Elijah

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Elijah (Hebrew: **אליהו**, *Eliyahu*, (Christian Arab Name, مارالياس , Mar Elias); also known as **Elias** and **Saint Elias**) was a prophet in Israel in the 9th century BC. He appears in the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Mishnah, Christian Bible, and the Qur'an. According to the Books of Kings, Elijah raised the dead, brought fire down from the sky, and ascended into heaven on a Chariot. In the New Testament, both Jesus and John the Baptist are on some occasions thought to be Elijah, the latter actually being described by the Archangel Gabriel as coming "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17); he is also one of two Old Testament figures (along with Moses) who appears and converses with Jesus during his Transfiguration. Based on a prophecy in Malachi, many Jews still await his return as precursor to the coming of the Messiah.

Elijah's legacy continues on in many traditions and beliefs. He is a major part of the Jewish *brit milah* and Passover seder ceremonies, as well as traditions involving Lillith and the angel Sandalphon. In Eastern Europe, he is known as "Elijah the Thunderer" and is blamed in folklore for poor weather.

Saint Elias

Elijah, 1638, by José de Ribera

Prophet

Born	Tishbe
Venerated in	Roman Catholic Church Eastern Catholic Churches Eastern Orthodox Church Lutheranism
Feast	July 20
Attributes	Prophet

Saints Portal

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Etymology

His name, Hebrew: אֵלִיָּה / אֵלִיָּהוּ, Standard *Eliyáhu* / *Eliyáh* Tiberian *ʾĒliyyāhû* / *ʾĒliyyāh* appears in the Greek of the Septuagint as Ηλίού, *Eliou* but in the New Testament it is hellenized as Ηλίας, *Elias*. In Arabic it is إلياس, *Ilyaas*. It has been variously translated as "Yah is God," "YHWH is my El", "whose God is Yah," "the strong Yah," "God of Yah," "Yah is my God," "my God is Yah," "My God is Jehovah", and according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible "God of Jehovah".

Elijah in the Hebrew Bible

Given the importance of Elijah in Jewish and Christian tradition, the story of his career occupies remarkably little space. The details are largely contained in 1st and 2nd Kings, with smaller references in 2nd Chronicles and in the Book of Malachi.

Composition of the Elijah narratives

The Elijah stories were added to the Deuteronomistic History in four stages. The first stage dates from the final edition of the History, about 560 BC, when the three stories of Naboth's vineyard, the death of Ahaziah, and the story of Jehu's coup were included to embody the themes of the reliability of God's word and the cycle of Baal worship and religious reform in the history of the Northern Kingdom. The narratives about the Omride wars were added shortly afterwards to illustrate a newly-introduced theme, that the attitude of the king towards the word of the prophets determines the fate of Israel. 1 Kings 17-18 was added in early post-Exilic times (after 538 BC) to demonstrate the possibility of a new life in community with God after the time of judgment. In the fifth century BC, 1 Kings 19.1-18 and the remaining Elisha stories were inserted to give prophecy a legitimate foundation in the history of Israel.[1]

1st and 2nd Kings

Introduction of Elijah

Elijah is introduced in 1 Kings 17:1 as Elijah "The Tishbite." He gives a warning to Ahab, king of Israel, that there will be years of drought, a drought so severe that not even dew will fall. This catastrophe will come because Ahab and his queen--Jezebel--stand at the end of a line of kings of Israel who are said to have "done evil in the sight of the Lord." In particular, Ahab and Jezebel had encouraged the worship of Baal and killed the prophets of the Lord.

Elijah appears on the scene with no fanfare. Nothing is known of his origins or background. His name, Elijah, "My god is Jehovah (Yahweh)," may be a name applied to him because of his challenge to Baal worship.[2][3][4] Even the title of "the Tishbite" is problematic, as there is no reference from the period to a town or village of Tishbe.[5]

Elijah's challenge, characteristic of his behaviour in other episodes of his story as told in the Bible, is bold and direct. Baal was the local nature deity responsible for rain, thunder, lightning, and dew. Elijah not only challenges Baal on behalf of Yahweh (Jehovah) the God of Israel, he challenges Jezebel, her priests, Ahab, and the people of Israel.

The strategic situation in Israel

By the 9th century BC, the united kingdom of David and Solomon had broken up into northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) kingdoms. With the Temple in Jerusalem, Judah had both the seat of government and the focus of religion within its borders. It was in this situation that Omri became king of Israel.

Map of Israel in the 9th Century BC. **Dark Green** is the Kingdom of Israel. **Light Green** is the Kingdom of Judah.

As a purely practical matter, Omri had to take steps to contain both government and religion within the borders of Israel, lest the loyalties of his subjects be divided between Israel and Judah. The task of centralising the government had a relatively straightforward solution: Omri built a new capital at Sameria on a hill 300 feet above the countryside. The religious problem posed more of a challenge, as the requirements of Temple worship were firmly focused on Solomon's Temple.

To break Israel's religion away from the control of the priests of the Temple in Judah, three solutions were pursued. The first was to encourage the building of temples (altars where sacrifices could be offered) at local sites within the borders of Israel. Secondly, priests were appointed from outside the family of the Levites. And finally, temples dedicated to the Canaanite god, Baal, were alternately allowed and encouraged.[6][7] All three solutions were contrary to the laws of Moses, and were guaranteed to bring the wrath of the prophets of Yahweh(Jehovah).

None of these solutions was new to Omri. They had all been begun with the reign of Jeroboam. Omri added a new dimension. In order to bring security with the outside world, Omri sought a marriage alliance. There was precedent for this solution in Solomon's reign. Omri was able to arrange the marriage of his son Ahab to princess Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon in Phoenicia. Jezebel came to Israel not only as a princess, but she was also a priestess of Baal.

The resulting problems may be alluded to in Psalm 45, sometimes viewed as a wedding song for Ahab and Jezebel:[8]

> ***Hear, O daughter, consider, and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house; and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him; the people of Tyre will sue your favor with gifts.*** (Psalms 45:10-12)

All of these solutions brought security and economic prosperity to Israel for a time.[9] However, it did not bring peace with the prophets of Yahweh, who were interested in a strict deuteronomic interpretation of Mosaic law. As bad as Omri's problems with the prophets were, Ahab managed to add to them. He not only allowed the worship of a foreign god within the palace (Solomon also did this), he also built a temple for Baal, and allowed Jezebel to bring a large entourage of priests and prophets of Baal and Asherah into the country.

Elijah in the wilderness, by Washington Allston

The widow of Zarephath

After Elijah's confrontation with Ahab, God tells him to flee out of Israel, to a hiding place by the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan, where he will be fed by ravens. When the brook dries up, God sends him to a widow living in the town of Zarephatho in Phoenicia. When Elijah finds her and asks to be fed, she says that she does not have sufficient food to keep her and her own son alive. Elijah tells her that God will not allow her supply of flour or oil to run out. She feeds him the last of their food, and Elijah's promise miraculously comes true. Some time later, the widow's son dies. Elijah prays that God might restore her son. 1 Kings 17:22 relates how God "heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived."

After more than two years of drought and famine, God tells Elijah to return to Ahab and announce the end of the drought. While on his way, Elijah meets Obadiah, the head of Ahab's household, who had hidden a hundred prophets of Yahweh the God of Israel when Ahab and Jezebel had been killing them. Elijah sends Obadiah back to Ahab to announce his return to Israel.

Challenge to Baal

When Ahab confronts Elijah, he refers to him as the "troubler of Israel." Elijah responds by throwing the charge back at Ahab, saying that it is Ahab who has troubled Israel by allowing the worship of false gods. Elijah then berates both the people of Israel and Ahab for their acquiescence in Baal worship. “How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). And the people were silent.

At this point Elijah proposes a test of the powers of Baal and Yahweh the God of Israel. The people of Israel, 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah are summoned to Mount Carmel. Two altars are built, one for Baal and one for Yahweh. Wood is laid on the altars. Two oxen are slaughtered and cut into pieces; the pieces are laid on the wood. Elijah then invites the priests of Baal to pray for fire to light the sacrifice. They pray from morning to noon without success. Elijah ridicules their efforts. They respond by cutting themselves and adding their own blood to the sacrifice. They continue praying until evening without success.

Elijah now orders that the altar of Yahweh, and its sacrifice, be drenched with water (twelve barrels of water). He asks God to accept the sacrifice. Fire falls from the sky, igniting the sacrifice. The people who witness this immediately begin worshiping Yahweh. Elijah seizes the moment and orders the death of the prophets of Baal. This episode ends with the return of rains to Israel, signaling the end of the famine.

Elijah at Mt. Horeb

Jezebel, enraged that Elijah had ordered the deaths of her priests, threatens to kill Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-13). This was Elijah's first encounter with Jezebel, and not the last. Later Elijah would prophesy about Jezebel's death, because of her sin. Later, Elijah flees to Beersheba in Judah, continues alone into the wilderness, and finally sits down under a juniper tree and prays for death. He falls asleep under the tree; an angel touches him and tells him to wake and eat. When he wakes he finds a bit of bread and a jar of water. He eats, drinks, and goes back to sleep. The angel comes a second time and tells him to eat and drink because he has a long journey ahead of him.

Elijah travels, for forty days and forty nights, to Mount Horeb and seeks shelter in a cave. God again speaks to Elijah (1 Kings 19:9): "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah lays out all his complaints and his despair. Up until this time Elijah has only the word of God to guide him, but now he is told to go outside the cave and "stand before the Lord." A terrible wind passes, but God is not in the wind. A great earthquake shakes the mountain, but God is not in the earthquake. Then a fire passes the mountain, but God is not in the fire. Then a "still small voice" comes to Elijah and asks again, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah responds again with his complaints and his sense of hopelessness. God responds by sending him out again, this time to Damascus to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as his replacement.

The Cave of Elijah, Mount Carmel, Israel.

The Vineyard of Naboth

Elijah encounters Ahab again in 1 Kings 21, after Ahab has acquired possession of a vineyard by murder. Ahab desires to have the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel. He offers a better vineyard or a fair price for the land. But Naboth tells Ahab that God has told him not to part with the land. Ahab accepts this answer with sullen bad grace. Jezebel, however, plots a method for acquiring the land. She sends letters, in Ahab's name, to the elders and nobles who lived near Naboth. They are to arrange a fast and invite Naboth. At the fast, false charges of cursing God and Ahab are to be made against him. The plot is carried out and Naboth is stoned to death. When word comes that Naboth is dead, Jezebel tells Ahab to take possession of the vineyard.

God again speaks to Elijah and sends him to confront Ahab with a question and a prophecy: "Have you killed and also taken possession?" and, "In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick up your own blood" (1 Kings 21:19)." Ahab begins the confrontation by calling Elijah his enemy. Elijah responds by throwing the charge back at him, telling him that he has made himself the enemy of God by his own actions. Elijah then goes beyond the prophecy he was given and tells Ahab that his entire kingdom will reject his authority; that Jezebel will be eaten by dogs within Jezreel; and that his family will be consumed by dogs as well (if they die in a city) or by birds (if they die in the country). When Ahab hears this he repents to such a degree that God relents in punishing Ahab but will punish Jezebel and their son--Ahaziah.

Ahaziah

Elijah continues now from Ahab to an encounter with Ahaziah. The scene opens with Ahaziah

seriously injured in a fall. He sends to the priests of Baalzebub in Ekron, outside the kingdom of Israel, to know if he will recover. Elijah intercepts his messengers and sends them back to Ahaziah with a message. In typical Elijah fashion, the message begins with a blunt, impertinent question: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?"(2 Kings 1:6). Ahaziah asks the messengers to describe the person who gave them this message. They tell him he wore a hairy coat with a leather belt and he instantly recognizes the description as Elijah the Tishbite.

Russian icon of the Prophet Elijah, 18th century (Iconostasis of Kizhi monastery, Karelia, Russia).

Ahaziah sends out three groups of soldiers to arrest Elijah. The first two are destroyed by fire which Elijah calls down from heaven. The leader of the third group asks for mercy for himself and his men. Elijah agrees to accompany this third group to Ahaziah, where he gives his prophecy in person.

Elijah's Departure

The biblical story of Elijah's departure is unique. Elijah, in company with Elisha (Eliseus), approaches the Jordan. He rolls up his mantle and strikes the water (2 Kings 2:8). The water immediately divides and Elijah and Elisha cross on dry land. Suddenly, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appear and Elijah is lifted up to heaven in a whirlwind. As Elijah is lifted up, his mantle falls to the ground and Elisha picks it up.

2nd Chronicles

Elijah is mentioned once more in 2 Chronicles 21. A letter is sent under the prophet's name to Jehoram. It tells him that he has led the people of Judah astray in the same way that Israel was led astray. The prophet ends the letter with a prediction of a painful death. This letter is a puzzle to readers for several reasons. First, it concerns a king of the southern kingdom, while Elijah concerned himself with the kingdom of Israel. Second, the message begins with "Thus says Yahweh, God of your father David..." rather than the more usual "...in the name of Yahweh the God of Israel." Also, this letter comes after Elijah's ascension into the whirlwind. Jacob Myers suggests a number of possible reasons for this letter, among them that it may be an example of a better known prophet's name being substituted for that of a lesser known prophet.[10] VanSeters, however, rejects the letter as having any connection with the Elijah tradition.[11]

Malachi

Elijah's final mention in the Hebrew Bible is in Malachi, where it is said that Elijah will come again before "the great and terrible day of the Lord." That day is described as the burning of a great furnace, "... so that it will leave them neither root nor branch (Malachi 3:19)". Traditionally, in both Judaism and Christianity, this is taken to mean the return of Elijah will precede the Messiah.

> "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."
>
> — Malachi 4:5-6

New Testament references

In the New Testament, Jesus would say for those who believed, John the Baptist was Elijah, whom would come before the "great and terrible day" as predicted by Malachi.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist preached a message of repentance and baptism. He predicted the day of judgment using imagery similar to that of Malachi. He also preached that the Messiah was coming. All of this was done in a style that immediately recalled the image of Elijah to his audience. He wore a coat of animal hair secured with a leather belt (Matthew 3:4, Mark 1:6). He also frequently preached in wilderness areas: near the Jordan river.

In the Gospel of John, the Baptist was asked by a delegation of priests if he was Elijah. To which, he replied "I am not (John 1:21)." The author of Matthew 11:14 and Matthew 17:10-13 however, makes it clear that John was Elijah but was not recognized as such. In the annunciation narrative in Luke, an angel appears to Zechariah, John's father, and tells him that John "will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God," and that he will go forth "in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:16-17)."

Jesus

Eastern Orthodox icon of the prophet Elijah, depicted with a disciple

Jesus's ministry had little in common with that of Elijah; in particular, he preached the forgiveness of one's enemies, while Elijah killed his. However, miracle stories similar to those of Elijah were associated with Jesus (e. g. raising of the dead,[12] miraculous feeding [13]). In the Gospel of Luke, Herod Antipas hears some of the stories surrounding Jesus. Some tell Herod that John the Baptist, whom he had executed, has come back to life. Others tell him that it is Elijah.[14] Later, in the same gospel, Jesus asks his disciples who the people say that he is. Peter's answer includes Elijah among others.[15]

By this time, Elijah had entered folklore as a rescuer of Jews in distress. During Jesus' crucifixion,[16] some of the onlookers wonder if Elijah will come to rescue him.

The Transfiguration

Elijah makes an appearance in the New Testament during an incident known as the Transfiguration.[17]

At the summit of an unnamed mount, Jesus' face begins to shine. The disciples who are with him hear the voice of God announce that Jesus is the "Son of God." The disciples also see Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Jesus. Peter is so struck by the experience that he asks Jesus if they should not build a "tabernacle" for Elijah.

In this appearance, Elijah is generally seen as a witness of the prophets and Moses as a witness of the law for the divinely announced "Son of God."[18][19]

Other references to Elijah

Elijah is mentioned three more times in the New Testament: in Luke, Romans, and James. In Luke 4:24-27, Jesus uses Elijah as an example of rejected prophets. Jesus says, "No prophet is accepted in his own country," and then mentions Elijah, saying that there were many widows in Israel, but Elijah was sent to one in Phoenicia (see story above). In Romans 11:1-6, Paul cites Elijah as an example of God's never forsaking his people (the Jews). In James 5:16-18, James says, "The . . . prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and then cites Elijah's prayers which started and ended the famine in Israel (again, see above), as examples of such prayers.

Elijah in Jewish tradition and folklore

The volume of references to Elijah in folklore and tradition stands in marked contrast to that in the canon. His career is extensive, colorful, and varied. He has appeared the world over in the guise of a beggar, scholar. Many of the stories have their origins in the canon while others owe their existence entirely to the minds of their creators.

Elijah in the apocrypha

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah uses 12 stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, to build an altar. In Malachi 3:21-24, he has two tasks: to herald the eschaton and to reconcile the generations with the generation that experienced the covenant. In the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira (Sirach 48:10) his tasks are altered to: 1) herald the eschaton, 2) calm God's fury, 3) restore familial peace, and 4) restore the 12 tribes.

> "At the appointed time, it is written, you are destined
> to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury,
> to turn the hearts of parents to their children,
> and to restore the tribes of Jacob."
>
> — A line in the Apocrypha describing Elijah's mission (Sirach 48:10).

In folklore

Elijah's identity

Elijah's miraculous transferral to heaven lead to speculation as to his true identity. Louis Ginzberg equates him with Phinehas the grandson of Aaron[20] (Exodus 6:25). Because of Phinehas zealousness for God, he and his descendants were promised, "a

covenant of lasting priesthood" (Numbers 25:13). Therefore, Elijah is a priest as well as a prophet. Elijah is also equated with the Archangel Sandalphon,[21] whose four wing beats will carry him to any part of the earth. When forced to choose between death and dishonor, Rabbi Kahana chose to leap to his death. Before he could strike the ground, Elijah/Sandalphon had appeared to catch him.[22] Yet another name for Elijah is "Angel of the Covenant"[23] (see Elijah's chair below).

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi

References to Elijah in Jewish folklore range from short observations (e. g. It is said that when dogs are happy for no reason, it is because Elijah is in the neighborhood[24]) to lengthy parables on the nature of God's justice.

One such story is that of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. The rabbi, a friend of Elijah's, was asked what favor he might wish. The rabbi answered only that he be able to join Elijah in his wanderings. Elijah granted his wish only if he refrained from asking any questions about any of the prophet's actions. He agreed and they began their journey. The first place they came to was the house of an elderly couple who were so poor they had only one old cow. The old couple gave of their hospitality as best they could. The next morning, as the travelers left, Elijah prayed that the old cow would die and it did. The second place they came to was the home of a wealthy man. He had no patience for his visitors and chased them away with the admonition that they should get jobs and not beg from honest people. As they were leaving, they passed the man's wall and saw that it was crumbling. Elijah prayed that the wall be repaired and it was so. Next, they came to a wealthy synagogue. They were allowed to spend the night with only the smallest of provisions. When they left, Elijah prayed that every member of the synagogue might become a leader.

Finally, they came to a very poor synagogue. Here they were treated with great courtesy and hospitality. When they left, Elijah prayed that God might give them a single wise leader. At this Rabbi Joshua could no longer hold back. He demanded of Elijah an explanation of his actions. At the house of the old couple, Elijah knew that the Angel of Death was coming for the old woman. So he prayed that God might have the angel take the cow instead. At the house of the wealthy man, there was a great treasure hidden in the crumbling wall. Elijah prayed that the wall be restored thus keeping the treasure away from the miser. The story ends with a moral: A synagogue with many leaders will be ruined by many arguments. A town with a single wise leader will be guided to success and prosperity. "Know then, that if thou seest an evil-doer prosper, it is not always unto his advantage, and if a righteous man suffers need and distress, think not God is unjust."[25]

Rabbi Eliezer

The Elijah of legend did not lose any of his ability to afflict the comfortable. The case of Rabbi Eliezer son of Rabbi Simon ben Yohai is illustrative. The rabbi was known as much for his conceit as he was for his learning. Once, when walking a beach, and feeling particularly proud of himself, he came upon a hideously ugly man–the prophet in disguise. The man greeted him courteously, "Peace be with thee, Rabbi." Instead of returning the greeting, the rabbi could not resist an insult, "How ugly you are! Is there anyone as ugly as you in your town?" Elijah responded with, "I don't know. Perhaps you should tell the Master Architect how ugly is this, His construction." The rabbi realized his wrong and asked for pardon. But Elijah would not give it until the entire city had asked for forgiveness for the rabbi and the rabbi had promised to mend his ways.[26]

The demon Lilith

Elijah was always seen as deeply pious, it seems only natural that he would be pitted against an equally evil individual. This was found in the person of Lilith. Lilith in legend was the first wife of Adam. She rebelled against Adam, the angels, and even God. She came to be seen as a demon and a witch.[27][28]

Elijah encountered Lilith and instantly recognized and challenged her, "Unclean one, where are you going?" Unable to avoid or lie to the prophet, she admitted she was on her way to the house of a pregnant woman. Her intention was to kill the woman and eat the child.

Elijah pronounced his malediction, "I curse you in the Name of the Lord. Be silent as a stone!" But, Lilith was able to make a bargain with Elijah. She promises to "forsake my evil ways" if Elijah will remove his curse. To seal the bargain she gives Elijah her names so that they can be posted in the houses of pregnant women or new born children or used as amulets. Lilith promises, "where I see those names, I shall run away at once. Neither the child nor the mother will ever be injured by me."[29]

In tradition

Elijah's Chair (kisse shel Eliyahu)

At Jewish circumcision ceremonies, a chair is set aside for the use of the prophet Elijah. Elijah is said to be a witness at all circumcisions when the "sign of the covenant" is placed upon the body of the child. This custom stems from the incident at

Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19).

Elijah had arrived at Mt. Horeb after the demonstration of Yahweh's presence and power on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18). Elijah is asked by God for an explanation of his presence on Mt. Horeb. He replies: "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:10). This was patently untrue (1 Kings 18:4 and 1 Kings 19:18), but since Elijah had made the charge that Israel had failed to uphold the covenant (brit), God would require Elijah to be present at every covenant of circumcision (brit milah).[30][31]

During the ceremony, Elijah is specifically invited to be present and to witness that the covenant is still observed. A chair, usually highly carved and decorated, is set aside specifically for Elijah. In some traditions, the chair has two seats: one for the prophet and one for the sandek (the person who holds the child). Any chair, however, may be designated as Elijah's chair by the father saying: "This is the chair of Elijah, the Angel of the Covenant, who is remembered for good."[32]

Elijah's Cup (koso shel Eliyahu)

In the Talmudic literature, Elijah would visit rabbis to help solve particularly difficult legal problems. Malachi had cited Elijah as the harbinger of the eschaton. Thus, when confronted with reconciling impossibly conflicting laws or rituals, the rabbis would set aside any decision "until Elijah comes."[33] One such decision was whether the Passover seder required four or five cups of wine.

Each serving of wine corresponds to "four expressions of redemption" in Exodus:

> "I am the Lord, and **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will deliver you** from their bondage, and **I will redeem you** with an out-stretched arm and with great acts of judgment, and **I will take you** for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:6-7).

The next verse, "And **I will bring you into** the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord" (Exodus 6:8), was not fulfilled until the generation after that of the passover story. Since the rabbis could not resolve the question of whether or not this verse was a part of the Passover celebration (thus deserving of another serving of wine), a cup was left for the arrival of Elijah. In practice, the fifth cup has come to be seen as a celebration of future redemption. Today, a place is reserved at the seder table and a cup of wine is placed there for Elijah. During the seder, the door of the house is opened and Elijah is invited in. Traditionally, the cup is viewed as Elijah's and is used for no other purpose.[34][35]

Havdalah

Havdalah is the ceremony that concludes the Sabbath Day (Saturday evening in Jewish tradition). As part of the concluding hymn, an appeal is made to God that Elijah will come during the following week. "Elijah the Prophet, Elijah the Tishbite. Let him come quickly, in our day with the messiah, the son of David."[34]

Elijah in other traditions

Considered a Prophet Saint

In Western Christianity, the Prophet Elijah is commemorated as a saint in the liturgical calendars of the Traditional Roman Catholics, the Carmelites, and the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod [36] on July 20.[37]

Russian Icon of the Prophet

In the Eastern Orthodox Church and those Eastern Catholic Churches which follow the Byzantine Rite, he is commemorated on July 20 (for those churches which follow the traditional Julian Calendar, July 20 falls on August 2 of the modern Gregorian Calendar). He is greatly revered among the Orthodox as a model of the contemplative life. He is also commemorated on the Orthodox liturgical calendar on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers (the Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord).

Carmelite tradition

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah returns from his stay with the widow of Zarephath to confront Ahab and

Elias (12th century, Pskov school. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow).

announce the end of the drought. He encounters Obadiah and orders him back to Ahab to announce his return. Obadiah is reluctant to comply for Elijah has just spent several years in hiding from a determined search by the king. Obadiah is afraid that Elijah will disappear again leaving him to face the king's wrath. After the confrontation on Mt. Carmel, Elijah will again avoid a determined search by Jezebel by going to the Sinai wilderness. After the confrontation over Naboth's vineyard, Elijah will disappear from the record completely and not reappear until the confrontation with Ahaziah in 2nd Kings.

Elijah is revered as the spiritual Father and traditional founder of the Catholic religious Order of Carmelites. In addition to taking their name from Mt. Carmel where the first hermits of the order established themselves, the Calced Carmelite and Discalced Carmelite traditions pertaining to Elijah focus upon the prophet's withdrawal from public life.[38][39] The medieval Carmelite Book of the First Monks offers some insight into the heart of the Orders' contemplative vocation and reverence for the prophet.

The prophet Elijah's feastday is celebrated on July 20 of the Carmelite Liturgical Calendar.

Islamic tradition

In the Qur'an, Elijah is a prophet known as Ilyas (إلياس) in Arabic. Similar to the story in the Hebrew Bible, Elijah preaches in opposition to Baal, pleading with the people not to forsake Allah.[40] He also causes a famine and prophesies destruction on Ahab and Jezebel.[41]

Latter-day Saint perspective

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also acknowledges Elijah as a prophet. Latter-day Saints believe that the Malachi prophecy of the return of Elijah was fulfilled on April 3, 1836 when Elijah visited the prophet and founder of the church, Joseph Smith, Jr. in the Kirtland Temple as a resurrected being.[42] This event is chronicled in The Doctrine and Covenants Section 110 (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) verses 13-16:

> After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said: Behold the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.

This experience forms the basis for the church's focus on genealogy and family history and belief in the eternal nature of marriage and families.

Latter-day saints make a difference between the personal name Elijah and the title Elias.

Bahá'í

The Bahá'í Faith, accepts the Báb, the founder of The Bábí Faith as the return of Elijah and John the Baptist. Both Elijah and John the Baptist are generally seen as Lesser Prophets, the Báb is buried on Mount Carmel, where Elijah had his confrontation with the prophets of Baal[43] Bahá'ís also view the Báb as the Islamic Mahdi and Al-Qua'im.[44]

Eastern European

As Elijah was described as ascending into heaven in a fiery chariot, the Christian missionaries who converted Slavic tribes likely found him an ideal analogy for Perun, the supreme Slavic god of storms, thunder and lightning bolts. In many Slavic countries Elijah is known as Elijah the Thunderer (Ilija Gromovnik), who drives the heavens in a chariot and administers rain and snow, thus actually taking the place of Perun in popular beliefs.[45][46]

In one Eastern-European folklore tale, Elijah is portrayed in his "Thunderer" persona:

Once Jesus, the prophet Elijah, and St. George were going through Georgia. When they became tired and hungry they stopped to dine. They saw a Georgian shepherd and decided to ask him to feed them. First, Elijah went up to the shepherd and asked him for a sheep. After the shepherd asked his identity Elijah said that, he was the one who sent him rain to get him a good profit from farming. The shepherd became angry at him and told him that he was the one who also sent thunderstorms, which destroyed the farms of poor widows. (After Elijah, Jesus and St. George attempt to get help and eventually succeed).[47]

Raëlism

In Raëlism, a group believing that extraterrestrial life is the source of modern religion, as well as human life on earth, Raël is told by the Elohim (in this group, the "people from the sky") that the Elohim had previously contacted several people to act as their prophets on Earth, including Moses, Elijah, Buddha, and others.[48]

The Holy Piby

In The Holy Piby, God enters into a dead man and becomes alive, then calls himself Elijah. [49]

Controversies

The Miracle of the Ravens

The *ravens* that fed Elijah by the brook Cherith have been queried. The Hebrew text at 1 Kings 17:4-6 uses the word עֹרְבִים, which means *ravens*, but with a different vocalization might equally mean *Arabs*. The Septuagint has κοραϰες, *ravens*, and other traditional translations followed. Alternatives have been proposed for many years; for example Adam Clarke treats it as a discussion already of long standing[50].

Objections to the traditional translation are that ravens are ritually unclean (see Leviticus 11:13-17) as well as physically dirty; it is difficult to imagine any method of delivery of the food which is not disgusting. The parallelism with the incident that follows, where Elijah is fed by the widow, also suggests a human, if mildly improbable, agent.

Prof. John Gray chooses *Arabs*, saying "We adopt this reading solely because of its congruity with the sequel, where Elijah is fed by an alien Phoenician woman."[51]. His translation of the verses in question is:

> And the word of Yahweh came to Elijah saying, Go hence and turn eastward and hide thyself in the Wadi Kerith east of the Jordan, and it shall be that thou shalt drink of the wadi, and I have commanded the Arabs to feed thee there. And he went and did according to the word of Yahweh and went and dwelt in the Wadi Kerith east of the Jordan. And the Arabs brought him bread in the morning and flesh in the evening and he would drink of the wadi.

Christian controversy over Elijah's ascension into heaven

In some Christian interpretations, the Gospel of John quotes Jesus as saying that none have gone to heaven other than the Son of Man (Jesus Himself) (John 3:13). Accordingly, some Christians believe that Elijah was not assumed into heaven but simply transferred to another assignment either in Heaven[52] or with King Jehoram of Judah.[52] For those who believe he went to Jehoram, the largest evidence is his writing a letter to the King after his "death" expressing God's condemnation.[53] They claim the letter is written after Elijah leaves Elisha due to the fact that King Jehoram ruled after the separation of Elijah and Elisha; for eight years starting from 913 B.C. at the age of 32.[54] This is in harmony with the fact that Elisha did not mourn for Elijah as was the custom for the dead in his day; although mourning would not necessarily have been appropriate for one assumed into heaven while living.[55]

Still another interpretation is that the Elijah spoken of in 2 Chronicles 21:12-15 is a totally different person altogether. This person lived in the time of Jehoram, to whom he sent a letter of warning,[56] and acted as a prophet in Judah while the Tishbite was a prophet of the northern kingdom. It may be supposed either that Elijah anticipated the character of Jehoram, and so wrote the warning message, which was preserved in the schools of the prophets until Jehoram ascended the throne after the Tishbite's translation, or that the translation did not actually take place until after the accession of Jehoram to the throne 2 Chronicles 21:12, 2 Kings 8:16. Also, the events of 2 Kings 2 may not be recorded in chronological order, and thus there may be room for the opinion that Elijah was still alive in the beginning of Jehoram's reign.[57][52]

Controversy over Elijah's Return

Centuries after his departure, the Jews still await the coming of Elijah to precede the coming of the Messiah. As discussed above, in some aspects of Judaism, there is a tradition of leaving an empty chair and a full goblet of wine at the Passover feast table to serve as a reminder of his promised return. At one point during the feast, participants may open a door in hopes that he will appear as a guest.[58][59] Similarly, an empty chair is left in the room during a circumcision.

For Christians, this belief is referenced in Matthew's gospel, where Jesus Christ taught that the Elijah who was to come was John

the Baptist (Matthew 17:9-13).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as mentioned previously in the 'Latter-day Saint' section, believes that Elijah returned on April 3, 1836 in an appearance to Joseph Smith, fulfilling a prophecy in Malachi.

The Bahá'í Faith, as mentioned above in the 'Bahá'í' section, believes Elijah to have returned as the Biblical Prophet John the Baptist, and as the founder of the Bábí Faith; the Báb, in 1844 in Shiraz, Iran. [60][61]

Arts and Literature

- Felix Mendelssohn composed an oratorio "Elijah".
- Elijah Rock is a traditional Christian spiritual about Elijah, also sometimes used by Jewish youth groups.
- "Go Like Elijah" is a song by the American rock-pop-jazz songwriter Chi Coltrane.
- The famous *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, composed by Wallis Willis in the 1860s, was heavily influenced by the story of Elijah's ascension to heaven.
- *Eliyahu HaNavi* is a Jewish song sung at the Passover as an invitation to Elijah. In some sects of Judaism, incluing Reform Judaism, Eliyahu HaNavi is also sung during the Havdalah service that concludes Shabbat.
- Lorenzetto created a statue of Elijah with assistance of the young sculptor Raffaello da Montelupo, using designs by Raphael.[62]
- The Fifth Mountain by Paulo Coelho was published in 1996 and was his fourth major publication. The story is based on the story of Elijah from the Judeo-Christian Bible (1 Kings 17-19).
- Christian metal band Disciple released the song "God of Elijah" on their 2001 album By God. The theme of the song is the challenge Elijah placed against Ahab between Baal and the God of Israel.

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14. ^ Luke 9:7-9 also Mark 6:14-16
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See also

- Carmelites—A contemplative religious order living in imitation of Elijah's life, regarding him as their founder.
- Theophoric name - The prefex **Jeho-**, suffix **-iah** and **-ijah** refer to the English:Jehovah, & Hebrew:YHVH.

External links

- Enoch, Elijah and Einstein's Theory of Relativity Presents a possible scientific explanation for the ascension of Elijah into the heavens and the references to his return mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.
- Legends of the Jews by Louis Ginzberg. The legends of Elijah.
- The Rabbi and the Cow by Shoshannah Brombacher A retelling of the rabbi Joshua ben Levi story.
- The Silent Cup by Israel Rubin Elijah's cup.
- Elijah the Prophet in Minsk by Yitzchak Buxbaum An Elijah story with a nice twist.
- Elijah Details various events in the life of Elijah and relates Elijah to the Passover/Pesach story.
- Jewish Encyclopedia: *Elijah*
- Catholic Encyclopedia: *Elias*
- *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Cosmic Voyages* - Mentions (in passing) the story of Elijah being carried up to heaven in a flaming chariot as an inspiration for human flight
- *Elijah* by Rob Bradshaw Extensive dictionary style article.
- *Biblaridion magazine*: Elijah redivivus: The role of Elijah in New Testament eschatology
- LDS Bible Dictionary Entry on Elijah
- Edith Stein on Elijah in Carmelite spirituality
- Elijah and his fiery chariot A partly serious, partly humorous article by Robert Greenham about Elijah and his fiery chariot, with reference also to Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah*
- Orthodox icons of the prophet Elijah
- Founder Statue in St Peter's Basilica
- Holy, Glorious Prophet Elijah Orthodox icon and synaxarion
- Quran in Action (Ilyas)

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