ELIJAH

A Man of Like Passions

3 - The Ravens

SERIES OUTLINE







1 - Ahab's Israel

2 - Elijah's Drought

3 - The Ravens

4 - The Widow

5 - Carmel and Judgment

6 - The Voice







Goal: to see how God was working with Elijah.

Core Message:	God:
1 - Ahab's Israel	is in control.
2 - Elijah's Drought	hears prayers.
3 - The Ravens	gives lessons that push us beyond our comfort zones.
4 - The Widow	gives lessons with fantastic blessings.
5 - Carmel and Judgment	decides when it is time for judgment.
6 - The Voice	doesn't relent.

3 - The Ravens

- At the Brook
- Elijah's Journey
- The Same Story

Core: God gives lessons that push us beyond our comfort zones.

Why: ravens?

AT THE BROOK

God commanded Elijah to go to the brook.

1 Kings 18:2-7 - "And the word of the LORD came to him: 'Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.' So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land."

But there was a problem.

Leviticus 11:13-15 → "you shall detest…every raven of any kind"

If they didn't detest these birds, they would become detestable:

Leviticus 20:23-26 - "And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them. But I have said to you, 'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine."

"detest" = שְׁקַץ H8262 only used 7 times highly charged

Deuteronomy 7:25-26 - "The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction."

This was the level of their abhorrence.

There were a lot of things God didn't tell Elijah.

- Where he would sleep
- What to do if a wild animal came

But, he specifically told him that *ravens* would feed him.

And, it wasn't just the ravens that were unclean.

In Judaism, there is an easy way to know what birds are unclean: scavengers

Leviticus 11:13 → "the eagle, the bearded vulture…"

Ravens eat carrion! Proverbs 30:17 Isaiah 34:11

Their *food was unclean!*

In Hebrew, there are a few generic words for food:

אֹכֶל H400 = food

מַאֲכָל H3978 = food

1 Kings 17:6 - "And the ravens brought him bread (לֶחֶם; H3899) and meat (בָּשָׂר; H1320) in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook."

Elijah could imagine that the "bread" was gleanings.

But what about the raw meat they brought?

Deuteronomy 14:21 - "You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. 'You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.'"

God gave Elijah unclean food from an unclean animal.

cp. Ezekiel 4:14

cp. Acts 10:14

What would Elijah have thought?

Would this have felt like a contradiction?

Was he being stretched beyond the law?

Or was his commitment to the law being tested?

This is what God does.

He gives laws and then breaks them, in order to show that He is about *principle*.

This was the lesson that Elijah needed.

Deuteronomy 28:22 → "the LORD will strike you…with drought"

But God was more flexible! Yes, He would bring famine. 2 Kings 8:1

And parents would eat children. Deuteronomy 28:55

2 Kings 6:26-29

God had His own timing. He was in control.

And because He was in control, law wasn't necessary.

Thus, the ravens not only brought him outside the law…

…but reminded him of God's control.

Consider the only other Scripture at the time that mentioned ravens:

Job 38:41 - "Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food?"

As Elijah waited, the brook became smaller and smaller.



ELIJAH'S JOURNEY

What was he doing here? What was going to happen?

1 Kings 17:7-9 - "Then the word of the LORD came to him, 'Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.'"

!!!!!! Really???

He would have had plenty of time to think about his discomfort.



About 60 miles

And it was going to be a Sidonian who *saved Elijah's life.*

And the same Sidonian whom God wanted to save.

God was working with the unclean birds.

And in the land of Baal.

But this was more than just working with Gentiles.



GENTILES

Because the law was clear about Gentiles.

Exodus 12:49 - "There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."

Leviticus 16:29 - "And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you."

Leviticus 17:12 - "Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood."

Leviticus 18:26 - "But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you."

If a gentile wanted to know God, the path was straightforward: become Jewish

But what about the Israelites who had to live among the gentiles?

The law said *nothing* about this. He certainly couldn't double down on nothing…

The closest the law came was:

Leviticus 18:27-30 - "(for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God."

Just like the ravens, these people were unclean.

So, just like the ravens and Jericho, they were to be abhorred. Right?

But God told Elijah to go live with a Baal worshiper.

So what was Elijah to do?

This was more than doubling down because of the ravens.

This was completely outside of the law's scope.

BEGINNING TO SEE MOSES

Who else under the law lived outside the land?

David



1 Samuel 26:19 - "Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering, but if it is men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'"

That wasn't a good sign!

So, he wouldn't want to look to David.

What about before the law? Joseph

Moses

Again, God was helping Elijah see outside the law.

But Elijah appears to have no associations with Joseph.

Maybe he didn't like Joseph's assimilation? Genesis 41:45

Should he do the same?

Perhaps the parallel with Moses would have resonated more.

Try to think like Elijah:

1. Elijah brought drought to save his people, but was resented. 1 Kings 18:17

1. Moses sought to save his people, but was resented. Acts 7:25-27

2. Elijah was simply obeying God's commands.

2. So was Moses—he knew he was the deliverer.

3. Thus Elijah had to flee to a foreign nation to hide from the king.

3. Just like Moses. Exodus 2:15

4. In that foreign nation, Elijah would meet a woman and be sustained.

4. In that foreign nation, Moses met Zipporah and was sustained.

Perhaps these parallels reinforced Elijah's prejudice. cp. Numbers 12:1

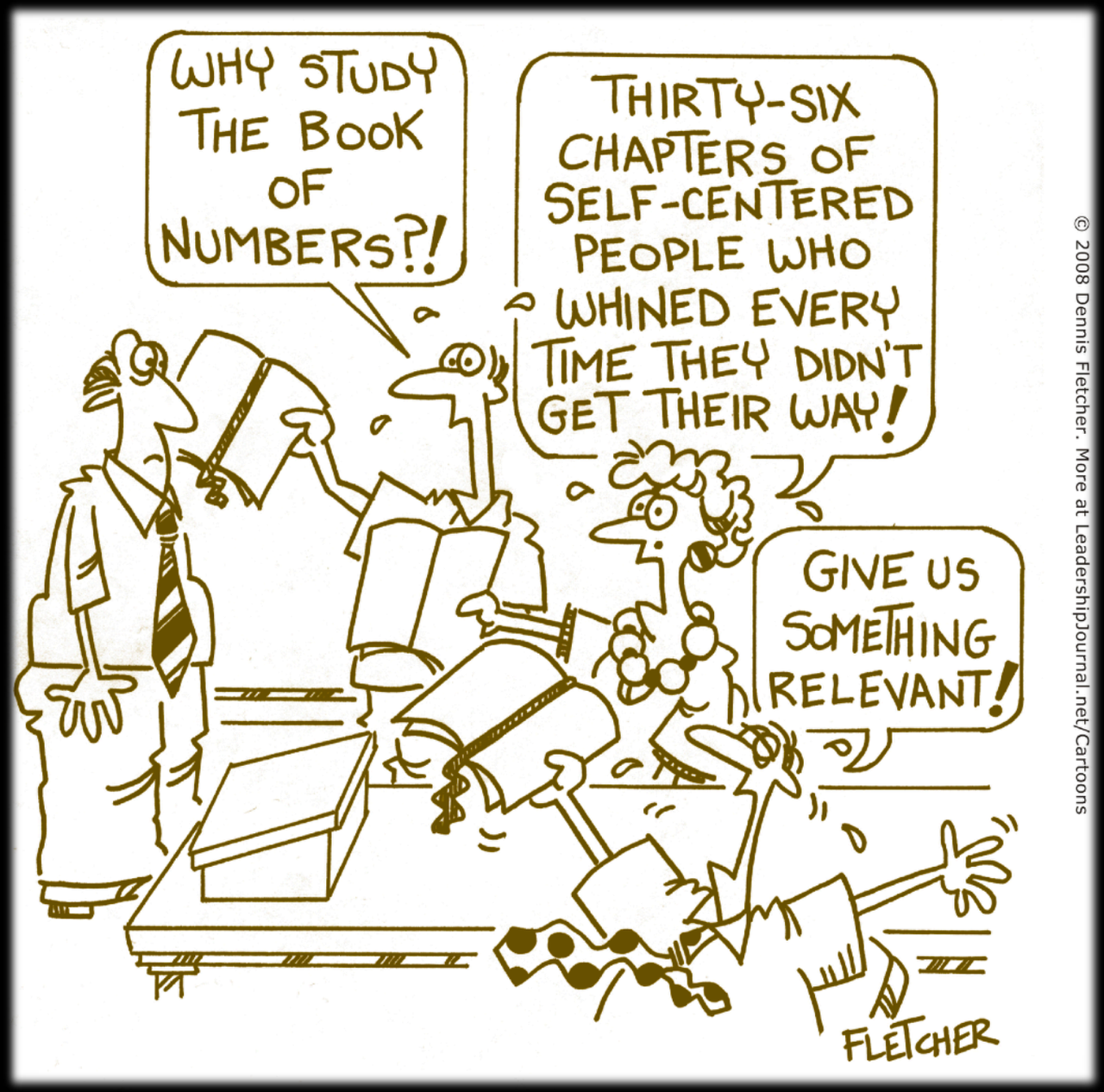
Yet how many of these parallels are actually valid?

None of them are! They all stem from Elijah's own perception.

They allowed him to see himself as following the footsteps of the lawgiver.

But, there was a stronger parallel.

THE ISRAELITES



Elijah *wanted* to be like Moses. But he wasn't.

Instead:

Exodus 16:8 - "And Moses said, 'When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.'"

Psalm 78:20 - "He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams (נַחַל; H5158) overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?"

And, eventually God stopped providing.

Deuteronomy 2:1-6 - “Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea, as the LORD told me. And for many days we traveled around Mount Seir. Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward and command the people, “You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful. Do not contend with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as for the sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. You shall purchase food from them with money, that you may eat, and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink.”’”

They were to be sustained by a foreign nation! Deuteronomy 2:28-29

Elijah's story wasn't the story of Moses.

It was the story of the Israelites.

Who struggled to remember that God was in control

Elijah had to learn God's overarching might.

God didn't *need* him. Thus, he had to live in isolation for months.

And God was working *everywhere.*

He would treat a non-Israelite widow like an Israelite. Deuteronomy 10:18 14:29

And, even in the midst of the drought, God was in control.

At some point, God saved 100 prophets from Jezebel. 1 Kings 18:4

He preserved 7000 people who hadn't worshiped Baal. 1 Kings 19:18

1 Kings 19:19 - "So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him."

Luke 4:24-27 - "And he said, 'Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.'"

Elijah would have acknowledged God's control.

But his actions didn't entirely align with it.

These 3.5 years were to teach Elijah this lesson.



THE SAME STORY

The situations were the similar—helping him apply the lesson in different contexts.

Ravens

Unclean bird

Scavenger

Eating its food was against the law

Widow

Unclean Baal worshiper

Gathering sticks/sustained by begging

Living with her went against the law

1 Kings 17:4 - "You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there (וְאֶת־הָעֹרְבִים צִוִּיתִי לְכַלְכְּלְךָ שָׁם)."

1 Kings 17:9 - "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you (צִוִּיתִי שָׁם אִשָּׁה אַלְמָנָה לְכַלְכְּלֶךָ)"

The biggest difference here is that Elijah can't double down on the law.

And so, Elijah seems to approach this woman with a somewhat-changed heart.

Elijah's words to the widow reflect a kindness that perhaps wasn't there before.



1 Kings 17:10-11 - "So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.' And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.'"

1 Kings 17:10-11 - "So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.' And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.'"

קְחִי־נָא־לִי

לְקְחִי־נָא־לִי = *please*

Perhaps he began to see that he had brought suffering on so many.

At some point, God showed him that it was not just Israel that was suffering:

1 Kings 17:14 - "For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'"

These people didn't know any better.

But his drought was affecting them too!

And, as he went to this widow, this suffering became more than intellectual.

It's difficult to be unemotional and apathetic when you're in the midst of suffering.

He had been in isolation for months!

And, it was a pathetic, dying widow who was supposed to sustain him.

Who wouldn't be humbled by such an experience?

By living with this widow, Elijah could see *why* God was working with everyone.

CONCLUSION

Isn't this how God works?

When Samson didn't learn, God pushed him further.

When Saul wasn't moved by Stephen, God stopped him on the road.

He makes the lessons stronger and stronger.

But He won't force us to learn.

Instead, He pushes us further and further out of our comfort zones.

And offers fantastic blessings.

Did you notice the blessing for Elijah in Christ's words?

Luke 4:24-27 - "And he said, 'Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

This is the first time in Elijah's life that he showed a *picture of Jesus.*

It wasn't the drought.

It wasn't the condemnation of Baal.

It was going to a widow and preaching to her.

Further this also foreshadowed Peter's work in Acts 10.