

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"The Trouble-Maker in the Mirror"

When the Problem Isn't the Person You're Blaming

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 1 Kings 18:16–18; 1 Kings 17–18; Matt. 7:3–5; Num. 23:23; 25:1–9; 31:16; Js 1:14–15; 4:1–10; Prov. 16:18; 2 Chron. 7:13–14; Jer. 18:7–8; 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 139:23–24.

Have you ever been absolutely convinced that someone else was the problem? Maybe it was your spouse, your boss, your parents, or someone who seems determined to make your life miserable. If only they would change, everything would be better! But here's an uncomfortable thought: What happens when the person causing the trouble is staring back at us in the mirror? It's much easier to point the finger somewhere else than to consider that we might be the primary contributor to the very problems we're complaining about. And that's exactly what we find in 1 Kings 18, when Elijah comes face-to-face with King Ahab.

Within a few generations, Israel had descended from the golden age of David's rule into the dark days of Ahab and Jezebel. The people had mistaken God's patience for His permission, assuming that because judgment hadn't come, God must be okay with their wickedness. But Eliyahu the Tishbite suddenly appeared, declaring that the God of Israel was alive and there would be no rain except at his word! Years later, with Israel suffering through a devastating drought, Elijah returned to confront Ahab. But instead of acknowledging his own responsibility, Ahab accused him: *"Is it you, the one who causes trouble for Israel?"* (1 Kings 18:17). Think about that! The very one responsible for leading Israel into rebellion against God was calling God's prophet the troublemaker! But before we shake our heads at Ahab, perhaps we should take a good look in the mirror ourselves.

1. STOP BLAMING THE MESSENGER!

When Ahab accused him of troubling Israel, Elijah responded, *"I have not troubled Israel. Rather, it is YOU and your father's house—by forsaking the mitzvot of ADONAI and going after the Baalim."* (1 Kings 18:18). In other words, "Are you kidding me? You're blaming ME?" Ahab had abandoned God's commands and led the nation into idolatry, and now that the consequences had arrived, he blamed the messenger! It's like an unfaithful husband blaming his wife for the fact that his marriage is ending. That's me-first, sin-distorted thinking.

There's a psychological concept called projection, where people attribute their own faults to others while remaining blind to those same faults within themselves. Yeshua addressed this when He spoke about noticing the speck in our brother's eye while ignoring the beam in our own (Matt. 7:3–5). Sin, in its self-protective, me-first posture, continually points responsibility elsewhere. It's my wife's fault. It's my boss's fault. It's my parents' fault. I'm always the victim! But as long as someone else is the troublemaker, nothing in me needs to change. When reading Scripture, we naturally identify with Elijah, standing courageously for truth. But sometimes we need to ask, "Is there any Ahab in me?" Am I so busy pointing fingers that I'm refusing to see my own responsibility? The messenger bringing the warning wasn't the trouble. The warning might actually save us from the trouble! The troublemaker was the man in the mirror.

2. STOP BLAMING JEZEBEL!

There's something important about Elijah's response that we shouldn't miss. Notice who Elijah does NOT blame. He doesn't blame Jezebel! Now, Jezebel was certainly bad news. She persecuted the prophets of ADONAI and promoted Ba'al worship. But here's the thing: Jezebel wasn't the one entrusted with ruling Israel. Ahab was! He wasn't some helpless victim of an outside evil force. He was the one who made the alliance, married Jezebel, and welcomed her idolatry into Israel's throne room. Elijah doesn't say, "Ahab, you've got Jezebel for a wife, and that's a tough situation!" No! He confronts Ahab because Ahab had willingly abandoned the commands of ADONAI and pursued other masters. The responsibility belonged to the one who made the compromise.

The same principle applies to us. Sometimes the spiritual drought we're experiencing comes from things we've willingly invited into the throne room of our own hearts. We open doors through sexual sin, bitterness, hatred, pride, or the pursuit of our desires rather than God's. Then, when the consequences arrive, we blame the devil, our circumstances, or someone else's influence. As James explains, *"But each one is tempted when he is dragged away and enticed by his own desire."* (James 1:14). Just because the enemy recognizes our weaknesses doesn't mean we're destined to surrender to them. Until we recognize the compromises we've made and take responsibility for them, nothing will change. Sometimes the problem isn't an external force. It's me allowing my desires to rule instead of God's.

3. STOP RESISTING THE CORRECTION OF THE LORD!

The beautiful thing about Ahab's encounter with Elijah is this: The Lord was still reaching out to Ahab! Despite everything Ahab had done, God hadn't left him wondering why Israel was suffering. He sent Elijah with a word, an opportunity to repent. Imagine what might have happened if Ahab had humbled himself and said, "Elijah, I didn't believe you before, but now I see that the God of Israel truly lives. What must I do to save my people?" Scripture reveals God's heart. In 2 Chron. 7:13–14, the Lord promises to hear, forgive, and heal when His people humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways. The primary purpose of God's correction isn't retribution, but rather to lead us to repentance and restore us to right relationship with Him. The drought was evidence that God was still calling Israel to return.

When we face the fire of God's discipline, we have two possible responses. That fire of judgment can soften us, allowing the Lord to reshape and reform us, or it can harden us until we become like ancient ruins—a reminder of wasted potential. Pride blinds us to our faults, and if we can't recognize them, we'll never correct them. Scripture warns, *"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."* (Prov. 16:18). But consider David. When Nathan confronted him about his sin, David didn't blame someone else. He humbled himself and declared, *"I have sinned against ADONAI."* (2 Sam. 12:13). That's true strength! Humility, often mistaken for weakness, opens the door to God's grace. As James reminds us, *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* (James 4:6). Ahab could have repented, but instead he resisted the correction that could have changed everything. We don't want to make that same mistake.

CONCLUSION

Who's the troublemaker in your troubled kingdom? When relationships are strained, when we're experiencing spiritual dryness, or when we're facing the consequences of poor decisions, where do we look first? It's easy to blame Elijah, the messenger who brings uncomfortable truth.

It's easy to blame Jezebel, the outside influence that tempted us toward compromise. But what happens when we finally look in the mirror and recognize that we may have contributed to the trouble ourselves? Not every hardship is the result of personal sin, but we should never be so quick to blame others that we refuse to first examine our own hearts. Sometimes the Lord allows discomfort because He loves us enough to confront what is keeping us from Him. His correction is an expression of His kindness, calling us back into fellowship with Him.

Today, come before the Lord with an open heart. Don't be like Ahab, so determined to defend himself that he couldn't hear the very word that offered him a way back to God. If you've been blaming others, acknowledge your responsibility. If you've opened doors of compromise, repent and close them. If you've resisted His correction, surrender your pride and allow Him to reshape your heart. Perhaps there's a relationship where you need to apologize, a habit you need to abandon, or an area where you need to return to obedience. Whatever it is, don't allow pride to rob you of the restoration God desires. Make David's prayer your own: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me... and see if there be any offensive way within me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* (Ps. 139:23–24). True strength isn't found in proving we're right, but in humbling ourselves before the Lord so that He can make us righteous.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **The Blindness of Blame:** Why was Ahab so quick to blame Elijah rather than acknowledge his own responsibility? How can pride distort our perception of reality?
2. **Looking in the Mirror:** When conflict arises in your marriage, family, workplace, or friendships, are you more inclined to examine your own actions or focus on what someone else has done wrong?
3. **The Compromises We Invite:** Elijah held Ahab accountable for welcoming Jezebel's influence into Israel. What kinds of compromises do believers today sometimes invite into their lives without recognizing the spiritual consequences?
4. **Responding to Correction:** Think of a recent time someone confronted you with an uncomfortable truth about your attitude or behavior. How did you respond? What might you do differently today?
5. **The Strength of Humility:** David responded to Nathan's confrontation with repentance, while Ahab resisted Elijah's correction. What does this contrast teach us about humility, repentance, and spiritual restoration?

CLOSING PRAYER

Abba, search my heart reveal anything that isn't pleasing to You. Forgive me for the times I've been quick to point fingers while refusing to acknowledge my own faults. Forgive me for allowing pride, selfishness, and my own desires to blind me to the truth. Reveal the compromises I've made and the areas where I've allowed something other than You to rule my heart. Father, give me the courage to receive Your correction, even when it's uncomfortable. Soften my heart so that I don't become hardened by the very things You intend to use to restore me. Surround me with godly people who love me enough to speak the truth, and give me the humility to listen. Where repentance is needed, lead me to repentance. Where reconciliation is needed, give me the strength to pursue it. Empower me by Your Spirit to walk in obedience and be transformed into the likeness of Messiah Yeshua.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.