

THE PROPHET WHO WON'T GO AWAY



Miracle of Rebirth

Biblical Sources

And the word of YHWH came to him:

“Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon, and stay there; I have designated a widow there to feed you.” ...

After a while, the son of that woman—the owner of the house—fell sick, and his illness grew worse, until he had no breath left in him.

She said to Elijah, “What harm have I done you, O agent of God, that you should come here to recall my sin and cause the death of my son?”

“Give me the boy,” he said to her; and taking him from her arms, he carried him to the upper chamber where he was staying and laid him down on his own bed.

He cried out to YHWH and said, “YHWH my God, will You bring calamity upon this widow whose guest I am, and let her son die?”

Then he stretched out over the child three times, and cried out to YHWH, saying, “YHWH my God, let this child’s life return to his body!”

YHWH heard Elijah’s plea; the child’s life returned to his body, and he revived.

(1 Kings 17)

Then fire from YHWH descended and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the earth; and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

When they saw this, all the people flung themselves on their faces and cried out:

יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים

“YHWH alone is God, YHWH alone is God!

(1 Kings 18)

[Elijah] walked forty days and forty nights as far as the mountain of God at Horeb.

There he went into a cave, and there he spent the night.

Then the word of GOD came to him: “Why are you here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I am moved by zeal [קִנְיָא קִנְיָאִיתִי] for YHWH, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life.”

“Come out,” God called, “and stand on the mountain before YHWH.”

And lo, YHWH passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by YHWH’s power; but YHWH was not in the wind. After the wind—an earthquake; but YHWH was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake—fire; but YHWH was not in the fire. And after the fire—a thin voice of stillness.

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his mantle about his face and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice addressed him: “Why are you here, Elijah?”

He answered, “I am moved by zeal for YHWH, the God of Hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and have put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life.”

YHWH said to him, “Go back by the way you came, [and] on to the wilderness of Damascus. When you get there ... anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to succeed you as prophet.

(1 Kings 19)

We find there to have been three (kinds of) prophets. One claimed the honour of the Father and the honour of the son; another, the honour of the Father, but not the honour of the son; another, the honour of the son, but not the honour of the Father. ...

Eliyahu claimed the honour of the Father, but not the honour of the son: "I have been very zealous for the Eternal, the God of hosts, etc." And what is stated in this regard? "And the Eternal said to him: ... Elisha the son of Shafat shall you anoint to be a prophet in your place." What is the intent of this? God does not desire your prophecy (because you do not claim the honour of Israel).

(Mekhilta de-Rabi Yishmael, Pischa 1:17)

Then the word of YHWH came to Elijah the Tishbite:

"Go down and confront King Ahab of Israel who [resides] in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard; he has gone down there to take possession of it. Say to him, 'Thus said YHWH: Would you murder and take possession? Thus said YHWH: In the very place where the dogs lapped up Naboth's blood, the dogs will lap up your blood too.'"

(1 Kings 21)

As they [Elijah and Elisha] kept on walking and talking, a fiery chariot with fiery horses suddenly appeared and separated one from the other; and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.

(2 Kings 2:6-12)

Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of YHWH.

He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents.

(Malachi 3:23-24)

In Rabbinic Literature

One day, Romans saw Rabbi Meir and ran after him, and he ran away from them and entered a brothel to hide. ... Some say that he escaped detection because Elijah came, appeared to them as a prostitute and embraced Rabbi Meir. The Romans who were chasing him said: Heaven forbid, if this were Rabbi Meir, he would not act in that manner. Rabbi Meir arose, fled and arrived in Babylonia.

(Bab. Talmud Avoda Zara 18b)

Rabbi Beroka Hoza'a was often found in the market of Bei Lefet, and Elijah the Prophet would often appear to him. Once Rabbi Beroka asked Elijah: Of all the people who come here, is there anyone in this market worthy of the World-to-Come? Elijah said to him: No. ... In the meantime, two brothers came to the marketplace. Elijah said to Rabbi Beroka: These two have a share in the World-to-Come. Rabbi Beroka went over to the men and said to them: What is your occupation? They said to him: We are jesters, and we cheer up the depressed. As well, when we see two people who have a quarrel between them, we strive to make peace.

(BT Ta'anit 22a)

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked Elijah: When will the Messiah come?
 Elijah said to him: Go ask him.
 Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked: And where is he sitting?
 Elijah said to him: At the entrance of the city of Rome.
 Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked him: And what is his identifying sign by means of which I can recognize him?
 Elijah answered: He sits among the poor who suffer from illnesses. And all of them untie their bandages and tie them all at once, but the Messiah unties one bandage and ties one at a time. He says: Perhaps I will be needed to serve to bring about the redemption. Therefore, I will never tie more than one bandage, so that I will not be delayed.
 Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi went to the Messiah ... and asked him: When will the Master (i.e. you) come?
 The Messiah said to him: Today.
 Sometime later, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi came to Elijah ... and said to him: The Messiah lied to me, as he said to me: I am coming today, and he did not come.
 Elijah told him that this is what he said to you: He said that he will come "today, if you will listen to God's voice" (Psalms 95:7).
 (BT *Sanhedrin* 98a)

In the case of two people who deposited money with one person, and this one deposited one hundred dinars and that one deposited two hundred dinars, and when they come to collect their deposit, this one says: My deposit was two hundred dinars, and that one says: My deposit was two hundred dinars, the bailee gives one hundred dinars to this one and one hundred dinars to that one. And the rest of the money (i.e., the contested one hundred dinars) will be placed in a safe place until Elijah comes and prophetically determines the truth.
 (Mishnah, *Bava Metzia* 3:4)

תיקו

= תשבי יתרץ קודיות ובעיות

Rabbi Yosei said: I was once walking along the road when I entered the ruins of an old, abandoned building among the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray. I noticed that Elijah, of blessed memory, came and guarded the entrance for me and waited at the entrance until I finished my prayer. ...

Elijah said to me: What voice did you hear in that ruin? I responded: I heard a Heavenly voice, cooing like a dove and saying: "Woe to the children, due to whose sins I destroyed My house, burned My Temple, and exiled them among the nations of the world." And Elijah said to me: By your life and by your head,

not only did that voice cry out in that moment, but it cries out three times each and every day. But when Israel enters synagogues and study halls and answers in the *kaddish* prayer,

יְהֵא שְׁמִיָּה הַגָּדוֹל מְבוֹרָךְ

“May His great name be blessed”, the Holy Blessed One shakes His head and says: Happy is the king who is thus praised in his house. (BT *Berakhot* 3a)

On [Erev Pesach] Messiah and Elijah the prophet will be exalted, as it is stated: “The watchman said: The morning comes, and also the night” (Isaiah 21:12). This is analogous to a woman who was awaiting her husband who had embarked to a country overseas. He said to her. ‘Let this sign be for you. When you see this sign, know that I am coming, and I am coming soon.’

(*Exodus Raba* 18:12)

The sages instituted the custom that people should have a seat of honour [at a Brit Milah] for the Angel of the Covenant; for Elijah, may he be remembered for good, is called the Angel of the Covenant, as it is said, *And the angel of the covenant, whom you desire, will be coming* (Mal. 3:1).

(*Pirkey de-Rabi Eliezer* 29:18)

In Kabbalah

Why has Elijah to testify [at a Brit Milah]? For this reason. When God said to him *What are you doing here, Elijah?* (I Kings 19, 9), he answered, *I have been very zealous for Adonai, the God of Hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant.* God said to him: “As you live, wherever my sons imprint this sign upon their flesh, you shall be there, and the mouth which charged Israel with forsaking the covenant shall testify that they are observing it.”

(*Zohar* 1:93a)

The following recondite passage is found in the Book of Adam the First Man, in describing the generations of mankind: “A certain spirit will one day come down to earth and will clothe itself in an earthly body and will bear the name of Elijah. Whilst in that body he will soar aloft and, divesting himself of that body, enter within a whirlwind, where another and luminous body will have been prepared for him, so that he will be as an angel among angels’ But whenever he will come down to earth he will invest himself again in the material body, which will remain in the lower world; and it is in this body that he will make himself visible on earth, whilst it is in the other body that he will appear on high.” ... There was no other man whose spirit ascended to heaven and then descended to earth except Elijah.

(*Zohar* 2:197a)

Modern Interpretations



Elijah the Prophet, Over Vitebsk

According to legend, the name of the Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue was given after an event that took place on Yom Kippur, when one person was missing to complete the minyan required for prayer. Out of nowhere, a man unknown to the worshippers appeared and the service was able to start. The man mysteriously disappeared after the Neilah prayer. The people were sure that the man was none other than Elijah the Prophet. (Wikipedia)



When one is having difficulty with a certain matter a kind of good news enters him, for he feels a single point entering his mind. This is called *bechinat Eliyahu* (the aspect of Elijah) ... for his knowledge expands and is suffused with vitality. Then he can unite the various parts of himself.
(Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, *Me'or Enayim*, Vayetzey 7)