

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL

1 Kings 16:29 - 17:7; 18:1-46

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Elijah, Ahab, and Baal's prophets

Key-locations: Israel, Mount Carmel

Key-repetitions:

- Ahab's sins: he committed the sins of Jeroboam (1 Kin 16:31); he married Jezebel (1 Kin 16:31); he served Baal (1 Kin 16:31); he built a temple for Baal (1 Kin 16:32); he made an idol to the prostitute goddess Asherah (1 Kin 16:33).
- Miracles related to Elijah: he predicted a drought (1 Kin 17:1); he prayed and fire came from God on Mount Carmel (1 Kin 18:20-40); he prayed and it rained (1 Kin 18:41-46); he outran Ahab's horses from Mount Carmel to Jezreel (1 Kin 18:46).
- Elijah ordered three times to fill four large jars with water and drench both the offering and the wood (1 Kin 18:34).
- Ahab considered Elijah a troublemaker and his enemy (1 Kin 18:17-18; 21:17-29).

Key-attitudes:

- Ahab's arrogance.
- Ahab's anger at Elijah.
- Elijah's courage and solitude.
- Conflict between: Ahab and Elijah, and between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

Initial-situation:

After King Solomon died, Israel assembled and requested for King Rehoboam to loosen up the harsh labor and the heavy yoke (*taxes*) Solomon had put on them. King Rehoboam answered with cruel words, saying he would be harsher than his father.

Ten tribes in Israel abandoned Rehoboam and made Jeroboam king over all Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Rehoboam continued to rule the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah, the Southern Kingdom.

Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, sinned by making idols. He sinned and caused the people to sin. All the kings of Israel followed the evil example of Jeroboam. Many years later, King Ahab began to rule in Israel.

Initial-problem:

King Ahab of Israel, did more evil than any of the kings before him. Prophet Elijah confronted King Ahab and prophesied that the Lord God would send total drought for several years.

Final-situation:

A heavy rain fell and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The Lord's power enabled Elijah to run ahead of Ahab's chariot until they reached Jezreel.

BIBLE STORY**Elijah During the Drought**

King Ahab of Israel did what the Lord considered evil. He did worse than all the kings before him. Ahab committed the sins of King Jeroboam. Ahab married Jezebel. Ahab served and worshiped Baal. Ahab built a temple for worshiping Baal in Samaria and made an idol to the prostitute goddess Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God to anger than all the previous kings of Israel (1 Kin 16:29-33).

Prophet Elijah confronted Ahab and prophesied that the Lord God would send total drought for several years. God provided food for Elijah during the three years of drought (1 Kin 17:1-16).

Elijah on Mount Carmel

Three years after Prophet Elijah prophesied the drought, the Lord told Elijah, "Present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."

Prophet Elijah went to meet King Ahab. Ahab saw Elijah and said, "So it's you, you troublemaker of Israel!"

Elijah replied, "I haven't troubled Israel. You and your father caused trouble for Israel. You abandoned the Lord's commands and now follow Baal as your god. Gather everyone in Israel at Mount Carmel. Bring the prophets who eat at Jezebel's table, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the prostitute goddess Asherah" (1 Kin 18:1-19).

Ahab summoned everyone in Israel, especially the prophets, to Mount Carmel. Elijah challenged the people, "How long will you try to serve both Baal and the Lord? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Nobody said a word.

Elijah spoke, "Get two bulls. Let Baal's 450 prophets butcher one bull and lay it on the wood, but not set fire to it. I'll prepare the other bull and put it on the wood, but not set fire to it. Then you pray to your god, and I'll pray to the Lord. The god who answers by fire, he's the real God."

The people agreed, "You have a good plan, do it!"

Baal's prophets took one of the bulls, prepared it, and called on Baal. They danced, shouted, and slashed themselves with swords and spears. Elijah made fun of Baal's prophets. Elijah sneered, "Shout louder, he's a god. Maybe he's thinking, or going to the bathroom, or traveling, or sleeping." Baal's prophets tried every religious trick they knew until the time for the evening sacrifice. But nothing happened.

Then Elijah took twelve stones to build an altar in honor of the Lord. Elijah dug a ditch around it. Elijah arranged the wood, butchered the bull and laid it on the wood as a sacrificed offering. Then Elijah ordered, "Fill four large jars with water and drench both the offering and the wood." Then he said, "Do it again," and they did it a second time. Then

Elijah said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. Water ran down around the altar and filled the ditch.

Elijah stepped near the altar and prayed, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, make known to these people that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are giving these people another chance to turn their hearts back to you."

Immediately fire from the Lord fell and burned up the sacrificed offering, the wood, the stones, the soil, and even the water in the ditch.

The people bowed down to the ground and shouted, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!"

Elijah commanded, "Seize the prophets of Baal!" The people seized them, and Elijah slaughtered the prophets of Baal (1 Kin 18:20-40).

Elijah prayed. Then Elijah ordered King Ahab, "Hitch up your chariot and get down from the mountain before heavy rain delays you."

A heavy rain fell and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The Lord's power enabled Elijah to run ahead of Ahab's chariot until they reached Jezreel (1 Kin 18:41-46).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of Ahab's sins against God?
2. Why was Elijah able to predict the coming drought?
3. How did Elijah survive during the three years of total drought?
4. How did God use nature to win back the Israelites to himself?
5. What was the relationship between King Ahab and Prophet Elijah?
6. Today, who are some of the people who consider God's servants to be troublemakers?
7. What was the purpose of the battle between Elijah and Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel?
8. What happened on Mount Carmel?
9. Why does God demand exclusive worship? Why doesn't God allow people to worship both him and other gods?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God often uses nature to punish people who rebel against him.** The Israelites served and worshiped the false god Baal, and God decreed a drought against Israel (1 Kin 17:1).

2. **The person who rejects the Lord will consider the Lord's messenger a troublemaker and may even consider him an enemy.** That was Ahab's reaction to Elijah (1 Kin 18:17-18; 21:17-29).
3. **People who disobey God and make wrong choices usually blame others for the negative consequences of their wrong choices. They refuse to recognize that they are responsible for damaging themselves, their health, and society.** Ahab accused Elijah of being a troublemaker. Ahab did not assume responsibility for the consequences of his own wrong choices (1 Kin 18:17-18).
4. **God's servants need to know when to go on the offensive against evil and when to retreat.** God told Elijah to predict the drought and then to hide himself (1 Kin 17:3). The Lord's prophets were in danger from the anger of Jezebel, and went into hiding (1 Kin 18:13). Three years later, the Lord told Elijah to confront Ahab and the false prophets (1 Kin 18:1). Sometimes the Apostle Paul fled persecution; other times he intentionally faced people who wanted to persecute him.
5. **The Lord God is the only true God with power to act.** The competition between Baal's prophets and Elijah on Mount Carmel was not to decide whether the Lord or Baal was more powerful. It was to determine which was the only true God. Elijah's word (1 Kin 18:22-25), his prayer (1 Kin 18:37), and the acclamation of the people (18:39) show that it was a battle to determine who was the only true God. Monotheist faith was determined: There is only one true God and he is Jehovah, the Lord God.
6. **God demands exclusive service and worship.** Elijah challenged the people, "How long will you try to serve both Baal and the Lord? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." The people flip-flopped, vacillating between serving Baal at one time and at another time serving the Lord Jehovah. They were reluctant to break with either form of worship, but the Lord God demanded exclusive worship (1 Kin 18:21).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Series of Tableaux:

The storyteller narrates the Bible story from beginning until the end. Then drama participants plan a series of frozen images that, together, tell the story with a beginning, middle, and end. Designate four drama participants. Each is designated to represent a person from the story:

- Elijah.
- King Ahab.
- Prophet of Baal.
- One of the people of Israel.

The storyteller starts retelling the Bible story. Drama participants stand around the performance area. When the storyteller pauses, drama participants interpret the narrated event by stepping into the performance area and establishing a frozen image in relation to one another until the tableau is complete.

The storyteller will pause after narrating each of the three following events and allow drama participants to interpret each event with a frozen image:

- Elijah told Ahab, "I haven't troubled Israel. You and your father caused trouble for Israel. You abandoned the Lord's commands and now follow Baal as your god. Gather everyone in Israel at Mount Carmel. Bring the prophets who eat at Jezebel's table, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the prostitute goddess Asherah." (*Storyteller pauses for drama participants to interpret the event with a frozen image.*)
- Elijah made fun of Baal's prophets, "Shout louder, he's a god. Maybe he's thinking, or going to the bathroom, or traveling, or sleeping." (*Storyteller pauses for drama participants to interpret the event with a frozen image.*)
- Fire from the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and even the water in the ditch. The people bowed down to the ground and shouted, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!" (*Storyteller pauses for drama participants to interpret the event with a frozen image.*)