

**Elijah and Elisha Class 2**  
**Introduction Continued**

**Last week we spoke of Jeremiah as the proposed author of the books of 1&2 Kings. We spoke of them being stylized as a Riv or lawsuit against God's people filed by God himself and prosecuted by his prophets calling his people to Repent before the inevitable judgment.**

**Last, we spoke of the division of the Kingdom after the death of Solomon and reflected briefly on how Solomon had put Israel on the road to judgment by his political intrigue, which led inevitably to idolatry. It is critical that we understand how history and war were understood by Israel and the prophets. Turn to Ex 23:20ff. Remember we said last week that Exodus is the constitutional document for life between Egypt and the Promised Land. Here God's larger purpose for the Exodus is explained. But the great danger to achieving this purpose is Israel's compromise with the gods of the people of the land.**

**Now turn to Deut. 7:1-16 Remember we said that Deuteronomy is the constitutional document for life in the Promised Land and Moses' farewell address or addresses. Here again the purpose of the Exodus, God's deliverance and for God's raising up his people is laid out. Why is idolatry such a big deal? Notice the language of Deut 7:16 and Ex 23:33. Look now to Judges 2:3**

**Now let's look at Deuteronomy 17:14-20 as the office of king is ordained but not yet filled and would not be filled by a human for more than 400 years. See 1 Kings 4:26; 1 Kings 11:1-13...what is your take on the prophet's assessment of Solomon's kingly stewardship?**

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**Jeroboam 1 sought to maintain the loyalty of his people by creating alternative worship sites in the northern and southern parts of his kingdom in Dan and Bethel. At these sites he erected altars, he said to the worship of Yahweh...but at each of these sites there were golden calves or bulls. These were seen not as idols in themselves but as pedestals for Yahweh to stand on...demonstrating his sovereignty and power. This civil religion was seen as a violation of Yahweh's exclusive claim on his people's love and loyalty...but was seen as a far less serious offense to the Baalism King Ahab brought into the northern kingdom.**

**Baalism was an ancient faith. But it served as the greatest temptation to Israel and Judah between the conquest of Canaan and the Babylonian exile of Judah. Like most pagan religions, Canaanite religion had a pantheon.**

*The nominal head was a remote high god, who interfered little in the affairs of the world. El may be thought of as a mild old gentleman who delegated authority to his children, only reserving the right to be final arbiter in the event of disputes among them. El, presided over the assembly of the gods who gathered in the farthest reaches of the north Mount Zaphon...like Mount Olympus was to the Greeks.*

*The consort of El in the Ugaritic texts was named Asherat or Asherah or Lady of the Sea. This name appears about 40 times in the OT especially in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Asherah poles were wooden poles that stood in Canaanite temples often translated as grove. See Judges 6:25,28.*

*El and his wife produced a family of seventy gods and goddesses or elim. The best known was Baal which means master or lord who was identified with the storm god Hadad. Baal was the god of fertility responsible for the germinating and growth of crops, the increase of flocks and herds and human*

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**families. Baal worship was the most degrading aspect of the Canaanite civilization. Devotees brought wine, oil, first fruits, and firstlings of the flocks to the 'high places'. Near the rock altar was a sacred pillar which represented the male element in the fertility cult, corresponding to the Asherah, or female element. Chambers were maintained for sacred prostitution by kedeshim or male prostitutes and kedeshoth or female prostitutes see 1 Kings 14:23,24; 2 Kings 23:7. The language of the prophets who described covenant unfaithfulness to the Lord as adultery, and speak of those who forget the God of Israel as going 'awhoring after idols', are not just coining a phrase. Numbers 22 records an incident in which a Babylonian soothsayer named Balaam note the name played the principal role. Balak of Moab frightened at the reports of the defeat of powerful Amorite kings at the hands of Israel in concert with the elders of Midian sent for Balaam trusting he could pronounce a potent curse of Israel and insure its defeat. Unable to do this, Balaam proposed the Midianites invite the Israelites to the worship of Baal at Peor, knowing this would mean apostasy from the God of Israel. Read Numbers 25:1-3...an Israelite man paired off with a Moabitess in the worship of Baal on Mount Peor. Baal was pictured as the 'rider of the clouds' whose voice makes the mountains quake but is identified with each locality in which he is worshipped. The gods of the heathen were regarded as demonic spirits by Moses in Deut 32. Baalzebul is a term of high honor meaning Prince Baal but becomes synonymous with Satan in the NT.**

**The sister and spouse of Baal was Anat. Although bearing the epithet 'the virgin', Anat was a goddess of passion, destructive as well as positive. Love and fertility were her domain, although Baal himself occupied the leading role in the cult. The lewd side of Anat worship may be noted from figurines and pittery plaques of the nude Anat unearthed at various Palestinian sites. Anat was a goddess of war as well as sex. She fights Baal's enemies wading in their blood and washing her hands in it. She attacked Mot, the god of death and forced him to give back her brother and husband Baal. She cleaved Mot with the sword, ground him up and planted him in the ground. Anat may also be identified with 'the Queen of Heaven' to whom Jews of Jeremiah's time**

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***burned incense Jer 44:19. Scholars are not positive about this identification because the three principal Canaanite goddesses are often confused.***

***Like Asherah and Anat, Astarte or Ashtaroah was primarily concerned with sex. According to Philo, the Phoenicians (Lebanon) attributed to Astarte two sons Pothos sexual desire and Eros sexual love. According to Theodore Gaster suggests that the three goddesses represent three aspects of womanhood.***

***“Ashterah was the wife and mother, sedate and matronly mistress of the home and female head of the family. Ashtarah/Astarte was the sweetheart and mistress, a glamorous and voluptuous embodiment of sexual passion and, therefore, also the force of reproduction and fertility. Anat was the young girl, a beautiful and virginal creature full of youthful zest, vigor, and addicted especially to the thrills of battle and the excitement of the chase. Since sex was such a part of the cult and each of their roles, they were often confused unless specified.***

***There were many other gods as well. Shemesh was the sun god and four towns bear Shemesh in their name. Jericho is named for Yareah, the moon god, as is Beth yerah south of Tiberias. This is the god Abram worshipped in Ur and Haran.***

***Dagon, worshipped by the Philistines, was the god of grain and force behind crops associated with Gath and Ashdod see Judges 16:23-30 and 1 Sam 5:1-7.***

***Mot was the god of the underworld and death. Mot is the particular enemy of Baal, and the fertility cult in general, as death is the enemy of life. He is the god of plague and pestilence.***

***Yam, is the god of the sea, another enemy of Baal. He contended with Baal for mastery over the earth. Appears also under the name of Lotan a seven headed monster of the deep. He is Leviathan of Ps 74:13,14.***

***Molech or Milcom is the national god of Ammon 1 Kings 11:5,33. Worship of Molech is expressly forbidden in Lev 18:21 and 20:1-***

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**5. Solomon built an altar to Molech in the Hinnom Valley at Tpheth 1 Kings 11:7. Both Ahaz and Manasseh offered their sons in sacrifice to Molech 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6. Josiah in seeking to reestablish the Torah, desecrated by the Hinnom Molech center, to end the pagan religious practices 2 Kings 23:10. But the Molech cult was revived and Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of it until the time of the exile Jer 7:29-34; Ezek 16:20,21,31; 23:37-39.**