

# ELIJAH ON MOUNT SINAI

1 Kings 19:1-21

## STRUCTURE

**Key-persons:** Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel

**Key-locations:** Israel, Mount Sinai

### Key-repetitions:

- Miracles related to Elijah: an angel fed him (1 Kin 19:5-7); he traveled forty days and nights without eating (1 Kin 19:8-9).
- The Lord was not in: the wind (1 Kin 19:11); the earthquake (1 Kin 19:11); the fire (1 Kin 19:12).
- Elijah's manifestation of depression/desperation: Elijah asked the Lord to take his life (1 Kin 19:4); twice he claimed to be the only living prophet, and that they were trying to kill him (1 Kin 19:10, 14).
- The Lord asked Elijah why he was on the mountain (1 Kin 19:9, 13).

### Key-attitudes:

- Conflict between Jezebel and Elijah.
- Jezebel's anger.
- Elijah's depression.
- God's determination to communicate to Elijah.
- The Lord's gentleness with Elijah.

### Initial-situation:

Elijah confronted Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel. God revealed himself by a fire that burned and consumed Elijah's offering. The people shouted, "The Lord, he is God." Then Elijah slaughtered all 450 of Baal's prophets.

### Initial-problem:

Queen Jezebel sent a messenger to Prophet Elijah, "By this time tomorrow, I'll make you as dead as you made those prophets of Baal."

### Final-situation:

Elisha set out to follow and assist Elijah.

## BIBLE STORY

Queen Jezebel sent a messenger to Prophet Elijah, "By this time tomorrow, I'll make you as dead as you made those prophets of Baal" (1 Kin 19:1-2).

Elijah was terrified and ran for his life. Elijah fled a day's journey into the wilderness. Elijah collapsed in the shade of a broom bush and wanted to die. Elijah prayed, "I've had enough of this, Lord. Take my life!" Elijah was exhausted; he fell asleep under the broom bush.

An angel brought Elijah bread and water, and then let him sleep. The food gave Elijah strength to walk for forty days and nights until he reached Mount Sinai (*Horeb*), the mountain of God. Elijah crawled into a cave and slept through the night (1 Kin 19:1-9).

The Lord spoke to Elijah, "Elijah, what are you doing here?"

Elijah answered, "Lord God, I've eagerly served you. The Israelites abandoned your covenant, tore down your altars, and executed your prophets. I'm the only one left, and they're trying to kill me."

God told Elijah, "Go stand on the mountain in front of the Lord. The Lord will pass by."

A hurricane force wind ripped the mountains, but the Lord wasn't in the wind. An earthquake came, but the Lord wasn't in the earthquake. A fire came, but the Lord wasn't in the fire. Then came a gentle whispering voice. Elijah heard the gentle whispering voice, went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

The gentle whispering voice asked, "Elijah, why are you here?"

Elijah replied, "I've eagerly served the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites abandoned your covenant, destroyed your altars, and executed your prophets. I'm the only one left, and now they're trying to kill me."

The Lord said, "Go back the way you came. Anoint Jehu king over Israel, and anoint Elisha to succeed you as prophet. I still have 7,000 living in Israel whose knees never bowed down to Baal, and whose mouths never kissed his image" (1 Kin 19:10-18).

Elijah found Elisha plowing with a team of yoked oxen. Elijah took off his coat and put it around Elisha. Then Elisha butchered his pair of oxen, used his plowing equipment to cook the meat, and gave it to the people. Then Elisha set out to follow and assist Elijah (1 Kin 19:19-21).

### 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. How did Queen Jezebel react to Elijah killing her Baal prophets?
2. How did Elijah react to Jezebel's threats?
3. How did the Lord minister to Elijah when he wanted to die?
4. What excuse did Elijah give for being on the mountain?

5. How did the Lord manifest his presence on the mountain?
6. How did the Lord help Elijah deal with his depression?
7. How can Elijah's experience with depression help us deal with our discouragement or depression?
8. How can Elijah's experience assist us in dealing with people who are discouraged or depressed?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **A person of impetuous disposition may flip-flop between displaying fiery courage and moods of despondency.** On Mount Carmel, Elijah displayed courage when he confronted King Ahab and 450 of Baal's prophets (1 Kin 18:20-40). However, after Queen Jezebel threatened Elijah, he became despondent and fled for his life (1 Kin 19:3). Elijah's character resembled that of Peter, who first struck a blow with a sword in defense of Jesus and then denied knowing him (Jn 18:10, 15-18, 25-27).
2. **The depressed person needs to take care of both his physical and spiritual necessities, and he needs to assume God-given responsibilities.** The victory on Mount Carmel was succeeded by Elijah's exhaustion and desire to die. Elijah felt that he had no success in preventing the nation from abandoning God (1 Kin 19:4). An angel provided Elijah with food and water, and let him sleep (1 Kin 19:5-6). On Mount Sinai, God conveyed that Elijah still had work to do (1 Kin 19: 15-16). Elijah was to transmit God's work to others, and so pave the way for success in the distant future (1 Kin 19:16).
3. **Those who serve the Lord are imperfect.** Elijah was a hero of the faith; however, he became afraid of Queen Jezebel. He became discouraged, he acted like a person without faith (1 Kin 19:3-4), and he became full of self-pity (1 Kin 19:10). God's servants are still mud vessels (2 Cor 4:7; Ja 5:17).
4. **Sometimes God manifests himself in attention-getting ways; other times he manifests himself in non-attention ways.** God manifested himself in fire on Mount Carmel (1 Kin 18:38), but in a whispering voice on Mount Sinai (1 Kin 19:11-12). The hurricane, the earthquake, and the fire were all tokens and agencies of God, but none disclosed him so convincingly as the peaceful whispering voice that followed the tempest. The prophet came to realize the true value of patience and forbearance in the furtherance of the divine purposes, as compared with the violence which he himself had displayed in his conflict with idolatry.
5. **The depressed person exaggerates the bad and minimizes the good.** Elijah was mistaken in thinking that he was the only survivor of the Lord's loyal servants. There were 7,000 who remained faithful to the Lord. The Lord's cause was not desperate because his prophet had fled from the field of conflict (1 Kin 19:18).

6. **The invitation to serve God often involves turning away from a situation in order to turn towards new responsibility.** Elisha killed oxen and burned his ploughs (1 Kin 19:20-21). Elisha left farming, just as the fishermen left their nets and boats to follow Jesus (Mat 4:18-22).

### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

#### **Sharing Groups:**

Invite listeners to divide into small groups of three or four. Encourage each one to share the kind of situations that discourages and depresses them and what they learned from the story that will help them when discouraged.