

Jezebels' reaction to Elijah

1 Kings 19:1 following

4th Lesson

Jezebel was a princess, the daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre and Sidon and the wife of Ahab king of Israel who ruled from 874 b.c. – 853 b.c. In biblical Hebrew her name means "There is no nobility". This name is probably a deliberate distortion of her given name which was either "Where is the Prince (Baal) or the Prince Baal exists" which praised her god Baal. The writer of Kings misconstrued her name to show his utter contempt for her actions and her religion. He characterized the queen as utterly evil.

Jezebel devoted herself to bringing the worship of Baal and his consort Asherah to Israel. She employed 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophetesses of Asherah (1 Kings 18:19) and persecuted the prophets of the Lord including Elijah. She also extended her religion by violating Israel's concept of limited monarchical power let's read (Deut 17:14–20). Read footnote in Liz's bible on Deut 17:14 – 20.) When Naboth refused to sell his God given inheritance to Ahab she arranged for his execution – a story we will cover at a later date)

Jezebel's defiance of the Lord led Elijah to prophesy that dogs would devour her body. Although she lived at least 10 years after Ahab's death she died as Elijah predicted when Jehu had her thrown from her window.

But we get ahead of ourselves. To re-cap Elijah had had the prophets of Baal killed then ran ahead of Ahab to the city of Jezreel where Jezebel was waiting for news. He did this so he could make sure the citizens of the town knew exactly what had just happened. When Ahab arrived at Jezreel he went straight to Jezebel and told her everything that Elijah had done and how he had killed all her prophets with the sword.

We cannot begin to imagine how incensed Jezebel was. She must have been almost frothing at the mouth in anger. How dare this little man defy her and her god Baal. She sent for her servant and told him to send a messenger to Elijah. [Where was Ahab at this time?](#) The bible doesn't say but I suspect he was cowering in a corner keeping well out of the way of his wife's anger.

She sent a messenger to Elijah saying "May the god's deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them (them being the prophets of Baal)." Even though all her prophets were dead Jezebel still had great power and influence and Ahab at this point, has lost control over her and is unable to restrain her. Elijah realises at this point that one of Israel's main sources of apostasy is still spewing out its poison and fearing for his life he runs along with his servant to Beersheba the southernmost city of Judah.

Leaving his servant in Beersheba, he himself went on alone a day's journey into the wilderness and after praying that he might die he lay down and slept under a spreading broom bush. Often discouragement sets in after great spiritual experiences especially those requiring physical effort or involving great emotion.

Elijah was probably physically and spiritually exhausted at this point and was maybe starting to doubt himself, so to lead him out of his depression God let him rest and have something to eat then God confronted him with the need to return to his mission and that was to speak God's words to Israel because Elijah's battles were far from over. There was still work for him to do. In other words God wasn't finished with him yet.

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All at once an angel touched him and said "Arise and eat." He looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals and a jar of water. He ate and drank then lay down to rest again.

The angel came a second time and told him to eat and drink as he had a hard journey ahead of him and needed to build up his strength. He was to head to Mount Horeb (Mt Sinai) which was 250 miles south of Beersheba, a journey which was to take him forty days and forty nights. Sustained by the Lord, just as Moses had been on Mount Sinai and Jesus had been in the wilderness. Interesting to remember that centuries later Moses, Elijah and Jesus would meet together on a mountain top (Luke 9:28-36)

Elijah still feeling unsafe and vulnerable decides to head to the wilderness of Sinai where he finds refuge in a cave. "What are you doing here?" said God. Elijah has a good moan. He complains that he has been zealous for God and killed all the prophets of Baal yet Jezebel is now threatening to kill him whom he believes to be, the only faithful survivor.

Ignoring this tirade, God says "Get up and go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord who is about to pass by." A great strong wind was rending the mountain and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord – but the Lord was not in the wind and after the wind an earthquake – but the Lord was not in the earthquake either. After the earthquake came a fire – but the Lord wasn't in the fire either and after the fire came a gentle whisper.

When Elijah heard it he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave and a voice came to him saying "What are you doing here Elijah?" This is another classic example of how we have to listen to hear the voice of God. (Go placidly) It's not just about going to church on a Sunday singing his praises or working zealously for him but we have to take time out from our busy schedules and sit in the quiet and allow God to come to us **Philippians 4: 7** tells us that the Peace of God surpasses all understanding"

Elijah continues to complain that the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars and killed your prophets and I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me! Then the lord said to him to go back the way he came. Elijah must have thought "You have got to be joking!"

He was told to go to Damascus which is in the North of the country and anoint an enemy king, Hazael king over Aram. God was going to use the Aramaic kingdom of Damascus to punish Israel for their sins by continually waging war on Israel. God asked Elijah to anoint three people Hazael, Jehu and Elisha.

The second Jehu would become King of Israel and was given the mandate to destroy the house of Ahab which would include all Baal worship. The third person Elijah was told to anoint was Elisha the prophet who would succeed him and Elisha's job was to work in Israel the northern kingdom to help point people back to God.

Everything seems to be happening in the Northern part of the kingdom as the southern kingdom at that time was ruled by Jehosephat who was completely devoted to god. We have to assume that god was quite happy with the southern Kingdom and he was concentrating on the Northern part. Those who had escaped Hazael's sword would be put to death by Jehu and those who escaped

Jehu's sword would be put to death by Elisha thus ensuring the country would be purged of all idol worshippers. God then explained to Elijah that there were 7000 prophets who had not worshipped Baal and are all faithful to him