

ELIJAH

A Study in Jewish Folklore

ELIJAH

A Study in Jewish Folklore

By

RABBI SAMUEL M. SEGAL



BEHRMAN'S JEWISH BOOK HOUSE

New York, 1935

Copyright, 1935, by
BEHRMAN'S JEWISH BOOK HOUSE
New York

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ל ז כ ר ו ן

נשמות

הורי היקרים

הרב הקדוש ר' יצחק זאב הלוי

והרבנית שרה פייגא בת ר' יעקב

זצוח"ל

PREFACE

DURING my work on the dramatization of Biblical characters, the idea occurred to me to extend my studies into the rabbinic field, and to give to the reading public a picture of one of the most significant Biblical figures as described by the sages.

I was, of course, aware of the "Legends of the Jews" by Professor Louis Ginzberg, in which most of the important Biblical characters are authoritatively treated. I thought, however, that there was room for reëxamining the original sources, and with the use of additional works, present in a special volume the life and acts of the most picturesque of these characters.

I do not claim that I have exhausted the subject. I feel, however, that the material utilized for my purpose, representative in character, gives a much needed portrait in English of the three Elijahs as created and pictured by the Rabbis.

I am greatly indebted to my esteemed teacher, Professor Henry Slonimsky, who happily opened for me the gates of folk-lore. It was in my walks and talks with him that I was inspired to work in the fertile fields of Midrash and Haggada.

I owe many thanks to my friends, Miss Cynthia Shapiro and Dr. Pauline Beakman, for reading the proofs, and to

my colleague, Rabbi Jacob Weinstein, who rendered me great service by making many helpful suggestions and reading the final proofs.

S. M. S.

New York, 1935.

CONTENTS

PART	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. THE ELIJAH OF THEOLOGY	7
B. ELIJAH AS THE PEG FOR JEWISH THOUGHT	9
II. SECTION I. THE HISTORICAL ELIJAH	19
A. ELIJAH'S BIRTH AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	21
1. Grand-child of Rachel	21
2. Menasseh and Gilead Are Unto Him	21
3. Four Names Had Elijah	22
4. And Elijah Was Called Pinehas	22
5. Did Elijah Have Any Children?	23
6. More Proof that Elijah Was from God	23
B. ELIJAH IN THE DESERT	24
1. Elijah Sees the End of Israel's Exile	24
2. Forty Days on One Meal	25
3. God Was Angry with Elijah	26
4. The Raven's Complaint	26
5. Elijah Studied Constantly	27
C. THE MIRACLES OF ELIJAH	28
1. Concerning Their Number	28
2. Concerning Their Place	28
3. Elisha's Miracles Greater than Elijah's	28
4. Whatever God Does the Righteous Can Do	28
5. A Simple Kal Wehomer	29
6. Elijah Prays for the Son of the Widow of Zarphat	29
7. The Righteous Will Come to Life Again	30
8. The Righteous Live For Ever	30
9. The Righteous Dead Are Mightier than the Living	31
10. Elijah Keeper of the Keys to Rain	31
11. Elijah Commands the Elements	32

	PAGE
D. ELIJAH'S DEALINGS WITH THE KINGS . . .	34
1. Ghosts that Chirp and Spirits that Mutter . . .	34
2. Concerning the Dew and the Rain	34
3. Ten Periods of Famine	35
4. Elijah Respects the Government	36
5. Wickedder than Jezebel	36
E. THE JOUST BETWEEN BAAL AND YAHVEH . . .	57
1. Two Bulls from One Manger	57
2. And His Fingers Became Like Wells	38
3. God Frustrates the Design of the Baal Prophets	39
4. God Silenced the World	39
F. ESPECIALLY SWEET IS THE PRAYER OF MINHA . . .	40
1. For the Sake of the Patriarchs	41
G. ELIJAH'S ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD	42
1. The Sun Halted as It Did for Joshua	42
2. Why Elijah Prayed as He Did	42
3. His Face between His Knees	44
4. Elijah Threatens God	44
H. ELIJAH AS A PROPHET	45
1. He Who Fights and Runs Away, Lives to Fight Another Day	45
2. Neither God nor Kings Love Zealous Prophets	46
3. Israel Is Like a Garden	47
4. Three Kinds of Prophets	48
5. Elijah Gainsaid God and Was Right	49
6. The Prophets Are in Truth Merciful	49
7. God Is Plentiful in Mercy	50
8. Only the Newly Born Have the Gift of Peace	50
I. THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH	52
1. God Shares His Glory with Mortals	52
2. Elijah Is the Storm	52
3. Elijah Is the Consoler	53
4. The Four Camps of Man's Habitation	53
5. On the Obligations of a Guest	54
6. The Torah Saves from Death	55
7. Conversation Should End with a Word of Torah	55
8. A Disciple Mourns for His Master	56
9. Nine Who Entered Paradise	56

CONTENTS

xi

PART	PAGE
10. Other Evidences of Elijah's Ascent to Heaven	57
11. The Fate of Elijah's Contemporaries	58
J. ELIJAH COMPARED TO MOSES	60
1. Both Are Redeemers of Israel	60
K. ELIJAH MISCELLANY	62
1. Elijah Knew What He Was Talking About	62
2. The Death Ray of the Lord	62
3. Hairy or Hairless, the Prophets Were Disliked	62
III. SECTION II. THE LEGENDARY ELIJAH	65
A. INFORMING THE PEOPLE OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD	67
1. God Ignores the Heretics	67
2. God Sees Both Sides of Every Question	67
3. The Holy One Relishes a Good Argument in the Academy	68
4. Of Prayers that Rocked the World	68
5. When the World Hung on Jehudah's Shoe	69
6. The Rabbis Are a Sight for Sore Eyes	69
7. Blessed Are the Peacemakers	69
8. Prayer Restrains the Hand of Death	70
B. ELIJAH THE FRIEND OF ISRAEL	71
1. How Sammael Gave Elijah a Beating	71
2. Why Mordecai Rent His Garment	72
3. Elijah Puts a Nail in Haman's Coffin	73
4. Elijah Announces the Doom of Jerusalem	74
5. How Elijah Exalted the Memory of R. Simeon	74
C. ELIJAH THE REDEEMER	76
1. Concerning Two Who Talked from the Womb	76
2. R. Ashi Clarifies Elijah's Answer	76
3. Messiah Sits Among the Poor and Suffering	77
4. Elijah Commands the Wearing of the Tallith	77
D. ELIJAH TEACHER OF THEORETICAL JUDAISM	79
1. Elijah's Air Service between Sura and Pumbedita	79
2. Elijah Seeks Instruction	79
3. Esther Knew Her Tannaim	79
4. God Is Anxious to Show His Mercy	80

	PAGE
5. The Earthquake Is God's Rod of Instruction	81
6. Poverty Is Israel's Crucible	82
7. Man Is Never Satisfied	82
8. In God's World, Even Forbidden Animals Have a Place	83
9. A Wife Does Help	83
10. A Non-Jewish Cemetery Does Not Contaminate a Priest	84
11. Nudists Are Not Seemly Unto God	84
12. How Joshua b. Levi Saw the Rubies of Chalcedon	84
13. The Rainbow Is a Sign of Unrighteousness	85
E. ELIJAH AS A TEACHER—TEACHING BY EXAMPLE	88
1. Elijah's Ways Are Strange But Just	88
2. Elijah Plays Virgil to Joshua	91
3. How Joshua Maneuvered His Way into Paradise	92
4. A Brief Statement of Elijah's Virtues	93
5. Knowledge Is Like the Shears of Delilah	94
6. Torah Is a Medicine and a Tonic	95
7. Sow Righteousness—Reap Mercy	96
8. Elijah's Formula for Happiness	96
9. Charity Averts the Evil Decree	97
10. Father Elijah Is All Too Human	97
11. The Hot-Tempered Are Barred from Torah	98
F. ELIJAH AS AN INSTRUCTOR—TEACHING BY REBUKE AND PUNISHMENT	99
1. Elijah Is Girded with the Hide of Isaac's Ram	99
2. Elijah Believes that Fear Is an Aid to Learning	99
3. Elijah Rebukes an Informer	100
4. R. Joshua Is Remiss in Prayer	100
5. A Simple "Please God" May Be Worth Many Denars	100
6. Elijah Counsels a Special Prayer for Travel	102
7. Elijah Makes the Prayer Fit the Occasion	102
8. He Can Be Terrible in Wrath	103
9. He Will Not Go Where the Poor Are Not Welcome	103
10. He Exposes a Murderer	103

CONTENTS

xiii

	PAGE
11. He Believes in Consideration for Servants . . .	104
12. He Encourages Eliezer ben Horkenos . . .	104
G. ELIJAH AS FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED . . .	106
1. There Are Always Poorer than the Poor . . .	106
2. Elijah Saves Nahum Gam Zu from Death . . .	106
3. And a Good Turn for Eleazar ben Perata . . .	107
4. Elijah and R. Meir's Reputation Foil the Romans	107
5. Elijah Assures Ben Yohai of His Eternal Re- ward	107
6. The Authority of Government Is Not Sovereign for Elijah	108
7. Elijah Is a Painless Dentist	108
8. Helps Shila in a Tough Spot	109
9. Rab Kahana Buttresses His Virtue with Elijah's Denars	109
10. The Woman Who Spat in R. Meir's Eye . . .	110
11. Beware of the Outer Garments of Piety . . .	110
H. ELIJAH AS FRIEND OF SCHOLARS AND MARTYRS	112
1. Akiba Finds a Sweet Lodging in Death . . .	112
2. Elijah Is Delayed by Good Works	113
I. ELIJAH, THE NEVER-FAILING FRIEND	115
1. The Story of the Thrice-widowed Bride Who Knew Her Torah	115
2. Adultery with a Demon Not Illegal	117
3. Elijah's Recipe for Disgorging a Serpent . . .	118
4. Never Get Angry on a Full Stomach	118
J. ELIJAH, FRIEND OF THE POOR	119
1. Elijah Lets Himself Be Sold for Eighty Thou- sand Denars	119
2. A Melange of Tall Tales	122
3. Concerning a Woman Who Proved a Fit Trustee of God's Wealth, or, Consult Your Wife and Be Prosperous	124
4. How to Make People Rich and Yet Keep Them Pious	126
5. When Wealth Comes in at the Window, Piety Goes Out at the Door	128

CONTENTS

	PAGE
6. God Abandons Those Who Abandon the Poor	130
7. Elijah Counsels Thrift, Even to the Gentile . . .	139
IV. SECTION III. ELIJAH IN THE RELIGIOUS SPECULATIONS OF ISRAEL	141
A. THE FUNCTIONS OF ELIJAH IN JEWISH THEOLOGY	143
1. Announcer of the Redemption	143
2. Reconciler of Children and Parents	143
3. Elijah As Pinehas	144
4. To Decide between Clean and Unclean, to Receive and to Expel	144
5. Elijah, Messenger of Fruitfulness	145
6. There Were Illegitimates in Israel	146
7. Restorer of the Pot and the Rod	146
8. Elijah, Successor to Aaron	147
9. Elijah Limited in Power to Reverse Decisions . .	147
B. THE HIDDEN, MYSTERIOUS AND DOUBTFUL MAT- TERS WHICH ELIJAH WILL CLARIFY	148
1. Domestic and Wild Animals	148
2. The Skin of Fish	148
3. Wine and Oil	148
4. Funerary Vessels	149
5. Halizah	149
6. Terumah	150
7. A Deep Covered Pan	151
8. Difficult Chapters in Ezekiel	151
9. Concerning Matters of Trust	151
10. Lost Articles	152
11. Slaves and Freeman	152
C. ELIJAH AS EXAMINER	153
1. Concerning the Festive Offering	153
2. Ezra Played Safe with the Dots	153
D. ELIJAH AS THE HARBINGER OF THE DAY OF THE LORD	155
1. Pinehas b. Yair Proves It from Malachi	155
2. A Common-sense Deduction	155
3. Elijah in the Place of the Angel	156
4. Elijah Will Kill the Guardian Angel of the Wicked Nation	156

CONTENTS

xv

	PAGE
5. The Whirlwind Is Moses and the Storm Is Elijah	156
6. The Messenger to Israel	157
E. ELIJAH AND THE HARBINGER OF THE MESSIAH	158
1. The Messiahs Among the Four Craftsmen	158
2. The Bearer of Good Tidings	158
3. The Light before the Truth	159
4. He Will Awaken Israel from Its Slumber	159
5. Elijah Spoke and Messiah Said	160
6. In Speaking of the Dam, Elijah Is Meant	160
7. The Seven Living Links	161
F. ELIJAH AS AN ANGEL	162
1. He Flies Like a Bird	162
2. The Chair of Elijah	162
3. Elijah Is Semi-express	162
4. A Dog's Howl Is an Evil Portent	163
5. Elijah Records the Affairs of Men	163
6. Elijah at the Cross-roads	164
7. Elijah Will Demand that the Merits of the Children Redeem the Sins of the Parents	164
8. Elijah Comforts the Messiah	165
9. Elijah Punishes the Man Who Chooses a Mate Unwisely	166
10. But for the Wise Chooser—a Kiss	166
G. ELIJAH A MAN OF MYSTERY	167
1. Redemption Will Come Piecemeal	167
2. The Messiah Will Go, Elijah Will Remain	167
3. And He Will Resurrect the Dead	168
INDEX	169

INTRODUCTION

THIS volume was first intended to give a picture of Elijah in our tradition. It brings together the various stories and opinions uttered by the sages and scholars of Israel through the six centuries during which the Mid-rashic literature of Israel was compiled. It has turned out, however, that the book reveals more about the mind of Israel, the folk habits and the group needs of the people than it does of the particular character of Elijah.

In the stories of Elijah the mythos and the religion of Israel try to live on terms of congenial compromise and this accounts for the utterly realistic note that is to be found in all these tales. The result pleases neither the religionist, whose medium is simplification, whether of dogma or creed, nor the myth maker, who revels in a fulness of imagination that must never be cramped by brittle fact. In the saga of Elijah, as in all the sagas of Israel, it is apparent, as Buber has so well pointed out,¹ that religion wins the apparent victory but that the real triumph is always with mythos. A volatile people, driven from pillar to post, ever making new adjustments, cannot live by the cold white light of rigid dogmatic creeds. It needs the intimate, the petty, the often contradictory, the sometimes unintelligible guidance of the story-teller. So we find it here.

¹ See *Jewish Mysticism*, p. xxii, J. M. Dent & Co., London, 1931.

In spite of the chaos which first appears when one is confronted with the tales concerning Elijah, there is a threefold category into which they might be fitted without too much recourse to Procrustean devices. We have considered Elijah, first as an historic Biblical character; second as the legendary figure created by the naïve fancy of the Amoraim and the Tannaim; and thirdly as the eschatological figure of the theologians. In their attempt to deal with the historic Elijah, the rabbis succeeded only in gilding the lily. Naturally with their attitude of reverence toward a document divinely inspired, they could not improve on any of the factual data in the story. From the rabbis, as from the Bible, we know that Elijah was a prophet during the reign of King Ahab. We know that he came from the land east of the Jordan. Some say more definitely from Gilead, and some say Gad.⁷ We know also that the chief event of his life was his victory over the prophets of Baal. We learn that he had to flee from the vengeance of Jezebel and take refuge in the wilderness where some of his most vital religious inspirations took place. When the rabbis began to enlarge on the structure of the story so artistically and simply given in the Bible, they produced details sometimes interesting but for the most part damaging to the æsthetic integrity of the original. For instance, it is not enough that Elijah wins over the Baalim by the power of his prayer. He must become a kind of magician who makes wells out of his fingers so that the four pitchers of water fill the entire place.⁸ It is not enough to say that the priests of Baal danced in dervish fashion, hesitating and

⁷ See p. 21.

⁸ See p. 38.

advancing in their incantation. The rabbis account for the hesitation. They introduce a certain Hiel, who is hidden in a pit and is instructed by the Baal prophets to set fire to the wood at the appropriate time. That is why, the sages explain, they hesitate, to avoid the pit. The God of Elijah is able to match the cunning of the Baalim. He sends a serpent to kill Hiel.⁴ It is not enough to say that two bullocks were offered up. The rabbis must intrude a dramatic description of a dialogue between the bullock chosen for Baal, and Elijah.⁵ Of course in so doing, the rabbis make the point that even the animal kingdom is faithful to the Creator, and in so doing they add a detail which draws out the story to the great delight of children and even of such grown-ups as never tire of chewing the cud of Biblical tales. But violence is done to the artistry and the dramatic sense of the Biblical narrative and there is a certain *lèse majesté* committed against the God of Israel, who spoke and it was, when He is compelled to resort to cunning devices. The rabbis adorned the telling of this story of the bullocks with a moral. The moral was that God's way is done through the instruments of evil as through the instruments of good. On this stage on which so many parts are played, even the villain works ultimately for righteousness.

Earlier moralists, before the closing of the canon, put their morals into the Biblical stories also, but they still had something of the flavor of the classic style. The rabbis of the Midrash have lost that flavor and that is why one cannot move from the Biblical tales into their stories without a sharp feeling of come-down. Only in

⁴ See p. 39.

⁵ See p. 37.

one instance perhaps is this sense of come-down absent. It is in that passage in Exodus Rabbah where the rabbis dramatize in universal ethical terms the challenge of Elijah to the Baal worshipers. What did God do? they ask. "He caused the whole world to be quiet, silencing the angels and the creatures on earth; and the whole world remained void as though there were no creatures at all. Had there been even a single sound the priests might have said it was the voice of Baal. How much deeper must the silence have been when God spoke on Sinai? He caused the world to be silent so that the creatures might know that there is no other God." ⁶

In their interpretation of Biblical character the rabbis pay Elijah the supreme tribute of comparing him to Moses. More than twenty ways are listed in which the prophet Elijah parallels the acts and thoughts of Moses.⁷ Still in a profounder sense the two differed. Moses was the immovable mountain who spoke, like God, once and for all. His commands were crystallized into tablets of stone and remained far off beacon lights. When his work was done the great prophet was buried in a hidden and unknown grave. He is the classic figure of Israel, molded in heroic proportions and complete. He has become the measuring rod and all things are compared unto him. On Mount Carmel, it is true, Elijah is seen in this same heroic stride, but he does not keep it long. He comes down from the mountain. He mingles with the people, he loses the prophetic manner, he becomes an humble wanderer, given to petty tasks, speaking in the crabbed prosaic accents of a people made small by circumstance. He is indeed the

⁶ See p. 39.

⁷ See pp. 60-61.

mountain come to the people and become one of them. What he loses in dignity he makes up in effectiveness. He becomes a friendly partner of Israel, a humble man to whom all men can come. It is this Elijah with whom we deal in the second category, the Elijah of Rabbinic legend.

In fact, there is so deep a rift between the Elijah of the Bible as described by the rabbis, and the Elijah of Rabbinic legend, independent of the Rabbinic narrative, that there are some who maintain that the two are entirely different characters, confused merely by the unfortunate application of the same name to both of them. This thesis is difficult to maintain, however. The folk mind is often confused, it is true, but in the long run it sloughs off drastic errors. The folk mind would not have made Elijah the prophet, the Tishbite, the man from Gilead, out of a person who had no germane connection with the Biblical character. It is far easier to account for the strident differences in the Biblical and post-Biblical picture of Elijah by merely taking account of the drastic changes in the circumstances of the people of Israel. Then, too, it must be remembered that the writers of the canon were a select group. They were the aristocrats of culture. They would naturally describe a figure in the dignified and classic manner in which they were disciplined. The writers of the Midrashim were simple people, undistinguished from the great mass of Jews. Their picture of Elijah would naturally be in terms familiar to them.

The Elijah of legend runs the whole gamut of functions. He is all things to all men. Nothing is too high, nothing too low for him. In a sense he parallels the

Christian Jesus, for he becomes the word made flesh. He is the embodiment of God's way on earth. He also assumes the functions of the many saints of Christendom, since he is a patron of all the needy and comes to them in the crises of their lives, whether that crisis depends on obtaining a meal or on evading a shrewish wife. Unlike the saints of Christendom, however, Elijah comes not with a shining halo or the radiant veil of the anointed. He comes in the form in which he is needed, whether as young man, old man, Arab, harlot, teacher, prince or slave. Perhaps it is an omen of the inveterate democracy of Israel that its story-tellers should convert the patron angel of the folk into a painless dentist, a quack, a perjurer, a slave or a simple wanderer. Yet this is what the sages have done with Elijah. In spite of the quick changes of character and function which Elijah undergoes, he does not lose his essential humanity, nor does he ever forget the high ethical values of the race. Our Elijah is hot-tempered, though he admits that a hot-tempered man cannot be a sage. He hates informers, stool pigeons; and will not accept the excuse of compulsion.⁸ He is even driven at one time to kill a man when the latter shows a special indignity to God in prayer.⁹ Yet this hot-tempered, vengeful man hates the mean and the proud. He will not visit a person who guards himself from the poor by an iron gate.¹⁰ He will not converse with a man who allows his servants only one portion, and that after the meal.¹¹ He is so utterly human that though he knows that "Jeshurun" kicketh when he waxeth fat, and that wealth is the

⁸ See p. 100.

⁹ See p. 103.

¹⁰ See p. 103.

¹¹ See p. 104.

enemy of piety, he still insists that the pious poor be given a taste of riches. He does not consider it wasteful that these enriched shall again be deprived of their wealth and again learn piety through poverty. To Elijah human nature needs this chastening experience. He understands that a poor man may treasure his piety above all things, know that wealth will endanger that piety, and yet desire a chance at affluence. Though this playing the rôle of benevolent patron is Elijah's most common function in Rabbinic legend (and considering the poverty of Israel in the period when these legends were compiled it is no wonder that this should be so), his more gracious rôle is that of teacher by example. He teaches the boorish rich farmer, who feels that with gold in his bag there is no need for God or heaven, to say "Please God."¹² He teaches Akibah in the days of his early poverty that no man can be so poor that he cannot find those poorer still.¹³

In sum, the Elijah of legend is the repository of the conflicting needs and ideals of the folk. Just as the normal hunger for wealth and power conflicts in every human breast with the desire for knowledge and decency and human kindness, so Elijah must be at one and the same time the giver of wealth and power and the teacher of humility and piety.

THE ELIJAH OF THEOLOGY

Theology is a loose word when applied to Judaism. Since there was no formal distinction between the religious and the not-religious, there is no cut-and-dried

¹² See pp. 100-102.

¹³ See p. 106.

theological speculation in the literature of Israel. Human and divine, sacred and secular are inextricably mixed. This is strikingly illustrated in the case of Elijah. His theological functions in the sense of fulfilling some ordained cosmic event are almost as varied as his duties in the realm of legend. In that twilight era before the judgment day, when all hidden things shall be revealed, Elijah will be the winnower, who will sift the clean from the unclean. He will be the chief examiner, putting the sages of Israel through their paces. He will clarify all doubtful hermeneutical points. He will be the messenger of good tidings. He will be the successor of Aaron, and interpret the words of Moses, who will stammer then as he stammered before. Most human and delightful of all, he will be the chief reconciler, bringing the hearts of the children to the parents and the hearts of the parents to their children. In short, he will be, if not the Messiah, the precursor of the Messiah. Experience has taught Israel that an evil and corrupt world does not turn into sweetness and light, even by heavenly fiat. Redemption will be piecemeal.¹⁴ Realizing the slow and tedious road of righteousness, Israel gave its God an extension of time. It permitted Him to send the harbinger of the real Messiah, the Messiah ben Joseph, who would proclaim the coming of Messiah ben David, and then they gave God a further extension of time and made Elijah the precursor of Messiah ben Joseph. The forerunner of Messiah in religious speculation is not so much a framework of dogma, but rather the almost mystic bearer of the Shekina. It is his task to make man the ladder upon which

¹⁴ See pp. 76-77.

earth mounts into heaven and heaven comes down upon earth.

ELIJAH AS THE PEG FOR JEWISH THOUGHT

The tales of Elijah tell more about the Jewish mentality, its habits of thought, its peculiar values, than they do about the life of Elijah himself. They indicate first of all the ambivalent results of poverty on the Jewish spirit. It is obvious that it dulled the edge of Jewish fancy, that it shrunk the horizon of the Jewish imagination. We have already called attention to the prosaic and leaden manner of the narrators' descriptive faculty. The story which we call "A Melange of Tall Tales,"¹⁵ is quite typical of the distressing awkwardness of the storyteller when he dealt with things of nature. Compare this story, or its descriptive passages at least, with the nature psalms, such as Psalm one hundred and four, to understand how clogged and cumbersome Jewish poesy had become.

But the cramping of the literary style was but a minor defect after all. It cramped the moral sense as well. The story of R. Kahana, who was about to commit suicide in order to avoid adultery with a woman, is one of the most revealing stories in the Talmud. When Elijah, having run four hundred Persian miles to avert the suicide, rebukes him, R. Kahana says, "Whose fault is it? Is it not my poverty that caused all this?"¹⁶ And it is this poverty also that makes money, coin, so constant an element in the Hebraic story. It serves as the Aladdin's lamp, the fairy wand, the magic genii. It is the source of all relief

¹⁵ See pp. 122-124.

¹⁶ See p. 109.

and salvation from all distress. It is with a lucky coin that Elijah brings prosperity to the poverty-stricken. It is the loss of the lucky coin that drives them back into poverty again. When Elijah wants to perform a miracle he no longer calls a bolt from the blue, or commands fire to consume the wood. He sells a garment to a poor man for a small price and buys it back for a larger sum. Buying and selling had become the essential means of their livelihood. Earthly salvation depended on a profitable sale. Our story-tellers, for all their naïve interludes, were realists. They did not disregard the mean and corrupting consequences of want.

A poverty-stricken, politically oppressed people cannot always be grateful, even though the relief which they occasionally obtain comes by the benevolent action of unselfish leaders. Mean conditions engender a base ingratitude, as we see from the story in *Pesikta Rabbati*. Jeremiah pleaded with God, saying, "Master of the Universe, I cannot prophesy before the people of Israel, for is there any prophet that came to them whom they did not try to kill? When Moses and Aaron appeared before them, did not the people attempt to stone them? When Elijah appeared before them, they jeered at him, calling him the Hairy Man. When Elisha appeared before them, they mocked, calling, 'Go up, thou bald head.'" ¹⁷

So, too, oppression, while it breeds contempt for the oppressors, nevertheless instils in the oppressed a morbid concern for the dominant group's good opinion. *Ma Yomru Hagoyim* haunts even the prayers of the prophets as they beg God to intercede for their people. The Agadot

¹⁷ See pp. 62-63.

Bereshit tells us that Elijah prayed to God in this wise: "Let it be known this day that Thou art God of Israel. That is, grant me my request for the same reason that Thou didst act in Egypt, namely, that the Egyptians might know that Thou art God." And this is not the first time that we find such sentiments in this body of literature. God is asked to perform His miracles not for His sake, nor for the sake of Israel, but that the Gentiles might know that He is God.

The persecution of petty tyrants, the dogged insecurity of the economic basis of their lives, all these conspired to induce a distaste for fundamental thinking. Few indulged in analyses of the social and political sources of the Jewish troubles. Just as they personalized the causes of their woe, so did they personalize the possible source of salvation. Relief was not seen in the regular order of things, in the growth of education, in the development of more equitable economic institutions. To the Jewish mind it was to come, if at all, by luck, by chance, by fiat, by the sudden appearance of a mysterious friend who knew a secret, a formula, a magic incantation by which the oppressors could be wheedled, threatened or scared into a momentary kindness. Elijah often plays the rôle of this mysterious stranger who knows hidden things. Such, for instance, is the story that Sisero did not rightfully own his garden but had taken it from a Jew whom he had slain.¹⁸ And again, Elijah orders a wall in the house of a miserly host to be repaired by magic, because he knows that there is a treasure hidden under that wall and this apparent act of kindness turns out to be Elijah's

¹⁸ See pp. 103-104.

method of punishing the discourteous.¹⁹ A time came later when the folk patience was exhausted, when Israel needed a more direct and brutal kind of redeemer. It was then that Rabbi Loew of Prague created the Golem who was not interested in discovering secret pass words or in revealing hidden knowledge, but who by the brash compulsion of his mighty aim hacked a way for Israel.

Yet it was the happy faculty of the Jewish mind to make of this necessity, too, a virtue. Elijah is quoted as saying to R. Eliezer, "What is the meaning of the verse, 'Behold I have refined thee but not as silver. I have tried thee in the furnace of affliction.'" The answer given in *Hagigah* is, "God looked around for the best condition for Israel and concluded that poverty is the one most fitted for it."²⁰

Where buying and selling are such necessary qualities in the life of the people, it is not to be wondered at that they picture their heroes in terms of cunning. Consider, for instance, the story of how Joshua ben Levi maneuvered his way into Paradise, and how he wangled the sword from the Angel of Death.²¹ Or see the story of how Ezra the Scribe accounted for the dots over the letters of a certain verse.²²

When we have made all due allowances for the corrupting influences of poverty and the mean defense mechanisms which Jews devised to meet pressing conditions, when we have been shocked time and again by evidence of craft on the part of the Talmudic heroes, we

¹⁹ See pp. 88-91.

²⁰ See p. 82.

²¹ See pp. 92-93.

²² See pp. 153-154.

are nevertheless impressed that the spiritual core of Israel is still sound in spite of all compromise and temptation. The ideals of learning, of piety, of justice are still triumphant. For all the reverence which necessity laid at the feet of wealth, it was never considered an end in itself. To the lucky person who happened to possess wealth, the prophet Elijah and all the moralists of Israel brought the messages that wealth was merely a trust which God has placed in the hands of those who can do His work with it.

In Midrash Ruth Zuta we have the appealing story of a woman who took the trusteeship of wealth which Elijah had miraculously placed in the hands of her husband so seriously and so ably, that when Elijah came at the end of the agreed period to retrieve the wealth, the woman refused to give it up. She maintained that if he, Elijah, could find more trustworthy people in the world, she would return the money to him. The Midrash goes on to say, "God saw that they were right, for He knew that they had acted as trustees for His money, in that they had not used it for themselves alone but for all who were in need." ²³

But wealth, whether selfishly or unselfishly used, is still subordinate to learning. In Seder Elijahu Zuta, Elijah gives us a formula for happiness. He used to say, we find there, "Heaven and earth testify that to a scholar who studies the Bible and the traditions for the sake of God, and who supports himself, the following verse applies: When thou eatest of the labor of thy hands, happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee." ²⁴

²³ See pp. 124-126.

²⁴ See pp. 96-97.

Perhaps it was only by exalting learning into a fetish that Israel was able to withstand the relentless vise of a mean environment. It is only by understanding this necessity that we can be patient with the *pilpul*, the word-play which we see in so many of these stories. The Torah was the reservoir of all their sanctions. What was found in the Torah could not be wrong, no matter how hard it might be to reconcile Scripture with reason. Likewise, reasons needed to justify conduct were somehow found in the Torah. It is hard for moderns bitten by the acids of Biblical criticism to conceive that by grossly stretching the obvious meaning of the text, the Rabbis honored the Torah.

Says R. Samuel: "The words of the Torah should be studied morning and evening, and this is proof of it: Elijah would study the Torah morning and evening. As the verse says, 'And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the evening, and he drank the waters of the brook.'" ²⁵ "God decreed," we find in Deuteronomy Rabbah, "that winter be winter and summer summer. Elijah came and made the winter summer, as it is written, 'As the Lord liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.'" ²⁶ As another proof of the facility with which the sages found sanction in the Scriptures for that which they wanted to prove, we find in Deuteronomy Rabbah: *The Lord is long suffering and great in power . . . the Lord is the whirlwind and the storm is His way, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.* ²⁷ Whirlwind refers to Moses, while the storm refers

²⁵ See p. 27.

²⁶ See pp. 32-33.

²⁷ Nahum 1:3.

to Elijah the prophet. Proof—*And Elijah went up by a storm into Heaven.*²⁸

We have spoken of the cumbersome imagination of the sages. We have called attention to their extreme ineptness in describing phenomena of nature. We must accord them their due, however, when it comes to finding apt parallels, striking analogies, revealing parables by which our human nature is made clearer to our perception. Consider, for instance, the Midrash in which the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are compared to the dead branches which support the vine,²⁹ or the story in Pesikta Rabbati where the sages explain the apparent harshness of the prophets by the analogy of the advisor who counseled his king to put his son into prison and let him die by starvation rather than by the prescribed method of fire.³⁰ The advisor gave this advice, knowing that when the king's anger had subsided he would have compassion on his son, and so did the prophets advise God concerning the world. Or consider the Midrash in which it is explained why God is called King of Glory. Because, say the sages, God shares His glory where mortals would fear to do so. The mortal king would not allow others to ride on his horse or sit on his throne. But it was otherwise with God, for He permitted Solomon to sit on His throne and Elijah to ride His horse.³¹

We have seen from our survey of the traditional sources concerning the life and deeds of Elijah that Elijah cannot be classified in any one category. He was a folk

²⁸ II Kings 2:11b. See p. 52.

²⁹ See p. 41.

³⁰ See p. 49.

³¹ See p. 52.

hero in the truest and deepest sense of the term. He became what the folk wanted him to be, and their desire in turn was dictated by their necessity. Therefore, Elijah becomes all things to all people. He is at times the sublime prophet, at times a shifty Mercury, then again a relentless advocate pleading for mercy from a just God, then a disillusioned man demanding harsh vengeance from a God of justice, and then in turn he is merchant, street Arab, slave, judge, domestic arbitrator, stern tutor, and a friend who mysteriously appears when Israel is in distress.

We have seen that of all the functions attributed to Elijah, two are outstanding. He is to announce the great and terrible day of the Lord, and he is to turn the hearts of the children to the parents. The latter rôle is not only the most gracious of all his functions but also the most significant, when we consider the real day-by-day needs of the people of Israel. The folk mind could have paid Elijah no higher tribute. Messiahs after all were far off. Patron kings and princes not seldom failed them. Judges and scholars were at times abtruse, and at times confusing. The family alone stood as the bulwark against the forces of disintegration. The home was the island of love and serenity in a world of hate. The sacrifice of parents for children and the reverence of children for parents were the high enduring values to which Israel held fast from the days of Abraham to those of Moses Mendelssohn. The exalted place of the *Akedath Yitzchak* story in the religious calendar, the countless proverbs and maxims, the emphasis on filial loyalty in the ethical wills, testify to the almost supreme position which Israel ascribed to these major sanctities of the home. More devastating than

the fear of wars or oppressive taxes or zealous proselytizers was the fear of family dissension. It is natural therefore that Elijah, the miracle-worker, the all-competent, should be entrusted with the task of bringing estranged children back to the heart of their parents.

The Rabbis saw beyond the family, however. The generations were as parents and children one to another. The sour grapes of the elders set the children's teeth on edge. The sins of one generation reaped the death harvest in the next. This was too cruel a reality for the folk mind of Israel. Such a world might be congenial to a God of stern justice, but not to a God who was the Father of mercy. The Rabbis therefore dulled the razor edge of necessity. They robbed cause and effect of their brutal inevitability. They converted the fate of the children whose fathers had eaten sour grapes into a noble mission of atonement. In the story that is related in Midrash Koheleth Rabbah, the children plead that their suffering and their untimely deaths be accepted as complete penance for their parents' guilt. This sublime reversal of the rôle of parents and offspring is entrusted to Elijah, who belongs to all generations. He it is who makes this plea for the children before the God of Israel.³² And thus Elijah gives a fresh turn to Israel's absorption with the thought of unity, the oneness of all life, the link of the generations, that unity, in short, which was to serve as the compelling theme for all the philosophers and pious men, whether Chassidim or Rabbis, that were to come.

³² See pp. 164-165.

SECTION I
THE HISTORICAL ELIJAH

ELIJAH'S BIRTH AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

GRAND-CHILD OF RACHEL

There was a controversy in the Academy concerning the ancestry of Elijah. Some of the teachers said that he was a descendant of the tribe of Gad, while others said that he was a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. Then Elijah himself came in and said to the Rabbis: "My teachers, what are you arguing about? Let it be known that I am one of the grand-children of Rachel."

Genesis Rabbah, ch. 71, sec. 12; ed. Warsaw, 1867.

See also:

Seder Eliyahu Zuta, ch. 15, p. 199; ed. Friedmann.

Midrash Hagadol Wayeze, column 473; ed. Schechter.

MENASSEH AND GILEAD ARE UNTO HIM

The verse *Gilead is unto me*¹ refers to Elijah who was an inhabitant of Gilead. The verse *Menasseh is unto me*² refers to the Messiah, who is to come from the children of Menasseh. According to another interpretation, given in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish, the verse *Gilead is unto me* implies that God said, "If anyone should say that the dead will not be resurrected, answer him that Elijah, who comes from Gilead,³ testifies to the contrary, for did he not say: 'Did not I bring to life the dead son

¹ Psalms 60:9.

² *Ibid.*

³ I Kings 17:1.

of Zaraphath with the help of God?' ” This is the force of the verse *Gilead is unto me*.

Numbers Rabbah, ch. 14, sec. 1; ed. Wilna.

FOUR NAMES HAD ELIJAH

R. Elazar ben Pedat said: Elijah was a citizen of Jerusalem and a member of the Sanhedrin that met on the Temple Mount. He was a citizen of the government of Judah and his estate was in the midst of Benjamin and Judah. Elijah had four names, as we see from the verse, *And Jaareshiah and Elijah and Zichri were the sons of Jehoram.*⁴ Why was Elijah called by the name Jaareshiah? Because when God wanted to destroy the world by a storm,⁵ Elijah arose and mentioned the merits of the patriarchs, and therefore God spared the world through mercy.

Exodus Rabbah, ch. 40, sec. 4; ed. Wilna.

AND ELIJAH WAS CALLED PINEHAS

R. Eliezer says: The Holy One, blessed be He, conferred upon Elijah the name of Pinehas, who was one of the settlers of Gilead. This is to teach us that Elijah brought about the repentance of Israel upon the Mount of Gilead, as the Scripture says: *Behold I give unto you my covenant, my covenant of life and peace.* Therefore God gave him life in this world, and a good reward in the world to come as well.

Yalkut Shimeoni Pinehas, sec. 771.

See also:

Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 47.

⁴ I Chronicles 8:27.

⁵ This is a play on the Hebrew, *ra'ash* meaning storm.

DID ELIJAH HAVE ANY CHILDREN?

R. Nathan one day asked R. Yose bar Hanina: "Did Elijah have children or not?"

R. Yose answered with the verse: *Do not touch my anointed ones, and upon my prophets visit no evil.*⁶ He continued: "The Holy One, blessed be He, chose His anointed ones, and set them apart from the rest of Israel for His service, and He gathered them into His temple. Concerning such a one (who is like an angel), are you asking concerning his descendants?"

Yalkut Sofer Pinehas, p. 111b, Foks, 1900.

MORE PROOF THAT ELIJAH WAS FROM GAD

The verse *And Leah said: Fortune is come! And she called his name Gad*⁷ comes to teach us that a little goat⁸ arrived at the house. Surely it cannot mean a little goat. Rather there came one who was destined to undermine the foundation of idolatry. And who, pray, is that but Elijah? This confirms the opinion of R. Nehorai who says that Elijah is of the tribe of Gad.

Midrash Hagadol, Weyeze, column 473, ed. Schechter.

⁶ Psalms 105:15.

⁷ Genesis 30:11.

⁸ This is a play on the Hebrew word *Gad*, meaning goat.

ELIJAH IN THE DESERT

ELIJAH SEES THE END OF ISRAEL'S EXILE

The verse: *And he lay down and slept under a broom-tree*^o tells us that the archangel Michael revealed the Secret to the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel. He showed him the end of Israel's exile, which would take place at the end of days, the end of the four governments, while the fourth king was ruling. Elijah tells of the revelation: "The spirit of God carried me away and brought me to the south of the world, where I saw a high place on fire and where no living creature could enter. The spirit of God carried me to the east of the world, where I saw the stars fighting with each other, ever fighting. The spirit carried me again and brought me to the western side of the world. There I saw souls being judged according to their deeds. And then finally did Michael the angel reveal to me the end of the exile that would take place."

Elijah, blessed be his memory, said further: "I see the dead drowning in a river, and their ashes collected and returned to their original state, to praise God as the resurrected did in the time of Ezekiel, when the guilty were punished and the righteous witnessed the suffering of the wicked." Elijah said again: "I see the fire coming down upon the wicked, and God removing the Temple

^o I Kings 19:5.

very far from them, that the righteous may not hear the noise and cries of the wicked and be moved to compassion by praying for them."

Elijah, blessed be his memory, continued the vision: "I see the Patriarchs and all the righteous sitting, and the land is spread before them, filled with all kinds of sweet things, and a special tree planted by God himself stands in the center of the garden, while vessels, freighted with riches, bring gifts to the righteous."

The vision of Elijah unfolded, and he saw a beautiful and great city coming down from heaven, a city built with perfection—the city of Jerusalem and its people dwelling there. The city contained three thousand and twenty towers, each a *ris*¹⁰ in size. Within each tower there are twenty-five thousand cubits filled with precious stones and pearls.

Elijah, blessed be his memory, again divined: "I see the houses and gates of the righteous, their door-posts made of precious stones, and the treasures of the Temple by their doors, while among them there is Torah and peace," as it is said: *And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.*¹¹

Yellinek Bet Hamidrash, Vol. III, pp. 65-68.

FORTY DAYS ON ONE MEAL

Concerning the verse: *And he (Moses) came to the Mount of God in Horeb,*¹² R. Simeon, the son of José, says that the cattle of Moses went for forty days and

¹⁰ A measure of length, two-fifteenths of a mile.

¹¹ Isaiah 54:13.

¹² Exodus 3:1.

tasted nothing, just as in the case of Elijah, as the verse says: *And he arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meal forty days and forty nights into Horeb.*¹³

Midrash Tanhumah Shemot, sec. 14; Warsaw, 1902.

GOD WAS ANGRY WITH ELIJAH

The verse concerning Elijah's forty days and forty nights in the desert signifies that God was angry with him for having spoken against Israel. God put Elijah into deep slumber and in a dream showed him the forty days and forty nights that Moses stood on Mount Sinai and prayed for the Israelites when they committed the sin of the golden calf. Elijah should have done likewise.

Furthermore, Elijah should have considered the fact that Israel had received the Torah and for that reason he ought not to have slandered them. This is the force of the verse: *And he walked for forty days*¹⁴ for he was pondering on Israel's receiving the Torah.

Yalkut Haddash, ch. on Elijah, sec. 3; Leub, 1928.

THE RAVEN'S COMPLAINT

At the time of the Flood the Raven protested to God: "Why did you pick me from all the animal kingdom?" R. Braḥya said that God answered the Raven in this wise: "You have been selected because the world will need you in the future." The Raven then asked, "When will that be?" God answered: "When the land will be dry from lack of water, and when a righteous one (Elijah) will

¹³ I Kings 19:8. This verse ends with *Horeb*, hence the parallel with Moses.

¹⁴ I Kings 19:8.

arise and bring drought upon the world. Then will you be of service to him, as the verse says: *The Ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and in the evening meat and bread.*¹⁶ R. Judah, however, said in the name of Rab that the Ravens obtained this food from the butcher shops of Ahab.

Hullin 5a.

ELIJAH STUDIED CONSTANTLY

R. Samuel, the son of Emi, says: "The words of the Torah should be studied mornings and evenings and this is the proof of it: Elijah, his memory be blessed, would study the Torah mornings and evenings, while the Ravens supplied him with bread and meat, as the verse says, *And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the evening, and he drank the waters of the brook.*"¹⁶

Midrash Samuel, ch. 5, sec. 2; ed. Buber.

¹⁶ I Kings 17:6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

THE MIRACLES OF ELIJAH

CONCERNING THEIR NUMBER

There were eight miracles performed by Elijah and sixteen by Elisha.

32 Middot of R. Eliezer, Midah 1; ed. Wilna.

CONCERNING THEIR PLACE

The verse *For the thickets of the Jordan are spoiled*¹⁷ refers to Elijah and Elisha, who performed their miracles at the Jordan.

Abbot d'R. Nathan, version 1, ch. 4, pp. 12b-13a; ed. Schechter.

ELISHA'S MIRACLES GREATER THAN ELIJAH'S

The verse *And Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground*,¹⁸ teaches us that the miracles performed by Elisha at the Jordan were greater than those of Elijah.¹⁹

32 Middot of R. Eliezer, *ibid.*

WHATEVER GOD DOES THE RIGHTEOUS CAN DO

What is the meaning of the verse: *The righteous one rules by the fear of the Lord?*²⁰ This teaches us that what-

¹⁷ Zechariah 11:3. The Hebrew word *Jordan* also means "they came down."

¹⁸ II Kings 2:8.

¹⁹ This interpretation is based on the verse, *Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me* (II Kings 2:9).

²⁰ II Samuel 23:3.

ever God does the righteous can do. God splits the waters; so did Elijah and Elisha. God withholds the rain; so did Elijah. God brings down the fire; so did Elijah. As the verse says, *Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering.*²¹

Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, ch. 10, sec. 3; ed. Wilna.

See also:

Midrash Samuel, ch. 29, sec. 2; ed. Buber.

Genesis Rabbah, ch. 77, sec. 1; ed. Wilna.

A SIMPLE KAL WEḤOMER

How do we know that the metal coffin containing the body of Joseph came to the surface of the water when Moses prayed? We know this from the fact that the axe made of iron came to the surface by the prayer of Elisha, who was but the pupil of Elijah, who in turn was the pupil of Moses. How much more readily then would the metal coffin come to the surface when Moses himself prayed.

Sotah 13a.

ELIJAH PRAYS FOR THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF ZARPHAT

R. Simeon said: By the strength and power of Charity will the dead be resurrected. This we learn from the case of Elijah who wandered from mount to mount and from cave to cave. When he came to Zarphat, a widow received him with great hospitality. Although Elijah, the widow and her son ate from the widow's small store of bread and oil, the food remained plentiful because of Elijah. When, a few days later, her son became ill and died, the widow

²¹ I Kings 17:38.

claimed the life of her boy from Elijah. Elijah then prayed to God: "Master of the Universe, are not all these sorrows I have experienced enough that I must now bear the burden of the widow's complaint? If you will bring her son to life again the people will know that the dead will be resurrected." His prayer was answered.

Pirke d'R. Eliezer, ch. 33; Warsaw, 1912.

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL COME TO LIFE AGAIN

R. Hananel said in the name of Rab: In the future the righteous will be resurrected. This we see from the verse, *Then shall the lambs feed as in their pastures;*²² and again in Micah it says, *Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old.*²³ "Bashan" refers to Elisha, and "Gilead" to Elijah.

Pesaḥim 68a.

THE RIGHTEOUS LIVE FOR EVER

R. Judah says: "Should one ask, if Adam had not sinned, would he have lived for ever? answer him, is it not true that Elijah, because he did not sin, lives for ever!

"If another should ask you, would God resurrect the dead? answer him that God did it long ago through Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel."

R. Aḥa says in the name of R. Samuel ben Naḥman: "Whatever miracles God will perform in the future, he has already partly done through the righteous.

"God promised, 'I will resurrect the dead,' and He has done it already through Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel. God promised, 'I will open the eyes of the blind,' and this was

²² Isaiah 5:17.

²³ Micah 7:14b.

already done, as it says, *And Elijah prayed, Lord I pray Thee open his eyes that he may see.*"²⁴

Tanḥuma Emor., sec. 12; ed. Buber.

THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD ARE MIGHTIER THAN THE LIVING

R. Hama bar Ḥanina says that the righteous are more powerful dead than they are alive. As Scripture states: *And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha he came to life and stood upon his feet.*²⁵

R. Papa confided to Abayye that perhaps in this case the bones of the dead man came to life when they touched the body of Elisha, in order that the blessing of Elijah expressed in the verse, *I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me*²⁶ might be realized. To this Abayye rejoined: "If that were the reason, why could not the resurrected man walk home?" Elijah's blessing was fulfilled when Elisha cured the leprosy of Naamon.

Hullin 7b.

ELIJAH, KEEPER OF THE KEYS TO RAIN

Simeon ben Shataḥ sent the following note to Honi, Hamagil, who forced God to answer his prayer for rain: "If you had not been Honi I would have excommunicated you for commanding God to send down rain. Are these times like the times of Elijah, who held in his hands the keys to rain? Has not the name of God been desecrated? But what can I do to you for all your sins before God,

²⁴ II Kings 6:17.

²⁵ II Kings 13:21.

²⁶ II Kings 2:9.

since He does your will as a father doeth the will of his son?"

Ta'anit 23a.

ELIJAH COMMANDS THE ELEMENTS

Just as one star can destroy the whole world by its fire, so one righteous man can destroy the world by fire. Such was the case of Elijah when he prayed: *If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire came down from heaven and consumed him^{26a} and his fifty.²⁷*

Pesikta Rabbati, 11, p. 45b; ed. Friedmann.

The following verse: *Who hath ascended up into heaven, and descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in his garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name and what is his son's name, if thou knowest?*²⁸ refers to Moses and Elijah. They kept the wind from bringing rain, as it says: And Elijah the Tishbite who was of the settlers of Gilead, said unto Ahab, *As the Lord the God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.²⁹*

Yalkut Ha-Makiri Proverbs 34; ed. Greenhut.

Compare also:

Midrash Mishle, ch. 30, verse 4; ed. Buber.

God decreed that the ocean be ocean and the land be land, but Moses came and made the sea dry; Elijah came

^{26a} The Captain.

²⁷ II Kings 1:12.

²⁸ Proverbs 30:4.

²⁹ I Kings 17:1b.

and made the dry land sea. Similarly God decreed that winter be winter and summer summer. Elijah came and made the winter summer, as it is written: *As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth . . . there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.*⁸⁰

Deuteronomy Rabbah, ch. 10, sec. 2; Warsaw, 1867.

⁸⁰ I Kings 17:1.

ELIJAH'S DEALINGS WITH THE KINGS

GHOSTS THAT CHIRP AND SPIRITS THAT MUTTER

What is the meaning of the verse: *And when they shall say unto you, seek unto the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and that mutter?*³¹ God said unto Israel: "If they (the peoples) will tell you to worship idols and forsake God in heaven, answer them, 'Should not a people seek their God?' " Just as Elijah answered Ahaziahu: *Is it because there is no God in Israel that you go to enquire of Baalsebub, the god of Ekron?*³² Why should we forsake the living God? And it further says: *But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one this day.*³³ Therefore we will follow the living God, but the Gods of other peoples are dead, as it says: *They that make them shall be like unto them.*³⁴

Midrash Tanhuma Emor., sec. 3; ed. Buber.

CONCERNING THE DEW AND THE RAIN

Concerning the verse, *As the Lord . . . liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word,*³⁵ some say that Elijah's prayer was accepted concerning both the rain and the dew. Others say that his prayer was accepted only with regard

³¹ Isaiah 8:19.

³² II Kings 1:3.

³³ Deuteronomy 4:4.

³⁴ Psalms 115:8.

³⁵ I Kings 17:1.

to rain, and they offer in proof the verse, *Go, show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the land.*⁸⁶ Some say that Elijah's prayer was not effective concerning the dew because this part of his vow was repealed when he prayed for the life of the widow's son.

This is analogous to the case of one who stole a physician's bag. Later the thief's son was wounded. The thief came to the physician and begged him to cure his son. The physician said, "If you will return my bag in which I keep my medicine, I will cure your son." So with Elijah. God said to him, "If you will return to me the key of dew by which the dead can be resurrected, I will grant you the request you made in behalf of the widow's son, whom you wish to revive."

Yerushalmi Berakot, ch. 5, col. 9a-b; ed. Krotoshin.

TEN PERIODS OF FAMINE

There were ten periods of famine in the history of mankind, and one of them took place in the time of Elijah. As Scripture says, *As the Lord . . . liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.*⁸⁷

Genesis Rabbah, ch. 25, sec. 3; Warsaw, 1867.

The Talmud confirms this fact, for it says, "Regarding the law that the seller of a field cannot redeem his field before two years have passed, the period is not counted if these two years are those of famine and drought, as was the case in the year of Elijah."

Baba Metzia 106a.

⁸⁶ I Kings 18:1.

⁸⁷ I Kings 17:1.

ELIJAH RESPECTS THE GOVERNMENT

Moses paid his respects to the government as God instructed him, and so did Elijah pay respect to the government, as Scripture indicates when it says: *And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran before Abab* ^{37a} *to the entrance of Jezrael.* ³⁸

Mekilta 'Bo' 13, p. 14a; ed. Friedmann.

WICKEDER THAN JEZEBEL

The verse says, *And Saul sent messengers unto David's house to watch him and to slay him in the morning.* ³⁹ Therefore said the Lord God: "*Because ye have outdone the nations that are round about you . . .*" ^{39a}

R. Judah ben Simon says that this verse means that Saul acted even as the worst ones, for Jezebel, who planned to destroy the priests of God, sent the following warning to Elijah: *So let the Gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them* ^{39b} *by tomorrow about this time.* This means that Jezebel gave Elijah a chance to escape and save his life, but in this case Saul did not act even as mercifully as the wicked Jezebel. ⁴⁰

Midrash Samuel, ch. 22, sec. 2; ed. Buber.

^{37a} Bowed before him.

³⁸ I Kings 18:46.

³⁹ I Samuel 19:11.

^{39a} In cruelty.

^{39b} The slain.

⁴⁰ For Saul ordered them to slay David in the morning, while Jezebel gave Elijah twenty-four hours' warning.

THE JOUST BETWEEN BAAL AND YAHVEH

TWO BULLOCKS FROM ONE MANGER

Says the verse: *And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, choose you one bullock for yourselves.*⁴¹ Elijah instructed the Baal prophets to choose two bullocks of one mother, fed from the same trough, and to draw lots, dedicating one bullock for God and the other for Baal. The bullock selected for God followed Elijah, but the bullock of Baal would not budge. All the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal as well as the four hundred other false prophets gathered around the stubborn ox, but they moved him not. Elijah then pleaded with the bullock, but the beast answered in the presence of all the people: "That other bullock and I were born of one mother, and raised on one pasture, yet he is dedicated to God and the name of God will be sanctified through him, while I am made the portion of Baal, to antagonize my Creator."

Elijah then said to him: "Go with the Baal prophets, for just as the name of God is sanctified through your brother, so is it sanctified through you." The bullock replied: "If you so advise me, I swear I shall not move from here until you yourself deliver me into their hands." Hence the following verse: *And they took the bullock which was given them.*⁴²

⁴¹ I Kings 18:25.

⁴² I Kings 18:26.

Furthermore it is written: *We learn from the cattle of the land,*⁴³ namely from the bullocks of Elijah. *We learn also from the fowls of heaven*⁴⁴ for the ravens did not get food for Elijah from Ahab's table, but rather from the table of Jehoshaphat.⁴⁵

Yalkut Shimeoni I Kings 18, sec. 214.

See also:

Midrash Tanhuma, sec. 8, Massé; Warsaw, 1902.

AND HIS FINGERS BECAME LIKE WELLS

Elijah, his memory be blessed, made an altar, and prepared a trench, and directed his disciples to fill it up with four pitchers of water. Is it possible that out of these few pitchers of water the entire place should be filled? But this is what happened. Elijah said to his disciples that he who had water should come and pour it upon his hands. Elisha then came and poured water upon Elijah's hands, and his fingers became like wells, until the whole place was filled with water.⁴⁶

Another question arises. How did Elijah sacrifice outside of the Temple, when it was forbidden to offer sacrifices on private high places? The answer is that God gave him special permission to do so. The double expression *Aneni* (answer me) which Elijah used in his prayer signified that he prayed in behalf of himself and in behalf of his disciples.

Yalkut Shimeoni I Kings 18, sec. 214.

Since the time of this contest the people forsook idolatry

⁴³ Job 35:11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Ahab's table was not kosher while Jehoshaphat's was.

⁴⁶ I Kings 18:36.

and started earnestly and truthfully to fear and worship God. Seder Eliyahu Rabbah, ch. 17, p. 87; ed. Friedmann.

GOD FRUSTRATES THE DESIGNS OF THE BAAL PROPHETS

The verse says: *And they danced in halting fashion about the altar which was made.*⁴⁷ The question is asked, Did Elijah make the altar of the priests? The answer is that the priests made it themselves. But the verse teaches us that Hiel made a cavity in which the priests concealed him, instructing him that when he heard their voices he should immediately set fire to their sacrifices. For this reason they danced haltingly about the altar, that is, to avoid stepping into the pit. But God sent a serpent and killed Hiel.

Yalkut Shimeoni I Kings 18, sec. 214.

GOD SILENCED THE WORLD

Scripture states that the voice coming forth from the mouth of God carried no echo. Should you wonder at this, consider the case of Elijah. For when Elijah came to Carmel, he gathered all the priests and said to them, *Cry aloud, for he is God.*⁴⁸ What did God do? He caused the whole world to be quiet. He silenced the angels, and the creatures on earth, and the whole world remained void, as though there was no life in it, as the verse affirms: *But there was no voice, nor any to answer, or any that regarded.*⁴⁹ Had there been any voice at all during the disputation, the priests might have said it was the voice of Baal. Exodus Rabbah, end of Yitro; Warsaw, 1867.

⁴⁷ I Kings 18:26.

⁴⁸ I Kings 18:27.

⁴⁹ I Kings 18:29.

ESPECIALLY SWEET IS THE PRAYER OF MINḤA

Said R. Helbo in the name of R. Huna: "One should always be careful with the Minḥa prayer, for Elijah's prayer was accepted only when he prayed in the afternoon, as the verse says: *And it came to pass at the time of the evening offering that Elijah the prophet came near and said . . .*"⁵⁰ He prayed that the fire should come down from heaven, so that the people would not say that he accomplished his victory through an act of magic."

Berakot 6b.

.

The force of the verse *It came to pass at the time of the evening offering . . .* is confirmed by a passage from the Psalms: *Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee, the lifting up of my hands as the evening service.*⁵¹ There is no prayer more beloved than the *Minḥa* prayer, and so we find it in the experiences of Daniel, Isaac and David. When Elijah realized that, he too used the prayer of *Minḥa* to defeat the priests of Baal.

Midrash Aggadot Bereshit, ch. 77, sec. 1, p. 147; ed. Buber.

.

R. Abahu points to the verse: *Hear me, O Lord, hear me,*⁵² and asks, Why did Elijah say "Hear me" twice?

⁵⁰ I Kings 18:36. The interpretation is based on the Hebrew expression *Minḥa*, which in the Bible means an offering, and in rabbinic literature an evening prayer.

⁵¹ Psalms 141:2.

⁵² I Kings 18:37.

The answer is that Elijah prayed for two things. First, that the fire should come down from Heaven, secondly, that the people should not say that he performed an act of magic. As Scripture indicates: *For Thou didst turn their heart backward.*⁵³

Berakot 9b.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE PATRIARCHS

The verse says: *Thou didst pluck up a vine out of Egypt.*⁵⁴ The vine refers to Israel.

The verse *And it came to pass . . . that Elijah . . . said: Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel, let it be known . . .*⁵⁵ teaches us that just as the vine lives and is supported by dead trees, so Israel lives and finds support on the patriarchs.

Elijah prayed a number of prayers, but was not answered until he mentioned Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Similarly, Moses at the time when the people committed the sin of the golden calf, prayed many prayers but was not answered until he mentioned the names of the Patriarchs. Hence Israel is to be compared to the vine.

Midrash Exodus Rabbah, ch. 44, sec. 1; Warsaw, 1867.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Psalms 80:9.

⁵⁵ I Kings 18:36.

ELIJAH'S ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD

THE SUN HALTED AS IT DID FOR JOSHUA

Concerning the verse, *And it came to pass at the time of the evening offering* ⁵⁶ the question is asked: Is it possible that in such a short time Elijah could have built the altar, prepared the wood, the stones, and the water, slaughtered the bullock and prayed? We must infer that Elijah caused the sun to stand still, persuading the sun that this was necessary for the glory of its master, even more than it was necessary in the time of Joshua, for now it was not for Joshua's sake nor for Israel's, but for the sanctification of the name of God. As soon as the sun heard this, it halted in its track. As the Scripture puts it: *For the Lord will rise up as in Mount Perazim, He will be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, strange is His work, and bring to pass His act, strange is His act.* ⁵⁷

Midrash Aggadot Bereshit, ch. 77, sec. 3, p. 148; ed. Buber.

WHY ELIJAH PRAYED AS HE DID

Concerning the verse, *And it came to pass at the time of the evening offering . . . that Elijah the prophet came near and said, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob . . .* ⁵⁸ the question is asked, why didn't Elijah repeat the name of God before each Patriarch? Because he did

⁵⁶ I Kings 18:36.

⁵⁷ Isaiah 28:21.

⁵⁸ I Kings 36:18.

not want the people to misinterpret and say that there are three Gods.

Elijah furthermore said: "If you cannot do it for the sake of the Patriarchs, do it for the sake of the twelve tribes of Israel." This is the meaning of the verse, *Return for thy servant's sake the tribes of thy inheritance.*⁵⁹

And Elijah further said: *Let it be known this day that Thou art God of Israel.*⁶⁰ That is, "Grant me my request, for the same reason that you acted in Egypt, namely that the Egyptians might know that You are God. And for the same reason that You have proven Your might to our ancestors, as it says: *Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord have builded up the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate.*"⁶¹

And Elijah pleaded even more, that if God should not perform the miracle for the sake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that He do it in order that the people might learn that Elijah was His servant. For did not God announce long ago: *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord?*⁶²

And Elijah argued still more insistently: "If you will do it now, the people will also believe that You will do it for them in the future. I am contending now only for the sake of Your name. This whole army of false prophets are contending for the sake of Baal. I beg You, O Lord, do not put me to shame. Answer me quickly. Hear me, O Lord, hear me. Cause the fire to come down and the water to be consumed in this world and in the future

⁵⁹ Isaiah 63:17.

⁶⁰ I Kings 36:18.

⁶¹ Ezekiel 36:36.

⁶² Malachi 3:23.

world against the prophets of Baal as well as against all the other false prophets. If you will do so we shall sing these praises for Thee: *I will give thanks unto Thee for Thou hast answered me, and art become my salvation.*⁶³

Midrash Aggadot Bereshit, ch. 77, sec. 4, pp. 148-149; ed. Buber.

HIS FACE BETWEEN HIS KNEES

Concerning the verse, *Thy head upon thee is as Carmel*,⁶⁴ God said to Israel, "The poorest are beloved unto me, even as Elijah, who ascended Mount Carmel."⁶⁵ As Scripture says: "*So Elijah went up to the top of Carmel and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.*"⁶⁶ Now why did Elijah put his face between his knees? This was the way of saying to God: "If we have no merits of our own, look at the covenant between You and Abraham."

Midrash Canticles Rabbah, ch. 7, on verse 6; ed. Wilna.

ELIJAH THREATENS GOD

Elijah is one of the three prophets (the other two being Micaiah and Moses) who used threatening language to the Lord, as for instance: "O Lord . . . if You will not answer, I shall say that you caused the people to go astray."⁶⁷

Midrash Numbers Rabbah, ch. 18, sec. 12; ed. Wilna.

⁶³ Psalms 118:21.

⁶⁴ Canticles 7:6.

⁶⁵ The interpretation is based on a play on the word *Carmel*.

⁶⁶ I Kings 36:42; referring to the circumcision, the Covenant between God and Abraham.

⁶⁷ I Kings 18:36.

ELIJAH AS A PROPHET

HE WHO FIGHTS AND RUNS AWAY, LIVES TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

Israel used to practise the ceremony of circumcision until the tribes were divided into two governments. Then the government of Ephraim ceased to practise this rite. Elijah was highly indignant at this backsliding and swore by Heaven not to permit dew or rain to come upon the earth. When Jezebel heard this she wanted to kill him. Elijah knew not what to do and prayed to God. God said to him, "Are you better than your ancestors? Jacob fled to save his life. Moses ran away and saved himself. David became a fugitive in order to escape the wrath of Saul. Why should you not follow their example?" Elijah then arose and fled from Eretz Yisrael, and thereby saved himself, as Scripture reports, "*And he came thither and lodged there, and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, 'What doest thou there, Elijah?'*" Elijah answered: "*I was very jealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts.*"⁶⁸ God replied: "Thou art always jealous, as thou wast in Shitim." As it says, "*And when Phinehas the son of Aaron*"⁶⁹ *saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand.*"⁷⁰ "Now again you are jealous. I swear by your life that Israel will have no circumcision unless you witness it with your own eyes."

⁶⁸ I Kings 19:13-14.

⁶⁹ Elijah is identified with Phinehas.

⁷⁰ Numbers 25:5.

Hence the rabbis enacted that a special seat of honor be prepared for Elijah at every circumcision ceremony.⁷¹ Scripture supports this practice in the verse, *And the messenger of the covenant whom Ye delight in, behold he cometh, and indeed he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers.*⁷²

Pirke d'R. Eliezer, ch. 29; Warsaw, 1852.

NEITHER GOD NOR KINGS LOVE ZEALOUS PROPHETS

The prophets that spoke to Israel were not welcomed by the people. There were even those who told the prophets to be gone with their prophecies. We know that this was so with King Ahab, who confronted Elijah in this manner: "I myself am worshiping many idols, yet come and see how many good things have been realized in my own day." As Scripture sayeth, *In his (Ahab) days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho; with Abiram he laid the foundation thereof, and with his youngest son, Segub, he set up the gates thereof.*⁷³ Elijah was angered by this remark. He answered: "Good-for-nothing, you have despised Him Who created the whole world, and Who gave the words of the Torah for His glory. By your life I will judge you according to the measure of your own words. As it says: *As the Lord the God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.*"⁷⁴

Elijah then took the key of rain and went away, and there was a great famine in the whole world until God

⁷¹ So that Elijah may personally see that the Jews observe the covenant.

⁷² Malachi 3:1-3:24.

⁷³ I Kings 16:34.

⁷⁴ I Kings 17:1.

spoke to Elijah: *Go, show thyself unto Ahab and I will send rain upon the land.*⁷⁵

Furthermore, God took Elijah and placed him where he could see the places in which his own predecessors prayed for mercy for their children. As it says: *And he lay down and slept under a broom tree, and behold an angel touched him, beckoning, Arise and eat, and he arose and did eat.*⁷⁶

Then said God to Elijah: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and he answered: *I have been very jealous of the Lord, the God of Hosts.*⁷⁷ Elijah should have said, "Master of the Universe, these are Your children, come, they are the children of Your distinguished ones, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who have done Thy will in the world." But Elijah chose rather to confess his jealousy of the Lord. God spoke tenderly to Elijah, waiting for three hours, that the prophet might rescind his confessions, but Elijah insisted stubbornly, "I have been jealous of the Lord." Then did the Holy Spirit say to him: *Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus . . . and Elisha shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy stead.*⁷⁸

Seder Eliyahu Zuta, ch. 8, pp. 185-186; ed. Friedmann.

ISRAEL IS LIKE A GARDEN

Just as when picking nuts one must be careful not to slip on their smooth and slippery surfaces, so must one be careful in serving Israel. One must be wary, that he be not punished for insulting the people of Israel, as was true in the cases of Moses, Isaiah and Elijah.

⁷⁵ I Kings 18:1.

⁷⁶ I Kings 19:5-8.

⁷⁷ I Kings 19:14.

⁷⁸ I Kings 19:15.

Moses said: *Hear now, ye rebels.*⁷⁹ Hence: *Therefore ye shall not bring this assembly.*⁸⁰

Isaiah said: *And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.*⁸¹ Hence: *With a glowing stone in the hand.*⁸²

Elijah said: *For the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant.*⁸³ Hence: *And Elisha the son of Shapat . . . shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy stead.*⁸⁴

Pesikta Rabbati, sec. 11, p. 42b; ed. Friedmann.

THREE KINDS OF PROPHETS

There were three prophets with three different aims. One demanded the honor of God *and* the honor of Israel; one demanded the honor of God but not the honor of Israel; and the third demanded the honor of Israel but not the honor of God. Elijah is the second of these, as we know from Scripture: *And he said, I have been jealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts.*⁸⁵ And what does it say afterward? *And the Lord said unto him, go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus . . . and Elisha the son of Shaphat shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy stead.*⁸⁶

Mekilta, Bo, p. 2a; ed. Friedmann.

See also:

Abot d'R. Nathan, version II, ch. 47, p. 65a; ed. Schechter.

⁷⁹ Numbers 20:10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 12; this was Moses' punishment.

⁸¹ Isaiah 6:5.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 6:6; the Seraph's coals of fire cleansed Isaiah from the sin of libelling the people in the foregoing verse.

⁸³ I Kings 19:10 and 14.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 16; Elijah is punished by being removed.

⁸⁵ I Kings 19:14.

⁸⁶ I Kings 19:15; that is, Elijah should have been the first type of prophet and been zealous for Israel's honor as well as God's.

ELIJAH GAINSAID GOD AND WAS RIGHT

Rabbi Eleazar said: Elijah uttered words against God, as it says: *Thou didst turn their hearts backwards.*⁸⁷ R. Samuel ben R. Isaac says: How do we know that God afterward admitted that Elijah was right? We know from the following verse: *In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her*⁸⁸ *that halteth and will gather her that is driven away, and her that I have afflicted.*⁸⁹

Berakot 31b-32a.

THE PROPHETS ARE IN TRUTH MERCIFUL

The verse says: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.*⁹⁰

Some claim that Hosea and Elijah were merciless. God forbid! They were far from merciless. Their actions can be explained by a parable. A king brought his son to trial. The son was judged guilty and condemned to execution by fire. What did the King's advisor do? He advised the king to put his son into prison and there let him starve.

The advisor thought that in the meantime the anger of the king would disappear and the life of the son would thus be saved. So it was with Elijah. When he saw that Israel followed in the wicked footsteps of Ahab, he said: "Let them suffer three years of famine, but let them not go astray altogether." And so too did Hosea speak, when he pleaded: *Give them (backsliders) O Lord, whatsoever Thou wilt give; give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.*⁹¹

Pesikta Rabbati, sec. 44, p. 183a; ed. Friedmann.

See also:

Yalkut Shimeoni Hosea, sec. 531.

⁸⁷ I Kings 18:37.

⁸⁸ Referring to the people of Israel.

⁸⁹ Micah 4:6.

⁹⁰ Hosea 14:2.

⁹¹ Hosea 9:14.

GOD IS PLENTIFUL IN MERCY

Text: *I have been very jealous for the Lord.*⁹²

God said to Elijah: "Because you have accused the people of forsaking my covenant, you will have to be present at each circumcision, and then report to me, how my people observe the covenant." Elijah answered: "Master of the Universe, since I am jealous of the Lord, and since I cannot tolerate any kind of sin or sinner, what will I do where the father of the child is a sinner? Certainly I could not forbear him." God answered: "In such a case I will forgive the sins of the father." Elijah argued again: "Suppose the father and the Mohel (circumciser) are both sinners, what shall I do then?" God said: "I will forgive the sins of both of them." Elijah importuned further: "Suppose all the people attending the circumcision rite are sinners, what will I do then?" God answered: "Even then I will forgive the sins of all of them."

Yalkut Sofer, Pinehas, p. 111b; Foks, 1900.

ONLY THE NEWLY BORN HAVE THE GIFT OF PEACE

God does not want to slander his children even when they are sinners. This we know from the cases of Hosea and of Elijah. Elijah (who is identified with Pinehas) was given a covenant of peace at Shitim. But later when Elijah spoke against Israel, that gift was taken from him. He went to the mountain of God in order to implore Moses to intervene in his behalf, that the gift of peace be returned to him. Moses answered: "I cannot do anything for you. You will have to go and visit the newly-born

⁹² I Kings 19:10.

babies in Israel,⁹⁸ and they will restore the gift of peace to you.”

Yalkut Hādash, sec. “Elijah,” par. 23; Lehub, 1868.

⁹⁸ *I.e.*, attend the ceremonies of circumcision.

THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH

GOD SHARES HIS GLORY WITH MORTALS

Text: *Who then is the King of Glory?*⁹⁴

Why is God called the King of Glory? Because He shares His glory with mortals that fear Him. A mortal king would not allow others to ride on his horse or sit on his throne. But it is otherwise with God. For God permitted Solomon to sit on His throne, and allowed Elijah to ride on His horse. What is God's horse? The tempest and the storm-wind. As it is said: *The Lord is in the whirl-wind, and in the storm is His way.*⁹⁵

Midrash Aggadot Bereshit, ch. 50, sec. 3, p. 101; ed. Buber.

Compare also:

Midrash Exodus Rabbah, ch. 8, sec. I; ed. Wilna.

ELIJAH IS THE STORM

The verse says: *The Lord is long-suffering and great in power. . . . The Lord, in whirl-wind and in storm is His way, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry.*⁹⁶

"Whirl-wind" refers to Moses, while "storm" refers to Elijah, as it says: *And Elijah went up by a storm into Heaven.*⁹⁷

Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, ch. 3, sec. 17; ed. Wilna.

⁹⁴ Psalms 24:10.

⁹⁵ Nahum 1:13.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ II Kings 2:11.

ELIJAH IS THE CONSOLER

In times of distress in the future, Elijah will come and console you, as it says: *And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.*⁹⁸

Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, ch. 3, sec. 17; ed. Wilna.

THE FOUR CAMPS OF MAN'S HABITATION

God said to Elijah: "Go forth and stand on the mountain of the Lord . . ." and the Lord asked Elijah, "What are these four camps which you see?" Elijah answered: "Master of the Universe, I do not know." God replied: "These are the four worlds through which man passes. A great strong wind⁹⁹ symbolizes this world, which is as a passing wind. After the wind an earthquake¹⁰⁰ symbolizes the day of death that comes after this world, in the form of an earthquake, because it corrupts the entire body. After the earthquake a fire¹⁰¹ refers to the suffering of the wicked in Gehenna. After the fire a still small voice¹⁰² refers to the great day of judgment." As it says: *For great is the day of the Lord, and very terrible, who can abide it!*¹⁰³ And then God alone will remain in the world as a supreme power, as it is written: *And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*¹⁰⁴

Midrash Tanḥuma, Pekude, end of sec. 3; Warsaw, 1902.

⁹⁸ Malachi 3:24.

⁹⁹ I Kings 19:11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Joel 2:11.

¹⁰⁴ Isaiah 2:11.

ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF A GUEST

When God said to Moses, *Go, now, and I will send you to Pharaoh*,¹⁰⁵ Moses replied, "Master of the Universe, I cannot, because Jethro received me in his home and treated me like a son. A guest so welcomed by his host is morally obligated to the host, even to the extent of his life." So do we find in the case of Elijah. While he was visiting the widow of Zaraphat, her son died. Elijah then prayed, as it says: *And he cried unto the Lord, O Lord my God, hast Thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourned by slaying her son?*¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, the guest is morally obligated to respect his host even more than his parents, for we find that when Elijah commanded Elisha to ask something which he could do for him before he was taken away, Elisha answered: *I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.*¹⁰⁷

Elijah then said: "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless if thou seest me when I am taken away from thee, it shall be so unto thee. But if not, it shall not be so."

Why didn't Elisha try to resurrect his own parents as he did the son of the Shunamite? Similarly one might ask why Elijah did not try to revive his parents as he did the son of the widow of Zaraphat. The reason must be that one has to give his own life for the sake of one's host. For this reason Moses would not go to Egypt without taking leave of his host, Jethro.

Midrash Tanhuma, Shemot, end of sec. 16; Warsaw, 1902.

¹⁰⁵ Exodus 3:10.

¹⁰⁶ I Kings 17:20.

¹⁰⁷ II Kings 2:9b.

THE TORAH SAVES FROM DEATH

Text: Two scholars who walk together on the road and do not discuss Torah deserve to be consumed by fire.¹⁰⁸

Concerning Elijah, the Scripture says: *And it came to pass as they (Elijah and Elisha) went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which parted them both asunder.*¹⁰⁹ In this case the fire did not injure Elijah or Elisha, because they were discussing words of the Torah. If they had not, they would have deserved to have been consumed by fire.

Ta'anit 10b.

CONVERSATIONS SHOULD END WITH A WORD OF TORAH

One must not stand up and pray immediately after a conversation, or after laughter. Similarly, one must not leave a friend with whom he has conversed in a mood of levity or indifference, but rather with a word of tradition. So do we find that the early prophets would close their messages with words of praise and consolation. Elijah left Elisha with words of Torah, as it is written: *Ask what I shall do for thee . . .*¹¹⁰

What was the nature of that discussion between Elijah and Elisha? R. Ahawa says that they discussed the question of reading the Shema. R. Judah ben Pazi says that they discussed the problem of the creation of the world, as it says: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.*¹¹¹ R. Judah the son of R. Ayybo opines that they

¹⁰⁸ Ta'anit 10b.

¹⁰⁹ II Kings 2:11.

¹¹⁰ II Kings 2:9.

¹¹¹ Psalms 33:6. The interpretation is based on the terms "word" and "heavens," the latter signifying both creation, and the place to which Elijah was about to ascend.

were discussing the ways of consoling Jerusalem, as it says: *Bid Jerusalem take heart.*¹¹² The Rabbis say that they were discussing the mystic speculations of the divine chariot, as it says: *That behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire.*¹¹³

Yerushalmi Berakot, ch. 5, 8d; ed. Krotoshin.

A DISCIPLE MOURNS FOR HIS MASTER

How do we know that a disciple is obligated to rend his garments as a sign of mourning when his master passes away? We know it from the example of Elisha, as Scripture says: *And he took hold of his own clothes and rent them into two pieces.*¹¹⁴

How do we further know that in such a case the disciple is not permitted to sew together the torn garment? This we know from the same verse, which states that he rent them into two pieces, which teaches us that the garment remained parted all the time.

Resh Lakish asked R. Yoḥanan: "Isn't Elijah still alive? Why did Elisha mourn for him?" R. Yoḥanan answered: "Since Elisha could not see him any more, he considered him as good as dead."

Moed Katan 26a.

NINE WHO ENTERED PARADISE

The following nine entered Paradise in their lifetime: Enoch the son of Yered; Elijah; Eliezer the servant of Abraham; Hiram, the king of Tyre; Ebed, king of the

¹¹² Isaiah 40:2. Again a play on the term "bid," the Hebrew word *dabru* in its ordinary sense meaning "speak."

¹¹³ II Kings 2:11. A play on the word "chariot."

¹¹⁴ II Kings 2:12.

Ethiopians; Ya'abez, son of R. Jehudah the Prince; Bithia, daughter of Pharaoh; Serah, daughter of Asher; and some say that R. Joshua, the son of Levi, also entered Paradise.

Derek Erez Zuta, ch. 1.

OTHER EVIDENCES OF ELIJAH'S ASCENT TO HEAVEN

God translated Enoch and Elijah into heaven, as a testimony for the souls that go up to heaven. God caused Korah to go down to earth as a testimony for the souls that go down to earth. This is the meaning of the verse: *At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established.*¹¹⁵

Yalkut Haddash, sec. Elijah, par. 49; Lehub, 1868.

On the first day of creation, God made a condition that Elijah should be translated into heaven. On the sixth day of creation, God arranged that the widow of Zarphat should feed him.

Ibid., sec. Elijah, par. 24.

R. Josse said that God's divine presence never came down on earth and that Moses and Elijah never went up to heaven; for this he offers the testimony of the verse: *The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the children of man.*¹¹⁶ But how do we reconcile the verse concerning Elijah: *And Elijah went up by a whirl-wind to heaven?*¹¹⁷ The answer is, he ascended the heavens but remained ten hand-breadths beneath the throne of God.

Sukkah 5a.

¹¹⁵ Deuteronomy 19:15. ¹¹⁶ Psalms 115:16. ¹¹⁷ II Kings 2:11.

R. Papos interpreted the verse: *Behold, the man is become as one of us*,¹¹⁸ to mean that Adam would be like one of the angels. R. Berakiah in the name of R. Ḥaninah said that Adam would rather have been like Elijah, for just as Elijah did not taste death, so Adam should not have tasted death.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah, ch. 21, sec. 5; ed. Wilna.

Elijah was translated in the second year of the rule of the King Ahaziah. There is a belief that he will not appear again until the advent of the Messiah. Then he will appear and be translated a second time. He will come a third time with Gog and Magog. At present Elijah is occupied with recording the deeds of all the generations.

Seder Olam Rabbah, ch. 17; ed. Ratner.

See also:

Yalkut Shimeoni, I Kings, sec. 207.

THE FATE OF ELIJAH'S CONTEMPORARIES

R. Yoḥanan says that there were six hundred thousand prophets in the time of Elijah. But R. Jacob guessed that there were one hundred and twenty thousand. R. Yoḥanan seems to have veered toward the larger estimate, for in another connection he states that there were six hundred thousand cities and even the two worst cities, Jericho and Bethel, produced not less than two prophets each. One may ask, why were the prophecies of these prophets not made known? Only those prophecies which were needed by future generations were made known. But those that would be of no use to future generations were not made

¹¹⁸ Genesis 3:22.

known. However, God will ultimately make all prophecies known, as the verse says: *And the Lord my God shall come and all the Holy Ones with thee.*¹¹⁰

Midrash Zuta Kohelet, ch. 2, sec. 8, p. 92; ed. Buber.

See also:

Midrash Ruth Rabbah, Petiḥata, sec. 2; ed. Wilna.

¹¹⁰ Zechariah 14:5.

ELIJAH COMPARED TO MOSES

BOTH ARE REDEEMERS OF ISRAEL

*Text: And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob.*¹²⁰

*Text: And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel up out of Egypt and by a prophet was he kept.*¹²¹

R. Tanhuma finds in these verses a key to many similarities between Moses and Elijah. Both arose from the tribe of Levi. Moses redeemed Israel from Egypt, while Elijah will redeem him in the future. Just as Israel was not enslaved again after the redemption from Egypt, so he will no longer bear the yoke after Elijah shall have redeemed him. Moses was called the servant of the Lord, and so was Elijah.

Moses went to Heaven, and Elijah was translated into Heaven.

Moses killed the Egyptian, Elijah killed Hiel.

Moses was fed by a woman, the daughter of Jethro; Elijah was fed by the widow of Zarphat.

Moses ran away from Pharaoh; Elijah ran away from Jezebel.

Moses was covered by a cloud; so was Elijah.

Moses gathered all Israel unto Mount Sinai; Elijah gathered the people unto Mount Carmel.

Moses destroyed the idol-worshippers; so did Elijah.

¹²⁰ I Kings 18:31.

¹²¹ Hosea 12:14.

Moses found himself in a cave; so did Elijah.

Moses went to the desert; so did Elijah.

An angel spoke to Moses; an angel spoke to Elijah.

Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights; Elijah fasted for a similar period.

Moses stopped the sun; so did Elijah.

God's love for Israel was strengthened through Moses; and so too was it strengthened through Elijah.

Moses brought fire down from Heaven; so did Elijah.

Moses built an altar; so did Elijah.

Moses used twelve stones for the altar, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel; so did Elijah, as it says: *And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob.*¹²²

Pesikta Rabbati, sec. 4, p. 13a-b; ed. Friedmann.

See also:

Sifre Deuteronomy, sec. 342, p. 142a; ed. Friedmann.

¹²² I Kings 18:31.

ELIJAH MISCELLANY

ELIJAH KNEW WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT

R. Eleazar says in the name of R. Yose b. Zimra that none of the prophets knew what they were prophesying except Moses and Isaiah. R. Joshua Ha'Kohen the son of Nehemiah added that Elijah also knew what he was prophesying, and as proof he offered the sentence: *And that which my lips know they shall speak sincerely.*¹²³

Midrash Tehillim, ch. 90, sec. 4; ed. Buber.

THE DEATH RAY OF THE LORD

R. Yoḥanan says: If there had been an opening as large as the eye of a needle in the cave in which Moses and Elijah had sojourned, no one could possibly have withstood its light, as Scripture says: *For man shall not see Me and live.*¹²⁴

Megillah 19b.

HAIRY OR HAIRLESS, THE PROPHETS WERE DISLIKED

Jeremiah pleaded with God, saying: "Master of the Universe, I cannot prophesy before the people of Israel. For is there any prophet that came to them whom they did not try to kill? When Moses and Aaron appeared before them, did not the people attempt to stone them? When

¹²³ Job 33:3. The interpretation is based on the idea that "Elihu" mentioned in Job is identical with Elijah.

¹²⁴ Exodus 33:20.

Elijah appeared before them, they jeered at him, calling him, the hairy man. As the verse says: *He was a hairy man.*¹²⁵ When Elisha appeared before the people, they mocked: *Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.*"¹²⁶

Pesikta Rabbati, sec. 26, p. 129a; ed. Friedmann.

See also:

Pirke d'R. Eliezer, end of ch. 31; Warsaw, 1852.

¹²⁵ II Kings 1:8.

¹²⁶ II Kings 2:23.

SECTION II
THE LEGENDARY ELIJAH

INFORMING THE PEOPLE OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD

GOD IGNORES THE HERETICS

Rabbah bar Sila ¹ met Elijah and asked him: "What is God doing?" Elijah answered him: "God is quoting traditional sayings of all the Rabbis except R. Meir." Rabbah then asked Elijah: "Why not the sayings of R. Meir?" Elijah replied: "Because R. Meir learned his traditions from Aḥar (the famous heretic)."

Ḥagigah 15b.

GOD SEES BOTH SIDES OF EVERY QUESTION

R. Abitar ² met Elijah and asked him: "What is God doing?" Elijah answered: "God is occupied with the problem of the tragedy concerning the concubine at Gibeah." ³ R. Abitar asked Elijah again: "What is the opinion of God concerning the matter?" Elijah answered: "God keeps on saying, Abitar, my son, says so, and Jonathan, my son, says so." Abitar asked again: "Are there any doubts before God?" Elijah answered: "By this, God means that both views are divine."

Gittin 6b.

¹ Amora, beginning of 4th century, common era.

² Amora, end of 3d century, common era.

³ See Judges, ch. 19-21.

THE HOLY ONE RELISHES A GOOD ARGUMENT
IN THE ACADEMY

On one day R. Eliezer ben Horkenos ⁴ argued with the rabbis, giving them all kinds of arguments. But the rabbis rejected all his arguments. R. Nathan then met Elijah, and asked him: "What is God doing at the present time while the rabbis argue so bitterly in the academy?" Elijah answered: "God smiles and says, fight, my children; fight, my children."

Baba Mezia' 59b.

OF PRAYERS THAT ROCKED THE WORLD

Elijah daily frequented the academy of Rabbi.⁵ One day, on the first of the month, Elijah came late. Rabbi asked him why he came late, and Elijah gave as an excuse that he had to help Abraham awake, wash his hands, pray, and take care of him, and afterwards he had to do the same to Isaac; and then to Jacob. Should all these three patriarchs pray at the same time, they would bring the Messiah before the appointed time. When Elijah was asked whether there were any others left among the living whose prayers would be as effective as those of the patriarchs, he pointed out R. Hiyya (a pupil of Rabbi), and his sons.

Once Rabbi decreed a fast day in order to cause rain to fall; and accordingly made R. Hiyya and his sons pray for rain, and their prayer was effective. But they added to their prayer, a prayer for the resurrection of the dead and the world started to tremble. In heaven they began to investigate who was the cause of this upheaval and it was reported that Elijah was to blame. Elijah was brought up

⁴ Tanna, *circa* 2d century, common era.

⁵ Tanna, editor of Mishnah, second half of 2d century, common era.

to heaven immediately and was punished with sixty beatings. Elijah then quickly came down to earth in the form of a fiery bear and caused R. Ḥiyya and his sons to stop praying.

Baba Mezia' 85b.

WHEN THE WORLD HUNG ON JEHUDAH'S SHOE

When R. Jehudah⁶ would remove one shoe, as a sign of suffering, rain would come down. Once he told his servant to remove his shoes. The servant removed one of his shoes, and rain started to fall. When the servant was about to remove the second shoe, Elijah appeared to R. Jehudah and told him: "God said: if you remove the second shoe I will destroy the world."

Ta'anit 24b.

THE RABBIS ARE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES

R. Habiba says: "R. Habiba bar Surmaki told me the following: 'I have noticed a certain scholar whom Elijah would visit. In the morning his eyes looked beautiful, and in the evening his eyes looked as though they had been on fire. I asked him why, and he told me that he had asked Elijah to show him the rabbis, as they are seated in the Heavenly Academy. Elijah told him that he could look at all the rabbis, except at the chamber of R. Ḥiyya.'"

Baba Mezia' 85b.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

R. Berako Huza'ah⁷ would visit the market-place of Be-Lefet which Elijah also frequented. R. Berako once said to Elijah: "Is there anyone in this crowded market-place who is worthy of the world to come?" Elijah said,

⁶ Amora, 3d century, common era. ⁷ His life and activities unknown

"No." In the meantime Elijah noticed a certain man coming who was wearing black shoes and no praying fringes⁸ upon his garment. Elijah then remarked to R. Berako, "This man is worthy of the world to come." R. Berako ran up to the man and asked him what his occupation was. The man told him to come the next day. The very next day the man informed him that he was a prison guard. His main duty was to keep the male prisoners away from the female prisoners. In the meantime two other men came. Elijah remarked: "These two men are also worthy of the world to come." R. Berako approached them and asked concerning their professions. They answered him: "Whenever we see someone gloomy or depressed we cheer him up, and whenever two are in a quarrel or combat, we try to pacify them."

Ta'anit 22a.

PRAYER RESTRAINS THE HAND OF DEATH

R. Pinḥas⁹ says: Once I was walking on the road and met Elijah. I asked him to tell me something which is good for mankind, and he told me that when the people mention the sacrifices of Moses in their prayers, God makes all the angels who speak evil of men, speak good of them. When a plague takes place in the community and many people die, further deaths can be averted by having the people come to the houses of worship and mention the passages dealing with the preparation of incense in the Temple.¹⁰

Midrash Hane'elam, Zohar, Wayyera, p. 100b; ed. Wilna, 1912.

⁸ Zizit.

⁹ Tanna, 2d century, common era.

¹⁰ See II Samuel, 24:21.

ELIJAH THE FRIEND OF ISRAEL

HOW SAMMAEL GAVE ELIJAH A BEATING

Once the prophet Elijah came to the academy of R. Yose.¹¹ When R. Yose arrived at the academy he found Elijah sitting there sad and depressed. R. Yose asked him why he was so depressed and Elijah replied: "I came before God while He and the Messiah were occupied with the consolation of Israel uttered by the prophet Isaiah. Then Sammael, the wicked angel, the guardian angel of Rome, came and began to accuse Israel. I then said to Sammael: God and Messiah are discussing the consolations of Isaiah, and you dare come now and accuse Israel! Sammael then gave me a beating and drove me to despair. God then said to me: I will tell of all your good deeds, and the doing of Sammael will be of no avail."

This shows the greatness of God, that He loves Israel more than the angels, and certainly more than the other nations. When all the heathen nations shall behold all the praise and glory bestowed upon Israel, they will be twisted with envy. For Israel's strength will be like the strength of the sun in the middle of the summer, as the verse says: *But they that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.*¹² And all the nations of the world will become subordinate to Israel as it is said: *And kings shall be thy foster-fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their*

¹¹ Tanna, 2d century, common era.

¹² Judges 5:31.

face to the earth. And if a heathen should ask you, Is this possible? tell him that this has already happened in the days of Nebuchadnezzar as the verse says: *Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshiped Daniel.*¹⁴

Bet Hamidrash by Yellinek, Vol. III, pp. 68-69.

WHY MORDECAI RENT HIS GARMENT

Concerning the verse *And Mordecai knew all that was done,*¹⁵ R. Ishmael says that eighteen thousand and nine hundred people participated in the feast of King Ahasuerus. They ate and drank everything and thus sinned. The Adversary (Satan) came before God and accused them. God agreed that the Torah be transferred to the angels, asking Himself, "Why do I need this people Israel at all? On account of them I have new problems every day." When the Torah heard this, she dressed herself up in mourning garments and started to cry. With her cried the angels. Elijah immediately ran, frightened as he was, to the Patriarchs and to all the other righteous ones, and to the early prophets, and said to them: "Heavens and earth and the angels are crying bitterly, and the whole world is trembling like a woman in confinement, while you remain so quietly!" They asked Elijah why, and he told them: "It was decreed that the destruction of Israel should take place as a result of their participation in the feast of Ahasuerus." When Moses heard that, he asked if there was one righteous man left in that generation. Elijah immediately pointed to Mordecai. Moses then said to Elijah: "Go and notify Mordecai that he should do his

¹³ Isaiah 49:23.

¹⁴ Daniel 2:46.

¹⁵ Esther 4:1.

best down there on earth and I will do my part up here in heaven.”

Elijah then expressed his fear to Moses that it was too late. Nevertheless Moses exhorted the Patriarchs to pray in order that their intercession might be effective. Hence Elijah went to Mordecai and notified him accordingly, informing him of the decree which was decreed in heaven concerning Israel. Hence Mordecai immediately tore his garments.

Midrash Abba Guryon, ch. 4, sec. 1; ed. Buber.

ELIJAH PUTS A NAIL IN HAMAN'S COFFIN

Scripture says: *And the king arose in his anger from the feast of wine . . . in the garden of his palace. . .*¹⁶

What did the angel Michael do then? He began to uproot the young plantings in the garden of the king, thereby increasing the king's anger. The king returned to the wine feast while Haman was about to appeal for his life. Michael the angel pushed him toward Esther, and Esther complained before the king. The king thus remarked: *Will he even force the queen before me in the house?*¹⁷ When Haman heard this he became discouraged. What did Elijah do then? He masqueraded as Harbonah¹⁸ and informed the king of the tree which Haman had prepared for Mordecai. The king immediately ordered to have Haman hung on the tree which Haman had prepared for Mordecai.

Midrash Esther Rabbah, ch. 10, sec. 9; ed. Wilna.

See also:

Pirke d'R. Eliezer, ch. 50; Warsaw, 1852.

Yalkut Hadash, "Elijah and Elisha," par. 9; ed. Lehub, 1868.

¹⁶ Esther 7:8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Esther 8:9.

ELIJAH ANNOUNCES THE DOOM OF JERUSALEM

R. Ḥiyya ¹⁹ and R. Hezekiah ²⁰ were sitting under a tree and R. Ḥiyya fell asleep. In his sleep R. Ḥiyya saw Elijah. The prophet informed him that "Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, because Jerusalem exists by law and according to the law it is to be destroyed. The city and its leaders are already handed over to the wicked Sammael, and I come to notify the wise that perchance the years of Jerusalem might be prolonged. . . ."

Zohar, Wayyeze, p. 151a; Wilna, 1912.

HOW ELIJAH EXALTED THE MEMORY OF R. SIMEON

One day R. Jehudah ²¹ was sitting at the gates of Tiberias. He chanced to notice two camels heavily laden. Approaching, however, they seemed to be slipping and moving downward. One camel fell down and the birds tried to reach him but they became exhausted and burst open, before they alighted upon him. Afterward many other birds gathered about this spot and attempted the rescue. They did not burst open. All they succeeded in doing was to make noise. But they could not make themselves understood. Suddenly a man passed by and said: "The following verse is now realized: *And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.*" ²²

R. Jehudah pursued the man for three miles, but the stranger refused to talk to him. R. Jehudah felt dejected and in despair sat down under a tree and there fell asleep.

¹⁹ Amora, beginning of 3d century.

²⁰ Amora, beginning of 3d century.

²¹ Tanna, 2d century, common era.

²² Genesis 15:11.

When he awoke, he said: "Surely since R. Simeon has died wisdom has gone from the world." R. Abba, who was nearby, then asked, "Who will not tell us the mysteries of the world? The man you saw was Elijah, who did not want to tell you the secret, in order that you should appreciate the greatness of R. Simeon by missing him."

Zohar, Wayyehi, p. 217a; ed. Wilna, 1912.

ELIJAH THE REDEEMER

CONCERNING TWO WHO TALKED FROM THE WOMB

Ben Sira knew who his father was. When he was born, he spoke to his mother, saying that she should not feel ashamed. Ben Sira further said that when Jeremiah was about to be born, the babe argued with his father about the very name his father was to name him. His father wanted to call him Abraham, but the babe refused, until Elijah came and told him to call him Jeremiah, signifying "the lifting"²³ of the hands of the enemy over Jerusalem during the lifetime of Jeremiah. "Thus," continued Ben Sira to argue, "just as Jeremiah was speaking while he was about to be born, so do I speak while I am about to be born."

Alpha Beta d'Ben Sira, pp. 16-17b; Berlin, 1858.

R. ASHI CLARIFIES ELIJAH'S ANSWER

Elijah said to R. Jehudah the brother of R. Sala Hasid,²⁴ "The world will last not less than eighty-five jubilee cycles, and in the last jubilee cycle, Messiah of the House of David will come." R. Jehudah then asked, would the Messiah come at the beginning or at the end of the jubilee cycle? Elijah replied that he did not know. Again he asked him, would Messiah come during the last

²³ The Hebrew word *Jeremiah* means "lifting."

²⁴ His period unknown.

cycle or after that cycle. Elijah replied again that he did not know. R. Ashi says that this is what Elijah meant: Up to the last jubilee cycle, do not hope for the coming of the Messiah; for he certainly will not come. But after that period, you may hope and expect the coming of the Messiah.

Sanhedrin 97b.

MESSIAH SITS AMONG THE POOR AND SUFFERING

R. Joshua b. Levi²⁵ found Elijah standing at the entrance of the tomb of R. Simeon b. Yohai. R. Joshua then asked him: "Will I come to the future world?" Elijah answered: "If the Lord wills it, you will enter." R. Joshua heard then a mysterious voice, that of God, coming forth. He asked Elijah again: "When is the Messiah coming?" Elijah replied: "Go and ask Messiah who is sitting at the entrance of the city among the poor and the suffering."

R. Joshua departed and found Messiah and asked him when he would come. Messiah answered: "Today." R. Joshua then told Elijah that the Messiah had lied to him because he did not come on that day. Elijah then explained to R. Joshua that the Messiah meant that he would come today on condition that the people should be worthy.

Sanhedrin 98a.

ELIJAH COMMANDS THE WEARING OF THE TALLITH

R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai²⁶ of Jerusalem had received a tradition from Elijah who revealed to him that Ben Kuzibo was not the Messiah. Elijah also commanded that the wor-

²⁵ Palestinian Amora, 3d century, common era.

²⁶ Tanna, 1st century, common era.

shippers in the Synagogue should have their heads covered with a praying shawl ²⁷ during the entire prayer, even on holidays, which are days of rejoicing.

Ohel Moed by Kammelhaur, No. 2, p. 41b; Krakau, 1899.

²⁷ Tallith.

ELIJAH, TEACHER OF THEORETICAL JUDAISM

ELIJAH'S AIR SERVICE BETWEEN SURA AND PUMBEDITA

Concerning the seven traditions which were recited before Rab Hisda²⁸ on Saturday morning in Sura and on Saturday afternoon before Rabbah²⁹ in Pumbedita, who could have carried these traditions on Saturday from one city to another, if not Elijah who was flying ten hand-breadths high?³⁰

Erubin 43a.

ELIJAH SEEKS INSTRUCTION

Elijah asked R. Nahorai:³¹ "What is the meaning of the verse, *And Shabaraim begot children in the field of Moab . . . ?*"³² R. Nahorai explained it to him in the following way: "Great are those who were born in the field of Moab."³³

Midrash Ruth Rabbah, ch. 4, sec. 1; Warsaw, 1867.

ESTHER KNEW HER TANNAIM

Rabbah b. Aboha³⁴ met Elijah and asked him the fol-

²⁸ Babylonian Amora, end of 3d century.

²⁹ Babylonian Amora, end of 3d century.

³⁰ The Talmud wants to prove that the law concerning leaving the city on the Sabbath does not apply to the space above ten hand-breadths high.

³¹ Amora, 3d century.

³² I Chronicles 8:8.

³³ Referring to David, who was a descendant of Ruth. The interpretation is based on the word *Shabaraim* which also means "dawns."

³⁴ Amora, end of 3d century.

lowing: "In accordance with whose reason did Esther invite Haman?" Elijah answered: "In accordance with all the reasons given by the various Tannaim and Amorain."⁸⁵

Megillah 15b.

GOD IS ANXIOUS TO SHOW HIS MERCY

Rabbi was sitting one day and delving into the following verse: *In thy distress, when all these things are come upon thee, in the end of days, then wilt thou return to the Lord thy God, and hearken unto His voice.*⁸⁶ Then he remarked: "All the sufferings of Israel which Moses predicted would come at the 'end of days,' have come. Yet the second part of the prediction that Israel would repent is not yet realized." While Rabbi was pondering this question, Elijah came and asked him in what he was engaged. Rabbi told him that he was trying to understand the verse: *In the end of days thou wilt return to the Lord thy God.*⁸⁷ Elijah then said to him: "By your life! O Rabbi, God Himself was one day engaged with that very question. Then Michael, the archangel, appeared before God and pleaded that He redeem His children from Edom, remarking, 'You have written in Your Torah that when they shall have received their punishment, You will show mercy to them.' Then God said, 'Let Sammael, the representative of Edom, come before me and present his view.' Sammael came and said to God: 'You declared that Israel would be under the rule of Edom until they all become righteous.

⁸⁵ A number of reasons are offered by these masters of law in the Talmud.

⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 4:30.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

At the present time all of them are wicked.' God became angry at Sammael for slandering Israel, and called Michael back, that he might continue his argument in behalf of Israel. God said to Michael: 'With regard to your pleading, why didn't you read the beginning of the verse where it speaks of returning to God? Only after that does the verse speak of God's mercy.' Michael replied: 'Nevertheless, You are known as the Merciful, and You should act according to Your name.' God finally answered: 'The decree stands until they repent. However, should they repent just a little, I shall open the great gates of repentance for them.'"

Zohar Hadash, Lek Leka, p. 109a-b; Azmir, 1868.

THE EARTHQUAKE IS GOD'S ROD OF INSTRUCTION

Elijah, blessed be his memory, asked R. Nahorai "Why do tempests come upon the world?" R. Nahorai replied: "Because of the sin regarding the priests' share of the crop." For there is an important contradiction between the two verses: *The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it,*⁸⁸ and *Who looketh on the earth and it trembleth; He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.*⁸⁹

"This must be the explanation: when Israel observes the agricultural laws God protects them. When they do not observe these laws, He causes the land to tremble."

Elijah replied: "Your explanation is reasonable. But here is the real explanation: when God sees that all the amusement places are secure and established, while His Temple is destroyed, then does the Lord shake the world;

⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 11:12.

⁸⁹ Psalms 104:32. The rabbis understand the term "earth" to refer to the land of Palestine; hence the contradiction in the verses.

hence the verse: *He doth mightily roar because of His fold.*⁴⁰

Yerushalmi Berakot, ch. 9, 13c; ed. Krotoshin.

POVERTY IS ISRAEL'S CRUCIBLE

Elijah said to Bar He He⁴¹ and some say to R. Eleazar: ⁴² "What is the meaning of the verse: *Behold I have refined thee but not as silver. I have tried thee in the furnace of affliction?*"⁴³

God looked around for the best conditions to be afforded Israel and concluded that poverty⁴⁴ is the one most fitted for him.

Hagigah 9b.

MAN IS NEVER SATISFIED

Once R. Yose on leaving the academy, met Elijah, blessed be his memory. Elijah asked him: "What subject did you discuss today in the academy?" R. Yose answered: "The verse *Let there be light.*"⁴⁵ Elijah asked him again: "Why does the verse use the expression *Wa-ya'as* (made) and not *Bara* (created)?" R. Yose replied: "Because it was difficult for light to be created." Elijah then asked: "Why is the term *Wa-Yibra* (created)⁴⁶ used in connection with the creation of man?" R. Yose replied: "In case of man there is an additional term used, namely *Wa-yezer* (formed)."⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Jeremiah 25:30.

⁴¹ See "Ethics of Our Fathers," end of ch. 5.

⁴² Tanna, 2d century.

⁴³ Isaiah 48:10.

⁴⁴ According to this interpretation, the "furnace of affliction" signifies poverty.

⁴⁵ Genesis 1:14.

⁴⁶ Genesis 1:27.

⁴⁷ Genesis 2:7.

Both Elijah and R. Yose admitted during the argument that man is the most peculiar creature. Man is never satisfied with his wisdom or other desires, nor can man receive only good in this world. For he has to save some for the world to come.

Aggadot Atikot Me-Teman, Jahrbuch der Juedisch Literarischen Gesellschaft, vol. 16, p. 13, Hebrew, sec. 13.

IN GOD'S WORLD, EVEN FORBIDDEN ANIMALS HAVE A PLACE

Elijah, blessed be his memory, asked R. Nahorai: "Why did God create forbidden animals and reptiles?" R. Nahorai replied: "There is a reason for it. When men sin, God looks at the forbidden animals and says: 'If these for which there is no need I do tolerate, how much more must I tolerate human beings?'"

Elijah then remarked: "There is another need for them. The fly is needed for the hornet; the bed-bug for the leech, the snake for sores; the snail for lichen; and the spider for a scorpion's bite."

Yerushalmi Berakot, ch. 9, 13c; ed. Krotoshin.

A WIFE DOES HELP

R. Yose met Elijah and asked him: "The verse says, *I will make for him a helper*.⁴⁸ In what way is a wife of assistance to her husband?"⁴⁹ Elijah answered: "When a man brings home wheat, can he chew the wheat? When he brings flax, can he wear flax? It is the woman who has

⁴⁸ Genesis 2:18.

⁴⁹ For that verse refers to Eve, Adam's wife.

to prepare these things. Hence it is the wife that brightens the eyes of the husband and puts him on his feet.”

Yebamot 63a.

A NON-JEWISH CEMETERY DOES NOT CONTAMINATE A PRIEST

Rabbah b. Aboha found Elijah in a non-Jewish cemetery. He then asked Elijah concerning the laws of a creditor and a debtor and whether a nude person is allowed to perform the ceremony of giving the priestly tithes (*Terumah*).⁵⁰

Afterwards he asked Elijah how he, a priest, happened to be in a cemetery. Elijah replied that the law of uncleanness does not apply to non-Jewish cemeteries.

Baba Mezia' 114a-b.

NUDISTS ARE NOT SEEMLY UNTO GOD

Abba bar Abin⁵¹ said that a certain pious man asked Elijah, may his memory be blessed, whether a nude person is allowed to read the Shema. Elijah replied: “The verse says, *that he sees no unseemly thing in thee.*”⁵² This means that no one must utter words of God while nude.”

Yerushalmi Terumot, ch. 1, 40d; ed. Krotoshin.

HOW JOSHUA B. LEVI SAW THE RUBIES OF CHALCEDON

The verse says, *And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies.*⁵³ R. Joshua b. Levi says the verse means “Chalcedonian stones.” R. Joshua desired to see the stones. Eli-

⁵⁰ For that ceremony is preceded by a blessing, and thus the person would have to mention the name of God.

⁵¹ Amora, beginning of 4th century of the common era.

⁵² Deuteronomy 23:15.

⁵³ Isaiah 54:12.

jah once appeared to him and asked him: "Do you desire to see these stones?" R. Joshua replied in the affirmative and Elijah showed him the stones through the following miracle. Once a ship was in the middle of the ocean, all of its passengers being non-Jews with the exception of one Jewish lad. A heavy storm came and was about to sink the ship. Elijah then appeared before the Jewish boy and told him that if he would promise to go to R. Joshua b. Levi and show him the Chalcedonian stones, he would save the ship from sinking. The boy told Elijah that he would do it. However, he feared that R. Joshua would not believe him. Elijah replied that R. Joshua being a humble man would believe him. He further instructed the boy that he should not show these stones to R. Joshua in the presence of other people, that he should take R. Joshua to a certain cave, a distance of three miles from Lydia, and there reveal to him the stones. The boy was miraculously saved from the storm and immediately went to the home of R. Joshua b. Levi. The Rabbi followed the boy without asking any questions and silently proceeded to the cave. There the boy showed him the stones. As soon as R. Joshua took possession of the stones, the entire city of Lydia became illuminated. He dropped them and they disappeared again.

Pesikta d'R. Kahana, p. 136a-b; ed. Buber.

See also:

Pesikta Rabbati, sec. 32, p. 148b; ed. Friedmann.

THE RAINBOW IS A SIGN OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

R. Joshua ben Levi and Elijah, blessed be his memory, were discussing words of the Torah. When they came to

a certain tradition of R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, R. Joshua b. Levi found a difficulty. Elijah then said to R. Joshua, "If you care to ask R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, I will bring him to you."⁵⁴ Elijah called R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, informing him that R. Joshua b. Levi wished to ask him something concerning a certain *halakah*, but R. Simeon refused to see him. Elijah argued with R. Simeon, pleading that R. Joshua was a righteous man. R. Simeon replied, that had R. Joshua been a righteous man, the rainbow wouldn't have appeared in his lifetime. For in the days of R. Simeon, the rainbow had never appeared.

Midrash Tehillim, ch. 36, sec. 8; ed. Buber.

See also:

Gaster, *Sefer Ha-Mas'iot*, sec. 205, pp. 136-137, Hebrew.

Pesikta d'R. Kahana, Beshallah, pp. 87b-88a; ed. Buber.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah, ch. 35, sec. 2; Warsaw, 1876.

ELIJAH RESTORES THE LEARNING OF ELEAZAR B. ARAK

R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai had five disciples. When he died all of his disciples went to Yabneh, except R. Eleazar b. Arak⁵⁵ who went to his wife at Deyyomsi, a summer resort. R. Eleazar b. Arak waited for his colleagues to come to him but they would not come. Finally, he wanted to go to them but his wife would not let him. He let himself be convinced by his wife's arguments and as a result he forgot his studies. Some say that he was called up to the Torah and made so grave a mistake in the reading that the entire congregation protested. R. Eleazar cried and the

⁵⁴ For R. Simeon had died long before that time.

⁵⁵ Tanna, end of 1st century.

congregation with him, until his learning was restored to him. Some say that Elijah, blessed be his memory, studied with him until he recovered all that he had forgotten. This, therefore, is the meaning of the verse: *Surely oppression turneth a wise man into a fool, and a gift destroyeth the understanding.*⁵⁶

Yalkut Shimeoni, Kohelet 7, end of sec. 973.

⁵⁶ Ecclesiastes 7:7.

ELIJAH AS A TEACHER—TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

ELIJAH'S WAYS ARE STRANGE BUT JUST

R. Joshua b. Levi discovered something that frightened him until the truth was revealed to him. Here is the story.

R. Joshua fasted many days and prayed to God that He make Elijah appear before him. And behold Elijah appeared before him asking whether he wanted anything done. R. Joshua replied that he would like to accompany Elijah in the world and observe all his actions, so that he might learn wisdom from him. Elijah at first refused, saying that R. Joshua would not be able to bear all the things he would witness and that both of them would get weary of their experiences. But R. Joshua promised Elijah that he would not trouble him with any questions. For all that he desired was to observe Elijah's doings and nought else. Elijah consented on the condition that should R. Joshua ask him any questions he would discontinue the trip.

They started on the journey. They first came to the house of a poor man who had no possessions except one cow tethered in the yard. The man and his wife were sitting at the door and as Elijah and R. Joshua came up, they greeted them, took them into their house, fed them, and gave them lodging. In the morning, when Elijah and R. Joshua were about to leave, Elijah prayed that the cow should die; the cow died immediately. They departed.

R. Joshua was much puzzled concerning that act of Elijah, and felt very sad, saying to himself, "Was there no other reward to the poor fellow for all the respects he paid us, than to kill his cow, his one and only cow?" He asked Elijah: "My master, why did you kill the cow of this man, after all he did for us?" Elijah answered: "Do you remember the condition between you and me, that you keep quiet and ask no questions? If you want to depart from me, then will I explain to you." R. Joshua ceased to ask questions. They continued their trip a whole day until evening, when they came to the house of a rich man. No one in the house greeted the visitors, nor paid any attention to them. The visitors had to stay there without food. In this house there happened to be a broken wall which needed repair. On the next morning, Elijah prayed that the wall be rebuilt, and immediately the wall was put up. R. Joshua was even more astonished than before, but held himself from asking further questions.

They continued their journey a whole day, until evening, when they arrived in a large synagogue having benches of gold and silver, and each member having a seat according to his wealth and position. One of the members asked: "Who will feed these poor strangers tonight?" Another member replied: "Water and salt would be enough for them." They stopped there over night, and in the morning, before leaving Elijah said to the people: "May God make you all leaders!" and resumed his journey. R. Joshua was more perturbed than ever, but refrained from asking questions.

Toward evening, the visitors arrived in another town. When the people of the town saw them, they greeted them

with joy, offering them the warmest hospitality. The next morning when they were about to depart, Elijah prayed and said: "May God give you only one leader." When R. Joshua heard that, he could no longer control himself and demanded that Elijah give his reasons for all his strange acts. Elijah replied: "Since you are so determined to depart from me, I shall explain to you everything that has happened:

"In the case of the poor man whose cow I prayed should die, on that day it was decreed in heaven that his wife should die. It was thus my prayer to God that the cow should die in her place, especially since I saw that the woman was a very good and useful one. In the case of the rich man, whose broken wall I caused to be rebuilt, if I had allowed the man to rebuild the wall himself, he might have discovered the large treasure of gold and silver which was hidden beneath its foundation. Therefore I caused the wall to be built up. Concerning the people for whom I prayed that they should have many leaders, the reason is that many leaders are bad for any community. That community that has too many heads is bound to be destroyed. As for the community that I prayed should be headed by one leader, one leader is good for the people. Hence the proverbs: 'When there are many captains, the ship sinks.' 'A city may be populated by one.' "

Elijah further said to R. Joshua: "If you see a wicked man successful, do not be disturbed, because that success may be the instrument of his destruction. On the other hand, when you see a righteous man suffer and struggle all his life, possessing nothing but pains and afflictions, do

not question the ways of your Creator. For God's ways are just and His eyes are on all men."

Hibbur Yaffe Me'Ha-Yeshua, by R. Nissim b. Jacob, pp. 4b-6a; Amsterdam, 1746.

ELIJAH PLAYS VIRGIL TO JOSHUA

R. Joshua b. Levi said: Once I was walking on the road and I met Elijah of blessed memory. Elijah asked me whether I would like to be taken to the gate of Hell, and I consented. There he showed me the different ordeals through which the wicked pass. Some are hanging by their noses, others by their hands, others by their tongues, and still others by their feet. Women are hanging by their breasts, some people hanging by their eyes. Some are fed with their own flesh and others with burning coal. Some of them are being eaten alive by worms. Elijah remarked to me: "To these the following verse applies: *For their worm shall not die.*"⁵⁷

He further showed me some that were fed with sand and since they were fed against their will, their teeth were broken. God would say to them: "O wicked ones, when you ate stolen food, that food was sweet in your mouths, and now you have no strength to eat." This is in accordance with the verse: *Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.*⁵⁸

Elijah further showed me people that are constantly thrown from fire into snow and back again from snow into fire, as the shepherd that drives his sheep from mountain to mountain. To them the following verse applies: *Like*

⁵⁷ Isaiah 66:24.

⁵⁸ Psalms 3:8.

*sheep they are appointed for the nether world; death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their form shall be for the nether world to wear away, that there be no habitation for it.*⁵⁹

Reshit Hakmah by R. Elijah Vidas, Sha'ar Ha-Yirah, ch. 13, p. 36a; Amsterdam, 1776.

HOW JOSHUA MANEUVERED HIS WAY INTO PARADISE

The sages said: R. Joshua b. Levi was a perfect, righteous one, and when he was about to die, God said to the Angel of Death: "Do whatever R. Joshua may ask of you." The Angel went over to R. Joshua saying to him: "The time has come for you to depart from this world. I will do anything you desire of me." Joshua b. Levi asked the Angel of Death to show him his seat in Paradise. The Angel of Death answered: "Come with me and I will show it to you." R. Joshua then said, "Give me your sword, that you may not frighten me with it." The Angel handed the sword over to R. Joshua. They walked together until they reached the walls of Paradise. There the Angel lifted R. Joshua on top of the wall of Paradise and pointed out the place inside. R. Joshua then jumped off the wall and fell inside of Paradise. The Angel of Death grabbed him by the corner of his mantle and ordered him to leave Paradise. But R. Joshua swore by the name of God that he would not leave the place, since the Angel of Death had no right to enter Paradise. The other angels complained before God, saying: "See what the son of Levi has done; he received his share in Paradise by force."

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 49:15.

God replied: "Go and investigate if he ever swore and invalidated his oath; for if he did, this oath may also be invalidated."

The angels investigated and discovered that he had never before betrayed his oath. God then told the angels that R. Joshua should remain in Paradise. When the Angel of Death realized that he could not get R. Joshua out of Paradise, he asked him to return his sword, but R. Joshua refused to return the sword until a heavenly voice came down and ordered him to return the sword, because the Angel of Death needed it for others. R. Joshua then said to the Angel of Death: "Before I return the sword to you, swear that you will not display it to the people when you are about to take their souls from them." For the Angel of Death had been in the habit of displaying the sword to all his victims before he used it. Now he swore to R. Joshua that he would not do it again, and he got the sword back.

Elijah now proclaimed before R. Joshua saying: "Make room for the son of Levi in Paradise." R. Joshua went and found R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, who was sitting on thirteen-curtained couches prepared for the righteous.

Hibbur Yaffe Me'Ha-Yeshua by R. Nissim ben Jacob, pp. 38b-39a; Amsterdam, 1746.

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF ELIJAH'S VIRTUES

Why was Elijah so worthy that on his account a dead person was resurrected? Because Elijah fulfilled the wish of God. He used to pray daily for the glory of God and the honor of Israel, realizing the evil consequences should Israel disappear from the world. Elijah furthermore in

every generation, whenever he would meet righteous people, would embrace and bless them, and praise and sanctify the name of God.

Seder Eliyahu Rabbah, ch. 5, p. 22; ed. Friedmann.

KNOWLEDGE IS LIKE THE SHEARS OF DELILAH

R. Eleazar b. Simeon⁶⁰ was appointed overseer of forced public labor. Once Elijah, of blessed memory, appeared before him in the guise of an old man, and said to him: "Get an animal ready for me to travel." R. Eleazar asked Elijah what he had to carry, and Elijah told him: "One space for me, one coat and lining." R. Eleazar then remarked: "You see, I can carry this old man to the end of the world, and he tells me to get an animal ready for him." Then he asked the old man whether he would like to be carried by him and the old man consented. He then carried him over mountains, valleys and fields of thorns. Toward the end, the old man began to fall upon R. Eleazar. The latter said to him: "Old man, old man, you had better become lighter. If not, I shall throw you off." Elijah asked him: "Would you like to rest a bit?" Eleazar said he would. Elijah then led him to one of the fields under a tree, and gave him food and drink.

Then Elijah remarked to him: "Where will all this irregular life lead thee? Follow the art of thy ancestors." R. Eleazar then asked Elijah whether he would teach him, and Elijah answered in the affirmative. As soon as R. Eleazar learned to read he lost all his physical strength, so that he could not carry even his own coat.

Pesikta d'R. Kahana, Beshallah, pp. 92b-93a; ed. Buber.

⁶⁰ Tanna, end of 2d century.

TORAH IS A MEDICINE AND A TONIC

R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon met Elijah disguised as an old man accompanied by a youngster, both being on the other side of a wide river, which they desired to cross. R. Eleazar addressed Elijah: "Old man, I will lift the boy with you to this side of the water." Elijah replied: "Don't you have a load already? How can you take us along?" R. Eleazar then said: "Old man, old man, if I were to seize you and the boy with my two hands I could lift you half a mile." Elijah asked him: "Have you studied Torah?" R. Eleazar answered: "Yes." Elijah then remarked: "Does not the Torah weaken the one who studies it?" R. Eleazar replied: "The Torah is also called a medicine and a tonic, as the verse says: *It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*⁶¹ I too have drunk much of the Torah and thereby acquired strength."

Then Eleazar asked Elijah: "Who is that youngster who is with you?" Elijah answered, "I teach him Torah." R. Eleazar said: "Old one, there is much strength in this world and the world to come, and because of this lad, I will not allow the angels of Gehenna to touch you, and I will bring you to the world to come with the power which I have there."

Elijah replied: "Your word is as powerful in the world to come as that of the servants that serve before God."

While R. Eleazar was looking at him, the old man disappeared. R. Eleazar then said: "That must have been Elijah," and he was glad for all that he had done to him.

Zohar Ḥadash, Lek Leka, pp. 116b-117a; Azmir, 1868.

⁶¹ Proverbs 3:8.

SOW RIGHTEOUSNESS—REAP MERCY

The sages said in the name of the prophet Elijah, a person should be like an ox carrying its yoke and a donkey its load. One should always be engaged studying the words of the Torah, as it is said: *Happy are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth freely the feet of the ox and the ass.*⁶² Happy are the people of Israel when they busy themselves with studying Torah and with acts of kindness. For then do they master the evil inclinations and are not mastered by them. "Sowing" refers to the acts of kindness, as it is said: *Sow to yourselves according to righteousness, reap according to mercy.*⁶³ "Water" refers to the Torah as it is said: *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye for water.*⁶⁴ As soon as a person has studied Torah, Prophets, the Halokot, the Mishnah, the Midrash, the Haggodot, the Talmud and the Pilpul, then the Holy Spirit will rest upon him, as it is said: *The spirit of the Lord spoke by me and His word was upon my tongue.*⁶⁵

Seder Eliyahu Zuta, ch. 1, p. 167; ed. Friedmann.

ELIJAH'S FORMULA FOR HAPPINESS

The sages said in the name of Elijah, one should always be wise in the fear of the Lord, answer calmly, appease anger, live peacefully with one's father, mother, teacher, neighbor and even with a non-Jew. Father Elijah, of happy and blessed memory, used to say: "Heaven and earth testify that to a scholar who studies the Bible and traditions for the sake of God, and who supports himself,

⁶² Isaiah 32:20.

⁶³ Hosea 10:12.

⁶⁴ Isaiah 55:1.

⁶⁵ II Samuel 23:2.

the following verse applied: *When thou eatest of the labor of thy hands, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*⁶⁶

Seder Eliyahu Zuta, ch. 15, p. 197; ed. Friedmann.

CHARITY AVERTS THE EVIL DECREE

The sages used to say in the name of the academy of Elijah, the prophet: Charity is important. From the day of creation until the very present day, one that has given charity is indeed praiseworthy and is saved from judgment in Gehenna, as it is said: *Happy is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the day of evil.*⁶⁷ "Evil" refers to that judgment as it is said, *Therefore remove vexation from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh.*⁶⁸ And it further says: *Happy are they that keep justice, that do righteousness at all times.*⁶⁹

Seder Eliyahu Zuta, ch. 1, p. 169; ed. Friedmann.

FATHER ELIJAH IS ALL TOO HUMAN

R. Yose once preached in Zippori, saying that Father Elijah was hot-tempered. Elijah, who was in the habit of visiting R. Yose, stopped coming for three days. After that time, he came again. When he returned, R. Yose asked him why he had been absent for three days. Elijah told him it was because he called him hot-tempered. R. Yose replied: "The fact that you stayed away proves that you were hot-tempered."

Sanhedrin 113a-b.

⁶⁶ Psalms 128:2.

⁶⁷ Psalms 41:2.

⁶⁸ Ecclesiastes 11:10.

⁶⁹ Psalms 106:3.

THE HOT-TEMPERED ARE BARRED FROM TORAH

Father Elijah, of blessed memory, used to say: "The Torah is to be explained only to him that is not hot-tempered. I myself do not appear to him who is hot-tempered."

Happy is the one who has met Elijah and has communed with him. Such an individual is assured of the world to come.

Kallah Rabbati, end of ch. 5; ed. Wilna.

ELIJAH AS AN INSTRUCTOR—TEACHING BY REBUKE AND PUNISHMENT

ELIJAH IS GIRDED WITH THE HIDE OF ISAAC'S RAM

I saw Elijah girded with a big girdle, and I asked him where he had secured that big girdle, and he told me that it came from the hide of the ram of Isaac. I asked him again: "Wasn't that ram a burnt offering entirely consumed, as are sacrifices for sinners? Is the hide of the ram not a part of that sacrifice?" Elijah replied: "That ram was slaughtered by Abraham, symbolizing kindness, for God, who is Mercy. I am girded with that ram, which is strong, to avenge the sinners."

Yalkut Reubeni Wa-yera, p. 102b; Warsaw, 1884.

ELIJAH BELIEVES THAT FEAR IS AN AID TO LEARNING

Elijah was accustomed to visit Rab Anan ⁷⁰ and teach him "Seder Eliyahu." When Elijah learned of a case in which Rab Anan unjustly recommended a certain litigant to R. Nahman, he stopped coming to him. Anan fasted and prayed for Elijah's return and Elijah did return. But from then on, Elijah during their studies would continue to frighten R. Anan. R. Anan had to build himself a special box, with which to protect himself from Elijah during their studies. This explains the two divisions of Seder Eliyahu—the Seder Eliyahu Rabbah and the Seder Eliyahu

⁷⁰ Amora, 3d century.

Zuta. The former they studied before Elijah's disappearance, and the latter after his return.

Ketubot 106a.

ELIJAH REBUKES AN INFORMER

The government was looking for 'Ulla. He ran away to Lydia to R. Joshua b. Levi. The government officials came to the town and surrounded it, issuing a warning to the people that if they did not deliver 'Ulla to them, they would destroy the town. R. Joshua b. Levi went then to 'Ulla and persuaded him to give himself up to the government. Since that incident, Elijah, who was in the habit of revealing himself to R. Joshua stopped coming. R. Joshua fasted a number of days until Elijah appeared again to him. Elijah rebuked R. Joshua, saying: "Should I appear to those who surrender people to the government?" R. Joshua said: "Didn't I follow the law?" But Elijah replied: "Was that in accordance with the moral law?"

Yerushalmi Terumot, ch. 8, 46b; ed. Krotoshin.

R. JOSHUA IS REMISS IN PRAYER

A certain man was torn and devoured by a lion in the vicinity of R. Joshua b. Levi, and Elijah stopped talking to R. Joshua for a period of three days. R. Joshua should have prayed for his generation so that such a tragedy should not have happened.

Makkot 11a.

A SIMPLE "PLEASE GOD" MAY BE WORTH MANY DENARS

Once upon a time there was a certain very rich man, who had a great deal of land, but no oxen with which to

plow. What did the man do? He took a bag of money and decided to go to town to buy some oxen with which to plow his land. While on the way, he was met by Elijah, of blessed memory, who asked him where he was going. The man answered: "I am going to the nearby town to buy oxen or cows." Elijah corrected him and said: "Say 'Please God.'" But the man returned, "Whether it pleases God or not, since I have the money in my hand, I will simply buy them." Elijah warned, "You will not succeed." The man went his way and lost the bag of money. When he reached the town and attempted to do business, he discovered that he had lost the money. He returned home embittered, but stubbornly went to another town in order to avoid meeting Elijah. On this second journey, he was again confronted by Elijah, now disguised as an old man who simply asked him where he was going. The rich man said he was going to buy some oxen. Elijah corrected him again: "Say 'Please God.'" But the man replied again, "Whether it pleases God or not, I have the money in my hand and I am not afraid of anything." He went his way.

While he was travelling on the road, Elijah caused him to fall asleep, and while asleep, Elijah took the bag away from him. When the man awoke he found that his bag had disappeared. In despair, he again turned homeward. He took money for the third time and went to town. Elijah met him and asked him where he was going, and the man replied: "To the market to buy oxen, *please God.*" Elijah remarked: "Go peacefully and succeed." Elijah then returned all the money that the man had lost during the first two trips, but in such a manner that the man was unaware of it. He went to the market place to buy the oxen and saw there two red cows without a blem-

ish. The owners wanted one hundred gold denars. The man thought that he did not have that much money with him. But he put his hand in his pocket and to his amazement found three hundred gold denars. He bought the cows and also oxen to plow the fields. Afterward he sold the cows to the government for a thousand gold denars.⁷¹ Hence if a man undertakes to do anything, he should say "Please God." For no one is certain what may happen to him in the course of a day.

Alpha Beta d' ben Sira, pp. 9b-10a; Berlin, 1858.

ELIJAH COUNSELS A SPECIAL PRAYER FOR TRAVEL

Elijah advised the following to Rab Yehudah the brother of R. Sala Ḥasida: ⁷² "Do not get angry and thus you will not sin. Do not get drunk and thus you will not sin. When you are about to travel on the roads, beg permission of your Creator and then go."

What does Elijah mean by "begging permission" from the Creator? R. Jacob in the name of R. Ḥisda says he refers to the special prayer formulated by the rabbis for such purposes.

Berakot 29b.

ELIJAH MAKES THE PRAYER FIT THE OCCASION

R. Yose said: Once, while I was walking on the road, I entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray. Elijah of blessed memory came to me and waited at the door until I finished praying. When I was through with the prayers

⁷¹ Probably the original source referred not to the government but to the Temple, where such cows were needed for the sacrifice of the red heifer.

⁷² Period unknown.

he greeted me and I responded to his greetings. Then he asked me why I had entered those ruins. I told him it was only to pray. Elijah remarked that I should have prayed on the open road, and not have entered the ruins. When I explained to him that I was afraid the travellers might interrupt me, he argued that I should have prayed only a special short prayer under such adverse conditions.

Berakot 3b.

HE CAN BE TERRIBLE IN WRATH

There was a man who prayed behind the Synagogue and would not turn his face toward the Synagogue. Elijah passed by and noticed him. He appeared before the man in the form of a traveller and said to the man: "Is this the way to stand before your Master?" Elijah drew his sword and killed the man.

Berakot 6b.

HE WILL NOT GO WHERE THE POOR ARE NOT WELCOME

There was a pious man whom Elijah would visit and talk with. However, when that man made a watchman's door at the gate of his yard, and thus prevented the poor people from entering the house, Elijah stopped visiting him.

Baba Batra 7b.

HE EXPOSES A MURDERER

R. Joshua b. Levi ordered his handy man not to buy him vegetables unless they came from the garden of Sisero. Elijah, of blessed memory, met the handy man

and begged him to tell his master that the garden did not belong to Sisero but to a Jew whom Sisero had killed, and from whom he had seized the garden. Elijah further added: "Inform all the people of this."

Yerushalmi Demai, ch. 2, 22c; ed. Krotoshin.

See also:

Yerushalmi Shebi'it, end of ch. 9.

HE BELIEVES IN CONSIDERATION FOR SERVANTS

Aboha bar Ihi, and Miniomin bar Ihi,⁷⁸ the first would give the waiter a portion from each dish served, while the other would give him from one dish only. Elijah would speak to the first one, but not to the second one.

There were two pious men (some say they were Rab Mari and Rab Pinehas, the sons of Rab H̄isda). One would allow the waiter to eat before serving, and the other would not allow him to eat until after serving. Elijah would speak to the first, but not to the second.

Ketubot 61a.

HE ENCOURAGES ELIEZER BEN HORKENOS

It is told concerning R. Eliezer ben Horkenos that he once became ambitious to study the Torah. Until then he used to help his father to till the rocky soil. But now he would sit and cry. When his father asked him why he was crying, R. Eliezer replied that he wanted to study Torah. His father rebuked him saying: "You are twenty-eight years old and you want to start studying the Torah?" R. Eliezer continued in great distress until Elijah appeared and told him to go to Jerusalem to the academy of Ben

⁷⁸ Amoraim, 3d century.

Zakkai. He went there and when he arrived he commenced to cry. Ben Zakkai asked him who he was but he would not tell. Then Ben Zakkai asked him why he was crying and what he desired. To this he replied that he desired to study Torah and afterwards revealed to Ben Zakkai that he was the son of Horkenos.

Abot d'R. Nathan, version 2, ch. 13; ed. Schechter.

See also:

Pirke d'R. Eliezer, ch. 1.

ELIJAH AS FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED

THERE ARE ALWAYS POORER THAN THE POOR

R. Akiba ⁷⁴ married the daughter of Kalba Sebu'a and they were very poor. Elijah visited them in the form of a man and asked them whether they could give him a little straw for his wife who, he told them, had given birth, and had nothing on which to lie. When Elijah left, R. Akiba remarked to his wife: "You see there are people that do not possess even a little straw."

Nedarim 50a.

ELIJAH SAVES NAHUM ISH GAM ZU FROM DEATH

Whatever would happen to Nahum Ish Gam Zu ⁷⁵ he would remark: "This too was meant for my good." Once the Jews sent through Nahum a gift for the Roman Emperor. On his way Nahum was robbed of the gift and, to make matters worse, the robbers filled the box with sand. When he arrived at court, the Emperor opened the box, only to find the sand. The Emperor roared: "The Jews have played a joke on me." Nahum was ordered to be executed. Elijah appeared in the form of a Roman citizen and said: "Perhaps these are the sands of the Patriarch Abraham which can be used in war, for they are sharp as files." The government tested the sand and found it to be so.

Sanhedrin 109a.

⁷⁴ Tanna, 2d century.

⁷⁵ Teacher of R. Akiba.

AND A GOOD TURN FOR ELEAZAR BEN PERATA

When R. Eleazar ben Perata ⁷⁶ was on trial before the Romans, a certain man arose to testify against him. Elijah came in the form of a high official with a letter and informed the court that the letter was to be sent to the Emperor at once. They ordered the witness to act as messenger to the Emperor. When he was on his journey, Elijah came and forced him four hundred miles out of the way, so that he never returned.

Abodah Zarah 17b.

ELIJAH AND R. MEIR'S REPUTATION FOIL THE ROMANS

The Roman government was searching for R. Meir,⁷⁷ to arrest him, because his wife was found guilty of trying to free her sister from prison. Once the officers were pursuing R. Meir, when Elijah, appearing in the form of a harlot, embraced him. Seeing this, the officers concluded that the man could not have been R. Meir.

Abodah Zarah 18a-b.

ELIJAH ASSURES BEN YOḤAI OF HIS ETERNAL REWARD

R. Simeon ben Yoḥai ⁷⁸ and his son R. Eleazar ran away to the desert of Lydia and hid themselves in a cave. By a miracle there appeared a carob tree and a well, from which they received their sustenance. Elijah, of blessed memory, would visit them twice daily and teach them. But no one else knew their hiding place. Once a certain discussion took place at the academy and R. Jehudah complained of the absence of R. Simeon, saying that the latter was greatly missed. One morning R. Yose sent a written message to

⁷⁶ Tanna, 2d century. ⁷⁷ Tanna, 2d century. ⁷⁸ Tanna, 2d century.

R. Simeon by putting it in the mouth of a bird. When R. Simeon and R. Eleazar received the message, they cried: "We weep because we have to be away from our colleagues, and because of these problems which they cannot solve. What will the later generations do when they see all this?!"

Meanwhile Elijah, of blessed memory, came and found them crying. He said unto them: "I was performing another duty, but God has sent me to you to remove your tears." While Elijah was talking to them, a wind passed by and carried him away in a flame. R. Simeon started to cry and fell asleep at the mouth of the cave. Elijah then reappeared and commanded him to awake, for God assured R. Simeon of his share in the world to come, and of his future glory.

Zohar *Ḥadash*, *Ki Tabo*, pp. 70b-71a; Barditsheb, 1825.

THE AUTHORITY OF GOVERNMENT IS NOT SOVEREIGN FOR ELIJAH

When R. Ishmael b. R. Yose⁷⁹ was appointed sheriff by the government, Elijah met him and asked him how long he would continue that office and deliver God's people for execution. R. Ishmael said: "What can I do? I have to follow the orders of the government." Elijah replied: "Your father escaped to Asia and you can escape to Laodicea."

Baba Mezia' 84a.

ELIJAH IS A PAINLESS DENTIST

Rabbi suffered from toothache for thirteen years. Elijah then came to him in the form of R. Ḥiyya, and asked

⁷⁹ Tanna, 2d century.

him how he was feeling. Rabbi told him that one tooth especially caused him great pain. Elijah put his finger on that tooth and the pain was gone. On the following day, R. Ḥiyya visited Rabbi and asked him how he was feeling. Rabbi told him that since yesterday, when he, R. Ḥiyya, put his finger on the sick tooth, the pain was gone. R. Ḥiyya then remarked that he had not visited him yesterday. From that day Rabbi respected R. Ḥiyya very much.

Yerushalmi Killayim, ch. 9, 32b; ed. Krotoshin.

HELPS SHILA IN A TOUGH SPOT

R. Shila ⁸⁰ punished a certain man who had committed the sin of adultery with a non-Jewish woman. This man reported R. Shila to the government saying: "There is one man among the Jews who administers justice without royal authority." A government messenger was sent to R. Shila to question him concerning the case. R. Shila explained that the man in question had intercourse with a donkey. When R. Shila was asked whether he had any witnesses to that effect, he answered "Yes." Elijah appeared at that moment and corroborated the statement of R. Shila.

Berakot 58a.

RAB KAHANA BUTTRESSES HIS VIRTUE WITH ELIJAH'S DENARS

Rab Kahana ⁸¹ was peddling with baskets. Once a certain lady asked him to commit a sin with her, and he told her to wait until he could be ready. He went up on the roof and attempted to jump from it. Elijah came and caught him before he fell to the ground and then chid him: "You caused me to run four hundred Persian miles

⁸⁰ Amora, 3d century.

⁸¹ Amora, end of 4th century.

in order to pick you up in time." R. Kahana said: "Whose fault is that? Is it not my poverty that caused all this?" Elijah then gave him a measure full of coins.

Kiddushin 40a.

THE WOMAN WHO SPIT IN R. MEIR'S EYE

R. Meir used to preach before large audiences. One Friday night a certain woman came home late from R. Meir's lecture. Her husband asked her where she had been and she told him that she had been at R. Meir's lecture. Her husband then told her not to come to his house until she had spit in the face of R. Meir. The woman was compelled to leave her home. Elijah then appeared before R. Meir, and told him how the woman had lost her home on account of him. What did R. Meir do? When the woman came to pray in his synagogue, he asked aloud whether there was anyone who knew how to cure a sore eye by charm. The woman called out, "I can do it." Thus she spit in his face.⁸² After that, R. Meir said to the woman, "Tell your husband that you have spit in my face." R. Meir did this in order to make peace between husband and wife.

Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, ch. 5, sec. 15; Wilna, 1878.

BEWARE OF THE OUTER GARMENTS OF PIETY

A certain man had money entrusted to him. Once during a journey he stopped in a town on Friday afternoon. He entered the synagogue and found a man there praying with his *tefillin*⁸³ on his head. The visitor thought that

⁸² There was a quaint superstition that sore eyes could be so cured.

⁸³ Phylacteries.

he surely could entrust that man with his money, since he seemed so pious, and so he did. Later the man denied that he had ever received the money. The visitor said to the man: "I did not trust you, but God, whose name you were carrying on your head." The visitor then put on his praying shawl⁸⁴ and prayed to God, saying: "Master of the Universe, I have put trust in Your holy name which was on that man's head." Then he fell asleep in the place where he was praying. Elijah, of blessed memory, appeared before him and told him to go to that man's wife and tell her to give him the money. As a sign that he was telling the truth, he was to tell her that she and her husband were eating leavened bread on Passover and food on the Day of Atonement. The visitor went to the woman and told her exactly what Elijah had directed him to say. The woman gave him the money. When the husband came home, he started to beat her for having returned the money to the visitor. The woman told her husband that it was not her fault, since the stranger had the correct password. The latter then said to his wife: "Since the secret of our double life has become known, let us return to our original faith."⁸⁵

Pesikta Rabbati, sec. 22, p. 111b; ed. Friedmann.

See also:

Midrash Ha-Godol, Yitro, pp. 221-222; ed. Hoffmann.

⁸⁴ Tallith.

⁸⁵ Both of them happened to be proselytes.

ELIJAH AS FRIEND OF SCHOLARS AND MARTYRS

AKIBA FINDS A SWEET LODGING IN DEATH

The verse says: *She hath also furnished her table.*

When R. Akiba was in prison, R. Joshua Hagarsi⁸⁷ would serve him and take care of him. Before a holiday, R. Joshua left R. Akiba and went home. Afterward Elijah came to R. Joshua. The latter responded to Elijah's greetings and asked him whether there was anything special he wanted. Elijah said to R. Joshua: "I am a priest and come to inform you that R. Akiba died in prison." They both went to the prison house immediately and found the gate of the prison wide open and the watchman sleeping, and also the other people within the prison house were asleep. Elijah and R. Joshua took the body of R. Akiba, put it in the bed, and carried it out of the prison house. Outside the prison, Elijah, of blessed memory, put the body on his shoulders. When R. Joshua noticed this, he said to Elijah: "My master, didn't you tell me that you were a priest, and a priest is prohibited to defile himself by a dead body?" Elijah replied: "Heaven forbid! There is no uncleanness attached to righteous people nor to their disciples."

Then they resumed their journey for a whole day until they reached the metropolis of Cæsarea. When they arrived there, they climbed up three stairs, and went down into a cave which opened before them. In the cave they found a

⁸⁶ Proverbs 9:2.

⁸⁷ Tanna, 2d century.

chair, a bed and a Menorah. They put the body of R. Akiba on the bed and left. As soon as they had left, the cave opening closed up and the candle of the Menorah commenced to flicker. When Elijah noticed that he said: "Happy are you the righteous; happy are you who busy yourselves in the study of the Torah; and happy are you who fear God, you, for whom a place is reserved in Paradise. Happy are you, R. Akiba, who in death found a sweet lodging."

This is the meaning of the verse: *She hath also furnished her table.*

Midrash Mishle, ch. 9, pp. 31a-b; ed. Buber.

ELIJAH IS DELAYED BY GOOD WORKS

R. Simeon said: "I am perplexed concerning that man who is girded with pomaces of kernels of grapes (i.e., Elijah)."⁸⁸ Why is he not present in our festive place, at the time when these holy words are being revealed?" Meanwhile Elijah came and three rays of light were on his face. R. Simeon asked him why he was not present at the celebration of the master when they sang praises to God. Elijah replied that all these days he had been occupied before God, so that he could not attend the celebrations of R. Simeon. For during that time, God sent him to save the old R. Hamenuna and his colleagues who had been imprisoned by the government. Elijah by a number of miracles had to break through the wall of the ruler's palace, bind forty-five officers, and thus save R. Hamenuna and his colleagues. Elijah put them in the valley of Ono

⁸⁸ Elijah was so called because of his peculiar attire, made up of pomaces of kernels of grapes.

and supplied them with bread and water, for they had not eaten for three days. Elijah had to take care of them the entire day.

Now Elijah started to praise R. Simeon and the other guests who came to the celebration, telling them what rewards await them and the other righteous people in the world to come.

Zohar, Naso, pp. 144b-145a; ed. Wilna, 1912.

ELIJAH, THE NEVER-FAILING FRIEND

THE STORY OF THE THRICE-WIDOWED BRIDE WHO KNEW HER TORAH

The verse says: *He kept him as the apple of his eye.*⁸⁹

God is heedful of His chosen ones, even as a man guards his eyes.

A certain rich and learned man had a daughter, beautiful and pious. She had been married three times, and each husband had died during the first night after the marriage. After her third misfortune, the woman said: "No more men shall die on my account, I will remain unwed until God will have mercy upon me."

The widow had a poor uncle (her father's brother) who lived in a distant country with his ten sons. The uncle would go daily with his oldest son to gather wood in the forest. He would then sell the wood and thus meagerly support his entire family. The time came when they could find no customers for their wood. They had no money to buy food and the whole family was in danger of starving.

The eldest son decided to ask permission from his parents to visit his rich uncle, the father of the thrice-widowed bride. He was given leave to go. After a long journey he arrived at his uncle's home and was very cordially received. The young man stayed at his uncle's house for seven days. On the eighth day he pledged his uncle to grant him a request, namely, the hand of his daughter in

⁸⁹ Deuteronomy 32:10.

marriage. When the uncle heard this, he wept, and revealed to his nephew the unhappy experiences of his daughter. The nephew nevertheless insisted upon marrying the daughter.

The uncle tried hard to dissuade him. "If you are after my money," he argued, "do not marry her, for I will give you all the money you need. Why should you risk your life?"

Answered the nephew: "You swore that you would not refuse my request. You must keep your promise."

The uncle finally consented and reported his decision to his daughter. When she learned of the love of her cousin, she wept bitterly and prayed God that no harm should fall upon this brave young lover.

An elaborate wedding was arranged. The elders of the city were invited. Then Elijah, of blessed memory, called on the bridegroom and counselled him that when a poor man, dishevelled, tired, barefoot, his clothes in tatters, should later appear, the bridegroom himself must receive him, seat him in a place of honor, and attend on him with food and drink. The advice given, Elijah disappeared.

The bridegroom and the guests were about to sit down to the wedding feast after the ceremony, when the poor man arrived. The bridegroom received him in the manner Elijah had prescribed. The feast over, the tattered stranger beckoned the bridegroom aside and told him that he was God's messenger, come to take the bridegroom's life. The bridegroom pleaded that he be granted a year's time, or even half a year, but the stranger refused. Then he begged for at least seven days, until the wedding celebration should be completed. But the messenger was adamant.

He announced that the groom must die at once, for his time had come. However, the messenger relented, to permit the groom to take leave of his bride. When the doomed man came to her she was in tears. When the groom related what had befallen him, the bride prevailed on him to remain in the room while she attempted to soften the heart of the grim messenger. She discarded sentiment and put her trust in logic. "If the bridegroom should now die," she pleaded, "the Torah would be a forgery, for the Torah says, *When a man taketh a new wife, he shall not go out in the host, neither shall he be charged with any business; he shall be free for his house one year and he shall cheer his wife whom he hath taken.*"⁹⁰ God is true, and so must His Torah be. If you reject my plea, I shall appeal to the great Beth-Din." God Himself was moved to order the messenger to depart.

The bride's parents had already prepared a grave for the bridegroom, so sure were they of his fate. But the next morning the groom awoke happy in his new-found love. Everyone rejoiced, and praised God for His mercy.

Midrash Tanḥuma, Ha'azinu, sec 8; Warsaw, 1902.

ADULTERY WITH A DEMON NOT ILLEGAL

Once a pious man was persuaded by a demon who appeared in the form of a woman to commit adultery. Afterward the man felt deeply remorseful, until Elijah, of blessed memory, appeared and asked him why he was troubled. The man told Elijah the story of his sin; Elijah then assured him that he was not to be blamed, because the temptress was a demon. From the opinion of Elijah

⁹⁰ Deuteronomy 24:5.

expressed in this instance, we learn that carnal relations with a demon do not legally constitute adultery.

Midrash Tanḥuma, Bereshit, sec. 27; ed. Buber.

ELIJAH'S RECIPE FOR DISGORGING A SERPENT

Some say that R. Shimi ben Ashi ⁹¹ once swallowed a serpent. Elijah appeared before him as a horseman and ordered him to eat *cuscuta* ⁹² with salt, and to run before his horse three miles. After this R. Shimi vomited the serpent.

Shabbat 109b.

NEVER GET ANGRY ON A FULL STOMACH

Elijah said to R. Nathan: ⁹³ "Eat to a third of your capacity, drink to a third, and leave the rest of the space in your stomach so that when you get angry you may not become distressed."

Gittin 70a.

⁹¹ Amora, 4th century.

⁹² *Kesuta*—a kind of an Indian grass.

⁹³ Tanna, end of 2d century.

ELIJAH, FRIEND OF THE POOR

ELIJAH LETS HIMSELF BE SOLD FOR EIGHTY THOUSAND DENARS

The sages tell a story of a very poor man who had a wife and five sons. One day he felt extremely distressed because of his poverty, and sat about the house in deep gloom. His wife advised him to go to the market place where perhaps God would put something in his way and thus save the family from starvation. The husband asked blankly, "Where can I go? I have no relatives, no friends, no one except God." The good woman could not persist, for she realized how hopeless things were. But when the children in their hunger cried for bread, the mother again urged her husband to go to the market place and try to find some kind of work. To this plea the man answered: "How can I go? I have nothing to cover my nakedness." The woman then found a torn garment and gave it to him that he might protect his body.

The man wandered mutely and aimlessly about the city. He lifted his eyes to heaven and prayed, "Master of the Universe, You know that there is no one to look upon my poverty or to take pity on me, neither brother nor relative nor friend. My children are hungry and cry for bread. O God, have pity upon us, or gather us unto Your arms, that our sufferings may cease."

His prayer went up to heaven, and behold, Elijah of blessed memory appeared unto the man. "Why do you weep?" he asked. The man recited the story of his sufferings. Elijah then said, "Do not be frightened. Keep calm. Take me and sell me as a slave in the market place and you will have money to live on." The man returned: "My lord, how can I sell you as a slave when people know that I never have possessed slaves of my own? I fear that people will say that you are master and I am your slave." Elijah assured him: "Do as I tell you. But when you have sold me, give me but one silver coin."

The poor man took Elijah to the market place, and indeed, the people took Elijah to be the master and the other the slave. But when Elijah was asked about it, he insisted that he was the slave and the poor man his master. Then one of the King's princes happened to pass by, and was impressed by Elijah. He offered eighty thousand golden denars for him. The poor man accepted the offer and, following the instruction of Elijah, gave one silver coin of the purchase price to him. Elijah returned the coin to the man, saying, "Keep it, and with it you will support your family. You will know no more of want or suffering."

Elijah went away with the prince, while the man returned home to his famished dear ones. He brought them bread and wine and they ate and drank and had food in abundance. The wife asked her husband how all this bounty had come to him, and he told her all that had happened. In true womanish fashion she said, "It is good that you followed my advice and went to the market place. Had you remained moping about the house, we would all have died of hunger." From this day on, God blessed that

man and he and his family knew no more of want and suffering, in all their days.

As for Elijah, the prince brought him before the King, who at that time was planning to build a luxurious palace outside the city. The King had bought many slaves to move rocks, cut wood, and prepare other materials for the building. The King asked Elijah what his trade was. Elijah answered that he specialized in the building of large and difficult structures. The King was delighted with this news and commissioned Elijah to build a magnificent palace for him, and to have sole charge of everything that pertained to the work. He promised Elijah that if the palace was completed at the end of six months Elijah could have his freedom. Elijah then asked the King to order the workers to have in readiness all the necessary building materials. The next morning he arose and prayed to God that the palace be built as the King desired. God granted his prayer and the palace, exactly as the King wished it, was built in one brief second. The palace completed, Elijah went on his mysterious way.

The King was informed of this amazing feat and rushed to see the miracle. He was much impressed by it, and was altogether delighted. But he wondered much how it had all happened in so short a time. He looked for Elijah but could not find him, so he assumed that Elijah was an angel and not a man.

Elijah now appeared to the man by whom he had been sold as a slave, and the man asked Elijah what he had done to the prince. Elijah answered: "I did all he asked me to. I did not want him to lose the money he paid for me, so I built him a palace which was worth far more."

The man blessed Elijah and thanked him for all that he had done for him.

Elijah protested. "Thank God, for He has done all this for you."

Hibbur Yafah Me'Ha-Yeshua by R. Nissim b. Jacob,
pp. 24a-25a; Amsterdam, 1746.

A MELANGE OF TALL TALES

A certain man taught his son the following Biblical maxim: Throw your bread upon the water and after many days it will come back to you.⁹⁴ When the father died, the son recalled the maxim which he had been taught. He accordingly took loaves of bread daily and threw them into the ocean. Elijah in the guise of an old man happened once to see him throwing bread into the water, and asked the young man what he meant by it, and the youth explained his action. Elijah then told him that the world would be very flat indeed without bread, just as bread without salt is tasteless. He therefore admonished the young man not to waste so much bread. Thereafter the young man would throw only small slices of bread into the water. He would cast the bread to one particular spot and it seemed that a certain fish would always be there to catch it. And thus the fish grew very fat. The other fish were jealous and very irked about this, and they held a meeting of protest and decided to complain to the Leviathan.

"Our master," they said, "there is a certain fish among us that has grown monstrously fat and has become a danger to our existence. For he now swallows whole

⁹⁴ Compare Ecclesiastes 11:1.

companies of our comrades with one full gulp." The Leviathan sent a messenger to bring the selfish pirate to court. But the selfish one swallowed the messenger. Another fish was sent to bring him but the same fate befell that messenger. Finally Leviathan himself came to him and inquired where he had grown so large and mighty. The fish answered: "At the overflowing of the sea." Leviathan then asked him how it was that the other fish that were about him did not grow so large. The fish then confessed that there was a certain man who daily brought him slices of bread "which I eat morning and afternoon." In addition he further confessed, "I swallow down twenty fish for a morning appetizer and thirty for an evening snack." Leviathan then asked why he ate his own friends and neighbors. The fish answered, "Because they happen to come in my way." Then Leviathan commanded the fish to get hold of the man who brought him bread, and bring him before his presence.

The selfish fish dug a pit in the place where the man was accustomed to stand while throwing the bread into the water, and when the man next came to his usual place, he fell into the water. The fish swallowed him and brought him before Leviathan. Leviathan ordered the fish to vomit the man from his mouth. The fish obeyed and the man was catapulted into the mouth of Leviathan. And now Leviathan asked the lad why he was in the habit of throwing bread into the water. The lad replied that his father had taught him so when he was very young. Leviathan then took the boy out of his belly, kissed him, taught him seventy languages and the entire Torah, and after that spewed him a distance of three hundred miles on to a spot

where human beings had never been. Dazed, the youth lifted his eyes, and beheld two ravens flying overhead. The young raven was asking its father, "Is this man alive or dead?" The father answered, "I do not know, my son." The son then ventured, "I will swoop down and pick his eyes, because I relish the eyes of men." The father warned him not to do so, for the man might be alive. The young raven, heedless of his parent's good advice, did pounce upon the forehead of the youth and was about to begin his feast, when the lad (who had understood the conversation, since he had been taught by Leviathan the language of birds) seized him. The reckless raven cawed for his father's help. The old raven heard the cry and said to the young man, "If you free my son, I will tell you a secret. Dig beneath the ground you now lie upon and you will find a treasure which King Solomon once hid."

The young man freed the raven at once, and commenced to dig. He found the hidden treasure of Solomon, precious stones and pearls in abundance. He and his family waxed very rich indeed.

Alpha Beta d'Ben Sira, pp. 5b-7a; ed. Steinschneider, Berlin, 1858.

CONCERNING A WOMAN WHO PROVED A FIT TRUSTEE OF GOD'S WEALTH

OR

CONSULT YOUR WIFE AND BE PROSPEROUS

There was once a man who lost all his possessions, and was reduced to extreme poverty. His wife remained pious in spite of the change in their circumstances. The man be-

came a laborer in the fields, and once while plowing, Elijah in the guise of an Arab appeared to him. The stranger announced that seven prosperous years had been allotted to the poor man, and that he would have to decide whether he should enjoy them now or wait until his old age. The man said to Elijah: "You are a faker, I will have nothing to do with you. Get thee gone." But Elijah persisted, and after awhile the man agreed to consult his wife. He went to her and told her all that had happened to him and asked her to advise him what to say to this stranger. The wife commanded him to go back and tell the stranger he would have the seven prosperous years to begin at once. So he did, and Elijah answered, "Go home, and when you get to the gates of your courtyard you will find the evidence of God's blessing everywhere about your home."

The man's children had been digging about the house and they stumbled upon a great treasure of gold. They ran to their mother with the good tidings and when the man came home his wife recounted the happy discovery. The man thanked God for His kindness to him and to his family and he was very happy indeed. The pious wife was also happy, but she felt a new responsibility as well. So she said to her husband: "God acted kindly toward us, and granted us seven years of prosperity. Let us therefore engage in acts of kindness during these seven blessed years. Perchance God will add more years to the measure of our happiness."

So the woman undertook to distribute money for all good causes, and she asked her youngest son to keep a careful record of the moneys that were given for good works. When the seven years rolled round, Elijah of blessed

memory approached the husband and informed him that the years of his wealth were done, and that now he must return all that he had received in the beginning. Quietly the man replied, "When I accepted your gift, I consulted my wife. Now when you ask me to return it, I will consult her also." When the wife heard of the stranger's mission, she commanded her husband, "Go and tell him, if he can find more trustworthy people in the world, we will return the money to him." God saw that they were right, for He knew that they had acted as trustees for this money, in that they had not used it for themselves alone, but for all who were in need. God therefore granted them many more years of happiness and prosperity. This is what the prophet meant when he said, *And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.*⁹⁵

Midrash Ruth Zuta, ch. 4, verse 11, p. 55; ed. Buber.

HOW TO MAKE PEOPLE RICH AND YET KEEP THEM PIOUS

Rab Abraham was a very poor man who lived in Ashkelom. He was as pious as he was poor. He opened the synagogue and he closed it. He was forever praising God. When Elijah saw him, he was moved to help him. Elijah asked permission of God to better the man's lot. God granted permission on condition that the man remain pious and devoted to Him even after affluence should come upon him. So Elijah went to the man and gave him a silver piece of money. The man accepted the coin and went to the market place to buy vessels of clay. Elijah appeared to

⁹⁵ Isaiah 32:17.

him again in the guise of a young man. He held in his hand a garment worth a golden coin. Elijah asked the man to buy this garment from him. The man replied that he had only one silver coin. Elijah sold him the garment for the silver coin. Thereafter Elijah appeared in the guise of an old man and asked to buy the same garment. The man asked Elijah how much he would give for it, and Elijah offered ten golden coins and one silver coin.

From that time on the man became a great merchant, well versed in business, and all other merchants were eager to traffick with him. So busy did he become that he could no longer attend the worship services at the synagogue.

God said to Elijah: "I had one beloved and pious soul and now you have taken him from me." Whereupon Elijah returned to the man and asked for the silver coin he had once given him. The man offered him a hundred golden coins in place of this silver coin which at first he could not find. Elijah insisted on that silver coin. The man looked again and found it finally and returned it to Elijah. Immediately all his wealth disappeared and he became poorer than he had ever been. He returned to his daily services at the synagogue where he lamented bitterly his bad reverse in fortune. Elijah complained to God, "I can no longer bear the cries of this man. Permit me to help him support himself again." God agreed but warned: "Do not estrange him from Me." Elijah promised that this time the man would not go astray from Him.

So Elijah returned to the man and said, "I am the one who gave you the silver coin and took it back from you when you neglected your prayers. If you will swear that you will not give up praying, I will return the lucky coin

to you." The man so swore, and soon he was blessed with riches more abundant than those he had known before. And when the merchants heard of his renewed fortune, they visited him to discover what means he really possessed. And it happened that whatever offer they asked for their goods, this man was ready to pay them. Thus his reputation as a rich man was firmly established.

Sefer Ha-Masiyyot, Gaster, No. 307, pp. 206-207, Hebrew.

WHEN WEALTH COMES IN AT THE WINDOW, PIETY GOES OUT AT THE DOOR

There was once a certain pious man who would pray three times daily, and his prayers were as acceptable to God as the sacrifices of the *Tamid*.⁹⁹ This man was as poor as he was pious, and as proud as he was poor, for he would accept gifts from no one. He would daily walk to the dunghill and there pick rags to cover his naked body. Such was his habit. When God saw the shame and the humility of this pious man, He commanded Elijah to give him four silver coins. When Elijah came to the man he found him praying as usual. Elijah waited until he had finished his prayers and then greeted him with the greeting of peace. The man returned the salutation. Then Elijah offered him the four silver coins as God had commanded. The poor but proud and pious man at first refused to take the money but was finally persuaded by Elijah to do so.

The man went to the market place and bought himself a cloak. But another man came by and wanted that self-same cloak. So eagerly did he desire it that he offered the

⁹⁹ The daily sacrifices in the Temple.

poor man twenty-four golden coins for it. With these twenty-four golden coins the man acquired a great fortune. He bought male and female slaves. Whole communities were his possession, and ships that sailed the seas. But when he became rich, he neglected his prayers to God and soon gave up his one-time pious habits. Then God said to Elijah: "See now this man who was once pious, since he has gotten him riches he no longer worships me. Go, take away from him that which I gave him."

Elijah found the man sitting on a gilt chair in the synagogue (he now used the House of God as a place of pomp, and not of prayer). Elijah greeted him and the man returned his greeting. Then Elijah said, "Favor me by returning that which I gave you." The man asked what it was that Elijah had given him, and Elijah reminded him of the four silver coins. The man first denied the incident and insisted that he did not recognize Elijah. But Elijah persisted until the man recalled the loan and expressed his willingness to return the four silver coins. But Elijah insisted that they must be the very same coins that he had given him. The man countered that it would be most difficult to recognize the original coins from among all he had. Elijah said sharply, "Bring me the money bag and I will find them." And sure enough Elijah picked out the same four coins he had given to the man.

The man's fortune began at once to ebb. The slaves died; then his children. And his ships foundered on the high seas. Penniless and alone the man returned to his old estate. He prayed three times daily and picked his sustenance from the dunghill. But God was moved to compassion for the man and said to Elijah, "This man is

very dear to me, I cannot see him suffer any longer. Go, lend him ten silver coins and make him swear by my name that he will never give up the practice of piety." Immediately Elijah came to the man, and found him at worship. He waited until the man had concluded his prayer and then said to him, "Here, take what I give you, but swear by the name of God that you will never give up the blessed custom of praying to your God."

Sefer Ha-Masiyyot, Gaster, No. 301, p. 193, Hebrew.

See also:

Midrash Ruth Zuta, ch. 1, sec. 20; ed. Buber.

GOD ABANDONS THOSE WHO ABANDON THE POOR

There were in a certain big city three men, and they all feared God. One was very wealthy. One was very learned, and one was very pious. Now it happens that time brings changes to all men, and that those who once were exalted are humbled, and those of great wisdom are bereft of knowledge. Thus the rich man who had always been successful in all his undertakings, acquiring houses, fields and vineyards, suffered reverses and misfortune. He lost all his possessions and was so reduced that he had not even a loaf of bread. His wife and children wept for nourishment but he could give them nothing. Time came when he could not stand their plight any longer, so he called his wife and said to her, "We are verily in great distress and it has occurred to me that I should become a wanderer and roam over the face of the earth. Perhaps God will have mercy upon me and give me the means to sustain my poor family. There is a saying of the ancients, "A change of place means a change in luck." To this his

wife replied, "Do as you think best, so that God may have pity upon us and send you the prophet Elijah to guide you upon your journey." So the man departed and came to the market place of the town, hoping that he might join a company of fellow travellers.

The second man, who was great in learning, and who busied himself with God's Torah day and night, was likewise very poor, so that there was not a crumb of bread in his house. He had sold all his household goods to obtain food for his family but now he realized that there was nothing that he could turn to, for he had sold the last of his many books. There was nothing for him to do but to bear the pitiful beseeching of his children. Finally the scholar confessed to his wife: "I have sold everything in our house. There is not even a single book left to me, and I fear I may forget all that I have learned. Therefore I thought that it would be best for me to travel abroad. Perhaps some employment will come to me. In other places God may have mercy upon me and enable me to find sustenance." His virtuous wife replied: "May God truly have mercy on you and bring you success. Go peacefully on your way." So the scholar took leave of his home and came to the market place of the town where he found the man who had been rich and was now poor like himself. So both waited for others to join their company.

The third man who was very pious and very observant of the Lord's every commandment, likewise had no rest in his home. For his was a rebellious wife, a shrewish woman who would curse him and shame him in public places, so that our pious one could bear it no longer and was compelled to flee his home secretly. He too came to the

market place where he found the one who had been rich and the scholar, and the three of them decided to take to the road together in the hope that God would prosper their way.

So the three wandered from city to city but no one had pity on them. For three years did they wander and still they found no shelter, no work for their hands, while the clothes on their bodies became worn to tatters. One day they rested in a certain field. They looked up to heaven. They lifted their voices and tearfully besought God to help them. God heard their prayers and lo! an old man appeared before them and greeted them with words of peace. Then he asked them why they were so troubled and tearful. They said to the old man, "If we tell you how can you help us? Only God can help."

But the old man insisted that they tell him their troubles, and each one told him at great length his own special predicament. The once rich man told him how he had left his family three years ago and how in all this time he had not found any help for them. The scholar told Elijah (for as you can guess, this is who the old man really was) how he had studied the Torah day and night and how he had been compelled to sell his books to buy bread for his little ones and how the clothes on his body were now so torn and tattered that he was ashamed to come among people and say that he was a scholar. And withal he had accomplished nothing by his three years of wandering, for his family was still without even the sparsest kind of livelihood.

The third one, he that was so pious, told Elijah how utterly poor he was, but that this was a minor burden, compared to the yoke of his shrewish wife, who insulted

him before friends and strangers, and he confessed that he knew not what to do and begged Elijah to advise him as to his future course.

Elijah listened very carefully to all these tales of woe, and finally said: "Listen to me. Do not worry. I come to help you out of your distress. All of you will return home great in honors, and you will find your families in peace and health. But you will have to heed my advice and not follow the desires of your own hearts. Only do so and all will be well with you."

To the man who had once been rich the prophet gave a single coin and instructed him, "Take this coin which I am giving you, and when you come home, put it in a special box and that box will at once be filled with treasure. Then build a synagogue and enable ten men to study and pray there day and night. Also give money to the poor. If you will do so, your riches will be lasting, for the box will never want silver or gold."

To the scholar, Elijah said, "Go home to your good and virtuous wife, and you will now be able to resume your study and you will have abundant food and drink. But heed carefully this instruction: take this book which I now place into your hand, and when you come home put it in a box. And this box will be ever filled with books, so that you will be able to sell the books and thus support your family. This will give you leisure to study the Torah as before, and your children will grow in comfort and well-being."

The pious one Elijah advised in the following vein: "Here is a ring for you. When you come home place the ring upon a peg on the wall and you will no longer hear

the curses of your wife, for she will change for the better and all wickedness will be quite gone out of her. From now on she will bless you and you will earn your bread in honor and your children will be properly nurtured."

And after this Elijah, "the old man of truth," suddenly vanished, and the three men went on their way in peace.

When they arrived in the city, behold the wife of the once wealthy man was waiting for him. As soon as she saw him barefoot, his clothes in rags, she lifted her voice and wept, saying, "Look, now, my husband, it is three years since you left me, and the children have been without victuals and I have hoped all these days that you would come to our rescue and support, but woe is me, for I see how deplorable is your condition. Aye, only God can help us." The man replied: "Listen, my good wife, to my good tidings. The prophet Elijah gave me this coin which I have in my hand. He told me to put the coin in a box and promised that the box would at once be filled with much silver and gold. But Elijah also warned me to give generously of my money to the poor, and to build a synagogue and enable ten people to study in it day and night. For only then will our riches be lasting." So the man took the coin and put it in the box and the box was miraculously filled with a great treasure, even as Elijah had foretold.

Now the man and his wife were happy in their new-found wealth, and they built a house with many rooms like a royal palace. The man also remembered to be charitable to the poor but he forgot to build the synagogue and support ten people who might sit and study Torah day and night. For the man said in the pride of his wealth,

“Why should I build a synagogue? Why should I busy myself with such like tasks? I will rather increase my business and acquire more money.” For he forgot the warning of the sages: “The more possessions the more worries.”

Concerning his obligations to the poor, however, the rich man did not fail. He invited poor people to his home and fed them. The news of his good deeds spread everywhere, for the poor would carry the story of his generosity from town to town. Thus people came to him from all places and he would give each money and gifts according to his needs.

One day a poor man came to his house and asked our rich one for enough money to buy a cloak. There were many other people waiting for alms at this time and the waiting room was crowded. The benignant one happened just then to arrive with another wealthy man with whom he was negotiating an important deal. The man who needed the cloak stepped forward and asked bluntly for the money to buy the garment. Our rich one gave him some coins but the alms-seeker was not satisfied and asked for more. Our philanthropist gave him more. When the other people saw this they also stepped forward and asked for more alms. The philanthropist satisfied them all in order that they might leave speedily so that he could continue his business with his wealthy guest. The guest said to his host: “I see that you are very charitable to the poor, but you do unwisely to permit them to come in your way and restrain you from the pursuit of your business. Why, it took you three hours to send the beggars away so that you might continue with me. Was it right that I should wait until the poor had gone away?”

Our rich one, hearing this, was ashamed and said to his guest, "I will not do so again."

He was much angered by this experience and when he told his wife about it she advised him to build a special palace for himself in which he could receive his own special guests undisturbed by the wretched poor. She herself undertook to care for the poor. The husband accepted her suggestion. But when the poor came to her she did not give them as much as her husband had done, so that they protested mightily and demanded that the husband himself give them alms. So much did they insist that the woman called the servants and expelled them from the house. And when her husband came she asked for additional watchmen to keep the poor from their home. Two new watchmen were duly appointed to keep the beggars from the home. And thus our rich one forgot all the warnings which Elijah had given him.

And now what happened to the scholar, he, to whom Elijah had given the magic book? He came home and placed the book in a box as Elijah had instructed. The box was at once filled with books and our scholar began to sell them. No matter how many he sold, the box remained filled with books. Eventually the scholar acquired money enough to build a large house, to acquire orchards and vineyards, male and female slaves. It is true that he built himself a special study, but he did much less studying now than he had done in the days of his humility, and when poor men came to his home the servants would mock at them and send them away with nothing for their pains. Thus our scholar too departed from the instruction of Elijah.

And what became of our pious one, he that was yoked to the shrewish wife? When he came home his wife barred the door against him. He went to his neighbor and pleaded that the neighbor prevail upon the wife to let him enter the house. The neighbor was successful in his good-will mission. And when our pious one entered the house he at once hung the ring on a peg on the wall, even as Elijah had ordered him. And even as the ring came upon the wall, the woman became transformed and began to show regard for her husband. They were happy with each other, and lived in peace, and with their limited means were generous to the poor.

In the course of time Elijah came to the city and visited the home of the man to whom he had given the lucky coin. Elijah noticed the guards before the gates of his palatial residence and he saw also how the poor were driven from the house. When our rich one saw Elijah, he recognized him as the one who had given him the lucky coin and he trembled with apprehension. Elijah said to him: "Is this the purpose for which I gave you the coin, that you build houses and acquire fields, vineyards, male and female slaves? Did I not give it to you rather because I pitied you and trusted that you in turn would show pity upon others in need? I commanded you also to build a synagogue and provide for ten men who would study the Torah night and day. These instructions you have ignored. Therefore have I come to ask you to return that coin to me."

The man pleaded with Elijah not to take the coin, but Elijah, faithful to the God of Justice, said, "Just as you have acted, so will I." Elijah took the coin and left. No sooner had he vanished than all the treasures of our rich

one disappeared, and he was left in poverty as he had been before.

Elijah went to the home of our scholar. He found the scholar and his wife eating, drinking and revelling in their abundance. Nor did they include the poor in their pleasures. Faithful to the God Who punishes the wicked, Elijah demanded that the scholar return the book to him, the original book which he had first given him. The scholar returned the book and Elijah departed.

Suddenly the books which were in the box disappeared, and all the wealth which had been bought with these books also disappeared, and our scholar became once again a man who dwelt in the shadow of poverty.

And now Elijah went to our pious one who had so long been martyred by his wife's sharp tongue. Elijah found the woman alone and she welcomed him at once, and greeted him as a worthy guest and prepared a table before him. When the husband came home he at once recognized Elijah as the one who had given him the ring, and he paid high respects to Elijah, even as his wife had done. Much moved, the prophet said to the man, "Mark you, the rich one and the scholar did not follow my instructions. They did what was pleasing in their eyes. So I have taken from them the magic coin and the magic book. But I see that you are not as they are, that you are truly fearful of the Lord. Therefore accept this book and this coin and God will grant you blessings through them. But take heed of my warning that you feed the poor, build the synagogue and enable a *minyón* to study there. If you will do so, happiness shall be your portion all the days of your life." Having said this, Elijah went his way. It need only be said

that our pious one became rich in blessings. He heeded the prophet's instruction and walked faithfully in the ways of the Torah, and God established the works of his hands.

Stories about Great and Righteous People, pp. 8a-11a; ed. Warsaw, 1924.

ELIJAH COUNSELS THRIFT, EVEN TO THE GENTILE

R. Levy ⁹⁷ says that there was a certain ruler in Rome who spent lavishly the treasures accumulated by his thrifty father. Elijah appeared to the ruler in a dream and said to him, "Your ancestors were slow to spend and long to keep and thus they accumulated riches which you are now wasting." From that time the ruler repented and accumulated riches even as his father had done.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah, ch. 83, sec. 4; ed. Wilna.

⁹⁷ Amora, end of 3d, beginning of 4th century, common era.

SECTION III

ELIJAH IN THE RELIGIOUS SPECULATIONS
OF ISRAEL

THE FUNCTIONS OF ELIJAH IN JEWISH THEOLOGY

ANNOUNCER OF THE REDEMPTION

We find in five places in Holy Writ that the word Jacob is written with an extra "WAV" (*Ya'akob* instead of *Ya'ak'b'*), and in five places the word Elijah is lacking the letter "WAV" (*Elijab* instead of *Elijabu*). The Rabbis interpreted this to mean that Jacob took one letter from the name of Elijah as a pledge that Elijah would come and announce the redemption of Israel (which is another name for Jacob).

Yalkut Reubeni, Beḥukkotai, p. 45b; Warsaw, 1884.

The accepted custom is to mention the prophet Elijah on Saturday nights and to pray that he come and announce the redemption of Israel.

RaMAH, Oraḥ Ḥayim, sec. 295.

RECONCILER OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS

The words of the sages can be understood only in the academies where the Torah is discussed publicly, as the verse says: *Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.*¹ It is further said that if you

¹ Canticles 7:5; the interpretation is based on the first part of the verse: *By the gate of Bath-rabbim*; i.e., public places.

have observed the Torah you may look forward to the coming of Elijah, of whom Scripture says: *Go return thy way to the wilderness of Damascus;*² and of whom it is further said: *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers.*³

Sifre, Ekeb, p. 79b; ed. Friedmann.

ELIJAH AS PINEḤAS

R. Simeon ben Lakish said: Pineḥas is identical with Elijah, for God said to Pineḥas, "You made peace between Israel and Me in this world. So too in the future you will make peace between Me and My children." As it is said, *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers.*⁴

Yalkut Shimeoni, Pineḥas, sec. 771; ed. Warsaw, 1876.

TO DECIDE BETWEEN CLEAN AND UNCLEAN, TO RECEIVE AND TO EXPEL

R. Joshua received a teaching from R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai, who received it from his teacher, who in turn had it from a tradition going back to Moses on Sinai. This tradition was to the effect that Elijah would not come to

² I Kings 19:15; this interpretation is based on a play on the word *Damascus*, which is found in Canticles and also in connection with Elijah.

³ Malachi 3:23-24.

⁴ *Ibid.*

judge between the clean and the unclean, to expel or receive families from the community of Israel, except in the case of families which had been received through external force or had been expelled by such force. There was a certain family on the other side of the Jordan by the name of Bet Zerifa, which was expelled by the power of a certain man, although it fulfilled all the ritual requirements for membership in the household of Israel. There was another family, ritually unclean, which was received through the undue influence of that same man.

In all such cases Elijah will come to decide between the clean and the unclean and according to his decision expel and receive. R. Jehudah, however, says Elijah shall come to receive but not to expel, while R. Simeon is of the opinion that Elijah's function will be the general one of settling controversies. The Sages say, however, that Elijah shall come neither to expel nor to receive families, but rather to make peace in the world. As Scripture says: *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers.*⁵

Edyyoth, ch. 8, Mishnah 7.

See also:

Kiddushin 71a.

ELIJAH, MESSENGER OF FRUITFULNESS

In the verse *Thy shoots are as an orchard of pomegranates*,⁶ the expression "shoot" (*Shlahayih*) refers to the messenger whom God will send to Israel and who will

⁵ Malachi 3:23-24.

⁶ Canticles 4:13.

make the people as fruitful as an orchard of pomegranates. That messenger will be Elijah of blessed memory.⁷

Midrash Canticles Rabbah, ch. 4, on verse 13, sec. 5;
ed. Wilna.

See also:

Edyoth, ch. 8, Mishnah 7; Talmud, Kiddushin 71a.

THERE WERE ILLEGITIMATES IN ISRAEL

R. Yosef said: If R. Jehudah, in the name of Samuel, had not said that the law follows the opinion of R. Yose, namely that bastards would be declared clean in the future and thereby entitled to membership in the nation, Elijah would have come and sent whole companies away from us.

Kiddushin 72b.

RESTORER OF THE POT AND THE ROD

Moses commanded Aaron: *Take a pot and put an omerful of manna therein and lay it up before the Lord to be kept throughout the generations.*⁸ The pot in which the manna was kept is to be one of the three things which Elijah will restore to Israel. The other two will be the vessel for the cleansing water and the vessel for the anointing oil. Others say Elijah will also restore the rod of Aaron, as the verse says: *The Lord commanded Moses, Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.*⁹

Mekilta, Beshallah, p. 51b; ed. Friedmann.

⁷ The interpretation is based on the Hebrew expression *Shlahayih* which means messenger, and is also found in connection with Elijah.

⁸ Exodus 16:33.

⁹ Numbers 17:10.

ELIJAH, SUCCESSOR TO AARON

The learned men (*Tannaim*) declared to Moses: "Elijah must be your disciple, for we learn that in many cases of doubt, judgment is to be suspended until the coming of Elijah." Moses replied, "That is true. Elijah is my disciple and colleague. He will also be a successor to Aaron, for when in the future I stammer, as I did in the past, Elijah will be my interpreter and explain all doubtful matters."

Yalkut Ḥadash, sec. Messiah, 48; Lehub, 1868.

It has been asked whether the doubtful matters referred to above include the food which we destroy on the day before Passover, concerning which we are not sure whether it is clean or unclean. It is asked whether Elijah will come and make a decision concerning this food. The answer is that he will not, for there is a tradition that Elijah will not come on Fridays nor on days preceding holidays.¹⁰

Pesahim 13a.

ELIJAH LIMITED IN POWER TO REVERSE DECISIONS

Rabbah bar bar Ḥanah said in the name of R. Yoḥanan: One court can nullify the decisions of another court in all questions with the exception of the eighteen decisions in which the school of Shammai opposes the conclusions of the school of Hillel. Regarding these eighteen decisions, even if Elijah and his court should attempt to change them, we would not heed them.

Abodah Zarah 36a.

¹⁰ For the people are occupied on those days with preparations for the holidays, and this should not be disturbed by the coming of the Messiah.

THE HIDDEN, MYSTERIOUS AND DOUBTFUL MATTERS WHICH ELIJAH WILL CLARIFY

1. DOMESTIC AND WILD ANIMALS

The verse *The King hath brought me into his chambers*¹¹ teaches us that in the future God will show Israel the hidden rooms and places in heaven. He will also explain the innermost meanings of the Torah and the ten commandments. Ezekiel will explain the meaning of God's throne¹² while Elijah will reveal the innermost secrets of domesticated animals and the Leviathan.

Yalkut Shimeoni, Canticles, sec. 982; Warsaw, 1877.

2. THE SKIN OF FISH

R. Naḥman bar Yizḥak was asked whether it is permitted to write Scriptural passages for the phylacteries on the skin of a ritually permissible fish. He answered, "If Elijah will come and say." By this R. Naḥman meant, "If Elijah will come and declare whether the original uncleanness of that skin is removed or not."

Shabbat 108a.

3. WINE AND OIL

R. Ulla was of the opinion that the scholars in Galilee would declare the wine and oil of Galilee fit for use in the Temple service at Jerusalem. The fact is that the wine

¹¹ Canticles 1:4.

¹² Compare Ezekiel, ch. 1.

and oil of Galilee are put aside until Elijah will come and declare them ritually clean.

Ḥagigah 25a.

.

In case of a barrel of wine set aside for the priest's tithe (*Terumah*) and it is not certain whether it is clean or unclean, R. Eliezer says you should keep it until Elijah may come and declare it ritually fit.

Berakot 33b.

.

R. Naḥman bar Yizḥak asked Rabbi: "Suppose people should consider wine as food, constituting a regular meal. How many blessings would it be necessary to say after such a meal?"¹³ Rabbi replied: "Wait until Elijah comes and declares wine a regular meal. Until then it cannot be considered as such."

Berakot 35b.

4. FUNERARY VESSELS

R. Meir said: "Objects intended for the use of the dead, if left over unused, cannot be employed by the living, until the coming of Elijah."¹⁴

Sanhedrin 48a.

5. ḤALIZAH¹⁵

In the case of a woman who went through the ceremony

¹³ The problem there is whether one or three blessings would be necessary.

¹⁴ When he may decide to the contrary.

¹⁵ In cases of levirate marriages when the brother refuses to marry the sister-in-law, he has to perform the ceremony of Ḥalizah. See Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

of *Halizah* and afterwards gave untimely birth, R. Yoḥanan says: "She needs no *Halizah* from the other brothers. The reason is that should Elijah come and say it was an untimely birth, the woman needed the ceremony of *Halizah*. Hence the first *Halizah* is valid."

Yebamot 35b.

See also:

Ibid. 41b.

.

Rabbah reported in the name of R. Kahana who in turn spoke in the name of Rab, that if Elijah should come and declare that the ceremony of *Halizah* can be performed with a regular shoe, we would listen to him. If he would say that they cannot perform the ceremony with a sandal (a sole with straps) we would not listen to him, because the accepted custom is to use a sandal. R. Yosef reports a similar conclusion.

Yebamot 102a.

6. TERUMAH

If a man desisted from taking care of *Terumah* (priestly tithes), R. Yoḥanan was of the opinion that such a tithe became barred to priests because of the apprehension that it came in contact with unclean objects. Therefore, if Elijah should come and say that the tithe was not in contact with any unclean object we would then declare it to be clean. R. Simeon ben Lakish was of a contrary opinion.

Pesaḥim 34a.

7. A DEEP COVERED PAN

The school of Shamai held that if a man took a vow to give a deep covered pan to the Temple, the vow-money should be put away until the coming of Elijah. For we do not know whether the man referred to the pan proper or to the sacrifice for which the pan is used.

Menahot 63b.

8. DIFFICULT CHAPTERS IN EZEKIEL

Chapter forty-five in Ezekiel, where it speaks about a sin offering, is very difficult to understand, for it confuses a sin offering with a burnt offering. R. Yoḥanan says the entire chapter will have to be explained by Elijah. And R. Jehudah was of the same opinion. The same is true for Chapter forty-four, where it says that priests must not eat prohibited meat of fowls and cattle, implying that Israelites may eat it, contrary to the law.

Menahot 45a.

9. CONCERNING MATTERS OF TRUST

In a case where two people have entrusted a person with their money, one giving him a hundred coins and the other two hundred, and where each claims that the two hundred are his, the procedure is as follows: each gets one hundred coins and the remaining hundred is put aside until the coming of Elijah. R. Yose is of the opinion that all the three hundred should be put away until the coming of Elijah. The same procedure applies to vessels that have been entrusted to a third party.

Baba Mezia' 37a.

10. LOST ARTICLES

If one finds gold or silver vessels, he should not appropriate them but should leave them until the coming of Elijah.¹⁶

Baba Mezia' 29b.

.

If one finds a note among his papers and does not remember whether the debt was collected or not, he should put the note aside until the coming of Elijah.

Baba Mezia' 20a.

11. SLAVES AND FREEMEN

In the case where a slave is confused with a freeman, and we do not know who is who, Elijah would resolve our doubt by telling us the identity of each.

Gittin 42b.

¹⁶ For the owner of the lost article may be identified, and the article is to be returned in the same condition as when found.

ELIJAH AS EXAMINER

CONCERNING THE FESTIVE OFFERING

Judah ben Durta'i and his son settled in the south. The elder Durta'i said: "Should Elijah come and ask Israel why they do not sacrifice the offerings of Temple visitors on the festivals, when these festivals fall on the Sabbath, what will Israel answer?" He further wondered why Shemaiah and Abtaleyon, the two great leaders of their age, did not allow Israel to sacrifice such offerings on the Sabbath.

Pesahim 70b.

EZRA PLAYED SAFE WITH THE DOTS

In the verse, *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law,*¹⁷ there are eleven letters marked with dots. Some account for the dots with the following explanation: Ezra, who put the dots there, thought, "When Elijah comes and questions me as to why I wrote the letters, I will tell him that I put the dots there to indicate that the letters should not have been written. If on the other hand Elijah should

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 29:29.

tell me that the letters belong there I shall remove the dots from the tops of the letters.”¹⁸

Midrash Numbers Rabbah, ch. 3, end of sec. 13;
Warsaw, 1867.

¹⁸ This remark is based on the tradition that the dots found on some of the letters in the Torah go back to the Scribe Ezra.

ELIJAH AS THE HARBINGER OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

PINEHAS B. YAIR PROVES IT FROM MALACHI

R. Pinehas ben Yair was in the habit of saying: There are a number of characteristics of the righteous man, one good quality encouraging the next higher one, until they lead to the resurrection of the dead, and after that to the coming of Elijah of blessed memory. How do we know this? From the verse, *I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*¹⁹

Mishnah, Shekalim, end of ch. 3.

A COMMON-SENSE DEDUCTION

The verse says, *Moses blessed Israel before his death.*²⁰ Would one think otherwise, that he blessed him after his death? Why then does it say "before his death"? It means when his death was near. Similarly, in the case of Elijah where it says, *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet . . .*²¹ would anyone suppose that Elijah would prophesy after the day of the Lord? Why then does it say "before the coming of the day of the Lord"? It means when the day of the Lord should be at hand.

Sifre Wezot Ha-Berakah, end of sec. 342; ed. Friedmann.

¹⁹ Malachi 3:23.

²⁰ Deuteronomy 33:1.

²¹ Malachi 3:23.

ELIJAH IN PLACE OF THE ANGEL

In the future God will first punish the guardian angels of the idol-worshippers, and after that the wicked kings on earth, as Scripture says: *And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will punish the host of the heavens on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.*²² In other words, God says to Israel: "In this era I sent an angel to cause the idol-worshippers to depart from you. But in the future I will send Elijah before you." As Scripture says, *Behold I will send you the prophet Elijah . . .*²³

Midrash Tanhuma, Mishpatim, end of sec. 18; Warsaw, 1902.

ELIJAH WILL KILL THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF THE WICKED NATION

R. Aḥa preached the following: In the future all the nations will betray the wicked nation and will chase her from people to people, until that nation will reach Bet Gubarim. There she will confront the Messiah, and the Messiah will depart from that place. Then God Himself will seize the guardian angel of that wicked people and hold him by the hair of his head until Elijah kills him with a sword.

Yalkut Shimeoni Wayishlah, sec. 133; Warsaw, 1876.

THE WHIRLWIND IS MOSES AND THE STORM IS ELIJAH

R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai was asked why the first tablets containing the Ten Commandments were the work of God, while the second was the work of man. R. Yoḥanan

²² Isaiah 24:21.

²³ Malachi 3:23.

answered: When Israel had committed the sin of the golden calf, Moses said to God: "Don't you know that you took the people of Israel out of an idolatrous environment?" God replied: "There is some truth in that. What do you desire? Shall I forgive them? If so you will have to bring your own tablets of the law." And God further said to Moses: "By your life! You have given your life for them in this generation, and later Elijah will do the same. And when he shall have come I will bring both of you together, as the verse says, *The Lord is in the whirlwind, and the storm is His way.*"²⁴ How do we know that by "whirlwind" is meant Moses? From the verse, *And she put the child therein and laid it in the flags by the river's brink.*²⁵ And how do we know that by "storm" is meant Elijah? By the verse, *And it came to pass when the Lord would take up Elijah by a storm into heaven.*²⁶

Yalkut Shimeoni, Ki Tisa, sec. 397.

THE MESSENGER TO ISRAEL

Moses said to God: "Master of the Universe, send whomever You will, send salvation through that man whom You will appoint in the future."²⁷ God replied: "I did not say to you that I was sending you to Israel. I sent you to Pharaoh. Concerning Elijah to whom you refer I will send him to Israel, as it is said, *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet. . .*"²⁸

Pirke d'R. Eliezer, ch. 40; Warsaw, 1852.

²⁴ Nahum 1:3.

²⁵ Exodus 2:3; the interpretation is based on a play on the Hebrew words *sufa* (a whirlwind) and *sof* (brink).

²⁶ II Kings 2:1; the word "storm" occurring in both places.

²⁷ *I.e.*, Elijah.

²⁸ Malachi 3:23.

ELIJAH AND THE HARBINGER OF THE MESSIAH

THE MESSIAHS AMONG THE FOUR CRAFTSMEN

Says the verse: *And the Lord showed me four craftsmen.*²⁹ Who are the four craftsmen? R. Hana bar Bizna said in the name of R. Simeon Ḥasida: The following are the four: Messiah, the son of David; Messiah the son of Joseph; ³⁰ Elijah; and the Kohen Zedek.³¹

Sukkah 52b.

THE BEARER OF GOOD TIDINGS

The verse, *Sing and rejoice,*³² will be realized when God redeems Israel. Three days before the coming of the Messiah, Elijah will stand on the mountains of Israel and say: "Mountains of Israel, how long will you remain waste and desolate?" And this query will be heard from one end of the world to the other. Then Elijah will announce that peace has come upon the world, as it is said, *Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that announceth peace.*³³

When the wicked will hear this tidings they will all rejoice, and say to one another, "Peace has come unto us." On the second day, Elijah will come and from the mountains announce that happiness has come to the world, as

²⁹ Zechariah 4:3.

³⁰ Concerning the two Messiahs, compare Sukkah 52a.

³¹ All the four have engaged, or will engage in, some kind of craftsmanship. Compare Rashi *ad loco*.

³² Zechariah 2:14.

³³ Nahum 2:1.

the verse says: *The harbinger of good tidings. . .*³⁴ On the third day Elijah will announce that salvation has come to the world, as the verse says: *Who announceth salvation . . .*³⁵ when Elijah sees that the wicked speak to one another, that salvation has come to them, he will proclaim that salvation will come only to Zion, and her sons, as it says: . . . *that sayeth unto Zion, thy God reigneth.*³⁶

At that hour God will show His glory and His kingdom to all mortals. He will redeem Israel and lead them, as it is said: *The breaker is gone before them. They have broken forth and passed on by the gate and are gone out thereat; and their King is passed on before them, and the Lord at the head of them.*³⁷

Pesikta Rabbati, 35, p. 161a; ed. Friedmann.

Compare:

Midrash Wa-Yosha, sec. 18, pp. 28-29; Warsaw, 1924.

THE LIGHT BEFORE THE TRUTH

The psalm says: *O send out thy light and thy truth.*³⁸ The light refers to the prophet Elijah who is a descendant of the house of Aaron. Truth refers to the Messiah of the house of David.

Midrash Tehillim, ch. 43; ed. Buber.

HE WILL AWAKEN ISRAEL FROM ITS SLUMBER

Says the psalm: *I laid me down and I slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.*³⁹ This refers to the people of Israel. "Awake" refers to Elijah, who will be the Lord's instrument for awakening Israel before the coming of the

³⁴ Isaiah 52:7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Micah 2:13.

³⁸ Psalms 43:3.

³⁹ Psalms 3:6.

Messiah. As Malachi says: *I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*⁴⁰

Midrash Tehillim, ch. 43; ed. Buber.

ELIJAH SPOKE AND MESSIAH SAID

The verse: *My beloved spoke and said unto me.*⁴¹ "Spoke" refers to the announcement of Elijah and "said" refers to the statement of the Messiah. And what will the Messiah say? *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*⁴²

Canticles, Rabbah, ch. 2, to verse 13, sec. 4; ed. Wilna.

IN SPEAKING OF THE DAM, ELIJAH IS MEANT

The verse: *Thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee,*⁴³ lends itself to this interpretation. If you observe this commandment, you will hasten thereby the coming of the Messiah, in reference to whom the verb "send" is also used, as in the verse, . . . *that send forth freely the feet of the ox and the ass.*⁴⁴ According to the interpretation of R. Tanhuma, the observance of this commandment will hasten the coming of the prophet Elijah, of blessed memory. For the verb "send" is used in connection with him, as in the verse, *Behold I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*⁴⁵

Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah, ch. 6, sec. 7; ed. Wilna.

See also:

Yalkut Shimeoni, Ki Teze, sec. 930; Warsaw, 1876.

⁴⁰ Malachi 3:23.

⁴¹ Canticles 2:10.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Deuteronomy 22:7.

⁴⁴ Isaiah 22:20.

⁴⁵ Malachi 3:23.

THE SEVEN LIVING LINKS

Seven persons cover the span of all generations, each overlapping the lifetime of the other. Adam saw Methuselah, Methuselah saw Shem, Shem saw Jacob, Jacob saw Serah, Serah saw Aḥiah, Aḥiah saw Elijah, Elijah still lives until the coming of the Messiah.

Abot d'R. Nathan, version II, end of ch. 38; ed. Schechter.

ELIJAH AS AN ANGEL

HE FLIES LIKE A BIRD

*The birds of heaven*⁴⁶ refers to Elijah, who flies in the world like a bird⁴⁷ as the verse says, *And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and flesh and bread in the evening, and he drank of the brook.*⁴⁸

Midrash Tehillim, ch. 8, sec. 7; ed. Buber.

THE CHAIR OF ELIJAH

The verse *Let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven*⁴⁹ refers to Elijah, who flies over the entire world with four stops in order to arrive wherever it is decreed. A special chair has to be prepared for him⁵⁰ and one has to proclaim: "This is the chair of Elijah." If not, Elijah will not stop.

Zohar, Introduction, p. 13a; Wilna, 1912.

ELIJAH IS SEMI-EXPRESS

We learn that the Angel Michael flies over the world with no stops, the Angel Gabriel with one, Elijah with four, and the Angel of Death with eight. But in time of a plague the Angel of Death makes no stops.

Berakot 4b.

⁴⁶ Psalms 8:9.

⁴⁷ The interpretation is based on the second part of the verse in Psalms, *Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*

⁴⁸ I Kings 17:6.

⁴⁹ Genesis 1:20. ⁵⁰ On the occasion of a circumcision ceremony.

A DOG'S HOWL IS AN EVIL PORTENT

When dogs howl it is a sign that the Angel of Death has come to town. When dogs play it is a sign that the Prophet Elijah has come. But this is true when there are no female dogs among them.

Baba Kama 60b.

ELIJAH RECORDS THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

We know from tradition that Elijah disappeared in the second year of Aḥaziah's rule, and that he will not be seen until the coming of the King Messiah. Then he will reappear and disappear a second time, and will not be seen again until the coming of Gog and Magog. At present Elijah records the doings of all generations.

Seder Olam Rabbah, ch. 17; ed. Ratner.

. . . .

R. Kohen and R. Joshua ben Simon said in the name of R. Levi: In the past when a man performed a good deed, Moses would record it. But now when one performs a meritorious deed, Elijah and King Messiah record it and God signs the record. As it is said, *Then they that fear the Lord spoke one with another and the Lord hearkened and heard and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.*⁵¹

Midrash Wayikra Rabbah, ch. 34, sec. 9; Warsaw, 1867.

. . . .

⁵¹ Malachi 3:16.

Before Elijah was translated to heaven, he swore that he would always defend Israel, so that whenever one performs a meritorious deed, Elijah hastens to report it to God, and he does not depart from His presence until that man's deed is recorded in black and white.

Yalkut Haddash, sec. "Elijah," 4; ed. Lehub, 1868.

ELIJAH AT THE CROSS-ROADS

R. Eliezer said: I heard with my own ears the Lord of hosts speaking, and He said: *See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.*⁵² God set before Israel two ways, a good way and a bad way, the way of life and the way of death. The good way has two forks, one leading to charity and one to kindness, and Elijah of blessed memory is at the meeting of these forks. When a man is about to enter, Elijah announces: *Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation that keepeth faithfulness may enter in.*⁵³

Pirke d'R. Eliezer, beginning of ch. 15; Warsaw, 1852.

ELIJAH WILL DEMAND THAT THE MERITS OF THE CHILDREN REDEEM THE SINS OF THE PARENTS

The verse, *So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun*⁵⁴ refers, says, R. Jehudah, to the young ones that die because of the sins of their parents. In the future they will stand by the side of the righteous, while their parents will be with the wicked. The young will then say to God, "Master of the Universe, why did we die? Was it not because of the sins of our

⁵² Deuteronomy 30:15.

⁵³ Isaiah 26:2.

⁵⁴ Ecclesiastes 4:1.

parents? Let then our parents be admitted here for the sake of our merit." God will reply, "Your parents continued to sin after your death, and those sins accuse them."

R. Jehudah bar R. Elai says in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi: At that time Elijah, of blessed memory, in the guise of one of them, will take up the defense for the young ones and he will plead before God in this wise: "Master of the Universe, which retribution is better, that of reward or that of punishment?" "That of reward, of course." "Now since we died for the sins of our parents as punishment of our parents, how right it is then that our parents should come to us as a reward for our virtues." God will reply, "Your argument is just. Let them come to you." As the verse says: *And they shall live with their children and shall return.*⁵⁵ They were returned from Gehenna, say the Rabbis, and were saved for the sake of their children. Therefore, everyone should teach his son Torah, that the latter may save him from Gehenna.

Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah, ch. 4, to verse 1; ed. Wilna.

ELIJAH COMFORTS THE MESSIAH

The garden of Eden is in the east. It contains many chambers. The fifth chamber is built of many kinds of stones and is surrounded with lakes of fragrant waters. In this chamber there sit Messiah the son of David, Elijah, and Messiah the son of Ephraim.⁵⁶ Messiah ben David sits under a decorated canopy while Elijah holds his head and comforts him, saying, "Bear your suffering for the

⁵⁵ Zechariah 10:9b.

⁵⁶ For the doctrine of two Messiahs, compare Talmud Sukkah 52a-b.

sins of Israel until the coming of the redemption." As the verse says, *That he was wounded because of our transgression, and he was crushed because of our iniquities.*⁵⁷

Midrash Konen, p. 3b; Warsaw, 1899.

ELIJAH PUNISHES THE MAN WHO CHOOSES A MATE UNWISELY

Rabbah b. R. Abba (some say it was R. Sala) in the name of R. Hammuna, said: If one marries a woman that is not suited to him, Elijah shall bind him and the Lord shall lash him. We have also learned that Elijah writes the following warning, and the Lord seals it: "Woe to him who causes his descendant to be disqualified and his family-honor to be tarnished by marrying a woman that is not befitting him. Elijah shall bind him and the Lord shall lash him."

Kiddushin 70a.

BUT FOR THE WISE CHOOSER—A KISS

If one marries a woman that is befitting, Elijah kisses him and God regards him with affection.

Derek Erez Rabbah, ch. 1.

⁵⁷ Isaiah 53:5.

ELIJAH, A MAN OF MYSTERY

REDEMPTION WILL COME PIECEMEAL

The verse: *Hark, my beloved, behold he cometh*,⁵⁸ teaches us that when the voice of the Shofar will be heard, ten earthquakes will take place, ten places will be destroyed, and ten will be burned. This teaches us that the door of redemption will not be open for all at one time, but rather that Elijah will come to one city while he disappears from another. He will speak to one man while he vanishes from another.

Midrash Canticles Zuta, ch. 2, sec 8, p. 26; ed. Buber.

See also:

Yalkut Shimeoni Canticles 2, sec. 986.

THE MESSIAH WILL GO, ELIJAH WILL REMAIN

According to another interpretation, the verse *Hark, my beloved, behold he cometh*, refers to the days of Gog and Magog, when Israel will be hidden in caves and underground places. R. Yose b. R. Jehudah said: Just as the legions (of Rome) built for themselves beautiful palaces, so there shall be a beautiful home for Israel on Horeb. When the rulers of the north will have heard that Amon and Moab are destroyed, they will all gather and establish their rule in Damascus. So also the rulers of the south and the west will gather and hold council at Median. Israel

⁵⁸ Canticles 2:8.

will be distressed, for it will be impossible to leave the sages in Median, or to leave their brothers in Jerusalem. God will then open a door for Elijah, who will leave the sages in Jerusalem and come to Median. On the way in the desert, full of rocks and wild beasts, God will perform miracles for Elijah. The prophet will come and stand before the Messiah in Median. The Messiah will go, but Elijah will remain standing. At that hour Elijah will take out the book of Yashar, of which the Torah is only one song. Then the earth will open and burn all the enemies of Israel, and become a large grave for them. Then the verse, *Open to me, my sister, my love, my undefiled*⁵⁹ will be realized.

Midrash Canticles Zuta 5, 2, pp. 33-34; ed. Buber.

AND HE WILL RESURRECT THE DEAD

The verse, *At our gates are all manner of precious fruits, new and old,*⁶⁰ refers, says R. Yose, to Elijah. For Eljiah will come and say to Israel, "I am Eljiah." The people will then say, "If you are Eljiah, resurrect the dead for us, not only the dead whom we do not remember, but also the dead whom we do remember."

Midrash Canticles Zuta, ch. 7, 14, pp. 38-39; ed. Buber.

⁵⁹ Canticles 5:2.

⁶⁰ Canticles 7:13.

INDEX

I

ELIJAH'S TEACHINGS

- Announcer of the redemption, 143.
Bearer of good tidings, the, 158, 159.
Blessings, 149.
Concerning matters of trust, 151.
Difficult chapters in Ezekiel, 151.
Domestic and wild animals, 148.
Elijah absent at celebration of R. Simeon, 113.
Elijah, academy of, 97.
Elijah admonishing young man not to waste bread, 122.
Elijah advising not to enter ruins, 102, 103; advising not to get angry or drunk, 102; advising R. Ishmael to escape to Laodicia, 108; advising R. Nathan how not to become distressed, 118.
Elijah and R. Joshua discussing words of the Torah, 85.
Elijah and the government, 108.
Elijah and the harbinger of the Messiah, 158, 159.
Elijah and the thrice-widowed bride, 115, 116, 117.
Elijah announcing death of R. Akiba, 112; announcing R. Joshua in Paradise, 93; announcing salvation to the world, 159; announcing the doom of Jerusalem, 74; announcing the Messiah, 160.
Elijah, a painless dentist, 108.
Elijah as an instructor, 99; as a teacher, 88; as friend of scholars and martyrs, 112; as Pinehas, 144.
Elijah assuring a repentant, 117; assuring Ben Yoḥai of his eternal reward, 107, 108.
Elijah believing in consideration for servants, 104; believing that fear is an aid to learning, 99; bettering poor lot of R. Abraham, 126, 127, 128; building a palace in one morning, 121.
Elijah carrying body of R. Akiba, 112, 113; carrying traditions between Sura and Pumbedita, 79; causing R. Joshua to see Chaldeonian stones, 84, 85; comforting the Messiah, 165, 166; commanding wearing of the *talith*, 77, 78; counselling a special prayer for travel, 102; counselling thrift to a Gentile, 139; curing sick tooth of Rabbi, 108, 109.
Elijah delayed by good works, 113; directing man how to get money back from a swindler, 110, 111.
Elijah encouraging Eliezer to start studying the Torah, 104, 105; eulogizing R. Akiba, 113; exalting the memory of R. Simeon, 74, 75; explaining action of Esther, 79, 80; explaining earthquakes, 81; explaining why he is girded with Isaac's ram, 99; exposing a murderer, 103, 104.
Elijah foiling the Romans, 107; friend of the oppressed, 106; friend of the poor, 119.
Elijah giving reason for need of forbidden animals, 83.
Elijah, harbinger of the day of the Lord, 155; helping pious poor, 128, 129, 130; helping the pious, 138, 139; helping Shila, 109.
Elijah in argument with R. Eleazar concerning study of the Torah, 95; informing R. Jehudah not to

- remove shoe, 69; informing R. Meir of a woman's trouble, 110; informing R. Yohanen concerning Ben Kuzibo, 77; informing regarding Heavenly Academy, 69; informing the people of what is going on in the world, 67, 68; in place of the angel, 156; in religious speculations of Israel, 141.
- Elijah kissing the one who chooses a mate wisely, 166.
- Elijah lets himself be sold, 119, 120; light before the truth, 159; limited in power to reverse decisions, 147.
- Elijah making the prayer fit the occasion, 102; meeting three people in distress, 132, 133; messenger of fruitfulness, 145, 146.
- Elijah, never-failing friend, the, 115, 116, 117; not to come on Fridays nor on days preceding holidays, 147; not visiting where the poor are not welcome, 103.
- Elijah offering seven prosperous years to a poor man, 125, 126.
- Elijah playing Virgil to R. Joshua, 91; pointing at those worthy of the world to come, 69, 70; praying that God give the people only one leader, 90; praying that God make all people leaders, 89; praying that the broken wall be rebuilt, 89; praying that the cow should die, 88; promising reward to the righteous, 114; punishing a man who chose a mate unwisely, 166.
- Elijah rebuking and teaching R. Eleazar b. Simeon, 94; rebuking an informer, 100; rebuking those who did not keep promise, 137, 138; replying R. Joshua regarding future world, 77; reporting discussion in heaven regarding Israel's redemption, 80, 81; restoring learning of Eleazar b. Arak, 86, 87.
- Elijah's advice to three people in distress, 133, 134; formula for happiness, 96, 97; interpretation in favor of Israel's poverty, 82; recipe for disgorging a serpent, 118; virtues, 93, 94; views on man and light, 82, 83; ways are strange but just, 88.
- Elijah saving imprisoned scholars, 113, 114; saving life of Eleazar ben Perata, 107; saving Nahum Gam Zu from death, 106; saving Rab Kahana from committing suicide, 109, 110; seeing city of Jerusalem coming down from heaven, 25; seeing end of Israel's exile, 24; seeing judgment of souls, 24; seeing the reward of the righteous, 25; seeing Torah and peace among children of the righteous, 25; seeking instruction, 79; sending R. Joshua to Messiah, 77; showing R. Joshua the suffering of the wicked in Hell, 91; showing that wife does help, 83, 84; stopping to talk to R. Joshua, 100; successor to Aaron, 147; suggesting name of Jeremiah, 76.
- Elijah, teacher of Judaism, 79; teaching a youngster Torah, 95; teaching by example, 88; teaching by rebuke and punishment, 99; teaching Rab Anan Seder Eliyahu, 99; teaching R. Joshua by example, 88, 89, 90; teaching to say "Please God," 100, 101, 102; telling concerning laws of ceremony of giving priestly tithes, 84; telling concerning laws of uncleanness, 84; telling laws regarding nudists, 84; telling regarding laws of creditor and debtor, 84; telling time of Messiah's coming, 76, 77; terrible in wrath, 103; to awaken Israel from its slumber, 159, 160; to be interpreter of Moses, 147; to be sent before Israel, 156; to be sent before the day of the Lord, 160; to be sent when day of the Lord at hand, 155; to clarify

- hidden, mysterious and doubtful matters, 148-154; to explain all doubtful matters, 147; to give his life for Israel, 157; to have sent companies of illegitimates away from Israel, 146; to kill the guardian angel of the wicked nation, 156; to make peace between God and His children, 144; to make the people fruitful, 145, 146; to punish the enemies of Israel, 168; to redeem Israel, 167, 168; to resurrect the dead, 168.
- Elijah, visions of, 24, 25; visiting R. Akiba, 106; visiting R. Simeon ben Yoḥai in cave, 107, 108.
- Elijah, witnessing punishment of the wicked, 24, 25.
- Ezra playing safe with the dots, 153, 154.
- Festive offering, 153.
- Functions of Elijah in Jewish theology, 143.
- Funerary vessels, 149.
- God ignoring the heretics, 67; re-lishing a good argument in academy, 68; seeing both sides of every question, 67.
- Halizah, 149, 150.
- Lost articles, 152.
- Messenger of fruitfulness, 145, 146; messenger to Israel, the, 157.
- Phylacteries, 148.
- Prayer restraining the hand of death, 70.
- R. Ashi clarifying Elijah's answer, 76, 77.
- Reconciler of children and parents, 143, 144.
- Restorer of the pot and the rod, 146.
- Skin of fish, 148.
- Slaves and freemen, 152.
- Temple service at Jerusalem, 148.
- Terumah, 150.
- To decide between clean and unclean, 144, 145.
- To make peace in the world, 145.
- To receive and to expel, 144, 145.
- Tradition in name of academy of Elijah regarding charity, 97.
- Tradition in name of Elijah regarding importance of studying the Torah, 96.
- Vows, 151.
- Wine and oil, 148, 149.

II

OPINIONS ON ELIJAH

- Angel speaking to Elijah, an, 61.
- Axe of Elisha coming to surface, 29.
- Baal and Yahveh, 37.
- Baal prophets, 37, 39.
- Bullocks from one manger, 37; bullocks of Elijah, 38.
- Carmel, 39.
- Chair of Elijah, the, 162.
- Children pleading in behalf of their parents, 17.
- Contest, the, 38, 39.
- Controversy in Academy concerning ancestry of Elijah, 21.
- Dog's playing a sign of Elijah's arrival, 163.
- Elijah, allowed to ride on God's horse, 52; all things to all people, 16; and Elisha, 55; and the raven, 26, 27; announcing the man who is to enter the good way, 164; answering Ahaziah, 34; as an angel, 162; as an historic Biblical character, 2; as a prophet, 45; as benevolent patron, 7; ascending Mount Carmel, 44; asked to explain four camps, 53; as the peg for Jewish thought, 9; at academy of R. Yose, 71.
- Elijah, beaten by Sammael, 71; being hot-tempered, 97; being still alive, 56; being the consoler, 53; being the storm, 52; Biblical and post-Biblical picture of, 5; blessing of, 31; bringing about the repentance of Israel, 22; bringing down fire from heaven, 61; bringing pros-

- perity to poverty stricken, 10; building an altar, 61.
- Elijah, called Pinehas, 22; called the hairy man, 10; cannot be classified in any one category, 15; causing the sun to stand still, 42; challenge of, 4; character of, 1; chief examiner, the, 8; chief reconciler, the, 8; children of, 23; citizen of Jerusalem, 22; citizen of Judah, 22; coming from Gilead, 21; coming in form needed, 6; commanding the elements, 32; compared to Moses, 4, 60; confessing jealousy of the Lord, 47, 48; covered by a cloud, 60.
- Elijah, dead resurrected through, 30; dealings with the Kings, 34; destined to undermine foundation of idolatry, 23; destroying idol-worshippers, 60; does not accept excuse of compulsion, 6; does not lose essential humanity, 6; driven to kill a man, 6.
- Elijah, entering paradise, 56; estate of, 22.
- Elijah, fasting forty days, 61; fed by widow of Zarphat, 60; finding himself in a cave, 61; flying like a bird, 162; folk hero, 16; forty days on one meal, 25; frequenting market place, 69; friend of Israel, the, 71; from tribe of Levi, 60.
- Elijah, gainsaying God and was right, 49; gathering people unto Mount Carmel, 60; giving formula for happiness, 13; going to the desert, 61; God being angry with, 26; God giving him life in this world and reward in the world to come, 22; God of, 3; grandchild of Rachel, 21.
- Elijah, hairy man, the, 63; hastening to record meritorious deeds, 164; hating informers, 6; hating the mean and the proud, 6; helping patriarchs awake, 68; hot-tempered, 6.
- Elijah, informing Ahasuerus of Ha-
- man's tree, 73; in our tradition, 1; interpreter of Moses, the, 8; in the cave, 62; in the desert, 24, 26; is human, 6.
- Elijah, keeper of keys to rain, 31; keeping wind from bringing rain, 32; killing a man, 103; killing Hiel, 60; knowing what he was prophesying, 62.
- Elijah, leaving Elisha with a word of Torah, 55.
- Elijah, making an altar, 38; making dry land sea, 32, 33; making pleas for children, 17; making winter summer, 14, 33; man of mystery, a, 167; member of the Sanhedrin, 22; mentioning merits of the patriarchs, 22; messenger of good tidings, the, 8; miscellany, 62; mysterious stranger, the, 11.
- Elijah, never forgets ethical values of race, 6; not tasting death, 58; not to be seen until coming of Messiah, 163.
- Elijah, occupied recording deeds of generations, 58; of legend, 5, 7; of Rabbinic legend, 5; of the Bible, 5; of the theology, 7; of the tribe of Gad, 23; on Mount Carmel, 4, 39; ordering a wall be repaired by magic, 11.
- Elijah, precursor of the Messiah, the, 8; performer of miracles, 10; permitted to ride on God's horse, 15; placing trusteeship of wealth, 13; pleading with bullocks, 37; pleading with R. Simeon to meet R. Joshua, 86; prayers of, 42, 43; praying for son of Zaraphat, 54; praying for son of widow, 29; praying to God, 45; preventing destruction of Israel, 72, 73; priest, a, 84; punished for insulting Israel, 47, 48, 50; punished in heaven, 68, 69.
- Elijah, rebuked by God, 47, 48, 50; recording affairs of men, 163; respecting the government, 36; running away from Eretz Israel,

- 45; running away from Jezebel, 60; running to avoid R. Kahana's suicide, 9.
- Elijah's ascent to heaven, 57; attitude toward God, 42; birth and family relationships, 21; contemporaries, 58; discussion with Elisha, 55, 56; face between his knees, 44; fingers becoming like wells, 38; method of punishing the discourteous, 12; native land, 2; prayer, 40, 41; prayer concerning rain and dew, 34, 35; prayer for widow's son, 30; prayer to God, 42, 43; saying that hot-tempered are barred from Torah, 98; theological functions, 8; view on Israel's poverty, 12.
- Elijah, sacrificing outside of Temple, 38; saga of, 1; servant of the Lord, the, 60; still living until the coming of the Messiah, 161; stopping the sun, 61; storm referring to, 15; studying constantly, 27; successor of Aaron, the, 8; swearing not to permit dew or rain to come, 45; swearing to defend Israel, 164.
- Elijah, taking away key of rain, 46; tales concerning, 1; tales of, 9; teacher by example, 7; teaching Akiba, 7; teaching to say "Please God," 100, 101, 102; the eschatological figure, 2; the legendary figure, as, 2; the man from Gilead, 5; the prophet, 2, 5, 13; the Tishbite, 5; the winnower, 8; threatening God, 44; to announce day of the Lord, 16; to be sent before day of the Lord, 43; to clarify all points, 8; to come with Gog and Magog, 58; to demand that the merits of the children redeem the sins of the parents, 164, 165; to re-appear at the advent of Messiah, 58; to redeem Israel, 60; to turn the hearts of children to parents, 16, 17; to witness circumcision ceremonies, 45, 46, 50.
- Elijah, using twelve stones for the altar, 61.
- Elijah, visiting a certain scholar, 69; visiting the widow, 54.
- Elijah, warning King Ahab, 46; was merciful, 49; will not converse with morally sinful persons, 6; will not visit morally sinful persons, 6; winning over the Baalim, 2.
- Elisha, asking for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, 54; curing leprosy of Naamon, 31; mourning for Elijah, 56; the bald head, 63.
- Ezra, accounting for dots, 12.
- Famine in time of Elijah, 35.
- Four names had Elijah, 22.
- Gilead, referring to Elijah, 21, 30.
- God, fear and worship of, 39; frustrating designs of Baal prophets, 39; His love for Israel strengthened through Elijah, 61; sending a serpent to kill Hiel, 39; silencing the world, 39.
- Hiel, making a cavity, 39.
- Jezebel, desirous to kill Elijah, 45; planning to destroy priests of God, 36.
- Joshua ben Levi, maneuvered way into Paradise, 12; wrangles sword from Angel of Death, 12.
- Keys to rain, 31.
- Melange of tall tales, a, 9.
- Miracles, Elisha's, 28, 29; of Elijah, the, 28, 29; their number, 28; their place, 28.
- Prayer of Elijah, 32; of Minḥa, 40.
- Prayers of Elijah, 42, 43.
- Priests of Baal, 40.
- Prophets, three kinds of, 48; zealous, 46, 50.
- R. Kahana, story of, 9.
- Rabbis, dramatizing challenge of Elijah, 4.
- Ravens' complaint, the, 26.
- Ravens, getting food, 38.
- Sisero, story of his garden, 11.
- Storm is Elijah, the, 157.
- Story of woman who took trusteeship of wealth, 13.

Ten periods of famine, 35.
 Translation of Elijah, the, 52, 53,
 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60.
 Victory of Elijah, 40.
 Widow of Zarp hath, 29; feeding
 Elijah, 57.

III

GENERAL

Aaron, 62.
 Abraham, Patriarch, 106.
 Academies, 143.
 Adam, 58.
 Adultery with a demon, 117.
 Amoraim, 2.
 Angel of Death, 162.
 Animal kingdom, 3.
 Baal, 4; prophets of, 2, 3; wor-
 shipers, 4.
 Baalim, 2, 3.
 Beggars, 135, 136.
 Ben Sira, 76.
 Beth-Din, great, 117.
 Bethel, 58.
 Birds of prey, 74.
 Buber, Jewish Mysticism, 1.
 Bullocks, 3.
 Cemeteries, 84.
 Chalcedonian stones, 84, 85.
 Charity, 97; power of, 29.
 Christendom, saints of, 6.
 Coffin, containing body of Joseph,
 29.
 Coin, lucky, 10.
 Concubine at Gibeah, 67.
 Consulting one's wife, 124, 125,
 126.
 Conversation should end with a
 word of Torah, 55.
 Custom to mention Elijah on Sat-
 urday nights, 143.
 David, 36, 45.
 Day of the Lord, the, 53.
 Death ray of the Lord, 62.
 Disciple mourning for his master,
 56.
 Dog's howl is an evil portent,
 163.
 Earthquake, 81.
 Edom, 80.

Eighteen decisions of Shammai and
 Hillel, 147.
 Eleazar b. Arak forgetting his
 learnings, 86, 87.
 Eleazar b. Perata, on trial before
 the Romans, 107.
 Eliezer b. Horkenos starting to
 study Torah, 104, 105.
 Enoch translated into heaven, 57.
 Family of Bet Zerifa, 145.
 Feast of King Ahasuerus, 72, 73.
 Forbidden animals having a place,
 83.
 Four camps of man's habitation, 53.
 Gad, 2.
 Gentile counselled by Elijah, 139.
 Gilead, 2.
 God, 4, 53, 57, 72, 117, 130, 131,
 132, 134; abandoning those who
 abandon the poor, 130; and His
 blessings, 125, 126; anxious to
 show His mercy to Israel, 80, 81;
 asked to perform His miracles,
 11; Father of mercy, 17; is
 plentiful in mercy, 50; loving Is-
 rael, 71; redeeming Israel, 158,
 159; set two ways before Israel,
 164; sharing glory with mortals,
 52; signing records of man, 163;
 sparing the world, 22; to punish
 the guardian angels of the idol-
 worshipers, 156; to punish the
 wicked Kings, 156; whatever He
 does the righteous can do, 28;
 why called King of Glory, 15.
 God's divine presence on earth, 57;
 rod of instruction, 81.
 Golden calf, 157.
 Golem, the, 12.
 Guest, obligation of a, 54.
 Hiel, 3.
 Hosea was merciful, 49.
 Illegitimates in Israel, 146.
 Isaiah, 47, 48, 62, 71.
 Israel, 71; destruction of, 72; God
 of, 3; like a garden, 47; pov-
 erty of, 7, 82; redeemer of, 12;
 spiritual core of, 13; suffering
 and redemption of, 167, 168; the
 moralists of, 13; to be compared
 to the vine, 41.

- Jacob, 45.
 Jeremiah, 62; pleading with God, 10.
 Jericho, 58.
 Jerusalem, 74, 76.
 Jesus, Christian, 6.
 Jezebel, 2.
 Joshua, 42.
 King Ahaziah, 58.
 Knowledge, 94.
 Korah going down to earth, 57.
 Lamp, Aladdin's, 9.
 Leviathan and the fish, 123, 124.
 Loew, Rabbi of Prague, 12.
 Making people rich and yet keep them pious, 126, 127, 128.
 Man never satisfied, 82, 83.
 Meange of tall tales, a, 122.
 Menasseh referring to the Messiah, 21.
 Messiah, 8, 68, 71, 77, 156, 160, 161, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168.
 Messiah ben David, 8.
 Messiah ben Joseph, 8.
 Messiah, forerunner of, 8; of the house of David, 159.
 Messiahs among the four craftsmen, 158.
 Micaiah, 44.
 Michael, 80, 81.
 Midrash, rabbis of the, 3; writers of, 5.
 Mordecai renting his garments, 72, 73.
 Moses, 44, 45, 47, 48, 52, 54, 60, 61, 62, 70, 72, 73, 155, 156, 157; keeping wind from bringing rain, 32; making sea dry, 32.
 Mysteries of the world, 75.
 Nahum Gam Zu, 106.
 Newly born, 50, 51.
 Nine who entered Paradise, 56, 57.
 Outer garments of piety, 110, 111.
 Patriarch's, the, 41, 72, 73; compared to branches supporting vine, 15.
 Peace, gift of, 50, 51.
 Peace-makers, 69, 70.
 Persecution of Jews, 11.
 Pesikta Rabbati, story of, 10.
Pilpul, 14.
 Pious man in distress, 131, 133, 137.
 Physician's bag stolen, 35.
 Poesy, Jewish, 9.
 Poor, poorer than the, 106.
 Pot of the manna, 146.
 Poverty is Israel's crucible, 82.
 Prayer of Moses, 41.
 Prayers of R. Hiyya, 68.
 Prophets, 58, 59, 62; are merciful, 49; disliked, 62.
 Psalms, 9.
 R. Abraham of Ashkelon, 126, 127, 128.
 R. Akiba, and Kalba Sebu'a's daughter, 106; finding a sweet lodging in death, 112.
 R. Joshua helping Elijah carrying body of R. Akiba, 112, 113.
 R. Joshua, maneuvering his way into Paradise, 92, 93; remiss in prayer, 100.
 R. Kahana buttresses his virtue with Elijah's denars, 109, 110.
 R. Meir, and Ahar, 67; being searched by the Romans, 107; his eye, 110.
 R. Simeon ben Yoḥai and Eleazar in cave, 107, 108.
 Rainbow, 85, 86.
 Ram, Isaac's, 99.
 Redemption, 8; will come piece-meal, 167.
 Resurrection of the dead, 29.
 Rich man on way to buy oxen, a, 100, 101, 102.
 Righteous, can do whatever God does, 28; dead mightier than the living, 31; live for ever, 30; man, the, 155; will come to life again, 30.
 Rod of Aaron, 146.
 Roman Emperor, 106.
 Sammael, 71, 74, 80, 81.
 Satan, 72.
 Saul, sending messengers to David, 36.
 Scholar, in distress, a, 131, 133, 136.
 School of Shamai, 151.
 Servants, 104.

- Seven living links, 161.
 Shemaiah and Abtaleyon, 153.
 Shila, helped by Elijah, 109.
 Solomon, 52.
 Stories, Biblical, 3.
 Story of advisor counselling King
 to put son into prison, 15.
 Tales, Biblical, 3.
 Tannaim, 2.
 Ten Commandments, 156.
 Theology when applied to Judaism,
 7.
 Thrice-widowed bride, 115, 116,
 117.
 Tooth of Rabbi cured, 108, 109.
 Torah, 72; God's, 117, 131, 134;
 is a medicine and a tonic, 95;
 reservoir of all sanctions, 14;
 saving from death, 55; study
 of, 95, 96, 98; the words of,
 14.
 Treasure of King Solomon, 124.
 Unity, 17.
 Wealth and piety, 127, 128, 129,
 130.
 Woman who proved a fit trustee,
 124, 125, 126; who spat in R.
 Meir's eye, 110.