

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“That’s Not What I Would Do...”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 1 Kings 17:8-16; Is. 55:8-9; Pr. 3:5-6; 17:3; Mt. 16:25; 1 Cor. 1:27-29

First Kings 17 unfolds during one of the darkest spiritual seasons in Israel's history. Ahab and Jezebel are ruling the northern kingdom, promoting the worship of Baal—the “storm god” who supposedly controlled the rain—in place of the God of Israel. Into that darkness, Eliyahu suddenly appears. His very name means, “ADONAI is my God,” and he declares that there will be neither dew nor rain except at his word. Baal is powerless; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still lives and rules. Then ADONAI sends Eliyahu into solitude at the brook Cherith, where he learns dependence as God provides for him through ravens. It is a season of preparation, pruning, and learning that the work ahead will be accomplished by the Lord, not by Eliyahu's own strength.

Eventually the brook dries up, and another season begins. *“Then the word of ADONAI came to him saying: ‘Arise, go to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have just commanded a widow there to provide for you’”* (1 Kgs. 17:8-9). Zarephath? In Jezebel's homeland? And a widow? None of this seems like the obvious choice. Yet this is where Eliyahu must learn what we all eventually learn: God does not always do things the way we would. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways”* (Is. 55:8). His call is not that we understand every step, but that we trust the One who does.

1. THAT'S NOT *WHERE* I WOULD GO — FOR SAFETY

Cherith had been wilderness, but it was *familiar* wilderness. Now ADONAI sends Eliyahu to Zarephath – a town in Sidon, the homeland of Jezebel and the very heart of the Baal worship corrupting Israel. To get there, he must travel about 100 miles west across a drought-stricken land where he is almost certainly a wanted man. From a natural perspective, going to Jezebel's homeland is about the last place anyone would choose for safety. Yet God knows exactly where He is sending His servant. Sometimes He leads us away from what feels secure. But He knows what He's doing and what He intends to form within us.

Even the name Zarephath points toward God's purpose. It comes from the word *tzaraf*, a word connected with smelting, refining, and testing. *“A crucible is for silver and a furnace is for gold, but ADONAI tests the heart”* (Prov. 17:3). Cherith had been the place of cutting away; Zarephath would become the place of refining. The Lord was preparing Eliyahu for what lay ahead. The fire of Zarephath would prepare him for the fire of Mount Carmel. We may not want the crucible, but God knows where we are, where He wants us to be, and what must be formed in us to get there. The place we would never choose may become the very place He uses to prepare us for His purposes.

2. THAT'S NOT *WHO* I WOULD CHOOSE — FOR SUSTENANCE

When Eliyahu arrives at Zarephath, the person God has chosen to sustain him seems even more unlikely than the place itself. ADONAI had said, *"I have just commanded a widow there to provide for you"* (1 Kgs. 17:9). We might imagine a wealthy widow with plenty of resources. Instead, Eliyahu finds a woman preparing what she believes will be the final meal for herself and her son. She says, *"I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in the jar, and a little oil in the jug"* (1 Kgs. 17:12). If we were Eliyahu, we might wonder whether we had misunderstood God. This certainly does not look like provision.

But God had already taught Eliyahu that the source is never *really* the source. At Cherith, ravens carried the food, but God fed him. At Zarephath, the widow would provide, but God would still be the Provider. Her little bit of flour and oil emphasize how inadequate she appeared for the assignment. Yet God often accomplishes His purposes through people and resources we would overlook. We say, "I don't have much. What difference could my offering, my ability, or my obedience possibly make?" But God is not limited by what is in our hands. In the middle of a national spiritual crisis, He chose Eliyahu—and then chose a starving widow in Baal's own territory to help sustain the work.

3. THAT'S NOT *HOW* I WOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Then comes the part that seems to make the least sense. The widow has enough flour and oil for one final meal, yet Eliyahu tells her, *"Fear not! Go and do as you said, but **first** make me a little cake from what you have there."* Then comes the promise: *"The jar of flour shall not be exhausted nor shall the jug of oil be empty until the day ADONAI sends rain on the land"* (1 Kgs. 17:13–14). Human logic says, "Take care of yourself first, and if something remains, then give." The Lord's instruction: "Trust Me **first**." The God who fed Eliyahu through ravens had promised to provide through this widow. God's math does not always make sense according to our calculations, but our responsibility is obedience.

And this is much bigger than finances. Our marriage is His. Our children are His. Our work, future, possessions, and very lives belong to Him. Yeshua said, *"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* (Matt. 16:25). God's ways are often counterintuitive: want to gain your life? Lay it down. Want to become great? Serve. Want to discover His provision? Trust Him with what seems insufficient. The widow obeyed, and *"the jar of flour was not exhausted, nor did the jug of oil become empty"* (1 Kgs. 17:16). We may not know **how** God will solve the problem before us, but we know the One who does. Listen for His voice, and obey Him.

CONCLUSION

We serve a God who does things differently than we do. We need safety, and He sometimes sends us to places that feel unsafe. We need support, and He may use people who can't seem to support themselves, much less us. We face problems, and His solutions may be completely upside-down to our logic. Scripture is filled with this pattern. He chose Abraham and Sarah – an elderly, barren couple – through whom to build a nation. He chose slow-of-speech Moses to become His spokesman. He reduced Gideon's army to

three hundred men. He chose David when even his own father overlooked him. *“God chose the foolish things of the world so He might put to shame the wise; and God chose the weak things of the world so He might put to shame the strong”* (1 Cor. 1:27). God works in ways that leave no room for human boasting.

Ultimately, God redeemed humanity in the least expected way of all. Yeshua did not win by laying down the lives of His enemies; rather, He won by laying down HIS life. That same God now calls us to trust Him. Perhaps your brook has dried up. Perhaps you are standing in your own Zarephath, feeling the heat of the crucible. Perhaps God’s provision looks inadequate, and you are thinking, “Lord, that’s not what I would do.” Today, surrender any demand that God do it your way, and trust that His ways are better. The God of Israel still lives. He sees you in the drought, He is Lord over what feels beyond your control, and He may reveal His faithfulness in a way you never saw coming. Trust Him and watch what He will do.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think ADONAI sent Eliyahu from the familiarity of Cherith into the dangerous territory of Zarephath?
2. What had Eliyahu learned from being fed by ravens that prepared him to trust God’s provision through the widow?
3. Have you ever obeyed God only to discover that the situation looked very different from what you expected? How did you respond?
4. Is there a “Zarephath” in your life right now—a difficult place God may be using to refine you rather than simply remove you from it?
5. What area of your life are you most tempted to manage according to your own logic rather than trusting God? What would obedience look like there?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, Your ways are higher than ours, and You see what we cannot see. Forgive us for the times we have trusted our own understanding more than Your wisdom. Give us faith to follow You into places we would not choose, to recognize Your provision through unexpected people and circumstances, and to obey even when Your direction does not make sense to us. Refine us without allowing us to lose sight of Your faithfulness. We place our families, our work, our finances, our future, and our lives into Your hands. May everything You accomplish through us make it clear that the wisdom, strength, provision, and glory belong to You alone.

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