

# 22

## ZEAL BORN OUT OF FAITH — ELIJAH



### ELIJAH

1 Kings 17–18

After Solomon's death, the big kingdom which David had built up disintegrated into two states: the southern state of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital, and the northern state of Israel with Shechem, Tirzah, and Samaria as capitals.

After a few initial kings, Ahab eventually reigned with his Phoenician wife, Jezebel, in the northern state. Many who served the heathen gods Baal and Ashtaroah had come into the land with Jezebel. Baal and Ashtaroah were regarded as gods of fertility and those who served them were called the prophets of Baal and Ashtaroah. King Ahab also worshipped the strange gods and had a temple built in Samaria in honour of Baal. Because of his influence, many Israelites turned away from the living God and worshipped strange gods.

Prophet Elijah lived in Israel at the time of King Ahab.

God sent Elijah to Ahab to proclaim that he would send a drought. With the drought, during which nothing could grow, the Lord showed the powerlessness and ineffectiveness of the so-called gods of fertility.

God told Elijah to hide by the brook Cherith during this time. There ravens provided him with meat and bread in the morning and evening. Eventually the brook too dried up because of the drought.

God again spoke with Elijah and sent him to Zarephath where he was to be cared for by a widow. When Elijah came to Zarephath, he met a widow at the city gate and asked her for water and bread. The widow told him that she only had a little flour and oil for herself and her son, and that they themselves would then have to die of starvation. Elijah told her not to be afraid, but to prepare food, first for him, and then for her son and herself, because God had promised that she would have enough flour and oil until it rained again. And that is what happened. The widow's faith in Elijah's promise was rewarded because thereafter there was always sufficient flour and oil in the house, until the Lord again sent rain.

When the widow's son died, Elijah brought him back to life.

In the third year following the beginning of the drought, God sent Elijah to Ahab for a second time to announce the end of the drought. With great courage born out of faith Elijah obeyed because, in the meantime, Jezebel had had all prophets of the Lord she was able to find killed. And the king had looked for Elijah throughout the kingdom. Before God again sent rain, however, the people were to experience who the true God was.

At Elijah's request, Ahab gathered the people of Israel, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Ashtaroath on top of Mount Carmel.

Then Elijah stepped forward and said to the people, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The people did not answer!

Then Elijah had two oxen brought. The prophets of Baal were to prepare the one, he the other, as a burnt offering. Then Elijah again turned to the people, "Call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God who answers by fire, He is God."

To this the people agreed.

The prophets of Baal erected an altar and laid one of the prepared oxen on it. Then they prayed to Baal all day for fire. They danced around the altar they had prepared, and even cut themselves with swords and spears to make themselves bleed as was their custom. However, no fire came down from heaven.

Then Elijah built an altar out of twelve stones, placed the other prepared oxen on it and had everything doused with water several times. Then Elijah prayed to God. Fire came down and consumed the burnt offering, the pile of wood, the stones, the soil, and the water. When the people saw this, they bowed with their faces to the ground and said, "The Lord, He is God."

The prophets of Baal and Ashtaroath were killed.

Over the summit of Mount Carmel there was no cloud in the sky as far as the eye could see. Then Elijah told King Ahab that he could hear the sound of rain. Elijah began to pray. After some time a tiny cloud arose. Elijah sent a messenger to the king telling him to seek shelter from the rain that was about to descend! In no time black clouds gathered making the sky pitch black. And after three years of drought it began to rain again for the first time.

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## EXERCISE 1



"I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. ... Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.... Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time.

In the balloons found in the illustration below are thoughts which might have been on the minds of the people who observed what happened on Mount Carmel.



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### EXERCISE 2



Complete the puzzle below by correctly inserting the following word fragments between the beginning and ending letters.

SRAELITE – XE – HA – ERTILIT – EZEBE – AI – HERIT – IR – LTA – SHTAROT – ROPHE – OUNT CARME

1. The wife of the king

J \_ \_ \_ \_ L

2. What Elijah built

A \_ \_ \_ R

3. The king of Israel

A \_ \_ B

4. What Elijah was

P \_ \_ \_ \_ T

5. For three years there was none in Israel

R \_ \_ N

6. Mountain in Israel

M \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ L

7. Sacrificial animals used by Elijah

O \_ \_ N

8. It came from heaven on Elijah's sacrifice

F \_ \_ E

9. Baal and Ashtaroth were gods of...

F \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ Y

10. A Canaanite goddess

A \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ H

11. They turned away from God

I \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ S

12. Where Elijah hid during the drought

C \_ \_ \_ \_ H

If everything has been done correctly, the letters in the boxes, read from top to bottom, spell one of Elijah's virtues, which children of God should also have.

Solution: