

## Doggin' It

Sled dogs don't get tired. Well, technically they don't get "fatigued."

Alaskan huskies have pulled off some amazing feats while mushing across the moonscape of the frozen forty-ninth state. In 1925 when diphtheria ravaged the Inuit children of Nome, teams of drivers and dogs relayed serum Pony Express style almost seven hundred miles from Nenana. On the final leg Balto, a former "scrub dog" (musher's argot for a bench-warmer), took the lead, intuiting a buried trail in a blinding blizzard until he delivered his load on the main street of the stricken town. Today, teams of sixteen canines annually slog the thousand-plus miles of the Iditarod trail in a little over a week.

Turns out they're cheating – metabolically, at least.

Michael S. Davis, an animal exercise researcher at Oklahoma State, claims that when the dogs hit the trail, they somehow throw a biological breaker that keeps them burning calories at a resting rate. As a result, their energy reserves of fat and glycogen last longer. They become, in the Davis' phrase, "fatigue-proof."

Isaiah finds himself hollering "Mush!" to a people who have been hauling the deadweight of exile for over a half-century. The Babylonian Gulag offers none of Gilead's balm but the trail back to Jerusalem lies lost beneath a generation of defeat. Their limbs weary and their spiritual calories consumed, God's people strain for thirty-nine chapters against the traces that tie them to a burden that will not budge.

Then God throws the switch.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary," admits Isaiah 40.30, "and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." As opposed to the limited resources of empire or physique, Israel's Lord offers the endless supply of his indwelling presence, a self-sustaining of the Spirit that allows the faithful to rest in the traces.

When you find yourself stalled by the weight of your burden with no remaining muscle to heave against the load, howl your prayer like a snow-bound husky to the God who's power is forever unconsumed. A sick world needs medicine, so a tired church needs strength. Forsake the secular sources of money and manipulation and learn to burn the fuel that feeds without depleting.

Mush!  
Doug