

**“Your food will not run out.”** King Solomon had been a tyrant. So when Solomon died, the people wanted freedom and liberation from their slavery. All Israel said to Solomon’s son Rehoboam, **“Your father enslaved us. Remove this heavy burden and we will serve you.”** But Rehoboam wanted to be **stronger** than his father Solomon. So he refused to lessen the burden of slavery on the people. And so the kingdom split in two. The northern ten tribes made **Jeroboam** king while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south were ruled by Solomon’s son **Rehoboam**. Concerned that his people would still want to worship at Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, Jeroboam made two golden calves in his land for his ten tribes to worship. This further pushed those ten tribes into **idolatry** and away from trust in the Creator. Every decade that went by, things got even worse. Sixty years after the split, **Ahab** was made king of the northern ten tribes and his wife **Jezebel**, who was from the wealthy merchant cities of Tyre and Sidon, brought the worship of their god Baal into Israel. Ahab built a temple for Baal in his capital city, Samaria.

It was during that time of king Ahab’s rule that the Creator called me, Elijah, to speak the truth. I said to Ahab, **“There will be no rain in this land for the next few years.”** Then the Creator told me to leave the land of Israel and go east of the Jordan River. There I hunkered down along a little creek during the drought and famine. The Creator provided for my every need, sending **birds** to bring me food and take care of me. But eventually the creek dried up and I had to leave. So the Creator ironically sent me into the land of Tyre and Sidon, the very place where the unfaithful Jezebel was from. It was there in a little town of that foreign land that the Creator directed me to a poor widow. As she was gathering sticks for a fire, I called out to her, **“Please give me a drink of water and a piece of bread.”** She said, **“I only have enough bread for one final meal for myself and my son before we die.”** I said to her, **“Do not fear. Make me a piece of bread and your food will not run out until the Creator sends rain on the land.”** She listened and obeyed. It was a miracle. In all of Israel I had not seen someone with faith like this foreign woman. Instead of first making bread for herself and her starving son, she used everything she had to make bread for me, a **stranger** in need. And the Creator was faithful to her—her food never ran out. For years she took care of me. But then her son got sick. His illness got worse and worse until one day he stopped breathing. This hospitable widow was devastated and angry. She said, **“What do you have against me?! Did you come here to kill my son?!”** I cried out to the Creator, **“Why have you brought this tragedy upon this widow who is taking care of me?! Let this boy’s life return to him!”** The Creator heard my prayer and the boy was raised from the dead.

After three years of famine and drought, the Creator told me to return to king Ahab and let him know that rain was coming. I learned that Jezebel, Ahab’s wife, had been systematically hunting down and killing all of the Creator’s prophets. I was crushed and angry. When I met king Ahab, he was furious with me. He said to me, **“You have caused all this trouble in Israel!”** I said, **“No, you have caused this trouble by abandoning the Creator and following Baal! Meet me on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal!”** When we gathered on Mount Carmel, I said, **“How long will you be divided in loyalty?! If the Creator is the true God, then follow him. If Baal is the true God, then follow him!”** They did not respond. So I said, **“I am the only prophet left for the Creator, but Baal has 450 prophets. Let’s both make an altar and pray for fire to come down from heaven. We will see which god is the real one!”** The prophets of Baal went first. For half the day they shouted and danced, begging Baal to bring fire upon their altar. But nothing happened. After hours and hours of waiting I said to them, **“Maybe your god is busy or went on a trip! Or maybe he is asleep!”** The prophets of Baal intensified their praying and began cutting themselves with their own swords. But the hours dragged on and on, and nothing happened. Then I told the people to pour water on my altar three times until it was soaking wet. Then I prayed, **“Lord answer me so that these people will know that you are the true God.”** The Creator answered my prayer immediately and fire fell from heaven upon the altar even though it was soaking wet. Then in my zeal and anger I ordered all 450 prophets of Baal to be killed.

This made Jezebel furious. She was not going to rest until I was dead. I was terrified and ran for my life. I hid in the wilderness and prayed to the Creator, **“I have had enough of this! Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors!”** I had gotten carried away and responded to the violence of Jezebel toward the Creator’s prophets by killing her prophets. I was **no different**, no better than Jezebel. I had become exactly what I hated. But the Creator was not interested in my pity party. He said to me, **“Get up and eat.”** Then I went to Mount Horeb, to Mount Sinai, where the Creator had spoken to our people and given them the Ten Commandments. There I hid in a cave. The Creator came to me again and said, **“What are you doing here, Elijah?”** I said, **“The people of Israel have rejected your covenant and have killed your prophets. I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me too.”** Then the Creator told me to stand on the mountain for he was going to bring his **presence** upon me. Then a great **violent wind** ripped across the mountain, smashing the rocks. I was terrified, thinking it was the Lord coming to destroy me—but the Creator was not in the violent wind. Then a **great earthquake** came, shaking and terrifying me—but the Creator was not in the earthquake. Then a **fire** came, just like the one that I had called down upon my altar, and I was certain this was the Lord—but the Creator was not in the fire. Then there came a **gentle breeze** that stilled the fears and anxieties of my heart—**this** was the Creator’s presence. And the Creator asked me again, **“What are you doing here, Elijah?”** I responded with the same words, **“The people of Israel have rejected your covenant and have killed your prophets. I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me too.”** Then the Creator said to me, **“Go back to the people. I have reserved 7,000 people in Israel for myself who have not bowed down to false gods.”** I thought I was all alone in my troubles, but I was wrong.

**“Your food will not run out.”** I was **exhausted** by trying to be faithful to the Creator in the midst of people who wanted nothing to do with him, people who did not want to listen and repent. I was **exhausted** resisting the false prophets and kings who were fighting against me. I was **exhausted** from feeling that I was the only faithful person left in the world. I was ready to give up and **die**. Everything looked hopeless and my ministry looked like an utter failure. But I was **wrong**. The Creator was **present** in my life and among the people. The Creator was there taking care of my **every need**, of every need of our people. Even in the midst of our idolatry and in the midst of our unfaithfulness, the Creator was there for us. The Creator was a **“gentle breeze,”** soothing and calming, giving us exactly what we needed, giving me exactly what I needed. I thought the people around me were hardhearted, blind, and deaf. It turned out I was just as hardhearted, blind, and deaf as they were.

**“Your food will not run out.”** Like Elijah, we too live in difficult times. We too live in a time of drought and famine where the Creator seems absent and his true Word is seldom heard. Like Elijah, you might think, **“I am the only one left.”** Like Elijah, you might think, **“Lord, why have you brought this tragedy?”** Like Elijah, you might think, **“I have had enough of this, take my life!”** But you must not give up hope. You are called to step out of your pity party and depression like Elijah did and stand on the mountain of the Lord—feel the presence of the Creator. The Creator is not in the violent wind, he is not in the earthquake, he is not in the fire—the Creator is in the **“gentle breeze.”** Pause from everything else that is distracting you and going on around you and within you—and feel the **“gentle breeze”** of the Creator’s presence in your life. Even in the midst of suffering and tragedy, the Creator is there for you. **“How long will you be divided in loyalty? If the Creator is the true God, then follow him.”** Trust in the Creator. Follow his Son Jesus, share your last meal with the stranger, and **“your food will not run out.”** Amen.