

## Bi235 Old Testament 2

### *Lesson Bi235-27 The LORD Encourages Elijah*

The LORD remembers that human beings are dust (Ps 103:14). This means that he knows that we are frail and prone to weakness. We become tired, and we become discouraged. Elijah became tired, discouraged, and spiritually weak, after his great experience of God's power on Mount Carmel. In the last lesson you learned about Elijah's confrontation with the leaders of Baal worship. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had brought into Israel the worship of Baal, one of the Canaanite nature gods. Ahab even built an altar for Baal worship in his capital city, Samaria. He "did more to arouse the anger of Yahweh, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him" (1Kings 16:33). On Mount Carmel God answered Elijah's prayer with fire from the sky. This fire burned up Elijah's sacrifice, altar, wood, stones, and water. The people turned against the Baal-leaders and ended their lives.

With God's power within him, Elijah ran all the way down to the valley below the mountain. When the king told Queen Jezebel what had happened, she became angry. She sent a message to Elijah, "By this time tomorrow, you will be as dead as my Baal-leaders" (1Kings 19:2).

Elijah was afraid and ran to save his life. He ran south into Judah. Leaving his servant in Beersheba (over 120 kilometers [75 miles] away from Jezebel), he traveled another day's journey south into the desert. Exhausted, he found some shade, sat down, and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Yahweh," he said. "Take my life!" Then he lay down and slept.

After several days of running and traveling, he was exhausted in body. He was also discouraged emotionally. He thought that he was the only person left in Israel who was faithful to God. Notice the sequence of Elijah's situation: he was tired physically, tired emotionally, and tired spiritually. You will see that God restored Elijah in the same order.

First God sent an angel, who said, "Wake up, Elijah, and eat something." Elijah looked around, and there beside him was some bread baking on hot coals, and some water to drink. The angel came a second time, woke him, and gave him more food to eat. God began to restore Elijah's exhausted body.

He traveled southward another 40 days. Then the LORD spoke to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Elijah replied, "I have been working hard for you, LORD, but the rest of the Israelites have turned against you and killed your prophets. I am the only one left alive, and now they are trying to kill me, too." Elijah was feeling sorry for himself.

Yahweh assured Elijah that he was not the only person still faithful to God. "There are yet seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed down to Baal." In this way God encouraged Elijah emotionally.

The God said, "Go stand outside and watch, for the presence of Yahweh is passing by!" Then a powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard the whisper of the LORD, he stood at attention.

The LORD spoke to him again, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Elijah told the same story as before; he was still feeling sorry for himself. God spoke to him, “Go back the way you came. Go farther north to the city of Damascus in Syria. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Syria. Then anoint Jehu king over Israel. After that, anoint Elisha to succeed you as prophet in Israel. Hazael will bring judgment on Israel, as will Jehu and Elisha. Through them I will punish Israel for worshiping Baal” (1 Kings 19:3-16). When Yahweh spoke these words to Elijah, he was encouraged spiritually.

Elijah became worn out in body, mind, and spirit. But God kindly restored his prophet in body, mind, and spirit. Elijah became one of the greatest men of God during the early years of the divided kingdoms.

This story is **important** because it reveals how God dealt with the Baal worship in the Northern Kingdom. He used godly persons who were sometimes discouraged in their ministry. The Lord sees and hears those who lose hope. He wants to speak to and restore those who continue to trust him.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that obeying the LORD was costly for Elijah. When he became afraid, exhausted, and discouraged, the LORD used several means, including direct speech, to encourage and restore him. God met his despairing servant at his point of need.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. How did Elijah become physically exhausted, and how did God restore him? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “He traveled many miles on foot to escape the wrath of Jezebel, but God sent an angel twice to provide food, drink and rest,” you are correct.
2. How did Elijah become mentally and emotionally exhausted, and how did God encourage him? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “He thought he was the only righteous man left in the Northern Kingdom, but God reminded him that 7,000 of his countrymen and women were still faithful to God,” you are right.
3. How did Elijah become spiritually exhausted, and how did God empower him? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, “For many weeks Elijah had not heard anything from God, but finally God began to speak to Elijah and encourage him” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. As you hear the story each time, see the events in your own mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it to some fellow believers who may need to be encouraged. Pray with them and ask God to touch all who follow him.

Elijah goes down in history as a man of powerful faith, but he had times of deep discouragement. The apostle James points to Elijah as a great example: “Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years” (James 5:17). Memorize James 5:16: “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”