

Another Kind of Warfare – 1 Kings 18

The warfare between Yahweh and the belief in Baal, described in 1 Kings 17, was intimate, personal: ravens stealing from those who had bread and delivering to one who did not; water flowing from the mountains; a small house; a tiny family. The scene spotlighted a group who by Baal belief criteria was cursed to penury and starvation – and miraculously blessed by the covenant God of a foreign county.

The scenes of 1 Kings 18 play out on very different, much bigger, much louder stages. They still portray the “Mesopotamian” battle of the gods for same audience of readers but a very different group of characters – and lessons.

As you are reading, I think it would be helpful to track the names of God.

The Lord – Yahweh – the covenant builder and protector.

God – Elohim – Supreme power, majesty, creator of all things, authority over all creation. The word is grammatically plural but used with singular verbs throughout the Old Testament.

The Lord of Heaven’s Armies – the Hebrew phrase is Yahweh Sabaoth or Adonai Tseva’ot. Tseva’ot means armies or hosts.

Adonai – lord or master signifies God’s absolute sovereignty or authority

Questions

1. Israelites had an interest in numbers. What do you think they made of the fact that Elijah arrived back in the third year of famine?
2. What do you make of “go make an appearance before Ahab so I can send rain on the surface of the ground”. Do you think it was a statement of covenant or merely predictive? If you believe this was written in the Babylonian captivity, why would the author put it in? I think this is one of those phrases that are about the character of God.
3. Why would Ahab summon Obadiah? Why him? Why make him part of the search team?
4. Do you think Ahab secretly knew Obadiah was saving prophets? What do you make of that?

5. What do you make of Ahab (translation meaning father's brother) being a team of two and doing half the territory himself?
6. I find Obadiah an interesting character on whom Uncle Arthur spent little time. He is an undercover member of the resistance. He saves at least 100 lives. That's got to take guts. And yet he says in vs. 7 "the Lord **your** God. It looks like he thinks God is some sort of Loki who's going to sprint Elijah off and leave Obadiah holding the bag. What do you make of him?
7. To answer this brave and terrified undercover rescuer Elijah uses the phrase Yahweh Tseva'ot. What does that say about Elijah?

Now, on to the part that Uncle Arthur liked

8. Vs. 16 – What are 3 or 6 reasons why Ahab would have talked to Elijah alone?
9. What do you think are some of the reasons why Ahab obeyed Elijah?
10. Mount Carmel was a sacred site for Baal worship. Oddly enough its beauty is described in the Song of Solomon. What are three or four reasons why Elijah would have picked that site?
11. Do you think Elijah made a mistake in vs. 22? If so, what was it? Do you think there might be lessons for us in that choice of his?
12. Vs. 24. Elijah's name for the Deity is interesting here: He calls on Yahweh but says the fire will show the true God...why use those names? ...I think it's absolutely deliberate.
13. Do you think it's Elijah's personality that sets up the drama in verses 25-30? Do you think that is how Yahweh would have set up the scene? What are your reasons for thinking this?
14. Vs. 30 – What are 2 or 4 reasons why Elijah might have said "approach me?"
15. Just a note on vs. 36: the name for God Elijah uses here is the name the Deity first used in Genesis 2. It's the name the Deity used to talk to Adam, Eve, and then the original folks who started Israel.
16. Between vs. 36 and 39 Elijah gives uses the names of the Deity very specifically. We can talk about them if we get here...and I will ask what was he trying to teach Israel right there, right then about the priorities of God?
17. Vs. 46 – which iteration of God energized Elijah?

Appropriation issues:

1. **What are the ways we have read or discussed or been taught this lesson in the past that might have blinded us to what else was going on in this part of the story?**

I am looking forward to all the ideas and different opinions we'll share in our discussion.

I do hope, in the midst of so much going on, that you find unexpected gentle blessings.

Catherine