

SCRIPTURE READING FOR NOVEMBER 7, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

1 Kings 19:1-18 CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹ Ahab told his wife Jezebel what **Elijah** had done and that he had killed *the prophets*. ² She sent a message to Elijah: "You killed my prophets. Now I'm going to kill you! I pray that the gods will punish me even more severely if I don't do it by this time tomorrow."

³ Elijah was afraid when he got her message, and he ran to the town of Beersheba in Judah. He left his servant there, ⁴ then walked another whole day into the desert. Finally, he came to a large bush and sat down in its shade. He begged the Lord, "I've had enough. Just let me die! I'm no better off than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down in the shade and fell asleep.

Suddenly an angel woke him up and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ Elijah looked around, and by his head was a jar of water and some baked bread. He sat up, ate and drank, then lay down and went back to sleep.

⁷ Soon the Lord's angel woke him again and said, "Get up and eat, or else you'll get too tired to travel." ⁸ So Elijah sat up and ate and drank.

The food and water made him strong enough to walk forty more days. At last, he reached Mount Sinai, the mountain of God, ⁹ and he spent the night there in a cave.

While Elijah was on Mount Sinai, the Lord asked, "Elijah, why are you here?"

¹⁰ He answered, "Lord God All-Powerful, I've always done my best to obey you. But your people have broken their solemn promise to you. They have torn down your altars and killed all your prophets, except me. And now they are even trying to kill me!"

¹¹ "Go out and stand on the mountain," the Lord replied. "I want you to see me when I pass by."

All at once, a strong wind shook the mountain and shattered the rocks. *But the Lord was not in the wind*. Next, there was an earthquake, *but the Lord was not in the earthquake*. ¹² Then there was a fire, *but the Lord was not in the fire*.

Finally, there was a *sheer silence*, ¹³ and when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his coat. He went out and stood at the entrance to the cave.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

1 & 2 Kings – are books that jump ahead in the story of Israel, after David has become king, followed by his son Solomon, the kingdom eventually is divided in strife and civil war into the northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) kingdoms. The book tells of the struggles of the kingdoms, peoples, and leaders to live believingly and obediently in and under the sovereignty of YHWH in a world that is mostly either ignorant of defiant of YHWH's power. The books tell what seems like an endless story of the failure of humanity to remain faithful and focused. Elijah is called as the prophet of YHWH to call the people back to their covenantal relationship with YHWH. Here he's battling against the infamous Israelite (northern) rulers Jezebel and Ahab, having just defeated their prophets in a "prophet-off" in chapter 18.

Jezebel :: Jezebel was the daughter of Ithobaal I of Tyre and the wife of Ahab, King of Israel, according to the Book of Kings of the Hebrew Bible (1 Kings 16:31). According to the Biblical narrative, Jezebel, along with her husband, instituted the worship of Baal and Asherah on a national scale. In addition, she violently purged the prophets of Yahweh from Israel, damaging the reputation of the Omride dynasty. For these offences, the Omride dynasty was annihilated, with Jezebel herself suffering the gruesome death of defenestration (*being throw out a window*).

Later, in the Book of Revelation, Jezebel is symbolically associated with false prophets.

Elijah :: Hebrew: אֵלִיָּהוּ, [Ēlīyyāhū], meaning "My God is Yahweh" was, according to the Books of Kings in the Hebrew Bible, a prophet and a miracle worker who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Ahab (9th century BCE). In 1 Kings 18, Elijah defended the worship of the Hebrew God over that of the Canaanite deity Baal.

The Lord asked, "Elijah, why are you here?"

¹⁴ Elijah answered, "LORD GOD ALL-POWERFUL, I've always done my best to obey you. But your people have broken their solemn promise to you. They have torn down your altars and killed all your prophets, except me. And now they are even trying to kill me!"

¹⁵ The Lord said: Elijah, you can go back to the desert near Damascus. And when you get there, appoint Hazael to be king of Syria. ¹⁶ Then appoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat to take your place as my prophet.

¹⁷ Hazael will start killing the people who worship *Baal*. Jehu will kill those who escape from Hazael, and Elisha will kill those who escape from Jehu.

¹⁸ But seven thousand Israelites have refused to worship *Baal*, and they will live.

Hebrews 12:1-3
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹ Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. ² We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne! ³ So keep your mind on Jesus, who put up with many insults from sinners. Then you won't get discouraged and give up.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in this text?
- When is a time when you've felt like Elijah – attacked for standing up for what is right, exhausted, spent, almost ready to die because you just can't adult or show up any more?
- God is present in the world. It's inherent in God's holy name YHWH - "I AM." And yet, we often feel like we're alone, forgotten - in a cave of abandonment. When is a time that you experienced God's presence in a visceral way (like Elijah in 1 Kings 19) How did it shape you? Or how do you long to hear God speak to you in your aloneness today? Talk to God of it.
- What invitation do you heard the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

sheer silence :: this is also often translated as "a small still voice" – or "gentle breeze". It's literally in Hebrew an expression made of three words: 1) קול [qol] meaning voice or sound, which made by crowds, birds, news report, thunder, speaking. In Genesis 3:8, 10, 16 it's used to refer to "the voice, sound of God". 2) דממה [demamah] meaning still or quiet, as in a whisper or the blowing wind. It's used in Job 4:16; Psalm 107:29. And 3) דק [daq] meaning small, thin, or fine.

LORD GOD ALL-POWERFUL:: Yawheh Elohe Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts). Used in the Bible more than 285 times. It is the promised and proper name of God. Sabaoth means an army going out to war.

Baal :: Baal or Ba'al was a title and honorific meaning "owner", "lord" in the Northwest Semitic languages spoken in the Levant during antiquity. From its use among people, it came to be applied to gods. The Hebrew Bible includes use of the term in reference to various Levantine deities, often with application towards Hadad, who was decried as a false god. In the preceding chapters we've learned that the Isrealite royalty (esp Jezebel) worshipped Ba'al. It's the prophets of Ba'al that are refered to in verse 1.

Hebrews – a letter in the New Testament in which followers of Jesus are called back to purity in faith – nothing extra or special – *just* Jesus. Chapter 11 is a majestic poem laying out the faithful living of those that believed without receiving the promise in which they trusted they're called a large crowd of witnesses.