

# Story: Help to Get Home

June 19, 2022

1 Kings 19:1-15

Luke 8:26-39

The 'apapane was lonely, lost, and scared. He'd been flying just above the treetops when the big wind blew up. In a moment its strength had snatched him away from the tree branches he wanted to cling to and shelter in. It carried him along above the slopes of Mauna Loa and off toward Kona-side. It was too much to fly into the wind. It was too much to fly across it; he'd simply have been tumbled. All he could do was stay in the air and ride it until it calmed enough that he could land somewhere and take shelter.

That took far longer than he'd hoped. Off to his left he could see the ocean from time to time. The land beneath him fell away, and he let himself descend with it, which eventually put him behind one of the ridges of Mauna Loa. The wind's strength faded, and he was able to find a perch in an ohī'a tree. There he clung and gasped for breath and was just grateful to be safe again.

He knew he was a long way from home, however. His own flock was far behind. None of the land shapes looked familiar – or if they looked familiar but he knew they weren't home. When the storm calmed, he knew he'd have a long flight home.

After a while, he heard the roar of the wind overhead subside. He took off once more to test it, and it was safe to start the journey back. But he was still scared, he was pretty much lost, and he was all alone. What else could he do but start his flight?

He stayed close to the trees – he didn't want to be blown back again if the wind returned – and tried to avoid the i'iwi and the 'amakihi and the 'akepa he saw. He flew around the little flocks of 'apapane as well. He wasn't sure he'd be welcome. But that meant that he was also flying around the places where ohī'a was in blossom. That, after all, was where the local birds were. Avoiding them meant he was also avoiding the places to find food and to rest safely.

Tired and hungry, he thought he spotted an ohī'a tree with no birds in it. It had a few blossoms on it, not many, and not enough to make a meal of nectar, but he hoped he'd find bugs to eat to fill himself up. He landed near a cluster of blooms and had dipped his beak for nectar when he heard an 'apapane voice say, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

He turned his head to see an older female 'apapane, a tutu for certain, he thought, so he answered respectfully, "I'm sorry, auntie. The wind blew me away from my home and my flock, and I'm on my way back. I'll just go now."

He opened his wings to take off again, but the tutu 'apapane stopped him. "Wait, now. You're in no shape to fly. Eat something."

He gratefully dipped his beak in the ohī'a blooms again, and hopped about chasing bugs and spiders. "Rest," said his new friend, and he let his eyes close. When they opened again she said, "Come with me," and they flew to another ohī'a tree, this one dripping with blossoms and nectar. She told the other 'apapane in the tree that he was a visiting friend, and he had an excellent meal and took another rest.

When he woke, the other birds had flown to other trees, but the tutu 'apapane was still there. "How do you feel?" she asked.

"Like I can fly home," he said.

"Have a safe flight and happy landings," she said, which is the most ancient of 'apapane prayers.

Off he went, and he did find his way safely home, because he'd been given food, and rest, and kindness by someone who was loving and wise.

*by Eric Anderson*