

1 Kings 19-Elijah Flees to Sinai

1 Kings 19:1-17

Based on the NLT (1996)

Transition

After Elijah challenged and killed the spokesmen of the false god, and God proved himself to be the true God, God sent rain and gave Elijah special strength and he ran ahead of King Ahab all the way back to the city where Ahab lived.*

1 Kings 19:1-2

When *king Ahab* got home, he told *his wife* everything Elijah had done and that he had slaughtered the *spokesmen* of the *false god*. So *his wife* sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods also kill me if by this time tomorrow I have failed to *kill you* like those whom you killed."

1 Kings 19:3-4

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life...He went on alone into the desert, traveling all day. He sat down under a...tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, *creator God*," he said. "*Kill me, I might as well be dead.*"

1 Kings 19:5-8

Then he lay down and slept under the...tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel* touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" He looked around and saw some bread...and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again. Then the angel of the *true, creator God* came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, *because* there is a long journey ahead of you." So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to...the mountain of God.

1 Kings 19:9-10

There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.

But the *creator God* said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Elijah replied, "I have zealously served *you*, the *true, creator God* Almighty. But the *descendants of Abraham** have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars*, and killed every one of your *spokesmen*. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

1 Kings 19:11-13

"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the *creator God* told him. And as Elijah stood there, the *creator God* passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the *creator God* was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the *creator God* was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the *creator God* was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And the *creator God* said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:14-17

He replied again, "I have zealously served the *true, creator God* Almighty. But the *descendants of Abraham* have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your *spokesmen*. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." Then the *creator God* told him, "Go back the way you came, and travel to a certain place. Then God gave Elijah several tasks to do when he arrived there.

Why This Story?

This story works very well as a sequel for *Elijah and the Prophets of Baal* for animistic people groups, or for groups who need to see a power encounter between the almighty, creator God, and lesser ‘gods.’ This story, as part of a larger “Fear Not” story set, has been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

Story Crafting

God

Some languages have a word for a god which is not the “creator/almighty God.” For example, English differentiates the all-powerful, sovereign God from a “lesser” god by the use of a capital letter. The word for the “lesser” god should be used when talking about “Baal” in this story. When talking about the Creator God (Yahweh), use a term that is recognized as a title for the all-powerful, creator, sovereign God so that there are no misunderstandings about which god is being referred to. In this story we’ve used “creator God” and “true God” as a way of showing that he is sovereign. If your audience has a name for God like the descendants of Abraham did (Yahweh, meaning “I am that I am”), you may use it here, but be careful that your audience understands that there is only one true God, and that he is the God Elijah serves. **“Kill me, I might as well be dead.”** This is the way we rendered “for I am no better than my ancestors.” Translator’s Handbooks says that this latter phrase means that Elijah’s ancestors are dead, and he might as well be with him. We’ve chosen the simpler rendering to avoid distracting discussion on the use of the word “ancestors.”

We’ve included that Elijah traveled 40 days and nights to add interest to the story, but if you find that it is too much detail for

your audience, you may simply say “several days.”

Mountain of God

This mountain is Mt. Sinai, where Moses received the commandments and where God revealed himself to his people when they left Egypt. This is a special mountain, and you could indicate that by saying “mountain of God,” “God’s mountain,” “a holy mountain,” or “a special mountain”.

I have zealously served you, the true, creator God Almighty. We have included *you* in this sentence to ensure that the audience understands that Elijah is talking to God himself.

Elijah wrapped his face in his cloak so that he would not see God, as it was believed that if he did, he would die. You may make this explicit in the story if it would not be readily understood.

The NLT states that when Elijah went to the entrance to the cave, a voice spoke to him. We have identified this voice as God (which is an acceptable addition of implicit information) so there is no confusion about who is speaking to him.

We’ve simplified the ending of the story so that it will be easier to remember and retell; however, we think it is important to show that God gave Elijah some tasks to do instead of allowing him to continue in his discouragement.

Words/Phrases to Consider

Please see the master glossary for a full explanation of these words.

Spokesman*

For the ‘prophets of Baal,’ you may need to choose a different term, or at least identify which prophets you are talking about (“prophets of the Creator God” versus “prophets of the lesser god”).

Often, prophets of a pagan god did not bring messages from that god, but simply performed certain rituals and sacrifices for that god, so it may be preferable to use a different term here for “prophet” than you used for Elijah.

Angel*

If you have a Bible translation, your best option would be to use the word in the translation, unless no one outside the church understands it. If you don’t have a Bible translation, your challenge is to find a word that accurately conveys the meaning of the original. An ‘angel’ is a supernatural, spiritual being who is a messenger from God. Angels appear to humans in human form, they are inferior to Jesus, and they often come with a specific message or to do a specific task. If there is no word in the language for ‘angel’ that a non-believer would understand, you could translate this as ‘messenger of/from God,’ ‘envoy of God,’ or perhaps ‘ambassador of God.’ Be aware, though, that ‘prophet’ also conveys those meanings. You might have to add ‘spirit (messenger from God)’ to this description.

Descendants of Abraham*

We’ve chosen to use this in place of “Israelites,” “Jews,” and “Hebrews” to show the epic storyline from Abraham. This term helps connect the stories, and helps the audience see that all of these different terms for the Jews really refer to the same people. In addition, it alleviates any prejudices people or cultures might have towards the Jews.

Altar*

An altar may refer to a place where animals are killed and burned as an offering to God, or a place where incense is burned. It is often built of stones, perhaps like a table or small platform.

Intra-Story Cohesion

We have included that Elijah says that the descendants of Abraham have broken their covenant with God. The audience will best understand this if they have heard stories about God’s covenant with his people throughout the years. If your audience is not familiar with this covenant, you may omit this phrase from the story to omit unnecessary information.

Use the same words and phrases for similar things as the *Elijah and the Prophets of Baal* story. (eg “**Creator God**,” “**god**,” names of people and places)

Story Set Themes

Fear

Victory over Evil