Story for home

# The Beyond-the-Stars Baker

Jezebel was angry. Very angry. Angry enough to kill.

She was the queen of Israel, married to Ahab the king.

Bit by bit, she had used her influence over him to lure him away from worshipping the true God and encourage him to worship the false god Baal.

Once she had convinced the king, it was a simple job to convince the people of Israel too: worship Baal and you will live; worship the true God and you will die.

Some people in Israel resisted this, however. None more than the prophet Elijah.

God sent Elijah to warn Ahab that what he was doing was wrong.

God told Elijah to explain to Ahab that God would stop the rain until he changed.

And when Ahab refused to change, God had Elijah arrange a contest between himself and the false god Baal.

There were altars and bulls and wood, and the God who could set it on fire would prove to be the true God.

It was God who burned up the bulls. Of course it was! Baal was just an idol – a collection of wood and stone. He could do nothing!

But when the people of Israel saw what God could do, they fell on their knees and worshipped him once again.

And more than that, led by Elijah, they chased after Baal’s prophets and killed them all!

And that is what made Jezebel angry. Her embarrassment. Her defeat. And, yes, the death of her prophets.

So she sent a message to Elijah.

“May the gods kill me, too, if I don’t do to you what you have done to my prophets by this time tomorrow!”

Elijah took that threat seriously. And he wasted no time packing his bags and leaving town. Then off he ran to the neighbouring kingdom of Judah where he hoped he would be safe.

Exhausted, he collapsed at last under a broom tree.

He had been standing against Jezebel and Ahab for three years, dealing with drought and hunger and the constant fear that they would catch him and kill him.

The contest with the bulls was meant to put an end to all that. To settle the matter once and for all. To bring the people of Israel on-side. But in spite of that victory, Elijah’s life was still at risk. And he could take it no longer.

“Kill me now,” he prayed to God. “Let me join my ancestors in death.”

And having prayed what he believed to be his final prayer, Elijah lay down under that tree and fell asleep.

God was not finished with Elijah, though.

He cared for his prophet. He knew Elijah needed to rest. But he also knew Elijah needed to find the strength to carry on. So God came up with what might seem a rather unusual solution to the prophet’s problem:

GBBO. The Great Broom-tree Bake Off!

Perhaps the angel looked like Paul Hollywood. Maybe Mary Berry. Or possibly more like Prue. Whatever the case, the angel God sent to help Elijah was most definitely a baker.

The angel heated up a stone for an oven (who knows how?), mixed the batter (who knows where?) and baked an amazing cake.

Layer cake? Short cake? Carrot cake? Eccles cake? Nobody knows.

But when the cake was baked, the angel nudged Elijah awake and told him to get up and eat.

So Elijah ate some cake and washed it down with water that the angel had also provided. Then, exhausted still, he fell back into a deep sleep.

Patiently, the angel waited. And when he thought Elijah had slept long enough, he woke the prophet once again.

“Eat. Drink,” the angel said again. “You have a long, hard journey ahead of you.”

So, once more, Elijah ate. And, once more, Elijah drank.

And when he finished, off he went to Mount Horeb, to meet with God.

Did he thank the angel? We do not know.

Did he take away the leftovers? Probably not.

Did he offer him a Hollywood handshake? Unlikely!

But as he went, Elijah discovered just how amazing that cake really was. For it sustained him, without any other food, for the 40 days that journey took!

And that’s when he realised exactly what kind of cake the angel had made for him.

An angel food cake, of course.

From a Beyond-the-Stars Baker!

**BOB HARTMAN**

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