

Summary Handout

“After the Fire a Still Small Voice”

Lesson
28
Summary

1 Kings 17; *Elijah seals the heavens, and is fed by the ravens—At his command the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil of the widow of Zarephath fail not—He raises her son from death.*

1 Kings 18; *Elijah is sent to meet Ahab—Obadiab saves a hundred prophets, and meets Elijah—Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to call down fire from heaven—They fail—He calls down fire, slays the prophets of Baal, and opens the heavens for rain.*

1 Kings 19; *Jezebel seeks the life of Elijah—An angel sends him to Horeb—The Lord speaks to Elijah, not in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, but in a still small voice—Elisha joins Elijah.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

“Rain” and “Life” Expressed in Jewish Prayers: These prayers include a subtle, recurring inference to the Messiah. “. . . benediction also praises God for His power, or *gevurah*. Among the manifestations of God's power are His providing sustenance for all living creatures, His healing the sick, and His causing rain to fall. Stress is laid on the revival of the dead, and the benediction which concludes with *Barukh mehayyeh ha-metim* ("Blessed be... He Who revives the dead") is therefore also known as *Tehiyyat ha-Metim* ("Resurrection of the Dead"). (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Blessing of Rain and Dew: “Bountiful rain in season is a blessing and its absence is regarded as a punishment from God. Dew, the nightly condensation of vapor is also emphasized as a symbol of beneficence since it is a source of water for plant life during the dry season. Its absence is also considered to be drought.” “Prayers for rain are found among the earliest liturgies. In the time of the Second Temple, the high priest recited a prayer for rain on the Day of Atonement. During periods of drought special prayers and fasting were ordained. The prayers for rain and dew in the daily *Amidah* evolved from these practices. Today the principal prayers for rain are recited during the *musaf* service on the eighth day of Sukkot . . . recited in the *Amidah* daily thereafter until Passover, when the rainy season comes to an end. The special prayers for dew are chanted during the *musaf* service on the first day of Passover and the benediction for dew is substituted thereafter in the daily *Amidah* until Sukkot. From about the fifth or sixth of December until Passover the *Amidah* also includes a benediction for both rain and dew.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Two” Seasons in Israel: “There are two seasons in Israel: winter --- the cold, rainy season from about October to April, and summer --- the hot, dry season when rain is virtually non-existent. “Because Passover falls around the beginning of spring, and because in Erez (land) Israel the rainy season ends approximately at the time, a special prayer for dew (*tal*) is recited on the first day and the prayer for rain (*morid ha-geshem*) is suspended.” “In biblical Hebrew, *tal*, the word for dew, may also mean a light rain. A comparison of biblical and talmudic quotations and the contemporary rainfall tables of Israel's meteorologists shows that the ancient records were accurate observations of weather phenomena. Rains fall in most of Israel from late October to May; and except for dew, the other months are dry. The amount of rain is also variable, so that crop irrigation has been developed to supplement the rainfall and to extend the growing season.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Rainfall in Jerusalem Equal to London's: In Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, the rainfall is equivalent to London, the capital of England, although Israel gets their rain all at once! An annual average of twenty-six inches of rain falls in Israel during the months of December, January and February (Utah gets about thirteen inches per year).

Rain, Metaphor of Reward and Punishment: “. . . God rewards the righteous by granting them prosperity and well-being, and punishes the wicked with destruction. This forms the basis of the passage from Deuteronomy . . . adherence to God's commandments will bring "the rain in its seasons"; disobedience will cause God "to shut up the heavens that there be no rain, and the land will not yield her fruit.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Sealing the Heavens: In response to the faithlessness of Israel, the “sealing” prophet, Elijah, used his God given authority to seal the heavens. The physical phenomenon of drought and losing their crops reflected the spiritual phenomenon of disregarding the “still small voice” and thereby, losing their eternal families. “The prophets attacked idol worship not only on the grounds that it violates God's covenant with Israel, but also because it was useless. While the pagans believed that the natural phenomena rain, fertility, health etc. were controlled by idols, the prophets taught that God is in control of nature.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Elijah's Chair: “A special chair is set aside for Elijah at circumcisions, as he is called the protector of children, and the upholder of the covenant between God and Israel, and Elijah is supposed to visit every Jewish home on Pass-over, so a special cup of wine is set aside for him. And, says the Midrash, when the time is right, it will be Elijah who will herald the coming of the Messiah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Who is Your Master? The name of Elijah literally means “my God is Yah (Jehovah),” an appropriate name at a time when a proliferation of gods was popular in the land. Ba'al in Hebrew means ‘master’ and the Ba'al religion named gods (masters) of such things as rain, earth, wind and fire. It is interesting that a modern “rock group” choose to call themselves, “Earth, Wind and Fire.” In modern times, groups like these become the popular “idols” that seek to master the attention of people. Turning to God required self-mastery, in Hebrew “Ba'al Tshuvah.”

Mastering Repentance: “Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means "return," and signifies a return to God. A person who repents his sins is known as a *ba'al teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the Talmud believed that the real *ba'al teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot* (commandments and blessings).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Doing Good: Taking care of the widows is also a high Jewish *mitzvah*. Yet, Elijah, who could have blessed the widows in Israel went to Sarepta, a suburb of Sidon, and blessed the “foreign” widow, there. “One of the most frequently mentioned *mitzvot* in the Torah is to protect the widow, the convert (the Hebrew word *ger* also means stranger) and the orphan who, like the converts, has no parents. This is because these people are alone in the world they are entering and need help in adjusting to new ways of acting and thinking.” “The earliest ethical teachings are commandments in the Bible: to do justice, to avoid bribery, gossip, robbery, oppression, to protect the weak --- the widow, the orphan, the slave, the stranger; to be kind to animals. Man is obliged to overcome his normal feelings and to obey these commands --- even with respect to his enemy.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Worthy Foreigners: In blessing the “foreign” widow, Elijah set up a lesson that Jesus would later use at Nazareth, in plain view of Mount Carmel, still known for Elijah's “droughtful” response to Israel's faithlessness. In response to the Nazarene's mocking request to “show them a sign” he said: “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias (Elijah) sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” (*Luke 4 25-26*)

Take Care of the Widows: In the Bible, another righteous widow, Ruth, cared for by a righteous Israelite, Boaz, produced the royal line of David, and ultimately the Savior, the Messiah. These are repeated lessons; “take care of the widows!”

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