

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"After the Fire: When Faithfulness Feels Like Failure"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 1 Kings 18:41-19:8; 1 Kgs. 18:21, 36-39; 1 Kgs. 8:35-36; 2 Chr. 7:13-14; Heb. 11:1; Jas. 5:17; Rev. 16:9-11; Zeph. 3:6-7.

You can pour your heart into something for years, do everything you believe the Lord has asked you to do, and finally witness a breakthrough—only to discover that the people you hoped would change haven't changed at all. You've prayed. You've obeyed. You've persevered. And when the moment arrives, you think, Surely now they'll see! Surely now they'll turn! But instead of repentance, there's resistance. Instead of celebration, there's disappointment. Sometimes the hardest moments don't come before a great victory, but after it—**when faithfulness begins to feel like failure.**

That's where we find Eliyahu—Elijah. After generations of idolatry and rebellion in Israel, ADONAI sent a drought that lasted three and a half years. Ahab, the very king whose rebellion had helped bring trouble upon Israel, had the nerve to call Elijah the "troubler of Israel." Then came the showdown on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal cried out all day, but there was no answer. Elijah prayed a simple prayer, and fire fell from heaven. The people cried, "*ADONAI, He is God!*" But the goal was never simply drought, sacrifice, fire, or rain. It was repentance—a turning of hearts back to the living God. What happens when the fire falls, but the hearts you hoped would soften remain hard?

1. THE FAITH AFTER THE FIRE (1 KGS. 18:41-46)

After the fire, Elijah told Ahab, "*Go up, eat and drink, for there's the sound of rain*" (1 Kgs. 18:41). There wasn't a cloud in sight! Elijah wasn't responding to what he could see; he was responding to what God had said. Long before, Solomon had prayed that when God's people turned from their sin, the Lord would forgive and send rain (1 Kgs. 8:35-36). Now the sacrifice had been offered, the people had acknowledged ADONAI, and Elijah trusted that rain was coming. He had learned this kind of faith at the brook Cherith and in the widow's home in Zarephath. God had been preparing him, teaching him to trust when the evidence was simply that God had spoken. As Heb. 11:1 reminds us, faith concerns realities not yet seen. Sometimes obedience means walking forward before anything around us looks different.

But Elijah knew the mission wasn't complete. The fire had come; the rain hadn't. He didn't stand around reliving the moment or taking credit for what God had done. Instead, he climbed back up Carmel, crouched down with his face between his knees, and prayed. He sent his servant to look toward the sea. The report came back: "*There's nothing*" (1 Kgs. 18:43). So Elijah sent him back—seven times. The fire had come immediately, but the rain required persistent prayer. Finally, a cloud as small as a man's hand appeared, and Elijah knew the promised downpour was on its way. Sometimes God answers the first time. Sometimes He calls us to keep praying, keep trusting, and keep looking. The most vulnerable time can be right after a victory, when it would be easy to become distracted. Elijah kept his eyes on the Lord and on the work that remained.

2. THE FEAR AND DISILLUSIONMENT AFTER THE FIRE (1 KGS. 19:1-4)

Then comes a turn we hardly expect. Ahab returned to Jezebel and reported "*all that Elijah had done*" (1 Kgs. 19:1). Think about what Ahab had witnessed: a drought announced years in advance, the complete powerlessness of Baal's prophets, fire from heaven consuming a drenched sacrifice, and rain arriving just as Elijah said it would. Yet his attention remained on Elijah—not on the God of Elijah. Rather than humble herself, Jezebel threatened Elijah's life. The fire hadn't melted their hearts. The rain hadn't softened them. We sometimes assume that one more miracle would convince a hardened heart. But people can see God's work and still cling to their pride, power, and desires. Rev. 16:9-11 describes people facing judgment and refusing to repent. The question is not simply what God has shown us, but whether we're willing to respond to Him.

And Elijah? The man who stood against hundreds of false prophets now ran for his life. Scripture tells us he was frightened, though it doesn't explain every reason why. Perhaps it was the crushing disillusionment of having poured out three and a half years of faithful obedience, believing that this moment would finally turn Israel's leaders back to God, only to hear that Jezebel wanted him dead. The victory had been extraordinary, but it hadn't produced the fruit he had hoped for. Was it all for nothing? Had he failed? He ran to Beersheba, continued into the wilderness, and collapsed beneath a broom bush, crying, "*It's too much!*" (1 Kgs. 19:4). James reminds us that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours (Jas. 5:17). One moment he was running in faith; now he was running in fear. In his weariness and disappointment, he was responding to Jezebel's word instead of resting in the Word of the Lord.

3. GOD'S CONTINUED FAITHFULNESS AFTER THE FIRE (1 KGS. 19:4-8)

Elijah was exhausted. After years of pressing through and waiting for this moment, he felt that he had nothing left. Under that broom bush, he prayed, "*Now, Adonai, take my life! For I'm no better than my fathers*" (1 Kgs. 19:4). He had hoped to see hearts turn, but now his work seemed fruitless. Yet look at how the Lord responded. He didn't arrive with a lecture or a rebuke. An angel touched Elijah and said, "*Get up, and eat*" (1 Kgs. 19:5). Beside him were bread and water. Elijah ate, drank, and lay down again. The Lord saw his humanity—his frailty, his weariness, his disappointment—and met him with compassion. The God who had answered with fire now ministered to His exhausted servant with a meal and rest.

Then the angel came a second time, touched him, and said, "*Get up and eat, because the journey is too much for you*" (1 Kgs. 19:7). God didn't pretend Elijah had limitless strength. He provided what Elijah would need for the next leg of the journey. Strengthened by that food, Elijah traveled forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. Notice the tenderness here: the Lord hadn't stopped being faithful because Elijah was afraid. His promises hadn't failed because Elijah was exhausted. And Elijah's obedience hadn't become worthless because Ahab and Jezebel refused to repent. The Lord who sent fire from heaven and rain upon the land was just as present beneath that lonely broom bush. Sometimes after the fire we run in faith. Sometimes, when the results aren't what we hoped, we run in fear. All the while, God remains faithful, reaching toward us to strengthen and sustain us.

CONCLUSION

There's a question in this story for every one of us: How are we responding to what God has already done? Ahab and Jezebel saw the signs but held tightly to their pride. Elijah saw God's power, yet in his disappointment he lost sight, for a moment, of God's continued faithfulness. We need to examine both possibilities in our own hearts. Are we resisting the Lord's call to repent, demanding another sign while ignoring what He has already revealed? Or have we been faithfully obeying, only to become disillusioned because the breakthrough didn't produce what we expected? **Faithfulness is not measured by our ability to make other people respond.** We are called to trust and obey the Lord, and to leave with Him the results we cannot control.

So come before ADONAI honestly today. If pride has kept you from surrendering, lay it down. Stop blaming, stop explaining away His Word, and turn to Him. He has shown His love by sending Yeshua our Messiah to bear our judgment and open the way to mercy. And if you're sitting beneath the broom bush—discouraged, frightened, or simply exhausted—don't mistake your weakness for God's absence. Bring Him the disappointment and the fear. Receive His compassion. Ask Him for strength for the next step. The fire may not have melted the hearts you hoped it would, but don't let disappointment harden yours. **Feeling like a failure doesn't mean you've been unfaithful. And God isn't finished with you simply because you feel finished.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Elijah demonstrate faith before there was any visible sign of rain (1 Kgs. 18:41–46)?
2. What does Ahab's report to Jezebel reveal about seeing God's works without responding to God Himself?
3. Where have you felt like a failure because faithful obedience did not produce the results you hoped for?
4. When disappointment or fear takes hold, which voice most shapes your response—God's Word, another person's words, or your own discouragement?
5. What might it look like this week to surrender the results to ADONAI while continuing to obey Him faithfully?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, You alone are God. Forgive us for the times we have seen Your faithfulness and still resisted Your voice. Soften the hardened places in our hearts. Teach us to trust Your Word when there are no clouds in sight, to keep praying when the answer seems delayed, and to remain humble when victory comes. And when we've done what You asked but feel defeated by the outcome, remind us that our faithfulness is not measured by another person's response. Meet us in our weariness with Your mercy. Thank You that You see our weakness and do not abandon us. Strengthen us for the journey ahead. Keep our eyes on You, and draw us closer through Yeshua our Messiah. Amen.

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