



Between the Lines

Challenges and Insights from the Old Testament

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Introduction

Between the Lines takes a unique approach for a Bible study: each lesson begins with a poem, written to explore the truths, insights, and challenges nestled *between* two consecutive verses of Scripture in the Old Testament.

When I originally wrote the poems you will find here, I did so because I was struck by the drama in these Old Testament stories – a drama that wasn't shouted from the actual text, but that took place literally after the close of one verse and before the start of the next.

Between the lines, between the verses, I found a wealth of pain, longing, emotion, conflict, and challenge. It is that drama that these poems seek to capture.

After each poem, you will find a page of questions relating to the issues that the poem raises. These questions are meditative and discussion-oriented in nature, appropriate for both personal devotion and small group settings. They are designed to add not only to our understanding of the Old Testament stories, but to our appreciation and application of eternal truths in our own lives.

Take your time. Explore the truths that God has revealed in these verses. And go forth changed and renewed.

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Lesson 1

What Have I Done?

Adam

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:7-8

What Have I Done?

I remember my thoughts –
cool, crisp, clear
logical precision to rationalize desire.
I loathed obedience,
freely choosing the reins of slavery.
I craved the promised knowledge,
power.

I received what I wanted –
with a vengeance.

Now I know.

I know what I have lost:
relationship ruptured
in one act of lust.

I know what I have gained:
self

exalted in tyrannical rule.

And in the forest shadows,
I hear mocking laughter.

I know things that before
were hidden in mystery:

Shame.

Guilt.

Sin.

Truths once shielded
from my innocent eyes.

My eyes are open, now.

I know myself in intimate ways:

I am naked.

Helpless.

Lost.

I gloried once in my body
myself.

Spirit, soul, and body
perfectly joined

a rejoicing communion.

Now I raise defenses without
trying to hide

the nakedness within.

And I can hear God walking

I can hear Him calling.

He calls me by name.

I hear the longing in His voice,
the empty loneliness in His heart;

I slip further into shadows.

One question alone echoes
in the barren wind

across my mind:

What have I done?

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ Have you ever rationalized sinful desires? What were the circumstances?
- ☞ Consider James 1:13-15 and I John 2:15-16. What do these verses tell you about the progression of sin?
- ☞ Why might you not want to be obedient to God?
- ☞ What have been some of the consequences of your own disobedience to God?
- ☞ Imagine what a perfect relationship with God would be like. What would characterize that relationship? What images come to mind?
- ☞ Consider Revelation 21:1-7 and Revelation 22:1-5. What are you most looking forward to in heaven?
- ☞ Is sin ever as sweet as we imagine it will be when we are desiring something we shouldn't have?
- ☞ Describe what it feels like to be burdened with shame and guilt. What does it do to your relationship with God?
- ☞ When you get defensive because you have been caught in sin, what do you do?
- ☞ When do you feel most vulnerable? Why?
- ☞ When you have unconfessed sin in your life and you hear God calling you to repentance, how do you respond?
- ☞ Consider John 3:16 and Romans 5:5-11. Do you ever struggle with understanding that God truly loves you – even though you are a sinner? Why?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Confess any sin, and meditate on the love of God, his forgiveness, and his joy at being in a love-relationship with you.

Lesson 2

The End of Waiting

Noah

Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did. Then the Lord said to Noah, "Enter the ark..."

Genesis 6:22-7:1

The End of Waiting

I thought I would never see
the fulfillment of promise.

I remember the voice
the spirit
the song
the thrill that rushed through my soul
the light that raced through my mind
the shout that sped through my body
the command of the Most High
the deafening clap of judgment
the sweet gentleness of grace
I set to work with fire in my bosom
my hands shook with excitement
trembled with energy
pouring out
neverending.

Except it did.
The bonfire burned
leaving dull embers
glowing with just enough
obedience
to be faithful.

Years passed
under a sky that
mocked
divine warnings
and divine promise.

Ridicule was a byword.
Scorn a daily meal.

I cannot count the nights
I cried
and pled
and angered
at the stars.
Questions rose.
Confusion.
Doubts.
The called are often
sure of the calling
but not of him who calls.

When the end finally came
it was with a voice that broke
my broken heart.
"Enter the ark ...
enter my promise ...
enter your rest ...
You have been tried and tested.
The embers banked in faith
have carried the fire
through the long night of waiting.
Enter, now ...
rise ...
rise and enter."

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ Have you ever felt inspired to do something? Describe what you felt, what you thought, and what you did.
- ☞ The chronology in Genesis 6 appears to indicate that it took Noah between 70 and 100 years to build the ark. Have you ever worked at something and waited for its fulfillment for years? What emotions did you struggle with as you had to wait?
- ☞ What does our society and culture tell us about perseverance? About fulfillment?
- ☞ How would you encourage someone who was discouraged about God “delaying” the fulfillment of their prayers, hopes, or dreams?
- ☞ What would you say to someone who doubted God’s calling on their life, even though it had seemed clear to them before?
- ☞ Consider I Timothy 1:18-19, 4:14-16, and 6:11-14. How did Paul encourage Timothy? Why might Timothy have needed this encouragement?
- ☞ When is it hard for you personally to be obedient?
- ☞ Consider John 14:15. How do love and obedience interconnect?
- ☞ Which is harder for you when you are struggling to persevere: internal depression and doubt, or external ridicule or mocking? Why?
- ☞ Are you ever afraid to ask God your hard questions? Why?
- ☞ Consider Hebrews 4:14-16. How can these verses give you confidence?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Ask God to strengthen and encourage you to be faithful in every area of your life.

Lesson 3

The Night Before

Abraham

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one the mountains of which I will tell you."

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Genesis 22:1-3

The Night Before

There should never be a night before.
When the sun has set on your life
your hopes
your dreams
and you know the morrow brings
execution
in the blood-red sunrise,
why must there be a night.

In the formless shadows
questions rise
doubts coalesce
fears menace.

Who is this Elohim?
This Adonai?
Does he promise and give
only to betray and destroy?
Have I placed my faith
in the bosom of the faithless?
What he asks is contrary
to all I know
or thought I knew.

He asks me to place my laughter
my soul
my self
on the altar of his sacrifice.
Is this divine whim?
The caprice of a careless Creator?
Or is it cruelty.

He knows what he asked:
"Take your son ...
your only son ...
whom you love ...
your laughter ..."

Why must it be a trial
between my God and my first-born?

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ Have you ever been called upon to sacrifice something dear to you? What were your thoughts and emotions? What happened?
- ☞ What is hope?
- ☞ Consider Romans 8:24-25. What does this passage tell us about hope? Does this match your personal understanding of hope, or does it challenge it?
- ☞ When have you doubted God? Why have you doubted him?
- ☞ What do you fear the most? Why do you fear it?
- ☞ Does God ever seem incomprehensible to you? When?
- ☞ Did God ever seem to break his promises to you? When?
- ☞ Consider Matthew 26:36-44, Matthew 27:45-46, and Hebrews 5:7-10. What insight and encouragement do you find in these verses?
- ☞ Why might God ask you to sacrifice something important to you? And perhaps, unlike Abraham, not get it returned to you?
- ☞ Consider James 1:2-5, Romans 5:1-5, and Romans 8:28. How can these verses strengthen you when you do not understand and are in pain?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Confess any bitterness you may have been harboring because of what God has asked you to sacrifice to him. Tell him any doubts or questions or fears you may be experiencing. Affirm his goodness and his faithfulness to you personally.

Lesson 4

Justice

Joseph

So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailor.

Genesis 39:20-21

Justice

Where is your justice,
Adonai?
I humbled myself
bowed before my master.
I caused all things to prosper
for his hand.
I received honor
though I sought it not.
I received authority
though I claimed it not.

In one moment
I lost all.
Respect
prosperity
honor
authority.
Ground to the dust
stripped of reputation
cast forth from trust
rejected from friendship.
Yet not for a single word
or act
that I had done.

Was it not enough
to degrade me to slavery?
To pay the price of pride
in cistern and sale?

To feel the scathing hatred
of those I own as kin?
Bereft of father
brothers
home
and safety?
Was that not enough?

I am accused of crimes
I loathe
and abhor.
My name is sullied
beyond all hope
of redemption.
My future is shackled
with the iron I wear.

Where is your promise,
Adonai?
Have you, too,
forsaken me?
I cry out
but there is none to hear.
There is no resurrection
from this pit.

Is this justice, Adonai?

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ Have you ever been falsely accused? What happened? What did you think and feel? How did you react?
- ☞ Consider how Joseph humbled himself as a slave before Potiphar. Would you find such humility easy or difficult if you were in his place? Why?
- ☞ What might have been the consequences if Joseph had not humbled himself before Potiphar, or if he had later given in to the advances of Potiphar's wife?
- ☞ What does Joseph's story tell you about the importance of obedience, even in the seemingly small choices of life?
- ☞ When do you find it most difficult to be humble? Why?
- ☞ Consider Philippians 2:5-11. What impact does it have on you to realize that Jesus, the Son of God, humbled himself?
- ☞ Consider Genesis 45:1-8 and Genesis 50:20. How do these passages challenge your faith? How do they strengthen your faith?
- ☞ Describe a time when good came out of a bad situation in your life.
- ☞ Consider I Peter 4:12-19. What insights, challenges, and encouragement does this passage give for those victimized by injustice or persecution?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Renew your commitment to humility, faith, and obedience.

Lesson 5

Nameless One

Moses' Mother

And the woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it, and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.

Exodus 2:2-3

Nameless One

Thou who art Nameless
find a name for my child.
I set my hope adrift
upon the waters of grace
dreaming of days of peace –
of lying down beneath the shade
of my own vine
and fig tree.
I dream of a land flowing
with milk and honey.
I dream of freedom and liberty
justice and praise.
I dream of law,
of sacrifice and a temple
built to You,
O Nameless One.

But I cast my hope adrift
and bow my head.
Back to the mudpits
the straw
the whip
and the toil.
The endless bricks
for endless temples
to endless gods
who all have names.

Surely You are more –
You, who hold Yourself aloof,
hiding Your face
despising finite images
in favor of infinite presence.

Surely You are more –
You, who withhold freedom
until its proper time
and turn the suffering of your people
into shouts of joy.

Surely You are more –
You, who allow the murder
of the infant-born
in order to raise up a Deliverer
for all peoples.

For so I believe of You,
Nameless One,
as I cast my hope adrift
on the waters of Your grace.
Thou who art Nameless
find a name for my child.

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ What are your favorite names for God? Why?
- ☞ Are there any names of God that you tend to avoid thinking about? Why?
- ☞ What is the significance of God's true name: "I AM"?
- ☞ When Moses' mother set the basket adrift on the Nile, she was relinquishing control. Why is it so hard to let go and entrust ourselves to God's care?
- ☞ What is trust? How would you define it? What image would you use to convey it?
- ☞ Why did God forbid his people to make images of him?
- ☞ Sometimes, we can get too "comfortable" with our picture of God. Consider Exodus 33:18-23, Isaiah 6:1-7, and Revelation 1:12-18. How do these passages impact your understanding of God?
- ☞ Why is it difficult to trust God's timing?
- ☞ What has happened when you have trusted God's timing and been patient?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Praise God by using the different names for him found in the Scripture.

Lesson 6

Restore My Sight

Samson

Then the Philistines seized Samson and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison. However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off.

Judges 16:21-2

Restore My Sight

There was a time
strength flowed through my body
muscles like iron
tendons like the strongest cord
thews as the gates of Gaza itself.

A man built to save Israel.
A man built to deliver her.
A man built to honor her.

Instead, I played the harlot.
Wife and whore alike
I took from my enemies
disparaging the virgins of Israel
refusing to save
or deliver
or honor her.

I had all and saw no reason
that I should deny myself
anything.

Now, I see the reason.
Now, as my feet tread endlessly
the land I should never have traveled
except in conquest.
Girded about with the bronze fetters
it had been my commission to break.

Now, I see the reason.
The power I used to feed hubris
should have been the bread of humility.
The strength I used for license
had been designed for liberty.
The might I used for gratification
could have been wielded for grace.

Yahweh, Almighty God,
restore my sight.
Not the sight of my eyes
but the vision of my soul.
Let me see more clearly yet
what I should have been
what I was
what I denied
that I might ask forgiveness
of your mercy.

And as tribute to your name
let me stand
even if for a moment
and be the all
you intended
for me.

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ Consider Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11-3. What are your spiritual gifts?
- ☞ What other strengths and abilities do you have (even if they are not specifically spiritual gifts)?
- ☞ When have you used your gifts, strengths, and abilities to glorify God? Why did you choose to do so? What were the results?
- ☞ When have you used your gifts, strengths, and abilities to glorify yourself? Why did you choose to do so? What were the results?
- ☞ What temptations and sins are you most drawn to? Why?
- ☞ Consider I Corinthians 10:13. What “ways of escape” has God provided you to help you overcome the temptations and sins you named?
- ☞ It is easy to look down on someone when they sin. Consider I Corinthians 10:12. Where have you allowed pride to creep into your life – either in the past, or in the present?
- ☞ Consider Matthew 16:24. Where have you successfully denied self? Where have you been unsuccessful?
- ☞ Consider I John 1:8-9. Do you ever find it hard to accept God’s forgiveness? Why?
- ☞ Describe the power of God’s redemption in a person’s life.
- ☞ Take time to pray. Ask God for the strength to overcome sin and temptation, and commit yourself to holiness and self-denial.

Lesson 7

I Am Listening

Samuel

And the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle ... And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever." So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

I Samuel 3:11, 14-15

I Am Listening

The throne of heaven
has been silent.
The voices of the prophets
stopped.
Dreams in the night
carry no visions.
For the sin of your people
for the apostasy of your chosen
for the iniquity of your called.

Even so, is there no one to hear?
A man of years
of wisdom
of character?
A woman of purity
of nobility
of truth?
To whom you might go
to call your people
to rebuke your people
to forgive your people?

Is there no one to whom you might
turn?
A man whose shoulders
already know

the burden of holiness?
A woman who yearns
for the coming
of your kingdom?
A man who will hear –
a woman who will obey –
that you come instead to a child?

For I am a child, Holy One,
Sovereign Lord.
No stature, no strength,
no learning, no wisdom.
I am untried,
untested,
unknown.
Is there not some strong one
to whom you might turn?
To deliver your message
to your faithless people?

And it is a message I fear.
It is a message of destruction
of violence
of judgment.
A message that brings pain
to those I love.

Is there not someone else, Lord?
Someone equal to this task?
Someone of unbending spirit
unflinching loyalty
unswerving commitment?

Yet you come to a child
and call my name in the darkness.

Speak, Lord.
I am listening.

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ We can become numb to the culture we live in. How would God define our culture in terms of sin, apostasy, and iniquity? Be very specific in your description.
- ☞ Consider Romans 1:28-32, I Corinthians 6:9-11, and Galatians 5:19-21. What insights do these passages give you about sin?
- ☞ Have you ever felt that God called you to do something that was beyond your abilities or strength to accomplish? What did you do? What were the results?
- ☞ Consider I Corinthians 1:18-31. What does this passage tell us about how God works, and why he works that way?
- ☞ Who is the wisest person you know? What characterizes that person?
- ☞ Consider James 3:17. What insights does this verse give you about wisdom?
- ☞ Why is it difficult to name evil for what it is – either in our society in general, or specific sins in a person's life? What can happen when we do so?
- ☞ Does our society ever consider the possibility of God's judgment on their sin? What about the Church?
- ☞ The book of Revelation talks about God's final judgment on the sin of the earth – involving horrific suffering, death, and destruction. How does that impact your understanding of God?
- ☞ How do you listen for God's voice?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Ask God for his wisdom, and for courage to follow his calling in every circumstance and choice of life.

Lesson 8

Five Stones

David

And David took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine. Then the Philistine came on and approached David.

I Samuel 17:40-41

Five Stones

Jehovah Tsidkenu,
I choose this stone for you:
you are our righteousness.
In apostasy and pride
we have fallen from holiness.
In repentance and humility
we beseech your holiness again.
The arrogance of rebellion
has come against us.
For your Name's sake
forgive and sanctify us anew.

Jehovah Jireh,
I choose this stone for you:
you are our provider.
You are strength
in time of weakness.
Abundance
in time of need.
In this, your unworthy vessel,
place a treasure finer than gold.
For your Name's sake
provide what I do not have.

Jehovah Nissi,
I choose this stone for you:
you are my banner.
No longer will I cower
under the standard of fear.
No longer will I hide

behind the banner of cowardice.
You lead me forth
glorious into battle.
For your Name's sake
go before me into victory.

Jehovah Sabbaoth,
I choose this stone for you:
you are the Lord of hosts.
We count our numbers
and we tremble.
We count the enemy
and we are afraid.
Open our eyes to your army
to the vast array prepared for war.
For your Name's sake
triumph over our adversaries.

Jehovah Shammah,
I choose this stone for you:
you are the Lord who is present.
In the darkness of the night
you have always been near.
My footsteps carry me into battle
yet I am not alone.
You are closer than
an intimate embrace.
For your Name's sake
show yourself now, my God.

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ Consider I Corinthians 1:30 and Zechariah 3:1-5. What does it mean to you personally to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ?
- ☞ Do you think that we take a serious enough view toward sin as a church? Why or why not?
- ☞ Consider II Corinthians 4:7. Do you rely on your own strength to accomplish things in life, or on God's strength? Why?
- ☞ Consider Philippians 4:6-7. How often do you spend time worrying rather than praying? Why? How can knowing that God is Jehovah Jireh help you not to be anxious?
- ☞ What battles are you encountering currently – at work, at home, at church, or in your heart, mind, or soul? How are you responding to them?
- ☞ “Jehovah Nissi” is a battle-name: how does it affect you to know that the Lord himself will do battle for you?
- ☞ How does it affect you to know that the Lord has uncountable legions of angels, all of whom are working to accomplish his will in the world – and in your life?
- ☞ Do you ever feel abandoned by God? When has that happened?
- ☞ Consider Matthew 28:18-20 and John 14:15-18. How would it change the way you think, live, and act if you truly understood that God is always present with you?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Focus your prayers around one of the five names of God listed in this poem.

Lesson 9

Treasure

Solomon

And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the Temple was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So Solomon was seven years in building it. Now Solomon was building his own house thirteen years ...

I Kings 6:38-7:1

Treasure

For seven glorious years
the Temple rose.
Seven years of devoted gold.
Seven years of golden blessings.
Seven years of blessed purity.
The sanctuary of God
the dwelling place of Immanuel
the earthly throne of Adonai.

What then?
It is a lie that gold never tarnishes.
Ask any thief who ever picked a pocket.
Any businessman who ever
swindled a client.
Any general who ever looted a city.
Do you want an answer?
Ask the wisest king who ever lived.

Gold held with purity remains pure.
Treasure held with humility
remains rich.
“For where your treasure is
there shall be your heart.”

Wisdom debauched by greed
degenerates into cunning.
Knowledge honed by pride
recoils upon the soul.
“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

For thirteen wasting years
the palace rose.
Thirteen years of devotion to gold.
Thirteen years of gilded blessings.
Thirteen years of blessing prosperity.
The sanctuary of man
the dwelling place of the king
the heavenly throne of Solomon.

The Almighty hid Glory
behind veil and wall.
Man pronounced fame
with a throne of ivory and gold.
The Omnipotent graced Covenant
with the wings of mercied angels.
Man announced rule
with twelve lions arrogant.
The Holy One spoke Peace
through the altar and the blood.
Man demanded homage
with taxes and tribute.

“Now the weight of gold
which came in each year
was six hundred sixty-six
talents of gold.”

The number of man.
The place of his treasure.

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ What is society's attitude toward money and wealth?
- ☞ What is your attitude toward money and wealth?
- ☞ Consider I Timothy 6:6-19. What principles about money and wealth do you find here?
- ☞ How can you guard your heart against greed?
- ☞ Consider Proverbs 30:7-9. Do you find it easy or difficult to pray this prayer? Why? Do you have trouble praying a certain part of it? Why?
- ☞ What do you treasure most in life?
- ☞ What are the differences and similarities in the sins of envy, greed, and covetousness?
- ☞ How could Solomon, the wisest man in the world, have ended up as he did – rich in material wealth, but poor in the things of God? What lessons can we learn from him?
- ☞ Consider Zechariah 9:9 and II Corinthians 8:9. What impact do these verses have on your understanding of God? On your attitude toward wealth?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Commit your money to him: what you have, what you don't have, your worries, your spending, your giving, and your desires.

Lesson 10

Witness

Elijah

The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord which he spoke through Elijah.

Now it came about after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him. So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance, and to put my son to death!"

I Kings 17:16-18

Witness

Elohim, Adonai,
what have you done?
This woman, not of our own,
put her faltering trust in you.
I was hunted as a criminal
and she took me in.
I was hungry and broken
and she fed me.
I was lonely
and she befriended me.

We have waited through
this drought of rain
the parched thirst of the land
the naked hunger of the soul.
You proved yourself faithful
with daily manna:
the oil did not run dry
the flour remained fresh in the bowl
day after faithful
day.

Even now, she calls me,
"Man of God."
She reverences you –
and you have crushed her.

She trusted you –
and you have abandoned her.
She longs for you –
and you have despoiled her.

She reproaches me now
through tears and sorrow
regretting her faith
her kindness
her trust.
Yet even so,
she calls you righteous.
She names sin foul.
She affirms holy justice.

All the good that was gained
has been lost in a moment.
Torn from her soul.
Shredding her hopes and dreams.
Elohim, Adonai,
what have you done?

But I hear your still,
small voice,
once again, and
once again.

She knows your justice
your righteousness
your reverence, Adonai.

Show her now
your love.

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Questions for Thought

- ☞ What strikes you from this poem? What insights does it give you?
- ☞ Has the Lord ever allowed something horrible to happen that bewildered you and caused you to doubt him? What happened?
- ☞ Consider John 9:1-7 and II Corinthians 4:7-18. How does it impact you to understand that God sometimes allows terrible things to happen in order to accomplish his purpose?
- ☞ In John 6, Jesus fed over five thousand using five barley loaves and two fish, with twelve baskets of food left over. In I Kings 17, God sustained the widow, her son, and Elijah with just enough to eat each day. How does the contrast between the two miracles strike you?
- ☞ Even in her grief, the widow was respectful toward Elijah and God. How do you respond toward God when you are grieving or angry? Why?
- ☞ It has been said that we tend to put God in a box. We limit him. How can catastrophes force us to give up our boxes and gain a better understanding of God?
- ☞ What have you learned from periods of grief, pain, or suffering? How has your character been changed?
- ☞ Elijah did not consider even death to be an insurmountable obstacle. He took the boy, prayed, and God raised him from the dead. What do you consider to be an insurmountable problem in life? How does this story impact your understanding of that problem?
- ☞ Take time to pray. Affirm God's love for you and his power over all the circumstances in your life.