

Traveling with Elijah

Seven lessons from the life of Elijah



Created by
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Lesson Two:

Two Styles of Serving God

1 Kings 18:1-18

1. Biblical text

Elijah Confronts Ahab

18 After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."

2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. 3 And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly,

4 and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)

5 And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." 6 So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself. 7 And as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. And Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is it you, my lord

Elijah?" 8 And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your lord, 'Behold, Elijah is here.'" 9 And he said, "How have I sinned, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?

10 As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, 'He is not here,' he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. 11 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here.'" 12 And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you I know not where. And so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth. 13 Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here"'; and he will kill me." 15 And Elijah said, "As the Lord of hosts lives,

before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today.”

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of

Israel?” 18 And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father’s house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.

2. Meaning of the story

2.1 King Ahab did not learn the lesson (1 Kings 18:4-5,12,17-18)

Three years of extreme drought has tortured the Kingdom of Israel and the surrounding world. “The famine was severe in Samaria.” [Picture 1]

We have no reason to think Israel turned to the Lord because of the famine. King Ahab was not prepared to change his life. We see that in spite of the severe punishment of God, King Ahab:



[Picture 1, impact of famine]

- allowed his wife Jezebel to kill Gods prophets
- was more worried about his animals than about his people
- organised a manhunt for Elijah
- blamed Elijah for the fate of Israel
- created a state of terror – Obadiah was afraid to be killed for even talking to Elijah.

Ahab did not change his ways, in spite of the drought and the hunger. But in spite of this, God intervened and decided to send rain to the land, to make an end to the awful famine.



QUESTIONS:

- What would the rationale of Ahab be for not changing his ways?
- How stubborn can we be?
- Why would God want to send rain to the unrepentant land? (See 1 Kings 19:18, Matthew 5:45)

2.2 Elijah takes a risk (1 Kings 18:1-2,10,16-19)

God told Elijah to go to King Ahab. In the circumstances of those days, this was very risky business! Elijah was quite aware of the dangers, but he obeyed his Lord and he went on his way. He left Zarephath, the place where God had so tremendously blessed him and the widow. He left his 'social security' because God called him for a new task.



QUESTIONS:

- Was it wise of Elijah to go to King Ahab?
- Are you prepared to leave your 'social security' behind if God asks you to do so? (See Matthew 4:19-22, Luke 9:24-25)
- How is Elijah's obedience an example for you? Do you need to take some action?

2.3 Obadiah: Serving God full-time (1 Kings 18:1-6)

On his way to King Ahab, Elijah met one of the King's co-workers. Everyone in Israel knew Obadiah. He was in charge of the palace of the King. That made him a sort of "Minister of Interior" in Israel. He was in charge of "police", even of the "secret police". He was responsible for the money of the government and in general of anything related to the palace and to the King directly.



[Picture 2, cave in northern Israel]

If King Ahab had found out that Obadiah was “a devout believer in the Lord”, he would never have appointed him to have this high position in government. And in his position, Obadiah was able to secretly support the cause of the Lord – with money and food from the palace. Thus, Obadiah was able to keep 100 prophets alive in some caves in northern Israel . [Picture 2]

Obadiah said of himself that he had “worshipped the Lord since [his] youth.” The Holy Scriptures confirm his dedication to God. It is clear though, that this was not a well-known fact in Israel. Why would he otherwise be so worried that King Ahab would find out that he had spoken with Elijah? Was Obadiah maybe a ‘secret believer’?



QUESTIONS:

- How could Obadiah work for such a sinful regime? (See 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, James 1:27, 4:4)
- Was Obadiah a lesser servant of God than Elijah?
- How is Obadiah a model for us?
- What do we learn about God from this story?

