

**File No. 74**

**I KINGS 19:1–21**

**ELIJAH RUNS AWAY / SENT BACK / ELISHA FOLLOWS ELIJAH**

(SBS Bk 3 Story No. 11, 12 & 13)

*Story Notes*

Jezebel would not celebrate the break of the drought as Ahab had. She spoke of what the gods would do to her if she did not kill Elijah. She feared no gods in fact. She feared only not getting her own way. However, her actions reveal the demonic powers behind all idolatry (I Cor. 10:19–20); she was not free at all.

Elijah's courage failed him and he fled for a safe haven in the South—the southernmost settled area of Judea. His witness on Carmel had not been his human strength pitted against Jezebel's but a divinely orchestrated confrontation. God would deal with Jezebel. In the mean time, God would help his servant and re-equip him for his next witness.

Elijah had not only run for safety. He felt a bitter failure in his mission and as a person. His emotions and confidence were in tatters. He wanted to die. God sent an angel with food and encouragement to eat, and on a second occasion, told him he would need the food for his coming journey. Then we find him travelling 40 days and nights, like Moses (Exod. 24:18; 34:28; cf. Matt. 4:2), to the Mount of God (Exod. 3:1), again, like Moses. Clearly, Elijah was still being directed in his powerful, Moses like ministry. His journey would have been 400 kilometres long.

At the Mount of God, he was still bitter about his failure. 'Why are you here?' God asked him. All his humanity had been poured out for nothing. Other prophets had been killed. His life was being sought. He could not see any people of God remaining. However, he was summoned to stand where Moses had stood and in a manner reminiscent of Israel at Horeb. Elijah saw demonstrations of the Lord's 'passing by' in a wind, an earthquake and a fire, but it was in a 'still' and 'thin' voice that God came to Elijah.

God asked his question again. Elijah gave his same answer. His depression was profound and persistent. But God had come to him. He announced the next part of the plan: he was to anoint three men. The first, a pagan king, would begin the judgement on Ahab and Israel's false worship. The second would continue the judgement and replace Ahab. The third would continue God's prophetic witness to his people and complete what remained to be done. Seven thousand people who had feared and been faithful to the Lord would be untouched by any of these judgements.

Perhaps Elijah then saw that he had assumed a responsibility for Israel which was not his to bear. The Lord himself would be responsible for his people. Things were not as they had seemed; the Lord knew what he was about, and Elijah was still his servant.

Elijah returned to Israel and anointed Elisha. Elisha signalled his change from prosperous farming to prophetic ministry by feasting with his workers, using the beasts he would no longer need.

We do not hear of contact with Hazael until II Kings 8:7–15 when Elisha foretells his kingship, or of contact with Jehu until II Kings 9:1–3 when Elisha sends a fellow prophet to anoint him as king. It appears that Elisha did these things in place of Elijah as the Lord had indicated.