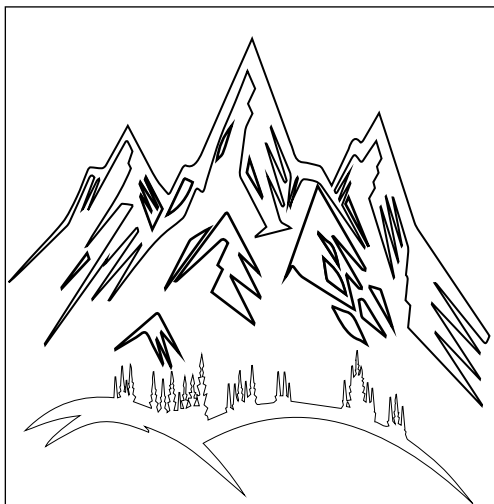




**Earthquake,
fire and whisper**

Colour me!



1 Kings 19:9b-18

Despite all the miracles he had seen, Elijah started to get scared for his life and ran away and went into hiding in the mountains.

While Elijah was on Mount Sinai, the Lord asked, "Elijah, why are you here?" 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!" "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. Then there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. Finally, there was a gentle breeze, and when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his coat. He went out and stood at the entrance to the cave.

The Lord asked, "Elijah, why are you here?" 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!" 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... But seven thousand Israelites have refused to worship Baal, and they will live".

Commentary

How different Elijah seems in this story! Suddenly this fearless and prayerful prophet appears weak and vulnerable. He is on the run and in hiding from Queen Jezebel, full of doubt and fear and struggling to pray. Despite the amazing victory on Mount Carmel, all he feels is despair that evil still triumphs in Israel. Even this godly man can be fragile at times. God isn't interested in creating superheroes. Christians get frightened too and sometimes feel like running away, just as Elijah did. But God hadn't abandoned Elijah, nor does he abandon any of us. He guides, supports and waits patiently to take us on to new things.

Mount Sinai was the holy mountain, and clearly Elijah hoped to meet with God in a powerful way there, just as Moses had done in the past. However, God's voice wasn't in the drama and noise—not even in the fire, as it had been on Mount Carmel—but in the gentle whisper of a breeze. God has new plans for Elijah, and reminds him that he has never been alone. There were always many others who still believed in God. This is the comfort that Elijah and all of us need to hear.

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Questions

- ▶ Why do you think Elijah ran away from Jezebel? Surely the victory on Mount Carmel had proved to him that he did not need to be afraid of her?
- ▶ Elijah is depressed. How does God help him move out of his depression?
- ▶ Elijah is also very angry that Jezebel and her prophets still have the upper hand. What makes you angry?
- ▶ What might we learn from this passage about how God speaks?



Visual aid

Using a large piece of cardboard in the shape of a giant flame, coloured in with red, yellow and orange, make the sounds that are associated with an earthquake (use it like a wobble board) and ripple the board from top to bottom like a flame. This same board can also be used to create the effect of a very gentle breeze.



Activity idea

Imagine and re-enact Elijah's long journey to the mountain by running on the spot; pretending to trudge through the hot and dry desert; moaning and complaining; sleeping and then waking to a miraculous meal, supplied by an angel; walking for days in the heat; and finally climbing a very high mountain. Tell each other how you feel. Was this long journey perhaps a way for Elijah to work out his frustrations and disappointment before he could properly hear God speaking again?



Prayer idea

In some Bibles, the gentle breeze of God is translated as a "still small voice". In a time of prayer, make space for God to speak as you listen to some gentle sounds together—for example, quiet music, the sound of water running, sounds of nature outside, or even just the sound of your own breathing. Share together what God may have said to you.

Key verse

Finally, there was a gentle breeze, and when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his coat (1 Kings 19:12-13).

New Testament story link

Luke 6:12-13: Jesus goes up a mountain to listen for the voice of God about who to choose to be his disciples.



Colour me!

