18 to 30 miles. The ordinary day's journey of the Scriptures is probably not far from 20 miles.

- Why do you think Elijah ran from Jezebel's threat?

» **4 “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”** - After “a day’s journey into the desert,” an exhausted Elijah says he wants to die, which, ironically, is the opposite desire to what he expressed by fleeing into the desert in the first place. Now God begins to renew his faith by miraculously feeding him. In other words, the Lord ministers to him as in the past. Twice an angel feeds him, thereby giving him strength to travel to “Horeb, the mountain of God.” Elijah knows God exists in Israel, Phoenicia, and the desert.

- Why is it so easy to doubt God’s protection, even on the heels of seeing mighty miracles?

» **6 Bread baked over hot coals** - The thin, flat bread of the East, especially among the nomadic desert tribes, is constantly baked in a rude oven, constructed in the sand or soil. A little hollow is made; sometimes it is lined with stones to retain the heat; fuel, often the root of the broom tree, is placed upon it and kindled, and when the sand or stones are sufficiently hot, the embers are raked to one side, and the dough is placed in the oven, where it is sometimes covered with the ashes.

- What does it say about God that He would feed Elijah after he’s run away without asking God for guidance?

» **8 He traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.** - Moses and the Israelites had traveled in that wilderness for 40 years, sustained by the manna God had provided for them and learned lessons of His faithful care and provision. Now Elijah would traverse the same desert for 40 days and nights, sustained by the bread God provided and would learn the same lessons.

» **9 There he went into a cave** - It is believed that this was the same cave that Moses used when God appeared to him.

- Why do you think that God led Elijah to the very spot where He appeared to Moses?

» **9 “What are you doing here, Elijah?”** - When it is remembered that the prophet had been sent to every other destination by the “word of the Lord,” and that he had left Jezreel without any such word—left it in terror and bitter disappointment and sheer distrust of God—it does look as if the words conveyed a gentle reminder that he had deserted the post of duty, and had no right to be there.

» **11-12 Powerful wind, earthquake, & fire** - This appearance of the Lord, reminds readers of Exod 33:18–22, where Moses desires to see God’s glory and is rewarded by being allowed to view “the back” of the Lord’s splendor. God places Moses in the rock and covers him with a divine “hand” to protect him. Here, Elijah waits for God’s word through tearing wind, ground shaking earthquake, and roaring flame. The Lord does not speak, however, through these natural phenomena. Certainly Elijah has experienced God’s sovereignty over nature, and has benefited from miraculous fire, but what he needs now is a definitive word from the Lord.

- « What does it mean to you that God was not in the wind, earthquake, or fire?

» **12 A gentle whisper** - Perhaps the Lord attempts to teach Elijah not to always expect the miraculous deliverance from problems. The Lord may simply be trying to explain to Elijah that He works in small ways at times.

- « What does it say about God that He works in small ways as well as mighty ways?

» **15 Go back the way you came...anoint Hazael king over Aram...** - “Go back the way you came,” a command that calls Elijah back into active service of the Lord. He must anoint Hazael king of Syria, which declares Yahweh’s lordship over that non-Israelite country. Similarly, he must anoint Jehu king of Israel, thus reestablishing the Lord’s rule over the Northern Kingdom. Finally, Elijah must anoint Elisha to take his place. This command, coupled with the Lord’s comment that he has selected, or caused to remain, seven thousand persons who do not worship Baal, reminds Elijah that God’s word cannot be silenced. It remains the force that produces the remnant, protects the remnant, and empowers the remnant. As a part of this remnant, Elijah can expect God’s protection and empowerment.

- « What does it say about God that He doesn’t allow Elijah to quit, but instead, He sends him back where he came from?

MY PRAYER...

1. How is God whispering to me now in areas I’m expecting earth-shattering miracles?
2. Where do I need God to send me back to work?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?



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