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Elijah's Life and Last Days

Lessons from 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2

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Elijah's Life

The word of the Lord directed Elijah's journey step by step except for a detour to Beersheba and Mount Horeb when he was driven by fear rather than by the word of the Lord.

- The Lord directed Elijah from his birthplace in [Tishbe](#) east of the Jordan to king Ahab in [Samaria](#) to declare a drought;
- Then, back near [Tishbe](#) to the [Cherith Brook](#) to drink of the brook and be fed by ravens until the brook dried up;
- Then, far north to [Zarephath](#) in Sidon on the Sea where he blessed the widow and her son and lived in her upper room.^a
- After about three years, he returned to king Ahab in [Samaria](#), then journeyed northwest to [Mount Carmel](#) where he challenged 850 false prophets that sat at the king's table. The glory of the Lord was displayed, and the false prophets perished.
- After praying for rain on the top of [Mount Carmel](#), Elijah outran Ahab's chariot to [Jezreel](#) where he heard of Jezebel's plan to kill him.
- Then in fear, Elijah ran from Jezebel. Nevertheless, the hand of the Lord covered his life. He fled far south from [Jezreel](#) to [Beersheba](#) where angels brought sustenance to him.
- Then, he journeyed 40 days and nights southwest to [Mount Horeb](#) in Sinai – the Mountain of God. The Lord met Elijah there and asked him twice, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Could the Lord have meant, "I didn't direct you here, so why are you here?" Twice Elijah informed the Lord of his zeal for Him, the sin of His people, and the fact that he alone was left, and his life was in jeopardy. I guess Elijah could have said, "I'm here because I'm scared!"

Then, in Elijah's place of running, the Lord blessed him with His Own presence. He directed Elijah to stand before Him on the mountain. But Elijah was inside the craggy, rock cave of the mountain listening to the breaking sound of ferocious wind, an earthquake, and fire. Then, everything became calm, and Elijah heard "the sound of a gentle blowing," louder to him than the storm and tremors. At its sound, he came to the entrance of the cave and stood before the Lord with his mantle covering his face. Still afraid, Elijah heard the Lord's direction to return. So, he returned toward the [wilderness of Damascus](#) in the opposite direction from where his fear had driven him. He travelled far north of Israel to anoint two kings and a prophet.

- On his way to [Damascus](#), Elijah intercepted Elisha at his home in [Abel Meholah](#) just east of Samaria. The Lord was not yet finished with Elijah. Wars ensued between Aram and Samaria, and Israel's kings (Ahab and his son, Ahaziah) died. 2 Kings 2 begins with Elijah's last days.

Elijah's Last Days

Following are the first verses of 2 Kings 2. Notice the similarities designated by the colors. Elisha was focused on staying close to Elijah. He did not want to miss anything the Lord was doing. The Lord directed them both step by step. As they went from *Gilgal* to *Bethel* to *Jericho* to *the Jordan*, they witnessed the same message through the prophets in each place – a confirmation of the word of the Lord through them – that Elijah would be taken from them:

- ¹ The time had come for the LORD to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah and Elisha were traveling from *Gilgal*,
- ² Elijah said to Elisha, “*Stay here; the LORD is sending me on to Bethel.*” But Elisha said, “*As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.*” So, they went down to *Bethel*.
- ³ Then the sons of the **prophets** who were at *Bethel* came out to Elisha and said, “*Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?*” He said, “*Yes, I know. Be quiet.*”
- ⁴ Elijah said to him, “*Elisha, stay here; the LORD is sending me to Jericho.*” But Elisha said, “*As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.*” So, they went to *Jericho*.
- ⁵ Then the sons of the **prophets** who were in *Jericho* came up to Elisha and said, “*Do you know that the Lord will take your master away from you today?*” He said, “*Yes, I know. Be quiet.*”
- ⁶ Elijah said to him, “*Stay here; the LORD is sending me to the Jordan.*” But Elisha said, “*As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.*” So, the two of them went on.
- ⁷ Fifty men from the sons of the **prophets** came and stood facing them from a distance while the two of them stood by the *Jordan*.^b
- ⁸ Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the waters, which parted to the right and left. Then the two of them crossed over on dry ground.^c ⁹After they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you.” Elisha answered, “Please, let me inherit two shares of your spirit.” ¹⁰Elijah replied, “You have asked for something difficult. If you see me being taken from you, you will have it. If not, you won’t.”

As they continued walking, a chariot of fire with horses appeared and separated the two of them. Elijah went up into heaven in the whirlwind. Elisha cried out, “*My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!*” Elisha never saw Elijah again. Then, he tore his clothes in two pieces and picked up Elijah’s mantle that had fallen from him.

Elisha returned and stood on the bank of the *Jordan*. He struck the waters with Elijah’s mantle, and they parted to the right and the left, and Elisha crossed over. When the sons of the prophets from *Jericho* who were facing him saw him, they said, “*The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.*” They came to meet him and bowed down to the ground in front of him.

Lessons

- The Apostle Paul said, “*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*”
– Take time to hear Him, so that the Spirit of God directs you rather than fear or wrong motives.

- The Lord directed Elijah to strange places. From the Cherith brook, he walked what appears to be 100 miles northwest to Zarephath to a pagan territory outside of Israel where he blessed a widow and her son. It is hard to imagine his rugged journey as the Lord shepherded him toward that city on the Sea. While God provided for the widow through Elijah, the evil king Ahab was struggling with the drought. In God's timing, Elijah returned to address Ahab, the false prophets, and the drought. Luke 4:25 tells us that the drought and famine lasted 3½ years.

– We may find ourselves in a place that seems to be a detour, but God knows what He is doing!

The story of the widow from Zarephath reminds me of the story of Jesus Who went out of his way to meet the woman at the well in Samaria. God's compassion directed Elijah and Jesus to minister to the downcast foreigner. Jesus made the point that, if the Jews were not open to God, God was not limited to who He would bless. (See Luke 4:20-30)

– The Lord goes out of His way to bring us to Himself.

- During Elijah's flight in the face of fear, the Lord was his constant companion. A few hundred years earlier, King David expressed the same protection (Psalm 139:7-10):

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

Even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.

– The Lord is with us wherever we go. He will lead us, and He will lead us back. His love is consistent.

- There is so much noise and chaos everywhere in our world. Elijah heard God's specific direction in the gentle stillness of a breeze. Jesus likened the Spirit to the wind when he sat in conversation with Nicodemus 800 years later, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

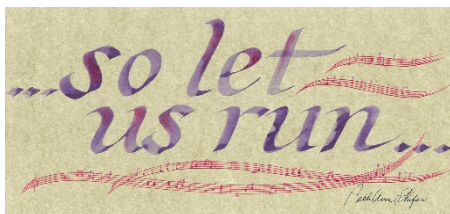
– We find Him when we take time in stillness.

- Just as Elisha did not let Elijah out of his sight, we keep our eyes upon Jesus as His *talmidim*.^d The Psalmist writes, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, and as the eyes of a female servant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He is gracious to us." (Psalm 123:2)^e

- Elijah's mantle fell from the sky to Elisha after Elijah was caught up into heaven. Whose mantle do we drape over our shoulders? I think of Jesus and many mentors who have gone before me. After Hebrews 11 recounts the list of the faithful ones in Scripture, the author writes, "Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking only at Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrew 12:1-2)

– Imitation requires impartation – the impartation of the Spirit of God through Jesus Christ.

– Let us take up the mantle and run with endurance!



- What insights did the Lord give you as you read about Elijah's life?

Endnotes

^a For pictures of the upper rooms, see my paper *[The Incarnation of Hesed](#)* at [ShaleFragments.com](#)

^b On June 23rd, 2012, I wrote in my journal, "God's Spirit fell on me when I read 2 Kings 2:7." I felt His presence powerfully and tangibly. I will never forget it. I sat basking in the moment until the moment was gone. Because of this experience, I delved further into these chapters to search for more insight.

^c Only three other times did leaders of Israel part the water. Moses parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:15-22); Joshua parted the Jordan (Joshua 3:5-17 through 4:1-18); and Elisha parted the Jordan just as Elijah had done (2 Kings 2:14).

^d For more on *talmidim*, see my writings, *[Clear Vision](#)* and *[Kedoshim Talmidim Favor](#)*.

^e For more perspective, see my *Imaginative Interpretation* *[Elisha's Perspective](#)*.

^f I used my chalk drawing of Elijah as a portrait of Simeon for an Art Card because they were both clothed in the fire of the Lord. You can see the card [here](#). However, Elijah was the original inspiration for the drawing. To read about the art process at Shale Fragments, [click here](#).