

ALIGNING WITH THE RIGHT SPIRIT
A Devotional Meditation from
1 Kings 19:1-18; Proverbs 28:12; Malachi 4:4-6; James 5:13-18
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When you go to Israel, be sure to visit the Mukhraka Monastery on Mount Carmel. In addition to a panoramic view of the Jezreel Valley, you will experience there the opportunity to pray on the site associated with Elijah's stunning victory over the prophets of Baal. More accurately, it was God's stunning victory, accomplished in partnership with His prophet.



Elijah at Mukhraka Monastery, Mount Carmel, Israel, [Dr. Avishai Teicher, via Wikimedia Commons.](#)

That's the way God does things. He chooses to work through human beings. He doesn't have to, of course; He is God, and can and sometimes does intervene directly in the world. When He does so, it is so spectacular that we mortals tend to

let those epic miracles overshadow the "common" miracles He accomplishes every day through ordinary people. Ideally, God's human partners are His willing accomplices, but He will still use the unwilling, the obstinate, and the oblivious, whether they believe in Him or not. It's better if His partners are men and women of vision, wisdom, and determination, but He can just as easily use the weak, the foolish, and the broken.

We like to think of Elijah in the former category: a strong man of God whose example continues to inspire people of faith. That's how James describes him:

The effective prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. And it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. He prayed again, and the sky gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. (James 5:16-18 TLV)

That's the image Elijah might prefer us to have of him, but those who know his story understand that he also suffered times of weakness and brokenness. The aftermath of his victory over Baal's 450 prophets was one such time. 1 Kings 19 tells us that on hearing how Elijah had slain her prophets and humiliated her religion, Queen Jezebel sent a message to Elijah saying that she would make sure he would be dead within a day. That royal death threat frightened the prophet so much that he ran away – all the way down to Arabia, to Mount Sinai. Along the way, this man who had prayed for drought and then prayed for rain issued another powerful prayer:

"It's too much!" he said. "Now, *ADONAI*, take my life! For I'm no better than my fathers." (1 Kings 19:4)

That was one prayer God was not willing to answer – at least not immediately. Instead He directed Elijah on into the wilderness, sustaining him with angelic help so that the Creator could transact uninterrupted business with His designated representative. The scriptures tell us how that happened:

When he arrived there at the cave [on Mount Sinai], he spent the night there. Then behold, the word of *ADONAI* came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” “I have been very zealous for *ADONAI-Tzva’ot*,” he said, “for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword—and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it!” Then He said, “Come out and stand on the mount before *ADONAI*.” Behold, *ADONAI* was passing by—a great and mighty wind was tearing at the mountains and shattering cliffs before *ADONAI*. But *ADONAI* was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but *ADONAI* was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but *ADONAI* was not in the fire. After the fire there was a soft whisper of a voice. As soon as Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then all of a sudden, a voice addressed him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” “I have been very zealous for *ADONAI-Tzva’ot*,” he said, “for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword—and I alone am left, and they are seeking to take my life!” Then *ADONAI* said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram, and anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. It shall come to pass that whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will slay; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will slay. Yet I have preserved seven thousand in Israel whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouth has not kissed him.” (1 Kings 19:9-18 TLV)

As is our Creator’s way, He asked a question twice: “What are you doing here?” The question came before and after the Lord had revealed Himself and His power to His doubting prophet. That Elijah answered the same way indicates the depth of his despair. He had labored single-handedly for years to wake up the people of Israel to the creeping threat of domination by a foreign queen who had seduced their king, undermined their values, and imposed a false religious system on the already-corrupted worship of Almighty God. Elijah’s allies among the prophets of God were either dead, in prison, or in hiding, and even the lopsided victory over Jezebel’s prophets had not prevented her and King Ahab from pursuing him to death. Perhaps it was right for him to give up since the people of Israel seemed unwilling to deliver themselves from what they knew to be wrong and harmful.

And this is where the true miracle occurs. Instead of granting Elijah’s wish for eternal retirement, God gave him a commission: anoint a new king of Israel, a new king of Aram (or Syria), and his own replacement. Why? As He said:

“Yet I have preserved seven thousand in Israel whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouth has not kissed him.”

Seven thousand is not many, but it's enough. God can save by many or by few, and Elijah knew it. This silent Israelite majority were to be the Lord's agents of redemption, but they needed hope and a prophet to lead them. That was the message the Almighty delivered to Elijah, saying in essence, "You are not alone, Man of God. The future of Israel, both the rebellious Northern Kingdom and the wayward Southern Kingdom of Judah, is in your hands. I have protected a remnant of righteous people who need the inspiration, instruction, vision, and leadership that I have entrusted to you and to the man you will train to take your place. If you do not do your part, they cannot do their part, and disaster will overtake your nation. So go back and do what I created you to do!"

We know what happened after that. Elijah did anoint Elisha as his successor, and when the younger prophet was ready, passed on his mantle. It was Elisha who presided over the anointing of the two new kings: Hazael as God's instrument of judgment for Israel's rebellion, and Jehu as God's instrument of national salvation. Jehu's dynasty ruled for a hundred years. He and his descendants were far from perfect, but they did rescue Israel's northern kingdom from certain destruction and provided space in which a righteous remnant could be nourished. When final judgment came, those who had obeyed the Lord as best as they knew how were preserved, many fleeing to Judah to rejoin their Hebrew brethren under the reign of righteous King Hezekiah. That was the fruit of Elijah's obedience – not to avert judgment, but to preserve a much larger remnant through it, and with them, a hope for the future. That is why we read in the last words of the Old Testament that Elijah's task in ancient times will be fulfilled again in prophets who walk in his spirit and anointing:

"Remember the *Torah* of Moses My servant, whom I commanded at Horeb—statutes and ordinances for all Israel. Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of *ADONAI*. He will turn the hearts of fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to their fathers—else I will come and strike the land with utter destruction." (Malachi 3:22-24 (4:4-6) TLV)

This is the spirit of Elijah. Do you walk in it?