



# Enter the Story

## *Elijah*

A narrative about God's power and His persistence with His people.

## *THE BIBLE*

1 Kings 16-19  
2 Kings 2

*Prepare for the Story*

## ICEBREAKER

Describe a time in your life when you felt totally alone. How did you cope or respond to that feeling? During that time, what would you have wanted if you could have had anything?

*Rewind the Story*

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- The First King – Saul
- David – Fighting Giants and Kings
- Solomon's Quest - Wisdom, Wives & Building the Lord's Temple
- Divided Kingdom – Israel (North) & Judah (South)

*Hear the Story*

### **Scene One: Ahab and Jezebel**

After Solomon's death and the division of the kingdom, the northern kingdom, Israel, had many kings. Some followed **Yahweh**, but many did not.

One of the worst kings was Ahab. He did more wicked things to provoke God's anger than all the kings who had come before him.

He married Jezebel, the daughter of another foreign power. With her encouragement, Ahab sponsored the construction of a temple to Baal and began making sacrifices to the pagan god on its altar.

Jezebel made it her mission to destroy the prophets of **Yahweh** because they were God's messengers. Her plan was to eliminate them so she could assert control over the nation. She succeeded in killing many of the prophets, but not all of them.

While all this was happening, God spoke to a man named Elijah and said, *"Go tell Ahab that there will be no rain or dew for the next few years until God decides to give it."* Elijah did as God told him, and then he left, following God's instructions the entire way.

The drought started just as Elijah had said, and the creeks and rivers dried up. After three years, God spoke to Elijah; *"Present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."* So, Elijah did as God instructed. When Ahab saw Elijah, he said, *"Is that you, the troublemaker of Israel?"* Elijah responded, *"I have not made trouble for Israel; you and your father's family are the ones who are to blame. You abandoned the LORD's commands and have worshipped the Baals and other false gods. Now summon all the people of Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. Bring the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table."* So, Ahab did as Elijah requested.

### **Scene Two: Contest on Mt. Carmel**

When they all gathered on Mt. Carmel, Elijah said to all the people, including the King, *"How long will you waver between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow Him; but if Baal is god, follow him. Elijah then issued a challenge saying, "Let's see which god is the real God. Bring us two bulls. The prophets of Baal can have the first choice and cut up their bull however they like. They can build an altar however they like. They can even choose whatever wood suits them best. But they will not set it on fire. I will do the same. They can call on their god, and I will call on Yahweh, and we shall see who answers."*

The prophets of Baal prepared their bull and altar and began calling on their god, Baal. From morning till noon, they called on him, but there was no answer. They started dancing around the altar, and still, there was nothing.

At noon Elijah began to taunt them, saying, *“Shout louder; maybe he’s hard of hearing. Maybe he’s deep in thought or too busy. Could he be traveling or sleeping, and someone needs to wake him? Perhaps he’s currently indisposed!”* Hearing his taunts, the prophets of Baal began to shout louder and even began cutting themselves as was their custom. They frantically called on Baal as evening approached, but nothing happened. Not a spark or a sound.

Elijah then called for the people’s attention. He took his time repairing the altar of the LORD that Ahab and Jezebel had previously torn down. He prepared the sacrifice and, once he was ready, said to the people, *“Fill four large jars with water and pour it over the bull and the wood.”*

They did just as he asked, then Elijah asked them to do it again, and so they did. After they had finished, he asked them once more to fill the jars and pour them over the altar. They followed his order, and the sacrifice he prepared was completely soaked once they were finished.

Then Elijah prayed, saying, *“Let it be known today that you, Yahweh, are God of Israel. Let it be known that you are bringing your people back to you.”* When he was finished, fire fell from heaven and consumed Elijah’s offering. It not only burnt the sacrifice but also ignited the wood, the stones, the soil, and even dried up every drop of water. The people who were watching fell to the ground and cried out. *“The Lord, Yahweh, He is God.”*

Then Elijah seized the prophets of Baal. He brought them down to the valley where they were slaughtered, every last one of them. When this was finished, Elijah went to Ahab and said, *“Go celebrate, eat and drink – the rain is going to return.”* So Ahab left, but Elijah climbed back to the top of Mt. Carmel. When Ahab returned, he told Jezebel what Elijah had done. Jezebel was furious and sent word to Elijah, promising to kill him before the sun set the following day.

### **Scene Three: Elijah Runs**

When Elijah heard that Jezebel was going to kill him, he was gripped with fear. He immediately began running for his life. He escaped into the wilderness, hoping to be able to hide there.

After a day's journey, Elijah sat down and prayed to God, saying, *"I've had enough of all of this; just end my life, LORD. I'm no better than those who came before me. My message, your message, is not getting through. Jezebel is going to kill me."* After he prayed this, he laid down and fell asleep.

Suddenly, an angel touched Elijah and said to him, *"Get up and eat; you'll need all of your strength and energy."*

Elijah ate what the angel provided for him, and he was re-energized. He traveled 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Mt. Horeb, the same mountain where Moses met with God and received the ten commandments. Elijah climbed the mountain and found a cave where he spent the night.

While in the cave, God said to Elijah, *"What are you doing here?"* Elijah replied, *"I have served You well and have been faithful to you. Yet the Israelites have rejected Your covenant, destroyed Your altars, and killed Your prophets. They have rejected You, and I'm the only one left – and even now, I'm being hunted down."*

The LORD replied, *"Go out and stand on the mountainside; I am going to pass by you."* As Elijah walked to the mouth of the cave, violent winds ripped into the mountain shattering the rocks, but the LORD was not in the wind. Then after the wind, an earthquake shook the whole mountain, but God was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake came a blazing fire, but the LORD was not in the flames; then came a gentle whisper.

Elijah heard the whisper and pulled his cloak over his face, stepping close to the mouth of the cave. Then the whisper said, *"What are you doing here?"* Again, Elijah repeated his complaints. But this time, God responded by giving Elijah a task.

God instructed Elijah to anoint the next King of Israel, a better man named Jehu, to replace Ahab. He also told him to find a man named Elisha to be his successor as prophet. Then God let him know that there were still 7,000 people in Israel who had refused to bow a knee to the pagan gods.

So, Elijah went from there and found Elisha, who immediately left his responsibilities and became Elijah's assistant. Together they continued to do God's work, becoming His messengers – while Ahab and Jezebel continued their evil ways.

## **Scene Four: The Fate of Ahab and Jezebel**

Because the King and Queen didn't turn to God and repent of their sins, God sent Elijah once again to Ahab. When Elijah found the King, he delivered God's message; Yahweh said, *"I will bring disaster on you and consume you. I will destroy all of your descendants, for you have made me angry and led Israel into sin. And for Jezebel ... the dogs will eat her body, and the members of Ahab's family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs and vultures."*

When Ahab heard this message, he tore his clothing, dressed in burlap, and fasted. Then another message came to Elijah; God said, *"Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has done this, I will not do what I promised during his lifetime, but I will bring his punishment on his house during the days of his sons. I will destroy his dynasty."*

Everything Elijah prophesied came true. Ahab died in battle, and his sons suffered because of their father. Sometime later, Jehu, the new King of Israel, traveled to confront Jezebel. As he approached the gate, Jezebel went to her window to try and "persuade" Jehu. He wasn't fooled and ordered her servants to throw her down. They did as he commanded, and her blood splattered the walls that day.

When they came to bury her, they found only her head, hands, and feet. Elijah's prophecy had come true. The animals had picked her body apart, and God had avenged the prophets she had killed.

### *Retell the Story*

- What kind of king was Ahab, and why was he this way?
- What influence did Jezebel have over Ahab? What did she do?
- How did God first confront Ahab through Elijah?
- After three years of drought, why did God send Elijah back to Ahab?
- What challenge did Elijah put forth to the prophets of Baal?
- What was the result of the challenge?
- When Jezebel got word, what happened to Elijah?
- What happened to Elijah while he was in the wilderness?
- What did God tell Elijah to do while he was on Mt. Horeb?

## Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- In the contest between the prophets of Baal and Elijah, they performed different rituals; what was different about this, and how do you understand the motives behind these “rituals”?
- After Yahweh is the clear winner of the contest, Elijah rounds up all the false prophets and kills them. Why does he do this? Is God pleased with this?
- Elijah runs into the wilderness to hide; why do you think he runs? Would you have run?
- As Elijah stands at the entrance to the cave, a violent wind, an earthquake, and a fire take place, but God is not in any of these things. Why do you think God reveals Himself to Elijah in a whisper?
- At one point, Elijah asks God to end his life; how does God answer his request? Do you think God’s response is fair or not?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?

- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

## *Join the Story*

### **1) DRAMATIC CONFRONTATION**

King Ahab and his Queen, Jezebel, had led the nation so far away from Yahweh that God sent His messenger to confront them dramatically. What were the sins of Ahab and the people? Do you think we have "idols" in our lives? What are some "dramatic ways" that God tries to get our attention back on Him?

### **2) ON THE RUN**

Elijah's follow-up act to completely humiliating Ahab and Jezebel in the "altar burning contest" is to turn tail and run. Why do you think Elijah ran? (Give us the obvious answer, but also dig deeper.) What do you think this meant about how he viewed God at this point in his journey? Do you think it was right or wrong for him to feel this way? Why?

### **3) GENUINE REPENTANCE**

In our story, it seems that what God desires most is repentance. In the contest between the prophets of Baal, the focus is not on the prophets; instead, it's on the people of Israel coming face to face with the one true God and repenting. And at the end of our story Ahab, maybe the worst King in Israel's history, genuinely repents, and God rewards him for it. What does this focus on repentance teach you about your life and how you relate to an all-powerful God? What do you think true repentance looks like?

God,

*Thank You that you use ordinary people just like us to accomplish extraordinary things. We acknowledge that the source of our power is not from us but from Your Holy Spirit. May we always anticipate Your power to change things for our good and Your glory. We confess there are times when we are gripped with fear and insecurity, times when we have taken our eyes off of You. Please help us to be faithful, even in difficult times, trusting that you still have something better in store. Amen.*