

Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.2, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 2, Introducing Elijah Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.2, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 2, Prelude to Battle, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture analyzes the opening of 1 Kings 18, framing it as the "prelude to battle" before the confrontation on Mount Carmel. **He emphasizes the significance of the extended introduction** of this conflict, suggesting it provides crucial context. **Oswalt highlights the relationship between God and Elijah**, explaining it's not possession, but a dialogue. **The lecture also examines the dire situation in Israel**, emphasizing the famine and Ahab's relentless search for Elijah. **Finally, he considers Obadiah's faithfulness** amidst the widespread idolatry, along with the risks he accepts in serving God.

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.2 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).



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on 14_2.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.2, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 2, Prelude to Battle

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on 1 Kings 17-18, Part 2:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on 1 Kings 17-18 (Part 2) – Prelude to Battle

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Kings_EN_Session14_2.pdf" (Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 14, Part 2)

Main Themes:

- **The Significance of Preparation and Context:** Oswalt emphasizes the "law of proportion" in biblical narrative. The extensive setup to the Mount Carmel showdown (19 verses) is nearly as long as the conflict itself (25 verses), suggesting the importance of understanding the context and the characters' motivations. He asks, "Why do God and his inspired author give this much attention to this material? It must be significant." The prelude builds suspense and allows for a deeper appreciation of the central conflict.
- **Dialogue and Partnership with God:** Oswalt distinguishes the biblical concept of prophecy from that of the ancient Near East. Biblical prophets are not simply mouthpieces possessed by God, but partners in dialogue. "God does not possess prophets in the Bible. He fills them." Elijah's actions are presented as a response to God's word, but also involve his own agency and obedience. God wants to use individuals' unique qualities rather than erasing them: "He wants to use you, your particular shape...God wants to take on the shape of an ugly mug as much as he does a goblet."
- **Faithfulness in Dire Circumstances:** The narrative highlights the severity of the drought, yet also emphasizes the existence of faithful individuals like Obadiah. Even amidst widespread apostasy and a powerful, murderous queen (Jezebel), Obadiah risks his life to protect prophets of Yahweh. This prompts the question: "What has this done to your faith and mine? Has it eroded it? Have we knuckled under to the despair around us? Or have we chosen in the midst of it all to stand firm?" Obadiah's faithfulness, even without immediate reward or signs, serves as an example for contemporary believers.
- **The Nature of God: Consistent but Unpredictable:** Obadiah's concern that "the spirit of the Lord may carry you [Elijah] when I leave you" reveals an

understanding of God's sovereignty and freedom. Oswalt explains that God is not untrustworthy but that He acts according to His own plans, which may not always be predictable: "although God is perfectly consistent, he will always do what is right. He will always do what is good. He will always do what is for our best. He's absolutely consistent. He is not predictable." Trying to confine God to human expectations or past patterns is futile. "Put God in a box and you know one thing, you are very shortly going to have a broken box."

- **The Central Question: Who is God?:** Oswalt sets up the battle on Mt. Carmel as a showdown centered on this question, which drives the entire narrative and should shape our own lives.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Proportion in Biblical Narrative:** The amount of text dedicated to introducing a conflict reveals its significance.
- **Elijah's obedience is key:** God told him to go see Ahab and despite the danger, he went forward.
- **Obadiah's Role:** Likely the prime minister, Obadiah demonstrates faithfulness by protecting prophets of Yahweh.
- **The Drought's Impact:** The drought is severe, forcing Ahab and Obadiah to search for grass just to keep the animals alive, particularly those used for war. "Mules to haul the material to haul supplies, pull the various wagons, and horses for the chariots. If these die, we're helpless before our enemies."
- **Ahab's Desperate Search:** Ahab has searched extensively for Elijah, even forcing other nations to swear they don't know his whereabouts.
- **Elijah's Oath:** Elijah swears, "as Yahweh of heaven's armies lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today," underscoring his commitment to God's command.
- **2020 Analogy:** Oswalt explicitly relates the themes of the passage to contemporary struggles, referencing the difficulties experienced in 2020.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.2, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 2, Prelude to Battle

1 Kings 17-18: Prelude to Battle - Study Guide

I. Key Themes

- **God's Sovereignty:** God initiates and directs events, speaking to Elijah and orchestrating his encounters.
- **The Nature of Prophecy:** Biblical prophecy is not mere possession but a partnership and dialogue between God and the prophet.
- **Faithfulness in Adversity:** Obadiah represents those who remain faithful to God even in times of widespread apostasy and hardship.
- **Obedience:** Elijah and Obadiah demonstrate obedience to God's commands, even when they are difficult or dangerous.
- **The Seriousness of the Drought:** The drought highlights the consequences of the people's unfaithfulness and the dire situation facing Israel.

II. Important Characters

- **Elijah:** A prophet of God who challenges Ahab and the prophets of Baal.
- **Ahab:** The king of Israel, influenced by his wife Jezebel, who promotes Baal worship.
- **Obadiah:** Ahab's prime minister (or palace administrator), a devout follower of God who protects God's prophets.
- **God (Yahweh):** The God of Israel, who demonstrates his power and sovereignty.

III. Key Events

- **God commands Elijah to present himself to Ahab:** This sets the stage for the confrontation on Mount Carmel.
- **Ahab and Obadiah search for pasture:** This highlights the severity of the drought.
- **Elijah meets Obadiah:** This encounter demonstrates Obadiah's faith and fear of God.
- **Elijah presents himself to Ahab:** This marks the beginning of the confrontation.

IV. Quiz (Short Answer)

1. According to Oswalt, what is the significance of the lengthy introduction to the confrontation on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:1-19)?
2. How does biblical prophecy differ from prophecy in the rest of the ancient Near East, according to Oswalt?
3. What is significant about God wanting to use people and their individual "shapes" to bless the world?
4. Why is Obadiah concerned about relaying Elijah's message to Ahab?
5. What does Obadiah's concern about Elijah's whereabouts reveal about his understanding of God?
6. What does Elijah say to Obadiah that reassures him that he will present himself to Ahab?
7. How does the search for pasture by Ahab and Obadiah illustrate the seriousness of the drought?
8. What actions did Obadiah take to demonstrate his faithfulness to God?
9. How is the story of Obadiah relevant to the challenges people may have faced in 2020 and beyond?
10. What is the central question that the upcoming battle on Mount Carmel aims to answer?

V. Quiz Answer Key

1. The extended introduction emphasizes the importance of the events leading up to the confrontation, suggesting that God's preparation and timing are significant in understanding the ultimate battle.
2. Biblical prophecy involves a dialogue and partnership between God and the prophet, whereas ancient Near Eastern prophecy often involved the god possessing the prophet and using them as a mouthpiece.
3. It signifies that God values individuality and desires to use the unique characteristics of each person to bless the world.
4. Obadiah fears that after he informs Ahab, God's Spirit will move Elijah elsewhere, and Ahab will kill Obadiah for delivering a false report.

5. It reveals that he understands God is not predictable, and He is in complete control of Elijah and can direct him to go wherever He wants.
6. Elijah takes an oath, invoking the name of God, promising that he will present himself to Ahab that day.
7. It shows that the drought was so severe that even the king and his prime minister had to search for grass to keep their animals alive, which were essential for warfare.
8. Obadiah risked his life to protect 100 prophets of Yahweh from Jezebel's murderous plans.
9. It encourages people to remain faithful in times of adversity, just as Obadiah did, even when there are no signs of immediate relief or reward.
10. The central question is "Who is God?", which the confrontation will attempt to answer by demonstrating God's power over Baal.

VI. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of God's initiative in the events of 1 Kings 17-18, focusing on how it contrasts with the actions of Ahab and Jezebel.
2. Analyze Obadiah's character, highlighting his faith and obedience, and explain how he serves as a model for believers facing adversity.
3. Compare and contrast the concept of prophecy in the Bible with the concept of prophecy in other ancient Near Eastern cultures.
4. Explore the theme of obedience in 1 Kings 17-18, examining the actions of Elijah and Obadiah, and consider the challenges and rewards of obedience to God.
5. Examine the law of proportion and consider how it applies to the narrative in 1 Kings, and what the emphasis reveals about the meaning of the text.

VII. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ahab:** The king of Israel, husband of Jezebel, and promoter of Baal worship.
- **Baal:** A Canaanite god of fertility and storm, often worshipped in opposition to Yahweh.
- **Elijah:** A prophet of God who challenged Ahab and the prophets of Baal.
- **Faithfulness:** Steadfast loyalty and devotion to God, even in the face of adversity.
- **God (Yahweh):** The God of Israel, sovereign and powerful, who demands exclusive worship.
- **Jezebel:** The wife of Ahab, a Phoenician princess who promoted Baal worship in Israel.
- **Obadiah:** Ahab's prime minister (or palace administrator), a devout follower of God who protected God's prophets.
- **Obedience:** Compliance with God's commands and will.
- **Prophecy:** Communication from God to humans, often involving revelation of future events or messages of guidance and judgment.
- **Sovereignty:** God's absolute authority and control over all things.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.2, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 2, Prelude to Battle, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source:

FAQ on 1 Kings 17-18 (Part 2)

- **Why does the narrative in 1 Kings 18:1-19 dedicate so much attention to the events leading up to the confrontation on Mount Carmel?**
- The significant amount of narrative space dedicated to the prelude to the battle on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:1-19) emphasizes the importance of the *context* surrounding the event. It's not just about the dramatic showdown; it's about understanding the dire circumstances—a severe, prolonged drought, the desperation of the king and his people, and the faithfulness of a remnant represented by Obadiah. This detailed setup builds suspense and underscores the seriousness of the question to be answered: "Who is God?". The "law of proportion" suggests that God and the author considered this setup as essential to the core message of the events.
- **How does the portrayal of Elijah as a prophet differ from the typical depiction of prophets in the ancient Near East, and what does this signify about God's relationship with humanity?**
- Unlike prophets in other ancient Near Eastern traditions who were portrayed as mere mouthpieces, passively seized by a deity, Elijah is depicted as a *dialogue partner* with God. God *fills* Elijah, but does not *possess* him. Elijah responds to God's word and acts in partnership with Him. This signifies a unique relationship where God invites individuals to participate in His work, using their unique personalities and characteristics. This shows that God wants to partner with humanity, not erase individuality.

- **What is the significance of God instructing Elijah to present himself to Ahab, knowing Ahab's hostility?**
- God instructing Elijah to present himself to Ahab, despite Ahab's clear animosity and active search for him, underscores the importance of *obedience* and *trust* in God's commands. Similar to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Elijah's obedience exemplifies a commitment to God's will, even when it appears dangerous or illogical from a human perspective. It reveals a faith that transcends personal safety and trusts in God's ultimate purpose.
- **What does the desperate search for pasture by Ahab and Obadiah reveal about the severity of the drought and the broader implications for the kingdom?**
- Ahab and Obadiah's desperate search for grass to sustain livestock highlights the *extreme severity* of the drought. More than mere discomfort, the potential loss of horses and mules signifies a significant threat to the kingdom's ability to defend itself, as these animals were essential for transportation, hauling supplies, and chariots. The drought, therefore, represents not just an ecological crisis, but a potential national security crisis, showing the extent of God's judgement.
- **Who is Obadiah, and what role does he play in the narrative?**
- Obadiah is portrayed as a high-ranking official, likely the prime minister, in Ahab's court. Despite his position in a kingdom steeped in idolatry, Obadiah remains a *faithful follower of Yahweh*. He has risked his life to protect prophets of Yahweh from Jezebel's persecution. Obadiah represents the faithful remnant, demonstrating that even in times of widespread apostasy, there are those who remain true to God.
- **What does Obadiah's understanding of God's interaction with Elijah reveal about God's character and actions?**
- Obadiah's concern that "the Spirit of the Lord may carry you when I leave you" reveals an understanding that God, while *consistent* in His goodness and righteousness, is *not predictable* in His actions. Obadiah knows that Elijah is under God's control and could be directed anywhere at any time. This understanding challenges the desire for a predictable God and emphasizes the need to embrace the wonder, possibility, and opportunity that come with trusting in a God whose ways are beyond human comprehension.

- **How does the story of Obadiah offer encouragement and a challenge to contemporary believers facing difficulties?**
- Obadiah's story offers encouragement by illustrating that even in times of great difficulty and widespread unfaithfulness, it is possible to *remain faithful* to God. He serves as an example of someone who chose to stand firm in his faith, without any guarantee of immediate reward or recognition. The challenge to contemporary believers is to emulate Obadiah's unwavering faith and not to "knuckle under" to despair or compromise their beliefs, even in the face of dire circumstances.
- **What is the central question that the events leading up to and including the battle on Mount Carmel seek to answer?**
- The central question that the narrative in 1 Kings 17-18, culminating in the battle on Mount Carmel, seeks to answer is: "*Who is God?*". It is a question of sovereignty, power, and ultimate allegiance. Is Yahweh, the God of Israel, the true God, or is Baal? The confrontation is designed to definitively demonstrate Yahweh's supremacy and call the people of Israel back to true worship.