

Ishael, the Man of God¹

The word of the God came to this man in Yehudah. The word he heard could be summarized as, "Go in this direction to the city of Bethel. Give this message to the king, and do not eat or drink anything in that land. Then return back to your homeland another way than then the way you came."

The man of God (Ishael) obeyed. He went in the direction God told him to go, in the northern tribes ruled by King Jeroboam. There he was – the king. Many other people in a circle around him surrounded the king. Jeroboam was at the altar – an altar that was not formed to worship the God of Israel. The man of God stepped through the crowd, slowly making his way to the center. That was where the king was. The king (of course) noticed him, but Ishael spoke not to the king, but to the altar!

And he cried against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the Sovereign, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you. This is the sign which the Lord has spoken, 'Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.'" (1 Kings 13:2,3)

When the kings heard these words, he responded in anger, "Seize him!" As he gave this command his arm was stretched out against the prophet. His fingers were extended, pointing towards Ishael. God dried up the king's arm to such an extent that he could not pull his arm back to his side. All the people around the king saw this, even the men who were about to seize this man of God. These men did not continue in their mad rush towards Ishael, but stopped, astonished at what had happened. They listened instead to the response of their king, "Pray to your God, oh, man of God, that my arm may be restore to me again. Pray to your God, that He might have mercy with me!"

¹ This story is taken from the Old Testament, 1 Kings 13.

Ishael, the man of God prayed, and the king's arm was restored back to him again. By this time, the altar was destroyed. At the sight of all of this, the men did not seize Ishael, and the king now responded in kindness towards him, saying; "Come back to my house, and I will give you gifts, come eat and drink."

But Ishael responded by repeating the command that he received from God saying, "I must not eat or drink anything in his land, even if you give me half of your kingly home, I will not take it." The king did not respond, and the man of God walked away from him; in a different direction from which he came from.

The people watch this man of God leave them, of course, unable to stop him. They all talk among each other saying, "Did you see that, ... I have to go tell abba... Where is he going?"

People were soon talking about this all over Bethel, and the news spread far and quickly. The news about what God did through this man of God reached the old ears of a prophet. His sons, with much excitement told their abba about what they saw and heard just a few minutes ago. Their abba asked them, "Which way did this man go?"

One of his sons said, "I saw him go this way by the familiar oak tree..."

The old prophet got up, and told his sons to saddle his donkey. He was going to see this man of God. The old prophet saw the man of God. He asked him, "Are you the man of God who came from Yehudah?"

Ishael said that he was as he sat tired and hungry under the oak tree. The old prophet noticed this and said, "Come back to my house, there we can eat and drink."

But the faithful man of God said, "I cannot! I was commanded by God not to eat or drink anything from this land."

Then the old prophet said, "Yes, I am a prophet, just like you, and before I got here, an angel told me to tell you, 'That it is all right for you to return to me and get something to eat and drink before you return back from where you came.'"

Ishael reasoned within himself that it would be all right to do what the old prophet said. Then he got up and went with the old prophet. But the old prophet had a lying tongue!

They finally reached the home of the old prophet. The old prophet got off of his donkey, while Ishael waited for him. They both entered into the house. Ishael waited at the door, while the old prophet went ahead of him into the house to get the food. Ishael was told to come in, and sit down. He did. The food and drink was place in front of him by the old prophet. The old prophet sat down. Eating and drinking what the old prophet gave him finally refreshed Ishael. He had been so thirsty and tired. Thoughts must of have entered into Ishael's mind saying "This must be a reward from God by giving me refreshments before I go back home because I completed the mission! This is great.... and..."

Almost as if in response to his hidden thoughts, the face of the old prophet turned cold and pokerfaced. Israel noticed it, and it caused him to stop eating. Then the old prophet spoke the word of God saying; "Since you have directly disobeyed the Sovereign your God, by eating and drinking in this land, you will not reach home, and you will not be buried with your forefathers!!!"

After hearing these words, Ishael suddenly had no more appetite. He was finished with his food. He left it and the old prophet at the table. He walked out the door – not closing it behind him. He rode and rode and rode the donkey for several miles. Thoughts were racing though his mind like, "How can this be? I obeyed, but I just... I just had a little of... I was hungry and I just had some... Oh, no!"

There, just ahead of Ishael, was a lion. Before this time, Ishael was fearful, fearful of the prophecy that the old prophet spoke might come true. The lion sensed he was afraid. Ishael, the man of God was killed. After the lion let go of the prophet's neck, the great animal sat down beside the dead body. He didn't eat the young prophet nor did he attack the donkey that the dead prophet rode on. Both the lion and the donkey where on either side of the dead body Ishael the man of God. It was a most remarkable sight. Men saw it and brought the amazing news home to the town where the old prophet lived.

When he heard of it he said, "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the Sovereign; therefore the Sovereign has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the Sovereign which He spoke to him."²

James: The prophet – the overcoming man of God – was killed (disciplined) because he disobeyed a detailed command from God. *He was faithful to obey it at first, but did not continue to do so when he was getting close to home.*

This is really something to learn from, because throughout the day I am obedient to my conscience, but I let my mind wonder and think worthless thoughts as I go to bed and as I am falling asleep. This is not being faithful to rule over my thoughts to the end of my day. I lose glory because of my disobedience.

Remember, Ishael was disciplined for not obeying every command his Master spoke.

² 1 Kings 13:26