

2 Kings 6-Elisha and the Army of Angels

II Kings 6:8-23

NLT 2004

Introduction: *Elisha was a spokesperson for God for the kings and peoples of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.*

II Kings 6: 8-10

When the king of *a neighboring country* was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, “We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place.”

But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, “Do not go near that place, for the *enemy* is planning to mobilize their troops there.” So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he would be on the alert there.

II Kings 6:11-14

The king of *the neighboring country* became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, “Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?”

“It's not us, my lord the king,” one of the officers replied. “Elisha, the *spokesman for God* in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!”

“Go and find out where he is,” the king commanded, “so I can send troops to seize him.”

And the report came back: “Elisha is at *a certain city*.” So one night the king of *the neighboring country* sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

II Kings 6:15-17

When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha.

“Don't be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!” Then Elisha prayed, “O *God*, open his eyes and let him see!” *God* opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

II Kings 6:18-20

As the *enemy* army advanced toward him, Elisha prayed, “O *God*, please make them blind.” So *God* struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked.

Then Elisha went out and told them, “You have come the wrong way! This isn't the right city! Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are looking for.” And he led them to the *capital city*.

As soon as they had entered *the capital city*, Elisha prayed, “O *God*, now open their eyes and let them see.” So *God* opened their eyes, and they discovered that they were in the middle of *the capital city*.

II Kings 6:21-23

When the king of Israel saw them, he shouted to Elisha, “My father, should I kill them? Should I kill them?”

“Of course not!” Elisha replied. “Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them home again to their master.” So the king made a great feast for them and then sent them home to their master. After that, the *neighboring country* raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.

Why This Story?

This story works very well for groups who need to see that God has protection that might be invisible to our eyes. These fear stories as a set have been used effectively as part of an orientation course for new field personnel.

Story Crafting

God

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. 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 Elisha serves.

Man of God

It may be less confusing to just say Elisha. You do want to identify him as a Man of God and as a spokesperson for God.

Lord

Here the word *lord* is used as a title of respect. You want to use a title that indicates respect and that is not related to divinity. In some cultures, *lord* would only be used as a term for a god.

In Your Bedroom

This would have been a small dark inner room. Some cultures don't have a separate bedroom. You want to indicate that even on his bed or even in the place where he went to sleep to make sure that the people understand that this was supernatural.

Chariots of Fire

These are located between Elisha and the enemy army. The city was set on a hill.

Follow me

Because the men were blind, they had to follow the sound of Elisha's voice.

Open—eyes—see

Elisha uses the phrase twice. The first is so that his servant will have his spiritual eyes opened and the second is so that the enemy soldiers will have their physical eyes open. Make sure that your people understand the difference in the story.

My Father

The king shows his respect for Elisha. Elisha is not the king's father. Find a way in your culture to address Elisha with this respect. You may select a more general term like “sir” if the people are confused.

Words/Phrases to Consider

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

Spokesman*/ Prophet*

Choose a term for ‘prophet’ that adequately describes the prophet's function. A prophet:

1. receives a call from God;
2. takes God's message to men because he had been given it by God himself;
3. has as his only priority bringing the Word of God to men.

We chose ‘spokesman’ because, in English, it can convey these three meanings but doesn't carry the unwanted connotation of a fortuneteller.

If you use a religious term, be sure that it has meaning that the average hearer will understand.

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.

Israel*

The word Israel has a number of different uses or meanings in the Bible.

1. It may refer to the name that was given to Jacob after he wrestled with the angel.
2. It may refer to the descendents of Jacob.
3. It may refer to the actual land of the Northern Kingdom when David's kingdom was divided into two parts after the death of Solomon.
4. In the New Testament, it refers to the descendents of Judah (Southern Kingdom) or to anyone considered to be an heir to the covenant God made with Abraham. Those who adhered strictly to the religious laws were considered Israelites.
5. It is used as the name for all the land given by God to Abraham and his descendents who were the chosen people. It refers to the land included in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

Today, Israel is the name of the country formed as a homeland for the Jewish people after 1948. For many people, this name is loaded politically and they have difficulty separating the current political meaning from the scriptures. Therefore, you may wish to use another word or term for Israel or Israelites. Some that have been used successfully include:
Promised Land

Northern Kingdom (for Old Testament stories)

The country

The land of the Hebrews

The Hebrews

God's people or God's chosen people

Samaria may also be used but would need to be defined as the name for the capital of the Northern Kingdom which at times referred to the whole kingdom.

Intra-Story Cohesion

You need to set the story into some sort of context. If you have not done stories on any of the kings and prophets (spokesmen), you will need to use a longer introduction so that your audience will understand who Elisha is.

If you have not previously discussed the split of the kingdom into the North and South, you may want a longer introduction that explains this. Example: At some time previous to this story, the people in the north rebelled against the king leading to a division of the peoples. They became two countries each having a king. Elisha was a spokesperson for God who gave messages from God to the king of the Northern Kingdom.

Be sure that you have used the same terms for prophet, God, Israel, that you have used in other stories.

Story Set Themes

Fear

Victory over Evil