



## TODAY IN GOD'S WORD

*Even Prophets Need Friends, Relational Imperative pt 1*  
1 Kings 19

April 30, 2006

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When Jeroboam, the first king of the divided kingdom of Israel, died, he left the kingdom in the hands of his son Nadab. After twenty-two years of reign, you would think Jeroboam had left the kingdom in capable hands, but you would be mistaken.

After only two years on the throne, Nadab was assassinated during a siege by one of his generals, Baasha. This man ruthlessly purged the kingdom of every possible heir to Nadab's throne.

Baasha ruled for twenty-four years and left the kingdom to his son Elah, who like Nadab ruled for only two years. He too was killed by one of his generals, Zimri – who had command of half the chariots of the army. In a seven day reign of terror, Zimri hunted down every possible heir and thus secured his throne.

But the throne was not secure, because Zimri did not have the support of the army. The army, encamped against a Philistine army at Gibbethon, declared a rival king – Omri. The army marched on the Israelite capital, Tirzah, and laid siege to it. Zimri committed suicide by burning the king's palace to the ground with him inside.

Omri's rule was itself contested by half of the nation, who followed a rival general, Tibni. It took Omri four years to hunt Tibni down and kill him. Thus, although the northern kingdom of Israel had split from the southern kingdom of Judah some fifty-four years before, the nation had not known peace. Bloody kings sat on stolen thrones in the royal city of Tirzah.

*Omri's rule is the first Israelite kingdom attested by archaeological evidence. In fact, the northern kingdom is consistently referred to as "the house of Omri."*

For six years, Omri sat in that bloody palace surrounded by the trappings of past kings. Then he bought the hill of Samaria and built a new capital there. He ruled there for another six years, and it was during that time that he made a treaty with Israel's northern neighbor, Sidon. Omri's young son, Ahab, was married to the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of Sidon. Jezebel was her name.

Twisted by his wicked father and idolatrous wife, the son of Omri became king. For the first time in Israel's history, a strong king sat on the throne without rival. The new, strong capital of Samaria secured him from enemies without and his father's ruthlessness secured him from enemies within.

Ahab worshiped the god of his wife's house – Ba'al, a Phoenician weather god. And worst of all, Ahab erected an a wooden pole, an *Asherah* (from the Akk. *Atharit*), which was a memorial of sorts to the goddess Astarte. The writer of 1 Kings says: "*Ahab did more to*

*provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*" [1 Kings 16:33]  
That's a pretty heady statement when you consider the guys who came before him!

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Into this darkest of kingdoms stepped the prophet Elijah.

- ÿ Never summoned, he bowed his knee to no king; always appearing at times of his own choosing and disappearing without a trace
- ÿ With the power to withhold the rain for three years and to call fire from heaven
- ÿ If Moses was the interceding voice of man before God, Elijah was the raging voice of God to man

Fifty-four years until Omri finally united the kingdom of Israel; sixty years until Ahab ascended a stable throne. The Bible says that Ahab ruled for twenty-two years – most of that time with Elijah as a perennial bur in his side. Elijah outlived Ahab and Ahab's son Ahaziah who died two years after his father.

During that time, Elijah took on the power of the gods that Ahab's wife Jezebel had brought into Israel. In a direct assault on Baal, Elijah withheld rain from the land. This was Baal's primary role; he was a storm god.

Then Elijah challenged the power of Baal's priests, facing them on Mt. Carmel where they tried all day to summon fire from heaven. But it was Elijah who called down the fire and went from the smoldering altar and turned the river Kishon red with the blood of 850 of Baal's prophets. And with the cries of the dying still echoing, he prayed seven times and summoned rain to cleanse away the blood.

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Many commentators look at the accounts of Elijah and see a man totally, completely sold out – literally God's man. And they latch onto him as some kind of rallying point for their radicalism. But I think they miss who he truly was.

With all of his power and authority, he was certainly God's but he was still a man. Facing all the struggles he faced, performing all the miracles he performed, standing up to a raging king and conjuring rain clouds from an empty blue sky, he was still a man.

What would it be like to bring an entire nation to its knees? To be heralded as the voice of God Himself? To see God provide for you while the rest of a nation starves; to call down fire from heaven; to order the execution of those who mislead others with false religion?

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1. THE MOMENT OF HIS GREATEST TRIUMPH WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF HIS PROBLEMS.
  - a. Now, what would it be like to do all this, and also face all of the dangers inherent in these acts ALONE?
  - b. Elijah had been a lone wolf – a man on a mission. His fiery temperament, his aggressive nature made him the perfect mouthpiece for God's Word but also made him impossible to work with. God allowed him to be broken on the side of the mountain so he could pass on his mantle.
  - c. In order to face the *harder* days that would come after this, Elijah had to learn something that didn't have anything to do with being able to call down fire or order up a rain storm. The moment of his greatest triumph was only the beginning of his problems. God knew that Elijah needed something *more* than him.
2. MOST OF THE TIME, WE FACE OUR PROBLEMS LIKE ELIJAH DID – ALONE (v 3)
  - a. Do you realize that God could have revealed this stuff to him anywhere along the way? It wasn't like God wasn't sending *supernatural* agents to sustain him.
  - b. God could have met Elijah along the way and assured him that he was safe; He could have provided some kind of miraculous rescue. God had fed Elijah through ravens at first and then through a miraculous provision of oil and flour.
  - c. God was *driving* Elijah into the wilderness, allowing him to suffer!
    - i. God fed him and gave him water. He sent an angel to watch over him so he could sleep through the night and then fed him again.
    - ii. God gave Elijah enough sustenance to drag himself through the wilderness for forty days and nights – fearing that Jezebel's army would come down on him, always looking over his shoulder at every noise and rustle in the bushes.
  - d. The irony of this whole situation is that when Elijah first shows up, he is alone. His entire ministry was alone, and didn't seem to bother him. He wanders in from nowhere in 1 Kings 17, with no one there to help him or support him.
  - e. Just because you *can* face some of problems of life alone, that doesn't mean you are SUPPOSED to.
3. GOD TURNED ELIJAH THE LONER INTO A MENTOR (v 16)
  - a. If God can turn Elijah into a teacher; if God can turn Elisha into a disciple; then there is hope for you and me.

- b. God knew that the only way Elijah's ministry was ever going to expand beyond Elijah, the only way the prophets would ever get beyond dealing with crises was if Elijah would give what he had been given.
4. AT THE ROOT OF MOST OF OUR "PROBLEMS" IS THE LACK OF RELATIONSHIPS
- a. Elijah HAD a servant! But when Elijah got into trouble, he left the servant behind. Contrast that with the way Elisha acts when Elijah tells him to stay behind [2 Kings 2:1-]
  - b. Elijah was alone because he was cut off. God took him 40 days into the wilderness, not to ISOLATE him but to show him that he WAS ISOLATED.