

Elijah

My name is Elijah. You may have heard of me. I am one of the few persons who have bypassed death and gone directly into the presence of the LORD God of Abraham. You may have also heard about the highs and the lows of my career. Let me explain in case you do not know. This is my prophetic message to you.

I lived in a time of incredible evil (but you probably do, too). Ahab was king over Israel. His wife was Jezebel. What a pair! They worshipped Baal, who required infant sacrifice and Asherah, who was honored by ritual prostitution. I was given a message from God to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word." I was then told to go to the Kerith Ravine east of Jordan where I was fed by ravens and drank from the brook.

When the brook dried up, I was told to go to a widow in Zarephath and ask her for a drink and a piece of bread. She said she and her son were down to a little flour and oil that would be their last meal. I told her to make a cake for the three of us and that the LORD would not let the flour or oil run out before rain returned to the land. She believed the message and it came true.

But then, her son became ill and died. Of course, she was angry at me, and at God. I took the body of the boy, placed him on the bed and prayed three times. When I lay on top of him, his breath returned, and I brought him back to his mother. That convinced the woman that I was a prophet. Maybe it convinced me, too.

I needed that reassurance because next I met Obadiah, who worked for the king. While Jezebel was killing prophets, he hid 100 of them in two caves and supplied them water and food. I asked Obadiah to tell Ahab where I was. He feared that I would disappear and if so, he would be executed. I convinced him that I would be there.

Ahab came and called me a "troubler of Israel." I turned it around – indeed, he was the problem. I challenged him to a contest, 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of Asherah on one side and myself, prophet of the LORD God of Israel on the other side. Each would set up an altar, wood and a bull for sacrifice and see who could call down fire from heaven.

They went first and were at it for a long time – all day in fact. Maybe it was unkind, but I chided them. "Shout louder!" I said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or travelling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." They slashed themselves with swords and spears but nothing happened. I guess they couldn't find an infant to sacrifice.

I then repaired the altar of the LORD, arranged the wood and the sacrifice. And to make it more difficult, I poured 4 large jars of water over the altar, wood and bull, so it filled the trench around it three times over. From eternity, I have been allowed to learn that some pagans of your day claim that it was not water poured over the altar, but a substance called "gasoline" – which burns. There was no such substance in the day it happened. I am told that you make it from pitch. No, we used water.

I prayed, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." Fire did come from heaven, burn the sacrifice, the wood and even the water and the stones! The prophets of false gods knew it was not a trick and also knew that they were on the wrong side. The people fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD —he is God! The LORD —he is God!"

The false prophets were taken to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered – it was the will of the LORD and they had been given a chance. I told Ahab to eat and drink because it was going to rain. I then went to the top of Mount Carmel and waited until a small cloud was visible rising out of the sea. I told Ahab to hurry home and I ran after him. With the power of the LORD, I actually passed him on the road.

Up to this point, my story makes a good chapter in a textbook for the school of the prophets. But I am ashamed of what happened next. When Jezebel found out that all her precious prophets had been killed, she sent me a message, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

Remember what I had just seen? Did I know that the LORD God of Israel could handle any rivals? Of course, I did. But what did I do? Pray to the LORD? NO! I ran for my life. When I got a day's journey into the desert and sat under a broom tree, then I talked to the LORD. "I have had enough, LORD," I said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Has this ever happened to you? Has doubt and despair unexpectedly come on the heels of victory? Well, the LORD did not criticize me but sent an angel with food and drink. The angel then led me on a 40-day trip to Horeb, the mountain of God.

After one night in a cave, the word of the LORD came to me, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" I started a first-class pity-party! "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

There was a powerful wind, that actually broke rocks! But the LORD was not in the wind. Then a powerful earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. Then a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. Finally came a soft whisper. The voice repeated the initial question and I repeated the same complaint. I was told to go back to the desert of Damascus and make three appointments, a future king of Aram, a future king of Israel and a prophet to succeed me. God was not done with me or with Israel. He said, "I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal."

When I found Elisha, son of Shaphat, I knew he was the one and threw my cloak around him. It is a good thing that I had learned this lesson: even if I do not understand, the LORD God of Israel knows what he is doing. The men I anointed did not immediately rise to the thrones of Aram and Israel. The evil Ahab continued to rule and even won a victory with the LORD's help. This gave him a chance to acknowledge the LORD. He followed the directions of the prophet and was victorious. But had he really reformed? NO!

Jezebel had not only failed to exterminate all the prophets, the land seemed to be thick with them. There was even a school of the prophets. Ahab got messages from some of those – obviously I was not "the only one left." He was given a great victory over a wicked ruler, who should have been executed. But instead of obeying and trusting the LORD for security, he reverted to his habit of negotiation and spared him for a sweet trade deal.

The treatment of Naboth was shameful. Jezebel, with no interference from Ahab, had this innocent man falsely accused and stoned to death so Ahab could have the man's property for a vegetable garden! Here I delivered a message of death and destruction. Ahab was humbled, but it was too late. Even allying himself with the righteous king of Judah in battle and disguising himself as a common soldier, an arrow providentially went through a gap in his armor and he slowly bled to death over the day. The chariot was washed, and his blood licked by dogs, as I had prophesied.

When my time to leave was near, I was told by an angel to meet a delegation from Ahaziah, Ahab's son, who were on the way to seek advice from Baal-Zebub. I brought down fire from heaven on the first and second delegations then spared the third group but told the king directly that he would die.

Next, I went with Elisha, my designated successor and struck the Jordan so that we walked across on dry ground. I asked Elisha what he wanted, and he said, "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit." I said, "You have asked a difficult thing, yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours— otherwise not."

As we were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of us, and I went up to heaven in a whirlwind. I was allowed to come back along with Moses when the Eternal Son had taken on human form as Jesus the Messiah and needed to show his glory to the men he had chosen to spread word of the new covenant to the entire world.

So do you think that this is all about me? NO, perish the thought!! It is about the LORD God of Israel and the power he makes available to his people! A latter-day prophet who is known to you wrote, "Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years." You, too, can pray! But do not think **you** have the power. The outcome must be the will of the LORD.

1 Kings 16 – 22, 2 Kings 1 – 2, Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9, Romans 11, James 5