

ELIJAH IN BIBLIE, TALMUD  
a n d  
MEDIEVAL LEGEND

Thesis

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*rec'd 9/78*

To J. C. -

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# TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

Apoc. - apocolypse.  
Art, arts. - article, articles.  
Ath. - Athenian.

B. - Baba.  
B.B. - Baba Bathra.  
beg. - begining.  
Ber. - Berochoth.  
B.M. - Baba Mezia.

Cf. - compare.  
Ch., chap., chapt. - chapter  
Chron. - Chronicles.  
Chs. - chapters.  
col. & column.

d. - dbe.  
Deut. - Deuteronomy.  
Deut. R. - Deut. Rabbah.

Ecc. - Ecclesiasticus  
ed. - edition.  
e.g. - for example.  
El. - Eliezer.  
etc. - and so forth.  
Ex. - Exodus.

ff. - following.

Gen. - Genesis.

Hist. - History.

Intro. - Introduction.  
Intros. - Introductions.

Jer. - Jeremiah.  
Jud. - Judges.

Ket., Ketub. - Ketuboth.  
Kid. - Kiddushin.  
Kil. - Kiloim.

lev. - Leviticus.

Makk. - Makkoth.  
Matt. - Matthews.  
Men. - Menochoth.

Ned. - Nedarim.  
No., Nos. - number, numbers.  
Num. - Numbers.  
N.T. - New Testament.

O.T. - Old Testament.  
p. - page.  
pp. pages.  
Pesik. - Pesikta  
Ps. - Psalm.

R. - Rabbi.  
R. Rabbah  
Rel. - religion  
Reub. - Reubeni.

Sab., Sabb. - Sabbath.  
S. - Seder.  
Sam. - Samuel.  
Sanh. - Sanhedrin.  
Sect., sec. - section.  
Sheb. - Shebuoth.  
Slav. - Slavic.

Ter. - Terumoth.

u. - und.

Vol., v. - volume.  
vv. - verses.  
v'Z. - v'Zuta.

w. - with.

Yalk. - Yalkut.  
Yeb. - Ybomoth.  
Yer. - Yerushalmi.

Z. - zuta.

## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

(continued)

- Aggad. Beresh. - Aggadot Bereshit.  
Biblioth. Orient. - Bibliotheka Orientale, D'Herbelot.  
Ber. R. - Bereshit Rabbah.  
B ha-M. - Beth ha-Midrash, Yellineck.  
  
Cath. Encycl. - Catholic Encyclopedia.  
  
Deut. R. - Deuteronomy Rabbah.  
  
Elias etc. - Elias, Jahve und Baal, Gunkel.  
Ex. R. - Exodus Rabbah.  
  
Heb. Story. -- Early Hebrew Story, Peters.  
Hist. of Heb. - History of the Hebrews, Kittel.  
Hist. of Rel. - History of Religion, Peters.  
  
Gen. R. - Genesis Rabbah.  
Gesch. - Geschichte des Juden, Grätz.  
  
Jew. Encycl., J.W. - Jewish Encyclopedia.  
  
Lev. R. - Leviticus Rabbah.  
  
Myth. of Heb. - Mythology among the Hebrews, Goldziher.  
  
Num. R. - Numbers Rabbah.  
  
Pirke R. El. - Pirke Rabbi Eliezer.  
  
S. Eliyahu R. v'Z. - Seder Eliyahu Rabbah v'zyta.  
Shem. ha-Gdol. - Shemoth ha-Gdolim, Asulai.  
  
Tanna d. Eliyahu R. or Z. - Tanna dbe Eliyahu Rabbah or Zuta.  
  
Unknown Homer. - The Unknown Homer of the Hebrews, Fiske.  
  
Yalk. Reub. - Yalkut Reubeni.  
Yalk. Shim. - Yalkut Shimoni.

## P R E F A C E

Legends like history are records of human struggle and development. Yet it would be unfair and incorrect to approach a study of legends in a merely critical and analytical manner. The essence and real significance of a legend would be over-looked, if it were exposed merely to the microscopic dissection or statistical cataloguing of facts and events contained, as would be proper in an investigation of historical documents. For beside realities, legends contain religious, ethical and aesthetic expressions. It is on this account that I have divided my study in two parts.

In Part One, I have attempted to investigate the character of Elijah and the legends built up about his person in a critical manner, though never losing sight of the spiritual and aesthetic elements involved. Therein I have endeavored to establish the historicity of Elijah; the probable causes of making Elijah the hero of Jewish legend and lore; the basis and facts of the legends; their extent and significance. The method of investigation applied is the one generally used in a study of religio-historical literature, or more specifically the method of biblical criticism.

In Part Two of this paper I give a collection of Elijah stories of the period limited by the title of this thesis. Here I have devoted my interest primarily to the aesthetic and psychological elements of the legends. Hence my efforts shifted from the investigator to the translator. There is also a secondary

purpose in this part, and not at all unimportant for the completeness of the subject as treated in this investigation. In classifying and arranging the legends, the conclusions of the first Part are brought out in bas-relief. An inclusion of all legends at the point of discussion in Part I, would by cause of the bulkiness mar the desired clearness of argument.

In this collection of legends I claim no completeness, nor originality. A complete collection would require a study of all Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic literature of this period, (concordances, indexes and guides of the literature of this period being limited), which is a physical impossibility to cover in the time allotted for the thesis. Nor can I claim originality, for a similar collection in Hebrew has been made by Friedman in the Introduction to his *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* (1). A less complete collection of Talmudic legends in English is that of Ginzberg (2), but the last volume of his works containing the sources of his material is as yet not published, and hence was of no aid in my work. A still smaller collection of Elijah legends in Hebrew and Yiddish is that of Rosenberg (3). But this work also having no references, and not at all careful with his sources was of only secondary aid in my work.

The literature directly or indirectly dealing with this subject is very large, and I have not availed myself of all of it due to time limitations. Though I have used the most important works on the subject, I have consulted wholly, or in part the

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(1) Meir Friedman. Vienna, 1902.

(2) Louis Ginzberg. "The Legends of the Jews", vol. iv, Philadelphia, 1913.

(3) Yudel Rosenberg. *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* Warsaw 1914.



books given in the Bibliography. In Part I, I have used secondary as well as primary sources, but confined myself almost completely to primary sources in Part II.

There remains the grateful task of acknowledging my personal indebtedness to my respected teacher, President Doctor Kaufman Kohler for suggesting this subject to me, and Rabbi Doctor Louis Grossman for helping me in compiling the Bibliography, read my outline and generally aided me in this work. Also to all my teachers who always gladly gave me advice and encouragement.

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Types of legends -- Development -- Migration  
-- Characteristics -- Development of legend  
among the Jewish people -- Elijah legends --  
The problem.

There are essentially two types of legends. There is the historical or instructive type which is the creation or compilation of the cultured class, or the leaders of a people or an epoch. These legends are directed and intentional, either serve to record an historical event, or to teach a certain truth which the authors desire to bring to the readers and listeners. In antiquity, the authors of this type of legend were the priests, the lawgivers, the prophets and the philosophers. Altogether a small group, and were it not for the fact that their legends were put down in writing, or that they attached them to, or incorporated them with the popular legends, their influence would have been slight; certainly would not extend beyond the time of their creation.

The other type of legend is the imaginative and popular legend. Created by the common people, it is indifferent of fact and accuracy, careless of origin and author, wanting of purpose or aim. It is the expression of the fancy of the people, the poetic whim of a folk. Transmitted from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation, it changes with the disposition, philosophy, and imagination of each group and age. Freely, it is combined with other legends coming from an altogether source and origin, or is changed to serve a purpose contradictory to its essence. In this form it often becomes useless for historical

purposes. Characters or events involved can be precipitated only with the catalytic aid of more known records. However, no matter how these legends have changed, or how distantly removed from facts, they always indicate the folk-psychology, record the mental depressions or exaltations of a people, its woes and hopes, its despair and faith. (1)

Often these two types are combined, and the result is another mixed type, the historical-imaginative legends. Most of the legends of antiquity are of this mixed type. In the Biblical legends we have the former incorporating the latter type. The author or compiler has a purpose in view when he relates his legends, but in using folk lore he honorably retains the borrowed material unchanged. In the Elijah legends under consideration, we have the latter type added to the former. Thus folk imagination is added to historical narratives and accounts. In these the authors are unscrupulous about sources and facts, Imagination and desire are the motivating forces. But here I am anticipating a later discussion. (2)

(3)

The development of legends is common to all peoples. Men everywhere and at all times formulate much the same ideas about certain phenomena, and at certain occasions. By fact of local color, legends of different peoples are externally diverse, but fundamentally folk thought runs on much the same lines everywhere. (4) Among the Semites as among the Aryans, similar conditions of mind produce similar legends and speculation. Originat-

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(1) Gunkel, "Elias, Jahve u. Baal", p. 5.

(2) See Infra pp. 69-70

(3) Lang, "Custom and Myth." p. 21 to 23.

(4) Palmer, "Samson Saga." p. ix

ing at the childhood of a nation in remembrance of great heroes, illustrious sovereigns, long-remembered wars, or in a solution of inexplicable phenomena, (5) legends gradually change, until their entire character and motif is altered. Transmitted to posterity, they gradually lose accuracy and precision, adopt all sorts of foreign elements, are augmented by the exaggeration of the vivid raconteur, are grafted upon different stems with varying growths, until their origin is almost completely forgotten. (6) Like religious myths and fables folk-legends also have an astonishing faculty for migration. (7) Thus the Babylonian flood legend is current in Israelite lore, a Jewish Elijah known among the Moham- edans, (8) and Slavs. (9) Legends of the Buddhist priests grafted in Spanish and French lore. Stories once told of the Sun-god, as a warrior of strength and prowess are told of some native hero who seemed to his compatriots endowed with similar gifts. Diogenes' conceits are ascribed to Tarleton. What the Christians say of St. George the Turks attribute to Cheberley, and many other instances can be stated. (11) Thus legends float about from one land to another "like the dust from the flowers carried away by the wind to different lands produces different colors and shades of flowers, according to the nature of each field. So legend, though spring- ing of the same seed, produces different emotions in accordance with the people that foster it, and to whom the grain was brought." (12)

Not only is the development of legends similar among all peoples, but likewise the characteristics are similar. All legends

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(5) Muller, "Science of Language." II, p. 581.

(6) Kuenen, "The Religion of Israel." I, p. 23.

(7) Taylor, "Origin of the Aryans." p. 331, 306.

(8) Goldziher, "Mohamed. Studien", vol. II, p. 275, *Infra* pp-27-6.

(9) Reference with Dr. Grossman. Could not obtain it at this time.

of antiquity were usually attached to names of places or persons, to parables or short poems, to proverbs and national customs. (13) If it is a legend of a person, the source of information about that character is indirect. It is most usually obtained from a person who was told by another person who associated with the character of the legend. (14) The character always remaining in a slightly distant world. He is never described, his size or form becomes apparent only through implications. His actions are never bound by exact references in time except, possibly, of a generally descriptive kind, like in the time of the great calamity, or important event. Yet with all the remoteness, the character is spoken of as a living figure, more or less immediately at hand. His exploits fairly recent and when a difficult situation arises, or an insoluble problem makes itself felt, the miracle worker of the legend is expected to be around and fix things up. (15) In the legends of heroes, divine myths and historical legends are often inextricably blended. (16) The most attractive subject of popular legends are historical events and personages, but different from history, it is poetical in its presentation, and instead of telling how things actually happened, legends are told in a manner so as to cheer, inspire and move. The characters selected by legend are usually popular men from the ordinary walk of life, rather than kings or lords. (17) For a long time it is transmitted as oral tradition, and only later is put down in writing. It is the expression and property of the community and has many authors. It treats only of small events, a story short enough to be related

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(11)

(12) Bar Ami, "Ost u. West." Vol. iv, p. 477.

(13) Kuenen, "The Religion of Israel." I, p. 23.

(14) This characteristic is more obvious in the immediate development of a legend.

in one conversation. (18) However, a later generation will collect a group of legends of similar content and character, unify them into one cycle and present them as a unit in several scenes. (19)

Legends express the habits of life, the temperament, humor or dullness of the people narrating them. They mirror the psychology and spiritual wants and needs of a people, and reflect their character, occupation, culture and geography. (20)

In the development of every people there is a period in which most of its legends are created, usually it is the childhood period of a people. All later legends are in some manner based upon the childhood reminiscences. It used to be arrationally assumed that the Jews unlike other peoples, were exempt from the weaknesses of forming myths or indulging in legends. To assume this is tantamount to assuming that the Jewish people was never young, never had a primitive state from which it developed by evolution, but was from the beginning adult, critical, unimaginative and historical. (21) But this would be proving a supernatural origin of the Jewish people. The "Jewish genius was different in kind and in degree from that of other peoples of the same era of human development, but it worked in an equally human way." (22) Like every other people, it had a primitive stage in which it formed its myths and legends. (23) Like every other people it had a

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(15) New Republic, "Paul Bunyan" July 7, 1920. See also *Infra*, p. Frederick Barbarossa, p. Alexander I of Russia, p. Paul Bunyan.

(16) Pfeleiderer, "Philosophy of Religion" III, p. 38.

(17) Those legends that do deal with Kings, select the popular ones, who were part and parcel of the people.

(18) Examples in the short, unrelated Genesis stories.

(19) Gunkel, *ibid*, p. 6. - The unrelated character of a cycle of legends can be ascertained by the repetition of speeches and motif in the various parts of a composite legend.

childhood which it outgrew, a period in its early history when it delighted in stories of adventure, abundant in exploit of superhuman prowess. (24) At the first awakening of its powers it was occupied with memories of the past, the deeds of heroes and the struggle for national existence. Then it began to think, imagine and speculate. With no science, or knowledge of nature it began to find solutions in its imagination, or else borrowed answers from the peoples among whom they lived or conquered. (25) As it developed and grew it began to produce its own lore and legends, about its own heroes and events, and presented them in its own peculiar way. Folk lore remained a living force in Israel to the present day. The richest period of its lore, however, radiates from the time of its national existence. The out-pourings of folk lore characterize the most interesting periods of Jewish history. The part of the Book of Kings which is drawn from the folk legends that gathered around the early Prophets are most interesting to the student of religion and Jewish folk lore. (26)

It is upon the stories of Elijah, the first of the great Prophets, upon which a great literature of legends was built up that my effort is directed in the following pages. My attempt is fourfold. First to obtain a picture of Elijah, as he is painted

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(20) New Republic, *ibid.*

(21) Palmer, "Samson Saga." p. 18.

(22) Fiske, "The Great Epic of Israel". p. 45.

(23) Goldziher, "Mythology Among Hebrews." XXI, p. 22.  
Steinthal, "The Legend of Samson." p. 420.

(24) Palmer, *ibid.*, p. viii.

(25) Kuenen, "Religion of Israel." I, p. 225.

(26) Peters, "Early Hebrew Story." p. 277.

(27) The Talmudic and Medieval legends practically include all Elijah legends. For the Biblical legends of Elijah have already incorporated Haggadic accounts of Elijah, (as will be seen in the course of discussion). The Medieval Elijah legends are mostly

by the boundless and lavishing legends. (27) Secondly to investigate the historical possibilities of Elijah's existence and activities. Thirdly to offer hypothesis why Elijah has captivated the imagination of the Jewish mind, and established himself hero of the bulk of its lore. Finally to present an appreciation of the Elijah stories.

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based on the legends of the Biblical period. Hence, I do not feel as going beyond the limits of my thesis - "Elijah in Talmudic and Medieval legends." - when I speak unqualifyingly of Elijah legends in the course of the discussion.



## CHAPTER I

### ELIJAH AS PORTRAYED IN BIBLICAL LEGEND.

The historic situation that called for Elijah --  
Elijah's historic personality -- Activities --  
Champion of Yahweh -- Champion of justice --  
Prophet -- Significance of Elijah's activities --  
Effects.

Dramatic is the sudden appearance of Elijah in history. Unknown and uncalled for he suddenly comes into existence, stands before Ahab and announces the fearful, oppressing draught that is to last for three years in the land of Israel. <sup>(1)</sup> The historic situation that called for this great personality was the following.

The confederated nomadic tribes of Israel have settled in the land of Canaan. After many vicissitudes and experiences they rapidly and firmly established themselves in the land, attained the culture of their civilized neighbors and rivals, until their influence is felt through out the then inhabited world. The first to establish the power and influence of the Empire is Solomon. He extends the boundaries of the land, east and west, north and south; he introduces a real palace and an up-to-date oriental court. He spreads culture and develops industry; he organizes armies and makes alliances. What Solomon does both to the North and the South, Omri accomplishes even to a greater degree for the North, now separated from the South.

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(1) I Kings, XVII, 1. ff.

In the foot steps of these two great monarchs, Ahab starts out his career. He makes alliances with the powerful peoples of Mesopotamia, and especially with the progressive, commercial Phoenicians. To affect the alliances and friendships he marries a Princess from Tyre, and permits her to build a Temple and a Phoenician colony in Samaria. Religiously, Israel then, is still monolatric, or at most henotheistic. Hence this occurrence is not opposed. Such things already happened in the reign of Solomon. The Tyrian Baal cult is a private affair, confined to the court. Even there Yahwe is continued. Ahab calls his children after Yahwe (2) and retains Yahwe priests and prophets. (3) The masses are still faithful Yahwe-worshippers, and if anything look at the court affairs with suspicion, surely do not consider it treachery or blasphemy. A mere political exigency on the part of the ambitious and progressive monarch.

But Izebel - the Tyrian princess and favorite wife of Ahab - is very ambitious. Her Temple in Samaria, erected for her by Ahab to the chief Phoenician God, is assuming larger dimensions. (4) Besides a Maçceba and an Ashera, (5) it now has a splendid priesthood, with Izebel as its most zealous champion, pushing and pressing the Tyrian cult beyond Samaria into the whole of Israel. (6) This arouses the jealousy of the Yahwe priests and prophets. They begin to find fault not only with Ahab's toleration of Baal worship, but with all his political plans as well.

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(2) Ahaziah, Athaliah.

(3) I Kings, XXII, 6 ; II Kings, X, 11

(4) II Kings, X, 18. ff.

(5) I Kings, XVI, 33 ; II Kings, III, 2

(6) Kittel, "Hist. of Heb.", II, pp. 263-264.

and in their jealousy will not stop at rebellion, even assassination. (7)

*crush* Ahab alarmed, attempts to squelch the uprisings by threatening and actual persecuting of the dissatisfied Jahweh - prophets. (8)

But if the position taken by Ahab outraged the religious feeling of the true worshippers of Jahweh, the whole nation's sense of justice was outraged by the trumped up charge and murder of Naboth in the name of law. (9) The nationalists and the faithful ones, and the older generation still reminescent of the freedom of the desert and the benefices of the desert-God Jahweh, fearful of the rapid gain in power and influence of the foreigners; of the encroachment of the Baal worship; of the recurrence of the despotic actions of the court the people begin to look for a hero, a savior in this untoward and portentous situation. The clash is on; two cults are in array; two civilizations in conflict; ambition and sentiment are at sword's edge, and the advantage is with the organized, Baal followers as against the alarmed but helpless Jahwists. (10)

To this signal call Elijah answered. A man of grand originality, all of a fire with zeal for his God, and conscious of the divine power that works in him. A man of bold religious idealism and militant patriotism. A marvelous man, who performs marvelous things. A strong commanding personality, before whom all bend willingly. A man of strange appearance and primitive dress - a hairy man, girt about the loins with a mantle of skins and a leather belt, (11) made from the very ram that served as substitute for the

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(7) Gunkel, "Elias, Jahwe u. Baal" pp. 49 - 52.

(8) Actually the persecution of the Jahweh Prophets did never attain the dimensions ascribed in the documents of Kings by the over-jealous prophetic writer. - Kittel, "Hist. of Heb." pp. 264. Vol. II.

(9) Kittel, *ibid*, II, p. 210.

sacrifice of Isaac. (12) A man possessing extraordinary forces and secret powers. (13) He can see and hear, what others can not; like the roaring of the coming rain, he can see hours before others. He also possesses the power to affect upon Jahweh- he can stop and bring rain. To his miraculous personality belong also his sudden appearance and disappearance, also his short and firey speech. (14)

With unfaltering resoluteness, with a zeal and severity unequalled among the heroes of the great Jewish past, he begins a grand campaign for the restoration of old Israelitish beliefs, ideals and habits. A son of Gilead, imbued with the glories of Israel's past when Jahweh alone reigned supreme, thrilled with the traditions of the old and faithful patricians, (15) inspired with the desert freedom that still flourished, unchanged in those mountainous regions he begins a back-to-Jahweh movement, a desperate struggle to halt the denationalizing of Israel, to rid them of the usurping foreigners, to free his people from the despotic oppression of the oriental court, and last but not least, to imbue them with an ideal - perhaps not yet formulated in his own mind - the great spiritual and social ideal clearly expressed by the later prophets. (16)

To oust Malkarot of Tyre is Elijah's immediate task. To accomplish this he brings draught upon the land, fearlessly admon-

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(10) The seriousness of this period is seen even better in the conditions existing after the struggle between Ahab and Elijah, rather than while they flourished. It is seen in the civil war of Jehu, in the usurpation of Athaliah, - II, Kings, xi, and the efforts of the descendants of Ahab to denationalize Judaism - Gunkel, "Elias," etc." pp. 33 - 34.

(11) II Kings, I, 8.

(12) Pirke R. El. Ch. XXXI; Yalkut Reub. 471

(13) Kittel, "Hist. of Heb." II, p. 267.

(14) Duhn, "Die Gottgeweihten in der Altestamentischen Religion." p. 13.

(15) I Kings, XVII, 1 - The inhabitants of Gilead support loyally the sons of Saul, their also David escapes from Absalom. - Vide Infra, p. 61

ishes Ahab, derides the Baal worshippers in public and finally slays four hundred and fifty Baal priests with his own hands. (17) But while his dealings are only with the Gods of Tyre, his implications are against all foreign cults. (18) His mood is expressed in the words, "I am Jahweh thy God, thou shalt have no other Gods besides me, for Jahweh's name is Jealousy, he is a jealous God." (19) Though himself not aware of the consequences, he is the forerunner of Monotheism. (20)

His activities do not cease here. Elijah is also a champion of justice. On Mt. Carmel, (21) he showed himself as the unequal champion of Jahweh, (22) in the outrage of Naboth (23) he stepped forth as the champion of justice, friend of the people and staunch opposer of the foreign - so to speak efficient - ways of the up-to-date court. This is not altogether a new doctrine, Jahweh always taught, blood-revenge. The blood of Abel was upon Cain's head. But what demanded revenge in private life was believed not to apply to rulers. So in the death of Uriah by David, so in the murder of Joab by Solomon, (24) The seizure of property by Kings also was taken as a matter of course by the average oriental. Here came Elijah with a new prophetic interpretation. - murder is murder and injustice is injustice be it performed by King or slave. (25)

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(16) Cornill, "Open Court." IX, pp. 4464-5.

(17) I Kings, XVIII.

(18) Gunkel, "Elias, etc." p. 52.

(19) Ex. XX;XXXIV, 14, cf. I Kings, XVIII, 21.

(20) Goldziher, "Mythology Among the Hebrews." p. 306

(21) Gunkel, Ibid. p. 54.

(22) I Kings, XVIII.

(23) I Kings, XXI.

(24) II Samuel, XI and XII.

(25) Gunkel, Ibid, p. 61.

(26) Gunkel, Ibid, p. 63-64 -- This idea is portrayed in the Haggadic description of Elijah's zealousness for Jahweh. Elijah accuses Israel before God, to an extent that God must remove him and put Elisha in his

Primarily then, Elijah comes to the fore as a patriot and defender of his own people against the tyranny of its rulers and the on-slaught of foreign influences, But in his struggle for Jahweh and Justice, the titantic personality of Elijah transcends even his own people, and rises to Prophetic heights. For if Israel will not carry the spotless banner of Jahweh, he will call upon the threatening armies of Damascus; with his own hands he will annoint Hazael - Israel's greatest enemy. Israel may perish, but Jahweh and Justice must be victorious. (26)

With this a new epoch is begun in the religious history of Israel, and Elijah stands out as the first prophet on a grand scale. The first prophet in a truly Israelitic sense, differing from the later prophets only in that his efficacy was entirely personal, leaving nothing written. (27)

Perhaps, Elijah and those with him who stood up against the actions of Ahab <sup>did not realize</sup> were not aware of the far reaching influence of their actions; that the opposition to the Tyrian Baal will soon be turned into opposition against all Baalim and foreign cult, and culminate in not less than monotheism, that the cry for justice for the patrician will result in the prophetic proclamation of universal social justice. (28) Still regarded in the light of history, Elijah stands at the head of a group of zealots for Jahweh who preserved Israel, and founded spiritual Judaism. (29)

It is therefore not surprising that Elijah became the object of admiration of later generations, that his image was sketched with much that is tremendous and superhuman, that his person was

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place - Pirke R. El. Ch. XXIX; Tanna d. El. Zuta, VIII.  
(27) Cornhill, "Open Court." IX, p. 4464 - 5.

(28) Fiske, "Unknown Homer of Heb" = Assumes that Elijah was conscious of his prophetic mission. So much so that he

adorned with garlands of legends and tradition, (30) that Haggadah connected up his life with every significant national event, (31) or high virtue, (32) that of all heroes of Israel's childhood, he has penetrated the Jewish soul, feeling and imagination and until the present day is the favorite theme of Jewish lore. (33)

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collected the Yahwist code for that purpose, of which Elijah was the author. (pp. 37-38.)

(29) Kittel, "Hist. of Hebrews." p. 265.

(30) Cornill, "Open Court." IX, p. 4465.

(31) Haggadah connects up Elijah's person and activity with the trials of Israel in the wilderness, with the critical incident of Phineas, the patriotic vow of Jephta, the decisive leadership of Gideon, and many other instances which will be treated later. Vide Infra. p. 108

(32) Elijah represents piety, hospitality, learning, etc. Vide Infra. p. 77ff.

(33) Bar Ami, "Ost und West." IV, p. 475.

## CHAPTER II

### ELIJAH AS PORTRAYED IN TRADITION.

Traditional additions to Elijah's biography --  
The great Deliverer -- Elijah legends an ex-  
pression of folk-psychology -- Elijah compared  
to Moses -- A popular hero -- Elijah in litur-  
gy and ritual -- In Christian literature -- In  
Mohammedan literature -- In other literatures  
-- The problem.

The Elijah of the Bible makes up only a small part of the personality of Elijah as he comes down to us. There, only a component part of his activities is recorded - a significant part to be sure - but a small part indeed, lapsing only over a short stretch of time of Elijah's career, which began with creation<sup>(1)</sup> and will end with close of the history of the human race.<sup>(2)</sup> These gaps legend has<sup>2</sup> painfully and lavishly filled out. To these supplementary details and other facts about Elijah I shall devote this chapter.

If Elijah is a hero of great dimensions, then in justice to the sense of Jewish aristocracy Elijah must descend from an aristocratic stem. Hence tradition makes Elijah a descendant of Rachel or Leah, or to the still more aristocratic tradition, a priest of the tribe of Levi.<sup>(3)</sup> He has more than one name. In full he is *אֵלִיָּהוּ בֶן־אִישׁ־לֵוִי* - the significance is apocalyptic: when God, because of the sinfulness of men, will desire to destroy the world with a great storm *רַעַם*, then Elijah *אֵלִיָּהוּ* will recall to the Almighty *זָכַר* the merits of the Fathers and

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(3) The origin of Elijah is taken up later in detail. Vide *infra* p.

(1) Yalk. Reub. *אֵלִיָּהוּ* p. 9b; Ha-Pardes p. 162

(2) Yalk. Hodash 58a ed Redawil. Vide *infra*, "Messianic Times" Ch. I, Part II.



other righteous men of Israel, pleading to have mercy בְּיָרֵחַ  
upon his children.<sup>(4)</sup> The prophetic training Elijah re-  
ceived from Ahijah<sup>(5)</sup> of whom he was a faithful disciple.<sup>(6)</sup> In  
the time of Ahab he was called upon to cleanse Israel from Baal -  
worship. The miracles Elijah performed then are numerous and mar-  
velous. He brings drought upon the land, but he himself is sup-  
plied, first by God-sent ravens and later by the pious widow of  
Zarephath,<sup>(7)</sup> whose entire food supply is a handful of meal and  
a little oil, but which with Elijah's blessing is never spent.<sup>(8)</sup>  
When the widow's son suddenly dies, Elijah revives him.<sup>(9)</sup> For  
this child is not an ordinary child, he is no other than מָשִׁיחַ  
בֶּן יוֹסֵף<sup>(10)</sup> who since revived and hidden away alive by Elijah  
will live on until Messianic days, to appear again before מָשִׁיחַ  
בֶּן דָּוִד, to fight and die in the wars of Gog and Magog. <sup>(11)</sup> The  
temporary death was only the fulfillment of the decree of death  
upon Adam.<sup>(12)</sup>

On Mount Carmel the wonders are even greater. One of the  
twain bullocks<sup>(13)</sup> chosen to be sacrificed to Baal refuses to go  
up upon the altar and the efforts of many strong men are of no a-  
vail, and finally in human tongue complained of his fate to be of-  
fered to Baal while his brother to God. Only after Elijah explains

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(4) Tanchuma כִּי תִשָּׂא

(5) 1 Kings, XI, 29

(6) Yalkut on 1 Kings, XVII, 1; Midrash Sam. VIII.

(7) 1 Kings, XVII, 6.; Gunkel, "Elias etc." p. 10. vide infra

(8) Ibid vv. 9-16. (p.)

(9) Another tradition has it that the child revived by Elijah  
was Jonah. - Pirke R. El. XXXIII, also Yer. Succa beg. of  
ch. V.

(10) 1 Kings, XVII, 17-24.

(11) מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן יוֹסֵף is a creation of the traditions of the North  
as against the Southern מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד. Later the origin  
was forgotten and the two were combined, but since there  
can be only one King when the Messianic era will be ushered  
in, legend kills Messiah ben Joseph before Messiah ben  
David appears, - Friedman' דְּבִי אֱלִיָּהוּ intro. p. 20.

him that with the offering to Baal, Yahweh will vindicate his cause that the bullock agrees to be sacrificed to Baal.<sup>(14)</sup> In order to bring out the folly and futility of the prayers of the Baal priests, while they frantically cried to Baal the entire world was put into a state of silence, such as it was in when the universe was waste and void.<sup>(15)</sup> To give sufficient time for a fair trial Elijah made the sun stand still.<sup>(16)</sup> Finally when Elijah was to show the reality of Yahweh's fire, water came forth from the fingers of Elijah to soak the altar and fill the trench round about it,<sup>(17)</sup>

Again in Beer-Sheba he is nourished by an angel, and on Mt. Horeb God appears to him in a cave.<sup>(18)</sup> With his mantle Elijah hypnotizes Elisha to forsake his daily pursuits and join the ranks of the prophets.<sup>(19)</sup> With this same mantle he crosses the Jordan.<sup>(20)</sup> Finally when Elijah's work in the time of Ahab was finished he most miraculously goes up to heaven in a fiery chariot,<sup>(21)</sup> and in spite of the remonstrances of the Satan,<sup>(22)</sup> body and soul<sup>(23)</sup> he is brought into the glorious spheres of paradise.<sup>(24)</sup> In heaven his duties are numerous, he is defending Israel at all occasions, he is praising the pious, keeps records of all good deeds, leads the de-

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- (12) Elyahu R., ch. XVIII. pp. 97-98 ed. Friedman.
  - (13) Num. R. XXIII, and Pesikta R., sect. ששס זש
  - (14) Midrash Tanchuma ed. Buber, IV, p.165
  - (15) Ex. R. XXIX end.
  - (16) Haggadot Bereshit 76
  - (17) Tanna d. Elyahu R. XVII.
  - (18) I Kings, XIX, 1-18.
  - (19) Ibid vv. 19-21.
  - (20) II Kings, II, 8.
  - (21) Ibid verse 11.
  - (22) Midrash Ruth, 59, 74.
  - (23) About the middle of the 2nd century C.E., when the notion of heaven was abused by the Christians theologians, tradition began to insist that Elijah never entered heaven. - cf. Succa 5a; Ratner on Seder Olam R. XVIII.
  - (24) Moed Katan 28a.

serving souls to their seats in Paradise, brings out the purged souls from Gehenna, weaves garlands to God from the ascending prayers, ministers upon the Patriarchs, sacrifices the daily peace-offering, guards the relics of the Temple, and many other duties. (25)

But Elijah's ascension to Heaven does not sever him from the mundane world. For EliJah never died, (26) he was only 'translated', and now appears upon the earth in the form of an angel, but more commonly in human form, whenever needed. (27) Thus to Elijah's name the epithet *יְכָר עֲדִיק לְבָרָכָה עָלֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם*, a phrase especially coined for the living Elijah, which only after the end of the 3rd century C. E. became to be used to dead worthy teachers of the Law. (28)

Elijah's missions and activities, in his appearances after his 'translation', will be treated separately and in detail in Part II, suffice it to mention here, that they vary as human needs vary. He appears to enlighten and to instruct, to help the distressed, to protect the innocent and the pious, to alleviate poverty, to comfort and heal, to save and warn, to advise and guide, to admonish and to bless. He visits the home, watches every male child entering into the Jewish covenant, rejoices at weddings, and interferes in mesqualliances and whenever and wherever help is needed.

But Elijah's grandest appearance, after which he shall re-

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(25) The above is treated in detail in Part II.

(26) Baba Kama 60b.

(27) Yalkut Reub. ed. Amstredam p. 9b; *ספר חינוך* p. 162. - The idea of Elijah's reappearance is not generally accepted. Some traditions hold that after Elijah's "translation" he appeared again to Ahaziah on the second year of his reign since he was hidden and will reappear again to announce the coming of Messiah, then disappear again for all times at the wars of Gog and Mogog, - Seder Olam XVII.

(28) Kohen, "Monatschrift", XII, p249.

main on earth for the rest of time will be when Messiah is to come. It is Elijah who will announce his coming, make all necessary arrangements, (28) and finally end his great career by killing Samael, (29) at the behest of God and destroy all evil from the world. (30)

Thus the person of Elijah becomes bound up with every phase and age of Jewish life. The first great prophet, announcing the truth of Yahweh and justice, fighting for the solidarity of Israel and its religious purity, and carry it through its most critical periods, Elijah becomes the prophet and helper in all calamities that befall the Jew. In the oppression of Rome, in the persecution of Germany, in the pogroms of Russia and Roumania Elijah is always on hand to protect and help the Jew. (31) The first deliverer of Israel from the intrusion of foreign worship and dominion, Elijah becomes the great

מגן of Israel. (32) Not only will he protect Israel through its long and painful period of exile, but he will bring down the real deliverance, Elijah will herald in the Messianic age, usher in the long-awaited-for משיח after which Israel will live in peace and respite until eternity.

With this Elijah becomes the expression, expectation and hope, faith and optimism of the Jewish consciousness, (33) and the darker the outlook, the greater the need for a deliverer, the more intense the Messianic hope, the more numerous and lavishing are the legends of Elijah. (34)

(28) Vide infra p. 86-92. Part II, "Messianic Stories".

(29) Yalk. Hadash p. 58a ed. Radawil.

(30) Yalkut Hadash ed. Radawil 58a

(31) Bar Ami, "Ost u. West" vol. IV, p. 474

(32) Sanh. 99a - Already in Malachai's days Elijah is connected up with the deliverance of Israel. Malachai III, 23.

(33) Jew. Encycl. V. p. 122, col. 1.

(34) Thus in the times of Johanan ben Zachai, when Messiah was expected, Jewish lore was most productive in Elijah legends. - תיאור אליהו כבא משיח Intro. p. 21, Friedman.

But even more, the individual that will redeem Israel, must also represent its ideal. Hence all virtues and aspirations of the Jew are incorporated into the character of Elijah. The entire folk-psychology, its weal and woe, the emotions and sentiments of its soul are mirrored in the portrayal of Elijah. (35)

Israel's persistence and zealousness for the God of its ancestors is strongly expressed in the numerous legends telling of Elijah's hyperzealousness for Yahweh, (36) and in his unbending rigidity for the faithless. *היה קשה לו* is the way the Talmud describes him under such circumstances. (37) Jewish solidarity is implied in Elijah's strong national sense, in his appearance at every national crisis, (38) in his boycotting an unfriendly non-Jew, and in his rebuking those who gave up co-religionists to the Roman government. (39) Morality and uprightness is very prominent in the Talmudic Elijah legends of the second and third centuries C.E., (40) reverence and self-abnegation in the early mystic and Hassidic stories. (41) All Talmudic stories are chucked full with the love for the Torah. (42) Sympathy and deference for poverty is common in all ancient cultures, but the dealings with the poor in Elijah stories bring out the real Jewish love and benevolence for the unfortunate. (43) There is hardly a legend of Elijah that does not deal with hospitality and friendliness. (44) The motif of faith and hope, cheerfulness and optimism so prominent in the Elijah stories of all generations is certainly expressive of the Jewish mind and thought. (45)

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The same can be observed in other periods when the Messianic expectations are intense.

- (35) Bar Ami, "ost u. West", p. 476.
- (36) Vide infra p. 121
- (37) Sanh. 113a
- (38) Vide supra p17, note 31

so important and significant is the character of Elijah in Jewish lore that he is compared to no less an individual of Jewish history and tradition than Moses- the founder of the Jewish people. Already Malachi speaks in one breath of the Torah representing Moses and the prophet Elijah. But most elaborate comparison is the Haggadah. (46) Both are called *אֵלִיָּהוּ וְאַתְנָחֵדָי*. (47) Both went up to heaven. Moses killed the sinful Egyptian, Elijah caused the death of the disobedient Hiel. (48) Moses was nourished by a woman - the daughter of Jethro, Elijah by the widow of Zarephath. Moses fled from Pharaoh, Elijah from Ahab. Moses fled to a well in Midian, Elijah to a well in Beer-Sheba. (49) Moses was enveloped in a cloud so was Elijah. Moses changed the natural law with prayer in the incident of Korach, Elijah through prayer brought drought for three years. Moses gathered Israel on Mt. Sinai, Elijah on Mt. Carmel. Moses killed those who served the Golden Calf, Elijah killed the Baal prophets. (50) Moses met an angel of God in the Sinaitic desert, Elijah was met by an angel in the desert of Damascus. (51) Moses went for forty days and nights without food, so did Elijah. (52)

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- (39) Vide infra p. 120-1, incident of Ula.  
 (40) Vide infra "Elijah Severe with his Friends". pp. 120-1  
 (41) Yalk. Shim., Ruth, sect. 601 + 607 (also pp. 102-4  
 (42) The many stories of Elijah's revelations to the Rabbis,  
 (43) B. Bathra 7b. {and his visits to the  
 (44) R. Nissim, "Hibbur Yaffeh" {academies are caes in poi  
 (45) Ta'anith 22a  
 (46) Malachi III, 22-23- Undoubtedly the close relation of the two in tradition is an expression of the compromise between sacerdotalism and spirituality of the Jewish religion as affected by the later prophets. -Goldziher, "Myth. among Heb." pp. 271-2  
 (47) Pesikta Rabosi, ch. IV, sect. *וְהָיָה כִּי יִרְאֶה*  
 (48) I. Kings, XII, 24  
 (49) Ibid, XVI, 34  
 (50) Ex. II, 15; I. Kings, XIX, 3.  
 (51) I Kings, XIX, 5 ff., cf. verse 15  
 (52) Ibid, verse 8

Moses stopped the sun, so did Elijah. (53) Moses embued the Jewish people with faithfulness to God when they said: **נאשה ונשמע**, Elijah made them say: **י' הוא האלהים**. (54) Moses constructed the Mishkan to offer sacrifices, Elijah erected an altar on Mt. Carmel when he sacrificed to God. Moses brought down fire from heaven upon the Mishkan, so did Elijah on the sacrifice of Mt. Carmel. Moses made an altar of twelve stones, so did Elijah. Moses crossed the Red-Sea with his staff, a miracle <sup>also performed</sup> by his disciple Joshua over the Jordan, Elijah crossed the Jordan with his mantle, which was also performed by his disciple Elisha. (55) Moses saw God face to face in a cave, (56) so did Elijah. (57) Moses delivered Israel from Egypt, Elijah will deliver them from the last exile. (58)

The extent to which Elijah has entrenched himself in the consciousness of the Jewish people can easily be judged from the great legendary literature that the fantasy of the Jewish mind has weaved about his person and still continues to create new missions for him, paint him in new colors and adorn him with new miracles. (59) But his popularity can be noticed in more than one way. The terminology, the simple desires and rewards, (60) Expressed in the greater number of legends is indicative that the legends reached the masses

(53) Agadot Bereshit 76

(54) I Kings, XVIII verse 39

(55) II Kings, II, 8, 12 ff.

(56) Ex. XXXIII, 21-22; I Kings, XIX, 8-9.

(57) I Kings, XIX, 8-9.

(58) Sanh. 99a; Tanna d. Eliyahu Zuta, VIII. - In Mohammedan legends also, Moses is often compared and paralleled with Elijah. - D'Herbelot, "Biblioth. Orient.", art. "Khidr" and "Moussa"; Koran, Sura 18; Zunz, "Gottesd.", vol. I p. 130, note d.

(59) Bar Ami, "Ost u. West vol. IV p. 476.

(60) Many of the stories deal with bringing money to the needy, the pious are rewarded with money and prosperity, the poor are given lucky coins which bring wealth, Elijah builds walls and houses, brings food at weddings, etc. - simple material expressions of the masses.

and became part of them, who transmitted them to posterity in their own language, judged them by their standards and adopted them to their needs. Another proof of the popularity of the Elijah legends, coming from an opposite angle, is the presence of Elijah in the liturgy and ritual. (61) Thus Elijah is mentioned in the prayers of

| 67 | 122 or, (62) in the benedictions of the Haftarah, (63) in grace after meals, (64) in the Benedictions for the בריית מילה, (65) in the Sabbath night hymns, (66) and in the Seder ritual. (67)

The popularity of the Elijah legends were not confined to the Jewish tradition, it migrated to the lore of other peoples, among whom they hold a prominent place, even long after all the relations of those peoples with the Jews were severed. (68) Especially prominent is Elijah in Christian tradition. In the New Testament he is known as the precursor of Messiah, presented in the person of Jesus. (69) But while Christian legend gets its suggestions from the Haggadah it is different and often contradictory to the original, and at times gives details altogether not known to Jewish legend. (70) The Catholic church has sainted Elijah, and on the day of his anniversary, which is also supposed to be the day of Elijah's "translation" he performs miracles even to the present day. (71) The

(61) Involved mostly in connection with the Messianic hope. - Kohen. "Monatschrift" XII, p. 291.

(62)

(63) שמחנו ה' אלהינו באליהו הנביא עבדך, ובמלכות בית

משיחך, רבו הרהור, הוא יסלח לנו את אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב

(64) ויבשר לנו בשורות טובות ישועות ונחמות

(65) When child is placed on the Elijah chair, (vide infra p. ) it is said: לישועתך זכור לטוב, לישועתך אליהו קלצך

קייט ה', שברתי לישועתך ה' והצותיך עשיתי אליהו קלצך

אליהו הנביא הנה שלך לפניך

Elijah is also invoked in a prayer for sick children: בחר הכרח: פוריק

אל נא רפא נא תחלואי גפן פוריק

(66) Hymns אליהו הנביא; במצאית ים מנוחה and others included in the Sabbath night Zmitoth.

(67) There is the Elijah Cup, which is filled when the third



Carmelite monks long cherished the belief that their order could be traced back in unbroken succession to Elijah, whom they hailed as their founder.<sup>(72)</sup> But while the Christian Elijah prophesies, performs miracles and is eternal, different from the Elijah of Jewish legend he is cold and devoid of any feeling, entirely lacking romance and usefulness.<sup>(73)</sup>

Altogether different is the Elijah of Mahomedan literature, where he is portrayed full of fantasy and magnetism. Following closely in the outline of Haggadic description he becomes more mysterious, and assumes nature elements as he is entwined in the character of Khidr - a nature myth of the god of ever-green - from which devolves the composite character and name Khidr-Illis.<sup>(74)</sup> This name is to the present day attached to the sacred Grove of Euphrates, where all life is sacred.<sup>(75)</sup>

The Moslem Druses of to-day at El-Muhroke, <sup>assembly</sup> (the spot on Mt. Carmel where Elijah offered up the sacrifice to Yahweh) to hold a festival and offer sacrifices in honor of Elijah. No Druse would dare break an oath made in the name of Elijah.<sup>(76)</sup> Elijah is also known in Magyar <sup>(77)</sup> and in slavie lore.<sup>(78)</sup>

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cup, <sup>הכוס</sup> is refilled, symbolic of the belief of the coming of Messiah which will be announced by Elijah. - <sup>העיר</sup> p. 18. At <sup>העיר</sup> the door is usually opened, and it is explained by tradition, for the purpose of receiving Elijah who is always wandering about paying visits to the pious and observant. It is doubtful whether this is the real reason for opening the door at <sup>העיר</sup>. Most likely was originated in precautions taken against a riot or pogrom which used to break out so often on Passover, as a result of the blood-accusations. - The latter the opinion of Dr. Deutsch.

(68) Kohen, "Monatschrift" XII, p. 242.

(69) Matt. XI, 14; XVII, 11; Mark, IX, 4ff. Gospel of Barnabas 124a.

(70) Algidius Camorathus in "De Gentis Eliae" ch. III, sect. 5 gives detail geneology and description of Elijah's face.

(71) Both the Greek and the Roman Catholic churches honor Saint Elijah on the twentieth of July - Cathol. Encycl. V, 382.

Thus Elijah has entrenched himself in the mind and imagination of the Jew, and extended his influence into other peoples as no other hero of Jewish history and legend did. His description was always filled with usefulness, romance and fascination, and as the legend of Elijah passed on from generation to generation it assumed greater magnitude and importance, it absorbed the struggles and emotions of the Jew, and his life linked up with theirs even to the present day. Indeed Elijah is still alive, performing miracles and helping the faithful ones in centers where the Jew still clings to his old beliefs and customs.

In view of all these, one naturally asks, who was the the original Elijah? Is Elijah an historical character, who for some particular reason was chosen by the Jewish imagination as hero of its greatest number of legends, or is Elijah altogether the product of imagination and folk-lore? If he is an historical personality, then what was it that made him assume the magnitude Elijah is enjoying? Was it a great deed that he performed, or did he step in at a great national crisis, the reminiscences of which became dear to his people and gradually were magnified into an epic? Or was he a popular hero, living and struggling for the masses, who as a protest to their rulers have developed fanciful legends about their friend and defender? If Elijah is a fictitious character, then what was it that gave impetus to his creation?

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- (72) Cathol. Encycl. V. p. 382.
  - (73) Kohen, "Monatschrift" XII, p. 293.
  - (74) Goldziher, "Mohamedanische Studien" II, p. 273.
  - (75) Peters, "Heb. Story", pp. 83-84
  - (76) Cathol. Encycl. V. p. 382, col. 2. also Koran, Sura 21, D'Herbelot, "Biblioth. Orient." arts. "Mahomed Aboul Casseni" and "Zerib ben Elia".
  - (77) Cathol. Encyclop. art. "Elia"
  - (78) vide Supra p. 6

Again how should be considered those facts that indicate Elijah's existence?

In the following chapters I shall endeavor to answer some of these questions. First I shall examine the historical documents, then compare them with the fictitious and purely legendary, after an analysis of the two I shall deduce conclusion as to the historicity of Elijah and cause for his popularity.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE BIBLICAL LEGENDS OF ELIJAH

Significance of the Biblical stories in the study of Elijah -- Treatment of stories -- Hiel and Elijah -- Meeting with Ahab -- The drought -- The widow of Zarephath -- Elijah fed by ravens -- Meeting Obadiah -- On Mount Carmel -- The conflict between the Baalists and Yahwists -- The Angel in the wilderness -- The Theophany -- Anointing Elisha -- The murder of Naboth -- The death of Ahaziah -- The "translation" -- The motif of the prophetic compiler -- Sources -- The historical -- Differences between Elijah and Elisha -- Elijah in Malachi.

The Biblical legends of Elijah are different from the other legends built up about his person. Not only are they nearest to the historical or original Elijah, but they actually seem to contain historical facts. In this respect they are unique in the large collection of the Elijah stories, and an analysis of these are inevitable in the study of Elijah's historicity. Not unlike other narratives of the Bible, the Elijah narrative is made up of original facts and legends, and secondary which were added by the compiler in order to bring out certain ideas and motifs. By reducing the composite narrative into its component parts we may ascertain the historical character of Elijah, or if he was not an historical character, what he was like in the original source-legend. Furthermore, a comparison of the various strata of the Elijah narrative will indicate the direction into which the Elijah lore is developing. For diverse and contradictory as the later legends may be to those contained in the Bible, it is very obvious, even upon a superficial examination, that all Elijah legends have their basis in the Biblical legends, or the legends known to the compiler of the Bibli-

cal narrative. (1) These facts viewed in the light of the development of Jewish history and imagination may give us a clue in ascertaining why Elijah was chosen hero of such a great collection of Jewish folk-lore .

In this Chapter I am giving only a brief analysis of the Biblical legends. The conclusions will be brought out separately in later chapters, after several other necessary examinations are made. I have followed the order of the legend as given in the Books of Kings, making summary remarks about each legend. In conclusion I have attempted to give a picture of what seems to be the original history or saga of Elijah.

Elijah's first appearance in the Bible is in I Kings, XVII, 1 ff., where Elijah suddenly confronts Ahab announcing the three years drought that is to come upon the land. Legend introduces Elijah in connection with Hiel, described in the last verse of Chapter XVI, immediately preceding Elijah's interview with Ahab. (2) Hiel the Bethelite has rebuilt Jericho, which was destroyed and put under ban by Joshua, never to be rebuilt again. (3) As a result Joshua's curse came upon Hiel and he lost his two children. Elijah the Prophet was sent by God to pay Hiel a visit of condolence, which Elijah accepted reluctantly, only after he was promised that whatever he may utter in righteous indignation will come true. Here Elijah met Ahab, who tried to justify his Baal-worship, and Elijah in indignation pronounced the three years famine upon the land. While the proximity of the two verses can not be stressed too much, yet there is a certain relation between the two. The very popular legendary account of Elijah's visit to Hiel, not only gives an additional activity to Elijah but answers to the peculiarity of Elijah's sudden appearance before Ahab. It was in the house of Hiel, altogether accidental,

that Elijah meets King Ahab for the first time. The legend can not be taken as a fact, yet it is historically significant, for it does indicate the popularity of Elijah, so much so that the author does not feel any need for introducing him. Everybody knows Prophet Elijah, just as much as everybody is acquainted with the doings of Hiel of whom the author makes only a passing remark.

For a Prophet to confront a King is a common occurrence in Biblical narrative. Samuel admonishes Saul, rebukes him and finally announces his downfall. Nathan rebukes David for his actions with Uriah. Isaiah appears before Ahaz, John the Baptist before Herod. The oriental ruler, while ~~the~~ despotic to his subjects, permitted complete freedom of speech and action to the prophets of his choice and often those opposing him. In this Elijah is enjoying a natural and common privilege, which is soon denied him and he is forced to hide for safety.

The great drought which is the starting point of the entire tradition about Elijah, though presented rather in a legendary way seems to be historically true. <sup>(4)</sup> Mennander of Ephesus tells of a drought about that time lasting one year, and which was ended by cause of a religious procession of the Phoenicians. <sup>(5)</sup> The similarity is obvious. The fact that such a vital power like withholding of rain is ascribed to Elijah, is an indication of Elijah's importance. <sup>(6)</sup>

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(1) For an example vide infra, p. 34-35

(2) The legend of Hiel in its most complete form is given in Sanh., Yer. X; same legend given in Bab. Sahn. 113a, and in Elijah Zuta, Ch. VIII, p. 185, ed. Friedmann.

(3) Joshua VI, 17, 26.

(4) Kittel, "Hist. of the Heb." p. 269.

(5) Josephus, "Antiquities." VIII, 13, Sec. 2.

(6) Gunkel, "Elias, etc." p. 9.

Having informed Ahab of the drought Elijah goes East by the brook of Cherith, There he is fed by ravens. Birds or animals nourishing human beings is an occurrence common in legends of many different peoples. (7) Semiramus while an infant in the wilderness was supplied with cheese and milk by doves. (8) Telephos and the son of Genofeva are nursed by a hind. (9) Paul the Hermit is provided with bread by ravens for sixty years. (10) Anecdotes of a similar motif, though the animal element left out, is Israel nourished in the wilderness with manna and quail, or in the case of Elijah by an angel when he is on Mount Horeb. (11) But while legend knows of different animals supplying food to men, ravens are particularly related to Prophets. Many auguries are derived from the raven. (12) Some oriental peoples eat the heart of this bird in order to become prophetic like it. (13) This incident clearly indicates that popular anecdotes were combined with the story of Elijah.

When the Brook of Cherith dried up, Elijah went up to Zarephath of Sidon. There a pious widow, who faithfully obeys Yahweh's commands is to nourish him. To convince himself of her worthiness to receive miracles, Elijah first asks her for a drink of water. (14) Not the first woman in legend to be tried of her worthiness in a similar manner. Moses meets the worthy daughters

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- (7) Greek parallels of animals nourishing human beings is found in "Gräichischen Märchen von Dankbaren Tieren," by A. Marx, p. 35, - nourished by a delphin, p. 41, - by an eagle, p. 57, p. 60 - by a lioness.
  - (8) Diodorus Siculus, "Bibliotheca Historica." II, p. 4.
  - (9) Grimm, "Deutsche Sagen." No. 538; Keller, "Thiere des Classischen Altertums." p. 100 ff., gives many other instances of Greek and Medieval legends of the Prince lost in the woods and nursed by animals.
  - (10) Hieronymus, "Vita Pauli Eremitae." Chapter X.
  - (11) I Kings, XIX, 5ff.
  - (12) Noah sends out a raven to see whether the flood has ceased.

of Jehthro at the well of Midian. (15) Eliezer finds Rebekah worthy of Isaac by the way she offers him a drink of water. (16) The widow of Zarephath is poor. In these trying years of the great famine all that she possesses of food is a handful of meal and a little oil in a cruse; enough for one more scanty meal for herself and son, and then they will die. Not so the intentions of Elijah. "Saith the God of Israel: the jar of meal shall not be spent, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the land",

This legend in practically the same manner is applied to Elisha. (17) The same motif is present in the legend of the cruse of oil found by the Maccabaeans at the rededication of the Temple. Also common to German legends of Mountaineers whose lamp-oil and bread never gives out. (18)

Elijah stayed with the widow for many days, when suddenly her son died and Elijah is called upon to resurrect him, which he does. In the same identical fashion legend tells of Elisha resurrecting the son of the Shunnemite woman. (19) The same is told of Jesus reviving the son of a widow. (20) Hence these are popular stories which were attached to Elijah in the same manner as they were attached to other individuals. (21) Viewed, however, in the light of

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(13) Frazer, "Folk-lore of the O.T." pp. 22-29.

(14) I. Kings, xvii, 10c.

(15) Ex. II, 15-22.

(16) Gen. XXIV, 11 ff.

(17) II Kings, IV, 1-7, 8

(18) Grimm, "Deutsche Sagen", No. 1

(19) II Kings, IV, 8ff.

(20) Luke VII, 11-15.

(21) It is interesting to note the contradiction within this very legend. While throughout the legend Elijah is portrayed as zealously obedient to Yahweh, in his prayer to revive the widow's child he is almost rebellious against God for taking away the life of the son of the faithful widow.



later legends weaved about the person of Elijah, these particular legends are significant for their motif. There are three striking notes expressed in the legend of the widow. In the first place God rewards through Elijah all those who are faithful to Him. Secondly God manifests Himself through the humblest, and thirdly Elijah's incognito visits to reward hospitality of the poor.<sup>(22)</sup> Many of the Rabbinic and the Medieval legends of Elijah express these ideas. This may lead us to two conclusions, either that the Biblical compiler has drawn his material of Elijah the Yahweh champion from popular legends of Elijah, similar to those known to us from a much later date, or else in his portrayal of Elijah he gave impetus to the development of such a motif in later Elijah legends.

In Elijah's meeting with Obadiah we for the first time get a picture of the habits and ways of Elijah, which harmonize with his mission as Champion of Yahweh. He is a faithful Yahweh prophet leading a life of privation and wandering hiding himself in the mountains of Gilead or the border lands of the desert, whence he gets his unbending free spirit. <sup>He</sup> Appears and disappears in the most miraculous ways, but known to all - one look at him and the faithful Obadiah recognizes him, just as a short description of him to king Ahaziah, in a later incident, and he knows him at once.<sup>(23)</sup>

The meeting of Elijah and Ahab is characteristic of Elijah description. Elijah orders Ahab to assemble the Baal-prophets and Ahab obeys. The interview is highly legendary, ostensibly not history.

But while the account leading up to Elijah on Mt. Carmel

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(22) Gunkel, "Elias etc." pp. 10 and 69 note 12.

(23) II Kings, I, 7-8

is to a large extent adopted from common legend, the incident on Mount Carmel is characteristically Elijahanic. There he is pictured as a personality of fearful and dramatic perseverance.

The scene is portrayed most powerfully and impressive. Surrounded by multitudes of people, confronting the king and the Baal prophets, Elijah clearly and unequivocally pronounces his rebuke: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him!"<sup>(24)</sup> -- There he stands no longer as the miracle worker, or humble bewailer of the sinfulness of his people, but as the passionate painful prophetic zealot. -- The people are overawed. Elijah then proposes the ordeal. Israel cannot be misled any longer by her rulers. Once for all it must be settled right there. Here again the contrast is most dramatic. On the one hand is Elijah singlehanded with his faith, opposite him four hundred and fifty prophets with the King in back of them. The Baal prophets get the first chance to sacrifice, Elijah the last; the Baal prophets have a well prepared altar and sacrifice, that of Elijah old and broken and soaked in water.

All preparations made, the Baal prophets proceed. The first half of the day they pray to Baal to send down fire and consume the sacrifice, but of no avail. The morning has passed, it is already afternoon and Baal has not replied. The prophets become confused and frantic. They call louder and louder, cut their flesh until they fall into a frenzy, yet there is no answer.

Here Elijah calls out in a victorious scorn: "Cry aloud for he is a God; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." <sup>(25)</sup>

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(24) I Kings, XVIII 21

(25) Ibid 27b.

Then he rebuilds the forsaken Yahweh altar, digs a trench round about it and soaking the sacrifice he also fills the trench with water. He offers a short and quiet prayer and a fire comes down from heaven devouring sacrifice, stones and all.

The perfect form of the account, the dramatic contrasts and moments all indicate that the author was interested in the story and its effect much more than in its accuracy. Furthermore some of the incidents are common to other legends. Fire coming down from heaven is a common occurrence in Biblical lore. Fire comes down from heaven to destroy Sodom and Gamorah.<sup>(26)</sup> The burnt-offering on the altar of the Mishkan is consumed by a fire from God.<sup>(27)</sup> The angel of God visiting Gideon, brings fire from the rock to consume the food offered to him,<sup>(28)</sup> and many other instances.<sup>(29)</sup> Again the water in the trench around Elijah's sacrifice is clearly an inaccuracy. This incident occurs at the end of a great three years drought and takes place on the summit of Mt. Carmel where there is no water even in normal times.<sup>(30)</sup> The slaying of the four hundred and fifty Baal prophets can hardly be taken as fact, but rather as the writers extravegenza.<sup>(31)</sup> With the same extravegance the writer describes the revenge of Jehu.<sup>(32)</sup> It is evident that the author is removed from the scene of action and that his effort is to introduce the contra-natural miracle.<sup>(33)</sup> But beyond the li-

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(26) Gen. XIX, 24.

(27) Lev. IX, 24.

(28) Jud. VI, 21.

(29) Ex. XIX, 18; Jud. XIII, 20; Job. I, 16; I Chron. XXI, 26; II Chron. VII, 1.

(30) In this the author is coherent with his previous miraculous descriptions of Elijah.

(31) Peters, "Hist. of Rel." p. 206 note 11.

(32) II Kings, X, 11.

(33) Gunkel, "Elias etc." p. 18.

terary accretions there stands out boldly a living grand personality of a zealous, heroic and passionate champion of Yahweh.

The descriptions that follow the Carmel incident give an insight into conditions of that time. Jezebel is pushing Baal worship to the fore, which arouses the jealousy of the faithful Yahwists. To prevent civil war Ahab begins to persecute the Yahwists, especially those at the head of the growing discontent. Elijah is one of the most dangerous rebels and instigators, hence his life is diligently sought by Izebel.<sup>(34)</sup> He hides, first in Beer-Sheba an old faithful colony of Judah and later in the wilderness. But life becomes miserable and difficult and he wishes to die. Tired and worried he sits down to rest under a broom-tree and he falls asleep. -- a description psychologically true, and in harmony with nature.

Here the legendary is brought in again. An angel brings food to Elijah and prepares him for a journey of forty days and nights on Mt. Horeb.<sup>(35)</sup> Even here one can observe the mixture of the natural and the supernatural. In order to go on a journey one must eat. Hence Elijah is provided with food. Of course, comes through an angel, a motif the same as in the ravens.<sup>(36)</sup> But he is so tired and weary of his wandering that at first he does not even understand the angel's command. Only after the latter repeats his mission that Elijah realizes what it is all about.<sup>(37)</sup> It is interesting to note that the scene of the angel takes place in the same locality where Hagar and Ishmael were saved from starvation by an angel.<sup>(38)</sup>

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(34) The Greek text states Izebel's challenge to Elijah even more emphatically than the Hebrew text, I Kings XIX, 2b reads: "If you are Elijah, then I am Izebel", again verse 3, the Greek reads: "he was afraid".<sup>r</sup>

(35) Moses was prepared for a forty days journey in a similar manner. Ex. XXXIV, 28.

(36) Vide supra p. 33.

(37) Gunkel, "Elias etc." pp. 22- 23

Undoubtedly this was an old legend connected with that place. (39)

On Mt. Horeb God reveals himself to Elijah while he is hidden in a cave. The Theophany is similar to the Theophany of Moses in the Covenant narrative. (40) But while this is not peculiar to Elijah and hardly historical it shows the type of prophet Elijah belongs to. He is the transitional type - passing from the old diviner to the literary prophet. He sees God without being possessed, he hears Him in a "Still small voice". In the command to anoint Hazael King of Aram, make Elisha prophet and get Jehu into the conspiracy the historical Elijah is brought out. Ahab has gone too far in his opposition to the Yahwists. Conciliation is impossible, hence the only resort left is the overthrow of the present government, a task which Elijah sets out to accomplish.

The Horeb account is different in tenor and motif from the Carmel account. They both have in common the persecution of the Yahweh prophets, the destruction of Yahweh altars, and the ultimate victory of Yahweh. Hence they are variants harmonized and unified by the author so as to appear one continuous account.

From Mt. Horeb Elijah sets out to organize the rebellion. His first task is to anoint his successor Elisha. Here he uses his magic mantle with which he hypnotizes Elisha. It is the same magic mantle with which he later crosses the Jordan, (41) and which is used by Elisha in the same manner. (42) While the appoint

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(38) Gen. XVI, 6 ff.

(39) Gunkel, "Elias etc." p. 22.

(40) Ex. XXXIII, 22 - later legends make even both caves to be the same. - Pesachim 44 a : Rashi Ibid.

(41) II Kings, II, 8.

(42) Ibid verse 14.

ing of his successor can be taken as history the magic matle is common to Hebrew and Arabic legend of antiquity.<sup>(43)</sup> One person enchanting another who must follow him, like in the case of Elijah and Elisha is common to all oriental and European legend.<sup>(44)</sup>

In the story of Naboth,<sup>(45)</sup> Another phase of Elijah's life is told. The striking motif of the incident is not so much the injustice of it as is the conflict of Ahab and the old patri-  
cians; "Yahweh forbid, that I sell you the inheritance of my  
forfathers." <sup>(46)</sup> Naboth is an embodiment of the old faithfull  
patricians clinging zealously to the ways of their ancestors.

Through intercourse with other nations, through the growth of the court, Israel became accustomed to pay taxes and levy, but that the King should take away patrician land given to the ancestors by God himself, that was going too far. Elijah the champion of the old comes forth to stop this worst form of tyren-  
ny. In this Elijah enters upon a new field of activity, followed on a larger scale by the prophets succeeding him, who are the champions of all the oppressed and mistreated, of the robbed and the poor.

The story of Naboth is not unique, in practically the same form it is told of the prophet Nathan in his denunciations of David's murder of Uriah.<sup>(47)</sup> Undoubtedly was chosen by the com-  
piler for the same purpose as the previous stories, viz: to vindicate Yahweh. But incidentally the narrator brought some signifi-  
cant information about Elijah. The prophet is a free-born anti-

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(43) Gunkel, "Elias etc." pp. 26 - a Chassidic song current to-day goes:   
זכר רבי שפריט זיא פאציילכעל איים  
שחית דעם ים אריבער  
Vide infra p.

(44) R. Köhler, "Kleinere Schriften" Vol. I p. 134, 348, III 623 ff., also Grimm, "Merchen" nos. 64, 82.

monarchical idealist.

The story of Ahaziah is another legend to prove the jealousy of Yahweh and incidentally proves the continuance of the conflicts between the Yahwists and the court which favored the Baal cult. The fire burning the messengers has the miraculous elements of the Carmel incident.<sup>(48)</sup> This legend also shows Elijah's popularity and his healing power - an endowment of the prophets of his day.

After a life of heroic struggle and manly fighting for Yahweh the compiler ends Elijah's career with what in his opinion is appropriate for the faithful prophet. On a fiery charriot he is taken up to God to become a heavenly being.<sup>(49)</sup> The "Translation" legend is told in a similar manner of Enoch and Jesus. Undoubtedly a myth connected up with some solar deity,<sup>(50)</sup> and not the original ending of Elijah's career.<sup>(51)</sup> II Chronicles, XXI, 12 ff. tells of Elijah's activity much after this event, when Elijah sends a letter to Jeoram.<sup>(52)</sup>

Thus did the compiler of the books of Kings portray Elijah. Whatever the historical Elijah may have been it is obvious that the description of the author is a composite one made up of many popular and independent legends which he harmonized and modified to make up a complete biography of the prominent prophet. His attempt to attach the miraculous and the wonderful to the original saga of Elijah, may be due either to the author's conception of the extraordinary in Elijah,<sup>(53)</sup> or to his attempt to attribute everything he could to this great personality of such importance to his prophetic ideal. Such a

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(45) I Kings, XXI.

(46) Ibid verse 3.

(47) II Sam, XII - Peters, "Hist. of Rel." p. 173.

(48) Benzinger, "Bücher des Könige" p. 127, claims the incident of the 50 messengers to be extraneous and added.

(49) II Kings, VI, 17.

(50) II Kings, XXIII, 11 - the horses and charriot given to the worship of the sun. Jud. V, 20 - the stars personified as fiery charriots.

motif is evident in all prophetic writings. Those who did most for Yahweh-worship are most exalted. To Samuel, the next after Moses to champion for Yahweh is attributed the beginning of prophecy, as he is even likened to Moses. (54) Elijah in whom Israel saw the greatest champion of Yahweh, who began the battle<sup>vs</sup> Izebel and her influence, who stopped the pernicious influences of Athaliah, who inspired the uprisings of Jehu, who exterminated the Baal worshippers, certainly needs be exalted in the prophetic literature. (55) Using all legends and myths at his disposal the prophetic compiler sets out to make Elijah the most wonderful and popular. (56)

"The material relating to Elijah is taken bodily from old Ephraimite writings and has a highly picturesque and epic quality; and also has the character of myth with traces of historical legend, and is nearly as ancient as that relating to patriarchs and the antedeluvian world." (57)

Yet stripped of the marvels and miracles there stands out a picture of a titanic personality, of a defiant imperious and confident prophet of Yahweh. The vizier trembles before him, the King obeys him, he silences the people and disdains the Baal prophets,

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(51) Several Haggadic legends assert that Elijah was not 'translated'. - Succa 5 a; Ratner on Seder Olam R. ch.17 - this however may not be due to the fact that another ending of Elijah's career was known to them, but because they needed Elijah on earth, or because the abuse of 'translation' by Christian scholars in the 2nd century. - J.E. V. p.123, col.1

(52) This event is usually taken by tradition as happened after Elijah's death. But in the reality seems to be more historical than Elijah's 'translation'.

(53) Gunkel, "Elias etc.", p. 18

(54) Jer. XV, 1: Psalm XCIX, 6

(55) Friedman, "The Bible and the World" Intro. pp. 12-13.

(56) Goldzher, "Myths among the Hebrews" p306

(57) Fiske, "The Great Epic of Israel" p.128.



he is the terror of Izebel, the hope of Israel. The masterful and vivid pen of the chronicler was lavishing and exaggerating in his presentation of Elijah, but behind it all there seems to be a personality that by his deeds and timeliness must have impressed himself upon the mind of the people as the great preserver of Yahwism, as the first great prophet on a grand scale, as the servant of God who saved Yahweh and his people from spiritual retrogression.

It is interesting to note here the differences between the Elijah and the Elisha stories. Those of Elijah are wonderful rather than miraculous and distinctly spiritual, those of Elisha are miraculous, grotesque and often almost vulgar, completely wanting sanctification and grandeur. The reason seems to be obvious, Elijah was a man of pure heart and clean hands who fought only with spiritual weapons, and tradition speaks of him accordingly. (58)

In the time of Malachi, Israel is suffering from its self-seeking rulers and priests, and their hope is turned to a day when once more they will be governed by the right rulers and priests: a day when the true servant of God will appear and deliver Israel from pain and shame: a day of reckoning when the wicked will be punished and the righteous recompensed. "Before the coming of the great and the terrible day," Malachi assured his people, "I will send you Elijah the prophet," (59) the great deliverer, the true servant of Israel.

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(58) Cornill, "Open Court" IX, p. 4464.

(59) Malachi, III, 23.

## CHAPTER V

### WHO WAS ELIJAH?

The problem -- Transformation of myths --  
 Elijah a solar myth -- Elijah among gods  
 -- Identified with Sandalfon and other  
 immortal characters -- The crossing of the  
 Jordan -- His wanderings -- Elijah a leg-  
 endary character -- Creation of the pro-  
 phetic writer -- Elijah in Malachi --  
 Name fictitious -- Elijah a principle --  
 Does not initiate laws -- Elijah an his-  
 torical character -- His popularity and  
 impression upon the people -- A Gileadite  
 -- The Rain of Ahab -- The Historic Elijah  
 -- Myth and History combined -- The next  
 problem.

It is obvious from the analysis in the previous chapter, that the accounts of Elijah in the Bible are not purely historical documents, giving an impartial and accurate description of the prophet. But on the contrary contain material common in the description of other heroes of antiquity, that stock legends common to other peoples have been used freely, that there are variants and contradictions within the account of Elijah. In other words, the narrative of Elijah in the books of Kings is not the work of a chronicler, but the product of a literateur. Who then, was Elijah? Did such an individual exist at all? Was he an historical character, mythical or purely legendary? Do the accounts in Kings contain any history, or are they pure fiction, the speculation of the biblical writer? Was Elijah a real historical character to whom legends and myths were ascribed, or was he a myth and later tradition transformed him into an individual? Did Elijah the favorite Mahwist of the prophetic compiler and the greatest hero of Jewish lore ever exist, or was it a mere idea that captivated the fancy of the imagination of the Jew? To answer some of

these questions is the task of this chapter.

Was Elijah a myth? Some modern scholars seem to think he was, (1) and indeed, much of the <sup>Elijah material</sup> corroborates that assumption. Of course our sources of Elijah, both the Biblical and Haggadic, even the earliest of them, come from a period when the material and objectionable features so prominent to mythological characters were no longer acceptable to the Jew. The records at our disposal hail from a time advanced enough culturally, when the philosophy and religious conscience of the Jew not only reinterpreted, diluted, and changed its myths, but by popular process was transforming them to individuals, who very often had no connection with the myths, but who lent themselves to such adaptations. (2) Hence to determine whether Elijah was originally a myth is not an easy task, for the stories of Elijah were the religious expressions of the Jew, and as such were stripped of all crude and objectionable features. Were Elijah originally a myth, or the Elijah stories originally stories of mythological characters which were later ascribed to Elijah, they are so diluted and transformed in their present state that the original form can hardly be ascertained. Yet here and there a feature or a short description is retained which indicate certain relations to myths. These I shall examine in detail.

The striking feature in Elijah's career is his power to withhold rain. (3) It is by means of the drought that Ahab submits to him, assembles the people on Mt. Carmel, and Yahweh is vindicated. It is on account of the drought that Elijah performs miracles, because he withheld the rain, he succeeded in killing the four-hundred and fifty Baal prophets. Rain is of vital importance in Palestine. Dif-

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(1) Schultze, "Handbuch" p.38; Winkler, "Geschichte Israels", II, p.273; J.E.II, p.128, col.1; Goldziher, "Myths among the Heb." pp.167-8.

firent from Babylon and Egypt, Palestine is completely dependent upon rain, and the absence of it means famine. Hence if we were to assume that Elijah was originally a myth, the myth would have to be connected with rain or drought, or the causes of thereof. Haggadic legend tells us<sup>(4)</sup> that at Mt. Carmel Elijen made the sun stand still.<sup>(5)</sup> Again to Rabbi Joshua B. Lewi he shows the stones that will at some future time replace the sun.<sup>(6)</sup> Thus Elijah is connected up with the sun. Such relations can also be observed in Elijah's "translation!" He goes up to Heaven on fiery horses and chariot. It is a common belief among the Babylonians and also ancient Israel that the stars are heavenly heroes traveling around on fiery chariots.<sup>(7)</sup> Hence these connections with the sun : the cause of drought, and Elijah's greatest power to withhold rain, causing famine and unfruitfulness, as well as the many desert-like characteristics ascribed to Elijah<sup>(8)</sup> point to the origin of Elijah in some solar myth-god, who if angered could bring drought and famine upon the land, a power of the myth which was localized in the time of Ahab, but which the original myth told without such local or chronological limitations. Indirect proof of Elijah's relation with astronomic spheres are the references to Elijah's knowledge of astronomy and his duty of fixing the calendar and intercalation when Messiah comes.<sup>(9)</sup> Added to this is the general fact that solar-myths were numerous and popular in the religious development of the Semitic peoples and especially the

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- (2) Jastrow, "Study of Relig.", p. 264;
  - (3) I Kings, XVII and XVIII.
  - (4) See note 5.
  - (5) Haggadat Bereshith, ch. 76.
  - (6) Pesikta R. Kahana, ed. Buber, p. 136, ff. sec.
  - (7) The sun believed as a chariot - II Kings, XXIII, 11; Ath. Enoch LXXII, 5; Slav. Enoch, XI, 2; The stars considered chariots - Ath. Enoch, LXXV, 3, 8; Jud. V, 20.
  - (8) Leads a nomadic life, wanders from one mountain to the other. Is also dressed like a Bedouin.

Canaanites.

The story of Elijah being fed by ravens has a mythological tinge. Animals or birds bringing food to man in legends are considered by students of mythology as originally being personified gods, who later became messengers of the gods and finally ordinary animals<sup>(10)</sup> reducing both Elijah and the ravens to their mythological origin, the relation of the two is clear - an exchange of courtesies among the gods. A close relation of Elijah and the deities is also seen in the Theophany at Horeb. No mortal can see Yahweh and live. Elijah sees part of Yahweh and speaks to him face to face because he is not a mortal.<sup>(11)</sup>

But also directly tradition identifies Elijah with demi-gods, thus many Midrashim identify him with Sandalfon.<sup>(12)</sup> Other Haggadis legends ascribe godly attributes to Elijah. Thus Tanchuma "Bereshit" <sup>2</sup>(13) tells as praiseworthy of the Jews, that although Elijah performed many duties that no mortal can perform, and like a god he lives forever, still Israel has not deified Elijah. The latter, the conclusion of the Midrashist, still in view of all other facts, this Midrash may imply the mythological origin of Elijah. Talmud in one place refers to Elijah as one of God's earthly sons.<sup>(14)</sup>

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(9) Acts, VII, 22; Pirke R. El. p. 55, ed. Friedlander.

(10) Max "Griechische Märchen von Dankbaren Thieren", p. 5 note 1, p. 19 note 1, pp. 35, 42.

(11) Moses also sees God, but Moses too has mythological elements. The Theophany on Mt. Horeb is similar to that of Sinai in almost all details. The two mountains are often made identical. Vide Supra, p. 39, note 40.

(12) Moses Cordovero, "Hekoloth", ch. XIV; also Mahzor Vitry, pp. 324 ff; Yalk. Hodosh ed. Prassburg, pp. 66-69; J. E. Vol. XI, p. 40, col. 1; Emek ha-Melch, p. 165

(13) Ed. Vienna 1863, p. 5a.

(14) Succa, 52b, Rashi ibid.

Elijah's godly character is also implied in his struggle with the Angel of Death when he was brought up to Heaven on the fiery chariot. The former asserted his right not to permit any mortal to enter Heaven without first dying, but had to permit Elijah, for he was different from all mortals.<sup>(15)</sup> Elijah being described as the Anti-Christ or as killing Samael - the angel of evil, when Messiah comes,<sup>(16)</sup> is another indication of Elijah's mythical nature.

The crossing of the Jordan by spreading his mantle is mythological in nature.<sup>(17)</sup> In the same manner Hercules crosses the Styx. A mantle performing miracles is also possessed by Dionyses. Wodan - the Mercury of the North - possesses a magic mantle and hat. The Egyptian Osiris has a fiery garment.

Again Elijah's origin is mythical. Nothing is stated in Bible or told by legend about Elijah's ancestry or offspring. Hence some Midrashim interpret this fact to indicate that Elijah sprang from Heaven.<sup>(18)</sup>

Elijah's wanderings, his incognito visits to reward the pious and those hospitable to him is characteristic of many myth-gods of Hebrew, Greek, German and other peoples.<sup>(19)</sup> Buddha, Zeus, Thor, Wodan and Khider<sup>(20)</sup> were believed to wander about the earth and test the piety and hospitality of the people.<sup>(21)</sup>

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(15) Zohar, Ruth, beg. ed. Warsaw 1885.

(16) Yalk. Hodosh, ed. Rodewil 58a; "Heb. Elijah Appoc" pp. 30-31, Paper by Dr. Bittenweiser.

(17) Ilkings, II, 8; Schultze "Handbuch" pp. 193, 196.

(18) Yalk. Reub. *נחמיה* p. 9b, ed. Amsterdam; Emek ha-Melech, ch. 39; Ha-Pardes, p. 162.

(19) Gunkel, "Elias etc." pp. 12, 69.

(20) Elijah is later identified with Khider the Mohammedan myth of the god of ever-green - Peters, "Heb. Story" pp. 83-84.

(21) Grimm, "Mythologie" p. 37, vol. I, ed. 3. - The story of the angels visiting Abraham and rewarding him for his hospitality is of the same type of myth.

But while all the given facts seem to point to the mythological origin of Elijah, other records about him, point that Elijah is legendary in origin- a pure fiction or idea invented by the leaders and writers of Israel, and later amplified by the masses. Thus Goldziher, (22) takes Elijah to be at bottom, nothing but a type of the persecution to which Yahwism was exposed in the Northern kingdom on the part of the rulers and priests. This procedure is common to the prophetic historian. In the same manner they painted the Patriarchs or Isaiah the Second. (23) This view held by Zunz, (24) with regards to the Haggadic legends which are using Elijah as a principle of certain truths.

Malachi's description of Elijah (25) is obviously legendary viewed from the light of the conditions of that time. Priest and ruler corrupt, Israel persecuted and oppressed, the only hope is in the future, and in order to make this consolation tangible and concrete Elijah is introduced. The very name Elijah, אליהו in connection with his activities shows that it was invented after the character was decided upon. Elijah represents the grand champion of Yahweh, hence he is called אלי יהוה - Yahweh is my God. (26) The Haggadic names of Elijah אלהיך, זכרי, בני-ירוחם (27) even more clearly indicate the fictitious origin. These names are interpreted symbolically to show that when God in his disappointment of the sinful world will want to destroy it by storm כש Elijah אלהיך will recall to God the merits of the Fathers זכרי and God will be merciful to his children בני-ירוחם (28)

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- (22) "Myths among Heb." p. 306  
 (23) Friedman, Tanna d. Eliyahu. pp. 12-13.  
 (24) "Gottesd." Vortrage, p. 150; Ibn Ezra to Esther I, 10  
 (25) Chapter III, 22-23  
 (26) Peters, "Hist. of Rel." pp. 176-177  
 (27) Tanchuma כי תשא  
 (28) These names, however, may have been given to Elijah after he has been made legendary.

An examination of the Talmudic and Midrashic legends will show that the great majorities of the stories about Elijah are intended to portray certain moral, ethical, or religious truths.<sup>(29)</sup> Thus for instance certain stories show how piety or hospitality is rewarded,<sup>(30)</sup> how strict observance of the Sabbath is compensated,<sup>(31)</sup> or injustice punished.<sup>(32)</sup> Thus the great problem of the divine world economy, the suffering of the righteous is brought out in Elijah's adventures with R. Joshua ben Levi,<sup>(33)</sup> or the Jewish faith strengthened with the Messianic ideals impressed by Elijah's activities and missions. Again in Elijah's visits to the academies, in his discussions with the Rabbis he enlightens, explains and interprets, but never initiates new laws. Typical of the Jewish lore psychology. The rabbis may venture to ascribe a certain explanation of a law to a legendary character, but would not dare have that legendary character make new laws, Or take Elijah's death. It is purely legendary. He dies east of the Jordan, the same place designated to be the death place of Moses.<sup>(34)</sup> There David buried his parents.<sup>(35)</sup> There Elimelech led his sons to death.<sup>(36)</sup> Undoubtedly a sacred place to which many legends were attached. Thus we have indications that Elijah may have been a mere idea, an invention of the religious teacher and preacher.

But there are other facts about Elijah. judging by the motif of some of the Elijah legends one might be tempted to conclude that the Elijah of the Bible was merely a type figure in the Israelite

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(29) Kohen, "Monatschrift" XII pp.247, 281

(30) Yalk. Ruth, 601 ; Midrash Ruth Zuta ed. Buber near end vide infra "Rewards the Pious" pp. 100 ff

(31) Pesikta R. XXII; Yer. Ber. II

(32) Sanh. 109a ; B. B. 7b; Sab. Yer. IX, 31a vide infra "Elijah severe w. his Friends" pp 120 ff

(33) Rabbenu Nissim, "Hibur Joffe" pp.9-12 vide infra p. 113 ff

(34) Deut. XXXIV, 1 ff.



conflicts of prophetism against the invasion of foreign cults, in the manner the Elijah of the Talmud is the principle of righteousness. But if the original Elijah was merely an idea, how is it that the personal picture of Elijah has made such a sharp impression upon all generations. In Jewish circles he is so well known that the historian of the book of Kings does not even feel the necessity of introducing him, but brings him in abruptly.<sup>(37)</sup> Obadiah recognizes him at once<sup>(38)</sup> and Ahaziah identifies him from a short description.<sup>(39)</sup> Nor does Malachi feel the need of describing Elijah, "Behold I am sending to you Elijah the prophet", and everybody knows whom he means. Not only in the intellectual circles is he known, but his person is impressed upon the masses. When Jesus appears the identity of Elijah is sought in John the Baptist,<sup>(40)</sup> among the Mahomadens his identity is sought in Khidr.<sup>(41)</sup> Nor does the Talmud ever explain who Elijah was. He is known to all. So frequently is his name heard among his people that in time it is shortened from  $\text{הֵילֵיָא}$  to  $\text{הֵילֵא}$ <sup>(42)</sup>

But even of greater weight is the description of Elijah and the <sup>way</sup> it corresponds with the historic situation of the time. From the general description of Elijah we learned that he was an old timer. He was not dressed in the apparel of the civilized man of that day, but in the Bedouhin skin-mantle with a leather belt.<sup>(43)</sup>

(35) I Saml. XXII, 3

(36) Midrash Ruth I

(37) I Kings XVII, 1

(38) Ibid XVIII, 7

(39) II Kings I, 2-8

(40) Mark VI, 15; VIII, 28; Matt. XVII, 10; John I, 19

(41) D'Herbelot, "Biblioth. Orient." art. "Khedher"; Weil, "Legenden der Muselmänner" p. 178

(42) Friedman, "Tanna d. Eliyahu", intro. pp. 12, 20

(43) II Kings I, 8

He led the life of a wanderer between the stepped of the mountains<sup>(44)</sup>  
 He hails from Gilead, the territory bordering on the desert and  
 separated by the Jordan, which by its very position is almost certain  
 to remain in a more primitive and nomadic state while the terri-  
 tories west of the Jordan, or the regions north and south are ra-  
 pidly advancing in civilization. Gilead is wooded and mountainous,  
 hence its inhabitants hardy with a primitive philosophy of life,  
 and remains a sort of homeland for the patrician Israel, a sort  
 of home for the strong nationalists and patriots, a last support  
 in time of distress. The inhabitants of Gilead support the sons  
 of Saul against the insurrection of the Phillistines, there David  
 takes refuge from Absalom.<sup>(45)</sup> The Rachabites, the zealous nation-  
 alists, strong supporters of Elijah, by virtue of their nomadic  
 habits seem to come from Gilead. As does Elijah. He is dressed  
 and has the habits of an old timer, and he stands for old ideals.  
 He cannot tolerate the smooth, polished and ipish Phoenicians  
 culture and rights; no, he does not even look for God in the  
 Temple, he seeks Him in the isolated rock on Horeb, in the desert,  
 where the deity appeared to Moses. Because of the prosperity of  
 Ahab's reign, because of the spread of the spread of foreign  
 culture, and the influence of the many foreigners in the land, the  
 foundation of the Mosaic religion is called in question. When  
 the national God was about to be abandoned, Elijah stepped forward  
 as its champion.<sup>(46)</sup>

Hence stripped of some of the additions we get a picture

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(44) The impression of suffering connected with his wan-  
 derings is a later strata, to a Bedouin such life was  
 normal.

(45) Peters "Heb. Story" p.76

(46) Kittel "Hist. of the Heb." pp.264-265

of a real historical character, of a prophet lurking here and there on the borders of Phoenicia and Syria, getting word of the ways of Ahab, who seeks his head as "troubler of Israel". He sojourns in obscure abodes, from time to time conceals himself on Mt. Carmel and other mountains. In moods of desparation he retires to the solitude of Mt. Horeb and there finds new inspiration in the "still small voice" of God. Thus watching for his hour from obscurity, and covering his movements with mystery he takes a hand in the revolutions of Damascus and Samaria, in the <sup>l</sup>throning of Hazael, in the uprising of Jehu, until the way is cleared for Yahweh in Israel. (47)

In the mode of life Elijah is leading, in his dress and appearance, in his nomadic ways and symbolic actions he is not unlike the other prophets of his day, and to that extent he may have been historically real, and the historic situation during the reign of Ahab well warrants the stepping in Elijah and start his activities. But his career was so enveloped with myths and legends that his real life can hardly be traced. (48)

In view of these facts it is incorrect to assume that Elijah was wholly a myth or a legend, nor can the entire account of Elijah be taken as historical. The fact of the matter is that in the accounts of Elijah we have a combination of myth, legend and history. As Frazer points out, personages about whom many mythological marvels are told may yet be records of real human beings and historical characters; on the other hand many attributes or achievements of historical individuals may be mythical or personifications

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(47) Fiske, "Unknown Homer", p. 38.

(48) Feters, "Hist. of Rel" p. 176.; Fiske, "The Great Epic" pp. 127-8

of natural phenomena.<sup>(49)</sup> Myth and history as two opposites do not exclude a third possibility, a combination of the two.<sup>(50)</sup>

The Elijah of Ahab's days was undoubtedly a real historical character who performed a great national service in his battles for Yahweh, but alongside with him there may have been a mythical character similar to him in some way.<sup>(51)</sup> When many of the deeds of Elijah became obscure, the wild spirit of poetry and admiration combined the two, magnified the relation and connection, impressed them upon the popular consciousness until the facts and the accretions both began to claim historical recognition for one individual. Hence we have both myth and history in the description of Elijah.

There remains now, in the historical investigation of Elijah, one more problem, viz: Why was Elijah, of all prophets and heroes of Jewish history, chosen to be the favorite of lore and tradition? This the task of the next chapter.

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(49) J. G. Frazer, "Fortnightly Review", Oct. 1900.

(50) Goldsiner, "Myth. of the Heb", p.22.

(51) There seems to be a difference between the Elijah of Kings and that of Malachai, as indeed John Lightfoot, claims the two to be two different characters. - "Horae Hebraicae in Evengel. Lucae", ch. I, 17; cf. Gunkel, "Elias etc." p.65; Friedman, "Tanna d. Eli-yahu", Intro. p.12, note 1.

## CHAPTER VI

### WHY WAS ELIJAH CHOSEN HERO OF JEWISH LEGEND

The problem -- Elijah's mysterious life  
-- Origin of Elijah -- From the tribe  
of Gad -- Elijah a Benjaminite -- Elijah  
a priest of the tribe of Levi -- An an-  
gel of supernatural origin -- A wander-  
ing hermit -- A miracle worker -- Ap-  
pearances and dress -- The geography of  
Elijah's habitation -- The 'translation'  
-- Champion of Yahweh -- The prophetic  
writers -- Champion of justice -- Fore-  
runner of the literary prophets -- Mes-  
sianism -- Elijah of Malachi -- Summary

Already in the Biblical legend Elijah is peculiarly pro-  
minent. The Biblical compiler devotes a great deal of time and space  
for the description of Abraham and Jacob, emphasises the dramatic  
personality of Joseph, elaborates upon the greatness of Moses, pre-  
serves the writings of Isaiah, Ezekiel and other prophets, narrates  
in detail the experiences of Deborah or Samson, Mordechai or Job,  
and many other religious and national personages, yet the brief  
history of Elijah is peculiarly fascinating and outstanding. Jacob  
was in close relation with God, Moses performed miracles, Amos fought  
for Yahweh and justice, yet no one has captivated the fancy of the  
Biblical compiler as did Elijah. The description is full of the won-  
derful and the mysterious; his activities are spiritual even in  
their crudeness, romantic in their barbarity.

But the person of Elijah gains even greater prominence be-  
yond Biblical records and times. When all other characters of Bibli-  
cal history, as it were, take a back seat, or are prey to oblivion,  
Elijah stands out prominently. His memory is continued to be cherish-  
ed, his history is augmented, his life extended. Talmud speaks of  
him passionately, Medieval lore adorns him with endearing legends

and faithful missions, mysticism speculates about him, and until the present day in circles where Jewish tradition and consciousness is still a living force, Elijah legend is fostered, elaborated and augmented. What were the elements in the history of Elijah that made such an indelible impression upon the imagination of the Jew? Why was Elijah chosen hero of Jewish lore and tradition?

The first thing one becomes aware of in the study of Elijah is his mysterious and extraordinary life. Undoubtedly a great deal of that is produced by the legendary elements of his description, yet one cannot help but feel that Elijah originally must have been a unique, fearless and striking, almost supernatural personality invoking all the miracles and wonders of his time in his description. But whether <sup>the Biblical writer</sup> had such fascinating material before him or not, the tradition following the Bible possessed it. To the generations of post-Biblical times, Elijah came as a fanciful personality inviting imagination and speculation.

Take the origin of Elijah. Nothing is known or said about it in the Bible. In a time when he was mostly needed he came down as if from heaven. Does later legend overlook it? No, but rather develops theories, elaborates, fills out the gaps, deduces facts until a great impressionable legend literature is built up upon this fact alone. In the same manner legend must have been impressed by other facts of his mysterious life. As proof of this argument I shall go in detail into the origin of Elijah.

There are four prevailing theories about the origin of Elijah. All of them developing out of implications in the Bible. As Friedman points out, <sup>(1)</sup> the Rabbis were not interested in the

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(1) Tanna d. Eliyahu Rabbah v-Zuta, Intro. p. 12

geneology of Elijah, not more than they cared for the origin of the other prophets or leaders. But it was because of the impression Elijah made and the folk-lore he invoked that his origin was indulged in detail.

One theory makes Elijah a descendant of the tribe of Gad. Proof for this theory is in the Biblical reference of Elijah as a Gileadite.<sup>(2)</sup> Also from Elijah's relation with Elisha who is also a Gileadite. It seems Elijah knows of his successor even before the latter is annointed.<sup>(3)</sup> The river Aliaba north of Alastiah belonging to the tribe of Gad, is identified with Elijah.<sup>(4)</sup> That Elijah is from the tribe of Gad is the prevailing opinion of Haggadah.<sup>(5)</sup> There may be historical basis in this theory, for Gad and Gilead are used synonymously in a number of places in the Bible. In fact Gad is taken by some scholars as an abbreviation of Gilead.<sup>(6)</sup>

Another theory makes Elijah a scion of the tribe of Benjamin, a descendant of Rachel. He lived in Jerusalem in the Lish-kath ha-Gozith, which was in the territory of Benjamin.<sup>(7)</sup> This theory was verified by Elijah himself, at one time when the Rabbis were discussing his origin.<sup>(8)</sup>

But most of Haggadic speculation was on the two following theories, which are wildly legendary. One theory is that Elijah descended from the tribe of Levi,<sup>(9)</sup> hence he is a priest.<sup>(10)</sup>

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- (2) Rashi to I Kings XVII, 1.
  - (3) Rashi to Ket. 105b ; Midrash Ruth, p.64b ed. Amstredam.
  - (4) Kaphthor vo-Perah ed. Lunz, p.311.
  - (5) Beresh. R. end of ch. LXXI and XCIX; Midr. Tehilim on Ps. XC, 1, ed. Buber. p.387; Tanchuma ויחי and ויחי;  
Num. R. ch. XIV,
  - (6) Dr. Julian Morgenstern in his course on the Hexateuth held this opinion. cf. J. E. vol. V, p. 544
  - (7) Tanchuma ויחי; Ex. R. XL; Yoma 12a ; Gen. R. end of ch. LXXI; Yalk. to I Kings, p. 208

He is the same person as Phineas, Aaron's uncle, the ~~Yahweh~~ zealot of the wilderness.<sup>(11)</sup> That he was a priest is evidenced from the fact that Elijah would not go near the dead.<sup>(12)</sup> From the fact he ate the first portion of the bread from the widow of Zarephath,<sup>(13)</sup> also from the fact that he lived in Jerusalem in the Lishkath ha-Gazith.<sup>(14)</sup> In the benedictions for circumcision, Elijah is called priest, and the same idea is carried out in some of the Sabbath-night hymns.<sup>(15)</sup>

The identity with Phineas undoubtedly originated in the similarity in some of the actions of the two. Both zealous for Yahweh.<sup>(16)</sup> Of Phineas it is said, "He was zealous with My zeal,"<sup>(17)</sup> the same is said of Elijah, "I have been very zealous."<sup>(18)</sup> Both kill those who worship other Gods. Elijah is also identified with Phineas in Christian<sup>(19)</sup> and Mahomedan legends.<sup>(20)</sup>

The last theory is that Elijah is an angel<sup>(21)</sup> - a supernatural being. He is "without father and without mother, without

- (8) S. Eliyahu R. p. 97 also S. Eliyahu Z. p. 199, ed. Friedman. - The Rabbis were speculating as to the origin of Elijah, when he appeared and informed them that he was a descendent of Rachel and the reason for asking the first part of the widow's bread was not that he was a priest, but it was to indicate that in Messianic times Elijah will appear before Messiah ben David, the widow's son.
- (9) Pesikta Rabosi IV, sec. **וְיָקָה אֵלֵינוּ** - just like Moses a descendent of Levi has delivered Israel, so will Elijah
- (10) Baba Mezia p. 121a; Tanna d. El. R. XVIII p. 97 ff. ed. Friedman; Pirke R. El. p. 713 note 9 ed. Friedlander; Book of the Bee, ed. Budge, p. 70
- (11) Yalk. **פִּינְחָס**; Pirke R. El. chs. 29, 40 and 47; Midr. on Prov. IX; Num. R. in connection with the **מִי־גִלְיָם**
- (12) Baba Mezia 114a.
- (13) **כֹּהֵן** belongs to the priest, and only he may eat it.
- (14) Baba Mezia 114a, Tosefta.
- (15) **שֶׁהָיָה כֹּהֵן צִדִּיק**
- (16) Pirke R. El. p. 213 ed. Friedlander 17
- (17) Num. XXV, 11
- (18) I Kings, XIX, 10
- (19) Epiphanes, "Adversus Haeres de Aheres," pp. 3, 33 IV - Elijah son of the high-priest Achimas; Petrus Damianus ad Nicolaum II, Liber I ep. 6.



descent, having neither beginning of days neither end of life, but made like unto the sun of God abiding forever." <sup>(21a)</sup> He was sent down to the world in the form of a man when his prophecy was needed, and when his mission accomplished he was taken back - "translated" - he never died. <sup>(22)</sup> While his great work was during the sinful reign of Ahab he appears at all ages when the need is great. He appeared in the form of Phineas when Israel was in the wilderness of Paran, <sup>(23)</sup> he appeared as an angel to Gideon when Israel was threatened by Midian, he was on earth during the reign of David, fought the great war for Yahweh in the days of Ahab, and will appear in his glory in Messianic times. <sup>(24)</sup> This theory is obviously based on the Biblical legends Elijah leads a mysterious life, his origin not given, nor is there mention made of his offspring. <sup>(25)</sup> Christian legend described the supernatural origin of Elijah in its own peculiar way. He was born to Sobaccha surrounded by fiery angels who fed him with blazing flames. His father alarmed, went to Jerusalem to inquire the high-priest about this phenomena. The high-priest informed the father that it was an indication of the divinity of Elijah. The father called his son Yabershua, and only after the experiences on Mt. Carmel was he named Elijah. When finished

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(20) D'Herbelot, "Biblioth. Orient." Arts. "Finhas" and "Ilia" - Rabbag I Kings, 17 contends that Phineas is not Elijah because both are included in the four that are to rebuild the temple in the Messianic times. Same idea expressed in Tanchuma on פנחס

(21) Yalk. to פנחס; Bechai's commentary to Num. 25; Gen. R. 60; Tanchuma end of פנחס; Yalk. Reub. p.9b ed. Amsterdam; S. Eliyahu R. XI p. 55 ed Friedman

(21a) Heb. VII, 2-3, cf. Ruth R. verse 3 - A similar origin

(22) is ascribed to Malkizedeck, Messiah ben David and Enoch. - J. E. vol. 8 p. 450 col. 1

(22) Ha-Pardes p. 162; Rosenberg, פנינים p. 9

(23) This theory also identifies him with Phineas and logically on better grounds than the former theory. As an angel it is possible for Elijah to flourish at different periods of time.

with his mission in the times of Ahab he was "translated". But Elijah still lives, he will come back at the end of the world's existence accompanied by Enoch and John the Baptist when he will be crucified on the cross. (26)

It is interesting to note that the different strains of legend contending for the descent of Elijah. He is claimed by the North, by the Ephraimite group who make him a Benjaminite. The East claims him, and he is made a descendent of Gad. The priestly group has a claim by making him a priest. The mystics appropriate him by making him an angel. In the effort of making them their own each section tries to outdo one another by legendary calculation, as a result the impression of Elijah is gaining force.

But beside the mysterious origin of Elijah there were other romantic factors in his life which contributed to his popularity and made his person especially adopted for legend material. He leads a life of a wandering hermit; makes his abode in the caves of mountains or by the brooks of the desert, (27) or else incognito seeks lodging among the poor and rewards liberally for their hospitality. (28) At other times he is nourished in a mysterious way by ravens or angels. (29)

Then he performs miracles - miracles of a peculiar nature

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(24) Seder Olam ch. 12 and 17; Koheleth R. 10 sec. הכנסים סדר

(25) Yalk. Reub. תורת רמב"ם ed. Amsterdam

(26) Pseudo-Dorotheus. De Vita Prophetarum; Aegidius Cameracensis "De Gertis Eliae ch3 sec. 5, Boland ibid ch. 1 sec. 1

(27) I Kings XVII, 3 ff. ; XIX, 8 ff.

(28) Ibid XVII, 8 ff.

(29) Ibid XVII, 4 ; XIX, 5-8

and of great importance. He can transform a small quantity of food into abundance<sup>(30)</sup> - a miracle that made Jesus popular. But he can also withhold rain,<sup>(31)</sup> a dreadful thing. He can also resurrection a thing never heard of before.

His appearance too is rather strange. Girt in but a mantle of sheep-skin about<sup>his</sup> loins and a leather belt, this hairy man strikes a rather savage and barbaric figure in the civilized North.<sup>(32)</sup>

Then the very places<sup>his</sup> identified with, lend themselves to romantic speculation. Take the brook of Cherith by which Elijah for some time made his abode.<sup>(33)</sup> This brook is identified with the Wady Kelt<sup>(34)</sup> which descends eastward from the highland of Judah and opens on the plain of the Jordan not far from Jericho. It furnishes a most fascinating scene. This glen is one of the wildest and most romantic spots in Palestine.<sup>(35)</sup> Gilead itself with its woods and mountains lend itself to legendary imagination. So does the beautiful Mt. Carmel and the bare Mt. Horeb.

Finally the end of Elijah's career. Not like all individuals does he die, but in a fiery chariot he is taken up to heaven. Room for speculation and imagination.

But even more significant from the point of view of legend-material are the activities of Elijah. Foremost among these is Elijah's unflinching fight for Yahweh.

(30) I Kings XVII, - the incident with the widow of Zarepheth.  
(31) Ibid XVII, 1

(32) II Kings I verse 8  
(33) I Kings XVII, 3 ff.

(34) The identity is not generally accepted. The references <sup>קלט</sup> and <sup>כרית</sup> <sup>כרית</sup> <sup>כרית</sup> which does not agree with the location of Kelt. The k of Kelt is emphatic and not like of Cherith. - J. E. vol. V. p. 121 col. 1.

(35) Frazer, "Folklore in O. T." III, pp. 22-23

Most picturesque and famous was this contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. At the head of the Nationalist party, a group of determined zealots, he started a movement for undivided Yahweh worship and did not stop at murder or assassination, war or revolution. It is obvious that the dramatic contest on Mt. Carmel was only the beginning of the conflict, only set in motion the great anti-foreign cult movement. The Tyrian Baal was not removed until a later generation, but it was Elijah that directed the forces against it.<sup>(36)</sup> It was Elijah that began the battle against Izebel and her influence, it was Elijah that stopped the pernicious activities of Athaliah, it was he who influenced the uprising of Jehu and the cold blooded extermination of the Baal worshippers and supporters, and though Baal lingered yet for many years after his appearance it was he that kindled the brand against it and made it burn until the battle was won.<sup>(37)</sup>

This struggle was a significant event in the history of Israel. Ahab's alliances with Phoenicia threatened a lapse from Yahweh to Baal and ultimately the abandonment of the national God to whom Israel owed the deliverance from Egypt and its religious development,<sup>(38)</sup> the deity of their ancestors and reminiscent desert. The war was begun against the Tyrian Baal, but it was extended by Elijah's successors against all Canaanite cult, and soon against all foreign gods and ritual, establishing Yahweh as the only God of Israel.<sup>(39)</sup>

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(36) Peters, "Hist. of Rel." p. 177.

(37) Friedman, "E. EliyhauuR. v'Z." intro. pp. 12-13

(38) Fiske, "Great Epic of Israel" p. 11

(39) Peters, Ibid p. 264 note 3

Viewed from the philosophy of history of a later date this mission of Elijah is highly significant. From the time Elijah proclaimed: "How long hold ye between two opinions?"<sup>(40)</sup> Israel perceived its individuality, its distinctness from the outside heathen and from the Canaanites among whom they lived, whose sanctuaries were in their midst and whose rites and practices they developed. In proclaiming Yahweh the only God of Israel, it discovered its religious uniqueness.<sup>(41)</sup> It is natural in consequence that the individual that gave impetus to these results should be ornamented with legend and lore, that everything he did be considered extraordinary and miraculous, that much wonderful be added to what he actually did.<sup>(42)</sup>

But even to the contemporaries of Elijah he was magnetic and attractive, invoked their affection and fancy, He was a marvelous man performing marvelous things, a fiery personality with divine power. He not only proclaimed his principles but fought for them. He was of the people and among the people and took up the cause of the people as against the court and the foreigners. Even more, unlike other prophets who insisted upon Yahweh and the national<sup>God</sup>, at the same time harangued against all ritual, Elijah said nothing against the bull worship of Bethel, or against the Tera-  
phim, or against the Ashera and its sexual rites, all which was adopted in the Yahweh worship. His great uncompromising objection was the Tyrian cult, the cult of the newly arrived foreigner.<sup>(43)</sup> Hence, he roused the patriotic sentiment in his people, but left them undisturbed in their habits and customs. It is this that con-

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(40) I Kings XVII, 21

(41) Peters, "Hist. of Rel." p. 218

(42) Kittel, "Hist. of Heb." p. 267

tributed to the popularity of Elijah, captivated the fancy of the people and the imagination of the masses of his day and immediately following his activities. Ultimately when the legendary accretions became large and wide spread, the details uncertain and removed, he entrenched himself as the hero of Jewish lore above any other historic personality.

Of no little significance are the efforts of the prophetic party and writers to popularize such a character. The prophetic writer always exalted those who championed for Yahweh. Thus they exalted Moses as the founder of Israel, the great lawgiver and the greatest prophet. Thus they exalted Samuel the next champion of Yahweh after Moses, as the first real prophet and even likened him to Moses.<sup>(44)</sup> Thus they elaborated upon Elijah, and undoubtedly did even more to spread his legend beside that of including his life in the prophetic writing.<sup>(45)</sup>

No less a contributing factor in the legendary development of Elijah were his activities as champion of justice, a glimpse of which is given to us in the incident with Naboth. The story of Naboth may not be historical, but it implies the tendencies of Elijah in view of the historic situation of his day. Ahab was introducing an up-to-date court and with it everything concomitant to an oriental court: its harem and its different temples, its luxury and its despotism. But Israel was a freedom loving people, descendants of the desert. To keep up a progressive government, a court and a strong army it was necessary to pay taxes, though reluctantly they agreed to that. to add prestige to the government it was ne-

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(43) Peters, "Hist. of Rel." pp. 176-177

(44) Jer. XV, 1; Psalms XCIX, 5

(45) Friedman, S. Eliahu R. v'Z. pp. 12-13

-cessary to build a palace and a Temple, they agreed to that and permitted the king to levy labor. But to be deprived of land inherited from patrician ancestors, apportioned to them by Yahweh himself, (46) and the outrageous means by which the king was acquiring it, that was too much. In the stand Elijah took in this matter he struck the conscience of the masses. (47) The incident of Naboth was undoubtedly only one out of many such despotic crimes, probably the most dramatic one, hence recorded. Such things were inevitable to happen in a oriental court against all of which Elijah took issue, calling back the ways of the desert, when Yahweh was supreme God, and justice was meted out. Thus again Elijah was the nationalist, the patriot against the foreignized king and court. (48) Such benevolent activities easily lend themselves to legendary exaggeration and popularity.

Perhaps even Elijah's position as prophet was a factor in making him prominent in legend. Elijah is the outstanding link in the great prophetic movement. He stands prominently between the old and professional prophets and the later literary prophets. (49) In many respects he is still similar to the ecstatic Nabi of his day - he is possessed with God's spirit and follows His commands over mountains and waters, oblivious to physical dangers. (50) Still he is different from them. He belongs to no guild or class of prophets, he is not acquainted with the ecstatic methods of the Baal prophets. When he speaks he possesses his conscience and mind, when he prays he

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(46) I Kings, XXI, 3b- "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my father unto thee."

(47) Gunkel, "Elias etc." p. 62

(48) Peters, "Hist. of Rel." p. 173-175

(49) Gunkel, *ibid* pp. 46-48

(50) I Kings, XVIII, 12 ff., 46; II Kings, II, 16

is quiet, falls into no frenzies. He sees God in a "still small voice". Like the literary prophets he is uncalled for, unwelcomed, and independent. Like Ahijah and Mica benImla he is not with the rulers but against them, taking up the cause of the people. But even more than Ahijah he is even against the people, like Isaiah or Jeremiah he is on the side of the one much great than kings and peoples, he is on the side of Yahweh. In this he paves the way for the literary prophets.

"In Elijah is embodied the protest of national will which was raising itself in powerful opposition against the insult which was about to be done to Yahweh by Ahab. With a clear consciousness of the real point at issue, Elijah takes up the field of Yahweh against Baal - the moral rights and freedom of the human spirit as against the tendency to forget them in the religion of Nature of Phoenicia or Canaan..... In this Elijah is the counterpart of Moses with whom the New Testament ranges him. Elijah introduces into prophecy that species of categorical imperative which distinguishes him as the forerunner of the literary prophets, that brazen inflexibility, that diamond-like hardness of character which bids hold fast by the moral demands even should the nation be dashed to pieces against it..... The whole appearance in history, though it takes place within the limits of the national particularism of Israel, thus gets at the same time a character of something that is supra-natural!" (51)

One can easily infer how a later generation conscious and proud of the religious achievements which they owe to the prophets, would add glory and wonders upon the individual that headed this great prophetic movement.

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(51) Fiske, "Great Epic of Israel." p. 16



There is one more factor to be considered in the spread of the Elijah legend, viz. Messianism. Messianic hope came into the religious philosophy of Israel with the development of individual responsibility. If an individual is not responsible for the wrong doing of his group of people, but for his own deeds, why then do the righteous suffer? Unless there must be an era when all wrongs will be righted. If to do justice is to follow Yahweh, then why is it that the unjust rulers and the unscrupulous priests prosper, unless there is going to be a great day of reckoning? If Yahweh is the God of justice then why is there so much suffering in the great world economy, unless there is going to be a Messianic era. Thus with the prophetic ideals Messianism springs up in Jewish philosophy of religion. In the story of the resurrection of the widow's son and in the "translation" of Elijah there is an indication of such ideas creeping into the Jewish religious philosophy. (52) But while these ideas are faint and undefined then, they take definite shape and form in the time of Malachi. The Jewish people went through many trying experiences. It was exiled from its land and re-instated and now again it is lapsing into a corrupt social order. "Wealth is gathered into the hands of the selfish few, the body of the people are poorer and oppressed. The ruling classes and the priests are selfish and regardless of their responsibilities. The priests have lost zeal for the Temple service. The glorious hopes of the former Haggai, Zachariah and Deutero-Isaiah have not been fulfilled..... Malachai is discouraged with present conditions nor does he see comfort in the past, hence he looks for hope in the remaining few righteous and the future. There are still a Godly few left who confer with one another and hope and look for Yahweh. (53) In them

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(52) Peters, "Heb. Rel." pp. 441-442.

is the hope of Israel." (54) In his search for a strong reformer, his hope connects itself up with the history of Elijah's reforms - the outstanding figure in the Yahweh movement, and then he prophesies of the coming of Elijah to prepare the way for the great and terrible day of Yahweh.

When Messianism becomes an accepted truth, all imagination and elaboration is showered upon Elijah. The only prophet who resurrected the innocent dead son of the widow and who ended his career in a peculiar supernatural manner. He did not die, he was "translated". Hence, he still lives and will return when Messiah is to appear. (55) And did not Elijah live a life of deprivation and poverty, suffered for his righteousness, the very elements that will bring Messiah to the suffering masses. (56) Hence, with the spread of Messianism the Elijah legends spread and grew. (57)

Elijah's miraculous and mysterious life in general, his activities as champion of Yahweh and justice, as first spiritual prophet, together with the critical period in which he flourished, each factor by itself and all of them together contributed to the wide spread of Elijah, and finally when the Messianic hope was added to his person - an idea that captivated the minds of the people of the last few centuries of the ancient era and the first centuries of modern era and remained a pulsating ideal in Judaism and Christianity - Elijah became the greatest hero and Jewish legend and lore.

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(53) Malachi III, 16.

(54) Peters, "Hist. of Rel." pp. 327-8, 442.

(55) Sedar, Olam R. XVII; Kid. 70a; Ber. R. XXXIV, 8; Succa 5a.

(56) Pirke, R. El. p. 239, ed. Friedlander.

(57) Kohen, "Monatschrift." XII, pp. 243-5.

## CHAPTER VI

### ELIJAH IN TALMUD AND MIDDLEVAL AGES

Elijah legends traveling to Judah --  
Elijah in Haggadah -- The Haggadic legends different from the Biblical --  
Significance of the post-biblical legends -- Historical importance --  
Transformation of Elijah in legend --  
The two periods in the Talmudic legends of Elijah -- The Mishnaic period --  
Elijah precursor of Messiah -- Elijah in Talmud -- Messianic stories amplified -- Protecting angel -- Teacher and guide -- Mediator between heaven and earth -- Moral principle --  
Elijah's appearances -- Elijah in middleval legend -- The supernatural element -- Borrowing foreign elements --  
The Messianic stories -- Visits to the pious -- Elijah the Wandering Jew --  
In mystic literature -- Founder and restorer of Kabbalah.

Elijah was an attractive personality, and as we observed in the previous chapter, had all the elements in him that qualified him for a national hero. But even more he came at the psychological moment, at a time when Israel began to praise its heroes, and formulate its national ideal; at a time when Israel began to create a literature and immortalize its leaders and inspirers.<sup>(1)</sup> The prosperity brought in by Ahab did not last long. Civil strife, rebellion, and finally the crushing armies of Senacherib demolished and scattered the people of the North. The ideals and reminiscences, traditions and poetry of Israel is entrusted to the people of the South - Judah is to carry on the dreams and hopes of the founders of the people of Israel. Judah is a mountainous land and its inhabitants like those of the Gilead region<sup>(2)</sup> have retained much of

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(1) Fiske, "Unknown Homer" pp. 32-33

the desert life and mores. To them a personality like Elijah magnified and made more attractive by distance and time, had an appeal probably greater than it ever had to the cultured Northerner. Elijah lived a life that they still cling to. In spite of the commerce and industry which is rapidly changing Judah, in spite of its temple and court, the inhabitants of the South still adhere to the ways of the desert, and Elijah becomes a prototype, an ideal citizen of the mountains, and his legend spreads and takes deep root in their imagination. Later after an exile and a reinstatement to national independence, the great Talmudic literature began its national career, Haggadah could find no personage so popular and known, so well suited for its purposes than Elijah. Hence made him the hero of its description, and not contented as in the case of other historical personages, to describe merely his earthly life, and to elaborate in its own way, it created a new history of him, which beginning with the "Translation" ends only with the close of the history of the human race. (3)

The Haggadic legends as well as the medieval legends following them, which developed in a similar manner in a different background, are altogether different from the Biblical legends of Elijah. Here the authors are primarily interested in the legends, in the ethical or religious inspiration they may convey, or in the aesthetic impressions they may produce. (4) Unlike the Biblical legends they are totally unconcerned about the history of Elijah.

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(2) Vide supra pp. 14, 62

(3) Kohen, "Monatschrift" XII, pp. 241-242; J. E. Vol. V, p. 122, col. 1.

(4) Gunkel, "Elias etc." p. 3.

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The Haggadic legends to acquaint you with the prophet but rather because Elijah and his activities make up good subject matter for imagination and speculation that he is used. In the description of Elijah the Haggadist could pour out his soul; express his emotions, find solutions to his difficulties and realization for his hopes. This popular hero, and zealous friend and champion of Israel and its God served the Haggadist to bring out his conception of Israel and Judaism: what it ought and what it ought not to be. To the Kabbalist the legends served to make his homilies attractive, popular, and appealing. To the people Elijah served to make their lore vivid and artistic. For Elijah of history was the embodiment of strength and spirituality, of uprightness and kindness.

But if the Haggadic legends contained no history, they are nevertheless of great significance in the study of the spiritual genius of the Jew.<sup>(5)</sup> For in a people's lore and poetry its heart and soul is expressed. A shallow material people has a shallow and material legends, an adventurous and ambitious people creates myths and legends of adventure and ambition, an aesthetic and spiritual people possesses legends of aesthetic and spiritual expression. Thus the pagan and adventurous Greeks created an Odyssey and an Iliad, expressing its admiration and love for the heroic and the adventurous, for physical strength and sensuous love. The freedom-loving mountaineers of Switzerland created a William Tell. The chivalrous and justice-seeking Brittons told of a King Arthur and his Round Table. The spiritual Jew embodied in its epics founders of religion and prophets; its legends were woven about a Noah and an Abraham, a Moses and an Elijah.

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(5) Bar Ami, "Ost u. West." p. 477.

In this respect the post-Biblical Elijah legends are also useful historically. For in them is implied the aspirations and longings of Israel, the depressions and exaltations of the Jew. Around the legendary person of Elijah the homeless and enslaved Jew weaved with predilections his sincerest hopes and ideals. (6) Was the Jew persecuted and driven among the unwelcoming nations, then he dreamt and speculated of Elijah bringing to the world the great Messiah, (7) or was he growing powerless and insignificant against his great military foes, then he wove a legend of the powerful armies of Gog and Mogog, (8) to be defeated miraculously by Messiah ben Joseph the son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elijah has revived. (9) Was he longing after his Temple ritual and sacrifice, then he fancied Elijah offering uninterruptedly the daily sacrifice in Heaven. (10) Was life on this earth getting difficult and meaningless, then he thought of Elijah leading the righteous souls to their honored seats in Paradise. (11) Was he afeared of the Roman government and officials, then he invoked Elijah to his rescue giving advice and protection from the extortionists. (12) Was Jewish solidarity in danger, then he placed rebuke and caution in the mouth of Elijah. (13) Or was it of Sabbath - the day of spiritual reunion, of peace and respite - that the Jew wanted to use, of the joys today invoked or of the difficulties and grief it brought; then he fancied Elijah guarding the pious observer of Sabbath, (14)

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(6) Kohn, "Monatschrift," XII, p. 241.

(7) Erub. 43a. Vide Supra, p. 66, also Vide Infra, p. 89 ff.

(8) Heb. Apoc. of Elijah, Bittenwieser, p. 30 - 31.

(9) Yer. Ber. IV, 9b.

(10) Yalk. Reub. ענין שבת art. 1754; Emek ha-Melech end of Chap. 65, Sec. ענין שבת

(11) Ketub. 77b:

(12) Aboda, Zarah, 18b. Ibid 17.

(13) Yer. Sheb. IX, 60.

(14) Pesik. R. XXII; Yer. Ber. II.

visiting the joyous synagogue and blessing blissful home. (15) The exalting father entering his son into the covenant of Abraham, honored Elijah with holding his babe before circumcised. (16) The joyous free-man commemorating the great liberation from Egypt at the Sedar, invited Elijah to partake in his rejoicing. (17) Or was it the Torah - the greatest inheritance of Israel - that the Jew wanted to emphasize, then he told of Elijah's solving the subtle and difficult points, (18) visiting the academies, (19) enlightening the erring, (20) and befriending the learned, (21) or disheartened by the dark future, the Jew had to look for consolation and pride in his glorious past, then he elaborated upon Elijah's wonders and victories in Biblical times. (22) Thus in every legend woven about the person of Elijah a moment of Jewish spiritual history is recorded. Every story gives utterance to the emotions of his soul and mirrors the vicissitudes of his existence.

In this connection it is interesting to note the change the description of Elijah underwent in the course of Jewish history. The more dependent the Jew became, the more he was persecuted, the milder and warmer became the legend of Elijah. The stern, unrelentless, merciless and zealous Elijah, who slayed cold-bloodedly the four hundred and fifty Baal Prophets on Mount Carmel, when Israel

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- (15) R. Nissim, "Hibbur Yaffeh" pp. 9-12.  
 (16) Vide Infra, Part II, Chapt. "Guardian Angel" pp. 96 ff.  
 (17) The "Elijah Cup" is put up on every Sedar Table.  
 (18) Yeb. 102b, Men. 45; Zohar III, 27.  
 (19) Sedar Eliyahu R. IX, p. 49, 51; 14, p. 70, ff; XVIII, pp. 95 and 99 ff. ed. Friedman.  
 (20) Yeb. 63a; Meg. 15b; Ket. 106a. B. Mezi'ah 85b. Num. R. IV, Vide Infra. "Teacher and Guide", pp. 109 ff.  
 (21) Pirke R. El. I.  
 (22) On the three years famine, Sanh. 113a; Yer. X. On the ravens, Gen. R. 38; Hulin 5a. On the son of the widow, Yer. Ber. IV, 9b. On the Carmel incident, Tanchuma, ed. Buber; Ex. R. XXIX; Aggadot, Bereshit, Chapt. 76, Tanna d. Eliyahu R. XVII.

was a strong nation, has changed to the mildness of an angel, when Israel was downcast and exiled. In the course of centuries, as the fate of the Jew was declining, the stern frown on Elijah's face has disappeared and with a smile on his lips, full of humor and kindness (23) he wandered about among his people, a comforter in need, a friend of the poor and afflicted, (24) a guardian of the children and innocent, (25) warns them against evil, (26) pleads for them before God, (26) protects them from temptation, (27) and prepares for the great deliverance. (28) The Elijah of Ahab's days, who because of his zeal for Yahweh is taken to Heaven by the Biblical narrator and is brought back again to the earth by the legends of the Talmud, Medieval Ages and Modern Times. It is an earthly event that Elijah's interests are most frequently manifested from post-Biblical times and onward. (29)

Roughly speaking, the Elijah legends of the Talmud may be divided into two periods. The Mishnaic period beginning with the pronouncement of Malachi and ending with the codification of the Mishna, containing the Messianic legends of Elijah, and the Talmudic Period beginning with the codification of the Mishna and ending with the close of the Talmud. In the latter period, while Elijah is still connected with Messianic activities, his greater work is that of a Guardian Angel bringing help whenever it is needed and enlightenment wherever it is wanting.

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- (23) Ned. 50a, Ket. 62b. S. Eliyahu R. XV, p. 76, ed. Friedman.
  - (24) Yalk. Ruth, 601; Midr. Ruth Zuta, ed. Buber, near end.
  - (25) Yalk. Reub. מִיִּירָא
  - (26) Sedar Olam, Chapt. XVII.
  - (27) S. Eliyahu R. VI, p. 35, ed. Friedman.
  - (28) Pesik. Rabosi, Chapt. אֶחָד Eduyoth VIII, 7. Arotyoth 12a. Sota 13a; Bar Ami, "Ost u. West" IV, p. 475.
  - (29) Grätz, "Gesch. d. Juden." III, p. 217 ff.



At no time in the history of the ancient world were the hopes so high for a reorganization of the political, social and religious status than in the last century of the old era. Not only Israel, but the entire world looked for a change in conditions, a radical change which can be brought about only by a Messiah. (30) The Prophets of Israel did not effect a social reform. The philosophers of Greece brought no solution. The conquests of Persia petered out with no accomplishments. The parliamentarians of Rome only brought more misery to the masses and smaller people. The entire ancient world looked for a Messiah at the period of the rise of Christianity. It is at that time that the Messianic hopes in Israel reached their height, and Elijah proclaimed by Malachi (31) to be the forerunner of the Messianic era, became hero of the legends of that period. The man who fought unflinchingly for the preservation of the true worship of Israel at a national crisis in the time of Ahab, will surely come to aid Israel when the new order is ushered in by the Messiah. (32) So closely knit was Elijah with Messianic hopes that the appearance of Messiah without Elijah could not be conceived. Thus, when Jesus appeared, claiming his Messianic mission, the people asked for Elijah as proof for his claim. For how can a Messiah appear without Elijah? (33)

The preserved legends of this period are very few in number. The Mishna being engaged in Halacha makes only little mention of Elijah. When mentioned he is always identified with the Elijah of Malachi. (34) However, the legends about Elijah at that period must

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(30) Grätz, "Gesch. d. Juden," III, p. 217 ff. (2nd Ed.);  
Sirah, 48, 10 to 11.

(31) Chapt. III, 23.

(32) S. Eliyahu R. and Z. ed. Friedman, p. 21 - at all times whenever the Messianic expectations were high Jewish lore was productive of Elijah stories.

(33) Mark VI, 15; VIII, 28. Matt. XVII, 10, John I, 19, - It is for the same reason that John the Baptist was identified with Elijah.

have been numerous and popular as is seen from the knowledge the people had about Elijah when Jesus appeared. From the popularity and a great number of Elijah's stories, the literature of the next period, and the familiar way in which he is spoken of. Nowhere in the Talmud is there a description or an introduction of the character of Elijah. Everybody knows him, even more, he is so well known that his name is shortened from  $\text{אֵלִיָּהוּ}$  to  $\text{אֵלִיָּה}$ . (35)

The Talmudic period not only enlarged and developed the Elijah legends, but also put it down in writing, and in the Haggadah of the Talmud, we have a large and rich collection of Elijah legends, anecdotes and stories. In this period, Elijah's activities with regards to Messianic times are emphasized, elaborated and entered into in detail. Thus, not only is it related that he will appear before Messiah and the many things he will do, and the miracles he will perform, but it is also calculated to the minutest detail, the time of Elijah's arrival, the dates upon which he can not appear and other such speculation. (36) The Messianic hopes, however, of this period are waning and subsiding. This hope pushed to a reality caused many of the Jews to go over to Christianity. On the other hand, Jewish people were rapidly adopting themselves to their social and political situation. There was no political or national hope for them, hence they looked for hope and inspiration in the ethical, moral and religious

(34) Shekalim, II, 5. Baba Mezia 29b; 20a.

(35) Friedman, S. Eliyahu R. vZ. pp. 12, 20.

(36) Erub. 73a. Sanh. 98a; Yer. Pesachim III, 5b; Peshachim 13a - thus if one makes a vow  $\text{אֵלִיָּהוּ שֶׁבֶן דִּיךְ}$  he can drink wine on Sabbath and Holidays.

(37) He is called "The bird of Heaven" - Ps. VIII, 9. - because of his frequent visits - Midr. Tehilim on Psalms. Ber. 4b; Targum on Eccl. X, 20.

world, and Elijah is brought down upon the earth to be with them, to help them, and protect them; all the time, at all occasions, like "the bird of heaven" hovering about them to bring them cheer and song.<sup>(37)</sup> It is too long to wait for the Messianic times, let us have Elijah right away, was the folk-thought. Thus the Messianic mission of Elijah falls to the background and instead he assumes many other important roles. He is the guardian angel protecting the deserving,<sup>(38)</sup> saving them from danger,<sup>(39)</sup> and cheering them in their dark moments.<sup>(40)</sup> He is the inspirer and teacher of the great Rabbis,<sup>(41)</sup> the admonisher and censurer of the leaders of his people.<sup>(42)</sup> He is the psychopomp<sup>(43)</sup> and defending attorney in Heaven,<sup>(44)</sup> the advisor and friend on earth.<sup>(45)</sup> But while on earth he is not free from heavenly duties. There he studies at the Academy on High.<sup>(46)</sup> There he records the deeds of men,<sup>(47)</sup> there he keeps the annals of Jewish history from the times its scribes ceased.<sup>(48)</sup> There he guards the souls of the pious,<sup>(49)</sup> There he ministers upon the Patriarchs,<sup>(50)</sup> there he offers the daily sacrifice,<sup>(51)</sup> and guards the lost articles from the last Temple.<sup>(52)</sup> It is from this Elijah, who divides his activities between Heaven and earth that the sages get a glimpse into the workings of Heaven. For to his friends Elijah reveals many heavenly secrets.<sup>(53)</sup>

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- (38) Aboda Zarah 18 b; Sanh. 109a; Kid. 40a; Ber. 58a; Vide infra Part II, pp. 96 ff.  
 (39) Ned. 50a; Aboda Zarah 18b; Kid. 40a.  
 (40) Ket. 62b; S. Eliyahu R. XV, p. 76, ed. Friedman.  
 (41) Ket. 105b; Haggiga 9b; 15b; B. Mezia 114b; Gittin 6b; Kid. 41a; B. B. 7b; Yer. Ter. I, 40d; Ket. 61; Emek haMelech Intro. p. 5b. Vide Infra Part II, ch. "Teacher and Guide" p. 109  
 (42) Ket. 106b; Yer. Ter. VIII, 46b; Ber. R. 94 end; Yoma 19b; Haggiga 15a; Sanh. 109a. Vide Infra Part II, "Admonishes the Guilty" pp. 102ff. "Elijah Severe with the Pious" pp. 120 ff.  
 (43) Pirke R. El. XVI, ed. Friedlander p. 102; Ket. 77b; Yalk. Reub. 77b art. 105. Vide Infra Part II, "E. as Psychopomp" p. 93  
 (44) Kid. 70a; Yalk. Reub. 77b art. 105 ed. Amstredam p. 9b, 141. Vide Infra "Sabbath Night Duties" p. 93 "Recorder in Heaven" p. 94

It is out of these legends that the later supernatural and mystic Elijah stories have developed.

While the Talmudic Haggadah believed in the reality of Elijah, it is obvious from many of the legends that Elijah was used merely to bring out ethical and metaphysical ideas, that many of the missions of Elijah were allegorical, to bring out moral and religious truths.<sup>(54)</sup> It is for this reason that the majority of the Talmudic Elijah legends have a moral connected with them. Every incident answers a philosophic or religious problem. Thus for instance the story of Elijah and R. Beroka,<sup>(55)</sup> teaches that men should not be judged by their outward appearance, but by their deeds. It also teaches the moral significance of cheerfulness and optimism.<sup>(56)</sup> The former truth is also brought out in R. Josi ben Levi's adventures with Elijah.<sup>(57)</sup> In Elijah's reproach to R. Annon for perverting judgement inadvertently, the Rabbis express their high regard for justice.<sup>(58)</sup> The principle of faith in men is brought out in the legend of Elijah as angel of creation.<sup>(59)</sup> When Elijah explains to Bar Hai Hai that the greatest

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(45) S. Eliyahu R. VI, p. 35, ed. Friedman; Gittin 70a; Sabb. 109b;

(46) Sohar 220b. B. Mezia 59b.

(48) Seder Olam XVII.

(49) Ket. 77b;

(50) Yalk. Reub. 65 sec. art. 1; Emek Ha-Mmelech end of ch. 65 sec.

(51) Ibid.

(52) Yosippon I. 21.

(53) Vide infra Part II, "Reveals Heavenly Secrets" pp;

(54) Moed Katan 28a; B. Kama 60b; Men. 64b; Ibn Ezra to Esther I, 10.

(55) Ta'anith 22a; Gospel of Barbara 124a, also Coptic Apocrypha ed. Budge p. 265, Elijah rebukes a man for weeping.

(56) Cf. Pirke R. El. note 7 p.2 ed. Friedlander.

(57) Rabbenu Nissim, "Hibbur Yaffeh" pp. 9-12; Yellineck, B. haM. V, pp. 133-135; VI, 131-133.

(58) Ket. 105b.

(59) Yalk. Reub. 9b, ed. Amstredam: HaBardes p.162.

virtue God gave men is poverty,<sup>(60)</sup> the problem of suffering is answered. In rebuking R. Ishmael ben Josi for being engaged in the duty of Bailif the Rabbis indicated the need of Jewish solidarity.<sup>(61)</sup> The same idea brought out in the rebuke of Elijah against his very best friend R. Josi ben Levi.<sup>(62)</sup> By helping Nahum of Gimza when the latter was robbed of the presents he was carrying to the Roman officials, the Talmudic truth, that the righteous are never endangered when performing a righteous mission, is vindicated.<sup>(63)</sup> The danger of extreme rigidity of the law is brought out in some of the objections to Elijah's severity, for which he is called  $\text{נִבְיָא}$ <sup>(64)</sup> It is because Elijah is used as a fictitious character in the Talmud that, he is recorded enlightening and clarifying laws, but never initiating them.<sup>(65)</sup>

The appearances of Elijah in the Talmud are interesting. He always appears in human form, but not always cognito. Very often in the guise of an Arab, Bedouin, Charioteer, Roman official, and in very numerous cases in the guise of an old man,<sup>(66)</sup> Under the title  $\text{זקן}$  many anonymous stories are told, which really belong to the Elijah legends. In fact the Tosephot in Hulin 6a contends that every place in Talmud  $\text{זקן}$  is mentioned Elijah is meant. However this hardly possible, as Friedman points out,<sup>(67)</sup> such an assumption would lead to many contradictions. But in many places Elijah is surely meant when  $\text{זקן}$  is used.

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(60) Haggiga 9b; - same idea brought out in S. Eliyahu Zuta pp;176-181, ed. Friedman, with out making direct reference to Elijah.

(61) B. Mezia 84a.

(62) Yer. Ter. 46b.

(63) Sanh. 109 a

(64) Ibid 113a; Pirke R; El. XXIX.

(65) Kohen, "Monatschrift" p.281, vol. XII.

(66) Sabb. 33a; Succa 52a; Hulin 6a; Haggiga 25a; Men. 11a; Yalk. Reub. "Bereshith".

(67) S. Eliyahu r. vZ. Intro. p.41, note. - e.g. Sabb. 34a or

In Medieval legend, the period from the close of the Talmud to the 15th century, Elijah ceases to be human and becomes a supernatural, supermundane being, an angel descended from Heaven on earth, whose forms, missions, and activities are manifold and hazardous.<sup>(68)</sup> The description is wild and fantastic, and becomes more supernatural as the mystic ideas of this period gain popularity. Finding a tangent in an older legend, they are woven, into new independent and often contradictory legends, borrowing details and characterizations from the sagas and legends of the peoples among whom they live. Thus Elijah is an angel descending from Heaven in human form whenever needed, by moving his wings four times.<sup>(69)</sup> To exist both in heaven and on earth legend gave him two bodies, one an angelic one with which he appears in heaven, and the other a human body, which was carried in the at his 'translation' and with which he appears now among mortals.<sup>(70)</sup>

When he was first brought into Heaven, the Angel of Death protested Elijah's entrance alive, this being a transgression of God's curse upon Adam. But Elijah threw the Angel of Death to the ground, and were it not for God's intervention, he would have rid the world from the evil of death. (71)

When on Mt. Carmel, in order to manifest the greatness of God, and prove the strength of God's fire, Elijah soaked God's sacrifice and the altar, and also filled the trench around the altar with water. The water Elijah obtained from the tips of his fingers,, which flowed with water until everything was soaked. (72) It is on that very same day that Elijah made sun stand still. (73)

(68) Succa lla, <sup>הַשִּׁמְשׁוֹן הַבְּרָכָה הַזֶּה הָיָה</sup> Elijah could not be meant.  
Kohen, "Monatschrift" XII, pp. 283-4, 288; Bar Ami, "Ost u. West", IV, p. 477.

Elija's girdle of skins is traced to come from the ram that served as substitute in the sacrifice of Isaac. (74)

The Messianic stories are amplified still more and more miraculous and supernatural. Not only will Elijah announce Messiah, but he will perform great miracles as an attestation to his tidings. (75) He will lead the Jewish people to the desert of Judah, and there by feeding them fire brands will choose those who deserve to remain for the Messianic era. (76) When Messiah will arrive, Elijah will revive the dead, kill Samael the angel of Evil, restore the primordial Light, and reveal the Divine Majesty. (77)

In his visits to the pious, at this period, Elijah is miraculous, and his rewards very lavishing. The elements of the wandering princes of the general Medieval legends is very obvious. To one poor pious man he appears in the guise of a servant, insisting that the former sells him, and use the money obtained for him. For the procuror he builds a palace over night and disappears. (78) To prevent another rich but miserly man from finding a great treasure hidden in the grounds he was digging for the foundations of house, Elijah builds the house for the rich man over night, and the treasure is left undiscovered for another deserving man. (79)

So many were the stories of Elijah's wanderings, appearing and disappearing in the most miraculous manner, but always ready to help the Jew in his needs and tribulations, that Elijah became the

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- (69) Ha-Pardes p. 162.
  - (70) Zohar נחמיה p.167a
  - (71) Midr. Ruth 59, 74.
  - (72) Tanchuma p. 165, ed. Buber.
  - (73) Aggadot Bereshit 76.
  - (74) Yalk. Reub. ירמיה
  - (75) Vide infra Part II, "The Seven Miracles" p. 67
  - (76) Pesikta Rabosi B. ha-M ch. - שדחח
  - (77) Othoth haMoshiah, II, 62; V, 128. Yalk. Hodosh p. 58a.
  - (78) R. Nissim, "Hibbur Yaffeh" p.11. Vide infra p. 101-2

prototype of the Wandering Jew.<sup>(80)</sup>

In Kabbalah and mystic literature, which developed during the early Medieval ages, Elijah plays a great role. He is accredited with founding Kabbalah. It was Elijah that revealed it to Simeon ben Yochai.<sup>(81)</sup> It was directly from Elijah that Jacob ben Nazir, the great teacher of Kabbalah, received his knowledge. Elijah also imparted the mysteries of Kabbalah to Abraham ben Isaak, and Abraham ben David of Posquieres.<sup>(82)</sup> Elijah is also accredited as restoring Kabbalah to R. Isaac Lurie Ashknazi in the middle of the 14th century, after Kabbalah was removed for several centuries.<sup>(83)</sup>

Like in the Talmud stories the Kabbalists claim Elijah appearing to them as teacher, and explaining the mysterious and the difficult.<sup>(84)</sup> To the father of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, Elijah appeared, and told him that his son to be born would be "a light in Israel". So frequent and intimate were the dealings of the Kabbalists with Elijah that they could quote him and by means of formulae beswear to perform certain things.<sup>(85)</sup>

It were these Kabbalistic claims of Elijah that gave impetus to the numerous and most romantic stories of Elijah among the Hassidim, who have used and misused Elijah more than any other character of the Bible.

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(79) R. Nissim, "Hibbur Yaffeh" p.11. Vide Infra p.

(80) J. E., V. p. 127; Kohler, "Hebrew Union College Addresses and others" p. 187, on the "Wandering Jew"; Ost u. West, vol. IV, p.807.

(81) Emek ha-Melech, Intro. p.5b; Introductions to Sefer ha-Koneh and Sefer Pliyyoth.

(82) "Shem Hagdolim", Asulai, II, 1; Yellineck, "Auswahl. Kabbalist. Mystik". pp. 4-5; Grätz, "Gesch." VII, p. 445, note 3. B. ha-M. III, p.38.

(83) Emek ha-Melech, Intro. p. 5b.

(84) Asulai, "Shem ha-Gdol.", X, p.165.

(85) Massioth Pliyyoth, pp. 24-25. "Emek ha-Melech", 3rd Intro. p. 10a



PART II

## CHAPTER I

### MESSIANIC STORIES.

The Messianic stories -- The climax of  
Elijah's activity -- Until the time of  
Messiah -- Elijah precursor of Messiah  
-- Dates upon which Elijah may appear  
-- Announcing Messiah -- The seven  
miracles -- Selecting the deserving  
-- Fighting Gog and Mogog -- Bringing  
peace upon the earth -- Repentance  
-- Restoration of families and tribes  
-- Restoration of lost objects --  
-- Rebuilding the Temple -- Explain-  
ing all mooted questions -- Will fix  
the calendar -- The last three days  
-- Samael killed -- Messiah's arrival  
-- The Messianic era.

#### THE MESSIANIC STORIES

Suggested by Malachi, (1) Elijah's greatest activity  
at the rise of Christianity and several centuries following was  
in connection with the fulfillment of the Messianic hope. The  
Talmudic period interested in other activities of Elijah used  
the Messianic mission of Elijah only for mere speculation. But  
with the rise of the mystical forces, the legends of Elijah in  
connection with Messiah assumed fantastic and romantic form. De-  
tails were elaborated upon and gaps filled out. Elijah remained  
connected with Messianic hopes for all times. He was introduced  
as such in the liturgy and ritual even to the present day. (2)

#### THE CLIMAX OF ELIJAH'S ACTIVITY

The greatest of Elijah is the one of announcing, and  
preparing the way for the coming of Messiah. The Elijah legends  
of all periods, though differing in content and presentation all

equally elaborated upon this event.

It was in his quiet and fervent prayer on Mt. Carmel to send down a fire to consume the sacrifice arranged for Yahweh, which resulted in the overthrow of the Baal worship and the purification of the religion of Israel that he was promised the mission of bringing Messiah to the people chosen by God.<sup>(5)</sup>

#### UNTIL THE TIME OF MESSIAH

In the second year of the reign of Ahaziah, Elijah was "translated",<sup>(4)</sup> Body and soul he was taken up in a fiery chariot to heaven.<sup>(5)</sup> Of course the Angel of Death objected to such a procedure. With the curse pronounced by God upon Adam, no human being was to enter Heaven without first being killed by the Angel of Death, and Elijah's arrival was an intrusion upon the rights of the "Angel of Death." But the Angel of Death, the slayer of the mightiest was no equal to Elijah. No sooner did he announce his objection when Elijah had him under his feet, finding this a good opportunity to rid the world of an evil. Just then God appeared, granted a special dispensation to permit the entrance of Elijah alive to Heaven, and saved the Angel of Death from a disgraceful end.<sup>(6)</sup> Since, Heaven has been the abode of Elijah.<sup>(7)</sup> Here and there he appears on the earth, either in the form of an angel or in the guise of a man to perform a mission, but soon returns again to Heaven. There he will remain until the coming of Messiah arrives, when he will go down upon the earth and announce Messiah's coming. He will then disappear again and re-appear for all times at the wars of Go and Mogog.<sup>(8)</sup>

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(1) Malachi, III, 23.

(2) Vide Supra, p. 26

(3) Midr. Shir Ha-Shirem, XXV, ed. Grunhuth; Aggad. Beresh. 76.

(4) II Kings II, 11.

(5) Pesikta, Rabosi V, p. 15a and b.

ELIJAH PRECURSOR OF MESSIAH

It was Malachi that informed the world that Elijah will precede the Messianic era. But the Rabbis learned of this fact in their own way and more directly. They were once discussing the origin of Elijah. Some claimed that he was the descendant of Gad, others of Benjamin and still others of Levi, because he ate the first part of the bread baked by the widow of Zarephath, (9) bread permitted only to the priests. Just then Elijah appeared in the Academy and settled this argument. "I am a descendant of Rachael and the reason for my eating the first portion of the widow's bread was to hint at the fact that I shall appear before Messiah ben Joseph, as well as Messiah ben David. For the Widow's son was no other than Messiah ben Joseph. (10)

DATES UPON WHICH ELIJAH MAY APPEAR  
TO ANNOUNCE THE COMING OF  
MESSIAH

So certain was the Messianic belief that regular systems were worked out as to the date and time Elijah may appear and announce the coming of Messiah. This speculation developed during the Talmudic period. (11)

If two sabbaths in succession are observed properly according to all the injunctions of the Torah and the Rabbis, then Elijah will surely appear and herald in Messiah. (12)

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(6) Zohar, Ruth 76a, ed. Warsaw 1885.

(7) Pirke R. El. XVI.

(8) Seder Olam R. XVII; Kid. 70a; Ber. R. XXXIV, 8; Succa 5a; Ratner on Seder Olam, R. XVII.

(9) I Kings XVII.

(10) Yer. Succa, beg. of Ch. V; Erubin 43a; Tanna D. Eliyahu R. p. 97 and Zuta p. 199, ed. Friedman. - Another tradition

Elijah could not come on Friday or any day preceding a Holiday for on these days the people are busy preparing for Sabbath or the Holiday, nor would Elijah come on a Sabbath or a Holiday, for then, the people can not be disturbed from enjoying the respite and festivity of the day. (13)

R. Josi ben Kisma is not interested in the day Elijah will appear to announce Messiah, he has a different sign which he imparted to his anxious students: When the gates will fall, be re-built, fall again, be re-built and then again fall, before they will be re-built another time Messiah will be on hand. (14)

Some legends, however, are more definite. Hence they inform that Elijah will appear in the month of Nissan, when he will usher in Messiah ben Joseph and start making all other preparations for the coming of Messiah Ben David. (15)

To a group of Rabbis, Elijah once told that when he will go down to Egypt, Messiah will come. (16)

860 R. Judah the brother of R. Sol Hasido had the most definite information. Messiah will come eighty five Jubilee Cycles after the destruction of the last Temple. This information was given to him by Elijah himself. (17)

#### ANNOUNCING MESSIAH

The entire world will know when it will be God's will to send to man the promised Messiah. But Elijah will not announce his

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has it that the son of the widow was Jonah - Pirke R. El. XXXIII.

(11) Kohen, "Monatschrift." XII, p. 250.

(12) Sabb. 118a - This is given as the reason for the recital of Elijah hymns on the outgoing of Sabbath, as if to call Elijah's attention that the Sabbath was observed properly

אבודהרן אבודהרן אבודהרן Abudharan.

coming in one time to all cities and man. He will rather reveal himself to one community while he will not be noticed by another; appear with the great tidings to one man and will be hidden from another. (18)

### MESSIAH BEN JOSEPH

The coming of Messiah announced, Elijah will then usher in Messiah ben Joseph. The latter, however, will be killed by Hermielos, the anti-Messiah, (19) whom in turn Elijah will render powerless. (20) Messiah ben Joseph is the son of the widow of Zarephath, whom Elijah has resurrected, and kept him hidden away <sup>in heaven</sup> until then. The temporary death was only the fulfillment of the decree of God upon Adam. (21)

### RESURRECTION

But many things will happen between the coming of Elijah and Messiah. Elijah will prepare the world and Israel for the King of Peace and many miracles will be performed in the act of preparation. The first thing Elijah will be called upon to do will be to resurrect the dead. For the people will ask Elijah as an attestation that his tidings of Messiah are true, that he resurrect not only those not known to them, but those who died recently and whom they could recognize. Elijah will gladly comply with their wishes. (15)

### THE SEVEN MIRACLES

Not only will Elijah resurrect the dead, but perform seven other miracles as additional proof. He will bring before them

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(13) Pesahin 13a; Erubin 43a - thus if one makes a vow <sup>הכריז</sup> he can drink wine on Sabbath and Holidays. Tur Orach Chaim Ch. 295 states this the reason for the recital of the Elijah hymns on Sabbath night. He can not come on Friday or Saturday. But is to be invoked again on Sabbath night when it is again possible for him to appear and announce Messiah. <sup>75</sup>

Moses and the generation of the wilderness; he will bring forth Korah and his company. He will revive Messiah ben Joseph, He will produce the three mysteriously lost sacred vessels of the Temple: the Ark, the Omer containing the Manna and the vessel for sacred oil. He will show the scepter he received from God. He will crush mountains like straw and reveal to man the Great Mystery. (23)

# SELECTING THE DESERVING

Having announced the coming of Messiah, Elijah will disappear for forty five days. He will then re-appear and lead Israel to the desert of Judah, (24) and there give them to eat fire brands and burning coals. Those who are faithful will eat them unhurt. The others he will send away among the Goyyim where they will perish in the wars of Gog and Magog. (25)

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- (14) Sanh. 98a.
  - (15) Baba Mezia 85b; Rosh Hashana 11a; Sefer Eliyahu in B. ha-M., Vol. III, p. 68, also
  - (16) S. Eliyahu R. XVIII, p. 97, ed. Friedman.
  - (17) Sanh. 97b.
  - (18) Shir ha-Shirem Z. 37, ed. Buber.
  - (19) Messiah ben Joseph is a preation of the North, parallel to Messiah ben David of the South. However; since there can be only one King in the Messianic era, tradition kills one. - Friedman, S. Eliyahu R. v'Z. Intro. p. 20.
  - (20) Pirke Moshiah, Yellineck, B. ha -M.
  - (21) S. Eliyahu R. XVIII, pp. 97 - 98, ed. Friedman.
  - (22) Shir ha-Shirem, ed. Buber, 38, {Zunz, "Gottesd," p. 285.
  - (23) Beth ha-M., Yellineck, vol. III, p. 72. {Bousset, The anti-
  - (24) Other versions of the legend indicate Christ legend, p. 203. the desert of Sihon as the place.
  - (25) PesiktaRabosi שיר השירים also Shir ha-Shirim Z. ed. Schechter.
  - (22a) A Talmudic legend has it that resurrection will take place before Elijah will appear. תחית המתים מביאה לידי עלייתו  
 5"3 ואליו ילכו כל ישראל

### BRINGING PEACE ON EARTH

The Messianic era is to be an era of peace and universal brotherhood. Hence all differences and obstacles of peace must be removed before the new era begins. To accomplish this Elijah will settle all quarrels, bring together family feuds, adjust all controversies, legal disputes and differences that have accumulated in the course of time, and thus bring in peace and concord. (26)

### REPENTANCE

Repentance taken place today is good for the time being, but it is not the genuine kind. It is impelled by suffering and oppression. But when Elijah will announce the coming of Messiah true repentance will take place. Repentance without any ulterior motives, that will completely change the minds of the people, so as to be pure for the Messianic era. (27)

### RESTORING FAMILIES AND TRIBES

All families will be restored to purity by Elijah who will link up the broken genealogies and origins. (28) But what is even more important is that Elijah will restore to Israel the lost tribes of Jacob. (29)

### RESTORING LOST OBJECTS

There will be great rejoicing when Elijah will restore which are dear to the Jewish memory. Among them will be the Ark,

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(26) Erubin 43b; Eduyot VIII, 7; Num. R. III, end;  
Men. 45b.; Abbot d. R. N. 34



the flask of the Manna, the vessel of the הכסף, and the cruse with the המנחם, objects that disappeared miraculously at the destruction of the Temple. (30) The הספר the book containing much valuable information for the Jew will also be restored. (31)

### REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

With the glory of Israel restored, and eternal undisturbed peace at hand another great thing will happen, which will add even greater joy and glory to Israel. The last Temple will be rebuilt. The one that will remain for eternity. Elijah will be one of its four architects. Elijah because of the skillful masonry he displayed in building the stone altar on Mount Carmel. (32)

### EXPLAINING ALL MOOTED QUESTIONS

In the Messianic era there will no differences of opinion over any law or question, as all will be enlightened by Elijah beforehand. He will settle all mooted questions, explain all seemingly conflicting passages. (33) הוא יבאר לנו כל חוקי התורה (34)

It is then that Elijah will also reaffirm the standing laws and add new ones, but never abrogate the old. (35a)

### WILL FIX THE CALENDAR

The principle of intercalation was lost to Israel with the death of Joseph and his generation. When Elijah will prepare the way

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- (27) Seder Olam XVII, p. 36a and b.; Pirke R. El. chs. 43, 47, ed. Friedlander p. 344
  - (28) Eduyot VIII, opinion of Johanan ben Zachai
  - (29) Eccles. Sirach XLVIII. 10, 11
  - (30) Arotyot 12a ; Sota 13a
  - (31) Midr. Shir ha-Shirim
  - (32) Succa, 52b ; Rashi ibid
  - (33) Yib. 102b; Men. 45a and b,

for the coming of Messiah he will also restore this knowledge. (35)

### THE WARS OF GOG AND MOGOG

The war of Gog and Mogog will be the greatest war in the history of the world. All the forces of the heathens will be mustered into one great army. But Elijah will come with with four hundred heavenly men of valor and defeat the enemy, and wars will be ended for all times. (36)

### THE LAST THREE DAYS

But the busiest days of Elijah's activity in the preparation of the coming of Messiah, will be the last three days before Messiah will arrive. On the first day of the three, Elijah will stand up on one of the mountains of Palestine and in a loud voice bewail its devastation. (37) So loud will be his cry, that it will be heard from one end of the earth to the other. Then Elijah will call in peace into the world, proclaiming: "Peace will now come over the earth". On the second day Elijah will speak words of comfort, resurrect the dead, perform miracles and bring in Messiah. On the third day he will usher in eternal salvation. (38)

### SAMAEI KILLED

Elijah will end his career by killing Samael, the angel of Evil at the behest of God, and thus destroy all evil from the earth. (39)

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(34) While this legend is of an early origin, the expression <sup>תשיב</sup> meaning Tishbi will explain all questions and problems, is not known to the Gaonim Alfasi and Rosh. - Rohen, "Monatsheriff" p.283.

(35a) Men. 32b.

(35) Pirke R. El. p. 55. ed. Friedlander.

(36) Heb. Apoc. of Elijah, Bittenwieser, pp. 30-31; Shir ha-

### MESSIAH'S ARRIVAL

When all preparations will be completed, the Archangel Michael will blow on a trumpet and Elijah will appear with Messiah ben David, whom he will present to the world.<sup>(40)</sup>

### THE MESSIANIC ERA

When Messiah will arrive, at his bidding Elijah will sound the trumpet. At the first blast the primordial light will appear, at the second blast all dead will rise, at the third the Divine Majesty will appear.<sup>(41)</sup> Then Elijah will become one of the eight princes of the world,<sup>(42)</sup> and will continue his activities as Guardian Angel for the rest of the time. Among many other things he will plead to God to free those in Gehenna, whose children will be in Paradise.<sup>(43)</sup> He will also be a mouth piece to Moses as Aaron once was.<sup>(44)</sup>

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Shirim Zuta. ed. Shechter.

- (37) The Zionists are saving Elijah from tears.
- (38) Pesakta Rabosi 35, 161; S. Eliyahu R. vZ. Intro. p. 25
- (39) Yalkut Hodosh 58a ed. Radowel.
- (40) "Othoth ha-Moshiah", B. ha-M. II, p. 62.
- (41) Mellineck, B. ha-M. V, P.128.
- (42) Micah V. 4.
- (43) Koheleth R. IV, 1.
- (44) Zohar 33 III, p.27.

## CHAPTER II

### ELIJAH'S DUTIES IN HEAVEN

Elijah as Psychopomp -- Sabbath night duties -- Recorder of deeds and events -- Companion of Messiah -- Miscellaneous duties.

### ELIJAH'S HEAVENLY DUTIES

The heavenly duties of Elijah are numerous, and express the romantic desires and hopes of the pious Jew. Most of these legends have developed in post-Talmudic times in the form of Midrashim.

### ELIJAH AS PSYCHOPOMP

In Heaven Elijah stands at the road crossing and directs the the pious to Paradise and the impious to Gehenna.<sup>(1)</sup> He personally attends to the placing of the pious in their respective seats in Paradise.<sup>(2)</sup> On the incoming of Sabbath he leads all souls out of Gehenna for the Sabbath rest, and on Sabbath night he leads them back.<sup>(3)</sup>

### SABBATH NIGHT DUTIES

On every Sabbath night, immediately after sunset the Heavenly Council is called in session to decide which souls should return to Gehenna. Those declared purged, Elijah leads in Paradise, those who have a week or more in Gehenna are sent back, but those who have only a few days more to serve in Gehenna, Elijah takes

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(1) Pirke R. El. XVI, ed Friedlander p.102 ; Yellineck ,  
B. ha-M. Intro.

the punishment upon himself and sends the soul to Paradise. (4)

On Sabbath night Elijah also seats under the Tree of Life and passes out decrees of reward to those who observed the past Sabbath properly. (5)

# RECORDER OF DEEDS AND EVENTS

From the time Elijah was 'translated' to the time of his appearance to announce the coming of Messiah he is entrusted with the task of keeping the records of every Jew. (6) A task also entrusted to Enoch in Apocalyptic literature.

Not only does he keep the records of individuals, but he is the chronicler of all Jewish history, which he shall continue to record until Israel will return to the land of its ancestors, and its government be reestablished. (7)

When God wishes to destroy the world, Elijah brings forth the records of meritorious deeds of men, and stays God in his wrath. (8)

Elijah also keeps the records of Mesalliances and undesirable marriages, and whenever possible prevents their realization. (9)

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(2) Ket. 77b.

(3) Yalk. Reub. טקטל שבת art. אלא- When children we used to postpone singing Elijah hymns until very late in the evening, believing that by so doing we kept Elijah from sending back the impious to Gehenna. When the twilights were very bright and the sunset red, then we would recite the Elijah hymns with great fervor, as if to implore Elijah to save the poor souls from the glowing fires of Gehenna, which are seen even in this world. - (From recollection)

(4) Yalk. Reubeni, art. אליהו - This given as reason for reciting the Elijah hymns on Sabbath night in "Tur Orah Hayyim" sect. 295, R. Isaac ben Mari.

(5) ש"ס p. 135 ff. - This also given as reason for reciting Elijah hymns on Sabbath night; - Jerusalem 1869, quotes from Madr. תלפית, ספר סדר דין, and ספר הירקא that reading Elijah hymns on Sabbath night brings prosperity, good heartedness, and sound memory. Same in Intro. to ספר אליהו הנביא, Rosenberg, Preface p.3. סגולה גדולה לפרנסה להצלחה ולברכה

COMPANION OF MESSIAH

The fifth Heaven is covered with gold and silver and decorated with most precious stones, the air is filled with the scent of the Lebanon. There Messiah rests on a costly and gorgeous bed covered with embroideries made by the angels, with him is his companion Elijah. When the prayers of those on earth, and the pleadings of the Kings and Patriarchs in Heaven ascend to this chamber, Elijah places Messiah's head on his lap caressing and comforting him that the end is very near. (10)

MISCELLANEOUS DUTIES

Elijah is a very busy man in Heaven. Besides the duties described, he also sacrifices the daily Peace-offering, ministers to the Patriarchs and before their daily prayers he pours water upon their hands from the heavenly Kiyor. (11) He also guards the relics of the destroyed Temple which were handed over to him by Jeremiah and which he will return when Messiah comes and the new Temple will be rebuilt. Among these are the Ark, the flask of Manna, the flask of the שמן המשחה and the flask of the מים החיים. (12) Last but not least Elijah is engaged daily in winding wreaths around the glory of God out of ascending prayers from Israel. (13)

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- (6) Yalk. Reub. ed. Amsterdam, פ' ח' ע"ב p. 9b, 141; Hapardes p. 162; Emek ha-Melech ch. 39.
  - (7) Seder Olam R. XVII,
  - (8) Tanchuma פ' ח' ע"ב
  - (9) Kid. 70a; Derech Erez part I.
  - (10) Yellinek, B. ha-M., II, pp. 49-50
  - (11) Yalk. Reub. פ' ח' ע"ב art. פ' ח' ע"ב; Emek ha-Melech end of ch. 65
  - (12) Yosippon I, 21.
  - (13) Zohar פ' ח' ע"ב; Yalkut פ' ח' ע"ב

# CHAPTER III

## ELIJAH AS GUARDIAN ANGEL

Elijah as guardian angel -- Protects  
the pious -- Rewards the pious --  
Comforts the dejected -- Admonishes  
the guilty -- Banishes the Yezor ha-  
Ra -- Helps the sick -- Protects the  
children -- Good genius of the home  
-- Guardian of Israel --

## ELIJAH AS GUARDIAN ANGEL

This activity of Elijah is the largest, has been recorded in most all Elijah legends and extended through the entire period of his activity. The largest number of legends about this mission of Elijah were created in the Talmudic period and recorded in the Talmud, however the Elijah legends of midieval and modern times are rich with similar exploits of Elijah. This idea was born from the persecution of the Jews, from the time of the downfall of its state. The only way they could retain their faith and still hold fast to the principle of *אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה*

was by inventing the protecting spirit of Elijah. The basis for this characteristics of Elijah can be traced to the Biblical account, where he is presented as one of those potent prophets who always appeared as watchman of the lore and his people in critical times. As guardian angel his activities were numerous helping and protecting at all times and under all circumstances and at all places. While he extended help to all those who were in need his chief concern is with the pious. To such an extent did he reply and appear whenever divine interference was necessary that he was named by the Haggadist "The bird of Heaven".(1)

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(1) Ber. 4b ; Targum on Eccles. X, 20.

PROTECTS THE PIOUS

To protect the pious and the innocent no land is too far for Elijah,<sup>(2)</sup> no place too remote,<sup>(3)</sup> and no means too hard.<sup>(4)</sup> He leaves nothing undone to help them in their distress and save them from misery.<sup>(5)</sup>

R. Meir was once sought by the Roman officials. A description of him was sent out to the police. Once on the road an official recognized him and started pursuing him. Elijah in the guise of a harlot appeared and stood along side of R. Meir. The official could not imagine R. Meir in such company, took it as a mistake on his part, and relinquished the pursuit.<sup>(6)</sup>

Joshua ha'Garse was ministering to R. Akibba, while the latter was in prison. One erev Yom Tov, when Joshua ha'Garsi came to the prison he found his teacher dead. He went out to call R. Joshua ben Levi. When both reached the prison, much to their surprise they found the gate open, and all the attendants fast asleep. In the court they met Elijah carrying the corpse of Akibba on his shoulders. He gently explained the astonished Rabbis: "Righteous people do not defile". Hence although a priest he could attend to the corpse of Akkiba.<sup>(7)</sup>

Nahum of Gimza was sent on a mission to the Roman government, carrying with him precious presents. On the way his presents were stolen, and the casket containing them filled with earth. Nahum

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(2) Aboda Zarah 18b; Sanh. 109a.

(3) Kid. 40a

(4) Ber. 58a; Aboda Zarah 17b; Sabb. 109b

(5) Lev. R. ch. IX; Num. R. V.

(6) Aboda Zarah 18b.

(7) Midr. on Proverbs ch. IX.



not aware of the theft appeared before the officials and offered his presents. Much to the fear of Nahum and the chagrin of the officials the casket was full of sand. Elijah appeared in the guise of a Roman official and advised the conferees that the contents is a precious sand which can be used in war like sword and bow. Just then Rome was laying siege to a city. The sand was tried, and the victory was quick and certain. Nahum's plea was honored and he was sent back with presents and respect. The thieves hearing of the incident came to claim the sand. They were siezed and punished for molesting the pious Nahum. (8)

R. Josi on the road stepped aside into one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray. Elijah appeared and guarded him from the evil spirits. (9)

When R. Shilla was arraigned before the Roman court, guilty of exercising Judaism, Elijah appeared as a witness and effected his acquittal. (10)

During the religious persecutions under Hadrian, Eliezer ben Prata was sentenced to death for being loyal to his religion. When the trial was to take place Elijah removed those who were to testify against him, and finally removed the Tanna four-hundred miles from the court. (11)

To R. Meir Elijah assisted in saving his mother in law from shame. (12)

A traveler came into a strange city shortly before Sabbath. He went to the synagogue to find some one whom he can give his money

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(8) Sanh. 109a.

(9) Ber. 3a. Vide infra p.

(10) Ber. 58a.

(11) Aboda Zarah 17b.

(12) Aboda Zarah 18b. cf. Grätz, "Gesch." IV, p. 208.

over Sabbath. There he saw a man of distinguished appearance praying very piously. The stranger entrusted all his valuables for keeping over Sabbath. Sabbath night when the stranger came for his belongings he found that he was dealing with a swindler. That night when the stranger was asleep Elijah appeared to him, and told him how to obtain his money from the wife of the swindler. The former followed Elijah's advice, and not only obtained his money, but succeeded in unmasking the hypocrite. (13)

When R. Judah left his camels on the street, Elijah appeared and watched them until the former returned. At another time Elijah protected R. Judah from four blasphemers who wished him evil. (14)

A rich man had a daughter who was a Batlonith. Once the son of the man's poor brother came to visit and get some assistance. and he fell in love with his cousin. In spite of the parents objections and fears, the wedding was to take place. On the night of the wedding Elijah appeared to the groom in the guise of an old man, and advised the former how to outwit the Angel of Death. It was not before long that the Angel of Death appeared in the guise of a poor old man. As he entered the house the groom rose, accepted the disguised poor man with respect, and placed him at the head of the table, waited upon him in person, and showed all hospitality possible, and the Angel of Death was powerless. (15)

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(13) Pesikta R. XIII; Yer. Ber. II.

(14) Zohar III p. 217a.

(15) Tanchuma 123b

REWARDS THE PIOUS

Not only does Elijah protect the pious, but he also rewards them by advice and material prosperity. This is one of the reasons for reciting Elijah hymns on the outgoing of Sabbath. It is then that Elijah sits under the Tree of Life and passes out his rewards to those who deserve them. (16)

R. Simeon ben Yochai fled from the Roman government. For thirteen years he hid himself in a cave. When the Emperor died, Elijah came to the Rabbi to inform him of the death, and the possibility of leaving his hiding place. (17)

R. Kohana in despair of his poverty, which led him to evil wanted to commit suicide by throwing himself from a roof. Elijah was at a distance of four hundred parsings, he jumped to the place in time to catch R. Kohana in his arms. Elijah cheered him up and provided him with riches. (18)

A pious man took upon himself not to accept any aid from mortals. He was very poor and his last garment and blanket were soon worn out. Elijah appeared to him in guise of an Arab, and gave him two coins to start trading. Before the year was over he became a very rich man, but his piety was rapidly diminishing. God rebuked Elijah for spoiling the greatest Hassid He had on earth. Hence Elijah took away from the man the two lucky coins he gave him, and the latter was poor again. The conditions were now intolerable to the man. He cried and fasted, prayed and repented, until Elijah appeared to him a again, gave him the coins and obtained a promise that this time his

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(16) Vide Supra p. 94.

(17) Sabb. 53b.

(18) Kid. 40a

wealth will not affect his piety. (19)

There was a poor but very pious couple. Elijah appeared to them in the guise of an Arab, and asked them when they would have six prosperous years which has been allotted to them. At first the man disbelieved Elijah, but after the latter appeared three times he consulted with his wife and requested to have the six good years at once. Notsooner was the wish expressed when the children of the pious couple found a great treasure. The couple spent the six prosperous years in benevolence and charity, and in doing every good possible. When the term was up, Elijah appeared to inform the end of the six years. But the wife of the pious man protested: "If you can find people using their wealth more conscientiously, and their money to a better advantage, then give it to them". Elijah reconsidered the matter, and obtained a special dispensation from God to leave all the wealth with the pious couple until the end of their days. (20)

There was a pious but very poor man. Elijah appeared to him and offered himself as a servant. The being able to withstand his insistence accepted him reluctantly. It was not very long before the king needed a skillful builder. Elijah informed his master of his skill, and he was sold to the King for a very great sum of money, which was given to the poor man. The first night in the King's house Elijah prayed to God, whereupon the contemplated palace of the king stood in readiness in the court. Elijah disappeared. (21)

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(19) Yalkut Shimeoni, Ruth, sect. 601

(20) Midr. Ruth Zuta ed. Buber near end; Yalk. Shim. sec. 607.

(21) Rabbenu Niissim, "Hibbur Yaffeh" p.16. -This story is embodied in the piyyut "Ish Hassid" in the Polish German ritual of the Sabbath Night.

COMFORTS THE DEJECTED

Elijah's missions do not end with protection or rewarding the deserving. He also comforts them when they are dejected. In each case the pious are the nearest to his heart.

Poverty and need was growing hard upon Rabbi Kibba and his wife. One cold winter night they spent in a little hut without covers or heat. Their only possession was but a little straw for a bed. To raise their spirits Elijah appeared in the guise of a poor man asking for some straw for his wife who is confined and has not even as much as a little straw under her. The couple were comforted seeing the poverty existing in the world. (22)

A devout and religious man who was also an industrious student of the law died while he was young. His wife would not be comforted, for she could find no reason for her husband's death. Daily she went to his friends and put up the questions of her husband's death to them. Until Elijah appeared in the guise of a student and succeeded in offering a valid explanation for her husband's death. She was comforted. (23)

It is in the capacity of a comforter that Elijah is the forerunner of Messiah. (24)

ADMONISHES THE GUILTY

Not only does he protect the pious but he also admonishes them. In that he is very severe with the pious and his intimate friends. (25) He sees that the guilty get their deserts, in all he

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(22) Ned. 50a; Ket. 62b.

(23) S. Eliyahu R. XV, p. 76. ed. Friedman.

(24) Pirke R. El. p.2, note 7, ed. Friedlander.

(25) Vide infra "Elijah Severe with the Pious" p.

invokes repentance. (26)

Seven years after Elijah's "Translation", he sent a letter to Jehoram admonishing him in his evil ways. (27)

Elijah paid regular visits to R. Annan and instructed him in "Sedar Eliyahu". Once a man came to R. Annan with presents, incidentally he asked R. Annan to decide a case for him. Due to the presents R. Annan felt disqualified to sit in judgment for the man. He sent him to R. Nachman. The latter knowing that the man was sent by R. Annan was lenient in his judgment. Because of that Elijah ceased visiting R. Annan. When the latter fasted and prayed for a long time, Elijah appeared to him, admonished him for his carelessness, and ordered him to prepare a box in which Elijah is to sit from now on in his appearances to R. Annan, unlike their previous interviews in which Elijah appeared to R. Annan face to face. (28)

R. Joshua ben Levi, in order to save the inhabitants of Lydda, gave up to the Roman Army Ula bar Koseheb. Elijah rebuked him for acting as an informer. (29)

Elijah rebuked R. Jehuda as withholding the coming of Messiah because of his leniency in judgment. (30)

He reproved R. Mair for dealing with the Apostate Elisha ben Abujah (Acher). (31)

The thieves that robbed Nahum of Gimza, are by a clever machination on the part of Elijah punished for their actions. (32)

A case in point is also the story of the Hassid who after becoming rich through Elijah, forgot his piety, for which Elijah

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(26) The element of invoking repentance in Elijah is strongly brought out in the Messianic stories, "Repentance", supra p. 89.

(27) Sedar Olam R. XVII.

(28) Ket. 106b.

(29) Yer. Ter. VIII; Ber. R. 94 end.

took away the wealth from him. (33)

There was a rich merchant who was overly confident in his material strength, and never considered God as a factor in his prosperity. Once while on his way to buy cattle, Elijah intercepted him and questioned him of his whereabouts. The merchant boastfully replied that he was on his way to the market place to buy cattle. "Say, 'with the help of God!'" Elijah added. "I have the money in my pocket and I shall buy cattle, whether God wishes so or not" - the merchant replied. When merchant came to the market he discovered that he lost his money. He went back home for new money and again he was stopped by Elijah on his way, the same questions and the same answers. When he reached the market place, his purse was missing again. A second time the merchant went home for new money and again he was overtaken by Elijah. "Where are you going?" - "To buy oxen, with the help of God," replied the merchant. "Go in peace and prosper," rejoined Elijah. Unnoticed Elijah placed all the lost money in the merchant's pocket. When the latter came to the market place, he saw two rare red cows, but the price was more than the money he took along. He put his hand in his pocket to re-count his money, when much to his surprise he found more than what he needed. He bought the cows, made a great deal on them and he understood. (34)

A Roman officer was lavishing his inherited money carelessly, Elijah appeared to him and admonished him for his wastefulness. (35)

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(30) Yoma 19b.

(31) Haggiga, 15a.

(32) Sanh. 109a. Vide Supra. pp. 97 - 98.

(33) Vide Supra pp. 100 - 101.

(34) Alfa Beta of Ben Sirah, IV, Ed. Venice.

(35) Gen. R. 33 - This incident shows Elijah's activities even outside of the Jewish fold.

### BANISHES THE YEZER HA'RA

Not only does Elijah admonish, but he makes it possible for those desiring to do right to do so. Hence, he conjures by an oath Yezer Ha'Ra to desist from his evil intentions. (36)

The same idea is brought out in the legend of Elijah killing Samael - the angel of evil - when Missiah comes. (37)

### HELPS THE SICK

As a guardian angel there is no limit to Elijah's activities. Helping the sick is one of the many. He comforts and affects cures by natural and miraculous ways.

Shimi bar Ashi swallowed a poisonous reptile. Elijah appeared to him and forced him to take an antidote which effected a cure. (38)

R. Judah I, Elijah saved from dreadful pains of a toothache by laying his hands upon his face. Not only did he effect the cure, but, also brought about a reconciliation between R. Judah and Rabbi Hiyah who were enemies for a long time. For Elijah appeared to R. Judah in the guise of R. Hiyah. (39)

To R. Nathan Elijah prescribed a diet for the improving of his health. (40)

### PROTECTS THE CHILDREN

With the little folks, Elijah is especially friendly. He is concerned with them ~~even~~ from pre-natal times, until they are safely in the Jewish covenant. The care of children forms a major

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(36) Sifre, 74a, Gen. R. 87, 5. Lev. R. 23, 3.

(37) Yalk. Hodosh, 58a, ed. Rodawski. Supra p. 91.

(38) Sabbat, 109b.

(39) Yer. Kil. IX, 32b; Ber. R. 33, 96.

(40) Gittin, 70a.



part of Elijah's missions in Medieval and Modern times.

While the babe is still in her Mother's womb, Elijah guards it carefully and keeps it from harms until it sees light.<sup>(41)</sup> When it is born, Elijah is in the lying-in chamber until the child is entered into the covenant and protected against demons and evil spirits.<sup>(42)</sup> But of greatest concern to Elijah is that the child, especially a boy be entered properly into the covenant of Abraham. Hence, he is present at every Brith,<sup>(43)</sup> and personally over sees the ceremony. He holds the baby while the circumcision takes place, blesses it and then remains near the child during the three critical days of the operation, to help and protect it.<sup>(44)</sup> For this purpose a special chair called the "Elijah Chair", *יֵשַׁע שֶׁל עֲלִיָּה* is prepared at every circumcision ceremony. It is upon this chair that each child is supposed to be laid for the operation, as it were in the hands of Elijah.<sup>(45)</sup> On the Sabbath, following the circumcision, Elijah is again invoked in a special piyyut.<sup>(46)</sup>

The mission of (Angel of the Covenant) was ordained upon Elijah in the following manner. In the time of Ahab and Izebl, Yahweh worship was neglected and the covenant of Abraham often broken. Elijah

(41) Yalk. Reub. *תורה*

(42) The amulets or "Ahir ha-Ma'aloeth Quittel" put up on the walls of the lying-in chamber, invokes Elijah to protect the Mother and child from evil spirits.

(43) Zohar, *נחלת* pp. 92-93; *תורה* p. 169a and *שם*; Shulchan-Aruch, Hilchoth "Milah", 265, 11; cf. Kol - Bo, Ch. 73.

(44) The "Elijah Chair" is left intact for three days- the dangerous period of the child's operation. Thus, Elijah is provided with a place during these days of his stay with the child. - J. E. Vol. V. p.128, Col. 2.

(45) Today the "Elijah Chair" is still prepared. But instead of keeping the child on that chair during the operation, the child is only put down on the "Elijah Chair" for a moment and then handed over to the Sandek, who is placed at the left of the "Elijah Chair". The prayer at the ceremony reads:

(46) Kol. - Bo, Ch. 73.

retired in a cave and there prayed to God,<sup>(47)</sup> and complained over Israel's forsaking the Covenant. Thereupon God appeared to him and promised him that because of his zealousness for God, no child shall be entered into the covenant of Abraham without him being present. To honor God's promise, the Rabbis instituted the "Elijah chair"<sup>(48)</sup> Some Haggidists consider this mission as a punishment imposed upon Elijah because in his over-zealousness he condemned the children of Ahab's time of forsaking the Covenant.<sup>(49)</sup> However, from all indications of the ceremony and the legends connected with it, as carried down to present time, the idea is that of invoking the protection of Elijah in his mission as a Guardian Angel.<sup>(50)</sup>

But Elijah's solicitude for children does not end with the B'rith. Thus, when a ship was storm-tossed, Elijah saved the entire crew of Gentiles in order to save the one Jewish child that was on board.<sup>(51)</sup> It is also one of his joys to visit schools for children.<sup>(52)</sup>

#### GOOD GENIUS OF THE HOME

The home in general is not neglected by Elijah. Medieval lore bringing to the home whenever the door is opened, thus he is present on Sabbath eve when the Sabbath lights radiate the home; he is in the home on Sabbath night to leave blessings and prosperity for the new week. He is the honorary guest at every B'rith.<sup>(53)</sup>

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- (47) I Kings, XIX, 10.  
 (48) Pirke. R. El. XXIX; Yalk. Shim. פסא and Joshua XV.  
 (49) Zohar פ' 93a.  
 (50) It is a practice to decorate the "Elijah Chair" and cover it with embroidery reading ברכך ה' . This custom well expresses the spirit in which Elijah's visit is taken.  
 (51) Psik. R. Kohana, ed. Buber, p. 136 ff. פסא וידה Supra.  
 (52) S. Eliyahu R. XVIII, p. 100, ed. Friedman.  
 (53) Vide Supra. p. 94, note 5.

He is present at the Seder and partakes of the meal,<sup>(55)</sup> He is especially interested in marriages. The right couple he blesses,<sup>(56)</sup> and does everything in his power to stop or help mesalliances.<sup>(57)</sup>

#### GUARDIAN OF ISRAEL

Not only does Elijah look after the welfare of the individual Jew, but also of Israel as a whole. He is Israel's protecting genius from creation,<sup>(58)</sup> until the end of days.<sup>(59)</sup>

When God wanted to create man he consulted the angels, who out of jealousy objected. Elijah was the only one among them, who favored God's plan, and not only did he favor the creation of men, but asked for the privilege to go down to the earth and serve them. God granted Elijah his request on the condition he bears a human name while on earth. Still and all he was not sent down to the earth as a full mortal until the times of Ahab, though as an angel he appeared to men before then. It was in the times of Ahab that he brought Israel back to the true faith, when he made them proclaim on Mt. Carmel יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ "When this mission was accomplished he was taken back to heaven, and appointed Guardian Angel of Israel in Heaven and on earth."<sup>(60)</sup>

The Angel of God who guided Israel through the wilderness, was no other than Elijah. It was he that headed them when they crossed the Red Sea.<sup>(61)</sup> It was Elijah in the person of Phineas that saved Israel in Midian.<sup>(62)</sup> It was Elijah that looked after Israel in the time of Jephta,<sup>(63)</sup> Elijah was the angel who appeared to

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(54) Vide Supra pp. 105-107, "Protects the Children"

(55) An "Elijah Cup" of wine is served for Elijah at the Seder table. He is expected to enter when the door is opened at "שפיר חתן"

(56) A picture of Elijah on a Ketuba of Medieval times, - J.E. vol. V. p.121, contains a photograph of one.

Gideon.<sup>(63)</sup> It was Elijah that saved Israel from the pernicious influence of Izebel.

When Haman wanted to destroy Israel, it was Elijah that affected salvation. It was he that informed Mordechai of Ahasuerus' decree, and Haman's machinations. <sup>(64)</sup> When Esther brought her complaint before the King, it was Elijah in the guise of Harbona that pointed out to the King, the tree in the court prepared by Haman for Mordechai, upon which the former was ultimately hanged. <sup>(65)</sup>

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- (57) Tanchuma דבראן, vide suprs story of the Katlonith, p. 99ff. Kid. 70a.
  - (58) Yalk. Reub. p. 9b ed. Amstredam; Ha-Pardes p.162; Emek ha-Melech, ch. 39.
  - (59) The Messianic legend, vide supra Part II, ch.I. - Pirke R. El. XXXV, p. 161 - Elijah the massanger of Salvation.
  - (60) Yalk. Reub. ד'ענין p. 9b
  - (61) D'Herbelot, "Biblioth. Orient" art. "Moussa".
  - (62) Vide Supra pp. 56-57.
  - (63) Vide Supra p. 59 ; Ber. R. IX. Tanchuma end of ע
  - (64) Esther R. III; Targum to Esther (Kohélet R. X.; S. Eliyahu R.XII, 55 ed. F.  
IV, 1. Targum Sheni to ibid.
  - (65) Pirke R. El. ed. Friedlander p. 407; Ber. R. 49; Esther R. X, 9. Aggadot of Maimanides מגילת אסתר I, 7.

## CHAPTER IV

### TEACHER AND GUIDE

Visits academies -- Teacher -- Re-  
veals heavenly secrets.

### VISITS ACADEMIES

Visiting Academies was one of the greatest joys of Elijah. Day after day he would go from one Academy to the other, and cognito or incognito, join in in the discussions, listen to the lectures, argue and enlighten the great Rabbis of the Talmud, and later of the Kabbalists.<sup>(1)</sup> He also loved to visit schools of children<sup>(1a)</sup>

Eliezer ben Hyrcanus was already a grown up youth, when he was still working in his father's field, totally ignorant of the Torah. Suddenly a desire came upon him to learn the Torah and the teachings of the Rabbis. All the wealth and comforts provided for him by his father would not satisfy him. He fasted and cried until Elijah appeared to him and advised him to go to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Johanan ben Zachai, where he became a great scholar.<sup>(2)</sup> Thus Elijah not only visits the Academies, but also influences students to go there.

The Academy of the mystic Gaon Joseph, Elijah visited daily.<sup>(2)</sup>

### ELIJAH AS TEACHER

As a teacher Elijah was very versatile. His greatest activity in this capacity was during the Talmudic times and the

times of the early mystics. However, when the time of Messiah will come he will again explain the Law to his people, and give final solution to all mooted questions. (4)

To Raba bar Abua, Elijah explained the Laws of Terumah, and another time enlightened him with regards to Esther. (5)

To some Rabbis he informed that a ram may be substituted for an ox and vice versa. (6) Another time upon a visit in an Academy he explained some difficult points in the history of Omri, and ended up in an enlightened discussion on the significance of womankind in human progress. (7) To another group he showed how shortsighted mortals are. (8) At all times he would give enlightened answers to all questions asked of him. (9)

To R. Simeon ben Levi and his son who were hiding in a cave, he appeared twice daily and instructed them. (10)

When Eliezer asked him difficult questions, Elijah encouraged him by informing him that the same questions were asked in the heavenly academies. (11)

Eliezer ben Simeon he taught for thirteen years. (12)

R. Annan he used to visit daily and teach "Seder Eliyahu" until the latter was involved in an injustice, when Elijah's ceased being as frequent. (13)

(1) S. Eliyahu R. IX, pp. 49, 51; XIV, pp. 70ff. XVIII, pp. 95, 99ff. ed. Friedman.

(1a) Ibid, p. 100.

(2) Pirke R. El. ch. I, ed. Friedlander.

(3) First Epistle of Sherira ed. Neubauer p. 32

(4) Yeb. 102 b; Men. 45; Sohar 13 III, 27. Vide Supra p. 90.

(5) Megilah 15b

(6) S. Eliyahu R. VI, p. 36.

(7) Ibid IX, pp. 49, 51

(8) Ibid II, p. 9.; Midr. Ha'Neelam p. 100b שם שם שם שם S. Eliyahu R. XIV, p. 70ff. XVI, p. 80.

(9) Ta'anith 22a

(10) Sohar Hodosh 47b.

Nehorai was a special pet of Elijah and he instructed in Biblical passages, as well as in the phenomena of nature.<sup>(14)</sup>

He gave individual instruction to Rabbah ben Shila, Rabbah ben Abahu, R. Abiathor, Rav Kohana, Bar He He and others who are not mentioned by name.<sup>(15)</sup>

He would meet the Rabbis at the Academies, at their homes or at any place where there was an occasion for a discussion of the Torah, and enlightenment was wanting.<sup>(16)</sup> Yet while he always explained, he never initiated new laws,<sup>(17)</sup> that he will do when Messiah will come.<sup>(18)</sup>

His teachings were not limited to the Talmudic Rabbis, he also instructed the Kabbalists.<sup>(19)</sup> To R. Abraham ben David and R. Jacob ha-Nazir he revealed the mysteries of Kabbalah.<sup>(20)</sup> After Kabbalah has been lost for several centuries, Elijah restores it again through R. Isaac Lurie Ashknazi.<sup>(21)</sup>

But his teachings are not even confined to Jews, he also enlightens non-Jews. To an inquiring non-Jew he explained about the seven prophets that prophesied among the gentiles.<sup>(22)</sup> With a Parsee he argued against the divinity of fire.<sup>(23)</sup>

Nor were his teachings limited to the Law or religious and moral problems. "Eat one third, drink one third, and rest one

(11) Zohar *an* 220b.

(12) *Tesikta* ed. Buber X, p. 92b.

(13) Ket. 105b, vide *supra* p. 103 - The present collection "Tanna dbe Eliyahu Rabbah v' Eutah was considered for a long time the treatises in which Elijah instructed R. Amman. However the present collection does neither come from Elijah, or from an Elijah school. There may have been a similar collection possessed by the Talmudists.- Kohen, "Monatschrift" p. 248, note 6, vol. XII.

(14) Yer. Ber. IX. 13c; Ruth R. IV.

(15) Haggiga 9b, 15b; B. Mezia 114b; Gittin 6b; Kid. 41a; B. Bathra 7b; Yer. Ter. I, 40a; Ket. 61a

(16) Yeb. 63a; Megila 15b; Ber. 3a; 29b; Ket. 106a; B. Mezia 85b

one third", was his teaching to the sickly R. Nathan. (24) Be not angry and you will not sin, drink not and you will not go amiss" - was another advice. (25) If one wants to be a student, he must love the work, and be willing to sacrifice for it. (27) Elijah states in another place. To a group of Rabbis in an Academy he explained the position of the earth among the spheres. (28)

### REVEALS HEAVENLY SECRETS

Not only does Elijah teach and instruct but he also reveals heavenly secrets. Of course only his friends are let in on these mysteries. (29)

R. Jeshua ben Levi wanted to see the bright stones, which according to Isaiah, (30) will replace the sun when Palestine will be restored to its ancient glory. Elijah showed it to him in the following manner. A ship was storm-tossed on the great Ocean, on board was one Jewish child. Elijah appeared to the child and obtained a promise from it, that it will lead R. Jeshua ben Levi to the place where the precious stones are hidden, for which Elijah will save the ship from drowning. When the ship came ashore R. Jeshua ben Levi followed the child. For three days they wandered, until they came to a cave.

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- ( Sabb. 13a; Sanh. 97a; Ber. R. ch. 54; Num. R. IV, et vide infra "Elijah's Appearings". pp.
  - (17) This fact may be noticed in examining the references in notes 15 and 16.
  - (18) Men 32b.
  - (19) Introductions to "sefer ha-Plich" and "Sefer ha-Koneh"; B. ha-M. III, 38, ; Grätz, "Gesh." VII, note 3, p. 445; Yellineck, "Auswahl. Kabbalistische Mystik" pp. 4-5;
  - (20) Rekanati p. 173d; Asulai, "שו"ת קדושים II, 1 באר"י  
מש"כ sec. מש"כ
  - (21) "Emek ha-Melech" Intro. p. 5b.
  - (22) S. Eliyahu R. VI, p. 35, ed. Friedman
  - (23) Ibid, I, p. 5.
  - (24) Gittin 70
  - (25) Ber. 29b.
  - (26) S. Eliyahu R. XXII, p. 121.



There the stones were treasured. R. Jeshua picked up the stones, but the glow was so strong that he dropped them to the ground and they disappeared. (31)

Once Joshua ben Lewi asked Elijah to take him along on his journeys around the world. The prophet yielded to the request on condition that Jeshua never questions his actions. Should he violate the condition, the journey will end, and the Rabbi will be obliged to return home. R. Jeshua agreed, and they started out. Their first stop was at the home of a poor man whose only possession was a cow, but who with his wife accepted the two strangers most kindly, and entertained them to the best of their ability. The Next morning R. Jeshua overheard Elijah praying to God the cow of the host be killed, and before they left the hospitable house, the cow was dead. R. Jeshua could not refrain, and exclaimed to Elijah: "Is this the reward, the poor man receives for his hospitality?". Elijah reminded R. Jeshua of the agreement, and silently they continued on their trip.

Toward evening they came to the house of a rich man, who did not even as much as look at them, and they were compelled to pass the night without food or drink. In the morning R. Jeshua heard Elijah pray to God that He build a wall which had caved in in the rich man's house. At once the wall stood erect. This agitated R. Jeshua but remembering the agreement he kept silence.

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- (28) Seder Eliyahu R. II, p. 9, ed. Friedman. - The following section "Reveals Heavenly Secrets", and the chapter on "Elijah as Friend" pp. bring out the same ideas as in this chapter.
- (29) Vide Infra, pp. 111ff
- (30) Chapter LIV, 11-12
- (31) Pesikta R. Kahana XVIII, ed. Buber p. 136ff. אֵלִיָּהוּ וְיֵשׁוּעַ

On the next evening they came to a Synagogue adorned with silver and gold, yet the rich members thereof showed no concern for travelers or guests, dismissed merely with bread and water. Upon leaving that place prayed that God would make them all leaders. Jehu R. Jeshua was about to break the agreement, but forced himself to silence.

In the next city they met very generous people, who vied one another in performing acts of kindness and hospitality to strangers. Great was the surprise of R. Jeshua when he heard the prophet pray that God givex them only one great leader.

R. Jeshua ben Levi could not refrain any longer, and asked Elijah for an explanation for all his strange acts, perfectly willing to forfeit the continuation of the journey. Elijah smilingly answered:

"The poor and generous man, we first met, was about to lose his wife, so I prayed to God, that he take the life of his cow instead of that of his wife. I prayed for the inhospitable rich man that the ~~wx~~ caved in wall in his house stand up, because under that wall there is a great treasure, which that man does not deserve. I prayed for many leaders in the unfriendly congregation. That will be the cause of its downfall, which it deserves. I wished only one leader the kind community of our last acquaintance, so that unity and peace may always be among them, and in God's name they prosper." (32)

It was to the same R. Jeshua ben Lewi that Elijah showed his seat in Paradise, while he was still alive. (33) At another time he arranged for him an interview with Messiah. (34)

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(32) Rabbenu Nissim, "Hibbur Yaffeh" pp. 9-12. Yellineck, B. ha-M. V. 133-135; VI, 131-133; Koran, Sura XVII, 59-82 - evidently story very old.

(33) Sanh. 93a.

(34) Ket. 77b - R. Jeshua ben Levi was the favorite of Elijah. B. ha-M I, p.148; III, p.68.

To Rab he disclosed a great celestial mystery for which Elijah was censured in Heaven. (35)

To R. Judah brother of R. Solo Hassido, Elijah told the appointed time for the arrival of Messiah, viz: eighty-five Jubilee cycles after the destruction of the last Temple. He also told the reason why Messiah does not come sooner is because the prevalence of immorality in the world. (36) He also told him another great secret, that the Satan is powerless on Yom Kippur. (37)

R. Beroka was promenading with Elijah in the market-place. The former wanted to know, who of all the people assembled there will be permitted to enjoy future life in Paradise. Elijah showed him a motley jailer, because the latter protected the women in his custody from immorality. Elijah also pointed out to two jesters as candidates for the future world, because whenever they see some one sad, they cheer him up. (38)

To Rabbah bar Shilo, Elijah told what God was doing in Heaven while the Torah was studied in the academies on earth: Godx was repeating the lesson with them, except that of R. Meir, because the latter's wasx not original. (39) To other Rabbis, Elijah told which law God was studying at a certain time. (40)

In the great controversy between Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Johanan ben Zakkai, when the latter retained his opinion in spite of the Bath Kol, and other supernatural signs, Elijah communicated to R. Nathan, the stand on the controversy taken in Heaven. "Ye have

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(35) B. Mezia 85b.

(36) Sanh. 97b.

(37) Yoma 19b.

(38) Ta'anith 22a; Yer, Ibid 64b

(39) Haggiga 15b

(40) B. Mezia 59b; Haggiga 15a; Gittin 6b; Sohar, "Phineas" p. 220b.

conquered me my children," said God.(41)

R. Josi while traveling, stepped aside on the road, and entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem to offer his prayers. Elijah appeared, stood at the door and guarded him until he came out. Elijah then admonished R. Josi for entering the abode of evil spirits: One should rather make a short prayer, than enter a ruin. Elijah then asked him what he heard in the ruin, to which R. Josi replied: "A voice crying like a dove, saying: 'Woe unto my children on whose account, I have destroyed my Temple! burned my cities, and caused them to be exiled among the nations.' " - Elijah then, informed R. Josi that the voice he heard was the voice of God, bewailing the conditions of his exiled children. Three times daily, and every time people assemble in the Synagogue, God bends his head and says: "Happy the King in whose kingdom there is peace! What joy is there to a father who has disowned his children, and woe to the children who are estranged from the father's table.(42)

He also revealed other secrets to R. Josi, he also told him when Messiah will come.(43)

A young student who was frequently visited by Elijah, wanted to be shown the heavenly academy. Elijah promised him with one condition that he would not look for the seat of R. Hiyyah - the chair which is not surrounded by angels. Elijah took the student up to heaven, but the latter could not withhold from looking at the forbidden chair, when two sparks came forth and dimmed his sight. When back on earth the student went to the grave of R. Hiyyah and cried for help. Whereupon he regained his sight for daylight but remained blind at nights.(44)

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(41) B. Mezia 59b

(42) Ber. 3a

(43) Sanh. 98a

(44) B. Mezia 85b

While in Eiberias, Elijah met R. Simeon and informed him what God was doing in heaven. (45)

Rightly Elijah took up to heaven the souls of renowned Kabbalists and showed them the Heavenly Council, whereby they learned the secrets of the Higher world. (46)

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(45) Zohar, "Phineas" p. 241b

(46) "Emek ha-Melech" 3. intro. p. 10 -The Kabbalists always used Elijah as a guide in Heaven.

## CHAPTER V

### ELIJAH AS A FRIEND

Elijah as friend -- Choosing his friends  
-- Frequency of his visits -- Intimacy  
with his friends -- Elijah severe with  
his friends --

### ELIJAH AS FRIEND

Elijah had many friends among the Tannaim, Amoraxim Kabbalists and other pious men. He would visit them frequently, be on very intimate terms with them, discuss the Torah with them, admonish them and help them, But the relation was always a spiritual one attempts to make Elijah join in a meal, like the later "Elijah Cup" legend.<sup>(1)</sup>

### CHOOSING HIS FRIEND

Elijah chose his friends from among the pious and the learned.<sup>(2)</sup> But he had also other standards by which he selected his friends he preferred the hospitable poor, the democratic and the kind.<sup>(3)</sup>

Thus of the two brothers of whom one would serve himself first and then his guests, and the other brother who first diligently attended to his guests and then served himself, Elijah visited the latter but would not visit the former.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Vide supra p. 106

(2) Vide supra "Elijah as Teacher and Guide" ch.4, Part II - Most of his relations was as teacher of the Law.

(3) Already in the Biblical story of the widow of Zarephath ( I Kings , XVII ) this motif is indicated. But all of Elijah's revelations bring him to the homes of the hospitable poor. To the rich he only appears as admonisher.

(4) Ket. 61a

Again of the two pious brothers one of whom allowed his servants his servants to partake in all his courses on his meal, while the other only a part of it, Elijah visited the former and never the latter. (5)

In Talmud Jeshua ben Levi seems to be the greatest favorite of Elijah, and in the Zohar Simeon ben Yochai.

#### FREQUENCY OF HIS VISITS

Once Elijah chose someone as his friend, he would visit him very frequently. The frequency always proportional to the degree of friendship. (6)

R. Anan before the intimacy was broken, Elijah would visit daily. (7) Gaon Joseph Elijah visited daily at his academy. (8) Other visits to Rabbis were treated in the previous chapter. (9)

#### INTIMACY WITH HIS FRIENDS

Elijah becomes very intimate with his friends. He not only instructs them but he also lets them in on his heavenly secrets. (10) But even more he commits his friends to be intimate with him, even to the extent of being admonished. Thus when R. Bar Abua met Elijah on this cemetery he reminds the latter that he is a priest and has no business there. (11)

R. Josi is so familiar with Elijah that he rebukes for being too zealous and hot tempered. (12)

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- (5) Ket. 61a
  - (6) Ber. 29b; Baba Bathra 7b ; Baba Mezia 85b ; Sanh. 113a.; Bereshit R. 35 ;
  - (7) Ket. 106b
  - (8) First Epistle of Sherira, ed. Neubauer, p. 32
  - (9) "Teacher and Guide" pp. 109-117
  - (10) Vide supra , Ksec. "Reveals Heavenly Secrets" p.112ff.
  - (11) Baba Mezia 114a

ELIJAH SEVERE WITH HIS FRIENDS

But while Elijah was intimate with his friends he demanded of them to follow "the Law of the Saints," not only Law but Conscience. (12) The slightest religious, and especially moral transgression, is sufficient cause for the severance of friendship.

R. Annan, Elijah used to visit daily and instruct in "Seder Eliyahu". Their relations were intimate and close. Once inadvertently, Annan caused a bias in court procedure executed by R. Nachman. Elijah stopped his visits. R. Annan fasted and cried for many days, until Elijah appeared. He admonished him for his carelessness and told him to provide a box from which he shall from now on receive his instructions, and not face to face as before. (14)

R. Jeshus ben Levi his greatest favorite he admonished many times. (15)

There was a philanthropist whom Elijah visited very frequently. In order to save his family from the plaintive voices of the poor, who constantly came to this man's house, he built a vestibule to receive them there. Elijah ceased visiting him even for that. (16)

The Roman army once besieged the city of Lydda, demanding the surrender of a certain Ula bar Koseheb, threatening the city with destruction and massacre, if the man is not produced. R. Jeshua ben Levi influenced Ula to surrender voluntarily to the Romans in order to save the city. Thereupon, Elijah stopped his visits to R. Jeshua. After a great deal of penance, Elijah ap-

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(12) Sanh. 113a

(13) Yer. Ter. 46b.

(14) Ket 105b.

(15) Yer. Ter. VIII, 4b; Yer. Sabb. IX, 31a; Makk. 11a

(16) B. Bathra 7b.



peared admonishing: "Am I expected to reveal myself to informers?", Whereupon the Rabbi asked, "Have I not acted in accordance with the the letter of the Law?", "But," retorted Elijah, "this is not the Law of the Saints". (17)

R. Meir, Elijah reproved for dealing with Elish ben Abua, even for legitimate purposes. (18)

He rebuked R. Judah for being lenient in meeting out justice. (19)

So well known was the fact of Elijah's severity with his friends, and his insistence upon the highest standards of morality, that legend tried to explain certain difficulties in his Biblical career from that angle. Thus for instance it is explained the reason God commanded Elijah to appoint his successor Elisha, while the former was still alive, because of his overzealousness, and God feared to leave His people in Elijah's hands. (20)

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(17) Yer. Ber. 46b.; Schechter, "Studies in Judaism", 2nd ed. p. 116ff.

(18) Hagigah 15a.

(19) Yoma 19b.

(20) Mehilta 2a; Pesachim 87a; S. Eliyahu Zuta p. 187, ed. Friedman. Pirke R. El. XXIX

## CHAPTER VI

### ELIJAH'S APPEARANCES

Frequency -- Forms of appearances  
-- How to accelerate Elijah coming.

#### FREQUENCY

So frequent are Elijah's appearances on earth that even animals recognize his approach. Thus the joyous barking of dogs is an indication that Elijah is in the neighborhood.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is because of his frequent visits on earth that Elijah is called "the bird of Heaven", for like a bird he flies everywhere through the entire world, wherever divine interference is necessary.<sup>(2)</sup>

#### FORMS OF APPEARANCES

In order to protect, teach and advise, Elijah appears in many guises. Sometimes he appears as an ordinary man,<sup>(3)</sup> sometimes as an angel.<sup>(4)</sup> Often as an Arab,<sup>(5)</sup> as a Roman official,<sup>(6)</sup> as a servant,<sup>(7)</sup> as a Charioteer,<sup>(8)</sup> as a Talmud Chacham,<sup>(9)</sup> personifying some one,<sup>(10)</sup> or any other form it may be necessary

- (1) B. Kama 60b.
- (2) Midrash Tehilim on Ps. VIII, 9 ; Targum on Eccles. X, 20; Ber. 4b. - The frequency of Elijah's visits to the Rabbis and Kabbalists was treated above in Ch. IV, "Teacher and Guide".
- (3) Ned. 5a; Ber. 56a.
- (4) Gen R. 60. Tanchuma end of chapter; Koheleth R. sec. 1; S. Eliyahu R. XI, p. 55, ed. Friedman.
- (5) Ber. 6b; 58a; Yalk. Shim. "Ruth", sections 601 and 607; Mid Ruth Zuta ed Buber. near end
- (6) Aboda Sarah 17b. Sabb. 109a
- (7) R. Nissim "Hibbur Yaffeh", near end.

Not only does he appear in various guises, but also appears in various ways. To some he appears while they are awake and cognito, (11) to others in the same way incognito. (12) To still others he appears in dreams. (13) In the case of Annan after the intimate relations were broken, he would appear in a box from where R. Annan could only hear him, but not see him. (14)

### HOW TO ACCELERATE ELIJAH'S COMING

The coming of Elijah can be accelerated, and he can almost be forced to appear by fasting. It worked successfully in almost every case it was tried. (15)

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- (8) Sanh. 109b.
  - (9) Twenty one references given in "S. Eliyahu R. v'Z", Intro. p. 30, Friedman.
  - (10) Yer. Kel. IX, 5d, Elijah personifies R. Hiyyah; Yer. Megila III, end, personifies Harbona; Ber. R. 49, Elijah personifies a herlot in Aboda Zarah 18b.
  - (11) References in Friedman, "S. Eliyahu R.v'Z., Intro. p. 34-39.
  - (12) Ibid.
  - (13) Gen. R. 83; Pesikta R. Kohana XXII, Yer. Ber. II,
  - (14) Ket. 106a
  - (15) Pirke R. El. I; Ket. 106b ; Yer. Ter, VIII; Gen R. 94 end.