

King Jehu:

I was the tenth king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. I was in no way related to my two predecessors, Ahaziah and Joram, the sons of Ahab. They continued to lead the people of the Northern Kingdom into worship of false gods, until God finally had enough.

God ordered me to completely wipe out the house of Ahab. I had a reputation for driving my chariot like a wild man, so I rushed to do what God wanted. I quickly killed Joram, seventy royal princes, other members and close friends of the house of Ahab. I completely obeyed God in this matter.

I followed up that episode by rounding up the prophets of the false god, Baal, and having all of them killed. I completely followed God in that matter. It would have been an easy thing for me to end the worship of false gods in the Northern Kingdom, but I chose not to. Instead, I kept the golden calves and other items for the people to worship. In that matter, I followed the previous kings of the Northern Kingdom, and did not follow God.

As my punishment, God did not give my family an everlasting kingship, and he started reducing the size of the Northern Kingdom. About one and a half centuries before me, King David had completely conquered almost all of the countries surrounding Israel. Those countries were forced to pay tribute to Israel. That was a big reason that David and his son, Solomon, became so wealthy. By my time, those countries had regained strength, and had started rebelling against Israel.

We not only lost their monetary tribute, but we were forced to pay the huge costs of protecting ourselves against them. By the time I became king, the Northern Kingdom was a weak, small country. God would let us survive for another hundred years, but it was clear that our days were numbered because he had withdrawn his blessings and protection.

God doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.¹ So, God kept sending prophets to get the Northern Kingdom back on the right track. First, Elijah. Then another powerful prophet, Elisha.

Elisha:

¹ 2 Peter 3:9

I've been bald since I was young. Baldness was often viewed as a sign of weakness. In fact, my baldness and my quick temper made for a story that made me famous, or more accurately, infamous. I am the prophet with the worst nickname. Guess what it has to do with. I'm a little sensitive about it, so, a little mercy I'm begging you.

I was God's prophet. The way I saw it was if you disrespect me, you disrespect God. One day, I was walking down the road, and here comes an enormous mob of boys from the town. "Get out of here, you old bald man!" "Beat it, Baldy!" I lost my temper. I called down a curse upon them, not realizing how powerful of a prophet I had become. Out of the woods came two bears that mauled forty-two of the boys. Not a story I am proud of, but it did demonstrate God intended his prophets to be viewed as powerful, not weak.

I started out as a farmer, and had no intention of doing anything else. One day, I was plowing with a pair of oxen alongside eleven other drivers, and the great prophet Elijah came up to me and threw his cloak around me. This signified that he was transferring his authority and power to me. I sacrificed my oxen as a thanks offering, burned my yoke as a symbol of complete commitment, then devoted myself to being the apprentice of Elijah.

When Elijah was taken to heaven in a whirlwind, I was there to watch. It allowed me to inherit his power and ministry. Immediately, I demonstrated that power in a story that has some interesting overtones. There was a company of over fifty prophets in Jericho who were in dire straits because the water there was bad. Undrinkable. They asked that I help. Symbolically, I threw some salt in the water and said a blessing over it. From then on, the water was fit to drink.

There are two subtle aspects of that story to understand. I was very careful to say that the Lord transformed the water, I did not take credit for doing so. Also, this incident was tied to a famous curse on Jericho: "At the cost of his firstborn son he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest, he will set up its gates." Joshua had put the destroyed city of Jericho under this curse.² Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho, a few years before my time, and lost his firstborn and youngest son in fulfillment of the curse.³ Apparently, the land had stayed in a cursed state until my water incident.

King Jehu told how King David conquered the neighboring nations, and how they had rebounded in power and rebelled against Israel. One of those countries was Moab. Moab's tribute payment to Israel was one hundred thousand lambs and the wool from one hundred thousand rams. A lot of lambs, a lot of wool. If they successfully rebelled, this would affect both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. A lot less lambs, a lot less wool. So, the kingdoms joined together to keep the rebellion from being successful.

² Joshua 6:26

³ 1 Kings 16:34

They marched on Moab, but ran out of water for themselves and their animals. As usual, when people make stupid mistakes, they turn to God to help them get out of trouble. Am I right? In this case, the kings turned to me to solve the problem. I prayed, I prophesied, and God filled the land with water. When sunrise came, and the rays hit the water, the rivers looked filled with blood. Rivers of blood. Which encouraged the Moabites to attack. Much to their surprise, the Israelites destroyed the Moabite army and completely devastated the land of Moab. That protected the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, but now the Moabites weren't able to pay tribute.

Slave girl:

Raiders came. They captured us. Captured Jewish people, including me. In a split second, I went from a carefree village girl protected by my father to a girl sold into slavery.

King David had conquered Aram and completely dominated it. Then, during my lifetime, the country of Aram was a bitter enemy of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Aram was located in an area you know as Syria. But over the following decades Aram rebounded and became more powerful than the Northern Kingdom.

One day, a band of raiders left Aram and entered the Northern Kingdom, where I lived. They devastated the countryside wherever they wanted. The men killed, the women and children taken into slavery.

My new master was the wife of the commander of the army of Aram. The abuse I took while I learned their language and learned my duties was... was... I was owned by Naaman, the most powerful man in the region, except for the king of Aram. *But* all of Naaman's power could not overcome the fact that he had leprosy.

Risking of more beatings, or death even, I told my mistress that if Naaman would go see the man of God known as Elisha, he could be healed of his leprosy. Nobody in the world had ever been healed of leprosy before, and I didn't know if Elisha would be willing to do the healing even if he could. It was a tremendous risk. My mistress convinced Naaman to listen to me. My belief in God and his mercy must have been obvious to them both.

In distress, Naaman got the king of Aram to send a letter to the king of the Northern Kingdom ordering him to cure him of his leprosy. Naaman took the letter and great riches, and went to the king of the Northern Kingdom.

The king of the Northern Kingdom was distraught when he got the letter. He knew he could not heal Naaman, and knew that retribution would soon be coming his way. He tore his robes in distress and wailed at his misfortune. Elisha heard the story and was disgusted with the king because of his lack of faith. He said to send Naaman to him so that Naaman would know there was still a powerful prophet of God left in Israel.

Naaman arrived at the prophet's house. Elisha did not even bother to see Naaman in person. He just sent a messenger out to tell Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan River and he would be completely healed.

Naaman was furious. He went away, insulted that Elisha wouldn't use a fancy healing or use a powerful river like the rivers of Damascus. Naaman's servants were wise enough to calm him down, and point out that he was just pouting. Naaman did as Elisha told him, and he was healed. Returning in repentance, Naaman gave glory to God and acknowledged him as the one true God. He swore never to bow to false gods again. He also tried to pay Elisha great riches, but Elisha wouldn't take anything from him. I changed the course of history...a slave....a girl...God's girl.

Elisha:

Such great faith! A little slave girl changed the relationship between Aram and the Northern Kingdom, altered the course of history! That's what she did. Someone so small with such great faith. She is an example of many people in the Bible who are barely mentioned, but are faithful...and change the world. Maybe, just maybe, you one of those kinds of people.

The Arameans were a constant distress to the Northern Kingdom. During one military campaign, I was a source of information to the Northern Kingdom. To the king himself. Every time the Arameans set up camp, I would tell our king where they were so he could avoid them or defend against them.

The king of Aram finally got so frustrated that he accused his officers of betrayal, there was a traitor in their midst. They knew the truth. They knew I was informing the king of the Northern Kingdom, telling him the very words that the king of Aram said, even in his own bedroom. Furious, the king of Aram ordered his men to track me down and destroy me. He knew that if I died, he could more easily win the war.

When the report came that I was located in Dothan, the king of Aram sent a force of horses and chariots to surround the city. When my servant got up the next morning, he saw the entire army spread out around us, "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" he cried.

I would imagine this scenario is familiar to you: surrounded and besieged by problems... or people. Unlikely to survive a situation? Depressed or held in the grips of hopelessness. Only able to see the physical problems that are so obvious to everyone anyway? If so, try to remember the rest of this story.

"Don't be afraid," I answered my servant simply. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then I prayed for the Lord to open my servant's eyes. He did. And he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around us. Just a tiny portion of God's army sent to protect me.

The Arameans attacked the city, I prayed that they be struck with blindness, and they were. In their helplessness, I led them into the capital city of the Northern Kingdom where they were taken prisoner. All of them. The king of the Northern Kingdom asked if he should kill his new prisoners, but I told him "Feed them" instead. He prepared a feast for them, and they returned home. It was this event that stopped the raiding from Aram, for a while.

I felt it was important that Israel start showing mercy to its enemies because I knew it would not be too long before Israel herself would be begging for mercy.