

Musings on I Kings 17
אמת ויציב - True and Certain
Words... Words... Words

אמת ויציב "true and certain" is a prayer recited in the liturgy of שְׁחֵרִית (the morning service). This prayer extols the many virtues of God and among the virtues are truth and certainty. Contemplating the opening words of this prayer אמת ויציב "true and certain," recalls the Elijah cycle of stories in I Kings 17.

Elijah, the 9th century (BCE) northern Israel prophet, is renowned for his zeal in carrying out his missions. In I Kings 17, דְּבָר "word" resonates throughout and is of central importance. During a drought Elijah obeys God's *word* to flee to the brook of Cherith and there he finds sustenance. Next Elijah heeds God's *words* to go to Phoenicia and while there he meets a widow and her son. The widow heeds Elijah's *words* about her meager flour and oil and she lives. The widow's son becomes ill and appeals to Elijah for help. The Lord listens to Elijah's *words* and the boy lives. These events set the stage for the real question at hand, will King Ahab and the infamous Queen Jezebel heed the *words*? They do not and meet a grisly end. When Elijah listens to the words of God, he lives. When the widow listens to Elijah's *words*, she lives. When God listens to Elijah's *words*, the boy lives. דְּבָר -words, word, words! Why listen to or heed any of these words?

The answer lies in the above-mentioned prayer, אמת ויציב "true and certain." The widow acknowledges the truth of Elijah's *words* (*I Kings 17:24*). The *words* that God and Elijah spoke were not only true but certain. Many hypotheses are deemed

true but they are not *certain* because they have yet to be proven. The leaders that condemned Galileo to death for his belief that the earth revolved around the sun and not vice versa thought that their *words* were true, however they were not *certain* because their *words* did not withstand the test of time. "אמת ויציב" true and certain" words are true at all times and in all places. God's *words* and Elijah's *words* were *true* because they emanated from reliable sources and they were *certain* in that ultimately the *words* were proven true. Ahab and Jezebel died, Elijah lived, the widow lived, and the boy lived. Will we heed the *words*?

When it came to advice my mom (ז"ל) rarely, even if asked, offered any. On the infrequent occasions she did, I learned through the experience of not listening to the *words* that she offered that I should heed them because she was always right. In retrospect I now realize that she reserved her *words* of advice for occasions that she knew that they were both אמת ויציב-- true and certain.

It is my hope that you have someone in your life whose *words*, like those of God and Elijah are...

אמת ויציב

True and Certain

שבת שלום מביתנו לביתך

Shabbat Shalom From Our House to Your House

Rabbi Malchah