

Elisha Story

Moving on...

The smell of wood smoke filled the air carrying with it the subtle aroma of roasted meat. Hungry people stood and sat around talking and enjoying the food. Everyone enjoys a party and sometimes it can be a great chance to relax during difficult time.

Elisha stood on the edge of the gathering, watching the proceedings. It was nice to see everyone enjoying himself or herself, but he wasn't really in the mood for celebration. He felt sad as he knew he would be leaving his village and didn't know when he would be back. In particular it was going to be hard leaving his family: his parents and brothers and sisters and cousins and their children.

'So how do you feel old chap', asked an old family friend. 'It must be pretty exciting to be asked to go and do one's bit for one's God and country eh?'

'Actually', said Elisha, 'I'm still taking it all in. It's happened rather too quickly for my liking'

It was with a somewhat heavy heart and an air of foreboding that Elisha had gone out to work in the field that morning. These were strange and troubled times. Nothing seemed certain any more! There was also a lot of hard work to be done.

As he guided his plough through the sticky, damp earth he had recalled how for three years there had been no rain and nothing had grown. Then just a few days ago there had been torrential rain and thunder. Everyone had got very excited and the villagers had decided that now was the time to plough their fields.

'Strange todo isn't it. All these things that have happened recently.'

About a week before Elisha, had heard about something extraordinary. A powerful and godly, but rather strange man called Elijah had shown the king and people that they must worship the Lord and not the statues of the gods that had been introduced from abroad. Following Elijah's prayers, alter fires which had been made to the Lord, despite being doused with water had caught fire, burning up the meat that had been placed on them as an offering. Many of the people, filled with passion and anger against the priests and priestesses of Baal and Asherah, clearly revealed as impostors had chased after them and killed most of them. Amidst this bloodbath rain had come at long last.

'Well I personally knew they all had it coming for them! I expect that half the people who had started worshipping those foreign idols only did so because they were copying the Queen. Why I'm sure that Jezabel woman is just braying for revenge.'

Elisha wondered whether even this man, clearly a follower of the Lord and a family friend, had not been tempted at some point to get involved with the new religion. Everyone knew people, often members of families loyal to the Lord who had either joined the cult or who had wavered on the point of joining

'I'm sure she is.' Said Elisha. 'But I don't think she is all we have to fear. We should also fear the Lord.

'Surely not', said the man. 'After all our people gave those foreign chaps a jolly good run for their money I'd say.'

Elisha had been sickened by the butchery. It showed him how depraved his nation had become. People had joined the foreign cult in their thousands. Basically because it was the religion of Queen Jezebel and therefore a good way to find favour with the king and his powerful Phoenician friends. Amongst, those for whom it didn't really matter whether they had the king's favour (because they weren't especially powerful or rich or important – even if they liked to think they were) it had become a fashionable thing to do a way of showing your friends you were modern and ahead of the times.

He would have much preferred it if, once the sect had been shown up for a sham, the people simply had turned back to the God of their ancestors. The aggressive behaviour of the angry mob on that day had clearly proved that they had not. All that had happened was that they had done something else wrong.

'Just because the people who had turned to worshipping Jezebel's gods felt so let down that they decide to murder their old leaders and teachers, doesn't make things alright,' said Elisha. 'It would have been better if they had decided to follow the Lord. I am fearful that our nation is going to be punished terribly for this.'

'Yes, I suppose we have fallen away from everything old Moses agreed to do.'

Elisha knew this was true and it was a terrible source of fear. He believed that the Lord would bring about a terrible punishment on a nation that could first turn against Him and then commit a terrible atrocity rather than repenting. Especially when they had agreed to be the Lord's special nation. He rather hoped though that they would get that special nation status back again quickly. They had after all become pally with the Phoenicians because they were scared of Syria. Phoenician ships had protected them from Syrian attacks from the sea. His companion however was thinking about other things.

'Why, Moses. Gosh he's someone to aspire to be like. Yes I know he had his faults, but what a thing to be remembered for. Hey, you never know, maybe people in the future will remember you in the same way.'

It was all very well to laugh, but Elisha did rather hope not! The last thing he had wanted was an important role in these difficult times. All he desired was to keep his head down get on with his farming and avoid trouble.

'So, how did it happen? Tell all.'

'Well, this morning I was ploughing and one of the boys came running up to me to tell me there was a man to see me.'

'Yes, go on,'

'And it was Elijah'

'Gosh. I can't imagine you were expecting it to be him were you'

'He put his cloak around me and asked me to be his successor.'

'How splendid.'

Elisha hadn't really known what to say. To be frank, he had been rather scared.

'Great idea, throwing a party, I must say'. The man munched at a piece of meat with relish. 'It's great to have something to celebrate after all these troubles.

Elisha smiled in a slightly embarrassed way, personally suspecting that there was more trouble to come.

'Yes, thank you. It was good of Elijah to let me come back and see my parents. They would have been terribly worried if I had just disappeared.'

Elijah had been quite happy for Elisha to see his parents before leaving the village. Elisha's parents were rather thrilled to meet Elijah. However Elisha had felt there was more he could do before he left. Many of the people wanted to celebrate the appointment of a local boy as successor to the great prophet. Others, Elisha felt, might perhaps need to be won over in terms of loyalty. All of them were very hungry, more than a little drained and in need of something to revive them.

It had been a little bit sad to slaughter the oxen. After all one's animals were almost friends. However there would be no-one to look after them once Elisha had gone away. As for his plough and yolk: they were no good anymore and he would need fuel to cook the meat for the feast.

Towards then end of the evening, Elijah beckoned Elisha over to him.

'I think we should go now.' He said.

Despite his apprehension, Elijah instilled confidence into Elisha and he knew that now was not the time for hanging around.

Elisha fastened his sandals and put on the cloak Elijah had given him. Then Elijah kissed his parents goodbye and the two of them left.

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