

## 1 Kings 19:1-8

### God Encourages a Dejected Elijah

**1 Kings 19:1** - "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword."

Miraculous fire had consumed the sacrifice at the confrontation with the prophets of Baal, showing Baal to be powerless and Yahweh to be the true and living God. All the prophets of Baal had been killed by Elijah and representatives of Israel. Ahab saw Elijah pray and end the three-year long drought with a rain storm (which supposedly was under the power of Baal as the storm god).

Ahab had witnessed this and was no doubt feeling conflicted and worried. His queen Jezebel had not been there. She still had 400 trusted Baal priests at her command and a base of support in the capital city of Jezreel. So she sends a message to Elijah promising to kill him.

**1 Kings 19:2** - "Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time."

With the truth publicly displayed, and seeing the response of the people gathered who witnessed it, Elijah probably expected a major movement of repentance and a revival of faith in Israel, with the overturning of Baal altars, destruction of the idols and a movement to reunite with Judah.

But none of that happened. Although he had been fearless at Mt. Carmel, Elijah was suddenly overtaken with fear. Something about Jezebel's personal threat revealed his own discouragement, and he fled south.

**1 Kings 19:3** - "And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there."

Beersheba was the southernmost city, on the edge of the Negev Desert. He left his servant and went one more day's journey into the desert, effectively leaving both Israel and Judah behind. He left the Promised Land. It's almost like he didn't feel worthy to remain.

**1 Kings 19:4** - "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

Not really a Juniper "tree," but a bush with yellowish flowers springing from a bitter root, which the poor were accustomed to eat

The bush is mentioned in **Job 30:4** and **Psalms 120:4** describing circumstances of extreme humiliation, poverty and despair.

Because the outcome of Mt. Carmel had not been what he expected, he assumes his failure is somehow because of his own sin. He is "no better than his ancestors" who had turned to idolatry.

### King David's Depression

David experienced a similar valley of depression, sitting under his own version of the juniper tree.

- **Psalm 13:1** - "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?"

Like Elijah, David feels forgotten and abandoned by God, and at the mercy of his enemies.

- **Psalm 13:2** - "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall my enemy be exalted over me?"

"take counsel in my soul" - The counsels or devices of his heart afford no relief.

Tossing on a sea of doubt and perplexity, David forms plan after plan, but to no purpose. He seeks to find a way of escape from his difficulties, but cannot discover one. - - Pulpit Commentary

"take counsel in my soul" - Literally, "put plans unto my soul." The plans (LXX., βουλάς) formed in the mind turn to sorrows as they are frustrated. It is better to render it, "how long shall I form plans *against* my soul (having) sorrow in my heart all the day?" The next verse confirms the suspicion that suicide had been in the psalmist's mind. — *Ellicott's Commentary*

- **Psalm 13:4** - "Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved." ("moved" - to totter, shake, slip)

The "enemy" could refer to Saul. But the psalm is written for our edification, and the enemy is the evil one who constantly goes about like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8) seeking to shipwreck our faith and destroy us. As with David here, he speaks to us through the myriad voices of defeat and despair in our own thoughts.

- **Psalm 13:5** - "But I have trusted in your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation."

But something happens. David remembers God's previous faithfulness to him. The use of "I" - the independent pronoun for emphasis - shows that his real identity, the real

David unaffected by the lies of his mind - has been called forth within himself, in contrast to his defeated condition in the previous verses. Christ appears.

“Salvation” is *yeshua* - deliverance, salvation, Joshua/Jesus.

The outcome of his renewed trust:

- **Psalm 13:6** - “I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.”

Elijah prays to die. God did the opposite for him. Elijah is one of the only people to *NOT DIE*. He is taken up in a fiery chariot into heaven.

### Comfort from an Angel

**1 Kings 19:5-6** - "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again."

Before, he had been fed by unclean ravens. Here God sends an angel to comfort him and provide sustenance.

### The Angel of the Lord - Provision and Presence

When Elijah needed to learn humility, God sent ravens. But now, when Elijah is completely broken and in despair, God responds with words of comfort and His personal presence in the appearance of "the Angel of the Lord."

In previous appearances this angel or messenger reflects the closest God comes in the Old Testament to revealing his face and presence. Often he acts as a stand-in for God Himself.

The Angel of the Lord comforts Hagar (**Genesis 21:17**). He stays the hand of Abraham at the binding of Isaac (**Genesis 22:11-18**). He speaks to Jacob in a dream (**Genesis 31:11**). Jacob/Israel referred to him as "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil." (**Genesis 48:16**)

He appeared in the burning bush to Moses (**Exodus 3:2**). He was promised to Israel "to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared." (**Exodus 23:20-24, Exodus 14:19, Exodus 32:34**)

The Angel withstood Balaam with a flaming sword (**Numbers 22:22-35**) The Angel scolds Israel just before the death of Joshua (**Judges 2:1-2**). He calls Gideon and brings fire out of the rock to consume his offering (**Judges 6:11-12**). Later he appears to Samson's parents announcing his birth (**Judges 13:3**).

Isaiah says "the Angel of His Presence saved them" (**Isaiah 63:9**). He joined Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the fiery furnace and preserved them (**Daniel 3:28**). He appears in Zechariah's vision (**Zechariah 3:1-6**).

The Angel of the Lord seems to be equated with God Himself:

Compare:

**Exodus 33:2** - "And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite."

**Deuteronomy 20:4** - "for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

**Zechariah 12:8** - "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them."

**Malachi 3:1** - "And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger (Angel) of the covenant..."

**Acts 7:38** - "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:"

The second time, the Angel touched him.

**1 Kings 19:7** - "And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee."

When we're in despair, we not only need food and drink, but a touch. The angel did not offer a detailed explanation of what God was doing, or point out where Elijah had gone wrong or what part of all this he had misunderstood. Like the touch of Jesus, this was a healing touch, and an empowering touch.

**1 Kings 19:8** - "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

To "arise" is the act of faith, the response of hope. It was a temporary, mini-resurrection for Elijah at this moment. It allowed him to go on, and sustained him for forty days and forty nights.

Elijah had taken Israel back to the days of the judges at Mt. Carmel, when he rebuilt the altar with stones representing the 12 tribes.

Now for the rebuilding of his *own* faith he had to go all the way back to Mt. Sinai (also called Horeb) where the Law and covenant had been given, and where Israel had truly

become a nation. The children of Israel had wandered for 40 years. He would trek 200 miles for 40 days, revisiting and re-experiencing Israel's failures and God's provision.

It was a mission of personal "spiritual archaeology." He was digging. Where was God?

He didn't know what he would find there, and probably didn't know exactly what he was looking for. But felt God would surely meet him there.

Compare this to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, also for 40 days and 40 nights. Afterward angels came and ministered unto Him (**Matthew 4**), and then Jesus called disciples. Elijah will spend 40 days at Horeb, and then call Elisha as his disciple.

This story is meant to comfort those of us who have ended up sitting under our own Juniper tree of defeat, failure and depression. Sometimes we have to go back to when we first met God, and rediscover what brought us to Him in the first place.

The message is that God is faithful. He will provide what we need, even in our confusion, when we cry out to Him. But it might get hard before it gets better.