

Messianic Rabbi: Why Are We Losing Our Prophetic Voices?

Last week, another leader of a large ministry, Jarrid Wilson, committed suicide. I didn't know him personally, but I grieved along with his family and congregation as I have done seemingly weekly this year. It seems like we are losing one leader after another to depression and death.

I have also read many articles and comments over the past year with many opinions about these men and women. Some are filled with grace and love; others are filled with condemnation and fire and brimstone.

With each additional report, my heart breaks a little more. With the suicides of the leaders, we are losing our Elijahs. We are losing prophetic voices, proclaimers of the Word, men and women who stand up against the enemies of our faith and often shout the words "fear not." And until we in the body begin to understand what is happening and step in to do something about it, we will continue to lose more.

Above, I called these men and women our Elijahs. Let me take a moment to explain why. We are introduced to Elijah in 1 Kings 17:1 (TLV) in this way:

"Now Elijah the Tishbite, one of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab: 'As Adonai God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be no dew or rain these years, except at my word.'"

Elijah is prophesying to King Ahab, trusting completely in the authority that he has been given by G-D. Notice that Elijah isn't prophesying, "Thus sayeth Adonai." Elijah is so filled with faith and the power of the Spirit of G-D that it will not rain again until Elijah says so. Just imagine being so full of the Spirit of G-D that the rains are under your authority.

Only a few verses down, we read in 1 Kings 17:13-14:

“Elijah said to her, ‘Fear not! Go and do as you said, but first make me a little cake from what you have there. Bring it out to me and afterwards, make some for you and for your son. For thus says Adonai God of Israel, “The jar of flour shall not be exhausted nor shall the jug of oil be empty until the day Adonai sends rain on the land.”’”

Elijah again speaks, instructing this woman to “fear not” and he prophesied that her flour and oil would not run out until G-D sends rain. What power, what authority in the Spirit Elijah is demonstrating to us! And in 1 Kings 17:16, we read the confirmation that what Elijah prophesied came fully to pass and the flour and oil lasted just as he said.

Only a few more verses into the chapter, we find Elijah praying for G-D to raise a young boy from the dead in 1 Kings 17:21-22:

“Then he stretched himself upon the child three times. He cried out to Adonai and said, ‘Adonai my God, please let this child’s soul come back into his body!’ Adonai listened to the cry of Elijah, so the soul of the child came back into his body and he was revived.”

Then in 1 Kings 18:37, we read about Elijah on Mount Carmel as he challenges the prophets of Baal and says:

“Answer me, Adonai, answer me, so that these people may know that You, Adonai, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again.”

1 Kings 18 ends in verse 41 as Elijah tells Ahab:

“Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink, for there’s the sound of rain.’”

When we are introduced to Elijah, he is a man of great faith who could speak and the rains would stop for years. Elijah was

so full of faith that while the other prophets were hiding from Jezebel in caves, Elijah was out in the open. Elijah was the prophet of Israel, respected by both the faithful and the unfaithful. Elijah was being used by G-D in the prophetic and to perform miracles up to and including raising the dead.

Elijah was and still today is used in sermons about being filled with faith and power. Yet the next thing we read about Elijah is about him being depressed, hiding under a bush, suicidal and praying all night long for G-D to take his life.

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom bush. He prayed that he might die. ‘It’s too much!’ he said. ‘Now, Adonai, take my life! For I’m no better than my fathers’” (1 Kings 19:4).

Now, it is very important for us to note that in the middle of Elijah’s depressed and suicidal state, he still was praying, and he still heard from G-D.

“When he arrived there at the cave, he spent the night there. Then behold, the word of Adonai came to him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (1 Kings 19:9).

It is vital for the body of believers to make note of Elijah. He was not a hypocrite; he was not a phony who was pretending. He was a minister who was actively hearing from G-D, walking in prophetic power, speaking miracles into existence, raising the dead and speaking boldly against false prophets, false gods and corrupt leaders. In the middle of his depression, Elijah still fasted for 40 days. Elijah was still human and not immune to the deceptive words of the enemy. But, even with his weaknesses, we all hold him up as a hero of faith.

We, as the body of believers, must look at our ministry leaders in this way: Just because they are powerful proclaimers of the Word or just because we see miracles take place in their ministry, does not mean that they don’t also struggle with the realities and pressures of their office.

Don't forget that these men and women are going through the same spiritual attacks you deal with on a regular basis, only intensified because they serve in the ministerial roles that they do.

I was in a room one time with a group of more than 20 congregational leaders, and the discussion of depression and suicide came up. As the discussion went on, it became clear that every one of those leaders had at one time or another in their life thought about suicide.

This doesn't mean they were suicidal, but they got to a point in their lives, either before entering ministry or after, that the weight of their world was so heavy that, if only for a fleeting moment, the enemy made it an option. Please remember that I was in the room.

So, now we all realize that, like Elijah, many leaders can be attacked by the enemy and deal with serious depression and even suicidal tendencies. What should we do about it? The answers are also provided in 1 Kings.

1. Be the angel or messenger who reminds them to take care of themselves and do it more than once if needed.

"Then he lay down and slept under the broom bush. Then behold, an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Get up, and eat'" (1 Kings 19:5).

"Then the angel of Adonai came again a second time, touched him and said, "Get up and eat, because the journey is too much for you'" (1 Kings 19:7).

2. Remind them that just because they are under attack, does not mean they don't know and hear G-D's voice.

"After the earthquake a fire, but Adonai was not in the fire. After the fire there was a soft whisper of a voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

3. Remind them that they are not alone in their personal struggles because you are with them, praying for them, holding them up and believing in their calling.

“Yet I have preserved seven thousand in Israel whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouth has not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:18).

Please remember that, even in the deepest moments of his depression and longing for death, Elijah was still Elijah the prophet. {eoa}

Eric Tokajer is author of *With Me in Paradise*, *Transient Singularity*, *OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry*, *#ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer, Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians*, and *Galatians in Context*.