

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON FOUR

by Sandy Harber

"And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land." I Kings 17:7

After "a while" the brook dried up. What constitutes "a while?" Some commentaries estimate that Elijah was sustained by the brook Cherith for about a year. This is based on the Hebrew, which literally reads, "at the end of days."

For a year God's prophet was hidden away so that there was no one proclaiming God's word during that time. The lack of physical water to nourish the body was accompanied by the lack of spiritual "water" to nourish the soul. Is this why God commanded Elijah to hide? Not to protect Elijah from the wrath of Ahab and Jezebel but to deprive Israel of God's Word?

The people had turned their backs on the God of Israel. They chose to worship Baal, a deaf, dumb, and blind "god" who could provide nothing for his followers. So God allowed them to have their own way. He withdrew His messengers and left the field open to His rival. Let Baal provide for the people during the drought.

Baal was the god of rain. The One True God fashioned His judgment on His idolatrous people to demonstrate His superiority over the object of their idolatry. The ground was parched. The brooks, rivers, and streams were completely dry or no more than a trickle. Wheat, barley, and corn stalks withered, shrivled, and dried up. The "god of rain" was silent, powerless to rescue his followers.

Baal was variously worshipped as the god of storm, the god of earth, and the god of fertility. His followers believed that Baal provided the rain that was essential to grow the crops and sustain life. During the dry season Baal was supposedly asleep or on a journey. During the rainy season he was back on the job. Suddenly there was no rainy season. For three and a half years it seemed as if Baal had taken an extended vacation.

The brook dried up because there was no water to replenish it. The waters in the brook were depleted by Elijah, who drank it, and by the natural process of evaporation that God had set in motion after the flood to provide rain. Only this time, rain was not forthcoming. The rivers, lakes, and streams were not replenished.

The souls of God's people had dried up because Queen Jezebel had murdered as many of God's prophets as she could find and the rest were in hiding. God's voice was quiet because the ears of the people had stopped receiving His messages. They preferred to have their ears tickled by the demonic doctrines of Baalism.

At times we wonder if God is listening because our prayers are not being answered the way we think they should be. We ask, we beg, we plead for such-and-such but God is silent. Is the real problem that God is not speaking or is it that we are not listening?

In our grief or despair we seek answers. Why me? Why my husband, wife, mother, father, child, whatever? Why did this happen to me or them? We want to understand. We want some kind of justification for the anguish we are enduring. We want God to explain Himself.

God doesn't owe us an explanation. But He does have a message for us. Trust Me. I love you. I only have your best interests at heart. What I allow in your life is for your good. He has many messages like this printed in His Word. All we have to do is open it and listen for Him to speak.

*"Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heather, I will be exalted in the earth."
Psalm 46:10*