SOME ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF ELIJAH IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

by

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This thesis is dedicated to my
precious wife without whose
support and encouragement
my efforts would all be
in vain.

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INTRODUCTION

The following study was originally motivated by a curiosity. No other prophet in rabbinic literature commands as much respect or high regard as does Elijah. Not even such profound and impressive literary prophets as Isaiah or Jeremiah gain as much affection as does the simple Tishbite who "wore a garment of haircloth with a girdle of leather about his loins."[1]

There is some contrast between this simple Biblical personality and the legendary giant of rabbinic literature. Historically Elijah appears suddenly with no indication of a geneology.[2] According to the rabbis, he was a priest[3] who possessed the angelic name of Sandolphon,[4] and who even existed from the beginning as an angel.[5] In the Bible, Elijah resembles many of the other early prophets who protested against acts of oppression and injustice. His career is marked largely by a series of miracles and accusations. For the rabbis, Elijah reveals a variety of personalities. Some of those characteristics are implied in the Biblical account, but never attain the prominence which the rabbis gave them.

Such were the reasons for the curiosity which stimulated this study. Just a casual comparison of the Bible and rabbinic texts reveals some difference between the two in the character of Elijah. Those differences suggest several questions. What were precisely the roles which the rabbis assigned to Elijah? In what way did the rabbinic period reflect the need for a personality who in-

corporated those roles? Why did they choose Elijah and what criteria did they employ in choosing him.

The present thesis attempts to deal only with selected aspects of these problems. It is admittedly an incomplete treatment of the many difficulties implicit in the rabbinic role of Elijah. This study represents only a beginning. In the future I hope I might investigate some of the further complexities of the problem. For the present, I was concerned almost exclusively with a definition of some roles which Elijah exhibits for the rabbinic mind.

The quantity of available material on Elijah is enormous. It would be impossible in one thesis to analyse and evaluate every legend about the prophet. It was necessary then to limit the material and to select only the most relevant passages. In order to make the selections consistent, certain criteria were established according to which choices were exercised.

The specific roles which are included in this thesis were not chosen at random. The first two chapters are devoted to Elijah's activity as a teacher and a helper, respectively. Both these functions were selected because they portrayed Elijah in the actual life-situation of the rabbis. The material in these chapters consists largely of incidents wherein the rabbis encounter Elijah personally. He instructs and helps individuals in difficult, but real circumstances.

The third chapter continues the analysis of personal appearances

of Elijah but restricts the study to his "minor roles." The phrase "minor roles" will be defined in Chapter III. Suffice it to say here that again these roles were not selected at random. They were chosen for purposes of contrast. These minor roles portray qualities of Elijah that are quite distinct from and often contrary to his more familiar attributes. They are presented also to indicate the totality of the legendary personality. He is not merely one kind of man. He is many kinds of men. He incorporates characteristics that at one time complement, at another time oppose each other. Chapter III illustrates this peculiarity.

The greatest part of this thesis represents an investigation of primary sources. Initially, however, I began with a study of the Talmudic passages concerning Elijah as they appeared in the Index to the Soncino translation of the Babylonian Talmud. I examined and considered every reference to the person of Elijah in the Talmud. Whatever references were considered relevant are cited in the body of this thesis or in the footnotes.

After exhausting these Talmudic sources, I proceeded to review the subject of Elijah in Louis Ginsberg's "The Legends of the Jews." Those references which Ginsberg cited for his presentation have been, with few exceptions, checked and verified in the primary sources.

That verification includes a thorough treatment of the subject of Elijah in the major midrashic collections. In some instances references could not be checked, because they were incorrectly cited. Ginsberg's references on Elijah include sources which extend to

the Middle Ages. My interest was limited to material about Elijah in the Bible and Targum, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmudim, and the major midrashic collections. Occasionally, when a legend seemed particularly fascinating, I traced its origin to a minor midrash or an unfamiliar text. Generally, however, my concern rested with the works already mentioned.

The edition of תנא דבי אליהו by Meir Ish Shalom provided some helpful additional sources. Occasionally, the Introduction included relevant passages which Ginsberg had not cited. His Introduction is virtually exhaustive and organizes the material under useful headings. I am indebted to this Introduction for its thorough and extensive collection of source material.

Recently there appeared an Israeli publication entitled אליהו הנביא by אליעזר מרגליות . This volume also served as a helpful secondary source. Like the Introduction to תנא דבי אליהו , this collection of sources was organized under topical headings. I checked the author's citations in the original texts and again employed the passages wherever they were relevant.

After I had begun to assemble the available evidence, it became apparent that certain aspects of Elijah's role lent themselves better to treatment than others. The criteria, which were outlined above, served to organize the material into the three major divisions. That arrangement, however, was inadequate without some revision. Overlapping of roles seriously complicated any attempt at organization.

In some instances, the legends reflect a variety of nuances. They could fit well into any one of several categories depending upon which point was emphasized. The choice which I exercised in these cases was admittedly arbitrary.

It will be apparent even to the most casual reader that several of the more popular roles of Elijah have been omitted from this study. Perhaps the most serious omission has been the role of Elijah as the forerunner to the Messiah. That phase of Elijah's activity was deleted for several reasons. In the first place, it did not portray Elijah as a participant in the daily affairs of men. His connection with messianism is almost by definition reserved for the future. It is largely theoretical and of small practical consequence in the daily lives of individuals.

Secondly, Elijah's role in the redemptive process is not totally defined by the close of the Talmudic period. Historical circumstances, subsequent to the rabbinic period, undoubtedly exercised no small influence in this area. Persecution and suffering can effect serious changes in the character of a redemptive figure. To restrict Elijah's role as the forerunner to the Messiah only to the rabbinic period would do injustice to that phase of his activity.

Most important, this particular role of Elijah was much too complicated for me to treat adequately. The material dealing with Elijah and the Messiah is so vast as to be overwhelming. It is not only complicated because of its quantity; it is extremely difficult. In the legends depicting Elijah as the herald of God's messenger, the text

does not always indicate clearly the precise function of the prophet. To fully understand the function of Elijah in this capacity requires an extensive knowledge of messianism and the development of the concept of redemption. Elijah's role in this process is often puzzling and involved. To treat this aspect of Elijah in legend properly would require a separate study.

Before proceeding to deal with Elijah in rabbinic literature, it would be helpful to recall his career as reported in the Bible. A brief resume of the Biblical personality will provide a frame of reference with which to compare or contrast the Elijah of legend. To be mindful of the Biblical Elijah also insures against misinterpreting the legendary figure. He is not a mere invention or fancy of the rabbinic mind; Elijah's rabbinic role is rooted in the Biblical text. Regardless of whatever changes or expansions occur, the personal identity of the Biblical and later legendary figure is the same.

Elijah was a prophet in Israel in the first half of the ninth pre-Christian century under King Ahab. He came from some locality in Gilead, a land east of the Jordan. He supposedly came to seek victory for his God Yahweh over the worship of the pagan god Baal. One of his first activities consisted of an announcement that there would be a drought inflicted upon the people by Yahweh. Addressing these remarks to Ahab and his wife, and incurring their displeasure, Elijah retreated to the wilderness. There by the brook Cherith, God worked a miracle. He commanded the ravens to bring Elijah bread and

meat, morning and night.

One of Elijah's places of refuge was Zarephath where a widow sustained him. In return for her hospitality, Elijah performed several miracles for the widow. He commanded the woman to make him a small cake from the little meal she had left. She did so and the jar of meal and the cruse of oil lasted until the drought ended. Elijah also brought back to life the widow's son who had died.

When Elijah next met Ahab, Ahab asked him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" And Elijah answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have...." Elijah indicts an individual for the sake of his people's welfare. His anger and wrath have in the Biblical text served a positive function. It is no misguided fury.

Elijah's most triumphant moment was his victory over the four hundred priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. It was there that he posed his famous question to Israel, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" Elijah then summoned the servants of Baal to demonstrate the alleged superiority of their God. Elijah proposed a contest in which both he and they should build an altar and place on it a burnt offering. The God who would send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice would be considered the true God. After the Baal prophets had failed and had been ridiculed by Elijah, Yahweh responded to the call of his own prophet. All Israel acknowledged Yahweh's supremacy, and the priests of Baal were slaughtered near the brook Kishon on Elijah's instructions.

Elijah then fled from the wrath of Jezebel. To save his own life,

after having proved the supremacy of Yahweh, Elijah escaped to the desert. There he begged God to take his life. He wanted to live no longer. He could not bear being an outcast. He lay down under a broom tree and slept. An angel then touched him and told him to eat. Elijah discovered that God had prepared for him a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.

Soon after this miracle, God spoke to Elijah. God asked him what he had been doing. Elijah replied that he had been very jealous for the Lord. He described the contest on Mount Carmel and explained that his own life was now in jeopardy. It was then that God appeared to Elijah out of the whirlwind.

After the whirlwind, God commanded Elijah to appoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shapot of Abelmeholah to be his own successor.

Another climactic moment of Elijah's career was his attack upon Ahab in defense of Naboth. Naboth was a Jezreelite who owned a small plot of ground near Jezreel and a vineyard that was located near Ahab's palace at Jezreel. Ahab desired the vineyard for a garden of herbs. He offered to pay Naboth the value of the property or provide him with a better vineyard in exchange. Naboth, however, declined both of Ahab's proposals on the grounds that the vineyard was the inheritance of his fathers. The issue would have apparently been resolved here had not Jezebel interfered. She wrote letters to the elders and nobles of Naboth's city instructing them to proclaim a solemn fast and set Naboth on high among his peers. She then arranged for two

wicked men to accuse Naboth of cursing God and the king, the punishment for which was stoning. Having secured Naboth's execution, Jezebel delivered Naboth's property into Ahab's hands. This act of wanton cruelty and brutality infuriated the prophet Elijah. He stormed against Ahab and Jezebel with unprecedented rage. To Ahab he promised, in the name of Yahweh, "In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick up your own blood."[6] Elijah cursed Jezebel as well, predicting that "The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel."[7] No member of Ahab's family was spared from Elijah's curse, as he declared that "Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat."[8]

Just prior to his ascent into heaven, Elijah brought Elisha to the banks of the Jordan. There Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water. A miracle occurred as the water parted, so that the two of them could walk across on dry ground.

As Elijah continued on with Elisha and talked, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. Elijah went up in the chariot in a whirlwind into heaven. He disappeared as quickly and as suddenly as he had arrived.

These incidents constitute the core of Elijah's Biblical career. Scripture cites other situations involving the prophet, but they are sketchy and brief. The entire Biblical personality of Elijah unfolds in only seven chapters.[9] Out of those pages emerged a legendary figure with perhaps no equal in all of rabbinic literature. The rab-

bis apparently discovered in this fiery non-literary prophet the promise of a spiritual giant. The subsequent chapters will examine these discoveries of the rabbinic mind.

N O T E S

INTRODUCTION

1. II Kings 1:8.

2. I Kings 17:1 begins simply, "Now Elijah the Tishbite of Tishbe in Gilead said to Ahab..."

3. Babba Mezieh 114b.

4. Ginsberg, Legends, Vol. VI, p. 325, Note 40.

5. Op. cit. Note 39.

6. I Kings 21:19b.

7. I Kings 21:23b.

8. I Kings 21:24

9. I Kings 17; II Kings 2; I Kings 20 does not concern Elijah.

A DIGEST OF CONTENTS

The title of this thesis suggests its contents, namely, "Some Aspects of the Role of Elijah in Rabbinic Literature." Out of the wealth of material concerning the Biblical prophet, I have chosen to concentrate on three specific areas.

The first aspect of the rabbinic Elijah with which I deal is his function as a teacher. Here I gathered together those legends in which the prophet expounds some lesson, be it aggadic or halakic. I restricted my selections in this category to legends which depict Elijah in an actual situation. I did not treat the innumerable incidents wherein an halakic debate concluded with

יהא מקום עד שיבוא אליהו or תיקו .

I limited my discussion to occasions on which Elijah speaks in person.

The second aspect of Elijah which is examined in this thesis is his role as a helper. Here again, the emphasis is upon those incidents in which Elijah is an active participant. These legends exhibit Elijah as a helper to the distressed, the poor, and the needy. Those who deserve sympathy and understanding are often the benefactor of Elijah's aid. It is found that Elijah supports those in danger of death as well.

The third chapter discusses some of Elijah's minor roles in rabbinic literature. Such roles are termed "minor" inasuch as they occur less frequently and with less regularity than those which de-

pict him as a teacher or helper. The chapter includes legends which portray Elijah as a censor and rebuker, as a man of violent temper and emotion. He is not always the defender, but occasionally the accuser. The third chapter serves as a contrast in Elijah's personality.

In the conclusion I have tried to demonstrate that the rabbinic personality of Elijah is not entirely dissociated from that of its Biblical counterpart. There are indications in Scripture that Elijah was well-suited for the role which the rabbis assigned to him. For almost every quality which Elijah exhibits in the rabbinic period, the Biblical prophet likewise reflects a similar characteristic. The Elijah of later legend was not entirely an invention of the rabbinic mind. The lonely Tishbite already possessed in Scripture many of the attributes which later won for him a remarkable immortality.

CHAPTER I

There are several facets to Elijah's role as a teacher. As part of his Messianic function, Elijah has a role as an expounder of the law.[1] He will have to resolve all legal difficulties and problems that have accumulated since days immemorial.[2] He will also decide puzzling questions of ritual concerning which rabbis have entertained conflicting views. In short, Elijah will resolve all differences of opinion.[3]

The following analysis omits entirely consideration of Elijah as a teacher in this capacity. The phrase אליהו עתיד לבוא or תיקו עד שיבוא אליהו is of frequent occurence in the tannaitic literature.[4] According to Marcus Jastrow[5] and Alexander Kohut[6] it is doubtful whether תיקו has any association with Elijah. Jastrow translates תיקו as a form of קום, meaning "let it stand," that is, "The question remains unresolved." Kohut maintains תיקו is only an abbreviated form of תיקום whose use implies only that a question is unanswered. Moreover, the suggestion that תיקו is an abbreviation for תשבי יתרץ קושיות ובעיות has, for Kohut, only the force of a יש אומרים . . . . Thus it has never been established that the phrase actually refers to the person of Elijah.

The present analysis attempts to depict Elijah as a teacher in those specific incidents in which he is a participant. His role is confined in this chapter to those recorded incidents in which the

person of Elijah himself is the source of instruction. There are several instances, as will be shown, in which Elijah appears to favored persons to impart a lesson of some kind, be it moral, legal, or practical. They are occasions on which the rabbis do not talk about Elijah, but to Elijah. There is a dialogue between Elijah as the teacher and the rabbis as his disciples. Elijah is not absent, but participates actively in the given situations. It is with Elijah as a teacher in these instances that the present chapter is concerned.

* * * * *

That devotion to study and teaching was highly prized by Elijah is undeniable. Elijah placed a high premium on the character of those who engaged themselves constantly in Torah. The rabbis lost no opportunity to emphasize Elijah's interest in academic pursuits. On one occasion,[7] the prophet assisted Rabbi Joshua in delivering Rabbi Akiba's body from prison. All night they walked with the corpse on their shoulders. At daybreak they were near Caesarea. A cave opened before their eyes, and inside they saw a chair, a bed, a table, and a lamp. They put the corpse on the bed and then left the cave which closed up behind them. Only the light of the lamp which lit by itself shone through the chinks in the cave. Whereupon, Elijah cried out, "Hail, ye just, hail to you who devote yourselves to the study of the Law. Hail to you, ye God-fearing men, for your places are set aside and kept and guarded in Paradise for the time

to come."

Another legend illustrates Elijah's very personal concern and high regard for learning and teaching. Disguised as a rabbi, Elijah was once approached by a man with a most tempting offer. This man promised to relieve him of all material cares if he would but abide with him. Refusing to leave the academy at Yavneh, Elijah answered, "Were you to offer me one thousand gold denarii, I would not quit the abode of the Law, and dwell in a place in which there is no Torah."[8]

The role of Elijah as a teacher may be viewed in two phases, that of haggadah and that of halakah. The rabbinic literature does not necessitate such a distinction, but it does warrant one. Indeed, the available evidence does not readily lend itself to any one specific principle of organization. Instead, these Elijah legends may be treated in any number of ways. The following analysis then is in many respects an arbitrary one. It does not purport to establish the only correct approach to this phase of Elijah's activity; it only attempts to provide one helpful method of organizing the material about Elijah as a teacher in rabbinic literature.

By the term haggadah is meant "the whole content of the non-legal part of the old rabbinical literature."[9] Haggadah is "the narrative, explanation, or homily, including also the gnomic laws. Such topics as medicine...theosophy, and mysticism, and similar subjects"[10] are included in this category. Under haggadah is included the teachings of Elijah which have no formal, legal implica-

tions. The second phase of Elijah's teaching is of an halakic type. Halakah, as used here, refers to "the whole legal part of the Jewish tradition, in contradistinction to the haggadah, comprising thus the whole civil law and ritual law of rabbinical literature."[11]

As will be demonstrated below, Elijah's opinions do not invalidate the existing halakoth or halakic principle. His instruction, however, is of a legal character. He does address himself to questions of ritual propriety and the authority of the halakic system.[12]

Within the area of haggadic teaching, Elijah concentrates on ethical and moral instruction. There are homilies ascribed to him which define the nature of the virtuous man. One such instance involved one of Elijah's encounters with R. Judah, the brother of R. Salla the Pious. Elijah said to him, "Fall not into a passion, and you will not sin; do not drink to excess, and you will not sin; and when you go on a journey, seek counsel of your Maker, and then go."[13]

The mark of a virtuous man is three-fold. He is first of all self-disciplined. One who is able to resist the extremes of emotion possesses a degree of self-restraint or discipline. Secondly, the virtuous man is a man of moderation. Neither total abstinence nor total indulgence is encouraged. Instead, the virtuous man is he who seeks the mean between two extremes. This view of Elijah is not wholly different from the ethic of Aristotle's "golden mean." There too virtue is "a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess,

and that which depends on defect."[14] Thirdly, the virtuous man reflects humility. By seeking the help of his Creator, man acknowledges his dependency. He expresses trust in the goodness and providence of God.

Elijah points out a paradox in the attainment of such virtue. He indicates that wisdom does not always enable a man to retain his moral character. The Talmud reports[15] that Abaye once overheard a man say to a woman, "Let us arise and go on our way." Abaye followed them to keep them from transgression. When they parted, he heard them say, "Our company is pleasant; the way is long." "If it were I," said Abaye, "I would not have restrained myself."[16] He went and leaned in great anguish upon a doorpost when an old man[17] came and taught him, "The greater the man, the greater his evil inclination."

Elijah asserts here that the more knowledge and insight a man possesses, then the more prone he is to the temptations which exist in the world. Often the greater his awareness of the good in life, the less is his resistance to the evil. In an attempt to assuage Abaye's internal struggle with the evil impulse, Elijah teaches a moral maxim.

The significance of human conduct and ethical action in Elijah's teaching is most emphatic in his response to Messianic hope and expectancy. Rabbi Joshua b. Levi met Elijah standing by the entrance to the tomb of R. Simeon b. Yohai. R. Joshua b. Levi asked Elijah, "Have I a portion in the world-to-come?" Elijah replied, "If this

Master desires it." R. Joshua b. Levi said, "I saw two persons, but heard the voice of a third." He then asked, "When will the Messiah come?" Elijah replied, "Go and ask him himself." "Where is he sitting?", asked Joshua b. Levi. "At the entrance....." So Joshua b. Levi went to him and greeted him saying, "Peace upon the Master and Teacher." The Messiah answered, "Peace upon thee, O son of Levi." "When wilt thous come, Master?" asked Joshua b. Levi. "Today," was his answer. On his return to Elijah, the latter inquired, "What did he say to thee?" "Peace upon thee, O son of Levi," he answered. Thereupon, Elijah observed, "He thereby assured thee and thy father of a portion in the world-to-come." Joshua b. Levi then protested, "He spoke falsely to me, stating that he would come today, but he has not." Elijah answered him, "This is what he said to thee, 'Today, if ye will hear his voice' (Ps. 95:7)."[18]

Elijah's last statement indicates that nothing delays the coming of the Messiah except the proper human conduct. Man himself may bring the Messiah by his own behevior. The Messiah is ready to redeem mankind at any moment, but man always puts an obstacle in his way which impedes his coming. That this obstacle is outrageous conduct is best evidenced by Elijah's encounter with a great saint. Elijah remarked, "You are astounded why the Messiah has not yet come. Today is the Day of Atonement, and on this day of repentance, many a virgin is deflowered in your city of Nehardea."[19]

Elijah states very clearly that the people have no right to expect the Messiah when on the holiest day of the year, they commit the most vile sins. Man must demonstrate through his conduct and ethical behavior that he is deserving of the Messianic Age. Elijah teaches that man himself can and must cooperate in bringing the Messiah from heaven to earth.

Elijah teaches that God understands and shows compassion for the moral frailty of human creatures. Elijah shows that God is sympathetic toward man even when he is in error and a delinquent. An impressive illustration of this thought appears in an encounter of Rabbah b. Shila with Elijah. Rabbah b. Shila asked Elijah, "What is the Holy One Blessed Be He doing?" Elijah answered, "He utters traditions in the names of all the rabbis, but in the name of R. Meir, He does not utter." Rabbah asked him, "Why?" He replied, "Because he learned traditions at the mouth of Asher."[20] Rabbah said to him, "But why? Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate; he ate the fruit within it, and the peel he threw away!" Elijah answered, "Now[21] He says, 'Meir my son says: when a man suffers, to what expression does the Shechinah give utterance? My head is heavy; my arm is heavy." If the Holy One Blessed Be He is thus grieved over the blood of the wicked, how much more over the blood of the righteous.[22]

Elijah communicates clearly the reality of God's suffering for man in his hour of trouble. Even though he has erred, and fully deserves his punishment, God shows compassion and returns the sinner to His presence. There seems to be an implied meaning here as well. Man

should imitate God in His compassion for the undeserving. Any divine virtue is worthy of human imitation. As God is ready to exonerate, so man too should be quick to forgive. The divine moral demands reflect the מדת הדין . The aggadoth of the character just cited emphasize the מדת הרחמים. Both divine and human nature reflect both qualities.

Elijah is not concerned solely with the ethical wellbeing of men. He is interested in the state of their physical welfare as well. Elijah's instruction occasionally partakes of the nature of medical advice. Rabbi Shimi once swallowed a snake. Elijah appeared to him and advised him to eat cuscuta with salt and to run three mils before him. The snake subsequently left Rabbi Shimi in strips.[23]

Elijah is equipped with unusual remedies to cure even the most bizarre illness, as depicted above. Whether Rabbi Shimi ever did swallow a snake or whether this incident is wholly legendary is unimportant. It is sufficient for the present purpose to demonstrate that health precautions and suggestions were not excluded from Elijah's teachings.

Sometimes Elijah's remarks about physical wellbeing also contain the overtones of a moral lesson as well. With regard to health precautions in avoiding sickness, Elijah once said to Rabbi Nathan, "Eat a third, drink a third, and leave a third for when you get angry and then you will have had your fill."[24]

Elijah cautions here against excessive eating and drinking. He implies that if one overeats and becomes angry, he will literally

burst. A man dissipates his energy not merely in food and drink, but in his anger as well. A stomach full of food leaves no room for the wide range of emotions which provoke a person's temper. Elijah's lesson here, however, may involve more than just advice on physical comfort. His statement also relates the physical constitution of an individual to his personal temperament. Elijah may be indicating the extent to which anger affects a man. It is as significant as the quantity of food and drink which he consumes. A person ought to regulate his eating and drinking in proportion to his temper.

In the aggadic phase of his teaching Elijah also reveals an attitude towards the role of woman. "Rabbi Jose met Elijah and said to him, 'It is written, "I will make for him a helpmate (Gen. 2:18)." In what way is a woman a helpmate to a man?' Elijah answers, 'If a man brings wheat, does he chew the wheat? If flax, does he put on the flax? Does she not then bring light to his eyes and put him on his feet!"[25]

Elijah suggests that a woman serves a man by completing the functions which he performs. One partner is incomplete without the other. Both depend upon each other. A man and a woman complement each other by virtue of the functions they perform. A woman enables a man to fulfill his intentions in the tasks he pursues.

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The second major phase of Elijah's role as a teacher is halakic. It is important to recognize that in this area Elijah does not alter the legal system already constructed and established by rabbinic tradi-

tion. His instruction reflects an endorsement of the prevailing system. Whatever information he imparts does not contradict but expands or reinforces the established halakic principles.[26]

Elijah abides by the principle of majority rule. No decision can violate legal principles already agreed upon. The classic illustration of this point is the great contest between Rabbi Eliezer b. Hyrcanus and the whole body of scholars.[27] The majority maintained the authority of its opinion. A בת קל however cried out, "Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the הלכה agrees with him." Rabbi Joshua then protested, "It is not in Heaven." Rabbi Jeremiah explained that Rabbi Joshua meant that Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai. The law was thus subject to human authority. A בת קל could not invalidate the principle of majority rule. When Rabbi Nathan asked Elijah about God's response to Rabbi Joshua's statement, Elijah answered that God laughed and replied, "My sons have defeated Me, my sons have defeated Me."[28]

No single incident emphasizes more the humanistic element in rabbinic thought. Elijah here endorses the prevailing notion that, given basic premises and postulates which are divinely ordained, the legal system is entirely a human institution. There is no recourse to any authority beyond that of the human mind and the principle of consensus by majority. Man is both the central concern and the central influence in the development of the halakah. Once God established certain rules of procedure, He abandons His own prerogative to violate the system. According to Elijah and rabbinic thought, God Himself must abide by the principles already constructed.

Elijah imparts his own halakic instruction only in situations wherein the sages are not enlightened. Rabbah bar Abbahu once met Elijah standing in a non-Jewish cemetery. He said to him, "Is a means test to be applied in favor of a debtor?" Elijah replied, "We deduce the law of proverty (written here) from that of valuations."[29] While of a debtor it is written, "And if thy brother be waxen poor, then thou shalt relieve him."[30] He asked Elijah further, "How do we know that a naked man must not separate?" Elijah answered, "From the verse, 'That he see no unclean thing in thee.'"[31] Rabbah said to him, "Are you not a priest? Why then do you stand in a cemetery?" He replied, "Has the master not studied the laws of purity? For it has been taught, 'Rabbi Simeon b. Yohai said, "The graves of Gentiles do not defile, for it is written, 'And ye my flock, the flock of my pastures are men. Only you are designated men."[32]

Elijah reflects in this halakic passage his compassion for the poor. The destitute man can only be expected to pay according to his means. No creditor can demand more than his debtor is able to provide. It is a Biblical precept that no uncleaness can appear before God. Nudity was regarded as a form of uncleaness. Since the separation of terumah involved a benediction which itself was considered an appearance before God, no naked man could separate terumah. Here Elijah was provided a raison d'etre for a practice already being observed. With respect to his presence in a non-Jewish cemetery, Elijah cites Shimeon b. Yohai as his justification. He contends that, according to his Scriptural verse, a priest may stand in a non-Jewish cemetery because

the bodies of Gentiles do not defile. The halakic character of Elijah's instruction is thus revealed in this passage in terms of its specific lessons: the means test is applied in favor of a debtor, a nuderperson cannot separate terumah, and a priest may appear in a non-Jewish cemetery. For all three statements, Elijah brings Scriptural verses as proof for his opinion.

He does not always bring Scriptural verses as evidence. Elijah teaches the sages important halakic lessons by virtue of their own experience. On one occasion, he taught Rabbi Jose the conditions of worship by correcting his mistakes. The Talmud records, "It has been taught: R. Jose says, "I was once traveling on the road, and I entered into one of the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray. Elijah, of blessed memory, appeared and waited for me at the door until I finished my prayer. After I finished my prayer, he said to me, "Peace be with you, my master!" And I replied, "Peace be with you, my master and teacher!" And he said to me, "My son, why did you go into this ruin?" I replied, "To pray." He said to me, "You ought to have prayed on the road." I replied, "I feared, lest passers-by might interrupt me." He said to me, "You ought to have said an abbreviated prayer." Thus I then learned from him three things: One must not go into a ruin; one may say the prayer on the road; and if one does say his prayer on the road, he recites an abbreviated prayer."[33]

Elijah occasionally appears as a defender of the intent of the law. There are recorded incidents in which Elijah acts in the spirit, and not by the letter of the law. Elijah once found a child

languishing with hunger and sitting on a dungheap in Jerusalem. It turned out that the child was the only member of his family still left alive. Elijah offered to teach the child words to live by, and the child agreed to learn. Elijah proceeded to teach the child the Shema, but the child said, "Be silent! For one must not make mention of the Lord's name." The child reacted in this manner because he had not been taught the true service of the Lord. Immediately he took out his idol and embraced it and kissed it. Immediately thereafter, his stomach burst and he died.[34]

Elijah had tried to convince the boy that explicit trust in God would deliver him from impending death. The boy died because, unlike Elijah who sought to save his life by acting upon the spirit of the law, he abided by the letter of the law which forbad him to speak the name of the Lord.

On another occasion an individual being pursued by the Romans took refuge with Rabbi Joshua. The Romans demanded his surrender; otherwise they would annihilate the entire city. Rabbi Joshua urged the fugitive to give up. Better, he thought, that one man should die than a whole city should be slaughtered. The fugitive yielded and surrendered. Elijah, who had often visited Rabbi Joshua, shunned him for many days. When Rabbi Joshua inquired for a reason for his absence, Elijah explained he would not associate with informers. Rabbi Joshua quoted a Mishnah in support of his conduct, but Elijah was unmoved. "Do you consider this a law for a pious man?" he asked. Other people might have been right in doing what you did, but you should have done otherwise."[35]

According to the law, the rabbi was permitted to surrender one man in order that all the inhabitants might be saved; but a pious man, for Elijah, is expected to fulfill not merely the letter but the intent of the law. Here the intent was to avoid loss of any life. On another occasion,[36] Rabbi Joshua was deeply humiliated to find out that extreme rigor was not praiseworthy in ceremonial matters. Elijah pointed out to the disciple of the Rabbi the unpleasant consequences of too rigorous a decision by his teacher.

In still another case, Elijah pronounced severe censure upon R. Ishmael b. Jose. R. Ishmael was willing to act as a bailiff in prosecuting Jewish thieves and criminals. Even though the Law literally permitted such activity, Elijah again championed the proper spirit of human compassion. He advised R. Ishmael to follow the example of his father and to leave the country.[37]

Again, as a mitigator of the law, Elijah teaches that outer appearance is no indicator of a man's inner worth. What determines individual merit is not strict adherence to the letter of the law, but an understanding of moral values which the law should approach. A man is judged not by his appearance but by his intentions. An excellent illustration of this lesson involves an incident[38] concerning R. Beroka Huzoah. R. Beroka used to frequent the marketplace at Be Lapat where Elijah appeared to him. On one occasion, R. Beroka wanted to know who had a portion in the world to come. Elijah pointed to a man wearing black shoes and no blue fringes[39] who turns out to be a jailer. As a jailer he seeks to keep men and women separate, to preserve the

chastity of Jewish virgins and advises rabbis of evil decrees against the Jews. Elijah also pointed to two jesters who merit a portion in the world-to-come because they devote their lives to making people happy and resolving arguments.

The lesson which Elijah teaches is clear. Outer appearance does not ensure favor in the sight of God. Indeed adherence to the letter of the law often has no connection with a man's inner worth. The jailer openly violates certain injunctions regarding the customary dress of Jews. He does not even wear the fringes which is a Biblical injunction. The two clowns engage in occupations which, by halakic standards, are disgraceful. A man should devote his life ideally to study of Torah. Yet, according to Elijah, both men have a portion in the world-to-come. Both of them violate the letter of the law only to fulfill a greater purpose. The jailer disguises his Judaism externally to realize it internally by helping other Jews to perpetuate their faith. The two jesters engage in work that is scorned by the halakah, only to bring happiness into the lives of others. The intentions of a man's action guarantee his immortality, regardless of his transgression of the written law.

Sometimes, in his zeal for the spirit of the law, Elijah remained the stern and inexorable prophet whom Ahab feared. He never lost his old fanatical zeal for the intent of halakic principle. For Elijah, it was not enough that a man abide by the minimal demands of the halakah. More important was the mood, the feeling, the כוונה which accompanied his performance of duties. As evidence of this

conviction, Elijah once struck a man dead, because he failed to perform his devotions with the proper reverence.[40]

At another time, R. Eleazar, the son of Rabbi Jose once met Elijah driving 4,000 camels heavily-laden. When he asked Elijah to reveal the nature of the load which the camels were carrying, he received a strange answer. "These camels," said Elijah, "are laden with wrath and fury for those who talk during their prayers."[41]

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

As a teacher, Elijah appears primarily to the sages and saints. He rarely appears to instruct the עמי הארץ . His appearances to the common man are usually reserved for another function, to be discussed shortly. Whether Elijah's association with the scholar class in this capacity reflects any distinction in status between that class and the common people can only be conjectured.

Elijah not only imparts his wisdom to individual sages, but he teaches the rabbis as a group as well. He is a frequent visitor to the academies. The rabbis never summon Elijah to impart his wisdom. He appears spontaneously and unsolicited. He delivers his lesson without any specific request or invitation.

It has also been observed that Elijah mitigates the law. His instruction consists of practical wisdom, and his attitude toward legal principle is that law is a means to an end, the end being proper conduct. Elijah does not exalt the law for its own sake. Whether in his legal or moral instruction, Elijah is concerned more with realistic than theoretical situations. One of Elijah's functions is to

glorify the intent of the law in contrast to its content.

In his aggadic teaching, Elijah encourages virtues which are accessible to any man, irrespective of his learning. Morality does not depend upon intelligence. Good deeds are available to any man who would choose them. Elijah's model of human excellence consists not in moral perfection, but in simple acts of service to others and moderation in personal behavior.

Elijah's aggadic teaching is also designed to provide comfort in the presence of trying circumstances. Poverty is difficult to endure until it becomes evidence of God's favor. Elijah transforms a curse into a blessing. Abaye is distraught with guilt-feelings until Elijah reassures him that only his unusual sensitivity and insight has made him more prone to the temptations existing in the world. As part of his instruction Elijah is encouraging, supportive, and reassuring.

Elijah's allegiance to legal principle in his halakic teachings indicates the extent to which the legal system has taken root. As is implied in Elijah's statements, particular decisions can be disputed, but not the system itself. There are rules of argument by which all participants must abide, and not even Elijah or God can overrule the accepted legal discipline.

Elijah also displays considerable respect for the integrity of rabbinic leadership. Even in cases of deadlock, Elijah does not arbitrate between one position or another. Instead, he proclaims that both sides are correct. Whether intended or not, this deference which Elijah pays to the sages enhances the status of the scholars. There is

no appeal for decision beyond the opinions of the rabbis themselves.

From the available evidence it seems certain that Elijah was recognized as a purveyor of knowledge. The extent of his influence among the rabbis was universal. Not only was Elijah's instruction practical and useful, but it was respected and eagerly-anticipated.

CHAPTER I NOTES

1. Ginsberg, L., Legends of the Jews, Vol. IV, p. 233.
2. Mishna and Tosefta at the end of Edyyoth.
3. Menachoth 45a.
4. Ginsberg, L., The Legends of the Jews, Vol. VI, p. 339.
5. Jastrow, M., A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bevli and Jerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature, p. 1331.
6. Kohut, A., ערוך השלם , Vol. 8, p. 263.
7. Midrash Mishle 9:62.
8. Eliahu Rabah 18:95; Eliahu Zutah 1:167.
9. Singer, Isidore, Projector and Managing Editor: Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. VI, p. 141.
10. Ibid.
11. Op. cit., p. 163.
12. Babba Mezlah 59b, 114a-b; Megillah 15b; Berakoth 32.
13. Berakoth 29b.
14. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book II, 6.
15. Sukkah 52a.
16. He would have surrendered to the temptation of cohabitation.
17. "An old man" who lacks any more specific identification is regarded in the Talmud and Midrash as "the spirit of Elijah." See Socino Talmud, Sukkah 52a, p. 249, Note 1.
18. Sanhedrin 98a.
19. Yoma 19b. These Jews are not punished because Satan cannot prosecute on the Day of Atonement. According to Rama b. Hama, this conclusion is derived from the numerical value of the letters in השטן . Together they equal 364. On 364 days of the year, Satan can act as the accuser, but on the 365th day, the Day of Atonement, he is silenced.

CHAPTER I NOTES (CONTINUED)

20. Aher is Elisha ben Abuya. See Ginsberg, Legends, Vol. IV, p. 220.

21. Since Rabbah b. Shilla had interceded on behalf of Rabbi Meir, the Shechinah was moved to pardon R. Meir.

22. Haggigah 15b.

23. Shabbat 109b.

24. Gittin 70a.

25. Yebamoth 63a.

26. Eliahu Rabah 14-15, 70-80 and Eliahu Zuta 2, 171-175 consist of Elijah's conversations with people who accepted the Written Law but not the Oral Law. In every case, Elijah insisted on the equal validity of the Oral Law.

27. Babba Meziah 59b.

28. In cases where the scholars differed in their opinions, Elijah was usually questioned as to how the problem was resolved in the heavenly court. Once the Sages were divided over the question as to why Esther invited Haman to her banquets with the king. Rabba bar Abba beseeched Elijah to tell him her real purpose. Elijah answered that all the reasons given by the Tannaim and the Amoraim were true, for Esther's invitations to Haman had many purposes. He gave a similar answer to the Amora Abiathar who argued with his colleagues over the reason why the Ephraimite who caused the war against the tribe of Benjamin first cast off his concubine and then became reconciled to her. Elijah informed Rabbi Abiathar that the brutal conduct was explained two ways in heaven, one according to Abiathar's conception, another according to his opponent, Jonathan's.

These incidents obviously involve no legal decisions. Nevertheless, they reflect again Elijah's reluctance to arbitrate between conflicting opinions. All the interpretations of the Rabbis receive his endorsement. All are considered equal in authority.

29. Levitious 27:8, "According to the means of him that vowed shall the priest value him."

30. Levitious 25:25.

31. Deuteronomy 23:15.

32. Babba Meziah 114a-b.

33. Berakoth 3a.

34. Sanhedrin 63b.

35. Genesis Rabah 94 (end); Yerushalmi, Terumoth 8, 96b.

36. Yerushalmi, Shabbat 9, 39a.

37. Babba Meziah 84a.

38. Taanith 22a.

39. A Jew was distinguished by the presence of blue fringes and the absence of black shoes. This Jew wore a disguise in order to aid his people and Judaism.

40. Berakoth 6b.

41. According to Ginsberg in the Legends, this legend is quoted by many medieval authors from the Yerushalmi or Midrash, respectively, but it is not found in the extant Midrashim and not in the Yerushalmi.

CHAPTER II

Elijah as helper is as significant as his role of teacher. He is the kindly benefactor of all deserving persons and utilizes his powers to the advantage of those whom he visits. So pronounced was this association of good deeds with the person of Elijah that even in messianic speculation, Elijah's primary activity is the restoration of peace and harmony for his people.[1] The very name "Elijah" became a synonym for love and reverence, expectation and hope.[2] In heaven, Elijah sits at the crossways.[3] One road is that of justice, the other road is one of love. On the arrival of a righteous person, Elijah calls out "Open ye the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faithfulness may enter in."[4] Elijah serves as the support of the just and upright. The rabbis contend that when the Angel of Death visits a city, the dogs bark. When Elijah the prophet comes, the dogs laugh.[5] Elijah is viewed by and large as the spirit of terrestial joy. Wherever there is joy and happiness, there Elijah will be.

These speculations, however predominant they are, depict Elijah's character as it will manifest itself in the future. They are largely theoretical statements. As in the last chapter, we are not concerned in this study with the theoretical description of Elijah's role. We are interested in specific incidents in which he testifies to the qualities attributed to him. The following chapter investigates not what help Elijah <u>will</u> render, but what support he <u>has</u> already given to persons in difficult circumstances. The evidence for his identity as a helper is restricted to his recorded appearances.

Elijah's concern for the plight of human beings may be subsumed under four types of activity. In many situations he is a support to those in need, particularly when they are in mortal danger of their lives. At other times, he appears to benefit the poor and the pious. On still other occasions he intervenes to reconcile opposing parties, to resolve conflict between friends or lovers.

In his support of those in danger, Elijah usually intervenes to save the life of a rabbi who has been accused by the secular authorities. When the Roman bailiffs were pursuing Rabbi Meir, Elijah joined him in the guise of a harlot. The Roman emissaries desisted from their pursuit, for they could not believe that Rabbi Meir would choose such a companion.[6]

In Elijah's function as protector of the rabbis in danger, it will be shown that there is a progression from passive assistance to a more active intervention. Elijah does not always perform a heroic feat or some extraordinary deed to deliver his friend from danger. In the incident just cited, Elijah does not resort to any aggressive act of violence. His peculiar appearance itself is sufficient to delude the pursuers and to protect Rabbi Meir.

An incident which portrays Elijah in a more active role occurs in his visit to Rabbi Simeon b. Yohai. Rabbi Simeon who spent thirteen years in a cave to escape the vengeance of the Romans, was informed by Elijah that the Jew-baiting emperor had died. Elijah assured Rabbi Simeon b. Yohai that it was now safe to leave his hiding place.[7]

Elijah is not here directly responsible for Rabbi Simeon's de-

liverance. Rabbi Simeon saved his own life by fleeing to the cave himself. Elijah did not put him there. He only advised Rabbi Simeon as to the proper time to leave.

More indicative of Elijah's active interference to save a life was his role at the trial of Rabbi Eleazar b. Perata. On this occasion a man was rising to give evidence against Rabbi Eleagar when Elijah appeared as a dignitary of Rome. He said to the man, "As miracles were worked for him (Rabbi Eleazar) in all the other matters, so a miracle will also happen in this one, and you will only be shown up as bad-natured. The man, however, disregarded the warning and stood up to address the court. Suddenly a written communication from important members of the government had to be sent to the emperor. The man who was about to testify was ordered to dispatch the communication. On the road, Elijah caught up with him and hurled him a distance of 400 parasangs. The man disappeared and never returned."[8]

This incident is not typical of Elijah inasmuch as he resorts to violence. Elijah usually operates in a more subtle fashion. He employs violence only as a last alternative. Even in this incident, it is important to note that Elijah hoped that a warning would suffice to discourage the witness from testifying.

Rabbinic literature does record instances in which Elijah achieves his purpose by active interference but without violence. His defense of Rabbi Shila is a case in point.[9] Rabbi Shila had administered lashes to a man who had had intercourse with an Egyptian woman. The man then went and informed against him to the government saying, "There

is a man among the Jews who administers the law without the permission of the government."[10] An official was sent to summon Rabbi Shila. When he came, he was asked "Why did you flog that man?" He replied, "Because he had intercourse with a she-ass."[11] They said to him, "Have you witnesses?" He replied, "I have." Elijah thereupon came in the form of a Persian and gave evidence in support of Rab Shila and against the informer. Rab Shila was honorably exonerated and discharged.

Elijah again intervened directly and actively but without violence in his support of Nachum of Gizmo. Nachum was sent to bear a gift from the Jews to the emperor of Rome. On route, he was robbed by bandits who refilled his box with earth. When the emperor opened the box and discovered that the gift was just dirt, he was prepared to execute Nachum of Gizmo. Elijah then appeared in the guise of a Roman, and suggested that this was the dirt of Abraham, which when thrown turned into swords and arrows. With such a gift, Elijah maintained, the emperor could conquer any foe. The emperor directed his officers to hurl the dirt, and indeed it did turn into swords and arrows. Nachum immediately became a hero. When the bandits discovered his success they too brought dirt to the emperor only to be executed when the miracle failed to occur.[12]

This last incident is unique in two respects. First of all, Elijah may be said to have intervened not only on behalf of one rabbi, but on behalf of the entire Jewish people. Nachum had been sent as a representative of all the Jews to the emperor. Had Nachum failed to

please the emperor, his punishment might have been shared by his people as well.

Secondly, Elijah employed a miracle here to achieve his purpose. It is an uncommon instance in which Elijah operates not through natural processes but resorts to a supernatural event. Elijah is not normally a miracle-worker in rabbinic literature. He possesses the power to perform them but usually relies on alternatives normally available to any human being.

Elijah not only saves lives at the crucial hour. He also ministers to those in need of sympathy and consolation. He is not only a support to those in need of a deliverer, but to those in need of a comforter as well. He reevaluates Israel's circumstances to provide them with added strength and encouragement to bear their burdens.

Elijah on occasion would interpret the oppressed condition of Israel as a sign of God's love for His people. It is reported[13] that Elijah said to Bar Hai Hai and others say to R. Eleazar, "What is the meaning of the verse, 'Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have tried thee in the furnace of affliction.' (Isaiah 48:10)? It teaches that the Holy One Blessed Be He went through all the good qualities in order to give them to Israel, but He found only poverty."

For Elijah, the fact that Israel suffers is a sign of God's love. Instead of a hardship, poverty becomes a virtue. Suffering is an indication of God's favor. The plague of poverty symbolizes not rejection but divine love. In the sight of God, no other value equals poverty.

Elijah comforts not only the people as a unit, but specific in-

dividuals as well. He responds not only to the plight of the nation, but to the despair of persons whose world has been shattered by tragedy.

The young widow of a promising scholar questioned the justice of the death of her husband. There was no scholar who could provide her with a satisfactory answer. Elijah thereupon went to see her and led her to admit certain failings of her husband. Through a sudden awareness of his transgressions, the young wife was led to acknowledge that her husband's death was a deserved punishment.[14]

Some might argue that the help which Elijah rendered in this case was questionable. Elijah does succeed in apparently relieving a measure of the widow's distress, but does so at the expense of the husband's character. It might not have been consistent with Elijah's compassionate nature to console the widow by degrading the beloved husband. The presentation of cogent reasons for his death, however convincing they might be, were inappropriate for the occasion. On the other hand, Elijah may be defended. His objective is to comfort a woman in her grief after the wisest of scholars had failed. That he directs himself to the woman's specific complaint and succeeds in providing an acceptable answer satisfies the demands of the situation. Elijah represents an objectivity in the presence of raw personal agony. He cites the bad in a man's nature at a time when human nature is inclined to recall only the good. Still, however painful his message, Elijah provides stability and a sense of justice under the most trying circumstances.

Just as he indicates the justice in seemingly unjust occurences, so Elijah works justice where individuals have been unduly wronged.

Elijah brings satisfaction to those who have been unfairly treated.

Once a man came into a strange city shortly before the beginning of the Sabbath and did not know to whom to entrust his money which he could not carry on the Sabbath. He therefore went to the synagogue where he saw someone in tefillin praying. He gave the man all that he had for safekeeping. At the conclusion of the Sabbath he asked for its return, but the seemingly pious refused to acknowledge his possession of the money. The poor man realized he had been dealing with a hypocrite. When he fell asleep, Elijah appeared to him and showed him how to obtain his money from the wife of the hypocrite. When he awoke he followed the advice of Elijah. He not only received his money back, but also exposed the hypocrite for what he was.[15]

Elijah is not only a support to those in danger of life or in need of comfort and satisfaction. He is also regarded as the helper of the poor. Whenever the poor are abased or mistreated, Elijah brings them new hope and faith. In most instances, he seeks to relieve them of their miserable, slovenly condition.

One man was so poor he had to do manual labor in the field of another landowner. Elijah, disguised as an Arab, came to visit him and tell him that he had seven good years in store. He must decide whether he wanted the good years immediately or in the future. The poor man did not at first believe the strange Arab. When, however, Elijah returned, the man answered that he must consult with his wife. Together they decided to take the seven good years now. As they spoke, so their wish was fulfilled. The man's children suddenly found

treasure buried on their land. As wealthy as they became, the man and his wife used their money charitably.[16] At the conclusion of the seventh year, Elijah came to announce that the seven good years were over. The man requested to inform his wife before Elijah left. His wife proposed to Elijah, "If thou canst find any person who will be more conscientious stewards of the pledges entrusted to us, than we have been, I shall willingly yield them up to thee." God acknowledged that these people had made proper use of their wealth, and He granted it to them as a perpetual possession.[17]

An interesting point of this legend is the effect of merits upon Elijah's plans. Elijah originally intended to relieve the poverty of this couple temporarily for seven years. By their charity and kindess however, they accumulated sufficient merit in God's sight to change Elijah's original intention. The ethical merits of individuals possess an unique power of their own.

Another principle which emerges from this legend, and which characterized allof Elijah's encounters with the poor, is the purposive function of wealth. One may, as the couple in the legend just cited, inherit wealth merely by good fortune. One retains it only by sound management. Wealth for the couple in this legend provided them with a sense of responsibility. They showed that they deserved the riches they had acquired.

There are several reasons for which Elijah will bestow wealth upon deserving individuals. Rabbah bar Abbahu was a victim of poverty. Because of his dire circumstances, he admitted to Elijah that he had no time to devote to his studies. Elijah thereupon led him into

Paradise, told him to remove his mantle and to fill it with leaves. As he was about to leave, a voice said, "Who desires to anticipate his share in the world to come during his earthly days, as Rabbah bar Abbahu is doing?" Rabbah bar Abbahu threw his leaves away but received 12,000 denarii for his upper garment because it retained the wondrous fragrance of the leaves of Paradise.

So anxious is Elijah to remove poverty for the sake of Torah that he violated the prohibition of permitting a human being to enter Paradise prior to his death. Elijah ignored established procedure in order to alleviate Rabbah's poverty so that he might devote his leisure time to study.

So zealous is Elijah in his defense and protection of the poor that he even disassociated himself from close friends if they mistreated the needy. He once dissolved an intimacy of many years standing because his friend built a vestibule which was so constructed that the supplications of the poor could not be heard by those within the house.[18]

Elijah's sympathies for the plight of the poor even outweigh the value of his most intimate friendships. Occasionally, as in this incident, his sense of moral responsibility to the poor and needy takes precedence over other equally noble human values.

In one of his more commendable endeavors, Elijah attacks poverty to enable a man to retain his moral integrity. Rav Kahanah was so needy he had to support himself by peddling household utensils. Once a lady of high standing endeavored to force him to commit an immoral act. Rav Kahanah, preferring death to iniquity threw himself from a

loft. Though Elijah was 400 parasangs away, he hastened to the spot and caught Rav Kahanah before he hit the ground. In addition, he gave him means enough to enable him to abandon an occupation that was beset with perils.[19]

Elijah was no doubt impressed with Rav Kahanah's piety as well as his poverty. There are occasions when Elijah indicates that piety and poverty are related. Poverty alone is not always a sufficient circumstance to elicit Elijah's assistance. It should be accompanied by a measure of piety as well.

As testimony to this observation, Elijah appeared in the guise of an Arab to a very poor man whose piety equalled his poverty. He gave the poor man two shekels. The man subsequently attained an impressive fortune. But in his zeal to gather worldly treasures, he had neglected to perform deeds of piety and charity, as was his former habit. Elijah again appeared before him. This time he took away the same two shekels, and in no time at all, the man was as poor as he had been previously. Elijah returned again and promised to restore the man's wealth if he in turn promised not to permit his large fortune to ruin his character. The man agreed to Elijah's conditions, repossessed the two shekels and regained his wealth. This time he remained in possession forever because his piety was not curtailed by his riches.[20]

This legend would suggest that Elijah served not only the poor and needy in time of danger, but rewarded the pious as well. Indeed that is the case. His visitations to the pious constitute a third phase[21] of Elijah's role as a helper in Rabbinic literature. It must have been

obvious to the rabbis, as it is to us, that good deeds are not always rewarded by personal happiness and success. The Book of Job is ample testimony to that awareness. It should also be no surprise then that Elijah, who bolsters confidence and gives encouragement to so many deserving persons, should also communicate his benevolence to the pious as well.

There was once a pious and rich man who was the father of a beautiful and saintly daughter. The young girl had already been married three times and had lost all three husbands, each on the day after the wedding. One day a poor cousin of the girl became so destitute that he came to the girl's father for help. While he visited with the father, the young man fell in love with his beautiful daughter. In view of her previous disasters, the father tried but in vain to discourage his nephew from marriage. While they were standing under the Huppah, the young couple were visited by Elijah who warned the groom, "While you are seated at the wedding table, you will be approached by a ragged dirty beggar with hair like nails. As soon as you see him, hasten to seat him beside you; set food and drink before him and be ready to grant whatever request he may make of you. Do as I say and you will be protected against harm." Just as Elijah had predicted the stranger arrived, but the groom did as Elijah had advised. After the wedding, the stranger revealed himself as God's messenger who was sent to take the young groom's life. He insisted that he would not listen to any supplication. He would just permit the groom to bid farewell to his wife. Still the bride argued with the angel, "Torah distinctly exempts the newly-wed from all duties for a year.[22] If

you deprive my husband of his life, you will give lie to the Torah." Thereupon God commanded the angel to desist. When the relatives came to prepare the grave for the groom, they found him well and unharmed.[23]

In this as in other meetings with the pious, Elijah sought to secure their happiness and avoid unnecessary sorrow. Certainly no worse tragedy could befall any young bride than the death of her beloved on their wedding day. Elijah provided the means to avert this impending disaster, and in so doing, rewarded the pious for their faithfulness.

It is also interesting to note in addition the manner in which the bride proves her case against the angel of death. She does so by citing a Scriptural verse. Such an argument, even for God, is irrefutable. All parties involved, including the Creator, must abide by the injunctions of Torah. God himself is compelled to assent.

A striking parallel to this legend is the encounter of Rabbi Reuben with the angel of death. The angel of death told him that his only son would have to die. The pious man was resigned and accepted the decree, but asked only one favor. He requested a delay of thirty days so that he might arrange for his son's marriage before he died. The angel acquiesced in Rabbi Reuben's request. Rabbi Reuben told no one of his meeting, and on the thirtieth day he proceeded with the arrangements for his son's wedding feast. On that day the bridegroom met Elijah who told him of his approaching death. Like his father, the son accepted the decree without protest. Elijah added that the angel would appear in the guise of a ragged dirty beggar. He suggested that the son receive the angel in the kindliest manner and to insist that the angel partake of their food and drink. Everything happened as Elijah

had described. The angel was so moved that he revealed his identity as a beggar and was softened by the entreaties of the father and the pleas of the bride. Both reminded him of the exemption from duty granted by the Torah to newly-weds. The angel then appeared before God and presented the petition. God responded by granting seventy more years to Rabbi Reuben's son.[24]

In this legend the young man is redeemed by the same Torah passage which redeemed the groom of our previous midrash. There is, however, one significant difference. In this incident it is not God who relents, but the angel himself who in turn presents the petition to God. Our previous legend includes no such activity by the angel.

The support which Elijah offers to the pious is not always money or the gift of life. Occasionally his assistance provides them with deeper insights or added strengths to endure bitter hardships. One such case involved Rabbi Akiba. Rabbi Akiba's rich father-in-law would have nothing to do with him or his wife, because his daughter had married Akiba against his will. All that Akiba could afford for his wife on this bitter cold night was straw to sleep on. He could comfort his wife only with assurances of love. Elijah then appeared as a poor man and begged for straw for his wife who was in childbirth. Akiba and his wife thus realized that their misery was not so great, and that Elijah had sustained the courage of the pious.[25]

Elijah had revealed to Akiba and his wife that as hopeless as their situation appeared, there were others who suffered even more. Elijah's statement was a kind of negative consolation inasmuch as it suggested not how fortunate they were, but how much more miserable

they could have been. Nevertheless, it was a realistic and effective remedy for Akiba's despair. To that extent, Elijah's observation was a helpful one.

Elijah's activity is not restricted to delivering the pious from death, poverty, and physical pain. He sometimes serves to alleviate mental anguish and suffering. A very saintly man was once punished for his excessive pride by being misled into sin by a female demon. God wished to humiliate him for his pride in his continence. Long and intense were the mental sufferings of this pious man who could not forget his sins for a moment. After he had been humiliated for a sufficiently long time, Elijah visited him to inform him that the beautiful woman who had enticed him was not a human being but a spirit, and his sin was thus not a real one.[26]

Although Elijah most often appears to reward the pious for their devotion, he also differentiates among them according to the degree of their merit. All men who practice piety are not equally commendable. Some are more righteous than others, and Elijah emphasizes the distinction. The story is told of two pious brothers who were both highly esteemed.[27] One provided for his servants as for his own table, while the other permitted his servants to eat abundantly only of the first course. Of the other courses they could only have remnants. Accordingly, Elijah often visited the first brother. He ignored the second brother.

There was another pair of brothers who were similarly esteemed. One brother was accustomed to provide for his servants only after his own needs were first satisfied, while the other brother attended to

the needs of his servants first. Elijah often appeared to the latter, but never to the former.[28]

Both these legends suggest the same lesson. Neither brother neglected his servants. Both were concerned for their welfare. Both brothers were pious. The difference between them was not one of kind, but one of degree. Elijah, by his presence or absence, indicated the extreme piety of one, contrasted to the limited piety of the other.

There is one further aspect to Elijah's role as a helper in rabbinic literature. That aspect concerns his function as a reconciler. Elijah occasionally reveals himself to restore peace between friends or husband and wife. He serves to heal the wounds or seal the rift that has occurred out of misunderstanding or a rash moment of temper.

There is the familiar but appropriate legend of the woman who arrived home late one Friday evening, because she had allowed herself to be detained by a sermon preached by Rabbi Meir. The woman's husband swore he would not permit her to enter the house until she had spat in the face of the rabbi. In the meantime, Elijah visited Rabbi Meir and explained to him that a pious woman had fallen into a difficult predicament on his account. In order to help the woman, Rabbi Meir announced that he was looking for someone who knew how to cast spells which were performed by spitting into the eye of the afflicted one. When he caught sight of the woman whom Elijah had designated, Rabbi Meir asked her to try her power on him. The woman hesitated to do so until the good rabbi insisted. Having spat in Rabbi Meir's face, she was thus able to comply with her husband's requirement without disrespect to the rabbi. Through the efforts of Elijah conjugal happiness

was restored to an innocent and loyal wife.[29]

No other legend could demonstrate more adequately Elijah's deep concern for שלום בית . Regardless of the nature of the conflict Elijah is associated with the spirit of domestic tranquility that restores harmony to a dissonant household. This particular legend is distinctive also inasmuch as those who profit by Elijah's concern remain unaware of their benefactor. Those who benefit from Elijah's activity usually recognize the one to whom they owe their gratitude.

Another illustration of Elijah's tendency to reconcile enemies involved Rabbi Judah ha Nasi himself. Rabbi Judah had been suffering for many days from an agonizing toothache. Elijah finally appeared in the guise of Rav Hiyyah the Elder and cured Rabbi Judah's pain by laying his hand upon the sufferer's cheek. When Hiyyah visited Rabbi Judah the next day, Rabbi Judah kissed him in gratitude for his service. When Hiyyah explained to Rabbi Judah that it was not he who had effected the cure, they both knew that Elijah had visited them. After he realized that Elijah had considered Hiyyah worthy of taking his appearance, Rabbi Judah paid the highest respect to Rabbi Hiyyah.[30]

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From the evidence which has been presented, it is clear that the rabbis viewed Elijah as a friend and counselor whose aid could always be counted on. Nor would it be unjustified to conclude that this function constituted one of Elijah's most popular roles. In the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods Elijah assumes a special vigilance as the protector of the innocent and as a friend in need. He hovers over the just and

pious and is ever present to guard the persecuted individual against evil or to snatch him out of danger at the last moment. He is likewise the defender of שלום בית and protects ties of love and friendship from dissolution.[31] With four strokes of his wings Elijah can traverse the world.[32] Hence, no spot on earth is too far removed for his help.

As a summary these remarks would not be fruitful if they were only to recount the incidents which have been already cited and evaluated. There emerges however from the material which has been considered certain characteristics of Elijah in his role as helper and supporter. It is the purpose of these concluding remarks to clarify those characteristics.

Elijah always appeared to those in need without a summons. Not one legend was uncovered in which an individual called upon Elijah for aid. He always appeared unsolicited. In his role as a teacher we found that Elijah exhibited the same trait. He appeared to selected individuals spontaneously and of his own volition.

Elijah most always disguised himself. Occasionally, he appeared in his own identity. More often he assumed the guise of an Arab, a Roman dignitary, a Persian officer, a beggar or even a harlot. Depending upon the demands of the situation, Elijah assumed the most effective manner and the most acceptable form. To influence Romans on behalf of a Jew, he appeared as a Roman official. To impress Akiba with the advantages of his own humble position, he appeared as a beggar. Elijah's guise often depended on the purpose of this mission.

Elijah did not render aid through violence. Even in rescuing the rabbis from death, he avoided physical punishment of the oppressor

wherever possible. Only as a last alternative, when no other choice was available, did Elijah resort to bodily harm. In all other instances, he achieved his end either by his own activity or through natural circumstances.

Elijah always acted to preserve human life for its own sake. Elijah helped rabbis threatened with death not because of their merit, but because of the circumstances. The rabbis all shared in common their oppression by Rome. Elijah sought to relieve them from that yoke. He did not question the justice or injustice of Rome's position. He was simply the defender of the accused. It is possible that Elijah always assumed the innocence and righteousness of the rabbis, and, hence, no defense need have been made for them. Still, in all such circumstances, the concern was the saving of their lives, not the justice of their cause.

Contrasted to the absence of any moral concern in his attempts to save rabbis attacked by Rome, Elijah very definitely exhibited that consideration in other circumstances. Elijah rescued a man from his poverty not irrespective of his character, but because of it. He sustained a man in his new-found wealth only if his moral conduct continued to merit it. In other words, Elijah did not serve as a mere dispenser of pleasures and riches for the needy. In all his encounters with the poor and pious, Elijah fulfills the reward of the righteous.

As he is described in the Tannaitic and Amoraic aggadah, Elijah, as a protector and benefactor, was a very friendly and appealing character. No matter how dismal or difficult life was, one would always find comfort in the confidence that Elijah might help. Elijah

represented the spirit of personal concern and support, a guarantee that no matter how desperate the situation, the righteous man was never entirely forsaken. It is not unlikely that Elijah's appeal and popularity can be traced to this function in rabbinic literature.

CHAPTER II NOTES

1. In the Mishna and Tosefta at the end of Eduyyot, there is a discussion on the means by which Elijah will restore peace and harmony in Israel. All the views presuppose that Elijah's chief activity will be the restoration of family purity.

2. Jewish Ecyclopedia, Volume V, p. 122.

3. Pirke Rabbi Eliezer 15.

4. Ibid.

5. Babba Kamma 60b.

6. Abodah Zorah 18b. The Talmudic passage also records the opinion of those who maintain that Elijah did not appear as a harlot. Instead, they contend that he struck his one finger in the food of the heathens and then sucked the other. It then appeared that R. Meir was associating with a heathen; the Romans thus gave up pursuit because, again, they did not believe it likely that R. Meir would associate with such a companion.

7. Shabbat 33b.

8. Abodah Zorah 17b.

9. Berakoth 58a.

10. He accused R. Shila of administering the law according to the Jewish code, and not according to that of the secular government.

11. The text (Berakoth 58a) later notes that Egyptians were compared to she-asses. (See Ezekiel 23:20).

12. Sanhedrin 109a; Taanith 21a.

13. Haggigah 9b. Through this interpretation of the Isaiah passage that follows, Elijah attempts to assuage the hurt and discomfort of his people in its affliction.

14. Shabbat 13a-b, Eliahu Rabbah 15, 76; Aboth d'Rabbi Nathan, Ch. 2, p. 8.

15. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. V, p. 123.

CHAPTER II NOTES (CONTINUED)

16. The emphasis in the Midrash is on the merit of this man's wife. After his sons find the treasure, the text reads,
מיד הודה להקב"ה ונחה דעתא עליו מה שעשתה אשתו הכשירה.
The couple use the money, on the wife's suggestion, for charitable deeds, so they can merit to keep the wealth. The woman even instructs one son to keep a list of all the persons they help.

17. Ruth Zuta 55 - The Midrash comments on the character of Ruth and adds that men who marry good women fulfill Torah from beginning to end. Indeed the redemption of the generations depends upon the merits of righteous women. Then follows the midrash just cited about a man who lost all his possessions, but was redeemed by the virtue of his wife.

18. Babba Mezia 114a-b.

19. Kiddushim 40a; Babba Bathra 7b. According to the Mishnah a porter's lodge would seem to be an improvement.

20. Ruth Zuta 50.

21. It will be noted above that Elijah serves first as a helper to those in desperate need of his defense and secondly as a benefactor of the poor.

22. Deuteronomy 24:5. כי יקח איש אשה חדשה לא יצא בצבא
ולא יעבור עליו כל דבר נקי
יהיה לביתו שנה אחת ושמח את אשתו אשר לקח.
"When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year and shall make happy his wife whom he hath taken."

23. Tanhuma Haazinu 8. The legend about Rabbi Akiba's daughter in Shabbat 156b has obviously influenced this legend. Astrologers predicted that she would die on the day of her wedding. That legend would have been fulfilled had she not acted judiciously. At the moment that a serpent was about to sting her, she hastened to the door to give alms to a beggar. Instead of being killed by the serpent, it was killed by her.

24. Maasiyot No. 1 From Sefer Hamaasiyoth in Judith Montefiore College Report for the year 1894-95. This midrash also appears in עשרת הדברות 83-84 where Elijah plays no part at all.

CHAPTER TI NOTES (CONTINUED)

25. Nedarim 50a.

26. Buber, מדרש תנחומא Book No. 1, p. 20; Yerushalmi, Shabbat 13b.

27. Ketubot 61a.

28. Ibid.

29. Deuteronomy Rabba 5 (End) See parallels in Yerushalmi, Sotahl, 198a, Leviticus Rabba 9:9 and Numbers Rabba 9:30 wherein instead of "Elijah," the agent of רוח הקודש is שלום בית.

30. Yerushalmi, K'laim 9,32b: Genesis Rabbah 33:3 and 96:5; Tanhuma Book No. 1, p. 215.

31. Ginsberg, Legends Vol. IV, p. 203.

32. Berakot 4b - relates that Michael traverses the world with one stroke, Gabriel with two, Elijah with four and the Angel of Death with eight.

CHAPTER III

The functions of Elijah which have already been described may be included among his "major" roles in rabbinic literature. Such roles are "major" inasmuch as they recur with considerable regularity. They reflect the predominant characteristics which the rabbis associated with the famous Biblical prophet. The student could not probe the rabbinic texts to any extent without discovering the identity of Elijah as a teacher and a helper.

Further investigation, however, reveals a number of "minor" roles for Elijah. There are occasions when Elijah appears in uncommon guises. Such occasions are not so frequent as to suggest that they are typical of Elijah's function in rabbinic literature. Indeed, they occasionally demonstrate qualities contrary to those which are normally ascribed to the prophet.

The following chapter will attempt to study some aspects of these "minor" roles. It is interesting to observe the variety of identities which Elijah assumes and to search for explanations of their origins. Why did Elijah appear in a particular role? Why were some of his functions emphasized to the exclusion of others? Why were these uncommon roles of Elijah preserved in various compilations of midrash and haggadah? The answers to these questions do not fall within the scope of the present study. The questions themselves, however, are relevant. They are the considerations which aroused this student's curiosity in his discovery of such "minor" roles. It was such considerations which motivated the inclusion of this chapter in the present study.

Elijah does not always appear as the friendly companion of deserving individuals to render them aid and support in their hour of trial. There are instances in which Elijah reveals a rather stern, harsh quality of his nature. Such incidents do not imply that Elijah is unjust or wicked. They only suggest that to some minds he was not always a comforter or sympathetic friend.

Most indicative of Elijah's zealousness and occasional rigidity is his association with Phineas. Scripture tells us only that the name of Elijah's home was Jabesh-Gilead.[1] The rabbis add, however, that he was a priest, identical with Phinsas.[2] Phineas was, in Scripture, the ~~priest~~ zealous for the honor of God, who distinguished himself on the journey through the desert. According to the Rabbis, Phineas also played a prominent role in the time of Judges.[3]

This association of Elijah with Phineas is supported by selected legends which describe Elijah as a man of vengeance and fiery zeal. The midrash[4] relates that Leah called the boy who was born by Zilpah, her handmaid, from Jacob, Gad. Gad, the midrash comments, means "fortune," or it may mean "the cutter," for from Gad was descended the prophet Elijah who brings good fortune to Israel and who also cuts down the heathen world.

There is also a later legend[5] which reports that the angel of Edom will flee for refuge to Bozrah, but God will appear there, and slay him. Tough Bozrah is one of the cities of refuge, yet will the Lord exercise the right of the avenger therein. He will seize the angel by his hair, and Elijah will slaughter him, letting the blood spatter the garments of God.[6]

These popular notions of Elijah's function for the future constitute a violent, gory picture of the prophet. This characterization contrasts sharply with the friendly, peace-loving, non-violent Elijah found in so many rabbinic sources. These unpleasant, unfriendly connotations of Elijah's role are not reserved solely for his future activity. Rabbinic literature records specific situations in which Elijah revealed his negative qualities.

Among those instances are occasions when Elijah appeared to reprimand the rabbis for their conduct. He scolded them for wrong decisions or poor behavior. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi incurred the displeasure of Elijah, because a man was brutally mangled by a lion in front of his house. Elijah claimed the rabbi was to some extent responsible because he did not pray for the prevention of such accidents.[7]

This legend possesses a number of nuances. It reflects Elijah's concern for the underdog, his compassion for the victim of a horrible disaster. It reflects also Elijah's very exalted standards of conduct for men who profess virtue. From the man of average character, Elijah expects only a normal degree of piety. From the rabbis, however, he demanded an additional measure of compassion and moral sensitivity.

For the present purpose, however, I would indicate by this legend the unusual severity of the prophet. It is not unfair to conclude that Elijah was particularly harsh with Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. No ordinary man would be expected to anticipate the occurence of such misfortune, no less anticipate his responsibility for them. Elijah expected extra-

ordinary virtue from his disciples and rebuked them firmly when they disappointed him.

Sometimes Elijah even inflicted punishment himself upon the pious for their frailties and failures so that they would mend their ways. A rich and learned young man once decided to take up some trade and profession. Since he did not know what to choose, he decided to explore the possibilities before he made up his mind. He first visited the marketplace to study the life of the merchants. When he saw that commerce was conducted by lying and cheating, he refused to become a merchant. Finally he noticed a man tilling the soil,[8] and asked him what his business was. Elijah replied, "I till the soil to provide food for myself, my wife and my children, the poor and the needy, the animals of the fields, the fowl of the air, and the beasts of the earth." The young man decided to become a tiller of the soil and stayed with Elijah. Elijah took the lad into his own house and offered to fulfill any of his desires. The young man wanted only to be married. Since Elijah knew who was destined to become this lad's wife, he took the young man to her and they were married. Amid his new happy circumstances, the young man forgot his promise to become a tiller of the soil. On the seventh day he was still cavorting around with his bride, when Elijah appeared. Elijah announced that his punishment for neglecting his work for more than the usual seven days would be seven years in slavery. Elijah's prediction was fulfilled. While the young man was washing in the river, Elijah descended, seized him, and carried him off to a distant country where he was sold into slavery. The young man's wife did not complain, but was convinced that whatever God did was

for the best. She settled down in the place where her husband disappeared and opened a store for the sale of corn, hoping that her husband would return in the course of time. After five years she recognized her husband as a slave of a corn merchant. When the young man told his wife that his sentence was for seven years of which he still had to serve two, they separated without a complaint. At the end of the seventh year, Elijah returned the lad to his wife and they lived happily ever after.[9]

The lesson of this midrash is a subtle one. The legend purports to exalt the faithfulness of this young man's wife. Despite the hardships and heartache, the young bride remains loyal and devoted to the man she married. The groom is depicted as a sincere, earnest lad in search of a worthy trade or profession. The legend then suggests that the reward of an honest, reliable and righteous man of integrity is a faithful, dedicated wife.

Still, Elijah's reprimand in this legend is extremely harsh. Undeniably, the young man deserved some rebuke for a breach of promise, but Elijah over-exaggerated the extent of the crime. Seven years in slavery is no just sentence for violating the seven days' absence from work. Elijah is not the sympathetic, understanding helper whom the rabbis meet elsewhere. He does not excuse this young man's actions as those of a confused newlywed. Instead, he pronounces a stern judgment upon him. As if that were not enough, Elijah does not even relent after five years, when after having seen his wife, the young man returns to slavery without complaint. It is uncommon in rabbinic literature to meet Elijah as such an unyielding rebuker.

One of the most familiar legends which depict Elijah as a reprimander is the meeting with Simeon the Son of Eliezer. This great Tanna stood in need of correction on account of his great conceit. When he was once returning from the academy, he took a walk on the beach. His bosom was swelling with pride at his attainments in Torah. Suddenly he met a very ugly man who said, "Peace be with you Rabbi." Instead of acknowledging the greeting, Simeon said, "O how ugly you are. Is it possible that all the residents of your town are as ugly as you?" "I know not," he man replied, "but go to the Master Artificer who created me and say, 'How ugly is this vessel which you have fashioned.'" Eliezer then realized not only the wrong he had committed, but that the ugly man had condemned him to death. Simeon humbly begged the pardon of the man. The ugly man, who was again Elijah in disguise, continued to refer him to the Master Artificer of the ugly vessel. The inhabitants of the town earnestly pleaded with the man to forgive the great Rabbi Simeon and to retract his curse. Eventually, Elijah accepted his apology, provided that the Rabbi would promise never again to commit the same wrong.[10]

The most striking illustration of the severity of Elijah's reprimands is told in the story of Rabbi Anan the prophet. Someone brought Rabbi Anan a mess of little fish as a present, and at the same time, he asked the rabbi to serve as the judge in a lawsuit in which he was involved. Under the circumstances Anan refused to accept a gift from the man. In order to prove his sense of justice, the man then urged the rabbi to take the fish but assign the case to another judge. Anan consented and petitioned one of his colleagues to act for him, because he had disqualified himself from serving as judge.

Anan's legal friend infered that the litigant was apparently a kinsman of Anan. Consequently he showed himself particularly complaisant toward him. As a result,the other party to the suit was denied an objective hearing. He failed to present his side as convincingly as he might otherwise have done, and so he lost the case. Elijah, who had been the friend and teacher of Anan, subsequently shunned his presence. He believed that the injury inflicted on the second party to the suit was due to Anan's carelessness. AAnan was deeply distressed. He observed many fasts and offered many prayers before Elijah appeared to him again. Even then Anan was not favored to view Elijah himself; he had to be satisfied with just listening to Elijah's words without beholding his face.[11]

Closely aligned to the role of Elijah as a reprimander is his function as a censor. In both characterizations, Elijah is harsh and punitive. Some individual commits an error which incurs Elijah's fierce anger and hostility. The distinction between the two roles is a subtle one. As a reprimander Elijah both scolds and punishes. He inflicts severe penalties on those who have erred. As a censor, Elijah does not pronounce any sentence. He expresses his genuine disapproval and dismay, but he refrains from executing punishment on the offenders. The following incident illustrates Elijah in this specific role of a censor.

Rabbi Levi said, "It is related of a certain ruler in Rome who squandered his father's treasures, that Elijah came to him and in a dream upbraided him. 'Your fathers amassed and you squandered."

Elijah did not stir from there until the ruler had replenished the treasure.[12] Here, the prophet scolds, but withholds the punishment.

Elijah thus possesses other qualities besides mercy, sympathy, and love. Elijah is not only a teacher and a helper. He is also a reprimander, a severe critic and a stern judge of human conduct. No incident summarizes better these unfriendly aspects of Elijah than they story of Rabbi Jose and the prophet. It is said that Elijah's rigor in the Biblical narrative once caused Rabbi Jose to accuse him of being passionate and irrascible. Consequently, the legendary Elijah would have nothing to do with him for a long time. When Elijah finally reappeared and explained the cause of his withdrawal, Rabbi Jose said he only felt justified. His accusation of the Biblical Elijah could not have received a more striking verification.[13]

Rabbi Jose's experience with the legendary Elijah is a direct development of the rabbinic attitude toward the early, Biblical Elijah. Elijah's sensitivity and temper in his encounter with Rabbi Jose are present also in the rabbinic speculations about the Biblical Elijah. The rabbis exhibited that attitude in their exegetical activities, particularly in their interpretation of the passage in I Kings 19:14-16. There Elijah exhibits his zeal for God, and God in turn suddenly commands Elijah to appoint Elisha as his successor. The rabbis offer the following explanation. The misdeeds of Israel swelled to such a number that they could no longer count on זכות אבות. They overdrew their account of merits. When they gave up the sign of the Covenant, Elijah could no longer control his wrath and accused

Israel before God.[14] God met with Elijah and conveyed that it was best to defend, not to accuse Israel. Elijah, however, was inexorable in his zeal for God. He would not relent. God then commanded him to appoint Elisha as his successor. "I cannot do," God says, "as thou wouldst have me. Though Israel has overthrown my altars, and slain my prophets, of what concern is it to thee?"[15]

Elijah not only rewards the righteous, he punishes the wicked as well in heaven as on earth. He who marries a woman unworthy of him (impure descent), will be placed in the stocks on a pole by Elijah and will be flogged by God.[16]

There are other "minor" roles ascribed to Elijah besides those already discussed. Among the most delightful of them all is his role as a teller of divine secrets. This function is intimately connected with Elijah's identity as the forerunner of the Messiah. In rabbinic literature it is Elijah who reveals how often the world stood at the brink of the messianic age only to be thwarted by human fear or weakness. Elijah revealed this phenomenon by disseminating to man the words and thoughts of God. On occasion Elijah appears to conspire with man against God Almighty. Elijah sometimes reveals more than he should.

Besides visiting selected individuals, Elijah was a regular attendant at the academy of Judah ha Nasi. On one New Moon day he was late. The reason for his lateness, he explained, was that it was his daily duty to awaken the three patriarchs, and to wash their hands, so that they might offer up their prayers. After their devotions,

he had to lead them back to their graves. On this particular day he was delayed because of the musaf service for the New Moon. Elijah added that this worship procedure was a tedious affair. Each patriarch had to pray one at a time. If they all prayed together, their prayer might be so efficacious that God would have to fulfill it and even bring the Messiah before his time. Rabbi Judah asked Elijah if there were any three men on earth who could equal the patriarchs in the efficacy of their prayers. Elijah answered that there were three such men, and cited Rabbi Hiyyah and his two sons. Rabbi Judah called for a day of prayer and fasting and summoned Hiyyah and his two sons. When they uttered the word for wind, a storm arose. When they petitioned for rain, it poured. When the prayer came for תחיית המתים, there was great commotion and excitement in heaven. Elijah was severly punished by fiery blows for revealing the secret of the efficacy of those three men in prayer. In order to prevent Judah from effecting a resurrection, Elijah had to assume the guise of a bear and put the congregation to flight.[17]

Elijah once showed to a scholar the fiery chariots in which the pious ascend to the heavenly academy. The scholar lost his eyesight, because notwithstanding Elijah's warning, he looked at the chariot of Rabbi Hiyyah and its lustre blinded him.[18] Again Elijah had revealed a secret too powerful for man to cope with.

Elijah's communication of heavenly secrets does not always result in disappointment. Sometimes Elijah's secret knowledge helps to sustain the world. He advises individuals to rest satisfied with

their blessings. To expect from God more than one has expected is to invite disaster. God will sustain the world only so long as man submits to His authority and does not usurp His prerogatives. Rav Judah once saw two men wasting bread. God then caused a famine to occur in order to teach them a lesson. When Rabbi Judah saw how starved the people were, he told his disciple, "Remove my shoes." When the disciple removed one shoe, the rain began to fall. Before he took off the other shoe, Elijah appeared and said to the disciple, "God says if you take off the other shoe, I will lay waste the world."[19]

Throughout his experience with mankind, Elijah was always sensitive to the deepest human yearnings. To the rabbis he was a favorite companion, someone who brought heaven a little closer to earth, and a friend in whom they could confide their fondest hopes and expectations. The rabbis often felt free to discuss with Elijah questions of faith and theology which they might not have even broached with any other heavenly figure. Elijah is in the unique position of being God's messenger and man's intimate companion.

The rabbis even discussed with Elijah the date of the arrival of the Messiah. Elijah once appeared to Rabbi Judah, the brother of R. Salla the Pious, and said to him, "The world shall not exist less than eighty five jubilees, and in the last jubilee, the son of David will come." R. Salla asked Elijah, "At the beginning or at the end (of the last jubilee)?" Elijah replied, "I do not know." "Shall this period be completed or not?" R. Salla asked. Again, Elijah replied, "I do not know." R. Ashi said, "Elijah spoke thus to R.

Salla, "Before that (last jubilee), do not expect him; afterwards, thou mayest await him."[20]

In the course of this conversation, Elijah suggested that a man should act as if there were not specific date for the messianic age. Were the time for the arrival of the Messiah known to mankind, then humanity would desist from all its noble efforts towards social justice and human brotherhood. The coming of the Messiah should not even be anticipated until the distant future. Were it otherwise all human initiative and ambition would cease.

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These functions of Elijah which have been termed his "minor" roles contribute much to an understanding of his place in rabbinic literature. The rabbis saw Elijah as a personality of many facets. He was not merely a teacher or a friend in need; he was also an irrascible gentleman, zealous for the honor of God, and quick to punish those who would violate his rigid standards of moral conduct. It was soothing to bask in the warmth of Elijah's comfort and sympathy; it was equally bitter to suffer the fury of Elijah's violent wrath.

The variety of Elijah's roles demonstrates most adequately his humanity. Even in his intemperate moments, his concern was for the welfare of all mankind. Elijah is subject to the same moods and tempers of all human beings. These changes of character, depending upon the situation, only underline the reality of his person. Elijah was no incarnation of truth and goodness. Such virtues he defended with intense vigor, but he was equally subject to fits of anger and

rage.

The human character of Elijah stands out in bold relief when he is seen as the teller of divine secrets. In such incidents he almost shares the exhuberance, impatience, and anxiety of a teenager who possesses valuable information for his respected peers. Elijah at times cannot contain himself, for the message he bears is so vital for mankind. The variety of Elijah's roles is significant also for its hints concerning the development of the prophet's legendary character. The many functions which Elijah serves would indicate that the legends which describe him were not preconceived. The personality of Elijah in Rabbinic folklore developed dynamically and spontaneously. Whatever situation seemed appropriate to include Elijah, there he appeared. The stories about him were invented and recorded without reference to pre-established criteria or standards of consistency. Were this not the case, it would be difficult to account in any systematic way for the unusual, unpredictable personality that was Elijah. Happy or sad, friendly or angry, sympathetic or harsh, all these qualities were facets of the Biblical prophet, transformed by some yet unknown process.

CHAPTER III NOTES

1. I Kings 17:1.

2. In Babba Meziah 114b, Elijah is regarded as a priest, but Phineas is not. The identification of Phineas as a priest occurs in Pirke Rabbi Elizer 44, Targum Yerushalmi to Exodus 6:18, to Numbers 25:12, and to Deuteronomy 30:4. In Numbers Rabah 21:3, Phineas is identified with Elijah.

3. According to Leviticus Rabah 1:1, Phineas is the "angel of God" in Judges 2:1.

4. Genesis Rabah 71:8.

5. Abkir in Yalkut, C. 1, verse 133.

6. According to Talmudic legend (Sukkah 52a, Eliahu Rabah, Ch. 4, p. 20) God will slay the יצר הרע on the Day of Judgment.

7. Makkot 11a.

8. The man tilling the soil is Elijah. See Ginsberg, Legends, Vol. 6, p. 336, Note 97.

9. Asereth Hadibroth 85-86.

10. Taanith 20b. See Rashi and Tosafoth on this passage. Rashi notes that there are סופרים who identify "the ugly man" as Elijah. Tosafoth cites Derek Eretz 4 where "the ugly man" is known as Elijah. Both commantators observe that our passage in Taanith does not read "Elijah," but only "an ugly man."

11. Ketubot 106a.

12. Genesis Rabah, end of 83:4.

13. Sanhedrin 113b.

14. Pirke Rabbi Eliezer 29; Aboth d'Rabbi Nathan, Ch. 47, p. 129; see also Mekilta: Bo 2a on Elijah's zeal for God, but not for Israel.

15. Shir Hashirim Rabah 1:6.

16. Leviticus Rabah, Ch. 34:8.

CHAPTER LXI NOTES (CONTINUED)

17. Babba Meziah 85b.

18. Ibid.

19. Taanith 24b. Rashi explains Elijah's statement to mean that the disciple should not weary God with any further prayer since God had already answered his specific request.

20. Sanhedrin 97b.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to judge objectively the merit of one's own efforts to deal with a theoretical problem. The problem of Elijah's role in Rabbinic literature is complicated. Certainly no single effort would provide an exhaustive analysis of the subject.

I had recognized early in my research that the following study would by necessity be limited. First of all, it could not possibly include all aspects of Elijah's role in rabbinic literature. Time and the enormous quantity of material restricted my observations to selected aspects of the prophet's character development in rabbinic Judaism.

Secondly, I withdrew from any extensive interpretation of the material. I refrained from calculating the significance of any incident beyond its relation to the category under which I had subsumed it. The preceding study did not intend to offer any comparative analysis between Elijah and other Biblical heroes in rabbinic literature. Nor did this treatment provide an elaborate understanding of the Elijah legends against the background of rabbinic theology. Such omissions do serve a positive function. They indicate the enormous task which awaits one who would exhaust the subject of Elijah.

The present study can claim certain achievements. It initiated a study of Elijah as a legendary figure. There has been surprisingly little research devoted to an analysis of Elijah's role in the rabbinic period. There are collections of aggadic material which deal

with the activity of Elijah, but they are not analytic. Most such studies only reproduce the available material concerning the Biblical prophet. They offer no commentary or explanation of his place in Jewish folklore. They often ignore the fact that the person of Elijah is invoked by the rabbis, not to glorify the prophet, but to teach a meaningful lesson.

In the preceding pages, I attempted to demonstrate that Elijah's appearances served a purpose. The rabbis were not recording simple hallucinations or day-dreams. They were most often invoking the presence of the prophet Elijah to lend authority to a moral maxim, a legal technicality, or simply a personal viewpoint. Elijah serves much the same purpose as many legendary characters. He is important primarily with respect to the qualities he represents.

The most important contribution of this study has been its analysis of specific aspects of Elijah's role in rabbinic literature. We have seen that Elijah served in diverse campacities, all of which were manifested as different facets of his personality. It would not serve any useful purpose merely to repeat in summary the evidence which has already been presented. There does remain, however, an interesting problem which could be treated as part of this conclusion.

In the introduction to this dissertation, we recalled briefly the activity of the Biblical prophet Elijah and suggested that the Biblical narrative ought not to be ignored in attempting to understand Elijah in rabbinic literature. The present task then is to explore the relationship, if any, between the Biblical, or historical

Elijah, and his rabbinic, or legendary, counterpart. For this purpose it might be helpful to recollect some of the roles which the rabbis assigned to Elijah. After we have clarified his legendary status, we may be better prepared to relate it to his Biblical character.

We discovered first of all that Elijah was considered a teacher. He advised the rabbis not only on matters of morality and ethical conduct, but on questions of physical comfort and mental peace of mind. He taught the rabbis proper modes of conduct and behavior in all areas of life. He was also an instructor in the proper observance of the law. He championed the spirit of the law and rebuked those who abided only by its letter. He demanded consistency and sought to establish a harmony between inward intention and outward observance. Elijah was a teacher of unusual sensitivity, passionately concerned for the welfare of the individual and his relationship to other persons.

In Chapter II we explored the aspect of Elijah's role as a helper. Rabbinic Judaism viewed Elijah as the defender and benefactor of the poor, the needy, and the oppressed. Elijah frequently appeared to correct wrongs which had been committed or to alleviate the danger which threatened the lives of innocent persons. Wherever justice was violated, there was Elijah prepared to protect the persecuted. He was, in short, the champion of the underdog.

Finally, we observed Elijah in a number of minor roles. There were occasions when Elijah appeared in guises which were uncommon for him inasmuch as they were irregular. Among these minor roles

was that of a reprimander. According to the rabbis, Elijah possessed a fiery temper. His support of a cause was often accompanied by relentless wrath and fury. He was severe not only in his rebuke but in his punishment as well. It was even suggested that Elijah frequently exaggerated the offense by imposing unreasonable penalties. Elijah was for the rabbis an uncompromising moralist. He refused to bargain on questions of ethical principle. As merciful as he was in his support of the innocent, so was he merciless in his attack on the wicked. There was for Elijah no excuse for prostituting moral values.

In addition to these specific roles, we noted still other qualities which the rabbis ascribed to Elijah. Elijah was depicted as the prophet who was zealous for God. In his unparalleled fervor to serve his Master, Elijah occasionally abandoned his defense of Israel to become her accuser. According to the rabbis, Elijah tolerated no breach of faith in Yahweh. He is the angry prophet -- angry with his people on behalf of his God.

The rabbis also ascribed miracles to Elijah. Normally they were reluctant to credit him with supernatural powers, because such an attribute detracted from the reality of his person. The rabbis were most concerned that Elijah appear to be a real person, not a figment of human imagination. Nevertheless, as a last resort, Elijah exercised miraculous powers. He would save rabbis from death by eliminating key witnesses at their trials. His supernatural gifts permitted him to achieve his ends when all other means failed. It was an assurance that, regardless of the circumstances, Elijah could always

bring deliverance. His capacity to work miracles testified also to his status as a divine messenger.

The immediate question which all these roles and attributes suggest is obvious. What relationship, if any, exists between the personality described by the rabbis and the Biblical prophet who first appears in I Kings 17? Is there any connection between the Biblical and rabbinic figure, or did the rabbis arbitrarily name Elijah as their benefactor and ascribe to him whatever qualities they chose? The rabbinic literature definitely identifies the Elijah of legend with the Biblical prophet. They are the same person. The question of how they are related is thus legitimate.

The answer to this problem is not simple. The process of tracing historical personalities to their embodiment in popular legend is a complicated task. It is a procedure which is beyond the scope of this present study. An adequate treatment of this problem would demand extensive research into the nature and development of folklore. Even if such an investigation were undertaken, there would very likely remain questions for which there were no certain answers.

This thesis, however, provides a beginning towards a solution to the problem. I would contend that by comparing the Biblical narrative with the rabbinic material already presented, certain helpful observations result. A careful comparison of the two Elijahs reveals definite clues concerning the emergence of the later legendary character from the earlier. The following comments will provide those clues. The method consists in a presentation of relevant Bib-

lical passages which may serve as possible sources for the Elijah of rabbinic tradition.

In the first place, Elijah is a convenient and likely candidate for a legendary role. He is the only prophet who never dies. Since he ascends into heaven while yet alive, it is only reasonable to suppose that he continues his activity in the celestial spheres. Moreover, if Elijah lives forever, he is free to move about among men in any generation. It is not strange then to find the rabbis speaking of the prophet's continual appearances. Elijah can dwell in their midst as can any human being who is fully alive.

The Biblical Elijah is a sensitive teacher of moral conduct. He advises certain individuals of proper ethical behavior and standards of decency. The incident of Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21:1-24) is a case in point. Elijah emphasizes the moral injustice of the confiscation. Repeatedly, in his criticism of Ahab, Elijah accuses him of having violated moral principles. He is a bad king because he is unethical.

Elijah is likewise concerned as a teacher with the proper observance of the law. As in rabbinic literature, he insists on the spirit, not the letter, of the law. A classic example of this principle occurred in his contest with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:17-40). Elijah displays an impatience for hypocrisy when he cries, "How long will you go limping after two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21) Elijah deplores individuals who think in

one direction, but act in another. For Elijah, law pertains to a man's outer conduct and spirit to his inner motivation, and there must be consistency between the two. The action must conform to the belief. The performance of a given law should be motivated by the proper spirit. One cannot believe in Yahweh and act for Baal.

Again in the case of the confiscation of Naboth's vineyard, Elijah campaigns for the supremacy of the spirit of the law. In his seizure of Naboth's property, Ahab had acted according to the letter of the law. He had secured the vineyard through Jezebel by ostensibly legal means. What then was Elijah's complaint? The prophet protested that Ahab had ignored the intent of the law. The law itself is intended to safeguard the rights of individuals, not to deprive them of those rights. Ahab had violated every moral principle in his process of seizure and had thus aroused Elijah's contempt for hypocrisy and deception. The rabbinic role of Elijah as a teacher and defender of the spirit of the law is not entirely absent in his Biblical career.

In the Bible, Elijah also comes to the aid of the oppressed and persecuted. As in rabbinic Judaism, he is a helper to those in need. In his journey to Zarephath, Elijah met a widow who, with her son, was destitute and poverty-stricken. (I Kings 17:8-16) Elijah enabled them to obtain food and fuel for an extended period. He even brought the son back to life.

Certainly, Elijah is a helper to Naboth. Abandoned not only by legal defense, but by the legal process itself, Naboth was helpless.

His situation seemed hopeless, and he was probably racked with despair. He even lost his life at the hands of a despot insane with power and lust. Elijah arrived as Naboth's defender. He stormed against Ahab for his wanton abuse of authority and misuse of office. Though he came too late to save Naboth, Elijah acted as his avenger in delivering the curse of death upon Ahab and his line. In respect to Naboth, Elijah again acted in the Bible as the helper of the oppressed and persecuted.

The rabbinic description of Elijah's fiery temper is not absent from the Biblical account. Time and again, Elijah hurls loose his wrath and fury against sinners and offenders of the moral code. After his contest on Mount Carmel, Elijah did not dismiss the priests of Baal with merely constructive criticism. Instead, Elijah commanded the people, "'Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.' And they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and killed them there. (I Kings 18:40)" Such conduct hardly suggests a man of patience and understanding.

Once more in the story of Naboth and his vineyard, Elijah reveals his furious temper in his condemnation of Ahab. He cursed Ahab "for the anger to which you have provoked me and because you have made Israel to sin." (I Kings 21:22b) Elijah imposed the punishment in no uncertain terms --- "Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat." (I Kings 21:23) Even in the Bible, Elijah was merciless in his judgment of the wicked.

Other qualities attributed to Elijah by the rabbis occur in Bib-

lical passages. His zealousness for God emerges in the events immediately following the contest on Mount Carmel. After having fled from Jezebel who seeks his life for the slaughter of the Baal prophets, Elijah twice confesses, "I have been very zealous for the Lord..." (I Kings 19:10, 14).

Elijah is famous in the Bible as a miracle-worker. Indeed his supernatural powers attain more prominence in Scripture than in rabbinic Judaism. When the king sends a captain of fifty with fifty men to arrest Elijah, the prophet exclaims, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." To be sure, the fire appeared and obeyed Elijah's word. Elijah performed this miracle twice in succession. One of his last miracles occurred just prior to his ascension to heaven. As he and Elisha were standing by the Jordan, "Elijah took his mantle, and rolled it up, and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground." (II Kings, 2:8) As was observed earlier, the rabbis were reluctant to ascribe miracles to Elijah. Scripture, however, records such incidents as memorable events. Shortly after parting the Jordan, Elijah ascends to heaven in the fiery chariot. He never dies, but departs from this earth while he is yet fully alive.

The parallels in Scripture of Elijah's role in rabbinic literature may be no more than that - parallels. I do not suggest that the rabbis looked to the Bible to justify their description of their folklore hero. Nor do I conclude that the rabbinic character of

Elijah is a direct product of his Biblical personality. My only motive in citing these parallels was curiosity. The Biblical and legendary Elijahs were not entirely dissimilar. The emphasis may be different. According to Scripture, Elijah appears to be more the stern uncompromising judge. In legend, Elijah's friendly and kindly qualities are more apparent. Nevertheless, the two characters exhibit considerable similarity. One can detect in Scripture the outlines of a personality whose character was expanded by subsequent folklore. It seems no accident that the rabbis chose Elijah as their champion of justice and friendly benefactor.

These remarks suggest a fruitful area for future study. The present thesis sought to provide a partial answer to the question, "What was the role of Elijah in rabbinic literature?" Even more intriguing would be an investigation of the "Why" of Elijah's role. Why did Elijah assume the guises ascribed to him? What factors contributed to the development of the legendary Elijah? Such a study would be intimately connected with the general problems of folklore and its principles of development. Perhaps Elijah shared many qualities in common with other folk heroes that earned him a place in Jewish legend. To solve the mystery of Elijah's developing character in rabbinic literature, to understand its origins and the factors which determined it, would also define the place of any folk hero in a people's history. The notion of legend and folklore as an influence in human culture is a fascinating one and should encourage further study.

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Deuteronomy 23:15
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I Kings 17:1, 8-16; 18:17-40; 19:10, 14; 21:1-24
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II. TARGUM YERUSHALMI

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III. TALMUD BAVLI

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Gittin 70a
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Kiddushin 40a
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COMMENTS ON THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

For a proper understanding of Elijah, the importance of primary sources cannot be overemphasized. No matter how adequate the secondary sources, the original texts frequently provide personal insights not provided elsewhere. The Hebrew text suggests nuances and implications which are lost in translation. The use of language often reflects the attitude of the author and his own response to the prophet Elijah. Bearing this in mind, that there is no substitute for original research in this area, I offer the following comments on secondary materials which I have utilized.

The Legends of the Jews by Louis Ginsberg was an extremely useful text. I found that the author's voluminous accumulation of footnotes was particularly helpful. Ginsberg collects and cites primary sources which otherwise would have been inaccessible to me. The textual material is concise, relevant, and to the point. A prime virtue of these volumes is their objectivity. Ginsberg presents all the available literature and leaves the interpretive task to the reader. Occasionally, his references are incorrectly cited, but such instances are so rare as to be negligible.

The הקדמה in the edition of חנא דבי אליהו by Meir Ish Shalom is virtually an exhaustive collection of passages dealing with Elijah. The material is organized under topical headings suggesting the variety of Elijah's functions. This הקדמה was helpful in providing some additional legends about Elijah not cited by Ginsberg.

A similar work to the הקדמה to תנא דבי אליהו is אליעזר מרגליות by אליהו הנביא בספרות ישראל . This work is also a collection of passages involving the prophet Elijah. Much of this book is organized according to Elijah's conversations with individual rabbis. For my purpose this organization presented some obstacles. I had to sift through much of the material to find relatively few legends which were not found elsewhere. As a general review of the character of Elijah, however, the volume possesses considerable merit.

The Jewish Encyclopedia provided background material on Elijah as a Biblical prophet. The account of his activities in that work is adequate but sketchy. It is helpful as a review of the earlier Elijah, but not as reliable for a detailed study of the prophetic personality.