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A Study of Heroic Characters in the Bible and Comicbooks

David N. Young

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York**

**February 27, 2006
Advisor: Dr. Andrea Weiss**

To Natalie, Gabriel, and Elijah,
my heroes.

A Study of Heroic Characters from the Bible and Comicbooks

By David N. Young

This thesis presents a study of seven characters from the Bible and comicbooks who exhibit extraordinary powers. From the Bible, Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha present fascinating stories to be compared to Captain America, the Incredible Hulk, and Green Lantern from comicbooks.

Studying both the biblical text and comicbook stories from a literary approach will help to elucidate not only use of the heroic characters, but also the similarities and differences involved in these two storytelling vehicles. Both in certain biblical narratives and in modern comicbooks, characters with amazing abilities take center stage.

Key questions asked of these texts will be: What are the distinguishing attributes of the main characters? Do biblical figures qualify as superheroes? What is the aim of each genre of literature? What types of sources give biblical and comicbook characters their powers? Is this source of power essential for the story's purpose? Why have people for so long been drawn to stories with such heroic characters?

To answer these questions, this chapter has delineated the literary approach for studying these texts as literature. The next chapter will The following two chapters carefully analyze the stories of the biblical figures and comicbook superheroes. The subsequent chapter will consider the similarities and differences among all seven heroic characters from both genres and attempt to reveal the role of the heroes in the texts. In the end, the goal of this project is to explore why these figures have captivated audiences from biblical times to the present day and to discover whether the characters merit the classification of superheroes.

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Chapter One: An Introduction to a Literary Study of the Bible and Comicbooks¹

A. General Introduction

Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to rally the troops with a single sound. Throughout history, in many different cultures, there have been literary characters with abilities to do amazing things. Though the public tends to think of heroes with amazing abilities as an invention of the 1930's and 1940's, the Bible contains several examples of characters performing amazing feats and miracles. In the Bible these characters gain their special abilities not from gamma radiation or radioactive spiders, but from God.

As a young boy, I began reading superhero comics. The stories were captivating, and the drawings on the pages made the characters come to life. I would imagine myself in the roles of the heroes jumping off my bed onto stuffed animals, who in my mind were a group of evildoers I had observed from atop a skyscraper. The values the heroes stood for, such as Superman's "truth, justice, and the American way,"² became an important part of how I wanted to live my life. The way the characters behaved was as important to me as their abilities to run at super speeds or fight twenty villains at once. The fictional characters on the page represented real world attributes that I wanted to emulate.

¹ There is varied opinion as to the use of the word "comicbook" instead of the phrase "comic book." I have chosen single word usage in agreement with comicbook writer/publisher/guru Stan Lee, who explains in the introduction to *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics* that the use of the modifier "comic" in front of the word "book" implies some sort of triviality and humor, like the funny pages in a newspaper, whereas "comicbook" describes a genre of literature, unmodified. Les Daniels, ed. *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics* (London: Virgin, 1991), iii.

² From the title sequence of television program "The Adventures of Superman," National Comics Publications, 1951-1957.

As an adult, I began reading fewer comicbooks and more biblical stories. As I did I realized that some of the biblical stories contained many of the features of the comics of my youth. No longer needing the pictures to animate the characters, instead, a deeper understanding of the text helped me imagine these characters acting in the world. Just as with comic books, I was inspired by the values and amazing feats performed by the characters of the Bible.

The characters Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha from the books of Judges and Kings provide excellent examples of biblical characters doing remarkable deeds. Gideon represents the ultimate charismatic leader, rallying troops and leading a small band to victory against the Midianites (Judg 6:34-7:25). Samson acts as the strongman whose uncontrollable rage is used as a tool by God against the Philistines (Judg 13:24-16:31). Elijah and Elisha exemplify classical prophets of their day performing miracles and working wonders for the faithful of Israel (1 Kgs 17:1-2 Kgs 13:25).

This thesis will compare these four biblical characters to three modern day comic book characters. Captain America appears as a Gideon-like charismatic leader. A super soldier from World War II, his patriotic views and military skills make him an exemplary leader of superhero groups like the Avengers. The Incredible Hulk behaves in some ways like Samson. Dr. Bruce Banner's uncontrollable anger turns him into a giant green monster who crashes through the bad guys with little ability to think about what he is doing. Members of the Green Lantern Corps most closely resemble Elijah and Elisha. Green Lantern wears a power ring that can be used to focus energy to do anything the wearer can imagine. The ring chooses who will wear it, and in sector 2814, where Earth is located, the power is passed to people who can overcome their fears. The abilities of

Green Lantern are limited only to his or her imagination and the code of the Green Lantern Corps. This thesis will closely analyze these different characters, using a literary approach to unpack the texts and identify the defining features of central characters in the Bible and contemporary comicbooks.

B. Literary Approach to the Bible

The stories of the biblical characters examined in this thesis appear in the books of Judges and Kings. These two books are found in the Former Prophets, part of the collection of Joshua through Kings which is also referred to as the Historical Books. These books tell the story of the history of the Israelites from the entry into the Promised Land until the Babylonian exile.

The desire to uncover events of the past by working backward from or combing the pages of the Bible has remained popular since the Seventeenth Century, when Bible scholars began utilizing the historical method for study. According to Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, a historical approach “aimed to reconstruct the history of ancient Israel and the history of the biblical text.”³ Examples of this type of investigation include Source Criticism, which “recognized the inherent complexity of biblical traditions and attempted to disentangle the strands of its development,”⁴ and Form Criticism, which attempted to break down the various genres inherent in the biblical narrative to discern cross-cultural sources. Berlin and Brettler explain that these types of historically oriented methodologies strive “to determine what had actually taken place, and to recover the

³ Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, “The Modern Study of the Bible,” *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2090.

⁴ Berlin and Brettler, 2085.

actual persons and events of the Bible as they had been preserved in the various stages of biblical tradition."⁵

In more recent years, scholars have started to focus on the literary features of the Bible, not just its historical aspects. A literary approach to any written work involves a careful analysis of the use of literary devices, including but not limited to symbolism, metaphor, hyperbole, imagery, rhythm, foreshadowing, and characterization. Robert Alter describes literary analysis as:

The manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else; the kind of disciplined attention, in other words, which through a whole spectrum of critical approaches has illuminated, for example, the poetry of Dante, the plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Tolstoy.⁶

Careful reading, close attention to detail, and knowledge of the many artistic uses of language all come into play during the literary analysis of a biblical text. Berlin and Brettler differentiate historical and literary approaches as follows:

Whereas historical study tended to be concerned with the prehistory of the text (oral traditions and written source materials) and with its development through successive redactions, literary study focused on the final form of the text. Whereas historical study was interested in the world referred to by the text, literary study directed its attention to the world constructed in the text.⁷

A literary analysis focuses mainly on style, structure, and content, employing these elements of style to strengthen the characterization in the piece.

This study will use a literary approach to focus on the nature of the heroic characters in the stories of Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha. Attention will be paid to the attributes of these characters, their motives, and how the narrator and other characters

⁵ Berlin and Brettler, 2084.

⁶ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 12-13.

⁷ Berlin and Brettler, 2090.

describe them. How the author constructs the protagonists is critical to the larger message the author wishes to relay. Biblical narrative tends to be rather terse; often the motives and feelings of the characters remain implicit. To access the inner workings of the biblical characters, Alter outlines a "scale of means" that specifies the different ways we gain information about them. Alter explains:

Now, in reliable third-person narrations, such as in the Bible, there is a scale of means, in ascending order of explicitness and certainty, for conveying information about the motives, the attitudes, the moral nature of characters.⁸

According to Alter, the most reliable way to learn about a character is through statements made by the narrator, for their veracity is not in question. If the omniscient narrator says: "Plony was hungry," then the reader should have no doubt about Plony's appetite at that particular time.

The next most reliable are internal statements made by a character. Referred to as a soliloquy in dramatic literature, characters' private thoughts give special insight into the motives involved in their past or future actions, which might be misinterpreted if not stated explicitly. A prime example of this is Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of Act II, scene 2, where he lets the audience know that although his behavior that seems like madness to the other characters in the play, he is only pretending to be insane. Hamlet also reveals his intention to have the king admit his guilt during the play within the play in this speech. The audience members who do not give Hamlet's soliloquy the primacy it deserves on the scale of means often mistakenly consider Hamlet actually to be mad.

Direct speeches of characters are the next most reliable statements, for their speech opens doors of understanding on their inner lives. However, the reader cannot

⁸ Alter, 116.

always rely on the sincerity of a character's words. As a result, one must pay attention to the situation in which the speech occurs. Alter explains:

Although a character's own statements might seem a straightforward enough revelation of who he is and what he makes of things, in fact the biblical writers are quite as aware as any James or Proust that speech may reflect the occasion more than the speaker, may be more a drawn shutter than an open window.⁹

Another character's statements to or about the character are the fourth most reliable means of characterization. Returning to Hamlet as an example, many other characters refer to him as mad, but the knowledge revealed in his internal monologue helps the audience understand that these characters do not understand the truth.

The fifth most reliable means for determining a character's nature is through the character's appearance, gestures, posture, and costume. Alter observes that these means of characterization leave readers "substantially in the realm of inference,"¹⁰ for we must draw our own conclusions based on how a character acts or appears. Characters' actions and appearances provide the least reliable means for determining their nature. Noting these things requires judgments to be made by the reader, which can be unreliable. Also, they tend to speak to a character's wealth or social standing, which usually is unimportant for biblical characters.¹¹ This category also requires the reader to make assumptions and connections among several parts of this scale. What the reader assumes is not nearly as reliable as what the author says, but these assumptions are still critical for analyzing the text, as they give insight that others may not have realized.

Yairah Amit further classifies Alter's scale into direct and indirect characterization, direct characterization being what the narrator or characters say

⁹ Alter, 117.

¹⁰ Alter, 117.

¹¹ Alter, 116-117.

specifically, and indirect characterization requiring inferences of the reader.¹² However, as noted above, a character's speech can also require interpretation by the reader. In order to ascertain the truthfulness of a character's words, the reader must compare what a character articulates to statements by the narrator or other characters as well as to their prior actions.

When reading a text as terse and cleverly constructed as the Bible, the reader must pay careful attention to the various, sometimes contradictory sources of information.

Alter writes:

We are compelled to get at character and motive...through a process of inference from fragmentary data, often with crucial pieces of narrative exposition strategically withheld, and this leads to multiple or sometimes even wavering perspectives on the characters. There is, in other words, an abiding mystery in character as the biblical writers conceive it, which they embody in their typical methods of presentation.¹³

Alter's scale of means provides a helpful lens for viewing and better understanding the characters of the Bible.

C. Literary Approach to Comicbooks

While the applicability of the literary analysis to biblical narrative is widely accepted, it might not seem as natural to approach comicbooks as literature. The tendency to devalue the literary quality of comicbooks can be blamed in part on the medium, for the illustrations hearken to children's books or advertisements. Scott McCloud discusses this common misconception saying:

Traditional thinking has long held that truly great works of art and literature are only possible when the two are kept at arm's length. Words and picture together are considered, at best, a diversion for the masses, at worst a product of crass

¹² Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 74.

¹³ Alter, 126.

commercialism. As children, our first books had pictures galore and very few words because that was "easier." Then, as we grew, we were expected to graduate to books with much more text and only occasional pictures...and finally to arrive at "real" books—those with no pictures at all.¹⁴

The subject matter could point to another possible reason for the degradation of comicbooks. Superhero comics in particular¹⁵, with their bright-costumed, branded, larger-than-life characters lend themselves more easily to the pantheon of pop culture iconography than other comicbook genres. Many consider comicbooks to be too basic, with heroes who unrealistically cling to black-and-white tenets of morality and work selflessly with authority figures to bring justice to the world. But as Mila Bongco points out, this view "is based on a too scanty knowledge of the history of superhero comicbooks, and a far too rigid interpretation of the superhero genre, at least an outdated one in view of the more recent re-makes of many of the genre's characters and narratives." He adds: "Only a fertile and productive genre could have spread and caught the attention of readers world-wide for so long."¹⁶

A deeper understanding of the history of comicbooks in America helps to bolster the view of this genre as a serious literary art. Comics have been a part of American culture since 1754, when Benjamin Franklin produced the first editorial cartoon of a snake with a severed head over the caption "Join, or die."¹⁷ In the early 1900's, comic strips made their way into newspapers and magazines. In 1934 the first volume classified

¹⁴ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 140.

¹⁵ According to Mila Bongco, superhero comicbooks encompass over 90% of the genre (Mila Bongco, *Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comics* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 91). Though artists such as Will Eisner and Harry Crumb should not be ignored, they are in the minority, and this study will focus on the type of comicbook that is published in the vast majority of the field.

¹⁶ Bongco, 92.

¹⁷ Claude Lalumiere, "The History of Comic Books," *January Magazine*, April 2000.

as a comicbook was published, called "Funnies on Parade."¹⁸ Since then, comicbook has become a popular form of American literature. The "Golden Age of Comics" dawned in 1938 with the appearance of Jerry Siegal and Joe Shuster's legendary hero, Superman, in *Action Comics* #1. Superman revolutionized the comicbook industry, inspiring the creation of characters with extraordinary powers, such as Bob Kane's Batman and Jack Kirby and Joe Simon's Captain America.¹⁹ Today superhero stories dominate comicbooks, though various non-superhero comicbooks exist, such as Will Eisner's *Contract with God* trilogy²⁰ or those by popular underground artist R. Crumb.²¹

In 1954, Fredric Wertham wrote a harsh critique of comicbooks, decrying comicbooks as being too violent, sexual, and radical. He even went so far as to incite a United States Senate hearing that blamed comicbooks for the rise in juvenile delinquency.²² His book's assertions have kept a stranglehold on the perception of American comicbooks to the recent past, and combining his attitude with preconceived notions of pictures and heroes as mentioned above, few people in the twentieth century took comicbooks seriously as literature.

In 1992, however, a change began to take place in the public perception of comicbooks after Art Spiegelman's graphic novel²³ *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* won the

¹⁸ Though this was more a collection of comic strips from newspapers than the unified story of a character.

¹⁹ Jaime Coville, "History of Comic Books," <http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/5537/hist.htm>, Internet.

²⁰ Will Eisner, *The Contract With God Trilogy* (New York: WW Newton, 2005).

²¹ See R. Crumb, *The Book of Mr. Natural* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1995) and *The Complete Dirty Laundry Comics* (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1993).

²² Fredric Wertham, *The Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rhinehart and Wilson, 1954). See also Mike McAvennie, "The Issues Behind the Issues," *Green Lantern: Brother's Keeper* (New York: DC Comics, 2003), 126.

²³ David Burke offers this explanation of the difference between a comicbook and a graphic novel: "The graphic novel is one of the numerous categories within the broad

Pulitzer Prize.²⁴ Comicbooks started to be recognized as serious literature deserving of scholarly attention to the "rich formal and thematic heritage of the medium."²⁵ The trend to treat comicbooks as a form of literature can be demonstrated by the growing number of books dedicated to the topic, such as McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, or Bongco's *Reading Comics*. Comicbook artist Will Eisner has raised comic art to new levels in the Jewish world in particular with his combination of publications such as his *Contract with God* trilogy as well as instructional works such as *Comics and Sequential Art*²⁶ and *Graphic Storytelling*.²⁷

Looking at comicbooks from a literary perspective entails a combination of the analysis of literature and visual art since comicbooks contain both media. An almost cinematic perspective in comicbooks creates a complexity that emphasizes "nuance over action, the elongation and subdivision of story time to create sensation, effect and meaning."²⁸ Though it is possible for the words and pictures to occasionally overlap or even repeat the message of the other, the relationship between the art and the text tends to

medium of comics or comic books. The comic book has traditionally been a thirty-two page stapled pamphlet in which a brief story is conveyed through a sequential narrative involving both visual art and print text. The graphic novel joins story narrative with sequential art in the same way, but has a much longer scope...and is able to narrate a complete story. A second distinguishing feature vis-à-vis comic books is that graphic novels are developed with marked higher-end production values: hardcover books, labor intensive, sophisticated art and design features." David G. Burke, Review of *The Lone and Level Sands*, *SBL Forum*, <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=451>; Internet.

²⁴ In the category "Special Awards and Citations: Letters."

²⁵ Bongco, 11.

²⁶ Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* (New York: Poorhouse Press, 1985).

²⁷ Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling* (New York: Poorhouse Press, 1996). The exhibit scheduled to open in mid-February, 2006 at the HUC-JIR Museum in New York "The Jewish Graphic Novel," will feature the work of Will Eisner and other Jewish comicbook artists.

²⁸ Grant, Steven, "Master of the Obvious," *Comic Book Resource*, vol. 106, www.comicbookresource.com, Oct. 1, 2003: Internet.

be interdependent. McCloud explains that language and images in combination are the heart of comicbook art. He writes:

Indeed, words and pictures have great powers to tell stories when creators fully exploit them both....The different ways words and pictures can combine is virtually unlimited....In comics at its best, words and pictures are like partners in a dance and each one takes turns leading....When these partners each know their roles and support each other's strengths, comics can match any of the art forms it draws so much of its strength from.²⁹

Bongco further clarifies this point by saying:

The crucial point is how effectively the linguistic and pictorial signs interact—how perfectly, how absorbingly and dynamically a story is related in pictures and texts. The interaction is all-important. The relation between text and image is a defining characteristic of comics, and the efficacy of the medium rests on the interdependence of the two mediums. As such, comics cannot help but demand of its readers the ability to decipher and “read” a new language of combined written and illustrated codes.³⁰

The linguistic aspect of comicbooks allows them to use the same literary devices as any other written medium, such as alliteration, rhyme, and figurative language. At the same time, the need to keep to a certain number of pages in an issue due to publication standards demands a terseness³¹ that resembles biblical narrative. Enter the artist, whose illustrations strengthen and add to the writer's work with vibrant colors and exaggerated human forms.³² The artist's work must be analyzed in tandem with the writer's, though the methodology is different. Line and color (in color comicbooks) elicits a variety of emotions in the viewer, just like any visual art. The way an artist uses focus and

²⁹ McCloud, 152-156.

³⁰ Bongco, 49.

³¹ Bongco, 36.

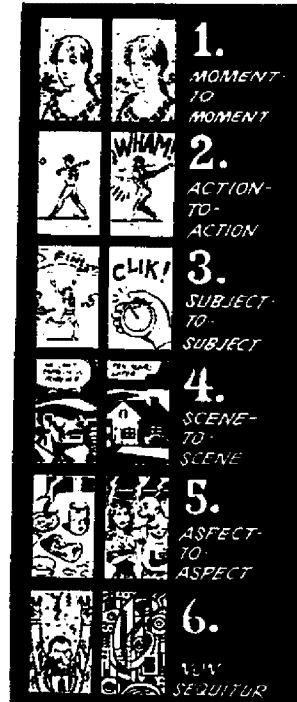
³² Most often, a writer and one or more artists collaborate to create a comicbook. In rare circumstances a writer/artist can publish a solo work such as Will Eisner's previously mentioned works. Usually, if a comicbook is credited to only one person it is because of that person's renown in a particular area, such as the art of Jack Kirby or the writing of Neil Gaiman.

perspective of the picture, background and foreground, and how representative or abstract a piece is all must be taken into account in order to adequately dissect the composition.³³

The combination of a textual passage and an image combine creates a "panel," the building-block of the comicbook. Ranging in size from a square inch to a two-page spread, the panels establish the narrative pattern, rhythm, and time of the piece based on how they relate to one another.³⁴ McCloud describes six types of

relationships between panels: 1) moment-to-moment, 2) action-to-action, 3) subject-to-subject, 4) scene-to-scene, 5) aspect-to-aspect, and 6) non-sequitur (figure 1). Each distinct transition type requires the reader to fill in the gap, known as a "gutter," in a unique way that helps to establish the rhythm of the story.³⁵

The artist's use of panels can make the characters within them come to life with overbearing hostility if they spill out of the panel, or succumb to weakness and despair if the panel all but makes them disappear. In the panels from Patrick Debruin's



Daisho, the same character looks menacing in the top panels, and Figure 1

helpless in the bottom one. When leaping at the reader, overlapping four panels in what is called a "spill," this character dominates the page and seems to want to attack the reader. Then he looks helpless as he falls toward what looks like a rooftop skylight, occupying about as much space on the page as one of his legs does in the above drawing (figure 2).³⁶

³³ McCloud, 43-44.

³⁴ Bongco, 58.

³⁵ McCloud, 70-74.

³⁶ Bongco, 60.



Figure 2

escapade. For example, the stories used in chapter three cover six issues of *Captain America*, vol. 3, four issues of *The Incredible Hulk*, vol. 3, and six issues of *Green Lantern: Emerald Dawn*. Though each plot spans four to six twenty-two-page installments about its hero, only a single adventure for each character will be studied. The adventure that happens to the superhero is the central focus of most comicbooks.

When the characters go through their trials and tribulations, the reader feels the characters' pain or triumph. Comicbook fans tend to relate so deeply to the stories that they can often consider the characters within them or even the comicbooks themselves as friends. They come to understand the laws that govern the world of the comicbooks as naturally as one would understand the role of a police officer or the President. Not only does this familiarity lead to a lack of surprise when a cape-clad character jumps into the air and flies over buildings, but this connection creates a swelling of pride and anticipation when the hero cries, "This is a job for Superman!" Likewise, the in-depth

³⁷ Not including advertisements like David Burke does defining a graphic novel in the footnote above.

³⁸ Often one storyline will occupy several installments of a monthly comicbook. If the storyline is popular enough, it may get bound in one volume as a graphic novel. See above for the difference between a graphic novel and a comicbook.

knowledge of a back story causes the reader to understand the emotional experiences of the characters, like how deeply a vision of his parents would affect Batman/Bruce Wayne. Committed comicbook readers possess intimate knowledge about the texts they read, the history of the world in which their characters live, and the connections comicbook universes have to each other and to reality. This type of familiarity with comicbooks helps tremendously when delving into a scholarly scrutiny of superheroes.

D. An Overview of the Thesis

Studying both the biblical text and comicbook stories from a literary approach will help to elucidate not only use of the heroic characters, but also the similarities and differences involved in these two storytelling vehicles. Both in certain biblical narratives and in modern comicbooks, characters with amazing abilities take center stage.

Key questions asked of these texts will be: What are the distinguishing attributes of the main characters? Do biblical figures qualify as superheroes? What is the aim of each genre of literature? What types of sources give biblical and comicbook characters their powers? Is this source of power essential for the story's purpose? Why have people for so long been drawn to stories with such heroic characters?

To answer these questions, this chapter has delineated the literary approach for studying these texts as literature. The next chapter will carefully analyze the stories of Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha to determine the defining features of these four biblical figures. The following chapter will utilize the same methods of literary analysis to explore Captain America, the Incredible Hulk, and Green Lantern. The subsequent chapter will consider the similarities and differences among all seven heroic characters

from both genres and attempt to reveal the role of the heroes in the texts. In the end, the goal of this project is to explore why these figures have captivated audiences from biblical times to the present day and to discover whether the characters merit the classification of superheroes.

Chapter Two: Character Analyses of Biblical Characters

A. An Introduction to the Book of Judges

An understanding of the stories of Gideon and Samson will be aided by a better understanding of the time period in which the stories take place. The stories of Gideon and Samson occur during the age of the Judges of Israel, around the twelfth century BCE. This was a stage of weakness for Egypt, previously the dominant presence in Canaan as well as much of the Asian continent. The decline in Egyptian power led to an increase in Philistine power. Without Egypt to hinder the establishment of a new authority in the land, Israel established itself as a new political entity in the ancient Near East. Israel originated as a tribal system, likely operating with similar structure to the city-state system, with no central ruler over the Israelites as a whole.³⁹

The account of Israel's conquest of Canaan is first recorded in the book of Joshua, which makes it seem like their undefeatable army swept through the land with unstoppable might, leaving no speck unconquered. The book of Judges, however, makes the conquest seem incomplete and awkward, with its successes accomplished by rogue guerilla tactics rather than military might. Instead of a united nation under one ruler, Israel appears as a collection of fragmentary groups that even occasionally fight with one another, subjugating much of the land but still bowing to the pressure of more powerful armies.⁴⁰

The leaders of the time were the people for whom the book of Judges is named. They are not limited to any personality type, nor are they all born into a particular class,

³⁹ John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 173.

⁴⁰ Susan Niditch, "Judges," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 176.

but John Bright points out that "they were men who, stepping to the fore in times of danger, by virtue only of those personal qualities (charisma) which gave evidence to their fellows that Yahweh's Spirit was upon them, rallied the clans against the foe."⁴¹ They each had God's spirit in them, allowing them to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds to lead their people to victory over a variety of enemies. However, calling the rulers of this period "judges" is a misleading translation of the Hebrew word שופט, which in the context of this book of the Bible is more accurately translated as "chieftains."⁴² These chieftains ruled from the death of Joshua to the rise of the Israelite monarchy.

Although the book of Judges recounts a particular time period in ancient Israelite history, the book should not be considered as a historically reliable document. According to Brettler, the book of Judges was not created with the intent of recreating the past; instead, he claims the book aims to intentionally fictionalize history or to simply provide entertainment.⁴³ So the ideology of the book of Judges outweighs its historicity, as Amit further explains: "Modern research has abandoned the conservative view, which accepted the bulk of the book of Judges as historically authentic, and has emphasized certain ideological (anti-Northern Kingdom, anti-Saul, pro-Davidic) and literary elements of the book."⁴⁴ The first part of the book of Judges repeatedly tells a story of sin and salvation.

⁴¹ Bright, 178. One word Bright misuses is "men," however, as he is ignoring Deborah, one of the first Judges, who led the Israelites in victory over the Canaanites ruled by Jabin (Jdg 4:1-24).

⁴² Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Book of Judges* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 118 n.1; see also Yairah Amit, "Judges: Introduction," *The Jewish Study Bible*, 508; K. Lawson Younger, "Judges," *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 353.

⁴³ Brettler, 1-8.

⁴⁴ Amit, 510.

The stories of the minor and major chieftains⁴⁵ are placed in a pattern in which Israel sins by worshipping other gods and is then punished by God through the success of their enemies. After a time goes by, Israel cries out to God, who sends them a hero, who is empowered with the divine spirit.⁴⁶ Amit explains how the stories of the individual chieftains fit within this pattern:

Scholars distinguish between the judges' stories, which are based on local-tribal traditions of deliverance and which do not interpret events with theological causality, and their frameworks, which depict the deliverer in a broad national context, characterized by a cycle that begins with sin and ends with peace.⁴⁷

Gideon and Samson stand out as two of the more memorable figures recorded in this part of the book of Judges.

B. Gideon⁴⁸

Gideon represents a military leader who utilizes his strategic mind, and overcomes his fears. Gideon is the fourth of the six major judges in the cycles, following Deborah. The story of Gideon begins after a time when the Israelites again revert to their

⁴⁵ The major chieftains are Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephtah, and Samson. The minor are Shamgar, Barak, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, so called because text dedicated to them is much shorter than that of the major chieftains. Their appearance in the book of Judges is likely to connect the text to historical figures. Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 89, 186-187, 215. Heb 11:32 considers Barak on the same level as Gideon, Samson, and Jephtah, and gives no mention to Deborah.

⁴⁶ Amit, 508-509. See also Joseph Calloway, "The Settlement in Canaan," Hershel Shanks, ed. *Ancient Israel: A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1988), 83-84.

⁴⁷ Amit, 509.

⁴⁸ Research used to inform this section includes John G. Butler, *Gideon: The Mighty Man of Valor* (New York: LBC Publications, 1992); Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988), 49-68; Dennis T. Olson, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), vol. II, 793-811; and Schneider, 99-131.

offensive behavior of sacrificing to foreign gods. As a result, God punishes them through desert nomadic tribes from Midian, Amalek, and Kedem who attack the Israelites, pillage the land, and make their harvest fruitless. Following the pattern of the Judges cycles, the Israelites then ask God for help. First, God sends a prophet to admonish them for worshipping the Amorite gods (Judg 6:8-10); then God sends Gideon to defeat the enemy and save the Israelites.

Amit points out that the Gideon cycle contains two sections: Judges 6:11-7:14 presents a wonder-filled story of the events before Gideon leads the Israelites to victory over the Midianites, and Judges 7:15-8:35 tells a tale of a bold, victorious leader who needs no miracles. Amit observes that in the first section "Gideon is portrayed as a coward requiring divine support," and in the second section "Gideon is displayed as a charismatic leader."⁴⁹

When Gideon first appears, an angel from God appears to him while he hides wheat from the Midianites in a winepress. The angel's first words explicate Gideon's heroic character: יהוה עמך גבור החיל "Adonai is with you, heroic warrior" (Judg 6:12). The phrase גבור החיל by itself denotes a powerful warrior. According to the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*:

Sometimes it is difficult to find the correct meaning of *gibbor chayil*, because the word...*chayil*, can have different meanings. It can mean strength (general, of a warrior, of military forces), ability (in war and in some vocation), or wealth (possessions), but the meaning must be determined by the context. Thus a *gibbor chayil* can be a wealthy man (1 S. 9:1; 2 K. 15:20), a rich landowner (Ruth 2:1), or an able man in any respect, especially with regard to work (Jeroboam I, 1 K. 11:28).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Amit, 522.

⁵⁰ G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) vol. 2, s.v. "*gibbor chayil*."

Both words can mean “strength” or “hero” and the word **הַיִל** has many meanings and can lead to difficulties in translating.

Shmuel Levinstam points out that the word **הַיִל** can be used to represent leaders of the people, as described in Exodus 18:21-22, when Jethro tells Moses to:

seek out from among all the people capable men [**אֲנָשֵׁי-הַיִל**] who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and let them judge the people at all times.⁵¹

This section is also appropriate for studying Judges because of the use of the verb **וַיִּשְׁפֹּט** for “and let them judge,” which comes from the same root as the word **שׁוֹפֵט**.⁵² Jethro’s instructions to Moses demonstrate the relationship between being a capable man and being a chieftain. Gideon’s status as both, therefore, serves to strengthen his characterization as a chieftain who is a heroic warrior.

The use of the definite article makes Gideon’s standing unique, as it does not appear in other occurrences of this phrase in the Bible. Here, **הַיִל גִּבּוֹר** possibly means “the mightiest hero,” if the *hey* is a superlative indicator. This would denote that the choice of Gideon from among the Menassites was an easy choice to make. But when the mightiest hero has God on his side as **יְהוָה עִמָּךְ** points out, there is nothing that can stop him.

Though Gideon is assured that God is with him, he is also characterized by fear. His fear first manifests itself when Gideon asks for a sign that he is speaking to God (Judges 6:17-18). Asking for signs occurs three times within the first section of the

⁵¹ JPS, 153. See also Shmuel Ephraim Levinstam, *’Entsiqlōpēdīā Mīgra’ūt* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1976), “*hāyil*.”

⁵² BDB, 1047.

Gideon narrative (Judg 6:17-18, 36-37, 39). These pleas for proof illustrate his inability to completely trust in God, which is most evident during Gideon's call (Judg 6:11-24).

The call of Gideon follows a typical pattern for prophetic call narratives. Here, after an angel appears and speaks to him, Gideon asks for a sign that it is really an angel. When the sign appears, fire from the angel's staff consumes an offering Gideon sets out, and "Gideon saw that it was an angel of Adonai" (Judg 6:17-22), but is scared. Finally, God comforts him, and he begins to do what the angel tells him. Amit calls this:

a stereotypic scene composed of seven stages: meeting (vv. 11-13), presentation of the mission (v. 14), refusal (v. 15), encouragement (v. 16), request for and giving of a sign (vv. 17-22), acknowledgement and **fear** (v. 23), and further encouragement (v. 24).⁵³

Though Gideon's call is a typical calling, the Bible never calls Gideon a prophet. While prophets are known to execute God's commands with a modicum of doubt,⁵⁴ Gideon is marked by constant doubt. Robert G. Boling refers to this scene as "the only early narrative in the book where Yahweh speaks directly to a protagonist or to Israel."⁵⁵ He also says Gideon's conversation reveals his difficulty in understanding that he was speaking to God, which foreshadows later problems in the book of Judges.⁵⁶ Perhaps this exchange also serves to exhibit the fear of Gideon's character, while showing that Gideon has within him the ability to be a hero capable of great achievements.

After the angel causes fire to consume his sacrifice, Gideon is told by God, "Do not be afraid" (Judg 6:22), which according to Alter's scale of reliability means he must have been fearful or God would not have spoken to him as such. Though speech from

⁵³ Amit, 523 (boldface mine).

⁵⁴ See the calls of Moses (Exod 3:11-13; 4:1, 10, 13), Jeremiah (Jer 1:6), and Jonah (Jon 1:3).

⁵⁵ Boling, 129 n1.

⁵⁶ Boling, 129.

one character to another is the third most reliable type of statement on Alter's scale, God's speech should be considered more reliable than other characters.

The next example of Gideon's trepidation occurs when God tells Gideon to tear down the altar to Baal in his father's house, which he does. But the text says: "Gideon took ten of his servants and did as Adonai had told him, but he was afraid of his father's house and the townspeople to do it by day, so he did it by night" (Judg 6:27). Since God's command included nothing about time of day to take action, he could perform his obligation at night and fulfill both his need to obey God and his need to avoid discovery. Alter's scale of means would declare this assessment completely reliable, because the narrator explicitly states Gideon's action and fear. Ergo, fearing both the divine and the human, Gideon is depicted as an all-around coward.

The following section provides another example of Gideon's fear of the public, when the townspeople discover the destroyed altar and ask who tore it down (Judg 6:28-29). Gideon's father Joash tells them in a scolding manner that they should never have built this altar in the first place. He states: "Do you contend for Baal? Do you deliver him? Whoever contends for him will be dead by morning! If he is a god, let him contend for himself, since his altar has been torn down" (Judg 6:31). Note that the people are not told this by Gideon. Instead, Joash, Gideon's father, scolds the people and challenges Baal on behalf of Gideon. Joash's statement uses the root **יָרָב** for contending three times, which leads naturally into giving Gideon the name "Jerubaal," meaning "Let Baal contend with himself" (Judg 6:32). Gideon remains silent during this entire scene, even during his renaming. He hides behind his father, afraid to confront the people and scold

them himself. Gideon appears as a non-player in this scene, yet he comes out a changed man with a new name.

A fourth noticeable indication of Gideon's cowardly nature occurs before Gideon's forces attack the Midianites. God recognizes Gideon's fearful nature and attempts to reassure him. God tells Gideon: "If you are afraid to go down, go down with Purah your boy to the camp and listen to what they say, after that your hand will be strengthened to go down against the camp" (Judg 7:10-11). Immediately, Gideon does exactly as God says, and takes Purah to listen to the Midianite soldier's dream (Judg 7:11-15). Gideon's action allows for the assumption that he is truly afraid. However, because making assumptions provides the least reliable means of assessing a character, Gideon's action simply emphasizes God's words to Gideon that point out his fear.

Gideon's fear and need for reassurance contrast with his propensity to take action. When Gideon first appears, he hides wheat in a winepress so that the Midianites will not find the produce. This act makes him appear enterprising. As the rest of the town cries to Adonai for help (Judg 6:6), Gideon takes action so that even if the Midianites destroy the fields, his family will have some wheat hidden away to help them survive.

Gideon again appears as a man of action when he encounters the people of Succoth and Penuel while chasing the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmuna. After the officials of both of these cities refuse to nourish his men, Gideon threatens to thrash the men of Succoth with briars and to tear down the tower at Penuel (Judg 8:5-9). By carrying out his threats, he demonstrates his ability to act (Judg 8:16-17), all the more so when considering that he tortures a young boy to get information about who makes the decisions in Succoth (Judg 8:14).

Another example of his willingness to act transpires when Gideon and his men catch up to Zebah and Zalmuna. Gideon receives credit for smiting the camp and for chasing the two kings when they flee. The narrator reports:

Gideon went up the road of the tent dwellers, from the east to Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the camp, and the camp was secure. Zebah and Zalmunna fled, and he chased after them, captured Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian (Judg 8:11-12).

Gideon also kills Zebah and Zalmuna and takes their camels' medallions as trophies (Judg 8:18-21). Jeter, Gideon's son, serves as a contrast to Gideon's active participation, because of Jeter's inability to kill the two kings (Judg 8:20). When Gideon slays the two men, he single-handedly ends the Midianite regime. His son's inaction in this episode highlights Gideon as the only one who could succeed in defeating Midian.

The most significant example of Gideon's inclination toward action takes place when he summons the Israelites against the Midianites in Judges 6:34-35. After "the spirit of Adonai enveloped Gideon" (Judg 6:34),⁵⁷ he blows his horn and summons the Abiezrite forces.⁵⁸ Gideon remains unsatisfied with the number of men he has mustered, and he sends messengers throughout Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. When embraced with the spirit of God, he summons thirty-two thousand soldiers to face the Midianites, establishing himself as a hero willing to work to accomplish his goals.

Gideon's skill as a strategist is the characteristic that helps him with such accomplishments. The two major examples of Gideon's tactical prowess are the battle scene (Judg 7:15-25), and the confrontation with the Ephramites (Judg 8:1-3).

⁵⁷ The significance of this phrase will be discussed in chapter four.

⁵⁸ It would be interesting to know the number Gideon summoned with the blast from his horn when inspired by God's power. Three hundred would be a likely guess, which is the amount God wanted Gideon to send against his enemies, but the text does not give a number here.

The battle scene stands out as one of the climactic portions of the Gideon narrative. In this scene, he devises a clever plan for his three hundred men to defeat the Midianites. He has his men surround the camp, smash fire-filled jars and scream to deceive the Midianites into believing they are surrounded (Judg 7:16-20). When Gideon and his men carry out his plan, the narrator points out: "Adonai turned every man's sword against his neighbor" (Judg 7:22), indicating that God defeats the Midianites regardless of Gideon's skill as a strategist. Gideon's facility with military maneuvers comes into play at the end of the battle scene, when the Midianites disperse and he has the Israelites cut off their water supply as they give chase to Oreb and Zeeb (Judg 7:24-25).

The next episode begins with another example of Gideon's skill as a strategist. When confronted by the men of Ephraim who ask why they were not invited to the battle against the Midianites, Gideon instantly soothes them with well-crafted words. He asks: "Now, what have I done like you? Aren't Ephraim's gleanings better than Abiezer's vintage! In your hand God has placed the Midianite generals Oreb and Zeeb, and what was I able to do like you?" (Judg 8:2-3). With his words he makes the Ephraimites feel like their glory is greater than his own, proving that his ability to strategize applies to his cunning linguistics in addition to his battlefield abilities. Perhaps Gideon also realizes the validity of his statement, as his character goes through a significant change at this point. He ceases to be a passive participant in the events of the story, and he joins his men in their pursuit of Zebah and Zalmuna, as the text explains he goes with the three hundred men across the Jordan to pursue the Midianite kings (Judg 8:4). Crossing the Jordan also indicates that a transformation is taking place, as crossing a body of water is

an indicator of significant change in ancient narratives.⁵⁹ The rest of the Gideon narrative demonstrates a transformation of character within Gideon.

The very wording of this section points to the dynamic nature of Gideon's character, marking him as going through a personal transformation. After the Ephramites rebuke Gideon, the text adds the phrase: *בְּחִזְקָה וּרְיִבֹּן אִתּוֹ*, "they contended with him strongly" (Judg 8:1). That the Bible describes again what has just happened makes the reader acutely aware of the seemingly superfluous phrase. The contending they do, using the word *וּרְיִבֹּן* plays on Gideon's second name Jerubaal. This is the first time the root *רִיב* is used since Gideon receives the alias Jerubaal and the last time it appears in the Gideon narrative. This well-placed pun helps to foreshadow Gideon's alteration. From this point on, Gideon is the main agent for the action of the text.

Another indication of Gideon's transformation can be seen in the contrast between his statement to the angel in Judges 6:13 and to the Israelites in Judges 8:23. When the angel tells him God is with him, Gideon responds almost sarcastically, though politely. By saying: "Adonai is with *us*?" (Judg 6:13), he ignores the angel's greeting in the second person singular and responds in first person plural. The use of plural seems to indicate his desire to be immersed in the community. At this point, he considers himself a part of the whole. Later, Gideon responds to the Israelites' request to lead them, saying: "I will not rule over you. Neither I nor my son will rule over you, Adonai will rule over you" (Judg 8:23). The use of the words "over you" in his declaration shows a change in his opinion of his role in the community at the beginning of his story. In this

⁵⁹ For biblical examples, see Gen 32:23-31, Exod 14:21-31, Josh 3:14-17, 2 King 2:8-14, and others. In other literature, see Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*; Homer, *The Illiad*, Book XXII; and William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*.

later passage saying "over you," indicates that he now considers himself above or separate from the community.

Gideon's disposition has changed considerably by the time he confronts Zebah and Zalmuna, and his new opinion of his rank will be his undoing. Gideon's downfall begins when he believes too strongly in his power as a heroic warrior. After his refusal to lead Israel as king, he builds an ephod out of the gold he takes from his men's booty (Judg 8:24-27). As Gideon's story comes to a close, he constructs what becomes an idol to the Israelites, so he embodies that which he was fighting against. Thus, idols flank the Gideon story: one that he destroys at his father's house and one that he builds when he has a household of his own.

Though his transformation causes his downfall, the reactions of several characters at the end of the narrative reveal another important trait: leadership. In Judges 8:23 Gideon speaks gallantly and does not accept full responsibility for the victory over the Midianites or Israel's rule after it. However, that the Israelite warriors would willingly give him part of their spoils shows that they do see him as a leader. Though he has gone through a considerable change in personality, his leadership is constant.

The kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmuna, further reveal Gideon's leadership. When Gideon asks them what the men they killed at Tabor look like,⁶⁰ they tell him, "Like you is like them as one, in the form of sons of a king," (Judg 8:18). This statement falls relatively low on Alter's scale of reliability, but if they looked like kings' sons, then so did Gideon. Amit points out that "their behavior is opposite that of Succoth and

⁶⁰ The events at Tabor are not mentioned in the Bible.

Penuel,"⁶¹ who do not treat Gideon with respect due to a leader. This distinguishes Zebah and Zalmuna's answer as highlighting Gideon's leadership ability, which is also a change from his character at the beginning of his tale. Boling suggests that at this point Gideon has "usurped Yahweh's executive prerogative,"⁶² elevating himself above the level of the earthly kings of Midian, and the King of Kings, even though he refuses to officially rule over Israel after Zebah and Zalmuna are dead (Judg 8:22).

After this, Gideon names his son Abimelech, which means "My father is king," (Judg 8:31). This hardly seems like an appropriate name for the son of a man who would rather have God rule over the Israelites than a king of flesh and blood. Abimelech is mentioned because of his role as a minor chieftain in Judges 9. According to Boling: "The name occurs thirty-one times in [Judges 9,] strongly implying the narrator's contempt for its bearer."⁶³ The narrator's disdain for the character and Abimelech's own violent behavior reflect poorly on Gideon's reputation.

Though Gideon may have sired a disreputable son, he dies with little commotion. The phrase that describes his death: "Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father at Ophrah of the Abiezrites" (Judg 8:32), indicates that his death was peaceful, and that he was honored at the time of his death as a leader.⁶⁴

As a dynamic character Gideon at first exhibits fear, then he transforms into a man of action, strategy and leadership. In the beginning Gideon fears both God and his

⁶¹ Amit, 528n.

⁶² Boling, *Judges*, 157.

⁶³ Boling, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 384n.

⁶⁴ K. Koch, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003), vol. 12, s.v. "qeber." See also Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 1, s.v. "Burial"; and Kent Harold Richards, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, s.v. "Death."

own abilities. Later, as a man of action, he spends much of his time doing that which he could have others do for him, and his military and political strategic ability allows God to use him to lead Israel to victory over Midian.

C. Samson⁶⁵

Samson is associated with uncontrollable rage, great strength, and an equally great weakness for women. His mental prowess is usually not noted, though his propensity for riddles, competition, and creativity prevails throughout much of the text. God uses him as a tool against the Philistines, which serves as the backing for all of his actions in his violent and often bawdy story.

Samson is the last of the chieftains whose stories occur in the book of Judges, and he portrays the demise of the chieftain system. His story diverges from those of other leaders in that he acts alone as opposed to working as a commander of troops.⁶⁶ The Samson narrative follows Samson as he battles a lion, bees, and many men with both his muscles and his mind. Along the way, he has affairs with three women. He marries one in Timnah, and the wedding companions given to him upset him enough to start the vengeance that prevails throughout the account. Each time Samson does something to the Philistines, they try to exact revenge on him; each time it backfires until they finally capture him. His tale, according to K. Lawson Younger, presents "a cycle of revenge

⁶⁵ Research used to inform this section includes Brettler, 40-60; James L. Crenshaw, *Samson: A Secret Betrayed, a Vow Ignored* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978); Klein, 109-139; Dennis T. Olson, 843-862; Schneider, 193-227; and Yair Zakovich, *Life of Samson (Judges 13-16): A Critical-Literary Analysis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982).

⁶⁶ Amit, 539n.

with escalating violence between Samson and the Philistines."⁶⁷ Samson's death ends this cycle, creating a tidal wave of destruction that leaves many Philistines dead in its wake (Judg 14-16).

Samson's major characteristic is his strength. Again and again, throughout the story the narrator describes him doing amazing feats of strength. In Judges 14, he makes three trips to see the Philistine woman he marries and he performs three feats of strength, though only the last harms the Philistines. First, he kills a lion with his bare hands (Judg 14:6). Next, he takes honey from a swarm of bees, with no concern for the bees' ability to harm him (Judg 14:8-9). After this, he kills thirty men with his bare hands to take their clothing (Judg 14:19). Samson later kills one thousand Philistines using only the jawbone of an ass as a weapon after breaking through ropes with which he is bound (Judg 15:14-15). He also rips the gate to Gaza off of its hinges and carries it up a mountain (Judg 16:3). Finally, he repeatedly frees himself from being bound by Delilah while she tries to determine his weakness (Judg 16:9, 12, 14).

His greatest feat of strength also indicates his last, when he tears down the Temple to Dagon:

Samson grasped the two central pillars that the house rested on, and leaned on them, one on his right and one on his left. Samson said, "Let my soul die with the Philistines!" and he stretched out with power, and the house fell on the lords and on all the people in it (Judg 16:29-30a).

Samson's entire life exhibits great strength, but his strength does not derive from his own power. Samson's strength comes directly from God. Samson's displays of power against the lion, the thirty men of Ashkelon, and the thousand men at Lehi are preceded by the

⁶⁷ Younger, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 379n.

phrase: "the spirit of Adonai possessed him" (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14). This phrase, or one like it, occurs in the stories of many biblical heroes, including Joseph (Gen 41:38), Balaam (Num 24:2), Gideon (Judg 6:34), Jephthah (Judg 11:29), and David (1 Sam 16:13, 10:6; 2 Sam 23:2).⁶⁸ Samson's feats of strength happen most often when God's spirit comes upon him (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14). The frequency of God's spirit possessing Samson shows that Samson operates under the divine will, reminding the reader that Samson serves as a tool used by God.⁶⁹

In addition to God's spirit, another source of Samson's strength comes from his hair. Samson's unshorn hair gives him his might (Judg 16:17), and he does not cut his hair because he is a Nazirite (Judg 13:5). Though it is not the hair itself that endows Samson with strength, his long hair is a sign that he is a holy man, dedicated to God and therefore able to receive God's spirit. In Judges 13, his parents Manoah and his wife (who remains unnamed), are met by an angel. The chapter goes to great lengths to remind the reader that he is a Nazirite, dedicated to God from birth.⁷⁰ Three times the angel mentions that Samson must avoid grape products, intoxicants, and anything unclean, and that his mother must even avoid these things during pregnancy. Also, the

⁶⁸ See chapter four for a more in-depth look at "spirit of God."

⁶⁹ Amit, 541n. See also Judg 14:4 and Boling, 394n.

⁷⁰ Laws regarding Nazirites can be found in Numbers 6:1-21. The Nazirite may neither drink wine nor wine product, and he may not eat grapes or grape product (vv. 3-4). He may neither shave nor trim his hair (v. 5), and he may not go near a dead body, even a family member (vv. 6-7). The difference between Samson and the Numbers Nazirites is that in Numbers the Nazirite is consecrated to God for a limited amount of time. Though the exact time of service is unspecified in Numbers, there is a ritual described for the end of a person's term as a Nazirite. In contrast, Samson's service to God lasts from birth to death (Jdg 13:7) and therefore he is never to cut his hair nor partake in intoxicants, any grape products, or anything impure.

angel tells her once that a razor may never touch his head, because of his role as a Nazirite to God (Judg 13:5).

Though Samson never touches anything intoxicating, he does have a vice that becomes his demise, and his tale begins with this weakness. Samson first takes center stage when a Philistine woman catches his eye (Judg 14:1). She, like his mother, is never named by the narrator.⁷¹ His interest in women receives primacy in his story, and it will eventually bring him to ruin. Samson's weakness leads to instances of great anger in him and great suffering for the Philistines, but as the narrator explains: "it was from Adonai, because it was an opportunity He was seeking against the Philistines" (Judg 14:4).

When the Philistines cannot solve Samson's riddle, they send his new wife to wrest the answer from him, but she does not simply ask him to tell her the answer. She tells him: "You just hate me, you don't love me. You propounded a riddle to my countrymen, and you did not conspire with me," (Judg 14:16). Just as she does not ask him flatly for the answer, he does not flatly tell her "no." He tells her: "Behold, I did not tell my father and mother, and you I will tell?" (Judg 14:17). Eventually, he does tell her, and she betrays him by telling his wedding companions. This scene foreshadows his escapades with Delilah, as the reader knows at this point that a woman can bring him down, no matter how crafty he is being with his words.

The next woman in the Samson narrative is a whore in Gaza (Judg 16:1). Though it might seem shocking to a modern reader to have the hero of a story sleeping with a prostitute with no repercussions, Amit explains that the Bible "does not flinch from the

⁷¹ Of course, this is typical for women in the Bible. Normally pointing this out would demonstrate a modern thinking imposed on a biblical character, but for Samson it shows something a little different. Of the four women in his story, including his mother, only Delilah receives a name. See also below.

human aspect and has no difficulty describing Samson...visiting a whore."⁷² This brief scene is the only time a woman does not cause Samson to be defeated, though the Philistines seem to believe he is at a weak point, since they set an ambush for him. Though the ambush fails, it illustrates that the Philistines are aware of Samson's Achilles' heel, which they use against him successfully with the help of Delilah.

Delilah is the third woman in the Samson narrative, but she is different than the other two, not in her behavior or loyalties—in these aspects she is the same as his wife—but in the way Samson feels about her. The narrator states that "he loved a woman in the Wadi Sorek, named Delilah" (Judg 16:4). Stating Delilah's name signals that something will be different about her regarding how she affects Samson. Once Samson's feelings are known to the reader, the Philistines immediately ask Delilah to trick Samson, using the verb *נא*, "persuade," which is the same verb used when Samson's wedding companions demand that his wife find the answer to the riddle from him (Judg 16:5; 14:15). Since a woman's persuasion has worked on him in the past, Delilah's potential to have power over him does not come as a surprise. Use of the same word for persuasion from an early episode strengthens such a foreshadowing. That Delilah would so quickly agree to betray Samson indicates that she may not be trusted. Her words to Samson will be manipulative throughout her action in the story, and his love for this woman will bring him to ruin.⁷³

Delilah's success does not come easily. She must press Samson until he finally gives in. The word used to describe her pestering, *הִצִּיקָהּ*, is the same word used to describe the nagging done by his wife in Timnah (Judg 16:16; 14:17). Again, the

⁷² Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 7.

⁷³ Amit, *Jewish Study Bible*, 544; see also Boling, 396-397.

parallels between Delilah and the Timnite woman are striking. Blinded by his love for Delilah, Samson tells her everything. Samson discloses the truth so thoroughly, the text says three times that Samson "told her all his heart," twice in the narrator's words and once in Delilah's (Judg 16:17-18). Delilah breaks down his defenses in a way only she could have done. She knew she had his heart because he loved her, so he opened his heart to her, only to be betrayed for eleven hundred pieces of silver. Symbolic of his blindness to her, Samson's eyes are gouged out by the Philistines when they discover his weakness and capture him (Judg 16:21). The great irony of this situation is that while Samson's weakness for women destroys him, many Philistines will perish because of his destruction (Judg 16:30).

Even though he can be defeated, Samson's character is full of strength of body and spirit. He is equally fierce in his playfulness and his rage, and until he asks God directly for strength (Judg 16:28), his power comes to him when God chooses. Samson uses his strength for a variety of things, most of which are to cause death and destruction to the Philistines. He also uses his wit to taunt them, usually with terse and clever poetry (Judg 14:14, 19; 15:16), and then he uses his physical strength to destroy them (Judg 16:30). All of this destruction is in God's design, as the text explains from the start that Samson, the hero and judge of Israel for twenty years (Judg 15:20; 16:31), is no more than a tool to do God's will against the Philistines (Judg 14:4).

Marked with combinations of poetry and prose, the Samson narrative crafts a tale about a strong yet sensitive hero. The statement at the end of Judges 15 and 16 that "He judged Israel [in the days of the Philistines] for twenty years" (Judg 15:20; 16:31), seems surprising because of the solo nature of his adventures. However, the repetition makes it

clear that Samson was more than a strong arm to the Israelites. He was a gift from God, there to save the people from the tyranny of the Philistines, and to lead them for twenty years during difficult times. That the statement occurs twice also serves as a frame for the last chapter of the Samson narrative, calling special attention to the Gazite whore, to Delilah's betrayal, and to his self-sacrifice in the Philistine temple. It is also fitting that a Nazirite, one dedicated to service to God, would die destroying a temple to a false god. This fits the theological message of the book of Judges as a whole, illustrating the need to wipe out the false gods and return the Israelites to Temple worship. Both the false god and the last chieftain are devastated simultaneously, showing that neither false gods nor any rulers besides the monarchs would be acceptable in Israel.

D. An Introduction to the Books of Kings

The stories involving Elijah and Elisha overlap and are contained in the books of Kings. The two books contain a modified history of the period spanning the time of King Solomon to the time of the Babylonian exile, roughly the tenth to sixth centuries BCE.⁷⁴ Ziony Zevit divides the two books into three sections: 1) the story of Solomon, 2) the account of nearly two centuries of divided monarchy until the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom, and 3) the defeat of the Southern Kingdom, ending with the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE. The plot develops synchronically as the stories of both kingdoms evolve in tandem, referring to the other as a guide and linguistic marker whenever a new king takes the crown.⁷⁵ As the books of Kings progress, the prophets

⁷⁴ Walter Dietrich, "1 and 2 Kings," *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 232.

⁷⁵ Zevit, 668.

become the protagonists and the kings become the antagonists, as is evident in how Elijah and Elisha narratives deal with royalty, especially Ahab and Jezebel.

Though written as a history and using historical data to give life to the text, the books of Kings are ideological in nature, presenting the opinion that the Temple houses the only valid place for Israel to worship, and that Yahwistic worship exemplifies the only acceptable form of reverence. The books impart the authors' views on politics and religion and the interweaving of the two, as is the case for the book of Judges, as stated above. Kings is a Deuteronomistic text, meaning it adheres to the views stated in the book of Deuteronomy, and so the reader should expect that those characters who follow the Deuteronomistic tradition will be lauded while those who do not will be punished.⁷⁶

The Elisha and Elijah narratives occur during the stories of the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Joash of Israel, and Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram, and Jehu of Judah. As the narratives of the kings intermingle with the narratives of the prophets, the text becomes a sort of didactic historiography, switching between the deeds of the prophets and the villainy of the kings. Though the prophets do not have direct contact with all of the kings who reign while their stories transpire, the narrator maintains an awareness of the kings of Israel as his heroes' episodes take place.

E. Elijah⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Dietrich, 232-234. See also Martin A. Cohen, "In All Fairness to Ahab," *Eretz Yisrael*, vol. 12.

⁷⁷ Research used to inform this section includes Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 424-458, 475-486; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings*, (New York: Doubleday, 1988); Volkmar Fritz, Anselm Hagedorn, translator, *1 & 2 Kings: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 181-201, 228-240; Gwilym H. Jones, *The New Century Bible Commentary: 1 and 2 Kings, Volume II*

Elijah's story takes place within the text from 1 Kings 17:1 to 2 Kings 2:11. His adventures are episodic, presented in bits and pieces, highlighting miracles he performs and confrontations he has with Ahab and Jezebel and her god. Elijah typifies the righteous prophet, wandering from place to place as he uses his miraculous powers and creatively works miracles for those in need. He leads other prophets, and all that he prophesies comes true. He personifies the struggle between God and Baal, establishing himself as the one true prophet, and Adonai as the one true God.

The Elijah story begins with him delivering a prophecy to Ahab, instead of with a call narrative or introduction typical of the literary prophets. There is no mention of his genealogy and not a word by the narrator affirming him as a prophet of Israel. He is introduced as "Elijah the Tishbite, from the sojourners of Gilead" (1 Kgs 17:1). This introduction presents a play on words between his stated place of origin, *תִּשְׁבִּי*, and the word *תַּזְזִי*, used for "sojourner"⁷⁸ of Gilead. The double use of the word for both a specific place from which Elijah came and to describe the type of person from whom he came speaks volumes to the type of character Elijah portrays in his story. He will never live permanently in any place, but he will only dwell there temporarily, soon to move on to where God tells him to go or where he is needed next. The twofold word use alerts the reader to the wandering nature of the Elijah texts that follow. Elijah moves from place to

(Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co, 1984), 301-336, 375-450; Choon-Leong Show, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), vol. III, 125-145, 157-160, 171-177; and Jerome T. Walsh, *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry: 1 Kings* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 225-289, 328-341, 368-375.

⁷⁸ Often translated as "resident alien" when combined with *גֵר*, as in Gen 23:4; Lev 25:35; and Num 35:15. See 1 Chr 29:15 for an example of one who is from another land but resides with God. BDB describes this kind of sojourner as "of a more temporary and dependent kind than the *גֵר* (with which it is often joined)" (444).

place, working miracles, helping Israelites in need, and prophesying against Ahab, Jezebel, and the Baalists, the enemies of Israel.

Though Elijah's origins are mysterious, other characters heed his prophesy, and his validity as a prophet is proven throughout his wanderings via the way others treat him. The narrator shows Elijah's validity as a prophet when God appears before him immediately after his first prophesy. Elijah appears as a man in partnership with God, both in his words of declaration that God is "the God of Israel before whom I stand" (1 Kgs 17:1), and in God's speech to him, in which God tells Elijah to go and be sustained by ravens. The need for miraculous sustenance implies that the drought will surely happen, and God will supply Elijah with food and water. The text further elucidates Elijah's reputation as a man of God several times throughout his story.

The first happens after performing miracles for the widow of Zarephath, she says to him: "Now this I know: that you are a man of God and that the word of Adonai in your mouth is truth" (1 Kgs 17:24). When Elijah meets King Ahab's steward, he immediately recognizes and reveres Elijah. Obadiah calls him "my lord," and makes a verbose complaint about what the king may do to him should Elijah disappear (1 Kgs 18:7-15). Both of these instances serves as examples of the fourth most reliable means on Alter's scale, but other examples that support this strengthen the case for Elijah's status. Lower on the scale of means, the many words Obadiah uses show Obadiah in a panic around such a venerated figure, especially the repeated phrase "he will kill me" (1 Kgs 18:12, 14). Another assumption marking Elijah's leadership comes when Ahab calls him "my enemy" (1 Kgs 21:20). Ahab serves as the text's antagonist, and much of Elijah's struggle comes from exchanges with this idolatrous king. The ideology of the text

presents Ahab as the negative example, therefore when he calls Elijah "my enemy," the text implies a rising in stature of Elijah. Though such an assertion qualifies as the least reliable on Alter's scale, this treatment paints Elijah with almost royal colors, as a servant of the king of kings more powerful than a king of Israel. A more reliable statement comes from his servant Elisha, who calls out "My father, my father," when he is taken away (2 Kgs 2:12). This does not mean that Elisha literally considers Elijah as his surrogate parent, but it is a statement of esteem. Such a statement from someone who works closely with Elijah bolsters his reputation as a respected man of God.⁷⁹

Whether or not his abilities are reputed, Elijah is a powerful prophet, with the capability to make miracles, as granted by God. He can make flour and oil not run out (1 Kgs 17:14-16), bring the dead back to life (1 Kgs 17:20-23), run faster than a chariot (1 Kgs 18:46), call fire down from heaven (1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 1:10, 12), split the Jordan river (2 Kgs 2:8), and what he prophesies always comes true (1 Kgs 20:21-24; 2 King 1:16-17; et al). Each time he works a miracle, God lets him know that he will be successful (1 Kgs 17:9), he specifically asks God to help him (1 Kgs 17:20; 18:36-37), or God's hand grants him power (1 Kgs 18:46). His abilities serve as the vehicle that drives much of the plot of the Elijah narrative, and they characterize him as a miracle worker.

Elijah's most impressive miracle occurs on Mt. Carmel. His defeat of the worshippers of Baal parallels the theological message of the text that Adonai surpasses any other gods, (which are in fact false gods.) He demonstrates the power of Adonai by stacking the contest against himself. He gives the Baalists more time to offer their sacrifice, he lets them choose their bull, and he douses his own sacrifice with water (1

⁷⁹ Paul J. Kissling, *Reliable Characters in the Primary History: Profiles of Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 159.

Kgs 18:25-35). When his offering brings down fire from heaven, he proves God's power over Baal to all the Israelites who "saw and fell on their faces and said, 'Adonai is God, Adonai is God!'" (1 Kgs 18:39).

Parallels to the Moses narrative further demonstrate Elijah's reputation as a leader. Elijah's journey to Mt. Horeb takes forty days and nights, during which time Elijah does not eat, as does Moses' journey up Mt. Sinai (1 Kgs 19:8).⁸⁰ Another, more subtle parallel between Elijah and Moses is the appointing of a שר, an "attendant," to serve and eventually replace the prophet (1 Kgs 19:21).⁸¹ This type of attendant does not just wait on the master; he serves a higher purpose, like angels ministering to God or a chief attendant to a king. Francis Brown gives "Joshua as chief assistant to Moses, Elisha to Elijah" as examples of שר, showing that the two relationships are parallel in characterization.⁸² Paralleling Moses shows that Elijah serves as a major hero of the biblical text and leader of the Israelites. Moses' reputation as a great prophet extends to the Talmud, which in Pirkei Avot 1:1 asserts: "Moses received the tradition from God on Mt. Sinai." The passing of tradition in this tractate serves to justify the Rabbis' authority regarding the interpretation of Torah.⁸³ By using Moses to validate themselves, they show that Moses is regarded as a central prophet. Similarly, citing the parallels to Moses, though low on Alter's scale, shows his importance to the text.

While Elijah parallels Moses, he stands out against the idolatrous Jezebel, specifically regarding the end of his time on earth. It is difficult to call this scene

⁸⁰ See also Exod 34:28, Deut 9:9, and others.

⁸¹ See also Exod 24:13, Num 11:28, and others.

⁸² Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 1996), 1058.

⁸³ Leonard Kravitz and Kerry M. Olitzky, *Pirkei Avot: A Modern Commentary on Jewish Ethics* (New York: UAHC Press, 1993), 1.

"Elijah's death" because the Bible never says he dies, it never says he was buried with his fathers, nor does it use any other common biblical euphemism for one's life force leaving the body. When he is summoned to Heaven, God sends horses and a chariot of fire to collect Elijah. An important note about his death is that there is no burial, because his body goes up to Heaven, and cannot be found by the servants who go and look for it (2 Kgs 2:11, 16-18). This is a colossal contrast between Elijah and Jezebel. Jezebel is cursed by Elijah, saying: "The dogs will devour Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, there will be no burial," (1 Kgs 21:23). According to Boling: "The loss of a body before burial was a calamity viewed with horror in the ancient world."⁸⁴ Deuteronomy 28:26 and Jeremiah 34:20 also make a highlight the importance of not having a burial, threatening that disobedience of God will cause one's body to be eaten by wild animals. Yet Elijah transcends both the biblical stigma of having no burial and the curse he puts on Jezebel. Her worst punishment is his greatest accolade, deepening the evil of Jezebel and intensifying the good of Elijah. In addition to the Jezebel contrast, this is the third time in the Elijah narrative that fire comes down from Heaven, after the challenge of the priests of Baal and the punishment of the captains of fifty and their men (1 Kgs 18:38; 2 King 1:9-12). This testifies again to Elijah's abilities, and to God's limitless power. The very tools God uses for damnation can be used for salvation as well, according to God's will and the worthiness of the people receiving the blessings or curses. Just as Jezebel, the Baalist priests, and the first two captains of fifty with their men deserved punishment for their sins, Elijah deserved reward of equal strength for his continued reverence of God, his honor, and his renown.

⁸⁴ Boling, 295.

By making miracles and establishing himself as a revered character, Elijah demonstrates his power and leadership. His greatness as a powerful prophet survives even today, as Elijah is the symbol of hope and redemption for modern Jews,⁸⁵ which is a non-textual testament to Elijah's import, though the text informs tradition. When he leaves this world, he bequeaths his power and his legacy to his servant Elisha. Elisha becomes the new prophet on whom rests the spirit of God, and he continues Elijah's work in the world.

F. Elisha⁸⁶

Elisha, like his master, is endowed with the ability to do God's wonders. He works hard, loyally serving his master, until he becomes the master and leads other Israelite prophets. His story parallels Elijah's in many ways. They perform similar miracles, they expect honor and loyalty to God, and they perform a variety of miracles and prophecies. Their prophecies come true with equal validity, and Elisha even continues some of Elijah's unfinished business. Elisha's one significant difference from

⁸⁵ Elijah appears at Passover Seders, baby namings, and Havdalah services, all of which are ceremonies infused with hope of salvation. Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), 86-88. See also Malachi 3:23-24.

⁸⁶ Research used to inform this section includes Mordechai Cogan, 449-458; Robert L. Cohn, *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry: 2 Kings* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 1-61, 87-95; Cogan and Tadmor; Fritz, 247-275, 312-313; Gwilym H. Jones, *The New Century Bible Commentary: 1 and 2 Kings, Volume II* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co, 1984), 501-505; Choon-Leong Show, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), vol. III, 171-177, 177-179, 183-212, 215-217, 237-239; and Jerome T. Walsh, *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry: 1 Kings* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 328-341, 368-375.

Elijah is his personal transformation, as he develops into a confident miracle worker throughout the narrative, instead of appearing as an established prophet.

Elisha should be understood as a parallel to Elijah, and yet a distinctly separate character with a different personality. His story begins as Elijah's servant, and Elisha's qualities of hard work, righteousness, and loyalty are immediately spelled out. When he appears in the Elijah narrative, plowing with twelve oxen, he presents himself as a strong, able-bodied man, willing to work alongside the animals (1 Kgs 19:19). Elisha also exudes respect, as when Elijah puts his mantle over Elisha's shoulders yet says nothing, Elisha immediately asks if he can say goodbye to his parents, highlighting not only his loyalty to his family, but to the prospect of serving Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19-20). He never questions the choice or his worthiness, only if he can take the time to show respect to his past before he completely severs ties. So strong is his loyalty to Elijah that he destroys the oxen and their yoke, putting them to good use by feeding the people. His action illustrates both his loyalty to Elijah and the people, as well as righteousness and using his action for the greater good. He does not simply destroy the things he no longer needs, he uses them for the betterment of others (1 Kgs 19:21). Introducing Elisha with such righteous attributes so tersely yet powerfully represented allows the reader to keep that image of Elisha in mind as they read the remainder of the Elijah narrative, even though Elisha stays relatively silent until Elijah's ascent. He remains a faithful, loyal servant for the rest of Elijah's life.

The beginning of Elisha's reign as sole prophet of Israel occurs simultaneously with the end of Elijah's. Since the abilities of the two prophets are nearly identical and Elisha takes over Elijah's role as the prophet of Israel, this makes perfect sense for the

structure of the Bible at this point. The strong loyalty of Elisha is emphasized by the repeated phrase: "By the life of Adonai and by the life of your soul I will not leave you!" (2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6). His refusal to leave his master alone as he dies comes to a head when Elijah goes up and Elisha calls out, "My father, my father! Israel's chariots and horsemen!" as Elijah drops his mantle for him (2 Kgs 2:12). This declaration shows his allegiance to Elijah, giving him a paternal name though he left his parents earlier in the text. The phrase also serves as a statement of honor for Elijah, as mentioned earlier.

Elisha eagerly takes on his new role as Elijah's successor. After Elijah disappears, Elisha rips his clothing, takes Elijah's mantle, and strikes the water with it, just as Elijah had done to make it part earlier (2 Kgs 2:13). When the water does not part, he calls out to God, and only then can he strike the water again and have it part for him (2 Kgs 2:14). With the acknowledgement that he is a vessel for God's power and not acting on his own accord he can begin to do the wonders Elijah was able to do. Only after Elisha has acknowledged God's power can he cross the Jordan. To reaffirm that the transference of duty is complete, the guild prophets gathered on the opposite side of the Jordan declare: "The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha!" (2 Kgs 2:12-15). When the men ask to look for the body of Elijah, Elisha begrudgingly allows them, knowing that it will not be found (2 Kgs 2:16-18). While this honors Elijah as mentioned above, it also seals Elisha as the only prophet: Elijah's worthy successor.

In addition to being so closely paralleled to his master, Elisha goes through a personal transformation throughout the chapters divulging his story. He journeys from servant to master, from loyal to demanding loyalty, and from verbose to terse. The narrative portrays Elisha as a unique individual as he traverses Elijah's final journey

backwards from the Jordan to Jericho to Bethel. In Jericho, Elisha purifies the town's water, a miracle that Elijah never performed (2 Kgs 2:19-22). As soon as he gets to Bethel, the end of his reverse imitation of his master, his physical difference from Elijah becomes clear. The children who taunt him in Bethel call him "Baldy," whereas before Elijah's meeting with the three captains of fifty, he is described as a hairy man (2 Kgs 1:8; 2:23). This contrast finalizes Elisha's succession as the one and only prophet of Israel.

Though Elisha is a prophet in his own right, he has several episodes with strong plot similarities to Elijah's narrative. One such occasion is when Elisha saves a widow by causing a vessel of oil to be never-ending (2 Kgs 4:1-7). This is a direct parallel to Elijah causing flour and oil to never run out (1 Kgs 17:14-16), the differences being that Elisha makes the miracle happen to save children from creditors, while Elijah saves a woman and her son from famine. The woman in Elijah's story is equivalent twice, compared to the occasion when Elisha meets the woman in Shunem. Elisha prophesies that she will have a son the following year, and she does, but her son becomes sick and dies. Like Elijah does in 1Kings 17:17-23, Elisha brings the woman's son back to life (2 Kgs 4:8-37). Two differences in the two stories make Elisha's miracle seem greater. First, the boy in the Elisha narrative dies (2 Kgs 4:20), while the boy in the Elijah story falls sick and "his illness was very strong, until no breath remained in him" (1 Kgs 17:17). Second, Elisha's servant Gehazi cannot heal the boy, even with the help of Elisha's staff (4:31), which contrasts Elisha's ability to revive him with his body and words, and thereby attests to Elisha as unique in magnitude of power.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Kissling, 193-195.

Elisha's ability to revive the dead presents a running theme throughout the Elisha narrative. Not only literally, as in the case of the Shunnamite woman's son, but also figuratively as in the scene when he purifies the poison stew, as the prophets describe it: "Death is in the pot, man of God!" (2 Kgs 4:40). By making the stew edible to the guild prophets, Elisha has essentially removed the death from the pot. Elisha's ability to bring the dead back to life stays with him even after his death. After Elisha's dies and he is buried, a man's body gets thrown into his grave, making contact with Elisha's bones. The body comes back to life, showing that Elisha's gifts continue to work after his body has ceased to function (2 Kgs 13:21). Though this is the only miracle in the Bible done by a dead prophet, it serves as another parallel to Elijah's character. Just as Elijah's legendary status as an eternal wanderer among Israel characterizes him as undying, so too Elisha gets a taste of eternity when he makes a man come back to life after his death.

The episode in which the king of Aram battles Israel establishes another theme in the Elisha narrative. Elisha sets a trap for a band of Arameans who would have ambushed the Israelite army (2 Kgs 6:8-23). Their punishment befits their crime, as they tried to conceal themselves to attack the Israelites, and instead they are blinded to the presence of their enemy next to them, leading them into the trap they would have set for the Israelites. Their treacherous behavior merits their lack of vision, whereas Elisha permits his servant to see. Elisha performs both the removal and granting of vision with nearly the same words: "Adonai, [please] open his/their eyes and let him/them see," (2 Kgs 6:17, 20).⁸⁸ Throughout this entire section, only Elisha sees all. He is aware of the Aramean presence for each attempted ambush. He knows God's army surrounds the

⁸⁸ The only differences between the two verses are the use of the word "please" and the singular form in verse 17, while verse 20 is in plural form and leaves out the plea.

Arameans, and he knows exactly where the Arameans are being led. Not until the other characters are granted a modicum of his knowledge do they realize their predicaments, as Elisha asks God to remove their blindness.

Elisha's great vision is contrasted by his servant Gehazi. Gehazi does not typify the same type of servant Elisha was to Elijah. Instead of serving as a שרם he is a נָעָר. A שרם, as described above, denotes a position of honor, not just serving a master but royally attending to royalty. נָעָר, on the other hand, represents a youthful retainer.⁸⁹ A נָעָר receives no special honor, and by title alone Gehazi contrasts Elisha, and by action he emphasizes this disparity. The first time this happens is after the Shunnamite woman approaches them on Mt. Carmel. Elisha sends Gehazi ahead to try to revive her dying son, and the woman stays with Elisha. When she declares her intent to stay with him, she uses the phrase: "By the life of Adonai and by the life of your soul I will not leave you!" (2 Kgs 4:30), the exact words Elisha uses earlier when he refuses to leave Elijah (2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6). This wording parallels the woman to Elisha and contrasts her against Gehazi, who should be the one declaring allegiance by not leaving Elisha's side. Instead, runs ahead to the boy but cannot revive him. More to the point, he says: "The boy has not awakened" (2 Kgs 4:31).⁹⁰ Saying he has not awakened shows that Gehazi does not think the boy truly died. His blasé attitude toward the situation not only contrasts the woman's refusal to leave Elisha's side, it also contrasts Elisha's flurry of action behind the closed

⁸⁹ BDB, 654. See also Gen 19:4; 21:20; Exod 10:9; Deut 28:50; Josh 6:21; 1 Sam 1:24 et. al. It is possible for both terms to apply to one character, as in Exod 33:11 and 2 Sam 13:7.

⁹⁰ Pirkei de Rebbe Eliezer Ch. 33 comments on this episode, saying that Gehazi thought the idea of putting a staff on the boy's face to revive him was so laughable that he told everyone he met this ridiculous task his master has asked him to do. Because of this mocking Gehazi was declared unworthy of succeeding Elisha.

door with the boy as he paces the room, lies across the boy, and prays for his revival (2 Kgs 4:32-35). Gehazi lays a staff on the boy's face, while Elisha actively does everything within his power to revive the Shunnamite woman's son.

Gehazi also contrasts Elisha's strong notions of righteousness and loyalty. When Elisha cures Naaman of *tzora'at*, he refuses to accept a gift for the miracle, because the reward of making it known that a true prophet exists in Israel trumps anything Naaman can give him monetarily (2 Kgs 5:8-19). Gehazi goes against this by seeking out Naaman, lying to him to receive the reward due Elisha in his mind, and then lying to Elisha when asked where he was (2 Kgs 5:20-27). Gehazi's punishment, though curable, shuns him from being Elisha's servant as he proves himself no longer worthy to serve such a righteous person, which shows itself on Gehazi's skin in the form of *tzora'at*. Since Gehazi can no longer serve Elisha and will certainly not succeed him, his main purpose in the narrative seems to be providing a contrast to his master.

While Gehazi's actions contrast Elisha's righteous character, the words of Joash serve to endorse it. When Elisha dies, Joash says the same thing that Elisha did when Elijah died: "My father, my father! Israel's chariots and horsemen!" (2 Kgs 13:14). This line not only acts as a frame for the entire Elisha narrative and a signal that the story is coming to an end similar to how Elijah's story ended, it also strengthens Elisha's status as a respected prophet in the eyes of the king and the parallels between the two prophet characters.⁹¹ Elisha has finished the work of Elijah, in anointing Jehu and Hazael and being around for the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecies about Jezebel. The efforts of the

⁹¹ Kissling, 179.

miracle working men of God are done, at least in this world, and he can be buried (2 Kgs 13:20).

These examples show how Elisha's qualities of righteousness, loyalty, and hard work exemplify him as a character. Though he can be seen as a parallel to Elijah and a continuation of the Elijah narrative, his own persona and his character's transformation shine through, setting him apart as a unique biblical hero.

Chapter Three: Character Analyses of Comicbook Characters

A. Introduction

The unique qualities of the biblical heroes provide exciting plots for the reader to follow. So too the comicbook heroes captivate their fans with stories of their fantastic adventures. Using the system of analysis mentioned in chapter one, this chapter will analyze three characters: Captain America, the Incredible Hulk, and Green Lantern. Such an investigation will attempt to establish parallels between the biblical and comicbook characters. Since the corpus of comicbook literature is so voluminous, one narrative has been chosen for each character that typifies his behavior and highlights his personality. Beginning with plot summaries of the focal storylines, each character will then be analyzed from a literary perspective.

B. Captain America

1. The Story of Captain America

Debuting in March 1941, Captain America, or "Cap" as fans call him, first appeared in a post-Depression America on the cover of *Captain America #1* punching Hitler in the jaw. This image remains etched in the minds of his fans, as he symbolizes the fight against the world's worst evils. As Tom DeFalco remarks in *Avengers: The Ultimate Guide*:

Marvel's biggest success during The Golden Age, and one of the top-selling super heroes of all time, Captain America is, first and foremost, a manifestation of patriotism. His debut preceded his country's entry into World War II, and he rode the wave of public spirit that followed Pearl Harbor; thus he identified himself forever with a period that may have been The Golden Age of the United States as much as it was The Golden Age of comic books. Sentimentally, a certain nostalgia for the period

remains, even among those who are too young to have experienced its triumphs and tragedies firsthand.⁹³

Ever since, he has fought alone or with one of several superhero teams against any evils that challenge the people of America and the rest of the world.

Cap has always been wrapped in the American flag, but the shield he carries functions as his personal symbol. Creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby originally designed his symbol to be triangular, but soon after they made it round instead. As a circle, the shield represents both defense and a target, and when thrown like a discus, it also functions as a surprisingly effective weapon. A safeguard that draws fire and then fires back, the shield provides the ideal emblem for Captain America.

His shield is not Cap's only weapon. Trained in combat fighting in World War II, Captain America uses fists and feet with deft agility. His body serves as a fighting machine, matched only by his keen mental prowess, which allows him to assess a combat situation in a split second, thereby maximizing his combat skill and minimizing bystander injury. This combination of mental and physical power gives him the ability to accurately bounce his shield from foe to foe, disarming them as his trusty shield returns to his side.

But this has not always been the case. Born Steve Rogers, Cap started life as a frail young man who wanted nothing more than to serve his country. Unfortunately, he was dismissed from the draft due to his weak stature. When he pleaded to be allowed the chance to fight for his country, a scientist answered his request and gave him a dose of an

⁹³ Tom DeFalco, *Avengers: The Ultimate Guide* (New York: DK Publishing, 2003,) 14.

experimental drug known as "Super Soldier Serum."⁹⁴ The serum made him so strong, agile, and vigorous that the Army not only accepted him, but made him their number one soldier. This, in part, explains why Captain America is so beloved by the public. He was not blessed with innate gifts; yet because he showed up at the right place and time, and with the right amount of passion and willpower, he deserved to wear the red, white, and blue costume and shield. Another factor worth noting is how he rose to popularity during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, when the young citizens of the United States were inspired by those whose charisma and mental abilities brought them to great power.⁹⁵

After World War II, Captain America vanished from the purview of the American comicbook reader, as his decline in popularity led to a break in his publications. His perfect patriotism seemed simplistic, and the readers no longer needed such a hero. He was revived in the 1960s, both in terms of publication and within his storyline, when the Sub-Mariner found him frozen in a block of ice in the Pacific. Revitalized in a new time, he now seeks the meaning of freedom in a time when patriotism may not be quite the same thing as unquestioning loyalty to one's country and political leaders.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Of course, the scientist was assassinated just after administering the serum, making Steve Rogers the one and only super soldier.

⁹⁵ DeFalco, 15.

⁹⁶ DeFalco, 24.

This study will focus on seven issues of *Captain America*,⁹⁷ which take place after Cap teams up with the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, and the rest of the Avengers to fight Onslaught.⁹⁸ After the battle, Cap and his fellow Avengers find themselves spread out across the globe after the battle, Captain America ends up in Japan nearly a year later, with inexplicable gaps in his memory, such as the inability to read Japanese. To add to the tragedy, nobody believes he is the real Captain America because the day he arrives is the day the Captain America movie premieres. He finds Japan's obsession with Americana distressing, but not as much as the ninjas who attack the American-frenzied Japanese. When the Japanese try to burn an American flag, Captain America makes his first entrance, defeating the ninjas and discovering they are led by Lady Deathstrike. He defeats them by trapping the ninja Akutagawa on a catwalk during the premiere of the Captain America movie, foiling an attempt by Lady Deathstrike to detonate a nerve gas bomb in the crowded theater.⁹⁹

The next episode focuses on the importance of Cap's shield (see figure 3) and introduces Hydra. Hydra is the villain group responsible for most of the antagonism of the series, run by their new leader the Sensational Hydra, who seems almost too

⁹⁷ Ron Garney and Bob Waicek, *Captain America*, Vol. 3, #1-7 (New York: Marvel Comics, Feb-Aug 1998). This series was chosen, with the help of comicbook expert Michael "Cap" Canaan, because of its depictions of Captain America struggling with his public image as well as its especially typical storyline. Its position in the third volume of the *Captain America* titles makes it fitting for a character analysis, due to the expository nature of the seven issues, which spend more time than most illustrating some of Cap's central attributes.

⁹⁸ Onslaught is an immensely powerful super-villain made of pure energy accidentally created from the minds of Professor X and Magneto. The inexplicable warp in space and time turned out to be due to a pocket universe that Franklin Richards created to protect all the heroes who would otherwise have sacrificed their lives to defeat Onslaught.

"Onslaught," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/onslaught_saga: Internet.

⁹⁹ Garney and Waicek, #1.



Figure 3

ridiculous to be taken seriously. Cap infiltrates a submarine captured by Hydra, deftly using his shield in tight quarters. With his shield behind him and a hostage in his arms, he positions himself in the torpedo chute and fires himself out of the sinking sub just before it crashes into a reef. Unable to withstand the blast, the straps of his shield come loose and the disc sinks to the bottom of the ocean.¹⁰⁰

The next episode begins with Cap trying to get used to his new shield, constructed for him by Tony Stark.¹⁰¹ Hydra provides his first field test with the new shield at the Smithsonian, where they have demanded he show up alone. Navigating the booby-trapped museum, Cap saves two young boys hiding in one of the exhibits, but he cannot maintain control of his new shield, which ends up in the hands of Hydra. He does, however, manage to take a replica of his original shield from a display of him fighting in World War II, which aids his troublesome escape. In a bold move outside the museum,

¹⁰⁰ Garney and Waicek, #2.

¹⁰¹ Rich playboy to the public eye, but known to the Avengers as the Indestructible Iron Man.

he declares war on Hydra, telling them he will no longer be on the defensive against their attacks, but he will seek them out until they are "wiped off the face of the earth."¹⁰²

Next, "Capmania" overtakes the country. Cap and Hawkeye spend the issue discussing the benefits and detriments associated with fame. Cap complains that his actions are useless, as is the glorification of his deeds. Hawkeye contends that the fighting of Hydra agents and Batroc that occur in the episode maintain the public's faith in Cap, which gives them hope and inspiration. As a smirk on Cap's face shows



Figure 4

the reader the faintest glimmer that Cap may enjoy the esteem bestowed upon him (figure 4), the revelation comes that the Sensational Hydra, who hired Batroc to attack Cap, enjoys Cap's popularity much more than he does.¹⁰³

The following sequence begins with Captain America making good on his declaration of war by infiltrating a Hydra lair with the help of Thor. Taking a break at a burger joint, they find out that the Sensational Hydra has taken two hostages and is taunting Captain America to try to free them. When reaches the hostages, he finds that both the hostages and the Sensational Hydra are actually shape-shifting Skrulls, able to take shape of any form and the powers of the form they assume. Tricked, Cap is trapped in "Skrull Handcuffs" as the lead Skrull imitates Captain America, trusting that Cap's reputation in light of recent events will make the people do anything he says.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Garney and Waicek, #3.

¹⁰³ Garney and Waicek, #4.

¹⁰⁴ Garney and Waicek, #5.

While Cap remains captive, the Skrull convince the public that one out of every twenty people is a Skrull living among them, breeding mistrust and violence across the country. By the time Cap breaks out of the Skrull Handcuffs, riots are breaking out everywhere.¹⁰⁵ Helping to calm rioters as Steve Rogers, he devises a plan to stop the Skrulls. Stark builds a machine that shoots a ray forcing a Skrull to revert to normal form, which he shoots at the Captain America-disguised Skrull just as he is making a public address about the president being a Skrull. Cap takes down the Skrull as their true identities are revealed. With the help of the Avengers and the Thing, the Skrull threat is nullified and Captain America addresses the people in true form, explaining that he will never call for violence and destruction again, that he will remain a servant of the people, not a leader.¹⁰⁶

2. Analysis of the Story of Captain America

Throughout these seven episodes, patriotism remains Captain America's central trait. Obvious at a glance from the stars and stripes that adorn his red, white, and blue costume, his actions further illustrate his patriotic persona. In Japan, Cap first stops a ninja from burning an American flag, a symbol of rejection of the American values that stir great emotion in many American readers of his comicbook. As his shield flies at one of the demonstrators, it knocks a torch out of his hand, which Cap catches in his left hand just as his shield returns to his right. Cap's "entrance," the first panel showing his face, depicts him posed with the raised torch and shield in a reversed Statue of Liberty pose. He comes into the scene as the emblem of the American people.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Garney and Waicek, #6.

¹⁰⁶ Garney and Waicek, #7.

¹⁰⁷ Garney and Waicek, #1.

In the expository first issue of volume three, Cap's patriotism at first seems to contrast starkly with the anti-American sentiment of Lady Deathstrike's men. But Lady Deathstrike's speech to Akutagawa in which she describes the importance of Japanese culture and the notion of honor shows her version of nationalism. While she speaks of her nationalistic pride, the background shows scenes of the Japanese countryside, with beautiful colors against the black and white word-balloons of her speech. If it were not for the discussion about the beauty of bushido suicide, it would be a sentimental scene. Her sense of Japanese pride does not so much contrast Captain America's patriotism. The contrast comes in her method of displaying her pride and her twisted sense of honor in death, while Captain America treasures human life.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the Japanese nationalism throughout the issue helps to make Cap's patriotism stand out, even against the backdrop of westernization of Japan. His American idealism is pure and not commercialized, whereas Japan is inundated with products that belittle true patriotism in the name of capitalism. Against both of Lady Deathstrike's nationalism and Japan's westernization Cap stands out as the quintessence of America.

He also embodies patriotism in the way he deals with politics and leadership. When congressional candidate Andrew Bolt asks for Cap's endorsement, he refuses the offer, saying: "I believe in the system. If you're really the best man for the job, I trust the American people to vote for you without my say-so!"¹⁰⁹ Cap stands for people more than politics, the preservation of the American dream rather than the political views of any candidate or party.

¹⁰⁸ Canaan, October 12, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Garney and Waicek, #4.

This preference for protecting the people surfaces at the end of the seventh issue in this series, when Captain America gives a speech to the people defining his role as a soldier and servant as opposed to a leader of the people. He says:

Captain America is not here to lead the country. I'm here to serve it. If I'm a Captain, I'm a soldier. Not of any military branch, but of the American people. Years ago, in a simpler time, this suit and shield were created as a symbol to help make America the land it's supposed to be, to help it realize its destiny...I will continue to defend this nation from any and all threats it may face. But, as of today...I am a man of the people.¹¹⁰

His speech covers four panels on one page. The first shows Cap at a podium from a bird's-eye view, surrounded by microphones and reporters, his shadow taking up more of the frame than his figure. The next frame is closer and more frontal, with his body still not taking up half of the panel. The third panel presents a waist and up picture of Cap at the podium, hand on hip and pointing at the reporters. The fourth frame depicts only Cap's head, his clear blue eyes at the center of the panel, his strong facial features taking up nearly the entire picture (figure 5). As Cap speaks of living as an average person serving the people, the reader perceives a growing image of Cap becoming more powerful and stronger.¹¹¹ As the point of view closes in on Cap's eye, the scene pans out again, this time picturing Cap standing on the torch of the Statue of Liberty, overlooking New York City. The images of Cap and the statue frames the entire story, confirming the reader's vision of everything in between these two figures, keeping vigil on the American people, Captain America and Lady Liberty.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Garney and Waicek, #7.

¹¹¹ Canaan, October 12, 2005.

¹¹² Garney and Waicek, #7.

In addition to the quality of patriotism, the Captain America comicbooks highlight Cap's intelligence. Cap does not simply display brute force, but he consistently uses



Figure 5

strategy in combat. For example, in the fight against Lady Deathstrike, he tries to use her deadly adamantium claws to save the people trapped in the theater. He backs up, leading her toward the chained doors which keep the people trapped in the theater, ducking just in time for her to slash the chains and give them a way out. Unfortunately this plan does not work, and he is forced to think of another way to save the trapped moviegoers while fighting Lady Deathstrike and her ninjas.¹¹³

Another example of Cap's strategic mind occurs after he is kidnapped by the Skrulls. Cap finds himself bound with what the Skrull leader calls:

Skrull Handcuffs, engineered to adapt instantly to whatever form a shapeshifter might take. Try to smash them, they'll turn hard, burn them and they'll freeze. And so on and so forth.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Garney and Waicek, #1.

¹¹⁴ Garney and Waicek, #5.

He spends nearly an entire issue trying to get out of them, until he finally thinks of a way to fool the cuffs. Diving down an elevator shaft, Cap grabs the elevator cables until he bleeds. Thinking he has turned into liquid form, the cuffs change shape into a glass-like bubble just as Cap hits the ground, smashing the cuffs and allowing him to limp away.¹¹⁵

Due to the combative nature of superhero comics, examples of his fighting skill pervade the issues. One more example of note arises when Cap leaps off a building, seeming to have no hope of landing safely, in order to catch a nerve gas canister thrown by a Hydra agent. In mid-dive, an arrow shoots past, and Cap thinks, "Well, finally!" as he grabs the rope attached to the arrow and slides to safety once it hits its mark. On the ground the archer, fellow Avenger Hawkeye, awaits.¹¹⁶ As this example demonstrates, Cap's capabilities in combat often center on reliance on his teammates. As a master strategist, Cap utilizes his fellow combatants' skills to their maximum potential, making him an even more indomitable force than he is alone. Though he can hold his own in solo combat, he is often surrounded by teammates, usually as the leader of teams like the Avengers.

Leadership and trust stand out as key characteristics of Captain America. As Hawkeye says: "If he told us to jump off a bridge, we'd be wet by now. His whole career's built on trust."¹¹⁷ In another example, Cap frees a hostage from a submarine controlled by Hydra. He sits on his shield in a torpedo tube, asking the hostage to trust him that they will be all right. Of course, she does, and they surface safely.¹¹⁸ That the

¹¹⁵ Garney and Waicek, #6.

¹¹⁶ Garney and Waicek, #4.

¹¹⁷ Garney and Waicek, #7.

¹¹⁸ Garney and Waicek, #2.

Skrulls are able to exploit this trust only proves that maintaining the trust of the populace is an essential part of Captain America's character.

Though this popularity has its adverse side when the Skrull uses it against him, Cap's sense of patriotic duty wins in the end. He addresses America, explaining his desire to be a citizen for the people and with the people, not a public figure leading them and telling them how to behave. His strong sense of patriotism wins out as his speech attempts to bring him down to the level of a people's soldier, but the reader's viewpoint of Captain America, as described above, makes it clear that he will never completely blend in to the crowd because he is America's ultimate hero.

Patriotism embodies everything Cap does, backed by his combat skill and the ability to command. Serving the people of his country to the best of his super-powered abilities, he is portrayed as a patriotic leader whose teammates and fellow citizens trust him to no apparent end.

C. The Incredible Hulk

1. Background and Plot Overview

The Incredible Hulk first appeared in *The Incredible Hulk* #1 in May, 1962. Inspired by *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby had trouble deciding exactly what would cause him to transform from Dr. Banner to the Incredible Hulk and back again. They drafted many plots for the misunderstood monster until in 1968, when they finally settled on an uncontrollable rage that would turn Dr. Banner into the Hulk.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Tom DeFalco, *Hulk: The Incredible Guide* (New York: DK Publishing, 2003) 7-28.

The story of the Hulk begins when brilliant nuclear physicist Dr. Bruce Banner saves Rick Jones from a gamma radiation blast and in turn is infected with gamma irradiation that causes him to transform into a hideous green monster called the Hulk. At first, he transforms into the Hulk at sunset and returns to Bruce Banner form at sunrise. Over the years and with the help of repeated gamma radiation treatments designed by Dr. Banner, he learns to control the transformations to a certain extent. Now, whenever Dr. Banner becomes angry, his rage triggers the transformation; he becomes the Hulk until he calms down and regains control. When in Dr. Banner form, he spends the majority of his waking hours searching for a way to free himself from the Hulk permanently.

Several manifestations of the Hulk have developed since the Hulk's first appearance, the most common of which is the rage-filled, green, seven-foot monster with little of Banner's intelligence. The Hulk is strong enough to lift a tank in each hand, and powerful enough to leap over three miles, but he has almost no control over his rage; as a result, anything that angers him tends to get destroyed. When engaged in battle, the longer he fights, the angrier—and therefore stronger—he gets, which makes time his greatest ally. The Hulk hates that Banner is a part of him, and would like to be rid of him. However, he lacks the intelligence to adequately express this concern, much less do anything about it.

Focusing on the current Hulk storyline beautifully illustrates his character.¹²⁰ The story begins with Bruce Banner/The Hulk hiding out in Alaska, its vast wilderness providing cover and nourishment for the fugitive. Assuming the alias "Robert," Bruce

¹²⁰ Daniel Way, Keu Cha, and Jason Keith, *The Incredible Hulk*, vol. 3 #88-91 (New York: DC Comics, Oct 2005-Jan 2006). Issues #88-91 of *The Incredible Hulk* were published during the writing of this paper.

Banner keeps himself isolated, allowing transformations into the Hulk for the purpose of fishing. Mark, the man who flies in supplies for "Robert," invites him into town one evening to a local pub, reminding him that all his time isolated may make him forget his humanity. While there, he is angered by two men forcing themselves on a woman. The Hulk emerges, easily defeating the men and running back to Banner's cabin.¹²¹

Mark shows up the next day, with different supplies from his usual stockpile, including what looks to Banner like a cell phone. When he opens it, a projection of Nick Fury, agent of SHIELD,¹²² invites Banner to a tanker in the Bering Straits. Once there, Fury tells him about an elaborate space station built by Hydra that has been out of control for decades and cannot usually be found by electronic equipment because of its cloaking capabilities. The station cannot be attacked by any means at SHIELD's disposal, because its defense systems are more advanced than anything they have, and its AI functions allow it to learn how to target nuclear stations on earth whenever SHEILD tries to attack it. Their only hope is to launch the Hulk into space, since he is made of organic material that the space station may not perceive as a threat.¹²³

Once he is launched into space, the station picks up the Hulk as if he was debris, and loads him on board. A battle ensues, and as the Hulk starts to tear apart the space station, two things happen. First, he notices a SHIELD emblem on the side of the station, revealing Fury's lie about Hydra's involvement. This has always been a SHIELD

¹²¹ Way, Cha, and Keith, #88.

¹²² Strategic Hazard Intervention, Espionage and Logistics Directorate: SHIELD is a government-funded black ops agency trained and equipped to handle super-powered threats to the safety of the United States. Occasionally they enlist the help of a hero. When this happens, SHIELD usually withholds information from the hero, supplying information on a "need-to-know" basis.

¹²³ Way, Cha, and Keith, #88-89.

experiment gone awry. Next, the space station knocks the Hulk out by piercing his brain with a metal tentacle. When he awakes, he has transformed back into Banner, and the space station is glowing green, having absorbed gamma radiation from Banner's irradiated cells.¹²⁴

Confronted with a cyborg-like creature made out of the collected debris, Banner tries to ask the station questions, but it instead prepares to attack him. Changing again into the Hulk, they fight as the station absorbs more of the Hulk's gamma radiation. Unable to handle that much power, the station self-destructs, and the Hulk re-boards the pod SHIELD provided. Surprisingly, the pod takes off away from Earth, as Fury's voice comes over the communication system, "Bruce, we're so sorry, but you've left us little choice." The Hulk is sent careening into space in his capsule, with seemingly no way back.¹²⁵

2. Analysis of the Story of the Incredible Hulk

The Hulk is the strongest creature to walk the Earth. His strength is his primary characteristic, and since he gets stronger as his anger grows, the limits to his strength remain unknown. In the four issues summarized above, he spends nearly half of the plot battling a metal monster with the ability to transform and adapt to his rampaging fighting style. He also withstands a nearby nuclear blast. But his strength is not illustrated via plot and action alone. Hulk stands seven feet tall, and his picture usually fills most of the panel, or spills over to increase his



Figure 6

¹²⁴ Way, Cha, and Keith, #90.

¹²⁵ Way, Cha, and Keith, #91.

menacing presence, as described by Bongco previously:
Hulk's body fills most of the page, while the other two ch
the beast.¹²⁶

Rage and control are two warring factors that al:
nearly uncontrollable rage is always countered by Banner
produces a struggle every time. When he remains angry,
control, which is why Fury lies to him about Hydra's part
station. The lie allows Fury to guarantee that
when the Hulk sees the SHIELD logo
emblazoned on the side of the space station, he
will stay infuriated and be able to maintain Hulk
form until he defeats the station.¹²⁷

But the need to control his rage is why
Banner chooses Alaskan isolation in the
beginning of the series. He sought solitude and
almost got it, but SHIELD finds him. When
Fury sends him into space after battling the
space station, the writer frames the story. He
seeks loneliness in the beginning, and in the end



Figure 7

he receives the ultimate form of loneliness, in deep space. C
chooses for himself, and the other is imposed upon him b

¹²⁶ Way, Cha, and Keith, #88.

¹²⁷ Way, Cha, and Keith, #90.

figure 6). Notice how the
acters seem miniscule next to

characterize the Hulk. His
desire to control it, which
Hulk proves impossible to
pation in creating the space



type of isolation Banner
Nick Fury and SHIELD.

Perhaps SHIELD believes casting the Hulk into space grants Banner the solace he seeks, but the Hulk does not seem to think so.

Many consider the Hulk a fairly simple character because when he is a big green monster he appears to do nothing but fight and destroy things. The Hulk's ability to enchant readers for so many years may be due in part to this appearance of simplicity. However, underneath the simple monster-smashes-villains plot lays a wealth of conflict that mostly comes out in the illustrations. Pictures of Banner's reactions to situations, close-ups on the Hulk's agonized or enraged responses to situations, and well-placed landscapes emphasizing the loneliness of the Hulk harmonize with the Hulk's pedantic banter (figure 7). Banner's furrowed brow and Hulk's frustrated scowl have subtle similarities that keep the reader believing that the frail Dr. Bruce Banner can turn into the menacing Incredible Hulk (figures 8 and 9).



Figure 8



Figure 9

The similarities in the facial expressions are particularly surprising when reminded of Bruce Banner's high level of intelligence. Though Banner's nuclear physicist mind gets buried in the Hulk's subconscious, he is often aware of what is happening to the Hulk. So too, the Hulk gets frustrated at the revelations from within himself as the trapped Banner's thoughts bubble to the surface.

Banner is as smart as the Hulk is strong, and his intelligence has also shown no signs of reaching its limitations any time soon.

The strength of the Hulk and the mental acuity of Banner merge into a beast that would be the perfect superhero if only his mind and muscle could coexist at the same time. Unfortunately, the intellect must be buried when in Hulk form, and the strength ebbs when Banner is the apparent being. This ultimate balance of power is contrasted by Nick Fury, who is not as smart as Banner and nowhere near as strong as the Hulk. But it is Fury who is the real monster in the story, lying to Banner and the Hulk and tricking both of them into being catapulted into space. Fury's eye patch intimates piracy, all the more fitting with his headquarters on a ship in the Bering Straits. But instead of forcing his way on board a ship like a pirate, he forces Banner/the Hulk to board a ship he built in space, which he needs to sink. The trick is complete when the pod shoots the Hulk in the wrong direction, possibly stranding him in space forever. Fury is the Hulk's nemesis and polar opposite. Though Fury does not appear only in Hulk comicbooks, it is surely no accident that he is chosen over other popular SHIELD agents in the Marvel Universe.¹²⁸ The theme of struggling against his own fury manifests as the tangible hostility towards Nick Fury.

¹²⁸ Such as Sharon Carter or Agent 13.

D. Green Lantern

1. The Story of Green Lantern

Created by Martin Nodell and Bill Finger, the original Green Lantern debuted in *All-American Comics* #16.¹²⁹ Not so much a specific hero as a title, Green Lantern has gone through many incarnations over the years, and many alter egos, including Hal Jordan, Guy Gardener, and Kyle Rayner. The Green Lantern title has been canceled and revived about once a decade, and each time the series returns with new characters, powers, and relationships for the readers to discover. Most of the cancellation and revival has simply been due to popularity of the characters. Decline in circulation means the comicbook titles do not get printed, since this would not be cost-effective. The most recent publication, *Green Lantern Corps*,¹³⁰ focuses on the entire Green Lantern Corps, the group of beings, based on the planet Oa, who have been chosen to protect the universe.

Green Lanterns are chosen because of their ability to overcome great fear. When chosen, they receive a power ring that enables them to create any form they can imagine, from trains to bombard their enemies to ether molecules to knock them unconscious. The ring can also answer questions, act as a universal translator, protect its wearer from harm, and record and playback a Lantern's memories or messages. The inability to affect anything yellow remains the rings only known weakness, though in recent years Kyle Rayner discovered that if a Green Lantern has enough confidence, this weakness can be eliminated. Those who wear the rings are restrained by the Green Lantern code, which

¹²⁹ Martin Nodell and Bill Finger, *All-American Comics* #16, (New York: DC Comics, July 1940).

¹³⁰ Premiere issue by DC Comics, Nov 2005.

states that they may not use the ring for personal gain, and it must be recharged every 24 hours.

Most Lanterns recite an oath while recharging their ring. Though not necessary for the process, it aids concentration and takes time while the ring recharges. Oaths are marks of honor for those who recite them. For example, Hal Jordan's oath is,

In brightest day, in blackest night,
no evil shall escape my sight,
let those who worship evil's might,
beware my power,
Green Lantern's light!¹³¹

Hal Jordan serves as the Green lantern of sector 2814, the sector including Earth, which needs his help more often than other planets in the sector. Jordan was chosen from between two possible candidates at the time of his predecessor's death, probably because he was geographically closest. This thesis will analyze Jordan's origin story, published more than forty years after the character's creation.

This story, taken from issues #1-6 of *Green Lantern: Emerald Dawn*,¹³² chronicles the death of Abin Sur and Hal Jordan's first trials as Green Lantern, as well as his battles with the Lantern-hunting villain Legion. Jordan's story begins with trouble mounted on trouble, but not from any super-villain or natural disaster: Jordan's trouble comes from within. Watching his father crash and burn while testing an aircraft for Ferris Aviation always weighed heavily on Hal's mind. Then, when he loses his job and his girlfriend at the same time, he tries to drown his sorrows in alcohol. While driving

¹³¹ Alfred Bester, *Showcase* #22, 1943.

¹³² Keith Giffin, Gerald Jones, and Jim Owsley, *Green Lantern: Emerald Dawn* (New York: DC Comics, 1989) #1-6. This series was chosen, with Canaan's help, for its explicit description of Green Lantern's powers and Hal Jordan's transformation after begin chosen as Green Lantern.

his friends and brother home drunk, he loses control of the car and injures all three passengers, one of whom dies from his injuries. When things cannot seem to get worse, he goes to work to test a flight simulator, which flies off its hinges and soars hundreds of miles into the desert, landing at the crash site of Abin Sur, Green Lantern of sector 2814. According to the Guardians, "Abin Sur found another one just like himself. Opinionated, intuitive, volatile, but such potential."¹³³ He bequeaths Jordan the power ring and dies, leaving him with limitless power, and countless questions.¹³⁴

While Jordan begins to learn the abilities his new ring gives him, he meets the yellow-armored villain Legion. Legion has been hunting Green Lanterns, and he caused Abin Sur to crash on Earth, his body kept alive only by the power of the ring so that he can find a replacement Green Lantern. The power ring cannot directly affect Legion because of his armor, and Jordan learns the ring's weakness: the color yellow. As his battle with Legion rages on, he realizes he cannot win, so he asks the ring to show him to another Green Lantern. The ring whisks him to another galaxy where he meets fellow Lantern Tomar-Re.¹³⁵

Tomar-Re takes Jordan to Oa, the physical center of the universe and the headquarters of the Guardians, who are in charge of the thirty-six-hundred-member Green Lantern Corps. While there, they learn that Legion is actually an amalgam of thousands of creatures from the planet Tchk-Tchk, who blame the Corps for their planet's

¹³³ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #6.

¹³⁴ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #1.

¹³⁵ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #2-4.

destruction. Safe for the time being, Hal Jordan begins his formal training as a member of the Green Lantern Corps.¹³⁶

While on Oa, Legion tracks them down and challenges the Green Lantern Corps to a fight to the death. Nearly invincible against the Lanterns' rings in the yellow armor, Jordan finds a way to cover the creature with mud, allowing the Lanterns to affect it through the layer of brown. After an arduous battle, the Lanterns defeat Legion, mostly due to the creative thinking of new Lantern, Hal Jordan. Safe from this foe and finished with his training, Jordan returns to Earth to face the problems of his life that the ring cannot help him fix.¹³⁷

After serving his time in jail for drunk driving and destroying a flight simulator, Hal's friends at Ferris took sympathy on him and gave him the job he always wanted—test pilot. Having conquered his fears, he flies the Ferris Jets with ease, making everyone proud of him. His loved ones remain in the dark about his secret identity, and they do not know that his abilities as a Green Lantern far surpass those of Hal Jordan the pilot.¹³⁸

2. Analysis of the Story of the Green Lantern

All Green Lanterns, first and foremost, are characterized by their ability to overcome fear. Hal Jordan is no different. In the sixth issue, when fighting Legion on Oa, he admits his fear, remembering the words of his predecessor:

"Fear is, for you, an intellectual exercise," Abin Sur said. "It is a method of self-preservation. That the ring singled you out indicates your potential to overcome your fear, to become truly fearless."¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #4.

¹³⁷ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #5.

¹³⁸ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #6.

¹³⁹ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #6.

He again states, "But...I'm afraid." Nevertheless, as Hal reflects upon his fear, he moves to save Oa from Legion. This shows that even though he reflects upon his fear, he acts against it and overcomes it, just as Abin Sur predicted. As he thinks, he flies directly into the central core battery, absorbing sufficient power to contain Legion so that the Corps can bring him back to Tchk-Tchk where he will not be able to harm anyone for ages.¹⁴⁰

Overcoming fear is an overarching theme of the earlier issues of the *Emerald Dawn* series as well, though the issue is not as explicit. The problems Hal experiences at the beginning of the story all can be traced to fear. The memory of his father's fiery death keeps him trying to be a pilot, trying to make him proud. The inability to hold his life together makes him attempt to escape by toying with danger, both in the car and in the flight simulator. Becoming Green Lantern allows him to escape temporarily to Oa, which Abin Sur calls the "method of self-preservation." Though he becomes a full fledged Green Lantern on Oa, his deeds on earth prove his fearlessness. He admits his guilt, atones for his mistakes, and even flies planes without the help of his ring. He learns to trust himself, which is a sign of conquering of fear.¹⁴¹

This transformation is illustrated by an inclusio that frames the narrative with two plane crashes. The first scene of the first issue shows Hal's flashback to his father's death. Unable to control his plane, Marty "Bishop" Jordan panics and ignores the warnings from tower control to

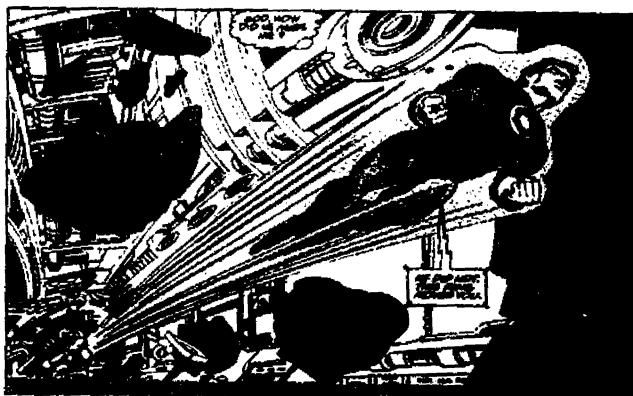


Figure 10

¹⁴⁰ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #6.

¹⁴¹ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #1-6.

abort his mission and eject from the plane. He tries to regain control, only to crash in an explosion, a "brightest day," that leaves Hal in a "darkest night."¹⁴² The story line ends with another pilot testing a plane that gets out of control. This time Hal is flying, and when the ring tries to take control of the plane, Hal takes it off and throws it out the window, declaring, "It's my show." He is so confident in his abilities that he does not even want the temptation of using the ring's power. Landing safely, Hal's flight not only serves to frame the entire piece, it also contrasts his father's flight. Mastery of his fear helps Hal overcome the plane's problems and bring it down in one piece. His father was afraid and lacked the clarity of mind necessary to land safely. Hal's fear becomes confidence, and his father's memory becomes an opportunity to learn from the past.¹⁴³



Another defining feature of Green Lantern is his creativity, which **Figure 11** guides the wonders wrought for him through the power of his ring. Sometimes he wills something to happen and it does, like forming a giant lawn mower to cut down carnivorous grass (figure 10). Other times he asks the ring for help if he does not know exactly how to perform the feat in his mind, like when he wants it to take him to another Lantern. In either case, the ring can bestow whatever marvels Hal can imagine. Occasionally, the ring moves on its own, providing protection for Hal that he may not even know he needs, like moving him out of the way of incoming projectiles (figure 11).

¹⁴² Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #1.

¹⁴³ Giffin, Jones, and Owsley #6.

In the six issues studied here, a great deal of the ring's power materializes as simple lasers shooting from Hal's fingers or force fields surrounding his body. Usually, though, it seems a new form emerges in every issue of Green Lantern. Part of the attraction to him for many readers is the power of the ring in partnership with the command of Hal's mind.¹⁴⁴

Hal Jordan is known to comicbook fans as, "the greatest Green Lantern who ever lived."¹⁴⁵ Though he protects sector 2814, he often heeds the call of Green Lantern Corps when they need extra help from time to time. There may be others who wield power rings, but nobody will ever top his fearlessness and creativity.

¹⁴⁴ Canaan, May 30, 2005.

¹⁴⁵ Phil Jimenez, *DC Comics Encyclopedia* (New York: DK Publishing, 2004), 132.

Chapter Four: Comparisons of Biblical and Comicbook Characters

Leadership, strength, personal transformation, mental competence, combat prowess, creativity, and working wonders are all characteristics shared by some or all of the seven characters examined in the two previous chapters. Captain America represents the patriotic warrior, struggling to keep his ego in check in light of the public's admiration and his teammates' respect for him. The Incredible Hulk symbolizes strength incarnate; battling super-powered villains as he fights to control his own rage requires both the physical aptitude of the Hulk and the mental powers of Bruce Banner. Green Lantern embodies fearlessness, creativity, and power. Gideon plays the role of heroic warrior while evolving from fearful farmer to fear-inspiring military leader. Samson epitomizes strength of body and mind, and simultaneously he demonstrates how vulnerability can tear down the strongest physical being, while faith in God grants strength to the devoted. Elijah and Elisha both denote leadership and creativity through miracles, and Elisha's conversion from servant to master distinguishes him from Elijah and elevates both of them as God's prophets.

These seven characters exhibit certain similarities as far as personality, abilities, reputation, and experiences. But can they be classified as superheroes? The comicbook characters are called superheroes because they are more than regular heroes who might be defined as focal characters of their stories, great military figures, or individuals famous for their strength.¹⁴⁵ Danny Fingeroth defines superheroes as "individuals with fantastic powers (whether magic or 'science' based), [or] people who fight their battles

¹⁴⁵ Philip B. Gove, ed, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G & C Merriam Company, 1961), "Hero."

with advanced technology (often differentiated from magic only because the author says so).”¹⁴⁶ Fingeroth points out that three things superheroes have in common are strength of character, positive values, and the willingness to protect said values at any cost.¹⁴⁷

Bongco expands upon Fingeroth’s explanation:

Some of the features that would be repeated countless times in...superhero stories could be listed as follows: a) aberrant or mysterious origins, b) lost parents, c) man-god traits, d) a costumed, secret identity, e) difficulties with personal and emotional relationships, f) great concern for justice, and g) use of superpower in politics.¹⁴⁸

Captain America, the Incredible Hulk, and Green Lantern all exhibit the defining features of a superhero. They are granted abilities to aid them through the action of their narratives. They are all costumed, they have secret identities, their parents are not involved in the stories,¹⁴⁹ and their atypical origins are the sources of their marvelous abilities. Their abilities are varied, but they all are granted “fantastic powers” or “advanced technology,” that endow them with “man-god traits,” and accord them the title superhero.

In contrast, Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha do not have mysterious origins. The narrator informs the reader that they are from Abiezer (Judg 6:11), Zorah (Judg 13:2), Tishbi (1 Kgs 17:1), and Abel-meholah (1 Kgs 19:16), and the text identifies all but Elijah’s fathers. Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha are neither costumed nor orphans, and their identities are far from secret. They are well-known and act in view of

¹⁴⁶ Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2004), 16.

¹⁴⁷ Fingeroth, 16-18.

¹⁴⁸ Bongco, 101-102.

¹⁴⁹ Captain America and Bruce Banner’s parents are dead, and Green Lantern’s mother seldom appears in his adventures, and usually only in flashbacks or brief cameo-like scenes.

the public eye. Ahaziah, for example, recognizes Elijah by his servants' vague description: "a hairy man, with a hide girdle tied around his loins." (2 Kgs 1:8). The most significant disparity between the biblical and comicbook characters comes from the source of their powers. The biblical characters do, however, exhibit some characteristics from Fingeroth and Bongco's classification of superheroes. The abilities and experiences appear to be the common aspects that link them as venerated literary figures.

The first quality shared among many of them is leadership. Gideon and Samson serve as chieftains, which testifies to their positions of leadership. Though Gideon refuses to serve as king, the text makes it clear that the people follow Gideon's instructions when he asks for a part of their spoil after the Midianite battle. The Israelites immediately comply and give him part of their booty, and their lack of hesitation "indicates Gideon's status and influence"¹⁵⁰ (Judg 8:24-25). Gideon also leads the Israelite army, while Samson does not need to lead militarily because he is an army of one. Elijah and Elisha also emerge as leaders, but not in a military sense like Gideon. They are often referred to by other characters in the narrative with honorifics such as "My lord" (1 Kgs 18:7, 13; 2 Kgs 2:16; 4:16; et al), "master" (2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 16; 6:5, 15; et al), and "my father" (2 Kgs 2:12; 13:14).¹⁵¹ When Elijah proves the power of God over Baal, the episode acts as a polemic emblemizing his authority over that of the earthly king Ahab (1 Kgs 18:19-40). Elisha's interchange with Jehu shows him as an authority figure, especially when he puts his hand over Jehu's (2 Kg 13:16), which testifies to the esteem Elisha held in the eyes of Israel.

¹⁵⁰ Amit, 529n.

¹⁵¹ Amit describes this phrase as "possibly an epithet of Elijah as Israel's defender," 728n.

The comicbook characters also exemplify leaders of the people. Captain America's leadership defines him as much as his patriotism. His quality as a vanguard of the American people is so prominent that even when he declares his desire to serve the people as a soldier, the pictures reveal that his authority outweighs his intent.¹⁵² Though leadership is not a main characteristic of Green Lantern and the Hulk, when called upon Green Lantern has been known to lead the Justice League of America; he ranks just below Superman and Batman when a leader is needed.¹⁵³ Even the Hulk conducts himself as a leader when in Banner form, for his vast knowledge of nuclear physics is respected by much of the scientific community.¹⁵⁴

The next attribute common among these characters is strength. Samson and the Incredible Hulk are identified most strongly with muscular power. Both of these characters perform incredible feats of strength, such as Samson killing a lion with his bare hands (Judg 14:5-6) or the Hulk manually ripping through a metal space station.¹⁵⁵ Captain America also gains an increase in physical fortitude from the super soldier serum, though not to the same degree as Samson and the Hulk. An extra amount of vigor even supplies Elijah with the ability to run ahead of Ahab's chariot (1 Kgs 18:46), but strength writ large is not one of Elijah's defining characteristics; instead, his super speed in this scene indicates his ability to work miracles.

Miraculous power is another common trait. Elisha and Elijah are able to perform miracles throughout their narratives, as described earlier (1 Kg 17-2 Kg 13). Worthwhile examples performed by both characters include bringing the two boys to life (1 Kgs

¹⁵² Garney and Waicek, #7. See also figure 1, last chapter.

¹⁵³ Jimenez, 162.

¹⁵⁴ DeFalco, 9.

¹⁵⁵ Way, Cha, and Keith, #90-91.

17:18-24; 2 Kgs 4:20-37) and providing unending supplies of flour and oil (1 Kgs 17:11-15; 2 Kgs 4:1-7). Green Lantern can manipulate the energy from his power ring into almost anything from weapons and shields to SCUBA gear. For instance, after he meets Tomar-Re, Green Lantern creates a giant lawn mower to cut down the carnivorous grass infestation on Tomar-Re's planet.¹⁵⁶ He also possesses the ability to fly and to clothe himself in Green Lantern garb.¹⁵⁷ As mentioned earlier, the only things that limit his ability to perform wonders are his own imagination and the adherence to the Green Lantern Code.

Another shared characteristic is creativity or cleverness. Gideon develops a strategy to defeat the Midianites by making them believe they are surrounded by a great army (Judg 7:15-21). Samson shows his creative side with his poetic rants (Judg 14:14, 18; 15:16) and when he sets the Philistine wheat, grape, and olive supply ablaze by setting torch-laden foxes loose in their fields (Judg 15:4-5).¹⁵⁸ Captain America, as stated previously, enhances his combat abilities with advanced strategies and clever use of his shield.¹⁵⁹ Though the Hulk rarely does what can be called creative or crafty, his alter ego constantly attempts new ways to maintain control over the monster within him, from

¹⁵⁶ Griffin, Jones, and Owsley, #4.

¹⁵⁷ Ron Marz, *Green Lantern* #51 (New York: DC Comics, 1994). Hal Jordan uses the same costume for nearly thirty years as Green Lantern, but Kyle Rayner (who works as a comicbook artist when not saving the world), frequently designs new costumes for himself. See also Judd Winnick, *Green Lantern: Brother's Keeper* (New York: DC Comics, 2003), 11.

¹⁵⁸ The biblical text proves this act to be especially well thought out when considering the first line of Judges 15, which includes the phrase "in the days of the wheat harvest," which would otherwise seem unnecessary for the advancement of the plot. Knowing that Samson's plan is implemented during the harvest shows that he is causing them more than an inconvenience—he is destroying their food supply for the season (Judg 15:1).

¹⁵⁹ Garney and Waicek, #2.

continued gamma radiation treatments to Aboriginal meditation.¹⁶⁰ Green Lantern's creativity is revealed in everything he forms with his ring. If he can think of something, he can make it happen.¹⁶¹

Personal transformation is also prominent among these characters. Gideon changes from fearful farmer to heroic warrior, though God views him as a warrior all along (Judg 6:12-8:32). Elisha develops from faithful servant to zealous master (1 Kgs 19:19-2 Kgs 13:20). Hal Jordan's conversion into Green Lantern requires learning how to deal with his fear, adjusting from running from it to overcoming it.¹⁶² For Bruce Banner, his goal is to prevent change, but the quest to stop becoming the Hulk makes transformation a focal point for his character as well.

Leadership, physical strength, miraculous power, creativity, and personal transformation stand out as the central defining features shared by the biblical and comicbook characters. Strength and abilities can be considered "fantastic powers" or even "man-god traits," from the explanation of "superhero" above.¹⁶³ Leadership can occasionally manifest itself as "use of superpower in politics," though it usually shows itself as "great concern for justice," from Bongco's definition. Creativity and personal transformation, however, do not fit into these definitions, and therefore are not part of the requirements to be considered a superhero.

¹⁶⁰ Lee, Kirby, *The Incredible Hulk*, Vol. 1, #3ff; various authors, *The Incredible Hulk*, Vol. 3, #62ff.

¹⁶¹ This ability was dangerous to Hal Jordan soon after his home town of Coast City was destroyed. He goes insane and rebuilds the entire city with energy from the power ring, attempting to construct a fantasy world for himself. Since this was classified by the Oans as using the power for personal gain, they tried to banish him from the Corps (Ron Marz and Darryl Banks, *Green Lantern* #48).

¹⁶² Giffin, Jones, and Owsley, #1-6.

¹⁶³ However, "man-god traits" would not be recommended for describing characters from the Bible due to the theological purpose of the biblical text.

Though the characters share many similarities, the source of their powers points to a significant difference between the biblical text and comicbooks. While the comicbook superheroes take on powers and use them according to their own will, the biblical figures get their abilities from God. In each case, the character is affected by God's spirit. The phrase *רוח יהוה*, "spirit of God" is used for Gideon when he summons the Israelites (Judg 6:34). The same phrase appears Samson is possessed by the spirit of God when he fights the lion, the thirty Philistines, and the thousand Philistines (Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). Obadiah describes Elijah as being moved by the spirit of God (1 Kgs 18:12),¹⁶⁴ and regarding Elisha the prophets declare: "The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha," by which they mean the powers granted Elijah by God (2 Kgs 2:15). Each time it appears, God's spirit strongly affects the hero in question, whether enveloping (Judg 6:34), possessing (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14), or resting on the character (2 Kgs 2:15). Each time the prevailing image is one of dominating the individual to endow him with superpowers.

The biblical definition of *רוח יהוה* comes from Isaiah, which describes it as "A spirit of wisdom and insight, A spirit of counsel and valor, A spirit of devotion and reverence for the LORD" (Isa 11:2).¹⁶⁵ Binyamin Oppenheimer further explains that *רוח יהוה* can only affect one character at a time, as demonstrated in 1 Sam 16:13-14, when God's spirit leaves Saul and cleaves to David. The hero affected by the spirit of God can do whatever God wills, such as having incredible strength or the ability to work miracles.

¹⁶⁴ The phrase "hand of God" is also used for Elijah when he races ahead of Ahab's chariot (1 Kgs 18:46). The intent is the same, even though the exact words are different.

¹⁶⁵ JPS, 870.

Only one hero can be great enough to deserve God's spirit at a given time, which strengthens the monotheistic message of the Bible: One hero parallels one God.¹⁶⁶

The concept of only one hero in the world stands out against the comicbooks, in which many heroes work simultaneously, and the characters' various abilities come from non-divine sources, such as alien, mutate, or science. Typically a comicbook hero is born with powers or is granted them either intentionally or through an accident that defines their development into a hero. Similar accidents happen to super-villains, the nemeses that are powerful enough to present challenges to superheroes. Whether the ability-granting causes the character to become a hero or a villain depends on the caliber of the individual. For Captain America, his abilities are given to him because of his strong sense of patriotism and duty. Bruce Banner would never have gotten hit with gamma rays had he not been concerned with the life of another human. Green Lantern was explicitly chosen because of his ability to overcome great fear.¹⁶⁷

Another key difference between the Bible and comicbooks is the purpose of the texts. The Bible is sacred literature, while comicbooks are entertainment literature. The

¹⁶⁶ Binyamin Oppenheimer, *'Ensiqlōpēdiā Mīqra'īl*. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1976), "Rūāh."

¹⁶⁷ A classic example of personality having opposite effects on individuals can be found in the Batman origin story, when Bruce Wayne witnesses his parents' murder at the hand of young mob goon Jack Napier, he dedicates his life from that moment on to training his mind and body, forcing it beyond the limits of human potential until he becomes Batman. As Batman, he devotes himself to deterring crime in Gotham City, and he eventually encounters an older, more powerful Napier. When Napier shoots at Batman, the bullet is deflected, punctures Napier's cheeks, and knocks him into a vat of strange chemicals. Though he survives, his skin pales, his hair becomes green, and his scars twist his face into a wild grin. From then on Napier takes the moniker Joker, and his deranged lack of concern for life makes him as formidable as Batman. Hence both Batman and the Joker are victims of circumstance, but Bruce Wayne's noble character makes him a hero, while Jack Napier's criminal mind makes him a psychotic adversary of the caped crusader. Frank Miller, David Mazzucchelli, *Batman* #401-404.

books of Judges and Kings specifically present theological statements about the need for a united monarchy and the validity of Adonai over other gods. While comicbooks do occasionally exhibit social, political, and even religious themes,¹⁶⁸ their primary function remains economic gain for their publishers garnered via entertainment for their readers. So too the Hebrew Bible entertains even though it chiefly serves as sacred a guide for Jewish religious life. Thus, although the characteristics of the heroes in both texts are similar, they serve different purposes in their texts. The heroes of the Bible represent vehicles of God's power, while the heroes of comicbooks provide amazing stories with crises that can only be resolved by super-powered protagonists.

This analysis of the biblical heroes shows that they do not warrant the label "superhero." They serve as the heroes of the Bible, but they are not above that level as the name superhero suggests, because God is the source of all power in the Bible. To confuse that issue would be to go against the theological message the biblical text presents so eloquently. Superheroes of comicbooks act on their own merit, and their abilities remain theirs until they die. For Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha, God decides how much *ruach Adonai* they receive, when they may use it, and if and when it gets taken away from them. With all their powers and abilities, the biblical heroes function as implements of God's power, and nothing more. So while the comicbook genre presents adventures of superheroes, it would be best to describe the biblical figures as "megaheroes," because of the prefix "mega-," which points to a greater example of a

¹⁶⁸ Examples of social issues include Judd Winnick's series "Hate Crime," in which Kyle Rayner's assistant gets beaten because of his homosexuality (*Green Lantern* 3, #153-155). Religious references are found in Mark Wald and Dan Curtis Johnston's "Tower of Babel" series, in which supervillain Ra's Al-Ghul disrupts the world's communication capabilities (*Justice League of America* #42-46, 1998).

hero, whereas "super-" points to something above a hero. Therefore, the name "megahero" suits Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha, who surpass the abilities of heroes who are not able to work wonders and use amazing abilities granted by God, but still exist as mortals who submit to God's will.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This thesis has delineated the distinguishing attributes of the seven focal characters and determined that the biblical characters do not qualify as superheroes. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the goal of biblical literature prevents classifying Gideon, Samson, Elijah, and Elisha as superheroes. Having the status of megaheroes allows the biblical characters to stand out as amazing literary figures while not assuming a position above other mortals, especially in light of God's determination of the biblical heroes' powers. However, whether labeled superheroes or megaheroes, the central characters of both comicbook and biblical literature provide fascinating material for study.

While the Bible and comicbooks differ in numerous, significant ways, this study has explored one common feature: the heroic figures found in these two bodies of literature. Though history may have changed the way people view the world, human nature has remained the same, and the characters in comicbooks and the Bible are splendid examples of humanity that have brilliantly connected readers to the text for thousands of years. Both the Bible and comicbooks have developed a loyal following, in part because of the fascinating stories told about characters like Gideon, Samson, Elijah, Elisha, Captain America, the Incredible Hulk, and Green Lantern. Audiences from ancient days to contemporary times have been attracted to stories featuring these types of characters. The myriad of publications about the Bible seems evidence enough to testify to its importance to the world at large, as does its reign as the number one bestseller since the invention of the printing press.¹⁶⁹ Comicbooks have been popular since the 1930's,

¹⁶⁹ Russel Ash, *The Top 10 of Everything*, (New York: DK Publishing, 1996), 112.

and though serious study has begun only recently, hundreds of titles are published monthly from tens of comic publishing companies.¹⁷⁰ Both genres of literature have also gathered cult-like followings. The Bible inspired two of the world's major religions, and comicbook fans gather at comicons¹⁷¹ around the world. At either type of gathering, inclusion into the group often requires an in-depth knowledge of the literature of the group, or at least a pretense thereof.

Whether or not the reader relates to the personal issues of the characters, reading about someone with amazing powers contributes to the experience of reading the Bible and comicbooks. The impossible feats described in both types of literature fascinate their readers, and characters serving the greater good inspire them.¹⁷² The biblical characters tend to be rich and realistic, even when performing impossible feats such as crossing bodies of water on dry land or defeating thousands of soldiers using only a donkey's jawbone. Both genres stimulate the imagination and furnish the readers with a fantasy world where the characters come alive.

¹⁷⁰ Marvel Comics and DC Comics, the two giants in the business, produce approximately fifteen titles per week.

¹⁷¹ A comicon is a convention for comicbook fans. "Cons" as they are colloquially called, are often sponsored by vendors, who sell comicbooks and comic paraphernalia such as figurines and clothing. Lecturers speak on topics such as comicbook publication or art, and artists display or sell original drawings and paintings. Cons range from serious and scholarly to commercial and crass, and popular cons are usually annual events, such as the Big Apple Con in New York City every November.

¹⁷² Comicbook creators are aware of this to the point where they consciously add instructions for their young readers. In the movie *Spiderman*, (Universal Studios, 2002), Spidey tells two kids who ask him how they can do what he does to "stay in school and eat your green vegetables." In their comicbooks, most superheroes never drink alcohol so they will have their wits about them if they are suddenly needed. For example, Bruce Wayne (Batman), drinks ginger ale in a champagne flute at social functions (Canaan, October 12, 2005).

Though these characters possess special powers, they undergo very human sorts of transformations and exhibit the types of flaws to which many readers can relate. Many of these characters must deal with a personal problem before they can effectively take on their role as megaheroes or superheroes, such as Gideon or Green Lantern overcoming fear. Overcoming great impediments makes for fascinating literature, and when the obstacles come from within the protagonists, the reader grasps the realism built into these fantastic characters.

Many biblical and comicbook characters relate to their readers via a tragic flaw that prevents them from personifying perfection.

Captain America relies too heavily on his shield and cannot help but give in to his own popularity. The Hulk and Banner battle constantly for control of their body. Green Lantern cannot affect anything yellow. Gideon builds an ephod. Samson yields to his desires for Philistine women. All of the biblical figures depend completely on God to perform their amazing feats. For the comicbook heroes these flaws often allow the writers to present exciting plot twists when villains exploit their



Figure 12

weaknesses. For example, when Captain America loses his shield, the artist literally paints a picture of hopelessness, showing Cap standing in a raft overlooking the vast ocean (figure 12). Any reader who struggles with despair, ego, sexuality, or anger

empathizes with the stories' figures. When the author shows that the heroes are imperfect, the severity of the reader's imperfections diminish when compared to problems of someone granted such amazing powers, even if that someone is fictional.

In addition to serving as pop culture icons, these types of stories espouse values and model behaviors that can inspire and influence their readers. The biblical characters act on behalf of God or under God's authority, and the text makes it clear which behaviors are to be lauded and which deserve punishment. Comicbook heroes, though not acting under divine influence, do exhibit exemplary conduct that can be utilized in tandem with biblical examples by Jewish educators. For example, the stories of Elijah, Elisha, and Green Lantern can be used as examples of how faith in God and in one's own creative abilities can help other people, which could relate to a lesson on *tikkun olam* or Jewish ethics. The comicbook stories also contribute useful parallels for teaching Bible stories, such as Superman's similarities to Moses.¹⁷³ Using Bible stories in partnership with comicbooks presents tales from the Jewish tradition directly connected to the modern day mythos of the students.

This thesis is not the first time a merging of comicbook and biblical genres has been suggested. Jeff Anderson and Mike Maddox published a graphic novel version of the Bible in 1998.¹⁷⁴ JT Waldman has recently produced the book of Esther in graphic novel format,¹⁷⁵ and Douglas Rushkoff hopes to see his graphic novel adaptation of the

¹⁷³ See Appendix C for an example lesson plan on this topic.

¹⁷⁴ Jeff Anderson and Mike Maddox, *The Puffin-Lion Graphic Bible*, (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1998).

¹⁷⁵ JT Waldman, *Megillat Esther*, (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 2006).

Bible on shelves in the near future.¹⁷⁶ As a means of communication, the graphic novel provides a method of relaying the biblical narrative that all ages can access, and that is entertaining on artistic and literary levels, as described in chapter one.

When the Bible and comicbooks merge, they inevitably focus on the characters. The heroes who have inspired stories for thousands of years have evolved since the time of the biblical narratives, but their effects on readers remain the same. Even when their intent is purely entertainment, amazing characters dominate religious and secular literature because they cause readers to aspire to higher levels of morality and decency.

¹⁷⁶ Douglas Rushkoff, *Testament*, (New York: DC/Vertigo, 2006). Scheduled for publication in March 2006, according to an interview on January 6, 2006.

Appendix A: Biblical Source Texts

Gideon's Call: Judges 6:11-24

¹¹ וַיָּבֹא מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּעֹפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאָשׁ אֲבִי הָעֹזְרִי וַגִּדְעוֹן בְּנוֹ חִבֵּט חֲמִים בָּנֹת לְהַנִּיס מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן: ¹² וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה עִמָּךְ נִבְּוֹר הַחִיל: ¹³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו גִּדְעוֹן בִּי אֲדֹנִי וַיֵּשׁ יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְלָמָּה מִצְאָתָנוּ כָּל־זֹאת וְאֵיךְ כָּל־נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר סָפְרוּ־לָנוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לֵאמֹר הֲלֹא מִמִּצְרַיִם הֶעֱלָנוּ יְהוָה וְעַתָּה נִשְׁשָׁנוּ יְהוָה וַיַּחֲנֹנוּ בְּכַף־מִדְיָן: ¹⁴ וַיֹּפֶן אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֶךְ בְּכַחַךְ זֶה וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף מִדְיָן הֲלֹא שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ: ¹⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בִּי אֲדֹנִי בָמָּה אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה אֵלַי הִדֵּל בַּמִּנְשָׁה וְאֲנֹכִי הֹצֵעִיר בְּבֵית אָבִי: ¹⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה כִּי אֵהְיָה עִמָּךְ וְהִכִּיתָ אֶת־מִדְיָן כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד: ¹⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם־נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַעֲשִׂיתָ לִּי אוֹת שְׁאֵתָה מִדְּבַר עַמִּי: ¹⁸ אֶל־נָא תִּמַּשׁ מִזֶּה עֵד־בָּאִי אֵלֶיךָ וְהִצָּאתִי אֶת־מִנְחָתִי וְהִנַּחְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁב עַד שׁוֹבֶכֶךָ: ¹⁹ וַגִּדְעוֹן בָּא וַיַּעַשׂ גִּדְי־עֲזִים וַאֲיִפְתָּ־קִמַּח מִצּוֹת הַבָּשָׂר שֶׁם בֶּסֶל וְהַמֶּרְק שֶׁם בְּפָרוֹר וַיּוֹצֵא אֵלָיו אֶל־תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה וַיֵּנֶשׁ: ²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים קַח אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר וְאֶת־הַמִּצּוֹת וְהִנַּח אֶל־הַסֶּלַע הַלִּז וְאֶת־הַמֶּרְק שְׂפוֹךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: ²¹ וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶת־קִצְהָ הַמִּשְׁעָנָה אֲשֶׁר בִּידּוֹ וַיֵּנֶע בַּבָּשָׂר וּבַמִּצּוֹת וַתַּעַל הָאֵשׁ מִן־הַצּוֹר וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר וְאֶת־הַמִּצּוֹת וּמַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הִלֵּךְ מֵעֵינָיו: ²² וַיֵּרָא גִדְעוֹן כִּי־ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אָהָה אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה כִּי־עַל־כֵּן רָאִיתִי מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים: ²³ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה שְׁלוֹם לָךְ אֶל־תִּירָא לֹא תָמוּת: ²⁴ וַיִּבֶן שָׁם גִּדְעוֹן מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ יְהוָה שְׁלוֹם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עוֹדָנוּ בְּעֹפְרַת אֲבִי הָעֹזְרִי:

And an angel of Adonai came and sat under the terebinth that was at Ophrah of Joash the Abiezrite, and Gideon his son was beating out wheat in the winepress to make them escape from the faces of Midian. The angel of Adonai appeared before him and said, "Adonai is with you, heroic warrior." Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, 'Adonai is with us?' Why has all this happened to us, and where are all his wonders that our fathers told to us, saying, 'Behold! From Egypt Adonai raised us!?' And now he has forsaken us and given us to the hand of Midian!" And Adonai turned to him and said, "Go. Your power is this: you will save Israel from the hand of Midian. Behold, I have sent you."

He said to him, "Please, my lord, how will I save Israel? My clan¹ is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house." Adonai said to him, "because I will be with you, and you will smite Midian as one man." And he said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your eyes, make me a sign that you are speaking with me. Please do not depart from this until I come to you and bring you my afternoon sacrifice and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay until you return." And Gideon came and he made a young goat and an ephah of unleavened flour. He put the meat in the basket and he put the soup in a pot and he went out to him to under the terebinth and he drew near. The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and place them on this cliff." And he did so. And the angel of Adonai sent the end of the staff in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread and fire went up from the rock and devoured the meat and the unleavened bread. And the angel of Adonai left his eyes. And Gideon saw that it was an angel of Adonai and Gideon said, "Aha, my God Adonai! For² I have seen an angel of Adonai face to face!" And Adonai said to him, "Peace upon you. Do not be afraid. You will not die." And Gideon built there an altar to Adonai and he called it, "God's Peace." Until this very day it is in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Gideon vs. Baal: Judges 6:25-32

וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָהָ הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה קַח אֶת-פֶּרֶה-הַשּׁוֹר אֲשֶׁר לְאֶבִיךָ וּפֶרֶה הַשְּׂנִי
שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים וְהִרְסֵתָ אֶת-מִזְבֵּחַ הַבָּעַל אֲשֶׁר לְאֶבִיךָ וְאֶת-הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר-עָלָיו
תְּכַרֵּת: ²⁶וּבִנִיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל רֹאשׁ הַמָּעוֹז הַזֶּה בְּמַעְרְכָה וּלְקַחְתָּ

¹ Lit. "cattle," which does not seem to make sense, unless the meaning refers to all the cattle he has to care for. JPS, JSB, and Oxford say "clans," and Anchor says, "contingent."

² כִּי עַל כֵּן is a redundant phrase in Hebrew, using more words than are needed to express the idea (BDB p. 474). Therefore, all three words can translate to the English, "For," to solve the syntactical issue.

אֶת־הַפָּר הַשְּׁנִי וְהַעֲלִיתָ עֹלָה בְּעֵצֵי הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּכְרֹת: ²⁷ וַיִּקַּח גִּדְעוֹן
 עֲשָׂרָה אָנָשִׁים מֵעַבְדָּיו וַיַּעַשׂ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה וַיְהִי כְּאֲשֶׁר יָרָא אֶת־בֵּית
 אָבִיו וְאֶת־אָנָשֵׁי הָעִיר מַעֲשֹׂת יוֹמָם וַיַּעַשׂ לַיְלָה: ²⁸ וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ אָנָשֵׁי הָעִיר בִּבְקָר
 וְהִנֵּה נָתַן מִזְבֵּחַ הַבָּעַל וְהָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר־עָלָיו כְּרָתָהּ וְאֵת הַפָּר הַשְּׁנִי הָעֹלָה
 עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַבְּנוּי: ²⁹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ מִי עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּדְרֹשׁוּ
 וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ גִדְעוֹן בֶּן־יֹאָשׁ עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: ³⁰ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אָנָשֵׁי הָעִיר אֶל־
 יֹאָשׁ הֲוֹצֵא אֶת־בִּנְךָ וַיָּמָת כִּי נָתַן אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ הַבָּעַל וְכִי כָרַת הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר־
 עָלָיו: ³¹ וַיֹּאמֶר יֹאָשׁ לְכָל אֲשֶׁר־עָמְדוּ עָלָיו הָאָתָם תְּרִיבוּן לַבָּעַל אִם־אַתֶּם
 תּוֹשִׁיעִינָן אוֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יָרִיב לוֹ יוֹמָת עַד־הַבֹּקֶר אִם־אֱלֹהִים הוּא יָרֵב לוֹ כִּי נָתַן
 אֶת־מִזְבְּחוֹ: ³² וַיִּקְרָאֵלוּ בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא יִרְבָּעַל לֵאמֹר יָרֵב בּוֹ הַבָּעַל כִּי נָתַן
 אֶת־מִזְבְּחוֹ:

That night Adonai said to him, "Take the young bull belonging to your father and a second bull seven years old. Tear down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred post which is beside it. Then build an altar to Adonai your God, on top of this place of safety on level ground. Take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering on the wood of the sacred post that you cut down." Gideon took ten of his servants and did as Adonai had told him, but he was afraid of his father's house and the townspeople to do it by day, so he did it by night. The townspeople arose the next morning and behold! The altar of Baal had been torn down and the sacred post beside it had been cut down, and that the second bull had been offered on the altar built there. They said to one another, "Who did this thing?" and they inquired and they investigated and they said, "Gideon son of Joash did this thing!" The townspeople said to Joash, "Bring out your son, and he will die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred post beside it!" And Joash said to all who stood against him, "Do you contend for Baal? Do you deliver him? Whoever contends for him will be dead by morning! If he is a god, let him contend for himself, since his altar has been torn down!"

That day they named him Jerubaal, meaning "Let Baal contend with himself," since he tore down his altar.

Gideon Assembles His Troops: Judges 6:33-7:8

³³ וְכָל-מִדְיָן וְעַמְלָק וּבְנֵי-קָדָם נֹאסְפוּ יַחְדָּו וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעֶמֶק יִזְרְעָאֵל:
³⁴ וְרוּחַ יְהוָה לָבָשָׁה אֶת-גִּדְעוֹן וַיִּתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר וַיִּזְעַק אֲבִיעֶזֶר אַחֲרָיו:
³⁵ וּמַלְאָכִים שָׁלַח בְּכָל-מְנָשָׁה וַיִּזְעַק נֹס־הוּא אַחֲרָיו וּמַלְאָכִים שָׁלַח בְּאִשֶּׁר
וּבִזְבִּלֹן וּבְנִפְתָּלִי וַיַּעֲלוּ לִקְרָאתָם: ³⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים אֲסִי־שֹׁף
מוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיָדִי אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: ³⁷ הִנֵּה אֲנִכִּי מַצִּיג אֶת-הַנָּזָה הַצֹּמֵר
בְּגִזָּן אִם טַל יִהְיֶה עַל-הַנָּזָה לְבִדָּה וְעַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ חֶרֶב וְיִדְעֹתִי כִּי-תוֹשִׁיעַ
בְּיָדִי אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: ³⁸ וַיְהִי-כֵן וַיִּשְׁכֹּם מִמַּחֲרַת וַיִּזֶר אֶת-הַנָּזָה וַיִּמָּץ
טַל מִן-הַנָּזָה מְלֹא הַסֶּפֶל מִיָּם: ³⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי-יִחָר אָפָּךְ בִּי
וְאִדְבָּרָה אֶךְ הַפֶּעַם אֲנִסָּה נְאֻד־קֶהֱפַעַם בְּנָזָה יִהְיֶנָּה חֶרֶב אֶל-הַנָּזָה לְבִדָּה
וְעַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה-טַל: ⁴⁰ וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים כֶּן בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיְהִי-חֶרֶב אֶל-
הַנָּזָה לְבִדָּה וְעַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ הָיָה טַל:
7 וַיִּשְׁכֹּם יִרְבֶּעֶל הוּא גִדְעוֹן וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ עַל-עֵין חֶרֶד וּמַחֲנֶה
מִדְיָן הָיָה-לּוֹ מִצְפּוֹן מִגִּבְעַת הַמּוֹרָה בְּעֶמֶק: ² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-גִּדְעוֹן רֹב
הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתָּךְ מִתַּתִּי אֶת-מִדְיָן בְּיָדָם פֶּן-יִחַפְּאוּ עָלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יָדִי
הוֹשִׁיעָה לִּי: ³ וַעֲתָה קְרָא נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם לֵאמֹר מִי-יֵרָא וַיַּחֲרֵד יֹשֵׁב וַיִּצְפֹּר
מִהָר הַגִּלְעָד וַיֵּשֶׁב מִן-הָעָם עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֲלָף וַעֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפִים נְשָׂאוֹ:
⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-גִּדְעוֹן עוֹד הָעָם רֹב הוֹרֵד אוֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַאֲצַרְפּוּ
לָךְ שָׁם וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלִידָה זֶה יֵלֶךְ אִתָּךְ הוּא יֵלֶךְ אִתָּךְ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר
אֱלִידָה זֶה לֹא-יֵלֶךְ עִמָּךְ הוּא לֹא יֵלֶךְ: ⁵ וַיִּוָּרֵד אֶת-הָעָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהוָה אֶל-גִּדְעוֹן כָּל אֲשֶׁר-יֵלֵךְ בְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ מִן-הָעָם כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵלֵךְ הַכֹּלֵב תִּצִּיג אוֹתוֹ
לְבָד וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יִכְרַע עַל-בִּרְכָּיו לִשְׁתוֹת: ⁶ וַיְהִי מִסְפַּר הַמִּלְקָקִים בְּיָדָם אֶל-
פִּיהֶם שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְכָל יֹתֵר הָעָם כָּרְעוּ עַל-בִּרְכֵיהֶם לִשְׁתוֹת מַיִם:
⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-גִּדְעוֹן בְּשֹׁלֶשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הַמִּלְקָקִים אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְנִתְתִּי
אֶת-מִדְיָן בְּיָדְךָ וְכָל-הָעָם יֵלְכוּ אִישׁ לְמִקְמוֹ: ⁸ וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-צֹדָה הָעָם בְּיָדָם וְאֶת
שׁוֹפְרֵתֵיהֶם וְאֶת כָּל-אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁלַח אִישׁ לְאַהֲלָיו וּבְשֹׁלֶשׁ-מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ
הַחֲזִיק וּמַחֲנֶה מִדְיָן הָיָה לוֹ מִתַּחַת בְּעֶמֶק:

All Midian, Amalek, and the Kedemites joined forces, they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. The spirit of Adonai enveloped³ Gideon, he sounded the shofar, and he summoned⁴ the Abiezrites behind him. And he sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and he also summoned them behind him. He then sent messengers through Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them. And Gideon said to God, "If you will deliver Israel by my hand as you have said, behold, I place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If dew will be on the fleece alone, and on all the ground dryness, I will know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said." And so it was. He rose early the next day, squeezed the fleece and drained the dew from the fleece, filling a bowl with water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me if I speak once more. Please let me make only one more test with the fleece: let dryness be on the fleece alone, while on all the ground there will be dew." God did so that night: dryness was on the fleece alone, and on all the ground there was dew.

Jerubaal arose early, (he is Gideon,) and all the people with him encamped above Enharod, while the camp of Midian was to the north of him, at Gibeath-moreh in the valley. Adonai said to Gideon, "Too many are the people with you that I am putting Midian in their hands. Lest Israel be glorified, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' Now, call to

³ Lit. "dressed"

⁴ JPS says "rallied," Oxford and ABD say, "were called." Both translations attempt to be loyal to different sentiments of קָרָא, which literally translates to "he called out." Using "rallied" is loyal to the feeling of the text, showing that the Abiezrites (and later other tribes,) joined Gideon at the sound of the shofar, but it is lexically difficult, changing the subject of the verb from Gideon to the tribe, making the impetus their own instead of coming from God's power through Gideon. Using "were called" is closer to the verb's meaning, but it creates a grammatical difficulty by making the verb passive, and there should be nothing passive about this section of the text. "He summoned" retains the concept of calling while staying true to the verb's tense and person, leaving neither a grammatical nor a lexical issue.

the ears of the people, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, turn back, and fly⁵ from Mount Gilead.'" And 22000 of the people turned back and 10000 remained. Adonai said to Gideon, "There are still too many people. Take them down to the water and I will test them for you there. And when I tell you, 'This one goes with you,' that one will go with you, and all that I say to you, 'This one will not go with you,' that one will not go." And he took the people down to the water. Then Adonai said to Gideon, "All those who lap up the water with their tongues like the dog laps, set them away, and all those who get down on their knees to drink." Now those who lapped the water into their mouths by hand numbered three hundred, all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Then Adonai said to Gideon, "By the three hundred lappers I will deliver you and I will put Midian in your hands. Let every man go to his place." And the men took provisions in their hand, and the lappers and all the men of Israel to the man were each sent to his tent, and the three hundred men remained strong. The Midianite camp was below him, under the valley.

The Battle in the Valley of Jezreel: Judges 7:9-25

וַיְהִי בַלֵּילָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה קוּם רֵד בַּמַּחֲנֶה כִּי נִחְתִּיו בַּיָּדָךְ:
¹⁰ וְאִם-יֵרָא אַתָּה לָרֶדֶת רֵד אַתָּה וּפָרָה וְעָרֹךְ אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה:¹¹ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ מִה־יִּדְבְּרוּ
 וְאַחֲרֵי תַחֲזֹקְנָה יָדְךָ וַיִּרְדֹּת בַּמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרֹד הוּא וּפָרָה וְעָרוּ אֶל-קֶצֶה הַחֲמִשִּׁים
 אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּחֲנֶה:¹² וּמִדִּין וְעַמְלֹק וְכָל-בְּנֵי-קָדָם נָפְלִים בְּעֵמֶק פְּאָרָה לָרֶב
 וּלְגִמְלֵיהֶם אֵין מִסְפָּר כַּחֲזֹל שְׁעַל-שִׁפְתַּי הַיָּם לָרֶב:¹³ וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וְהִנֵּה-אִישׁ
 מִסְפָּר לָרַעְהוּ חֲלוּם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלוּם חֲלַמְתִּי וְהִנֵּה:⁶ צִלּוֹל לָחֶם
 שְׁעָרִים מִתְהַפֵּף בַּמַּחֲנֶה מִדִּין וַיָּבֹא עַד-הָאֵהָל וַיִּכְּהוּ וַיִּפֹּל וַיִּהְיֶפְכְּהוּ לַמַּעֲלָה
 וַנִּפֹּל הָאֵהָל:¹⁴ וַיַּעַן רַעְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין זֹאת בִּלְתִּי אִם-חֶרֶב גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן-יוֹאָשׁ

⁵ Meaning of Heb. uncertain, though JPS translates it as "as a bird flies," showing the connection to צָוֹר, meaning "bird."

⁶ צִלּוֹל

אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָתַן הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־מִדְיָן וְאֶת־כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה: ¹⁵ וַיְהִי כַשְׁמֹעַ
נִדְעוֹן אֶת־מִסְפָּר הַחֲלוּם וְאֶת־שִׁבְרוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר
קִוְמוּ כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה בְּיָדְכֶם אֶת־מַחֲנֵה מִדְיָן: ¹⁶ וַיַּחֲץ אֶת־שְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ
שְׁלֹשָׁה רֵאשִׁים וַיִּתֵּן שׁוּפְרוֹת בְּיַד־כָּל־ם וּכְדִים רִקִּים וּלְפָדִים בְּתוֹךְ הַכְּדִים:
¹⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִמְּנִי תִרְאוּ וְכֵן תַּעֲשׂוּ וְהָנָה אֲנֹכִי בָא בַקֶּצֶה הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהָיָה
כְּאִשְׁר־אֶעֱשֶׂה כֵן תַּעֲשׂוּן: ¹⁸ וַתִּקְעָתִי בְּשׁוּפָר אֲנֹכִי וְכָל־אִשֶּׁר אִתִּי וַתִּקְעֻתָם
בְּשׁוּפְרוֹת גַּם־אֲתָם סְבִיבוֹת כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וַאֲמַרְתֶּם לַיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן: ¹⁹ וַיָּבֹא
נִדְעוֹן וּמֵאֵה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ בַּקֶּצֶה הַמַּחֲנֶה רֹאשׁ הָאֲשָׁמֶרֶת הַחֵיכּוֹנָה אֲדָה הַקָּם
הַקִּימוֹ אֶת־הַשְּׁמֵרִים וַיִּתְּקֻעוּ בְּשׁוּפְרוֹת וּנְפוּץ הַכְּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדָם: ²⁰ וַיִּתְּקֻעוּ
שְׁלֹשֶׁת הָרֵאשִׁים בְּשׁוּפְרוֹת וַיִּשְׁבְּרוּ הַכְּדִים וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ בְיַד־שְׁמֹאוֹלִם בְּלִפְדִּים
וּבְיַד־יָמִינָם הַשׁוּפְרוֹת לַחֲקוֹעַ וַיִּקְרְאוּ חֶרֶב לַיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן: ²¹ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ אִישׁ
תַּחֲתָיו סְבִיב לַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרֶץ כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּדְעוּ ⁷ וַיָּנִסוּ: ²² וַיִּתְּקֻעוּ שְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת
הַשׁוּפְרוֹת וַיִּשֶׁם יְהוָה אֶת חֶרֶב אִישׁ בְּרֵעֵהוּ וּבְכָל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיָּנֶס הַמַּחֲנֶה
עַד־בֵּית הַשָּׁפָה צָרְרָתָה עַד שַׁפְת־אֲבֵל מַחוּלָה עַל־טַבַּח: ²³ וַיִּצְעַק אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִנִּפְתָּלִי וּמִן־אֲשֶׁר וּמִן־כָּל־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אַחֲרֵי מִדְיָן: ²⁴ וּמִלְאָכִים שָׁלַח נִדְעוֹן
בְּכָל־הָר אֲפָרִים לֵאמֹר רְדוּ לִקְרֹאת מִדְיָן וּלְכַדּוּ לָהֶם אֶת־הַמָּיִם עַד בֵּית
בָּרָה וְאֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּצְעַק כָּל־אִישׁ אֲפָרִים וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־הַמָּיִם עַד בֵּית בָּרָה
וְאֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן: ²⁵ וַיִּלְכְּדוּ שְׁנֵי־שָׂרֵי מִדְיָן אֶת־עֲרֹב־וְאֶת־זֹאב וַיַּהֲרֹגוּ אֶת־עֲרֹב
בְּצוּר־עֲרֹב וְאֶת־זֹאב הָרָגוּ בְּיַקְב־זֹאב וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶל־מִדְיָן וְרֹאש־עֲרֹב וְזֹאב
הֵבִיאוּ אֶל־נִדְעוֹן מַעֲבָר לַיַּרְדֵּן:

That night Adonai said to him, "Get up and go down against the camp, for I have given it
to your hands. And if you are afraid to go down, go down with Purah your boy to the
camp and listen to what they say, after that your hand will be strengthened to go down
against the camp." So he went down with his boy Purah to the end of the battalion that
was in the camp. Midian, Amalek, and all the Kedemites were spread over the valley like
locusts in multitude, and their camels were innumerable, like the sands on the seashore in
multitude. Gideon came and behold! One man was telling a dream to another. "Lo, I
dreamed a dream, and behold, a loaf of barley bread was turning through the Midianite
camp. It came to a tent and struck it, and it fell, and it turned upside down, and the tent

⁷ וַיָּנִסוּ

fell." The other answered, saying, "That can only mean the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has put Midian and the entire camp into his hands." When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed low. He returned to the Israelite camp and said, "Get up! Adonai has placed the Midianite camp into your hands!" He divided the three hundred men into three companies and he gave every man a shofar and an empty jar, with a torch in each jar. He said to them, "Watch me, and do the same. When I come to the end of the camp, what I do, so should you do. I will blow my shofar, and all of you with me will blow your shofarot too, all around the camp, and you will say, 'For Adonai and for Gideon!'" Gideon came, and the hundred men with him, to the end of the camp, at the beginning of the middle watch, just as the guards were getting up. They sounded their shofarot and smashed the jars in their hands, and the three companies blew their shofarot and broke their jars. Holding the torches in their left hands and the horns for blowing in their right hands, they called out, "A sword for Adonai and for Gideon!" They stood each man in his position, surrounding the camp, the entire camp ran and shouted and fled. And three hundred shofarot were sounded, and Adonai turned every man's sword against his neighbor, and in the entire camp, and the camp fled to Beth-shittah, Zererah to the end of Abel-meholah near Tabbath. And the Israelites were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and from all of Manasseh and they pursued Midian. Gideon sent messengers all through the mountains of Ephraim saying, "Go down to call out the Midianites and seize them at the water from Beth-barah to the Jordan." All the men of Ephraim summoned and seized them at the water from Beth-barah to the Jordan. They captured Midian's two generals, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the

Rock of Oreb and they killed Zeeb at the Winepress of Zeeb. They chased Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

Gideon vs. Zebah and Zalmuna: Judges 8:1-21

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם מִה־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ לְבַלְלֵי קְרָאוֹת לָנוּ כִּי הִלַּכְתָּ לְהִלָּחֵם בְּמִדְיָן וַיִּרְיִבוּן אֹתוֹ בְּחֻזְקָה: ² וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִה־עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּךְ כִּי כִּם הָלֹא שׁוֹב עַלְלוֹת אֶפְרַיִם מִבְּצִיר אֲבִיעֶיכֶם: ³ בַּיּוֹדְכֶם נָתַן אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שָׁרִי מִדְיָן אֶת־עֹרֵב וְאֶת־זָבָב וּמִה־יִּכְלָתִי עָשׂוֹת כִּכֶּם אִי רָפָחָה רִיחָם מִעֲלֵי בִדְבָרִי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: ⁴ וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן הַיִּהוּדָה עִבְרָה וְשָׁלַשׁ־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ עֵיפִים וְרֹדְפִים: ⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאִשִּׁי סָבוֹת הַנִּינָא פְּכוֹת לָחֶם לָעֵם אֲשֶׁר בְּגִדְלִי כִּי־עֵיפִים הֵם וְאֲנֹכִי רֹדֵף אַחֲרֵי זָבָב וְצִלְמֹנֶעַ מֶלֶכִּי מִדְיָן: ⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂרִי סָבוֹת הַכֹּף זָבָב וְצִלְמֹנֶעַ עִמָּךְ בִּידְךָ בִּידְךָ כִּי־נָתַן לְצַבָּאָךְ לָחֶם: ⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן לָבֹן בַּתֹּת יִהוּהוּ אֶת־זָבָב וְאֶת־צִלְמֹנֶעַ בְּיָדִי וְרִשׁוֹתֵי אֶת־בְּשָׂרְכֶם אֶת־קִוְצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַפְּרִקָּנִים: ⁸ וַיַּעַל מִשָּׁם פְּנוּאֵל וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם כִּי־אֵתָּה וַיַּעֲנוּ אוֹתוֹ אִשִּׁי פְּנוּאֵל כֹּאֲשֶׁר עָנוּ אִשִּׁי סָבוֹת: ⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם־לְאִשִּׁי פְּנוּאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּשׁוֹבִכִי בְּשָׁלוֹם אֲחִי אֶת־הַפְּרִקָּנִל הַזֶּה: ¹⁰ וְזָבָב וְצִלְמֹנֶעַ בְּקָרְקָר וּמִחֲנִיתָם עִמָּם כִּי־מִשָּׂחַ עָשָׂר אֵלָף כֹּל הַנוֹחָרִים מִכָּל מַחֲנֶה בְּנֵי־קָדָם וְהַנִּפְלָיִם מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֵלָף אִישׁ שָׁלָף הָרֹב: ¹¹ וַיַּעַל גִּדְעוֹן וְדָוִד הַגִּישְׁכֹּנִי כֹאֲהֻלִּים מִקָּדָם לָנֹכַח וַיִּנְבְּהָה וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת־הַפְּתִיחָה וְהַפְּתִיחָה הִיא בְּשָׂחַ: ¹² וַיִּנְסוּ זָבָב וְצִלְמֹנֶעַ וַיִּרְדּוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־שְׁנֵי מֶלֶכִּי מִדְיָן אֶת־זָבָב וְאֶת־צִלְמֹנֶעַ וְכָל־הַפְּתִיחָה הַחֲרִיד: ¹³ וַיִּשָּׁב גִּדְעוֹן בְּרִי־וִישׁ מִן־הַפְּרִקָּמָה מִלְּמַעַל הַחֹרֶם: ¹⁴ וַיִּלְכְּדוּ־נָעַר מֵאִשִּׁי סָבוֹת וַיִּשְׁאָלֶהוּ וַיַּכְתֵּב אֵלָיו אֶת־שָׁרִי סָבוֹת וְאֶת־זִקְנֵיהָ שְׁבַע־עִים וּשְׁבַע־עֶשְׂרִי: ¹⁵ וַיָּבֹא אֶל־אִשִּׁי סָבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה זָבָב וְצִלְמֹנֶעַ אֲשֶׁר חָרַפְתֶּם אוֹתִי לָאִמֹר הַכֹּף זָבָב וְצִלְמֹנֶעַ עִמָּךְ בִּידְךָ כִּי נָתַן לְאִשִּׁיךְ וַיַּעֲפִים לָחֶם: ¹⁶ וַיִּשָּׁח אֶת־זִקְנֵי הָעִיר וְאֶת־קִוְצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַפְּרִקָּנִים וַיִּדַּע בָּהֶם אֵת אִשִּׁי סָבוֹת: ¹⁷ וְאֶת־מַגִּדֹל פְּנוּאֵל נָתַן וַיַּהֲרֹג אֶת־אִשִּׁי הָעִיר: ¹⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־זָבָב וְאֶל־צִלְמֹנֶעַ אִיפֹה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָרַגְתֶּם בְּחֻבּוֹר וַיֹּאמְרוּ כְּמוֹךְ כְּמוֹתֶם אַחֵד כְּחֹאֵר בְּנֵי הַמִּלְכָּד: ¹⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֹתִי בְּנֵי־אִמִּי הֵם חֲרִי־יְהוּהוּ לֹן הַחִיָּתִים אוֹתָם לֹא הִרְגִנְתִּי אַחֲכֶם: ²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר לֵיתָר בְּכוֹרִי קֹדֶם הָיָה אוֹתָם וְלֹא־שָׁלָף הָעָנָר חָרַבּוּ כִּי יָרָא כִּי עֹדְנֵי נָעַר: ²¹ וַיֹּאמֶר זָבָב וְצִלְמֹנֶעַ קֹדֶם אִתָּה וּפְנַע־בָּנוּ כִּי כֹאִישׁ נִבְרָחַתוּ וַיִּקָּם גִּדְעוֹן וַיַּהֲרֹג אֶת־זָבָב וְאֶת־צִלְמֹנֶעַ וַיִּשָּׁח אֶת־הַיְּהוּדָנִים אֲשֶׁר בָּצְאוּ־אֹתוֹ וּמִקְלֵיהֶם:

And the men of Ephraim said to him, "Why did you do that to us, not calling us when you went to fight Midian?" And they contended with him strongly. And he said to them, "Now, what have I done like you? Aren't Ephraim's gleanings better than Abiezer's vintage! In your hand God has placed the Midianite generals Oreb and Zeeb, and what was I able to do like you?" So their spirit relaxed from him in his speaking that speech. Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed it. The three hundred men with him were wearily pursuing⁸. He said to the people of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to the men who are at my feet, for they are famished, and I am chasing after Zebah and Zalmunah, the kings of Midian." But the officials of Succoth said, "Are Zebah and Zalmunah now in the palm of your hands, that we should give bread to your army?" Gideon said, "Thus, when Adonai gives Zebah and Zalmunah to my hands, I'll thresh your flesh with desert thorns and briers!" From there he went up to Penuel and spoke to them the same, but the people of Penuel answered him the same as the people of Succoth answered. He also spoke to the people of Penuel saying, "Upon my *peaceful*⁹ return, I'll tear down this tower!" Zebah and Zalmunah were at Karkor with their encampment of about 15,000, all that remained of the entire encampment of the Kedemites, 120,000 men having fallen on drawn swords. Gideon went up the road of the tent dwellers, from the east to Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the camp, and the camp was secure. Zebah and Zalmunah fled, and he chased after them, captured Zebah and Zalmunah, the two kings of

⁸ Oxford says, "exhausted and famished," and JPS says, "famished, but still in pursuit." Anchor says, "wearily giving chase," which recognizes that the pair of verbs is a hendiadys.

⁹ Oxford and Anchor say "victorious," and JPS says, "safe." שלום means peace or wholeness, and does not easily translate into either of those terms, therefore the lexical issue is solved with italics, both for sarcasm and to imply that he was using the word peace to mean he would have come in peace had they not refused him, and instead Gideon and his troops will be the only ones at peace upon his return.

Midian, and terrified the whole army. Gideon son of Joash returned from the battle at the Ascent of Heres, he captured a boy from among the people of Succoth and questioned him. He wrote for him the officials and elders of Succoth, seventy-seven men. And he came to the people of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunah, about whom you taunted me, saying, Are Zebah and Zalmunah now in the palm of your hands, that we should give your weary men bread?" And he took the elders of the city and desert thorns and briers, he made the people of Succoth aware with them. And he tore down its tower Penuel and killed the townspeople. He said to Zebah and Zalmunah, "How were the men you killed at Tabor?" They said, "like you is like them as one, in the form of sons of a king." He said, My brothers, the sons of my mother. As Adonai lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you." And he said to Jether his first-born, "Get up! Kill them!" And the boy did not draw his sword, because he was afraid, because he was still a boy. Then Zebah and Zalmunah said, "You get up and strike at us, because you are like a man of might." Gideon got up and killed Zebah and Zalmunah, and he took the crescents that were on the necks of their camels.

Gideon's Downfall: Judges 8:22-35

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-גִּדְעוֹן מִשְׁלַבְנוּ גַם-אֶתָּה גַם-בְּנֶךְךָ גַם בְּנֵי-בְנֶךְךָ כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִיַּד מִדְיָן: ²³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים גִּדְעוֹן לֹא-אֶמְשָׁל אֲנִי בָכֶם וְלֹא-יִמְשָׁל בְּנֵי בָכֶם יְהוָה יִמְשָׁל בָּכֶם: ²⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים גִּדְעוֹן אֲשַׁאֲלָה מִכֶּם שְׂאֵלָה וְחֲנוּ-לִי אִישׁ נָזִם שְׁלָלוּ כִּי-נִזְמִי זָהָב לָהֶם כִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֵלִים הֵם: ²⁵ וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָתַן נָתַן וַיִּפְרְשׁוּ אֶת-הַשְּׂמֵלָה וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ שָׁמָּה אִישׁ נָזִם שְׁלָלוּ: ²⁶ וַיְהִי מִשְׁקַל נִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר שָׂאָל אֵלָּה וּשְׁבַע-מֵאוֹת זָהָב לְבָד מִן-הַשְּׁהָרָנִים וְהַנְּטָפוֹת וּבְגָדֵי הָאֲרָנָן שַׁעַל מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן וּלְבָד מִן-הָעֵנְקוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּצֹאֲרֵי גְמְלֵיהֶם: ²⁷ וַיַּעַשׂ אוֹתוֹ גִּדְעוֹן לְאִפּוֹד וַיַּצַּג אוֹתוֹ בְּעִירוֹ בַּעֲפָרָה וַיִּזְנוּ כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרָיו שֵׁם וַיְהִי לְגִדְעוֹן וּלְבֵיתוֹ לְמוֹקֵשׁ: ²⁸ וַיִּכְנַע מִדְיָן לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָסְפוּ לָשׂאת רֹאשׁם

וַתִּשְׁקַט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּיַמֵּי גִדְעוֹן: ²⁹ וַיֵּלֶךְ יִרְבֶּעֶל בֶּן־יֹאָשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּבֵיתוֹ: ³⁰ וּלְגִדְעוֹן הָיוּ שִׁבְעִים בָּנִים יִצְאִי יָרְכוּ כִּי־נָשִׁים רַבּוֹת הָיוּ לוֹ: ³¹ וַפִּילָגְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּשָׁכָם יִלְדָה־לוֹ גַּם־הָיָא בֶּן וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אֲבִימֶלֶךְ: ³² וַיָּמָח גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן־יֹאָשׁ בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּקִבְרֵי יֹאָשׁ אָבִיו בְּעַפְרָה אָבִי הָעֶזְרָי: ³³ וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר מָת גִּדְעוֹן וַיָּשׁוּבוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּזְנוּ אַחֲרֵי הַבַּעֲלִים וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ לָהֶם בַּעַל בְּרִית לֵאלֹהִים: ³⁴ וְלֹא זָכְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הַמַּצִּיל אוֹתָם מִיַּד כָּל־אֲבִיהֶם מִסְבִּיב: ³⁵ וְלֹא־עָשׂוּ חֶסֶד עִם־בֵּית יִרְבֶּעֶל גִּדְעוֹן כְּכֹל־הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

The Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you, your son, and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian." Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you. Neither I nor my son will rule over you Adonai will rule over you." And Gideon said to them, "I will ask you a question. Let each man give me the earring of his booty." They had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites. They said, "We will certainly give." And they spread out the mantle, and each man threw onto it the earring of his booty. The weight of the golden earrings that he had asked for was 1700 in gold separate from the crescents and the pendants and the purple garments that were on the kings of Midian and separate from the collars on the necks of their camels. Gideon made an ephod and set it up in his own town of Ophrah. There all Israel acted as harlots after it, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household. Thus Midian was humbled before the Israelites and did not lift its head again, and the land was quiet for forty years in Gideon's days. Jerubbaal son of Joash returned to his house. Gideon had seventy sons come out of his loins, for he had many wives. His concubine in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech. Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father at Ophrah of the Abiezrites. When Gideon died, the Israelites returned to harlotry after the Baalim, and they set up Baal-berith as a god. The Israelites did not remember Adonai their God, who saved them from all the enemies

around them. And they did not do kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) like all the good that he did for Israel.

Samson's Birth: Judges 13:24-25

וַתֵּלֶד הָאִשָּׁה בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שָׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּגְדַּל הַנַּעַר וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה: ²⁵ וַתַּחַל רוּחַ יְהוָה לִפְעָמוֹ בְּמַחֲנֵה־דָן בֵּין צֹרְעָה וּבֵין אֶשְׁתָּאֵל:

The woman bore a son, and she named him Samson. The boy grew up, and

Adonai blessed him. The spirit of Adonai began to affect¹⁰ him in the encampment of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.¹¹

Samson in Timnah: Judges 14

וַיֵּרֶד שָׁמְשׁוֹן תְּמַנָּה וַיֵּרָא אִשָּׁה בְּתַמְנָתָה מִבְּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים: ² וַיַּעַל וַיֵּגֶד לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אִשָּׁה רָאִיתִי בְּתַמְנָתָה מִבְּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְעַתָּה קָחוּ-אוֹתָהּ לִי לְאִשָּׁה: ³ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ הֲאִין בְּבָנוֹת אַחִיד וּבְכָל־עַמִּי אִשָּׁה כִּי־אָתָּה הוֹלֵךְ לִקְחָת אִשָּׁה מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים הָעֶרְלִים וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל־אָבִיו אוֹתָהּ קָח־לִי כִּי־הִיא יִשְׂרָה בְּעֵינַי: ⁴ וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי מִיְּהוָה הִיא כִּי־תֵאֵנָה הוּא מִבְּקֵשׁ מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים וּבָעֵת הַהִיא פְּלִשְׁתִּים מְשָׁלִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁵ וַיֵּרֶד שָׁמְשׁוֹן וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ תְּמַנָּה וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־כָּרְמִי תְּמַנָּה וְהִנֵּה כַּפִּיר אֲרִיּוֹת שָׂאֵג לִקְרָאתוֹ: ⁶ וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁסַעְהוּ כְּשֶׁסַּע הַגָּדִי וּמֵאֻמָּה אֵין בִּידּוֹ וְלֹא הִגִּיד לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: ⁷ וַיֵּרֶד וַיְדַבֵּר לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּיטֵר בְּעֵינֵי שָׁמְשׁוֹן: ⁸ וַיֵּשֶׁב מִיָּמִים לִקְחָתָהּ וַיִּסֵּר לְרֹאוֹת אֵת מַפְלַת הָאֲרִיָּה וְהִנֵּה עֹדֶת דְּבוּרִים בְּגוֹיֵת הָאֲרִיָּה וּדְבָשׁ: ⁹ וַיֵּרְדּוּ אֶל־כַּפֵּיו וַיִּלֶּךְ הַלּוֹךְ וְאָכַל וַיִּלֶּךְ אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אִמּוֹ וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וְלֹא־הִגִּיד לָהֶם כִּי מִגּוֹיֵת הָאֲרִיָּה רָדָה הַדְּבָשׁ: ¹⁰ וַיֵּרֶד אָבִיהוּ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיַּעַשׂ שָׁם שָׁמְשׁוֹן מִשְׁתָּה כִּי כֵן יַעֲשׂוּ הַבְּחוּרִים: ¹¹ וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹתָם אוֹתוֹ וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁלֹשִׁים מִרְעִים וַיְהִיו אוֹתוֹ: ¹² וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שָׁמְשׁוֹן אַחֲזִידָה נָא לָכֶם חִידָה אִם־הִגִּיד תִּגִּידוּ אוֹתָהּ לִי שְׁבַעַת יָמֵי הַמִּשְׁתָּה וּמִצָּאתָם וְנָתַתִּי

¹⁰ See also Judg 16:19.

¹¹ Normally an episode would not contain such a small amount of text. Technically, this is the conclusion of the previous story of Samson's mother and father, as his birth is the legitimacy of the prophecy of the angel in their story. Nevertheless, as often happens in episodic stories, the end of one chapter lead to the beginning of another.

לָכֶם שְׁלֹשִׁים סְדִינִים וּשְׁלֹשִׁים חֲלָפֹת בְּגָדִים: ¹³ וְאַם־לֹא חוּכְלוּ לְהַגִּיד לִי וְנִתְּתָם
 אֲתָם לִי שְׁלֹשִׁים סְדִינִים וּשְׁלֹשִׁים חֲלִיפֹת בְּגָדִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חוּדָה חִידָךְ
 וְנִשְׁמָעָנָה: ¹⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם

מִהָאֵכֶל יֵצֵא מֵאֵכֶל וּמִעֵז יֵצֵא מִחֹק

וְלֹא יָכֻלוּ לְהַגִּיד הַחִידָה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים: ¹⁵ וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאִשְׁת־
 שֹׁמְשׁוֹן פָּתִי אֶת־אִישְׁךָ וַיַּגִּד־לָנוּ אֶת־הַחִידָה פֶּן־נִשְׂרָף אוֹתְךָ וְאֶת־בֵּית אָבִיךָ
 בְּאֵשׁ הַלִּירֶשֶׁנוּ קִרְאָתָם לָנוּ הֵלֵא: ¹⁶ וַתִּבְךְ אִשְׁת שֹׁמְשׁוֹן עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר רַק־
 שָׂנֵאתָנִי וְלֹא אֶהְבֵּתָנִי הַחִידָה חֲדָתָ לְבָנִי עָמִי וְלִי לֹא הִנְדַּתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הִנֵּה
 לְאָבִי וּלְאִמִּי לֹא הִנְדַּתִּי וְלָךְ אֲנִיד: ¹⁷ וַתִּבְךְ עָלָיו שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה
 לָהֶם הַמִּשְׁתָּה וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי וַיַּגִּד־לָהּ כִּי הִצִּיקָתָהּ וַתַּגִּד הַחִידָה לְבָנִי
 עָמָה: ¹⁸ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי בְּטָרֶם יָבֹא הַחֲרָסָה
 מִהַ־מִּחֹק מִדְּבַשׁ וּמָה עֹז מֵאִרִּי

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם

לֹא־חֲרַשְׁתֶּם בְּעִגְלָתִי לֹא מִצָּאתֶם חִידָתִי:

¹⁹ וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיֵּרֶד אֲשָׁקְלוֹן וַיֵּךְ מֵהֶם שְׁלֹשִׁים אִישׁ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־
 חֲלִיצוֹתָם וַיִּתֵּן הַחֲלִיפֹת לְמַגִּירֵי הַחִידָה וַיַּחַר אָפוֹ וַיַּעַל בֵּית אָבִיהֶו: ²⁰ וַתְּהִי
 אִשְׁת שֹׁמְשׁוֹן לְמִרְעָהוּ אֲשֶׁר רָעָה לוֹ:

Samson went down to Timnah, and he saw a woman in Timnah from the Philistine women. He went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I saw a woman in Timnah from the Philistine women, now get her for me as a wife." His father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman in the daughters of your brethren¹² and in all our people, that you must go and take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get me that one, for she is pleasing to my eyes." His father and mother did not know that it was from Adonai, because it was an opportunity He was seeking against the Philistines, and at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. Samson and his father and mother went down to Timnah. When they came to the vineyards of Timnah, a young lion roared, calling at him. The spirit of Adonai possessed him, and he tore him in

¹² JPS says, "kinsmen," but the KJV translation used here solves the lexical difficulty while retaining the likely meaning of the text itself, as Samson was an only child.

two like the cleaving of a kid with absolutely nothing in his hands, and he did not tell his father and mother what he had done. And he went down and spoke to the woman, and she was pleasing to Samson's eyes. He returned after days to marry her, he turned aside to see the remains of the lion, and behold, a swarm of bees was in the corpse, and honey. He scraped it into his palms and he walked on and ate. He walked to his father and mother, he gave to them and they ate it, and he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of a lion's corpse. His father came down to the woman, and Samson made a feast there, for that was what young men did. When they saw him, they acquired thirty companions to be with him. Samson said to them, "Let me propound a riddle to you. If you surely expound it for me in the seven days of the feast and find it out, I will give you thirty linens and thirty changes of clothing, and if you are not able to tell me, you will give me thirty linens and thirty changes of clothing."¹³ And they said to him, "Propound your riddle and we will hear it." And he said to them:

"Out of the eater came something to eat,

Out of the strong came something sweet."¹⁴

They were not able to propound the riddle for three days. On the seventh day, they said to Samson's wife, "Persuade your husband to tell us the riddle, lest we burn down you and your father's house with fire. To impoverish us you called us here, no?" And Samson's wife cried on him and said, "You just hate me, you don't love me. You

¹³ This to be a double repetition, not only because the stakes of the bet are repeated, but also because thirty linen outfits is the same thing as thirty changes of clothing, which is explained by a second definition of בְּגָדִים offered by ABD: "בְּגָדִים n.[m.] treachery," (p. 93). This shows that the repetition could be a foreshadowing of the treachery about to be played upon Samson by his wife and his wedding companions.

¹⁴ JPS

propounded a riddle to my countrymen, and you did not conspire with me." He said, "Behold, I did not tell my father and mother, and you I will tell?" She cried on him for the seven days that were left of the feast, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed upon him. And she expounded the riddle to her countrymen. And the townsmen said to him, on the seventh day before sunset, "What is sweeter than honey, And what is stronger than a lion?" He said, "If only you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have guessed my riddle!" The spirit of Adonai possessed him. He went down to Ashkelon and smote thirty of its men, and he stripped them and gave the changes to those who had conspired about the riddle. And his anger was kindled and he went up to his father's house. Samson's wife then became one of his wedding companion's.

Samson vs. the Philistines: Judges 15

וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים בֵּימִי קִצִּיר־חֹטִים וַיִּפְקֹד שָׁמְשׁוֹן אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ בְּגִדֵי עִזִּים וַיֹּאמֶר
אֲבֹאָה אֶל־אִשְׁתִּי הַחֲדָרָה וְלֹא־נָתַנּוּ אֲבִיהָ לְבֹא: ² וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִיהָ אָמֵר אֲמַרְתִּי
כִּי־שָׂנֵא שְׂנֵאתָהּ וְאֶתְּנָהּ לְמַרְעָךְ הֲלֹא אֶחָתָהּ הִקְטַנְתָּ טוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה תְּהִי־נָא לָךְ
תַּחְתֶּיהָ: ³ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שָׁמְשׁוֹן נִקִּיתִי הַפַּעַם מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי־עָשָׂה אֲנִי עִמָּם רָעָה:
⁴ וַיֵּלֶךְ שָׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּלְכֹּד שְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת שׁוּעָלִים וַיִּקַּח לְפָדִים וַיִּפֶּן זָנֹב אֶל־זָנֹב וַיֵּשֶׁם
לְפִיד אֶחָד בֵּין־שְׁנֵי הַזָּנָבוֹת בַּתּוֹךְ: ⁵ וַיִּבְעֶר־אֵשׁ בַּלְּפִידִים וַיִּשְׁלַח בִּקְמוֹת
פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּבְעֶר מִנְדִּישׁ וְעַד־קָמָה וְעַד־כָּרֶם זֵית: ⁶ וַיֹּאמְרוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים מִי עָשָׂה
זֹאת וַיֹּאמְרוּ שָׁמְשׁוֹן חָתָן הַתַּמְנִי כִי לָקַח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְמַרְעָהּ וַיַּעֲלוּ
פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּשְׂרְפוּ אוֹתָהּ וְאֶת־אֲבִיהָ בָּאֵשׁ: ⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שָׁמְשׁוֹן אִם־תַּעֲשׂוּן כְּזֹאת
כִּי אִם־נִקְמָתִי בָכֶם וְאַחֵר אֶחָדֶל: ⁸ וַיֵּךְ אוֹתָם שׁוֹק עַל־יָרֵךְ מִכָּה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּרְדּוּ
וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּסַעֲיָף סַלַּע עֵיטָם: ⁹ וַיַּעֲלוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיַּחֲנוּ בִיהוּדָה וַיִּנָּשְׂאוּ בְּלַחִי:
¹⁰ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה לָמָּה עָלִיתָם עָלֵינוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאַסּוּר אֶת־שָׁמְשׁוֹן עָלֵינוּ
לַעֲשׂוֹת לּוֹ כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָנוּ: ¹¹ וַיִּרְדּוּ שְׁלֹשָׁת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ מִיהוּדָה אֶל־סַעֲיָף
סַלַּע עֵיטָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְשָׁמְשׁוֹן הֲלֹא יָדַעְתָּ כִּי־מַשְׁלִים בָּנוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמָה־זֹּאת
עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי כֵן עָשִׂיתִי לָהֶם: ¹² וַיֹּאמְרוּ לּוֹ לְאַסְרֵךְ
יָרְדְּנוּ לְתַתֶּךָ בִּיד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שָׁמְשׁוֹן הֲשָׁבְעוּ לִי פֶן־תִּפְגְּעוּן בִּי אֲתָם:
¹³ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לּוֹ לֹא כִי־אָסַר נֶאֱסַרְךָ וְנִתְּנָךְ בְּיָדָם וְהָמַת לֹא נִמְיָתְךָ

וַיֵּאָסְרוּהוּ בַשָּׁנִים עֲבָתִים חֲדָשִׁים וַיַּעֲלוּהוּ מִן־הַסֶּלַע: ¹⁴ הוּא־בָּא עַד־לְחִי
 וּפְלִשְׁתִּים הִרְיֵעוּ לְקִרְאָתוֹ וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַתַּהֲיִינָה הָעֲבָתִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־
 זִרְעוֹתָיו כְּפִשְׁתִּים אֲשֶׁר בָּעָרוּ בָּאֵשׁ וַיִּמְסוּ אֲסוּרָיו מֵעַל יָדָיו: ¹⁵ וַיִּמָּצָא לְחִי־
 חֲמוֹר טָרִיָּה וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיִּדְּבָהּ אֵלָף אִישׁ: ¹⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמֹשׁוֹן
 בְּלָחִי הַחֲמוֹר הַחֲמוֹר חֲמֹרִתִּים
 בְּלָחִי הַחֲמוֹר הַפִּיתִי אֵלָף אִישׁ:
¹⁷ וַיְהִי כִכְלָתוֹ לְדָבָר וַיִּשְׁלַח הַלָּחִי מִיָּדוֹ וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא רָמַת לְחִי:
¹⁸ וַיִּצְמָא מְאֹד וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲתָה נָתַתָּ בְּיַד־עֲבָדְךָ אֶת־הַתְּשׁוּעָה
 הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְעַתָּה אָמוּת בְּצָמָא וְנִפְלִיתִי בְּיַד הָעַרְלִים: ¹⁹ וַיִּבְקַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־
 הַמִּכְתָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר־בְּלָחִי וַיֵּצְאוּ מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם וַיִּשָּׂף וַתִּשָּׁב רֹוחוֹ וַיְחִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ
 עֵין הַקּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּלָחִי עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: ²⁰ וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּימֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים
 עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה:

Days later, in the days of the wheat harvest, Samson visited his wife, with she-goat kids.
 He said, "Let me come into my wife's chamber." And her father would not let him come.
 Her father said, "I certainly said that you surely hated her, so I gave her to your wedding
 companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, let her be yours instead."
 Samson said to them, "I am free this time from the Philistines, for I am doing evil to
 them."¹⁵ Samson went and caught three hundred foxes. He took torches and turned them
 tail to tail, and he placed one torch between every two tails. He lit fire to the torches and
 sent them to the standing grain of the Philistines, consuming from stacks to standing
 grain, to the olive vineyards. The Philistines said, "Who did this?" And they said, "It was
 Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because he took Samson's wife and gave her to his
 wedding companion." And the Philistines went up and burned her and her father with
 fire. Samson said to them, "If you act like this, I will have revenge on you and after I will
 rest." He smote them leg to thigh with great blows, and he went down and stayed in the
 cleft of the rock of Etam. The Philistines went up, made camp in Judah and spread out in

¹⁵ Meaning, "Because of what you did to me, I am going to do all the more so to you."

Lehi. The men of Judah said, "Why did you rise up against us?" They answered, "To bind Samson to us to do to him as he did to us." And three thousand men from Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and they said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule us? What is this you have done to us?" He said, "As they did to me, so I did to them." They told him "We came down to bind you to give you to the hand of the Philistines." Samson said to them, "But swear to me, lest you encounter me." They said to him, "No, we will surely bind you and give you to their hand, and we will surely not slay you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. He came to Lehi, the Philistines raised a shout to call to him. And the spirit of Adonai possessed him, and the ropes on his arms became like flax that was consumed by fire, and his bonds melted from his hands. He found a fresh jaw of an ass and he sent his hand to it and took it, and with it he smote a thousand men. And Samson said:

"With the jaw of an ass, an ass for asses!

With the jaw of an ass I smote a thousand men."

As he finished his speech, he threw the jaw from his hand and he called that place Ramath-lehi. He was very thirsty and he called to Adonai saying, "You gave this great salvation in the hand of your servant, and now I will die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised!" And God split open the hollow was in the jaw, and the water came out of it and he drank, and his strength returned, and he lived. That is why it is called "En-hakkore of Lehi," to this day. He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years.

Samson vs. the Gazites: Judges 16:1-3

וַיִּלֶךְ שָׁמֶשׁוֹן עִזָּתָה וַיִּרְאֶשֶׁם אִשָּׁה זֹנָה וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ: ²לְעִזָּתִּים לֵאמֹר בָּא

שמשון הנה ויסבו ויאבדו־לו כל־הלילה בשער העיר ויתחרשו כל־הלילה
לאמר עד־אור הבקר והרגנהו: ³ וישכב שמשון עד־חצי הלילה ויקם בחצי
הלילה ויאחז בדלתות שער־העיר ובשתי המזוזות ויסעם עם־הבריה וישם
על־כתפיו ויעלם אל־ראש ההר אשר על־פני חברון:

Samson went to Gaza, and he saw a whore there and came to her. To the Gazites it was
said that Samson had come there, so they surrounded and contended all night in the town
gate the whole night and they devised all night saying, "At the light of day, we will kill
him." And Samson lay down until midnight. He got up at midnight, grasped the doors of
the town gate and the two gateposts, and pulled them out with the bar. He placed them on
his shoulders and brought them up to the top of the hill near Hebron.

Samson and Delilah: Judges 16:4-22

⁴ ויהי אחרי־כן ויאהב אשה בנחל שרק ושמה דלילה: ⁵ ויעלו אליה סרני
פלשתים ויאמרו לה פתי אותו וראי במה כחו ובמה נוכל לו ואסרנהו
לענתו ואנחנו נתן־לך איש אֶלֶף ומאה כסף: ⁶ ותאמר דלילה אל־שמשון
הגידה־נא לי במה כחך גדול ובמה תאסר לענותך: ⁷ ויאמר אליה שמשון
אם־יאסרני בשבעה יתרים לחים אשר לא־חרבו וחליתי והייתי כאחד
האדם: ⁸ ויעלו־לה סרני פלשתים שבעה יתרים לחים אשר לא־חרבו
ותאסרהו בהם: ⁹ והארב ישב לה בחדר ותאמר אליו פלשתים עליך שמשון
וינתק את־היתרים כאשר ינתק פתיל־הנערת בהריחו אש ולא נודע כחו:
¹⁰ ותאמר דלילה אל־שמשון הנה התלת בי ותדבר אלי כזבים עתה הגידה־
נא לי במה תאסר: ¹¹ ויאמר אליה אם־אסור ואסרוני בעבתיים חדשים אשר
לא־נעשה בהם מלאכה וחליתי והייתי כאחד האדם: ¹² ותקח דלילה עבתיים
חדשים ותאסרהו בהם ותאמר אליו פלשתים עליך שמשון והארב ישב
בחדר וינתקם מעל זרעתיו כחוט: ¹³ ותאמר דלילה אל־שמשון עד־הנה התלת
בי ותדבר אלי כזבים הגידה לי במה תאסר ויאמר אליה אם־תארגני את־
שבע מחלפות ראשי עם־המסכת: ¹⁴ ותתקע ביתר ותאמר אליו פלשתים עליך
שמשון וייקץ משנתו ויסע את־היתר הארג ואת־המסכת: ¹⁵ ותאמר אליו איך
תאמר אֶתְבְּתִיד ולבד אין אתי זה שלש פעמים התלת בי ולא־הנדרת לי
במה כחך גדול: ¹⁶ ויהי כִּי־הציקה לו בדבריה כל־הימים ותאלצהו ותקצר

נִפְשׁוּ לְמוֹת: ¹⁷ וַיִּגְדֹּלָהּ אֶת־כָּל־לְבוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מוֹדָה לֹא־עָלָה עַל־רֹאשִׁי כִּי־
 נֹזֵר אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי אִם־גָּלַחְתִּי וְסָר מִמֶּנִּי כְחִי וְחִלְתִּי וְהִיִּיתִי כָכָל־
 הָאָדָם: ¹⁸ וַתֵּרָא דְלִילָה כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהּ אֶת־כָּל־לְבוּ וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא לְסָרְנִי
 פְּלִשְׁתִּים לֵאמֹר עָלוּ הַפֶּעַם כִּי־הִגִּיד ¹⁶ לָהּ אֶת־כָּל־לְבוּ וְעָלוּ אֵלֶיהָ סָרְנִי
 פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיַּעֲלוּ הַפֶּסֶף בְּיָדָם: ¹⁹ וַתִּשְׁנֶנָּהוּ עַל־בִּרְפִּיהָ וַתִּקְרָא לְאִישׁ וַתְּנַלַּח אֶת־
 שֶׁבַע מַחְלָפוֹת רֹאשׁוֹ וַתְּחַל לְעַנּוֹתוֹ וַיִּסָּר כַּחוֹ מֵעָלָיו: ²⁰ וַתֹּאמֶר פְּלִשְׁתִּים עָלֶיךָ
 שִׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּקֶץ מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵצָא כָּפֹעַם בְּפֹעַם וְאֲנֶעֱר וְהוּא לֹא יָדַע כִּי יְהוָה
 סָר מֵעָלָיו: ²¹ וַיֵּאחֲזוּהוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּנְקְרוּ אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיּוֹרִידוּ אוֹתוֹ וַיֵּאֱסְרוּהוּ
 בְּנַחֲשֹׁתַיִם וַיְהִי טוֹחֵן בְּבֵית ¹⁷ הָאֲסִירִים: ²² וַיַּחֲל שְׁעַר־רֹאשׁוֹ
 לְצִמָּח כַּאֲשֶׁר גָּלַח:

After that, he loved a woman in the Wadi Sorek, named Delilah. The lords of the Philistines went up to her and said to her, "Persuade him and see wherein is his great power, and wherein we can prevail over him, bind him, and afflicted him, and we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." And Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me, wherein is your great power, and wherein can you be bound and afflicted?" Samson said to her, "If I were bound with seven moist remains that had not been dried, I would weaken and I will be like one man." And the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven moist remains that had not been dried, and she bound him with them, and they stayed in wait in her room. She said to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" And he pulled away the remains, as a strand of tow tears at the scent of fire, and his power was not known. Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you deceived me, and you spoke lies to me! Now tell me please, wherein you will be bound." He said to her, "If I were surely bound with new ropes that had never been used for work, I would weaken and I would be like one man." So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and she said to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" and they stayed in wait in her room, and he tore

¹⁶ לֵי

¹⁷ הָאֲסִירִים

them away from his arms like thread. And Delilah said to Samson, "Up to now you deceived me, and you spoke lies to me! Tell me wherein you may be bound!" He said to her, "If you weave me with seven braids of my head with the web." And she thrust it on a pin and said to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He woke up from his sleep and he pulled out the peg, the loom, and the web. She said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' and your heart is not with me? These three times you mocked me and did not tell me wherein is your great power." And when she had pressed upon him in her speech all the days, and she shortened his soul to death, and he told her all his heart. He said to her, "A razor has never gone up to my head, for I am a Nazirite to God from being in my mother's belly. If I were shaven, my power would turn from me and I would weaken and I would be like every man." Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, and she and called sent for the lords of the Philistines saying, "Come up this time, for he has told me all his heart." And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought up the money in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees. And she called to the man, and she shaved the seven braids of his head, and she began¹⁸ to afflict him, and his strength turned from him. She said, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" And he woke up from his sleep, and he said, "I will go out like the other times, and I will shake free," and he did not know that Adonai had turned from him. The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him in bronze, and he was a grinder in the prison. And the hair of his head began to grow when it was shaved.

Samson's Last Dance: Judges 16:23-31

¹⁸ See also Judg 13:25. The same word is used when God's spirit first comes on him as when it leaves him.

²³ וַיִּסְרְנוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים נְאֻסָּפוּ לְזִבְחַת זִבְח־גִּדּוֹל לְדָגוֹן אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וּלְשִׁמְחָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ
נָתַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָדֵנוּ אֶת שִׁמְשׁוֹן אוֹיְבֵינוּ:

²⁴ וַיֵּרְאוּ אוֹתוֹ הָעָם וַיִּהְלְלוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי אָמְרוּ
נָתַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָדֵנוּ אֶת־אוֹיְבֵנוּ

וְאֵת מַחְרִיב אֶרְצֵנוּ וְאִשֶּׁר הִרְבָּה אֶת־חֲלָלֵינוּ:

²⁵ וַיְהִי ¹⁹ כִּי טוֹב לָבָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ קִרְאוּ לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן וּשְׁחַק־לָנוּ

וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן מִבֵּית הָאֲסִירִים וַיִּצְחַק לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמִידוּ אוֹתוֹ בֵּין הָעַמּוּדִים:

²⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל־הַנַּעַר הַמַּחְזִיק בְּיָדוֹ הַנִּיחָה אוֹתִי ²¹ וְהִימֹשְׁנִי אֶת־הָעַמּוּדִים

אֲשֶׁר הֵבִית נָכוֹן עֲלֵיהֶם וְאִשְׁעֵן עֲלֵיהֶם: ²⁷ וְהֵבִית מְלֵא הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְשָׂמָּה
כָּל סֶרְנֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְעַל־הַגָּג כְּשִׁלְשַׁת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה הָרַאִים בְּשַׁחֲוָק

שִׁמְשׁוֹן: ²⁸ וַיִּקְרָא שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה זָכְרִנִי נָא וְחַזְקִנִי נָא אֲךָ

הַפֶּעַם הַזֶּה הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲנַקְמָה נִקֵּם־אֶחָת מִשְׁחִי עֵינִי מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים: ²⁹ וַיִּלְפַּת

שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶת־שְׁנֵי עַמּוּדֵי הַתּוֹךְ אֲשֶׁר הֵבִית נָכוֹן עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּסְמֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם אַחֵד

בְּיָמָיו וְאַחֵד בְּשִׁמְאָלוֹ: ³⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁמְשׁוֹן תָּמוּת נַפְשִׁי עִם־פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיֵּט בִּכְחַ

וַיַּפֵּל הַבַּיִת עַל־הַסֶּרְנִים וְעַל־כָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ וַיַּהֲרֹג הַמָּתִים אֲשֶׁר הָמִית

בְּמוֹתוֹ רַבִּים מֵאֲשֶׁר הָמִית בְּחַיָּיו: ³¹ וַיִּירְדוּ אָחִיו וְכָל־בֵּית אָבִיהוּ וַיֵּשְׂאוּ אוֹתוֹ

וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ בֵּין צֶרְעָה וּבֵין אֲשֶׁתָּאֵל בְּקֶבֶר מְנוּחַ אָבִיו וְהוּא שָׁפֵט

אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה:

The lords of the Philistines gathered to slaughter a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and
to be festive. They said,

"Our god has given to our hands Samson our enemy."

The people saw him and they praised their god, saying,

"Our god has given to our hands our enemy

And the devastator of our land, who slew so many of us."

When their hearts were good they said, "Call Samson here and make him play for us."

Samson was called from the prison, and he laughed in front of them, and they stood him
between the pillars. Samson said to the boy grasping his hand, "Let me rest and make me

¹⁹ כְּטוֹב

²⁰ הָאֲסִירִים

²¹ וְהִימֹשְׁנִי

touch the pillars that the house rests on, and I will lean on them." And the house was full of men and women, and there were all the lords of the Philistines, and there were about three thousand men and women on the roof watching Samson play. And Samson called to Adonai, saying, "Lord Adonai! Please remember me, and please strengthen me one more time, God, and I will surely avenge one of my two eyes from the Philistines." Samson grasped the two central pillars that the house rested on, and leaned on them, one on his right and one on his left. Samson said, "Let my soul die with the Philistines!" and he stretched out with power, and the house fell on the lords and on all the people in it. And the dead that died by his death were more than those who died by his life. His brothers and his entire father's house went down and carried him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He judged Israel twenty years.

Introduction of Elijah: 1 Kings 17:1-7

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הַתְּשִׁבִי מִתְּשִׁבִי גִלְעָד אֶל-אֲחָאב חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתִּי לִפְנָיו אִם-יְהִי הַשָּׁנִים הָאֵלֶּה מָל וּמָטָר כִּי אִם-לֹא־יִהְיֶה דְּבַר-יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר: ³ לֹךְ מִזֶּה וּפְנִיתָ לָךְ קִדְמָה וְנִסְתַּרְתָּ בְּנַחַל כְּרִית אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן: ⁴ וְהָיָה מִהֲנַחַל תִּשְׁתָּה וְאֶת-הָעֲרֻבִים צִוִּיתִי לְכַלְכֶּלְךָ שָׁם: ⁵ וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּנַחַל כְּרִית אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן: ⁶ וְהָעֲרֻבִים מְבִיאִים לוֹ לֶחֶם וּבָשָׂר בַּבֶּקֶר וּלְחֶם וּבָשָׂר בָּעֶרֶב וּמִן-הַנַּחַל יִשְׁתָּה: ⁷ וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ יָמִים וַיֵּיבֶשׁ הַנַּחַל כִּי לֹא-הָיָה גֶשֶׁם בָּאָרֶץ:

Elijah the Tishbite, from the sojourners²² of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As Adonai lives, the God of Israel before whom I stand²³, there will be no dew or rain these years except at

²² JPS says, "inhabitant," which gives the sense of a more permanent residence in Gilead than Elijah was likely to have. BDB defines this word as "apparently of a more temporary and dependent kind" of dweller (p. 444).

²³ JPS says "serve," which is likely what it means, but it disregards the word לִפְנֵי, so here the literal translation is used so as not to cause a syntactical issue.

my bidding." The word of Adonai came to him saying, "Go from here, turn yourself eastward and hide in the Wadi Cherith, next to the Jordan. You will drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to sustain you there." He went and did as Adonai had said. He went, and he stayed in the Wadi Cherith, next to the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the wadi. After days²⁴ the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

Elijah and the Zarephite Widow: 1 Kings 17:8-24

⁸ וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר: ⁹ קום לךְ צִרְפָּתָה אֲשֶׁר לְצִידוֹן וּישְׁבֶתָ שָׁם הִנֵּה צִוִּיתִי שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֲלֻמָּנָה לְכַלְכֶּלְךָ: ¹⁰ וַיֵּקֶם וַיֵּלֶךְ צִרְפָּתָה וַיָּבֹא אֶל־פֶּתַח הָעִיר וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֲלֻמָּנָה מְקַשֶּׁשֶׁת עֲצִים וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא לִי מַעֲט־מִים בְּכִלִּי וְאַשְׁתָּה: ¹¹ וַתֵּלֶךְ לִקְחָת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר לִקְחִי־נָא לִי פַת־לֶחֶם בִּידֶךָ: ¹² וַתֹּאמֶר חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִם־יִשְׁלִי מִעוֹן כִּי אִם־מֵלֶאכֶר־קֶמַח בְּכֶד וּמִמַּעַט־שָׁמֶן בְּצִפְפָּחַת וְהִנְנִי מְקַשֶּׁשֶׁת שְׁנַיִם עֲצִים וּבָאתִי וְעָשִׂיתִיהוּ לִי וּלְבָנִי וְאֶכְלָנָהּ וּמִחְנוּ: ¹³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אֱלֹהֶיהָ אֶל־תִּירָאִי בְּאִי עֲשִׂי כַדְבָּרְךָ אֲדָּ עֲשִׂי־לִי מִשֵּׁם עֲנֵה קִטְנָה בְּרֹאשְׁנָה וְהוֹצֵאתִי לִי וְלֶךְ וּלְבָנֶךָ תַעֲשִׂי בְּאַחֲרֹנָה: ¹⁴ כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכְלֶה וְצִפְפָּחַת הַשָּׁמֶן לֹא תִחְסַר עַד יוֹם תִּתֵּן־יְהוָה גֶּשֶׁם עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה: ¹⁵ וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה כַדְבָּר אֲלֵיהָ וַתֹּאכֵל הוּא־וְהַיָּתָם וּבֵיתָהּ יָמִים: ¹⁶ כֹּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא כָלְתָה וְצִפְפָּחַת הַשָּׁמֶן לֹא חָסַר כַדְבָּר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד אֱלֹהֶיהָ: ¹⁷ וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה חָלָה בֶן־הָאִשָּׁה בְּעֶלְתָּ הַבַּיִת וַיְהִי חָלִי חֲזָק מְאֹד עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא נוֹתְרָה־בּוֹ נְשָׁמָה: ¹⁸ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ מָה־לִּי וְלָךְ אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּאתָ אֵלַי לְהַזְכִּיר אֶת־עוֹנִי וּלְהַמִּית אֶת־בְּנִי: ¹⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ הִנֵּי־לִי אֶת־בְּנֶךָ וַיִּקְחֵהוּ מִחִיקָה וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ אֶל־הָעֵלִיָּה אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יֹשֵׁב שָׁם וַיִּשְׁכְּבֵהוּ עַל־מִטָּתוֹ: ²⁰ וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָנֶם עַל־הָאֲלֻמָּנָה אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מַתְּנוֹרֵר עִמָּה הֲרַעוֹתָ לְהַמִּית אֶת־בְּנָהּ: ²¹ וַיַּתְּמֵד עַל־הַיֶּלֶד שְׁלֹשׁ פַּעַמִּים וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי תִשָּׁב נָא נַפְש־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה עַל־קִרְבּוֹ: ²² וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלֹהֶיהָ וַתֵּשֶׁב נַפְש־הַיֶּלֶד עַל־קִרְבּוֹ וַיְחִי: ²³ וַיִּקַּח אֱלֹהֶיהָ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּרְדֵּהוּ מִן־הָעֵלִיָּה הַבַּיִתָּה וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ לְאִמּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֶיהָ רְאֵי חַי בְּנֶךָ: ²⁴ וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה

²⁴ Literally, "at the end of days," implying passage of time. To avoid a Christological misinterpretation of the literal translation, a more colloquial translation works better here.

אֶל-אֱלִיָּהוּ עָמָהּ זֶה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה וּדְבַר-יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אָמַת:
 And the word of Adonai came to him, saying, "Go up to Zarephath which is in Sidon, and stay there. Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you." So he went up to Zarephath. When he came to the entrance of the town, and behold, a widow woman was there gathering wood. He called out to her saying, "Please take for me a little water in your vessel, and let me drink." She went to take it, and he called out to her saying, "Please take for me a bit of bread in your hand." She said, "As Adonai your God lives, if I had a cake, because I only have²⁵ a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. Here I am gathering two sticks, and I will come and make them for me and my son, and we will eat them and die." Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake first, and bring it out to me, and for you and your son do afterwards, for thus said Adonai, the God of Israel: The jar of flour will not end and the jug of oil will not lack until the day that Adonai gives rain on the face of the ground." She went and did as Elijah had spoken, and she and he and her house ate for days. The jar of flour did not end, and the jug of oil did not lack, just as the word of Adonai spoken through the hand of Elijah. After these things, the son of the mistress of the house fell sick, and his illness was very strong, until no breath remained in him. She said to Elijah, "What is between me and you²⁶, man of God, that you come to remind of my sin and make my son die?" He said to her, "Give me the boy," and he took him from her bosom, and he carried him to the upper chamber where he stayed, and laid him on his

²⁵ The word "have" is implied by the phrase in Hebrew.

²⁶ Literally, "What is to me and to you." JPS says, "What harm have I done to you," and Oxford says, "What have you against me."

bed. He cried out to Adonai and said, "Adonai my God, will you also²⁷ bring evils on this widow with whom I stay, and make her son die?" And he stretched himself on the child three times, and cried out to Adonai, saying, "Adonai my God, please return this child's soul to within him!" Adonai heard Elijah's voice, and the child's soul returned to within him, and he lived. Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room of the house, and gave him to his mother. Elijah said "See, your son lives." And the woman said to Elijah, "Now this I know: that you are a man of God and that the word of Adonai in your mouth is truth."

Elijah confronts Ahab: 1 Kings 18:1-19

וַיְהִי יָמִים רַבִּים וַדְּבַר־יְהוָה הָיָה אֶל־אֱלֹהֵיוּ בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית לֵאמֹר לֵךְ הֲרֹאֵה אֶל־אֲחָאָב וְאַתָּנָה מִטֹּר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה: ²וַיֵּלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵיוּ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶל־אֲחָאָב וְהָרַעַב חֹזֶק בְּשִׁמְרוֹן: ³וַיִּקְרָא אֲחָאָב אֶל־עֲבָדָיו וְאֵשֶׁר עַל־הַבַּיִת וְעֲבָדָיו הָיָה יָרָא אֶת־יְהוָה מְאֹד: ⁴וַיְהִי בַהֲכָרִית אִיזָבֵל אֵת נְבִיאֵי יְהוָה וַיִּקַּח עֲבָדָיו מֵאֵה נְבָאִים וַיַּחֲבִיאֵם חֲמִשִּׁים אִישׁ בַּמַּעֲרָה וְכָל־כָּלֶם לֶחֶם וּמִים: ⁵וַיֹּאמֶר אֲחָאָב אֶל־עֲבָדָיו לֵךְ בָּאָרֶץ אֶל־כָּל־מַעֲיְנֵי הַמֵּים וְאֵל כָּל־הַנְּחָלִים אוֹלֵי נִמְצָא חֲצִיר וְנַחְיָה סוֹס וּפֶרֶד וְלֹא נִכְרִית מִהֶבֱהֵמָה: ⁶וַיַּחֲלֲקוּ לָהֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ לְעֵבֶר־בָּהּ אֲחָאָב הָלַךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶחָד לְבָדּוֹ וְעֲבָדָיו הָלַךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶחָד לְבָדּוֹ: ⁷וַיְהִי עֲבָדָיו בְּדֶרֶךְ וְהִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיוּ לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיִּפְרְחוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל־פָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֵתָה זֶה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵיוּ: ⁸וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֲנִי לֵךְ אָמַר לְאֲדֹנֶיךָ הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיוּ: ⁹וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה חֲטָאתִי כִי־אָתָּה נָתַן אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ בִּיד־אֲחָאָב לְהַמִּיתָנִי: ¹⁰חֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִם־יִשְׁגֹּנִי וּמִמְלָכָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁלַח אֲדֹנָי שָׁם לְבַקֶּשְׁךָ וְאָמְרוּ אִין וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ אֶת־הַמֶּמְלָכָה וְאֶת־הַנּוֹי כִּי לֹא יִמְצָאֲכָה: ¹¹וַעֲתָה אָתָּה אָמַר לֵךְ אָמַר לְאֲדֹנֶיךָ הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיוּ: ¹²וְהָיָה אֲנִי אִלֶּךְ מֵאֲתָךְ וְרוּחַ יְהוָה יִשְׁאָף עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־אֲדַע וּבֹאתִי לְהַגִּיד לְאֲחָאָב וְלֹא יִמְצָאֶךָ וְהָרַגְנִי וְעֲבָדְךָ יָרָא אֶת־יְהוָה מִנְעָרֵי: ¹³הֲלֹא־הִגַּד לְאֲדֹנָי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בַהֲרֹג אִיזָבֵל אֵת נְבִיאֵי יְהוָה וְאֲחָאָב מִנְבִיאֵי יְהוָה מֵאֵה אִישׁ חֲמִשִּׁים חֲמִשִּׁים אִישׁ בַּמַּעֲרָה וְאִכְלָכֶלֶם לֶחֶם וּמִים: ¹⁴וַעֲתָה אָתָּה אָמַר לֵךְ אָמַר לְאֲדֹנֶיךָ הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיוּ

²⁷ JPS and Oxford ignore the word "also," and only translate the השאלה ה' indicating that Elijah is speaking a question.

והרגני: ¹⁵ ויאמר אליהו חי יהוה צבאות אשר עמדתי לפניו כי היום אראה
 אליו: ¹⁶ וילך עבד יהוה לקראת אהאב ויגד לו וילך אהאב לקראת אליהו:
¹⁷ ויהי כראות אהאב את אליהו ויאמר אהאב אליו האתה זה עכר ישראל:
¹⁸ ויאמר לא עכרתי את ישראל כי אם אתה ובית אביך בעזבכם את מצות
 יהוה ותלך אחרי הבעלים: ¹⁹ ועתה שלח קבץ אלי את כל ישראל אל החר
 הפרמל ואת נביאי הבעל ארבע מאות וחמשים ונביאי האשרה ארבע מאות
 אכלי שלחן איזבל:

After many days, the word of Adonai came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, appear before Ahab, then I will give rain on the face of the earth." And Elijah went to appear before Ahab. The famine was severe in Samaria. Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was the palace steward²⁸. Obadiah feared Adonai very much. When Jezebel was cutting off the prophets of Adonai, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them, fifty men in a cave, and sustained them with bread and water. And Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go in the land, to all the springs of water and to all the wadis. Maybe we will find some grass and we will keep horse and mule alive, and we will not be cut off from the beasts." They divided the land for them to go through it, Ahab went one way alone and Obadiah went one way alone. Obadiah was on the road, and behold, Elijah called to him. He recognized him and flung himself on his face, saying, "Is that you, my lord Elijah?" He said to him, "It is I. Go tell your lord Elijah is here." And he said, "How have I sinned, that you are giving your servant to the hand of Ahab to be killed? As Adonai your God lives, there is no nation and kingdom to which my lord has not sent to look for you, and when they said, 'He is not here,' he made that kingdom and nation swear that they did not find you. And now you say, 'Go tell your lord: Elijah is here!' When I go from you, the spirit of Adonai will carry you off I don't know where, and I will come to tell Ahab and

²⁸ Literally, "over the house," but it is probably Obadiah's title, as JPS translates it "steward of the palace," and Oxford says, "in charge of the palace."

he will not find you, and he will kill me. Your servant has feared Adonai from my youth. Has my lord not been told what I did when Jezebel was killing the prophets of Adonai, and I hid a hundred of the prophets of Adonai, fifty men to a cave, and sustained them with bread and water? And now you say, 'Go tell your lord: Elijah is here.' He will kill me!" Elijah said, "As Adonai of Hosts lives, before whom I stand, today I will appear before him." Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is that you, troubler of Israel?" He said, "I did not trouble Israel, because it was you and your father's House, who forsook the commandments of Adonai and went after the Baalim. Now send to gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, and the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah: those who eat at Jezebel's table."

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal: 1 Kings 18:20-40

²⁰ וַיִּשְׁלַח אַחָאב בְּכָל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֶת־הַנְּבִיאִים אֶל־הָר הַכְּרִמָּל:
²¹ וַיָּגֶשׁ אֵלֵיהֶם אֵל־כָּל־הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר עַד־מָתַי אַתֶּם פֹּסְחִים עַל־שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִים
אִם־יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים לְכֹו אַחֲרָיו וְאִם־הַבַּעַל לְכֹו אַחֲרָיו וְלֹא־עָנּוּ הָעָם אֹתוֹ
דָּבָר: ²² וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם אֵל־הָעָם אֲנִי נִוְחָרְתִּי נָבִיא לַיהוָה לְבָדִי וְנָבִיאֵי הַבַּעַל
אַרְבַּע־מֵאוֹת וְחֲמִשִּׁים אִישׁ: ²³ וַיַּחַנּוּ־לָנוּ שְׁנַיִם פָּרִים וַיִּבְחָרוּ לָהֶם הַפָּר הָאֶחָד
וַיִּנְתְּחֻהוּ וַיִּשְׁימוּ עַל־הָעֵצִים וְאֵשׁ לֹא יִשְׁימוּ וְאֲנִי אַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַפָּר הָאֶחָד וְנִתְחַתִּי
עַל־הָעֵצִים וְאֵשׁ לֹא אֵשִׁים: ²⁴ וַקְרָאתָם בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאֲנִי אֶקְרָא בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה
וְהָיָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲנֶה בְּאֵשׁ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַן כָּל־הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ טוֹב
הַדָּבָר: ²⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם לְנָבִיאֵי הַבַּעַל בַּחֲרוּ לָכֶם הַפָּר הָאֶחָד וַעֲשׂוּ רֹאשֹׁנָה
כִּי אַתֶּם הָרַבִּים וַקְרָאוּ בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאֵשׁ לֹא תִשְׁימוּ: ²⁶ וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־הַפָּר
אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָהֶם וַיַּעֲשׂוּ וַיִּקְרָאוּ בְּשֵׁם הַבַּעַל מִהַבֶּקֶר וְעַד־הַצֹּהֲרַיִם לֹא־אָמַר
הַבַּעַל עָנָנוּ וְאִין קוֹל וְאִין עֲנָה וַיִּפְסְחוּ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: ²⁷ וַיְהִי בַצֹּהֲרַיִם
וַיִּהְיֶה בָהֶם אֵלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר קְרָאוּ בְּקוֹל־גָּדוֹל כִּי־אֱלֹהִים הוּא כִּי שִׁיחַ וְכִי־שִׁיחַ
לֹו וְכִי־דָרָךְ לֹו אוֹלֵי יִשָּׁן הוּא וַיִּקְרָאוּ: ²⁸ וַיִּקְרָאוּ בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל וַיִּתְגַּדְּדוּ כַּמִּשְׁפָּטִים
בַּחֲרֻבוֹת וּבִרְמָחִים עַד־שִׁפְךָ־דָם עֲלֵיהֶם: ²⁹ וַיְהִי כַּעֲבֹר הַצֹּהֲרַיִם וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ עַד
לַעֲלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה וְאִין־קוֹל וְאִין־עֲנָה וְאִין קֶשֶׁב: ³⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם לְכָל־הָעָם נָשׂוּ

אֵלֵי וַיָּגִשׁוּ כָל־הָעָם אֵלָיו וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־מִזְבַּח יְהוָה הַהָרוּס׃³¹ וַיִּקַּח אֵלָיו שְׁתֵּי עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים כַּמִּסְפָּר שִׁבְטֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְרֶךְ אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה יִהְיֶה שֵׁמֶךָ׃³² וַיִּבְנֶה אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים מִזְבֵּחַ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה וַיַּעַשׂ תְּעֹלָה כְּבֵית סֹאתִים זֶרַע סָבִיב לַמִּזְבֵּחַ׃³³ וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת־הָעֵצִים וַיִּנְתַּח אֶת־הַפֶּה וַיִּשֶׂם עַל־הָעֵצִים׃³⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר מִלֹּא אֲרֻבָּעָה כָּדִים מִים וַיִּצְקוּ עַל־הָעֹלָה וְעַל־הָעֵצִים וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁנוּ וַיִּשְׁנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁלְשׁוּ וַיִּשְׁלְשׁוּ׃³⁵ וַיֵּלְכוּ הַמֵּיִם סָבִיב לַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְגַם אֶת־הַתְּעֹלָה מִלֹּא־מֵיִם׃³⁶ וַיְהִי בַעֲלֹת הַמִּנְחָה וַיָּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו הַנָּבִיא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם יִצְחָק וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם יוֹדַע כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲנִי עֲבָדְךָ וּבַדְּבָרֶיךָ עָשִׂיתִי אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה׃³⁷ עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי וַיִּדְעוּ הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַתָּה הִסַּבְתָּ אֶת־לִבָּם אַחֲרֵי־נִית׃³⁸ וַתִּפֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הָעֵצִים וְאֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וְאֶת־הָעֶפֶר וְאֶת־הַמֵּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּתְּעֹלָה לַחֲכָה׃³⁹ וַיֵּרָא כָל־הָעָם וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים׃⁴⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לָהֶם תִּפְשׁוּ אֶת־נְבִיאֵי הַבַּעַל אִישׁ אֶל־יָמֻלֵּט מֵהֶם וַיִּתְּפְשׂוּם וַיּוֹרְדוּם אֵלָיו אֶל־נַחַל קִישׁוֹן וַיִּשְׁחָטֵם שָׁם׃

Ahab sent to all the Israelites and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. Elijah

approached all the people and said, "Until when will you hop²⁹ between two opinions? If Adonai is God, go after Him, and if Baal, go after him!" the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, "I, I am the remaining prophet of Adonai alone, and the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men. Let two young bulls be given to us, let them choose one bull for themselves, let them cut it up, and let them lay it on the wood, but they will not put fire on it. I will make the other bull, I will lay it on the wood, and I will not put fire on it. You will then call your god by name, and I will call Adonai by name, and it will be that the god who responds with fire, is God." And all the people answered, saying "The thing is good!" Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one

²⁹ JPS uses hop for the root נסס saying, "keep hopping between two opinions," and Oxford says, "go limping with two different opinions." Both texts stay true to their translation of the root in verse 26 below (see note.) Use of either word translates properly, but using limping gives Jezebel's prophets the image of a lame, slow moving people, unable to activate themselves to service to Adonai, and the use of hopping gives a sense of a desperate people unable to hold still enough to be aware of the still, small voice in which the spirit of God rests, as in 1 Kings 19:12.

bull and prepare it first, for you are many³⁰. Call your god by name, but put no fire." They took the bull that was given them, they made it, and called Baal by name from morning until noon, saying, "Baal, answer us!" and there was no voice, and no answer, and they hopped upon the altar that was made. At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Call in a great voice, because he is a god. He may be in conversation, he may be moved away, or he may be on his way, or maybe he is asleep and will wake up." So they called in a great voice, and cut themselves, as was their practice, with swords and spears, until blood poured over them. When noon passed, they enraptured until afternoon arose, and there was no voice, no answer, and no cognition. Elijah said to all the people, "Approach to me", and all the people approached to him. He repaired the damaged altar of Adonai. And Elijah took twelve stones, like the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob who had the word of God saying, "Israel will be your name," and he built an altar of the stones in the name of Adonai. He made a trench that could house³¹ two seahs of seed around the altar. He arranged the wood, and he cut up the bull and set it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it over the offering and the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time", and they did it a second time. "Do it a third time," he said, and they did it a third time. The water went around the altar, and also the trench was filled with water. As afternoon arose, the prophet Elijah approached and said, "Adonai, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel! Today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that by your word I have done all these things. Answer me, Adonai, answer me, that this people may know that You, Adonai, are God, and You have turned their

³⁰ JPS says, "the majority."

³¹ JPS and Oxford say, "large enough," but the English colloquialism "to house," stays true to the word כָּבֵה.

hearts backward." Then fire from Adonai fell and devoured the offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. And all the people saw and fell on their faces and said, "Adonai is God, Adonai is God!" And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal, do not let a man of them get away." They seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there.

Elijah Sends Down Ahab and the Rain: 1 Kings 18:41-46

⁴¹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶוּ לְאַחָאָב עֲלֵה אֲכַל וּשְׁתֵּה כִּי־קוֹל הַמּוֹן הַנֶּשֶׁם: ⁴² וַיַּעֲלֶה אַחָאָב לְאֲכֹל וּלְשִׁתּוֹת וְאֵלֵיהֶוּ עָלָה אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַכְּרִמָּל וַיִּגְדֹּר אֶרְצָה וַיִּשֶׁם פָּנָיו בֵּין בְּרָכּוֹ: ⁴³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נַעֲרֹו עֲלֵה־נָא הִבֵּט דְּרָדִיִּים וַיַּעַל וַיִּבֶט וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין מְאוּמָה וַיֹּאמֶר שֶׁב שֶׁבֶּע פַעֲמִים: ⁴⁴ וַיְהִי בַשְּׁבַעִית וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־עֵב קִטְנָה כְּכַף־אִישׁ עָלָה מֵיָם וַיֹּאמֶר עָלָה אָמַר אֶל־אַחָאָב אֲסֹר וְרָד וְלֹא יַעֲצֹרְכָה הַנֶּשֶׁם: ⁴⁵ וַיְהִי עַד־כֹּה וְעַד־כֹּה וְהַשָּׁמַיִם הִתְקַדְּדוּ עֲבִים וְרוּחַ וַיְהִי נֶשֶׁם גָּדוֹל וַיִּרְכַּב אַחָאָב וַיֵּלֶךְ יִזְרְעֵאלָה: ⁴⁶ וַיִּדְּיָהוּהָ הֵיחָה אֶל־אֵלֵיהֶוּ וַיִּשְׁנֶם מִתְנִיּוֹ וַיֵּרָץ לִפְנֵי אַחָאָב עַד־בֹּאָכָה יִזְרְעֵאלָה:

Elijah said to Ahab, "Get up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of much rain," and Ahab went up to eat and drink. Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, bent to the ground, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his boy, "Get up, please. Look sea-ward." He went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back seven times,"³² and it was the seventh, and he said, "Behold! A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." He said, "Go say to Ahab, 'Hitch up and go down and the rain will not restrain you.'" Meanwhile³³ the sky darkened with clouds and wind, and there was a

³² Oxford has the end quote here, and JPS has it after "go back." This syntactical problem works with both solutions, but keeping the end quote here gives Elijah more of a prophetic image than the JPS version. If Elijah tells the servant boy just to go back, and this happens seven times, it is as if Elijah was unsure exactly when it would come, but he knew it would be soon. But if he tells him to go back seven times, he knows how long it will take for the cloud to show, because he is a prophet.

³³ Literally, "from then to then," but ABD says, "עַד־כֹּה וְעַד־כֹּה till now and till then, i.e. meanwhile" (pg 462).

great rain, and Ahab mounted and rode his chariot and went to Jezreel. The hand of Adonai was on Elijah, and he girded his loins and ran before of Ahab until coming to Jezreel.

Elijah Flees from Jezebel: 1 Kings 19:1-9a

וַיַּגֵּד אֶחָב לְאִיזֶבֶל אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹהֵיוּ וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר הָרַג אֶת־כָּל־הַנְּבִיאִים בְּחָרֵב: ²וַתִּשְׁלַח אִיזֶבֶל מַלְאָךְ אֶל־אֱלִיָּהוּ לֵאמֹר כֹּה־יַעֲשֶׂוּן אֱלֹהִים וְכֹה יוֹסֶפוּן כִּי־כַעַת מָחָר אֲשִׁים אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ כְּנַפֵּשׁ אֶחָד מֵהֶם: ³וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־נַפְשׁוֹ וַיָּבֹא בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע אֲשֶׁר לִיהוּדָה וַיֵּנַח אֶת־נַעְרׁוֹ שָׁם: ⁴וְהוּא־הֵלֶךְ בְּמִדְבַר דֶּרֶךְ יוֹם וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת רֶתֶם וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ לֵמֹת וַיֹּאמֶר רַב עֲתָה יְהוָה קַח נַפְשִׁי כִּי־לֹא־טוֹב אֲנִכִּי מֵאֲבֹתַי: ⁵וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיִּישֹׁן תַּחַת רֶתֶם אֶחָד וְהִנֵּה יָדָה מַלְאָךְ נֹגֵעַ בּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ קוּם אֲכֹל: ⁶וַיִּפֹּט וְהִנֵּה מִרְאֲשֵׁת׃ עֵנַת רֶצָפִים וְצִפְחַת מִים וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשָּׂת וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיִּשְׁכַּב: ⁷וַיֵּשֶׁב מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה שֵׁנִית וַיַּנִּיעַ־בּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר קוּם אֲכֹל כִּי רַב מִמָּוֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ: ⁸וַיֵּקָם וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׂתֶּה וַיֵּלֶךְ בִּכְחַת הָאֲכִילָה הָהִיא אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה עַד הָר הָאֱלֹהִים חָרֵב: ⁹וַיָּבֹא־שָׁם אֶל־הַמַּעְרָה וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and all the prophets he had slain by the sword.

Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do and more at this time tomorrow if I make your soul like the soul of one of them." He was afraid and he got up and went for the sake of his life. He came to Beer-sheba, which is in Judah, and left his boy there. He went into the wilderness one day in, and he came and sat down under a broom bush, and asked his soul to die. He said, "It is too much! Now, Adonai, take my soul, because I am no better than my fathers." He lie down and fell asleep under a broom bush. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and behold, at his head was a stone-cake³⁴ and a jug of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of Adonai came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, because the way will be too much for you." He got up and ate and

³⁴ עֵנַת רֶצָפִים: *cake of hot-stones*, i.e. baked on them (ABD p. 728)

drank, and went with the power of that meal forty days and forty nights as far as the mountain of God at Horeb. There he came to a cave, and he spent the night there.

God Calls Elijah: 1 Kings 19:9a-18

והנה דבר־יהוה אליו ויאמר לו מה־לך פה אליהו: ¹⁰ ויאמר קנא קנאתי ליהוה אלהי צבאות כיעזבו בריתך בני ישראל את־מזבח־ך הָרְסוּ ואת־נביאיך הָרְגוּ בחרב ואותך אני לבדי ויבקשו את־נפשי לקחתה: ¹¹ ויאמר צא ועמדת בחר לפני יהוה והנה יהוה עבר ורוח גדולה וחזק מפרק הרים ומשבר סלעים לפני יהוה לא ברוח יהוה ואחר הרוח רעש לא ברעש יהוה: ¹² ואחר הרעש אש לא באש יהוה ואחר האש קול דממה דקה: ¹³ ויהי כשמע אליהו וילט פניו באדרתו ויצא ויעמד פתח המערה והנה אליו קול ויאמר מה־לך פה אליהו: ¹⁴ ויאמר קנא קנאתי ליהוה אלהי צבאות כיעזבו בריתך בני ישראל את־מזבח־ך הָרְסוּ ואת־נביאיך הָרְגוּ בחרב ואותך אני לבדי ויבקשו את־נפשי לקחתה: ¹⁵ ויאמר יהוה אליו לך שוב לדרךך מדברה דמשק ובאת ומשחת את־חזאל למלך על־ארם: ¹⁶ ואת יהוא בן־נמשי תמשח למלך על־ישראל ואת־אלישע בן־שפט מאבל מחולה תמשח לנביא תחתיד: ¹⁷ והיה הנמלט מחרב חזאל ימית יהוא והנמלט מחרב יהוא ימית אלישע: ¹⁸ והשארתי בישראל שבעת אלפים פל־הברכים אשר לא־כרעו לבעל וכל־הפה אשר לא־נשק לו:

Then the word of Adonai came to him. He said to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?" He said, "I have always been zealous³⁵ for Adonai, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets by the sword. I alone remain, and they seek to take my soul." He said, "Come out and stand on the mountain before Adonai." And behold, Adonai passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and crumbling crags³⁶ before Adonai. Adonai was not in the wind. After the wind was an earthquake. Adonai was not in the earthquake. After the

³⁵ The infinitive absolute here is most often translated, "very zealous," (Oxford and KJV.) JPS uses "moved by zeal," but the past tense נִקְנָה motivated the translation above, which solves this grammatical issue.

³⁶ JPS says, "shattering rocks," and Oxford and KJV say, "breaking rocks in pieces." Literally, "breaking cliffs into pieces," I could not resist the consonance here.

earthquake was a fire. Adonai was not in the fire. After the fire was a still, small voice³⁷. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Behold, a voice said to him: "Why are you here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have always been zealous³⁸ for Adonai, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets by the sword. I alone remain, and they seek to take my soul." Adonai said to him, "Go back your way, to the wilderness of Damascus, and go anoint Hazael as king of Aram. Anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place³⁹. The one who escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill him, and the one who escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill him. I will leave in Israel seven thousand every knee that did not bend to Baal and every mouth that did not kiss him."

The Anointing of Elisha: 1 Kings 19:19-21

¹⁹ וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם וַיִּמָּצֵא אֶת-אֵלִישָׁע בֶּן-שָׁפָט וְהוּא חָרַשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר צָמָדִים לִפְנֵי
וְהוּא בְּשָׁנִים הָעָשָׂר וַיַּעֲבֹר אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶדְרֵתוֹ אֵלָיו: ²⁰ וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת-
הַבָּקָר וַיֵּרֶץ אַחֲרָיו אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲשַׁקֶּה-נָּא לְאֲבִי וּלְאִמִּי וְאֶלְכָה אַחֲרָיו
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֵךְ שׁוּב כִּי מִה-עַשִׂיתִי לָךְ: ²¹ וַיָּשָׁב מֵאַחֲרָיו וַיִּקַּח אֶת-צֶמֶד הַבָּקָר
וַיִּזְבְּחֵהוּ וּבִכְלֵי הַבָּקָר בָּשָׁלָם הַבָּשָׂר וַיִּתֵּן לָעָם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיָּקֶם וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרָיו
אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁרְתֵהוּ:

³⁷ From KJV. Literally, "thin whispering voice." JPS says, "soft, murmuring sound," and Oxford says, "a sound of sheer silence." The KJV phrasing is commonplace in the 21st Century, and the implications of the phrase have a more profound effect on today's readers than the others.

Note also the sequence of short sentences. JPS, KJV, and Oxford all use the word "but" to solve the syntactical difficulty of the repetition of the conjunctive vav. By intentionally disrupting the syntax, however, Elijah seems to be concentrating, paying careful attention to discover the presence of Adonai.

³⁸ See note #40

³⁹ Oxford. JPS and KJV say, "to succeed you as prophet," which has a similar, though more colloquial meaning but changes the syntax.

He set out from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat, and he was plowing. There were twelve yoke⁴⁰ of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. He left the herd, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and mother, and I will go after you." And he said to him, "Go back, for what have I done to you?" He turned back from him and took the yoke of oxen and slaughtered them, he boiled the herd in a vessel and gave the meat to the people, and they ate. He got up, went after Elijah, and served him.

Ahab Repents: 1Kings 21:18-28

וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-אֱלִיהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי לֵאמֹר:¹⁸ קוּם רֵד לְקַרְאֵת אַחָאב מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְרוֹן הִנֵּה בָכָרָם נְבוֹת אֲשֶׁר-יָרַד שָׁם לְרִשְׁתּוֹ:¹⁹ וּדְבַרְתָּ אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הָרֹצֵחַת וְגַם-יִרְשֶׁת וּדְבַרְתָּ אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר לָקְדוּ הַפְּלָבִים אַתְּ דֹּם נְבוֹת יִלְקוּ הַפְּלָבִים אַתְּ דָּמָהּ גַּם-אַתָּה:²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר אַחָאב אֶל-אֱלִיהוּ הַמְצֵאתָנִי אִיבִי וַיֹּאמֶר מֵצָאתִי יַעֲן הַתְּמָכְרָד לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:²¹ הֲנִי מִבִּי אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה וּבְעֵרְתִּי אַחֲרֶיךָ וְהִכְרַתִּי לְאַחָאב מִשְׁתֵּין בָּקִיר וְעֶצֶר וְעֹזֹב בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:²² וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-בֵּיתְךָ כְּבֵית יִרְבֵּעַם בֶּן-נֶבֶט וּכְבֵית בַּעֲשָׂא בֶן-אָחִיהָ אֶל-הַפֶּעַם אֲשֶׁר הִכְעַסְתָּ וַתַּחֲטֵא אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל:²³ וְגַם-לְאִיזֶבֶל דְּבַר יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הַפְּלָבִים יֹאכְלוּ אֶת-אִיזֶבֶל בָּחַל יִזְרְעֵאל:²⁴ הִפֹּת לְאַחָאב בְּעִיר יֹאכְלוּ הַפְּלָבִים וְהַמֶּת בַּשָּׂדֶה יֹאכְלוּ עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם:²⁵ רַק לֹא-הִיָּה כְאַחָאב אֲשֶׁר הַתְּמָכְר לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-הִסְתָּה אֹתוֹ אִיזֶבֶל אִשְׁתּוֹ:²⁶ וַיִּתְּעַב מְאֹד לָלֶכֶת אַחֲרֵי הַגִּלְלִים כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה מִפָּנָי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:²⁷ וַיְהִי כַשְׁמַע אַחָאב אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּקְרַע בְּגָדָיו וַיִּשְׁם-שָׁק עַל-בָּשָׂרוֹ וַיֵּצֵא וַיִּשְׁכַּב בָּשָׁק וַיְהִלֶךְ אֵט:²⁸ וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-אֱלִיהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי לֵאמֹר:²⁹ הִרְאִיתָ כִּי-נִכְנַע אַחָאב מִלְּפָנַי יַעֲן כִּי-נִכְנַע מִפָּנָי לֹא-אֲבִי הָרָעָה בְיָמָיו בְּיוֹ אֲבִיא הָרָעָה עַל-בֵּיתוֹ:

Then the word of Adonai came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Get up and go down to meet King Ahab of Israel who is in Samaria. Behold, he is in Naboth's vineyard, he has gone down there to take possession of it. Speak to him, saying, 'Thus said Adonai: Have

⁴⁰ BDB defines צָמָר as, "couple, pair, usu. of animals," but Oxford, JPS, and KJV all say, "yoke," which attaches oxen together the way a pair of animals would be attached.

you taken possession through murder⁴¹? Thus said Adonai: In the place where the dogs lapped up Naboth's blood, the dogs will also lap up your blood." Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy?" And he said, "Yes, I have found you. On account of having sold yourself⁴² to do evil in the eyes of Adonai, behold I will bring evil upon you. I will consume that which comes after you, and I will cut off every one from Ahab, bond and free,⁴³ from Israel. And I will make your house like the House of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like the House of Baasha son of Ahijah, because of the wrath you have provoked by making Israel sin. And Adonai has also spoken of Jezebel, saying, 'The dogs will devour Jezebel in the field of Jezreel. The dead of Ahab in the city will be devoured by dogs, and the dead in the field will be devoured by the birds of the sky.'" (Only there has never been one like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of Adonai, at the instigation of his wife Jezebel. He acted very abominably, going after idols like all the Amorites, whom Adonai dispossessed before the Israelites.) When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes and put sackcloth against his flesh, and he fasted and lay in sackcloth and walked gently. The word of Adonai came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying "Have you seen that Ahab has humbled himself before Me? On account of his humbling himself before Me, I will not bring evil in his days, in the days of his sons I will bring evil upon his house."

⁴¹ JPS, Oxford, and KJV all say something similar to, "Have you murdered and taken possession," which is a syntactical/grammatical problem, as it ignores the hendiadys.

⁴² BDB p. 774. JPS, Oxford, and KJV all use, "Because," instead of "On account of," which creates a lexical problem.

⁴³ The four word phrase *מִשְׁתַּחֲבָדִים וְעֹבְדֵי יָדָיִם* appears three times in Kings (1Ki 14:10, 21:21, and 2Ki 9:8) and literally means, "those who urinate against the wall and those who are left restrained." Since this colloquialism means nothing to the modern reader, JPS and Oxford use "bond and free" to update the phrase.

וַיִּפְשַׁע מוֹאָב בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַחָאב׃² וַיִּפֹּל אַחַזְיָה בְּעַד הַשִּׁבְכָה בְּעִלְיָתוֹ
בְּשִׁמְרוֹן וַיַּחַל וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם לְכוּ דַרְשׁוּ בְּבַעַל זְבוּב אֱלֹהֵי
אֲשֶׁר עֲקְרוֹן אִם-אֶחֱיָה מַחְלִי זֶה׃³ וּמִלֵּאָדָּה יְהוָה דִּבֶּר אֶל-אֱלִיָּה הַתִּשְׁבִּי
קוּם עֲלֵה לִקְרֹאת מַלְאָכֵי מֶלֶךְ-שִׁמְרוֹן וְדַבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם הַמִּבְלִי אֵין-אֱלֹהִים
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אַתֶּם הַלְכִים לְדַרְשׁ בְּבַעַל זְבוּב אֱלֹהֵי עֲקְרוֹן׃⁴ וְלִכְן כֹּה-אָמַר
יְהוָה הַמָּטָה אֲשֶׁר-עָלִיתָ שָׁם לֹא-תֵרֵד מִמֶּנָּה כִּי מוֹת תָּמוּת וַיֵּלֶךְ אֱלִיָּה׃⁵
וַיָּשׁוּבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מַה-זֶּה שָׁבְתֶם׃⁶ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אִישׁ
עָלָה לִקְרֹאתָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵינוּ לְכוּ שׁוּבוּ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח אֲתֶכֶם וְדַבַּרְתֶּם
אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַמִּבְלִי אֵין-אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אַתָּה שָׁלַח לְדַרְשׁ
בְּבַעַל זְבוּב אֱלֹהֵי עֲקְרוֹן לִכְן הַמָּטָה אֲשֶׁר-עָלִיתָ שָׁם לֹא-תֵרֵד מִמֶּנָּה כִּי-מוֹת
תָּמוּת׃⁷ וַיַּדְבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם מָה מִשְׁפָּט הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָלָה לִקְרֹאתְכֶם וַיַּדְבֵּר אֲלֵיכֶם
אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה׃⁸ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אִישׁ בָּעַל שַׁעַר וְאֶזְרוֹר עוֹר וְאֶזְרוֹר בְּמַתְנֵי
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיָּה הַתִּשְׁבִּי הוּא׃⁹ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֵלָיו שְׂרָחֲמָשִׁים וַחֲמִשִּׁין וַיַּעַל אֵלָיו וְהִנֵּה
יֹשֵׁב עַל-רֹאשׁ הַהָר וַיַּדְבֵּר אֵלָיו אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הַמֶּלֶךְ דִּבֶּר רָדָה׃¹⁰ וַיַּעֲנֶה
אֲלֵיהֶם וַיַּדְבֵּר אֶל-שְׂרָחֲמָשִׁים וְאֶם-אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי תֵרֵד אֲשׁ מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְתֹאכַל אַחַד וְאֶת-חֲמִשִּׁיךָ וְתֵרֵד אֲשׁ מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתֹאכַל אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-חֲמִשִּׁיו׃¹¹
וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיִּשְׁלַח אֵלָיו שְׂרָחֲמָשִׁים אַחֵר וַחֲמִשִּׁין וַיַּעַן וַיַּדְבֵּר אֵלָיו אִישׁ
הָאֱלֹהִים כֹּה-אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהֵרָה רָדָה׃¹² וַיַּעַן אֲלֵיָּה וַיַּדְבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם אִם-אִישׁ
הָאֱלֹהִים אֲנִי תֵרֵד אֲשׁ מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתֹאכַל אַחַד וְאֶת-חֲמִשִּׁיךָ וְתֵרֵד
אֲשׁ-אֱלֹהִים מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתֹאכַל אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-חֲמִשִּׁיו׃¹³ וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיִּשְׁלַח שְׂרָחֲמָשִׁים
שְׁלֹשִׁים וַחֲמִשִּׁין וַיַּעַל וַיָּבֹא שְׂרָחֲמָשִׁים הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיִּכְרַע עַל-בִּרְכָיו לִנְגַד
אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְחַנֵּן אֵלָיו וַיַּדְבֵּר אֵלָיו אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים תִּיקֶר-נָא נַפְשִׁי וּנְפֹשׁ עַבְדֶּיךָ
אֵלֶּה חֲמִשִּׁים בְּעִינֶיךָ׃¹⁴ הִנֵּה יֵרֵדָה אֲשׁ מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתֹאכַל אֶת-שְׁנֵי שָׂרֵי
הַחֲמִשִּׁים הָרִאשֹׁנִים וְאֶת-חֲמִשִּׁיהֶם וְעַתָּה תִּיקֶר נַפְשִׁי בְּעִינֶיךָ׃¹⁵ וַיַּדְבֵּר מִלֵּאָדָּה
יְהוָה אֶל-אֲלֵיהֶם רֵד אֹתוֹ אֶל-תֵּירָא מִפְּנֵיו וַיִּקֶּם וַיֵּרֵד אֹתוֹ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ׃¹⁶
וַיַּדְבֵּר אֵלָיו כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה יַעַן אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַחְתָּ מַלְאָכִים לְדַרְשׁ בְּבַעַל זְבוּב
אֱלֹהֵי עֲקְרוֹן הַמִּבְלִי אֵין-אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְדַרְשׁ בְּדַבְּרוֹ לִכְן הַמָּטָה אֲשֶׁר-
עָלִיתָ שָׁם לֹא-תֵרֵד מִמֶּנָּה כִּי-מוֹת תָּמוּת׃¹⁷ וַיָּמָת כְּדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר
אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּמְלֹךְ יְהוֹרָם תַּחְתָּיו בְּשֵׁנַת שָׁתַיִם לַיהוֹרָם בֶּן-יְהוֹשָׁפָט מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה כִּי
לֹא-הָיָה לוֹ בֶּן׃¹⁸ וַיָּחַר דְּבָרֵי אַחַזְיָהוּ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַלֹּא-הֵמָּה כְּחוּבִים עַל-סֹפֶר
דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

Moab rebelled against Israel after Ahab's death. Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his

upper chamber in Samaria and was injured. He sent messengers, and said to them, "Go

inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, if I will revive from this injury." An angel of Adonai said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Get up, and go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, 'Is there no God in Israel that you go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? And so, thus said Adonai, "You will not come down from the bed you are upon, for you will surely die.'" And Elijah went. The messengers returned to him, and he said to them, "Why have you returned?" They said to him, "A man came up to meet us and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him: Thus said Adonai, 'Is there no God in Israel that you go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Thus, You will not come down from the bed you are upon, for you will surely die.'" He said to them, "What was the manner of the man who came up to meet you and told you these things?" They said, "A hairy man, with a hide girdle tied around his loins." He said, "He is Elijah the Tishbite." And he sent to him a captain of fifty and his fifty. He went up to him, and behold, he was sitting at the top of the mountain. He said to him, "Man of God, the king says come down!" Elijah answered and spoke to the captain of the fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire from heaven come down and devour you and your fifty," and fire from heaven came down and devoured him and his fifty. And again he sent to him another captain of fifty and his fifty, and he answered him, saying, "Man of God, the king says come down quickly!" Elijah answered him saying, "If I am a man of God, let fire from heaven come down and devour you and your fifty," and fire of God from heaven came down and devoured him and his fifty " Again he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty. The third captain of fifty came and went up, knelt on his knee in front of Elijah, and sought favor of him, saying, "Oh, man of God, please let my soul and these souls of your fifty servants be precious in your eyes! Behold, fire from heaven has

come down and devoured the first two captains of fifty and their fifty, and now let my soul be precious in your eyes." An angel of Adonai said to Elijah, "Go down with him, do not fear him." So he rose and went down with him to the king. He said to him, "Thus says Adonai. Because you sent messengers to consult Baal-zebub the god of Ekron as if there were no God in Israel to consult His word, you will therefore not come down from the bed you are upon, for you will surely die." And he died, according to the word of Adonai that Elijah spoke. Jehoram succeeded him as king, in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat King of Judah, for he had no son. The other events of Ahaziah's reign and his actions are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

The Death of Elijah/The Passing of the Mantle: 2Kings 2:1-22

וַיְהִי בַהֲעֵלוֹת יְהוָה אֶת־אֱלִיהוֹ בְּסַעֲרָה הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּלֶךְ אֵלָיו וְאֵלִישָׁע מִן־הַגִּלְגָּל: ² וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֶל־אֵלִישָׁע שֶׁב־נָא פֹה כִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי עַד־בֵּית־אֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע חִי־יְהוָה וְחִי־נַפְשְׁךָ אִם־אֶעֱזֹבְךָ וַיֵּרְדּוּ בֵּית־אֵל: ³ וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי־הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר־בֵּית־אֵל אֶל־אֵלִישָׁע וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִירָעָתָ כִּי הַיּוֹם יְהוָה לָקַח אֶת־אֲדֹנֶיךָ מֵעַל רֹאשְׁךָ וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם־אֲנִי יִרְעָתִי הַחֲשׂוֹ: ⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵלָיו אֵלִישָׁע שֶׁב־נָא פֹה כִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי יִרְיָחוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר חִי־יְהוָה וְחִי־נַפְשְׁךָ אִם־אֶעֱזֹבְךָ וַיָּבֹאוּ יִרְיָחוֹ: ⁵ וַיִּגְשׁוּ בְנֵי־הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר־בִּירְיָחוֹ אֶל־אֵלִישָׁע וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִירָעָתָ כִּי הַיּוֹם יְהוָה לָקַח אֶת־אֲדֹנֶיךָ מֵעַל רֹאשְׁךָ וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם־אֲנִי יִרְעָתִי הַחֲשׂוֹ: ⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵלָיו שֶׁב־נָא פֹה כִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי הִירָדָנָה וַיֹּאמֶר חִי־יְהוָה וְחִי־נַפְשְׁךָ אִם־אֶעֱזֹבְךָ וַיִּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם: ⁷ וְחַמְשִׁים אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים הִלְכוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ מִנֶּגֶד מַרְחֹק וּשְׁנֵיהֶם עֲמָדוֹ עַל־הִירָדָן: ⁸ וַיִּקַּח אֵלָיו אֶת־אֲדָרְתּוֹ וַיִּגְלַם וַיַּכֶּה אֶת־הַמַּיִם וַיַּחֲצוּ הַנָּה וְהַנָּה וַיַּעֲבְרוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם בַּחֲרֵבָה: ⁹ וַיְהִי כַעֲבָרָם וְאֵלָיו אָמַר אֶל־אֵלִישָׁע שְׂאֵל מָה אַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ בְּטָרָם אֶלְקָח מֵעַמֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע וַיְהִינָּה פִּי־שְׁנַיִם בְּרוּחָךְ אֵלַי: ¹⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר הַקְּשִׁיתָ לְשֹׂאֵל אִם־תִּרְאֶה אֹתִי לָקַח מֵאֲתָךְ יְהִי־לְךָ כֵּן וְאִם־אֵין לֹא יְהִי: ¹¹ וַיְהִי הַמָּה הַלֹּכִים הַלּוֹךְ וְדֹבֵר וְהַנָּה רֹכֵב־אֵשׁ וְסוֹסֵי אֵשׁ וַיִּפְרְדּוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיַּעַל אֵלָיו בְּסַעֲרָה הַשָּׁמַיִם: ¹² וְאֵלִישָׁע רָאָה וְהוּא מִצַּעֲקֹ אָבִי אָבִי רֹכֵב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרְשָׁיו וְלֹא רָאָהוּ עוֹד וַיַּחֲזֹק

בבגדיו ויקרעם לשנים קרעים: ¹³ וירם את־אדרת אליהו אשר נפלה מעליו וישב ויעמד על־שפת הירדן: ¹⁴ ויקח את־אדרת אליהו אשר־נפלה מעליו ויכה את־המים ויאמר איה יהוה אלהי אליהו אף־הוא ויכה את־המים ויחצו הנה והנה ויעבר אלישע: ¹⁵ ויראהו בני־הנביאים אשר־ביריחו מגד ויאמרו נחה רוח אליהו על־אלישע ויבאו לקראתו וישתחוּ־לו ארצה: ¹⁶ ויאמרו אליו הנה־נא יש־את־עבדיך חמשים אנשים בני־חיל ילכו נא ויבקשו את־אדניך פן־נשאו רוח יהוה וישלכוהו בְּאֶחָד הָהָרִים אוּ בְּאֶחָת הַנִּיאוֹת ויאמר לא תשלחו: ¹⁷ ויפצרו־בו עַד־בֹּשׁ ויאמר שלחו וישלחו חמשים איש ויבקשו שלשה־ימים ולא מצאוהו: ¹⁸ וישבו אליו והוא ישב ביריחו ויאמר אלהם הלוא־אמרתי אליכם אל־תלכו: ¹⁹ ויאמרו אנשי העיר אל־אלישע הנה־נא מושב העיר טוב כֹּאֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנִי רָאָה וְהַמַּיִם רַעִים וְהָאָרֶץ מְשֻׁכֶּלֶת: ²⁰ ויאמר קחו־לי צִלְחִית חֲדָשָׁה וְשִׁימוּ שָׁם מֶלַח ויקחו אליו: ²¹ ויצא אל־מוצא הַמַּיִם וישלך־שָׁם מֶלַח ויאמר כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה רַפְּאֵתִי לַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה לֹא־יְהִיָּה מָשָׁם עוֹד מוֹת וּמְשַׁכֶּלֶת: ²² וירפו הַמַּיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כְּדָבָר אֱלִישֶׁע אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר:

When Adonai was to bring Elijah up in a storm-wind to heaven, Elijah and Elisha went from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for Adonai has sent me to Bethel." Elisha said, "By the life of Adonai and by the life of your soul I will not leave you." They went down to Bethel. Guild prophets⁴⁴ at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today Adonai will take your master away from your head?" He said, "I also know it. Be silent." Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for Adonai has sent me to Jericho." Elisha said, "By the life of Adonai and by the life of your soul I will not leave you." They came to Jericho. The guild prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today Adonai will take your master away from

⁴⁴ There is a lexical issue here. JPS says, "Disciples of the prophets," KJV says, "Sons of the prophets," and Oxford says, "The company of prophets," which is closest to this translation, but use of the word "guild" gives the flavor of the role of these בְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים, as defined by BDB, "*member of a guild, order or class, בְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים i.e. those belonging to the prophetic order.*" (p. 122) David Posner describes any construct with בְּנוּת and another noun as a "noun of relation," meaning the literal translation given by KJV is incorrect and "silly," (memo, "The Meaning of Bar/Bas Mitzvah: Correcting a Case of Mistaken Linguistic Identity," Nov. 3, 1997)

your head?" He said, "I also know it. Be silent." Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for Adonai has sent me on to the Jordan." He said, "By the life of Adonai and by the life of your soul I will not leave you," and they walked together⁴⁵. Fifty men of the guild prophets went and stood across from them from afar, and the two of them stood at the Jordan. Elijah took his mantle, folded it up, and hit the water. It divided here and there, and the two of them crossed on dry land. As they crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I will do for you before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Let a double portion of your spirit be for me." "You have asked a difficult thing. If you see me taken from you, it will be so for you. If not, it will not be." As they went on walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them and brought Elijah up in a storm-wind to heaven. Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father! Israel's chariots and horsemen!" When he could no longer see him, he grabbed his garments and tore them in two pieces. He picked up Elijah's mantle that had fallen from above him, and he stood again at the bank of the Jordan. He took Elijah's mantle that had fallen from above him, he struck the water and said, "Where is Adonai, the God of Elijah even he⁴⁶?" He struck the water, it parted here and there, and Elisha crossed over. When the guild prophets at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha!" And they came to meet him and bowed before him on the ground. They said to him, "If you please, your servants have fifty men—soldiers—with them. Please let them go and seek your master, lest the spirit of Adonai has thrown him to one of the

⁴⁵ Literally, "the two of them," but using "together" conveys the culmination of the progression of the three exchanges of Elijah, Elisha, and the guild prophets.

⁴⁶ KJV, JPS, and Oxford translate אֵלִיָּהוּ after the end quotes on Elisha's statement. The *etnachta* in אֵלִיָּהוּ makes this translation fitting, but the *vav* in וַיִּכְרֶה makes this a syntactical problem. Perhaps the confused language relays Elisha's anguish at the loss of his master, hence in this translation it is moved to before the end quote.

mountains or in one of the valleys." He said, "Do not send them." They pushed him until he was embarrassed, and he said, "Send them." They sent out fifty men, they searched for three days and did not find him. They returned to him while he was staying in Jericho, and he said to them, "Didn't I tell you not to go?" The men of the city said to Elisha, "Please behold, dwelling in the city is good, as my lord sees, and the water is bad and the land causes barrenness." He said, "get me a new jar and put salt in it." They got it for him. He went to the spring of water and threw salt into it. And he said, "Thus said Adonai: I healed this water, death and barrenness will no longer come from it!" The water has remained healed to this day, as the word of Elisha that he spoke.

Elisha Disciplines 42 Children: 2 Kings 2:23-25

²³ וַיַּעַל מֶשֶׁם בֵּית-אֵל וְהוּא עָלָה בְּדֶרֶךְ וְנַעֲרִים קְטָנִים יָצְאוּ מִן-הָעִיר וַיַּחְקְלֻסּוּבּוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ עָלָה קָרַח עָלָה קָרַח: ²⁴ וַיִּפֹּן אַחֲרָיו וַיֵּרָאם וַיִּקְלָלם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה וַתֵּצְאָנָה שְׁתֵּי דָבִים מִן-הָעֵר וַתִּבְקַעְנָה מֵהֶם אַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁנֵי יְלָדִים: ²⁵ וַיֵּלֶךְ מֶשֶׁם אֶל-הָר הַכְּרָמֶל וּמִשָּׁם שָׁב שָׁמְרוֹן:

He went up from there to Bethel.. He was going up the road, and little boys came out of the town and mocked him, saying, "Go up, baldy! Go up, baldy!" He turned around and looked at them and cursed them in the name of Adonai. And two she-bears came out of the woods and ripped apart forty-two of the children. He went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

Elisha and the Three Kings: 2 Kings 3

⁹ וַיֵּלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה וּמֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹם וַיֵּסְבוּ דֶּרֶךְ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים וְלֹא הָיָה מַיִם לַמַּחֲנֶה וּלְבַהֲמָה אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלֵיהֶם: ¹⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֶּה כִּי-קָרָא יְהוָה לְשִׁלְשֶׁת הַמְּלָכִים הָאֵלֶּה לְתֵת אוֹתָם בְּיַד-מֹאָב: ¹¹ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשָׁפָט הֲאִין פֶּה נָבִיא לַיהוָה וְנִדְרָשָׁה אֶת-יְהוָה מֵאוֹתוֹ וַיַּעַן אַחֲרַי מַעֲבָדִי מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר פֶּה אֱלִישָׁע בֶּן-שָׁפָט אֲשֶׁר-יֵצֵק מַיִם עַל-יָדָיו אֵלֶּיהֶם: ¹² וַיֹּאמֶר

יְהוֹשָׁפָט יָשׁ אוֹתוֹ דְּבַר־יְהוָה וַיֵּרְדּוּ אֵלָיו מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוֹשֻׁפֹּט וּמֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹם:
¹³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע אֶל־מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל מַה־לִּי וְלָךְ לֶךְ אֶל־נְבִיאֵי אֲבִיךָ וְאֶל־
 נְבִיאֵי אִמֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵל כִּי־קָרָא יְהוָה לְשִׁלְשֶׁת הַמְּלָכִים
 הָאֵלֶּה לְתַת אוֹתָם בְּיַד־מוֹאָב: ¹⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע חִי־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר עִמָּדָתִי
 לִפְנֵי כִי לֹוִי פָנִי יְהוֹשָׁפָט מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה אֲנִי נָשָׂא אִם־אֵבִיט אֵלֶיךָ וְאִם־אֶרְאֶךָ:
¹⁵ וְעַתָּה קְחוּ־לִי מִגֶּן וְהָיָה כִּנְגֹן הַמִּנְגֵּן וְתָהִי עָלָיו יַד־יְהוָה: ¹⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה אָמַר
 יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה הַנְּחָל הַזֶּה גְּבִים גְּבִים: ¹⁷ כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לֹא־תֵרְאוּ רוּחַ וְלֹא־
 תֵרְאוּ גֶשֶׁם וְהַנְּחָל הַהוּא יִמָּלֵא מַיִם וְשִׁתִּיתֶם אֹתָם וּמִקְנֵיכֶם וּבַהֲמֹתֵיכֶם: ¹⁸ וְנָקַל
 זֹאת בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וְנָתַן אֶת־מוֹאָב בְּיַדְכֶם: ¹⁹ וְהִפִּיתֶם כָּל־עֵיר מִבְּצָר וְכָל־עֵיר
 מִבְּחוּר וְכָל־עֵץ טוֹב תְּפִילוּ וְכָל־מַעֲיִינֵי־מַיִם תִּסְתְּמוּ וְכָל הַחֲלָקָה הַטּוֹבָה
 תִּכְאֹבוּ בְּאֲבָנִים: ²⁰ וַיְהִי בַּבֹּקֶר כַּעֲלֹת הַמִּנְחָה וְהָנָה־מַיִם בְּאִים מִדֶּרֶךְ אֲדוֹם
 וְתִמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַמַּיִם: ²¹ וְכָל־מוֹאָב שָׁמְעוּ כִּי־עָלוּ הַמְּלָכִים לְהִלָּחֵם בָּם
 וַיִּצְעֲקוּ מִכָּל חֹנֶר חֹנֶרָה וּמַעֲלָה וַיַּעֲמְדוּ עַל־הַגְּבוּל: ²² וַיִּשְׁפִּימוּ בַּבֹּקֶר וְהַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
 זָרַח עַל־הַמַּיִם וַיֵּרְאוּ מוֹאָב מִנֶּגֶד אֶת־הַמַּיִם אֲדָמִים כְּדָם: ²³ וַיֹּאמְרוּ דָם זֶה
 הַחֶרֶב נִחְרְבוּ הַמְּלָכִים וַיָּכּוּ אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְעַתָּה לְשַׁלֵּל מוֹאָב: ²⁴ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־
 מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְמוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּכּוּ אֶת־מוֹאָב וַיִּגְסּוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיָּבֹוּ־בָהּ וְהַכּוֹת
 אֶת־מוֹאָב: ²⁵ וְהָעָרִים יִהְיוּ וְכָל־חֲלָקָה טוֹבָה יִשְׁלִיכוּ אִישׁ־אֲבֹנּוֹ וּמִלֵּאוּהָ
 וְכָל־מַעֲיִן־מַיִם יִסְתְּמוּ וְכָל־עֵץ־טוֹב יִפִּילוּ עַד־הַשָּׂאִיר אֲבָנִיָּה בְּקִיר חֲרָשֶׁת
 וַיִּסְבּוּ הַקָּלָעִים וַיָּכּוּהָ: ²⁶ וַיֵּרָא מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב כִּי־חָזַק מִמֶּנּוּ הַמִּלְחָמָה וַיִּקַּח אוֹתוֹ
 שֶׁבַע־מֵאוֹת אִישׁ שֶׁלֶף חֶרֶב לְהִבָּקִיעַ אֶל־מֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹם וְלֹא יָכָלוּ: ²⁷ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־בָּנוֹ
 הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר־יָמַלְךְ תַּחְתָּיו וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ עָלָה עַל־הַחֲמָה וַיְהִי קֶצֶף־גָּדוֹל עַל־
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ מֵעָלָיו וַיָּשֻׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ:

The king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom went, and they went around
 for seven days, and there was no water left for the camp or for the animals at their feet.
 The king of Israel said, "Alas! Adonai called these three kings to give them to the hands
 of Moab." Jehoshaphat said, "Isn't there a prophet of Adonai here, may we inquire of
 Adonai through him?" One of the servants of the king of Israel answered, saying, "Elisha
 son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah, is here." Jehoshaphat said, "He
 has the word of Adonai." The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went
 down to him. Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What is there between me and you? Go to
 your father's prophets and your mother's prophets." But the king of Israel said, "No, for

Adonai has called these three kings to give them into the hands of Moab." Elisha said, "By the life of Adonai of Hosts, before whom I serve, if it were not for the face of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, I would not lift up to look at you nor see you. Now, get me a musician." As the musician played, the hand of Adonai was upon him, and he said, "Thus says Adonai: make this wadi full of ditches, for thus said Adonai: You will see no wind, you will see no rain, and this wadi will be filled with water, and you and your cattle and your animals will drink. And this is but a trifle in the eyes of Adonai, and He will give Moab to your hands. You will strike every fortified city and every choice city, you will fell every good tree and stop up every spring of water, and every good plane you will mar with stones." And in the morning, at the meal offering, water came from the way of Edom and the land was filled with water. And all of Moab heard that the kings were coming up to wage war on them, every one girded in a girdle was summoned, and they went up and stood at the border. They arose early in the morning, and the sun rose over the water, and Moab saw from the distance the water was red as blood. They said, "This is blood! The kings have surely put each other to the sword and smote each other. Now to the spoil, Moab!" They came to the Israelite camp, and the Israel arose and smote Moab, and they fled before them. They constantly attacked Moab, and they tore down the cities. Every man threw a stone into each good plane to fill it, and they stopped up every spring and felled every good tree, until the stones of Kir-hareseth were left, and the slingers surrounded it and smote it. The king of Moab saw that the war was too strong for him, and he took seven hundred men, swords drawn, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not. And he took his first-born son, who was to reign after him,

and offered him up on the wall as a burnt offering, and a great wrath was on Israel, and they set out from him and returned to the land.

The Ever-Flowing Oil Flask: 2Kings 4:1-7

וַאֲשֶׁה אֶחָת מִנְשֵׁי בְנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים צָעָקָה אֶל-אֵלִישָׁע לֵאמֹר עֲבָדְךָ אִישִׁי מֵת
וְאַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ כִּי עֲבָדְךָ הָיָה יָרָא אֶת-יְהוָה וְהַנְּשָׂה בָּא לִקְחַת אֶת-שְׁנֵי יְלָדָי לָהּ
לְעֲבָדִים: ² וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אֵלִישָׁע מָה אַעֲשֶׂה-לָּךְ הַגִּידִי לִי מִה-יִשְׁלַכִּי בַּבַּיִת
וְתֹאמַר אֵין לִשְׁפָחוֹתְךָ כָּל בֵּית כִּי אִם-אֶסוּף שָׁמָּן: ³ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ שְׂאֵלִי-לָךְ
כָּלִים מִן-הַחוּץ מֵאֵת כָּל-שֹׁכְנֵי כָּלִים רָקִים אֶל-תְּמַעֲיֹשִׁי: ⁴ וּבָאת וְסָגַרְתָּ
הַדֶּלֶת בְּעַדְךָ וּבְעַד-בְּנוֹיךָ וַיֵּצֵקְתָּ עַל כָּל-הַכָּלִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהַמָּלֵא תִּסִּיעִי:
⁵ וְתִלְךְ מֵאֵתוֹ וְתִסְגֹּר הַדֶּלֶת בְּעַדָּהּ וּבְעַד בְּנֵיהָ הֵם מְנֻשִּׁים אֵלֶיהָ וְהִיא מֵיֻצְקֶת:
⁶ וַיְהִי כַּמֶּלֶאֶת הַכָּלִים וְתֹאמַר אֶל-בְּנָהּ הַנְּשָׂה אֵלַי עוֹד כָּלִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אֵין
עוֹד כָּלִי וַיַּעֲמֵד הַשָּׁמֶן: ⁷ וְתָבֹא וְתִגְדַּר לְאִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִכְרִי
אֶת-הַשָּׁמֶן וְשָׁלַמְתִּי אֶת-נַשְׁיָכִי וְאַתָּה בְּנִיכִי תַחֲיֶי בְּנוֹתָי:

One woman, from the wives of the guild prophets, cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know your servant feared Adonai. And a creditor is coming to take my two children as slaves for him." Elisha said to her, "What can I do for you? Tell me, what have you in the house?" She said, "Your maidservant has nothing at all in the house, except a flask of oil." He said, "Go and ask for vessels from outside, from all your neighbors, empty vessels, let them not be few⁴⁷. Come in and shut the door behind you and behind your children, and pour into all those vessels, and remove the full ones." She went from him and shut the door behind her and behind her children. They brought to her and she poured. When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." He said to her, "There are no more vessels", and the oil stopped⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Oxford says, "and not just a few," which is a grammatical problem in that it ignores the jussive verb, and JPS says, "as many as you can," ignoring the lexical issues and translating for meaning.

⁴⁸ JPS and Oxford. Literally, "the oil stood."

She came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your children can live on the remainder."

Elisha and the Shunammite Woman: 2 Kings 4:8-37

⁸ וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיַּעֲבֹר אֵלִישָׁע אֶל-שׁוֹנָם וְשָׁם אִשָּׁה גְדוֹלָה וַתַּחֲזֹק-בּוֹ לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם וַיְהִי מִדֵּי עָבְרוֹ יָסַר שָׁמָּה לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם: ⁹ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-אִשָּׁה הַנַּהֲנָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים קָדוֹשׁ הוּא עָבַר עָלֵינוּ תָמִיד: ¹⁰ נַעֲשֶׂה-נָּא עֲלֵית-קִיר קִטְנָה וְנָשִׂים לּוֹ שֵׁם מִטָּה וְשִׁלְחָן וְכֶסֶף וּמְנוּרָה וְהָיָה בָּבָאֵו אֵלֵינוּ יָסַר שָׁמָּה: ¹¹ וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיָּבֹא שָׁמָּה וַיָּסַר אֶל-הָעִלְיָה וַיִּשְׁכַּב-שָׁמָּה: ¹² וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-גִּיחִזִּי נַעֲרוֹ קְרָא לְשׁוֹנְמִית הַזֹּאת וַיִּקְרָא-לָהּ וַתַּעֲמֹד לִפְנָיו: ¹³ וַיֹּאמֶר לּוֹ אָמַר-נָא אֵלֶיהָ הִנֵּה חֲרָדָת אֵלֵינוּ אַחַת-כָּל-הַחֲרָדָה הַזֹּאת מָה לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ הֲיֵשׁ לְדַבֵּר-לָךְ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אוֹ אֶל-שָׂר הַצָּבָא וַתֹּאמֶר בְּתוֹךְ עַמִּי אֲנִכִּי יֹשֶׁבֶת: ¹⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר וּמָה לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהּ וַיֹּאמֶר גִּיחִזִּי אָבֵל בֶּן אִין-לָהּ וְאִשָּׁה זָקֵן: ¹⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר קְרָא-לָהּ וַיִּקְרָא-לָהּ וַתַּעֲמֹד בַּפֶּתַח: ¹⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר לְמוֹעֵד הַזֶּה כָּעֵת חָיָה אִתִּי חֲבֵקֶת בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל-תִּכְזֹב בְּשִׁפְחָתְךָ: ¹⁷ וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן לְמוֹעֵד הַזֶּה כָּעֵת חָיָה אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֵלֶיהָ אִלִּישָׁע: ¹⁸ וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיֵּצֵא אֶל-אָבִיו אֶל-הַקְּצָרִים: ¹⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אָבִיו רֵאשִׁי רֵאשִׁי וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הַנֶּעַר שֹׂאֵהוּ אֶל-אִמּוֹ: ²⁰ וַיִּשְׂאֵהוּ וַיְבִיאוּהוּ אֶל-אִמּוֹ וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל-בְּרֵכִיהָ עַד-הַצֹּהֲרִים וַיָּמָת: ²¹ וַתַּעַל וַתִּשְׁכַּבְהוּ עַל-מִטַּת אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּסְגֹּר בַּעֲדוֹ וַתֵּצֵא: ²² וַתִּקְרָא אֶל-אִשָּׁהּ וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחָה נָא לִי אֶחָד מִן-הַנְּעָרִים וְאַחַת הָאֲתָנוֹת וְאֶרְוֶצָה עַד-אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶשׁוּבָה: ²³ וַיֹּאמֶר מְדוּעַ אִתִּי הִלַּכְתִּי אֵלָיו הַיּוֹם לֹא-אֶחָדֹשׁ וְלֹא שֶׁבֶת וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁלוֹם: ²⁴ וַתַּחֲבֹשׁ הָאֲתָנוֹן וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-נַעֲרָה נִהְיָ וּלְךָ אֶל-תַּעֲצֹר-לִי לְרֹכֵב כִּי אִם-אֲמַרְתִּי לָךְ: ²⁵ וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבוֹא אֶל-אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַר הַכְּרָמֶל וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים אִתָּהּ מִנֶּגֶד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-גִּיחִזִּי נַעֲרוֹ הִנֵּה הַשׁוֹנְמִית הַלֵּז: ²⁶ עָתָה רוּץ-נָא לִקְרָאתָהּ וְאָמַר-לָהּ הַשְׁלוֹם לָךְ הַשְׁלוֹם לְאִישֶׁךָ הַשְׁלוֹם לְיֶלֶד וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁלוֹם: ²⁷ וַתָּבוֹא אֶל-אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַהָר וַתַּחֲזֹק בְּרַגְלָיו וַיָּנֹשׁ גִּיחִזִּי לַהֲדָפָה וַיֹּאמֶר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הֲרַפְּהָ-לָהּ כִּי-נִפְשָׁה מְדַהֲלָה וַיְהוּהָ הָעֲלִים מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא הִגִּיד לִי: ²⁸ וַתֹּאמֶר הֲשֵׁאלְתִּי בֶן מֵאֵת אֲדֹנָי הֲלֹא אָמַרְתִּי לֹא תִשְׁלַח אִתִּי: ²⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר לְגִיחִזִּי חָגֵר מִתְּנִיךְ וְקַח מִשְׁעָנְתִּי בִידְךָ וּלְךָ כִּי-תִמְצָא אִישׁ לֹא תִבְרַכְנוּ וְכִי-יִבְרַכְךָ אִישׁ לֹא תַעֲנֶנּוּ וְשִׁמַּת מִשְׁעָנְתִּי עַל-פְּנֵי הַנֶּעַר: ³⁰ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם הַנֶּעַר חִי-וַיְהִי וְחִי-נִפְשֶׁךָ אִם-אֶעֱזֹבְךָ וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרֶיהָ: ³¹ וַגִּיחִזִּי עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיִּשֶׁם אֶת-הַמִּשְׁעָנָה עַל-פְּנֵי הַנֶּעַר וַאֲיִן קוֹל וַאֲיִן קֶשֶׁב וַיֵּשֶׁב לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיִּגְדַּל-לוֹ לֵאמֹר לֹא הִקִּין הַנֶּעַר: ³² וַיָּבֹא אֵלִישָׁע הַבֵּיתָהּ וְהִנֵּה הַנֶּעַר מֵת מִשְׁכָּב עַל-מִטָּתוֹ: ³³ וַיָּבֹא וַיִּסְגֹּר הַדֶּלֶת בַּעֲד שְׁנֵיהֶם

וַיִּחַפְּלֵל אֶל־יְהוָה: ³⁴ וַיַּעַל וַיִּשְׁכַּב עַל־הַיֵּלֶד וַיִּשֶׁם פִּיּוֹ עַל־פִּיּוֹ וַעֲיִנָּיו עַל־עֵינָיו
וּכְפִּיּוֹ עַל־כַּפּוֹ וַיִּגְהַר עָלָיו וַיִּחַם בָּשָׂר הַיֵּלֶד: ³⁵ וַיָּשָׁב וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּבֵית אַחַת הָנָה
וְאַחַת הָנָה וַיַּעַל וַיִּגְהַר עָלָיו וַיִּזְוֹרֶר הַנָּעַר עַד־שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים וַיִּפְקַח הַנָּעַר
אֶחָד־עֵינָיו: ³⁶ וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־גִּיחָזִי וַיֹּאמֶר קְרָא אֶל־הַשְּׁנַמִּית הַזֹּאת וַיִּקְרָאָהּ וַתָּבוֹא
אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאִי בִנְךָ: ³⁷ וַתָּבֹא וַתִּפֹּל עַל־רַגְלָיו וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶי אֶרְצָה וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־בְּנָהּ
וַתֵּצֵא:

One day when Elisha was passing through Shunem. A great woman there grabbed him to take a meal, and it was often that he passed by and turned aside there to take a meal. She said to her husband, "Please behold, I know he is a holy man of God who always passes through to us. Please, let us make a small, walled upper chamber and put a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp-stand there for him, and when he comes to us he will turn aside there." One day he came there, he turned aside to the upper chamber and lay down there. He said to his boy Gehazi, "Call that Shunammite woman." He called her, and she stood before him. He said to him, "Please tell her, 'You have gone through all this care'⁴⁹ for us. What can we do for you? Can we speak for you to the king or to the army commander?" She said, "I stay among my own people." He said, "What then can be done for her?" Gehazi said, "But she has no son, and her husband is old." He said, "Call her," and he called her, and she stood in the doorway. And Elisha said, "At this season next year, which is a time of revival⁵⁰, you will embrace a son." She said, "No, my lord, man of God, do not lie to your maidservant." The woman conceived and bore a son at that season which is a time of revival, as Elisha told her. The child grew up. And one day, he went out to his father, to the reapers. He said to his father, "My head, my head!" He said to a boy, "Take him to his mother." He carried him and brought him to his mother. And the child sat on her lap until noon, and he died. She went up and laid him on the bed of

⁴⁹ BDB says, "*been anxiously careful*" (p. 353)

⁵⁰ A euphemism for spring, (BDB 773)

the man of God, and closed the door behind him and left. She called to her husband and said, "Please, send me one of the boys and one of the she-asses, and I will run to the man of God and back." He said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." She said, "Peace." She saddled the ass, and said to her boy, "Drive and walk. Do not keep me from riding unless I tell you." She went and came to the man of God on Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her from afar, he said to his boy Gehazi, "Behold, that is the Shunammite woman. Please run to meet her and say to her, 'How are you? How is your husband? How is the child?'" She said, "Peace." She came to the man of God on the mountain and she grabbed his feet. Gehazi approached to push her, and the man of God said, "Leave her alone, for her soul is bitter to her, and Adonai has hidden it from me and not told me." And she said, "Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not mislead me'?" He said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins, take my staff in your hand, and go. If you meet a man, do not bless him, and if a man blesses you, do not answer him, and place my staff on the face of the boy." And the boy's mother said, "By the life of Adonai and by the life of your soul I will not leave you!" and he got up and went after her. Gehazi had passed in front of them and he placed the staff on the face of the boy, and he had no voice or awareness. He turned back to meet him and told him, saying, "The boy has not awakened." Elisha came to the house, and behold, the boy was dead, lying on his bed. He came and shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to Adonai. He went up and lay down on the boy, placing mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, and hands to hands⁵¹, and he bent over him, and the flesh of the boy became warm.

⁵¹ JPS says, "his mouth on its mouth..." and KJV and Oxford say, "his mouth upon his mouth...." This translation causes a lexical/grammatical problem by ignoring the pronouns for the sake of the rhythm of the text.

He returned and walked in the house once here and once there, then went up and bent over him. The boy sneezed seven times, and the boy opened his eyes. He called Gehazi and said, "Call that Shunammite woman," and he called her, and she came to him, and he said, "Pick up your son." She came and fell at his feet and bowed to the ground, and she picked up her son and left.

Elisha Feeds the Masses: 1 Kings 4:38-44

38 וַיָּאֵלִישָׁע שָׁב הַגִּלְגָל וְהָרַעַב בָּאָרֶץ וּבְנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים יֹשְׁבִים לִפְנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לְנַעֲרוֹ שֹׁפֵת הַסִּיר הַגָּדוֹלָה וּבִשָּׁל נֶזֶד לְבְנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים: 39 וַיֵּצֵא אֶחָד אֶל-הַשָּׂדֶה לְלֶקֶט אֹרֶת וַיִּמְצָא גֶפֶן שָׂדֶה וַיִּלְקֹט מִמֶּנּוּ פַקְעֹת שָׂדֶה מְלֵא בָגָד וַיָּבֵא וַיִּפְלֹחַ אֶל-סִיר הַנֶּזֶד כִּי-לֹא יָדְעוּ: 40 וַיִּצְקוּ לְאֲנָשִׁים לֵאכֹל וַיְהִי כְּאֹכְלִים מִהַנֶּזֶד וְהִמָּה צָעֲקוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ מוֹת בְּסִיר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא יָכֻלוּ לֵאכֹל: 41 וַיֹּאמֶר וּקְחוּ-קֶמַח וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶל-הַסִּיר וַיֹּאמֶר צֵק לָעַם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וְלֹא הָיָה דְּבַר רָע בְּסִיר: 42 וְאִישׁ בָּא מִבְּעַל שְׁלֹשָׁה וַיָּבֵא לְאִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים לֶחֶם בַּכּוּרִים עֲשָׂרִים-לֶחֶם שְׁעָרִים וּכְרָמָל בְּצֻקְלָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר תֵּן לָעַם וַיֹּאכְלוּ: 43 וַיֹּאמֶר מִשְׁרָתוֹ מָה אַתָּן זֶה לִפְנֵי מֵאָה אִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר תֵּן לָעַם וַיֹּאכְלוּ כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲכֹל וְהוֹתֵר: 44 וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּוָּתְרוּ כְּדָבָר יְהוָה:

Elisha returned to Gilgal. There was a famine in the land, and the guild prophets were sitting before him. He said to his boy, "Set the large pot and boil a pottage for the guild prophets." One went out to the field to pick herbs. He found a field vine and picked from it field gourds, as many as his garment would hold. And he came and cut them up into the pot of pottage, and they did not know. They poured it for the men to eat, and as they were eating of the stew, they cried out, saying, "Death is in the pot, man of God!" And they could not eat. He said, "Get some flour." He threw it into the pot and said, "Pour it for the people and let them eat." And there was no longer a bad thing in the pot. A man came from Baal-shalishah and he brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty barley breads, and fresh grain in his sack. And he said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." His servant said, "How can I put this before a hundred men?" He said, "Give it to

the people and let them eat. For thus said Adonai, 'Eat, and leave a remnant.'" So he put it before them, and ate and left a remnant, as Adonai had said.

Naaman's Cure/Gehazi's Curse: 2Kings 5

וְנַעֲמָן שַׂר־צָבָא מֶלֶךְ־אֲרָם הָיָה אִישׁ גָּדוֹל לִפְנֵי אֲדֹנָיו וְנָשָׂא פָנִים כִּי־בֹ
נִתָּן יְהוָה חֲשׂוּעָה לְאֲרָם וְהָאִישׁ הָיָה גִבּוֹר חֵיל מִצְרָע׃² וְאֲרָם יֵצְאוּ גִדּוּדִים
וַיֵּשְׁבוּ מֵאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל נַעֲרָה קַטְנָה וַתְּהִי לִפְנֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ נַעֲמָן׃³ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־
גְּבִרְתָּהּ אַחְלֵי אֲדֹנִי לִפְנֵי הַנְּבִיא אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁמְרוֹן אִזּוּ יֹאסֵף אֹתוֹ מִצְרַעְתּוֹ׃
⁴ וַיָּבֹא וַיִּגֵּד לְאֲדֹנָיו לֵאמֹר כִּזְזֹאת וְכִזְזֹאת דִּבְרָה הַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר מֵאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל׃
⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ־אֲרָם לֶךְ־בָּא וְאֶשְׁלַחְהָ סֹפֶר אֶל־מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלְךְ וַיִּקַּח בִּידּוֹ
עֹשֶׂר כַּפְרֵי־כֶסֶף וְשֵׁשֶׁת אֲלָפִים זָהָב וְעֹשֶׂר חֲלִיפוֹת בְּגָדִים׃⁶ וַיָּבֹא הַסֹּפֶר אֶל־
מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר וְעַתָּה כִּבּוֹא הַסֹּפֶר הַזֶּה אֵלֶיךָ הִנֵּה שְׁלַחְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֶת־
נַעֲמָן עַבְדִּי וְאֶסְפְּתוֹ מִצְרַעְתּוֹ׃⁷ וַיְהִי כִּקְרָא מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַסֹּפֶר וַיִּקְרַע
בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים אֲנִי לְהַמִּית וּלְהַחְיֹת כִּי־זֶה שְׁלַח אֵלַי לֵאסֹף אִישׁ־
מִצְרַעְתּוֹ כִּי אֶךְ־דַּעֲנָא וּרְאוּ כִי־מִתְאַנֶּה הוּא לִי׃⁸ וַיְהִי כַּשְּׁמַע אֱלִישֶׁעַ אִישׁ־
הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי־קָרַע מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לֵאמֹר לָמָּה
קָרַעַת בְּגָדֶיךָ יִבְאֲנָא אֵלַי וַיֵּדַע כִּי יֵשׁ נָבִיא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל׃⁹ וַיָּבֹא נַעֲמָן בְּסוּסוֹ
וּבִרְכָבוֹ וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח־הַבַּיִת לְאֱלִישֶׁעַ׃¹⁰ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֵלָיו אֱלִישֶׁעַ מֶלֶאֶךְ לֵאמֹר
הֲלוֹךְ וְרַחֲצֵת שִׁבְעַ־פְּעָמִים בִּידְדֹן וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּשָּׂרָף לֵךְ וַיְטַהֵר׃¹¹ וַיִּקְצֹף נַעֲמָן וַיִּלְךְ
וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה אִמְרַתִּי אֵלַי יֵצֵא יֵצֵא וְעַמֵּד וּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיו וְהִנֵּיף יָדוֹ
אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם וְאֹסֵף הַמִּצְרָע׃¹² הֲלֹא טוֹב אֲבָנָה וּפְרָפֹר נִהְרֹת דְּמָשֶׁק מִכָּל־
מִימֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲלֹא־אֶרְחֹץ בָּהֶם וַיְטַהֲרֵתִי וַיִּפֹּן וַיִּלְךְ בַּחֲמָה׃¹³ וַיִּגְשׁוּ עַבְדָּיו
וַיִּדְּבְרוּ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲבִי דָבָר גָּדוֹל הַנְּבִיא דָּבָר אֵלֶיךָ הֲלֹא תַעֲשֶׂה וְאִף־
כִּי־אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ רַחֵץ וַיְטַהֵר׃¹⁴ וַיֵּרֶד וַיִּטְבֹּל בִּידְדֹן שִׁבְעַ פְּעָמִים כַּדָּבָר אִישׁ־
הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּשָּׂרָף כַּבָּשָׂר נַעַר קָטָן וַיְטַהֵר׃¹⁵ וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶל־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא
וְכָל־מַחֲנֵהוּ וַיָּבֹא וַיַּעֲמֵד לִפְנֵיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל־
הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם־בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה קַח־נָא בִּרְכָה מֵאֵת עַבְדְּךָ׃¹⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר חֲיִי־יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר־עֲמַדְתִּי לִפְנֵיו אִם־אֶקַּח וַיַּפְצֹר־בּוֹ לִקְחַת וַיִּמָּאֵן׃¹⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר נַעֲמָן וְלֹא־
יִתֵּן־נָא לְעַבְדְּךָ מִשָּׂא צִמּוֹד־פָּרָדִים אֲדָמָה כִּי לֹא־יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד עַבְדְּךָ עֲלֶיהָ וְזֹכֵחַ
לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים כִּי אִם־לַיהוָה׃¹⁸ לְדָבָר הַזֶּה יִסְלַח יְהוָה לְעַבְדְּךָ כִּבּוֹא אֲדֹנִי
בֵּית־רַמּוֹן לְהַשְׁתַּחֲוֹת שָׁמָּה וְהוּא נֹשֵׁעַן עַל־יָדַי וְהַשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי בֵּית רַמּוֹן
בְּהַשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי בֵּית רַמּוֹן יִסְלַח־(נָא) [קָק] יְהוָה לְעַבְדְּךָ בְּדָבָר הַזֶּה׃¹⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר
לוֹ לֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם וַיִּלְךְ מֵאֵתוֹ כְּבֶרֶת־אֲרָץ׃²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר גִּיחִזִּי נַעַר אֱלִישֶׁעַ אִישׁ־
הָאֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה חֲשָׁךְ אֲדֹנִי אֶת־נַעֲמָן הָאֲרָמִי הִנֵּה מִקְחַת מִידּוֹ אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־הִבִּיא

חִי־יָהוָה כִּי־אִם־רָצִיתִי אַחֲרָיו וְלִקְחֹתִי מֵאִתּוֹ מְאוֹמָה: ²¹וַיִּרְדֹּף גִּיחֲזִי אַחֲרָיו
נֶעֱמָן וַיִּרְאֶה נֶעֱמָן רֵץ אַחֲרָיו וַיִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַמֶּרְכָּבָה לִקְרֹאתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הַשָּׁלוֹם:
²²וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁלוֹם אֲדֹנִי שְׁלַחֲנִי לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה עָתָה זֶה בָּאוּ אֵלַי שְׁנֵי־נְעָרִים מִהָר
אֲפָרַיִם מִבְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים הַנִּהְיָנָא לָהֶם כִּכְר־כֶּסֶף וְשְׁתֵּי חֲלָפוֹת בְּגָדִים: ²³וַיֹּאמֶר
נֶעֱמָן הוּאֹל קַח כִּכְרִים וַיִּפְרֹץ־בּוֹ וַיִּצֹר כִּכְרִים כֶּסֶף בְּשְׁנֵי חֲרָטִים וְשְׁתֵּי
חֲלָפוֹת בְּגָדִים וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־שְׁנֵי נְעָרָיו וַיֵּשְׂאוּ לִפְנָיו: ²⁴וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָעֶפְל וַיִּקַּח
מִיָּדָם וַיִּפְקֹד בְּבֵית וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ: ²⁵וְהוּא־בָּא וַיַּעֲמֵד אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֵלִישָׁע מֶאֵן גִּיחֲזִי וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא־הִלֵּךְ עִבְדְּךָ אֵנָּה וְאֵנָּה: ²⁶וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלָיו לֹא־לְבִי הִלֵּךְ כְּאִשֶּׁר הִפְדָּ־אִישׁ מֵעַל מֶרְכָּבָתוֹ לִקְרֹאתְךָ הָעֵת לִקְחֹת
אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף וְלִקְחֹת בְּגָדִים וַיִּתִּים וּכְרָמִים וְצֹאן וּבָקָר וְעִבְדִּים וְשִׁפְחוֹת:
²⁷וַצִּרְעַת נֶעֱמָן תִּרְבֶּק־בְּךָ וּבִזְרַעְךָ לְעוֹלָם וַיֵּצֵא מִלִּפְנָיו מִצְרַע כְּשִׁלְנִי:

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was important to his lord and high
in his favor, for through him Adonai had granted salvation to Aram. The man was a
mighty hero inflicted with *tzora'at*⁵². When the Aramean bands were out, they captured a
young girl from the land of Israel, and she was before Naaman's wife. She said to her
mistress, "Ah, that my lord would be before the prophet in Samaria, he would remove his
tzora'at from him." He went and told his lord, saying, "Like this and like that the girl
from the land of Israel has spoken." And the king of Aram said, "Go and I will send a
document to the king of Israel,." He set out, taking with him ten talents of silver, six
thousand gold pieces, and ten changes of clothing. He brought the document to the king
of Israel. It said, "Now, when this letter comes to you, know that I have sent my servant
Naaman to you, so you will cure him of his *tzora'at*." When the king of Israel read the
document, he rent his clothes and said, "Am I God, to make die or live, that this is sent to
me to remove *tzora'at* from a man? But please know and see that he is seeking a quarrel
against me!" When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had rent his

⁵² JPS, Oxford, and KJV translate this as "leprosy," but it is probably closer to psoriasis, which can be healed while leprosy cannot. This translation uses the Hebrew name of the disease to not cause any lexical problems.

clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you rent your clothes? Please bring him to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came on his horses and chariot and stood at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and bathe seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be returned to you pure." Naaman was enraged and he walked and said, "Behold, I said he would surely come out to me, and would stand and call the name of Adonai his God, and would wave his hand at the place, and remove the *tzora'at*. Are the Amanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, not better than all the waters of Israel? Will I not be pure washing in them?" He turned and went in a rage. His servants approached and spoke to him, saying, "My father, if the prophet had spoken a great thing to you, would you not do it? How much more when he has said to you, 'Bathe and be pure.'?" He went down and immersed in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had said, and his flesh returned like a little boy's flesh, and he was pure. He returned to the man of God bringing his entire retinue. He stood before him and said, "Please behold! I know that there is no God in any land except in Israel! Please take now a gift⁵³ from your servant." He said, "By God's life, before whom I serve, I will not take it." He pressed him to take it, and he refused. And Naaman said, "Please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth, for your servant will never again offer up burnt offering or sacrifice to another god, except Adonai. For this thing may Adonai pardon your servant. When my master come to Beit-Rimmon to bow down there, and he is leaning on my arm and makes me bow down at Beit-Rimmon, when I bow down at Beit-Rimmon, please let Adonai forgive your servant for this." And

⁵³ Lit. "blessing."

he said to him, "Go in peace." And he went a distance from him⁵⁴. Gehazi, the boy of Elisha the man of God, said, "My master has refrained from taking what that Aramean Naaman brought! By the life of Adonai, I will run after him and take something from him." Gehazi chased after Naaman, and Naaman saw him running after him, and he fell from his chariot and called to him, saying, "Peace?" He said, "Peace. My master has sent me to say, 'Behold this now! Two youths, guild prophets from the hills of Ephraim, have come to me. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" Naaman said willingly, "Please take two talents." He broke through, and he wrapped the two talents of silver in two bags, and two changes of clothes, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them ahead of him. When he arrived at the citadel, he took from their hands and deposited⁵⁵ them in the house. He sent the men away and they went. He came and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him, "Where were you, Gehazi?" He said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." He said to him, "Did my heart not go when a man overturned from his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to take money and clothing and olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves? The *tzora'at* of Naaman will cling to you and to your descendants forever." And when he left his presence, he was with *tzora'at* like snow.

Elijah Makes Metal Float: 2Kings 6:1-7

וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי-הַנְּבִיאִים אֶל-אֱלִישָׁע הִנֵּה-נָא הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכְנוּ יֹשְׁבִים שָׁם
 לַפָּנִיךָ צָר מִמֶּנּוּ: ²נִלְכְּהָ-נָא עַד-הַיַּרְדֵּן וְנִקְחָהּ מִשָּׁם. אִישׁ קִוְרָה אֶחָת
 וְנַעֲשֶׂה-לָּנוּ שָׁם מָקוֹם לְשֹׁכֵת שָׁם וַיֹּאמֶר לָכֵן: ³וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֶחָד הוּאֹל נָא וְלֵךְ
 אַתְּ-עֲבֹדֵיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אָנִי אֵלֶיךָ: ⁴וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתָּם וַיִּבְאוּ הַיַּרְדֵּנָה וַיִּגְזְרוּ הָעֵצִים: ⁵וַיְהִי
 הָאֶחָד מִפִּיל הַקִּוְרָה וְאֶת-הַבְּרֹזֶל נָפַל אֶל-הַמַּיִם וַיִּצְעַק וַיֹּאמֶר אָהָה אֲדֹנָי

⁵⁴ It seems to be a specific distance, but exactly how far is uncertain, (BDB 460)

⁵⁵ JPS

והוא שאול: ⁶ ויאמר איש־האלהים אנה נפל ויראהו את־המקום ויקצב־עץ
וישלך־שמה ויצף הברזל: ⁷ ויאמר הרם לך וישלח ידו ויקחהו:

The guild prophets said to Elisha, "Please behold, the place where we live before you is too cramped for us. Please let us go to the Jordan, and let each one of us to the man take a beam from there and make for ourselves there a place to live there." He said, "Go." One said, "Will you please go with your servants?" He said, "I will come," and he went with them. They came to the Jordan and cut wood. As one of them was felling a beam, the iron⁵⁶ fell into the water. And he cried out, saying, "O master, it was borrowed!" The man of God said, "Where did it fall?" He showed him the place, and he cut off wood and threw it there, and he made the iron float. He said, "Pick it up," and he reached out his hand and took it.

Elisha and the King of Aram: 2Kings 6:8-23

⁸ ומלך ארם היה נלחם בישראל ויועץ אל־עבדיו לאמר אל־מקום פלני אלמני תחנתי: ⁹ וישלח איש האלהים אל־מלך ישראל לאמר השמר מעבר המקום הזה כי־שם ארם נחתים: ¹⁰ וישלח מלך ישראל אל־המקום אשר אמר־לו איש־האלהים והזהירה וגשם שם לא אחת ולא שתיים: ¹¹ ויסער לב מלך־ארם על־הדבר הזה ויקרא אל־עבדיו ויאמר אליהם הלוא תגידו לי מי משלנו אל־מלך ישראל: ¹² ויאמר אחד מעבדיו לוא אדני המלך כי־אלישע הנביא אשר בישראל יגיד למלך ישראל את־הדברים אשר תדבר בחדר משכבך: ¹³ ויאמר לכו וראו איכה הוא ואשלח ואקחהו ויגד־לו לאמר הנה בדתך: ¹⁴ וישלח שמה סוסים ורכב וחיל כבד ויבאו לילה ויקפו על־העיר: ¹⁵ וישכם משרת איש האלהים לקום ויצא והנה־חיל סובב את־העיר וסוס ורכב ויאמר נערו אליו אהה אדני איכה נעשה: ¹⁶ ויאמר אל־תירא כי רבים אשר אתנו מאשר אותם: ¹⁷ ויתפלל אלישע ויאמר יהוה פקח־נא את־עיניו ויראה ויפקח יהוה את־עיני הנער וירא והנה החר מלא סוסים ורכב אש סביבת אלישע: ¹⁸ ויגדו אליו ויתפלל אלישע אל־יהוה ויאמר הֲדָנָא את־הנזי־הזה בסנורים ויפם בסנורים כדבר אלישע: ¹⁹ ויאמר אלהם אלישע לא זה הדרך ולא זה העיר לכו אחרי

⁵⁶ From the head of the axe

וְאֵלֵיכָה אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּבְקֶשׁוּן וַיֵּלֶךְ אוֹתָם שְׁמֵרוֹנָה: ²⁰ וַיְהִי כְּבָאֵם שְׁמֵרוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע יְהוֹה פָּקַח אֶת־עֵינֵי־אֵלֶּה וַיֵּרְאוּ וַיִּפְקַח יְהוֹה אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם וַיֵּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה בְּתוֹךְ שְׁמֵרוֹן: ²¹ וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־אֵלִישָׁע כִּרְאֹתוֹ אוֹתָם הָאֵפָה אֵפָה אֲבִי: ²² וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא חֶפֶז הָאִשׁ שֶׁבֵּית בַּחֲרָבָה וּבִקְשָׁתָהּ אֵתָהּ מִכָּה שִׁים לֶחֶם וּמִים לַפְּנִיָּהּ וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ אֶל־אֲדֹנֵיהֶם: ²³ וַיִּכְרֶה לָהֶם כְּרֶה גְדוֹלָה וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיִּשְׁלַחֵם וַיֵּלְכוּ אֶל־אֲדֹנֵיהֶם וְלֹא־יִסְפוּ עוֹד גְּדוּרֵי אֶרֶם לָבוֹא בָּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

The king of Aram was battling Israel. He was counseled by his servants and said, "I will encamp in such and such a place." And the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, "Be on guard of passing through that place, for the Arameans have gone down there." The king of Israel sent⁵⁷ to the place which the man of God had told him. He warned and was wary there not once and not twice. The king of Aram was enraged to the heart about this matter, and he summoned his servants and said to them, "Will you not tell me who of us is for the king of Israel?" One of the officers said, "No one, my lord king, but Elisha the prophet in Israel tells the king of Israel the words you speak in your bedroom." He said, "Go find out where he is and I will send and seize him." It was told to him saying, "Behold, in Dothan." He sent horses and chariots there and a heavy army. They came at night and went around the city. The attendant of the man of God rose early and went outside, and beheld an army surrounding the town with horses and chariots. His servant said to him, "O, lord, what will we do?" He said, "Do not fear. There are more with us than with them." Elisha prayed, saying "Adonai, please open his eyes and let him see." And Adonai opened the boy's eyes and he saw, and beheld the hills all around Elisha full of horses and chariots of fire. They came down against him, and Elisha prayed to Adonai, saying, "Please smite this people with a sudden blindness." And He smote them with a sudden blindness, as Elisha had said. Elisha said to them, "This is not the road,

⁵⁷ He probably sent spies, thought JPS and Oxford say, "sent word."

and that is not the city, follow me, and I will lead you to the man you seek." And he led them to Samaria. When they came to Samaria, Elisha said, "Adonai, open their eyes and let them see." Adonai opened their eyes and they saw that behold! They were inside Samaria. When he saw them, the king of Israel said to Elisha, "Father, shall I surely smite them?" He said, "Do not smite them. Did you capture them with your sword and your bow that you would smite them? Set bread and water before them, and let them eat and drink and go to their master." He prepared a great feast for them and they ate and drank and he sent them to go to their master. And never again did the Aramean bands come to the land of Israel.

Elisha Predicts Ben-Hadad's Officer's Death: 2Kings 6:24-7:20

²⁴ וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי־כֵן וַיִּקְבֹּץ בֶּן־הַדָּד מֶלֶךְ־אַרָם אֶת־כָּל־מַחֲנֵהוּ וַיַּעַל וַיֵּצֵר עַל־
שָׁמְרוֹן: ²⁵ וַיְהִי רָעַב גָּדוֹל בְּשָׁמְרוֹן וַהֲנָה צָרִים עָלֶיהָ עַד הָיִיתָ רֹאש־חֲמוֹר
בְּשִׁמְנִים כֶּסֶף וְרָבַע הַקֶּבֶץ חֲרִיּוֹנִים בַּחֲמִשָּׁה־כֶּסֶף: ²⁶ וַיְהִי מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹבֵר
עַל־הַחֲמָה וְאִשָּׁה צָעָקָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר הוֹשִׁיעָה אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ: ²⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶי־
יֹשֻׁעַד יְהוָה מֵאִין אוֹשִׁיעַד הַמֶּן־הַגֶּרֶן אוֹ מֶן־הַיָּקֵב: ²⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר־לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ
מַה־לָּךְ וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת אָמְרָה אֵלַי תָּנִי אֶת־בִּנְךָ וְנֹאכְלֶנּוּ הַיּוֹם וְאֵת־
בְּנֵי נֹאכַל מָחָר: ²⁹ וַנִּבְשֹׁל אֶת־בְּנֵי וְנֹאכְלֶהוּ וְאָמַר אֵלֶיהָ בַּיּוֹם הָאֶחָד תָּנִי
אֶת־בִּנְךָ וְנֹאכְלֶנּוּ וַתַּחֲבֹא אֶת־בְּנָהּ: ³⁰ וַיְהִי כַשֵּׁמֶעַ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָאִשָּׁה
וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְהוּא עֹבֵר עַל־הַחֲמָה וַיִּרְא הָעָם וַהֲנָה הַשֶּׁקַּע עַל־בִּשְׂרוֹ
מִבֵּית: ³¹ וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה־יַעֲשֶׂה־לִּי אֱלֹהִים וְכֹה יוֹסֵף אִם־יַעֲמֹד רֹאשׁ אֱלִישָׁע בֶּן־
שַׁפְטָן עָלָיו הַיּוֹם: ³² וְאֱלִישָׁע יָשָׁב בְּבֵיתוֹ וְהַזְקֵנִים יֹשְׁבִים אִתּוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח אִישׁ
מִלִּפְנֵיו בְּטָרֶם יָבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלָיו וְהוּא אָמַר אֶל־הַזְקֵנִים הֲרֵאִיתֶם כִּי־שָׁלַח
בֶּן־הַמְּרִצָּח הַזֶּה לְהַסִּיר אֶת־רֹאשִׁי רָאוּ כִּבְּא הַמֶּלֶךְ סָגְרוּ הַדֹּלֶת וּלְחַצְתֶּם
אִתּוֹ בַּדֹּלֶת הַלּוֹא קוֹל רִגְלֵי אֲדֹנָיו אַחֲרָיו: ³³ עוֹדְנֵנוּ מְדַבֵּר עִמָּם וַהֲנָה הַמֶּלֶךְ
יָרַד אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־זֹאת הָרָעָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה מַה־אוֹחִיל לִיהוֹנָה עוֹד:
7:1 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלִישָׁע שְׁמַעְנוּ דְּבַר־יְהוָה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה כַּעַת מָחָר סָאֵה־סֶלֶת
בַּשֶּׁקֶל וְסֹאתִים שְׁעָרִים בַּשֶּׁקֶל בְּשַׁעַר שָׁמְרוֹן: ² וַיַּעַן הַשְּׁלִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־לַמֶּלֶךְ נִשְׁעָן
עַל־יָדוֹ אֶת־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה אֲרָבוֹת בְּשָׂמַיִם הִיחִיָּה
הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּכָה רָאָה בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּמָשָׁם לֹא תֹאכַל: ³ וְאַרְבַּעָה אָנָּשִׁים הָיוּ

מִצָּרַעִים פָּתַח הַשָּׁעַר וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ מָה אֲנַחְנוּ יֹשְׁבִים פֹּה עַד־
מָתְנוּ: ⁴ אִם־אָמְרֵנוּ נָבֹא הָעִיר וְהָרַעַב בְּעִיר וּמָתְנוּ שָׁם וְאִם־יִשְׁבְּנוּ פֹה וּמָתְנוּ
וְעָתָה לָכוּ וְנִפְלֵה אֶל־מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם אִם־יַחֲיֵנוּ נַחִיה וְאִם־יָמִיתֵנוּ וּמָתְנוּ: ⁵ וַיָּקֻמוּ
בְּנֶשֶׁף לָבֹא אֶל־מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־קִצְהַ מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם וְהָיָה אִין־שָׁם אִישׁ:
⁶ וַאֲדָנִי הַשְּׁמִיעַ אֶת־מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם קוֹל רֶכֶב קוֹל סוֹס קוֹל חֵיל גָּדוֹל וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו הִנֵּה שָׂכַר־עָלֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מַלְכֵי הַחַתִּים וְאֶת־מַלְכֵי
מִצְרַיִם לָבֹא עָלֵינוּ: ⁷ וַיָּקֻמוּ וַיִּנּוֹסוּ בְּנֶשֶׁף וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־אֱהֻלֵּיהֶם וְאֶת־סוּסֵיהֶם
וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵיהֶם הַמַּחֲנֵה כַּאֲשֶׁר־הָיָה וַיִּנּוֹסוּ אֶל־נַפְשָׁם: ⁸ וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמִּצְרָעִים הָאֵלֶּה
עַד־קִצְהַ הַמַּחֲנֵה וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־אֶהֱלֹךְ אַחֵד וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִשָּׁם כֶּסֶף
וְזָהָב וּבְגָדִים וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיִּטְמְנוּ וַיָּשָׁבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־אֶהֱלֹךְ אַחֵד וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִשָּׁם וַיֵּלְכוּ
וַיִּטְמְנוּ: ⁹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ לֹא־כֵן אֲנַחְנוּ עֹשִׂים הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יוֹם־בִּשְׁרָה
הוּא וְאֲנַחְנוּ מַחֲשִׁים וְחִפְיָנוּ עַד־אֹרֶךְ הַבֶּקֶר וּמִצָּאָנוּ עוֹן וְעָתָה לָכוּ וְנִבְאָה
וְנִגִּידָה בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: ¹⁰ וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־שַׁעַר הָעִיר וַיִּגִּידוּ לָהֶם לֵאמֹר בָּאוּ
אֶל־מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם וְהָיָה אִין־שָׁם אִישׁ וְקוֹל אָדָם כִּי אִם־הַסּוֹס אֲסוּר וְהַחֲמֹר
אֲסוּר וְאֱהֻלִּים כַּאֲשֶׁר־הָמָּה: ¹¹ וַיִּקְרָא הַשָּׁעָרִים וַיִּגִּידוּ בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּנִימָה:
¹² וַיָּקָם הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־עַבְדָּיו אֲנִידֶה־נָּא לָכֶם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ
לָנוּ אֲרָם יָדְעוּ כִּי־רַעֲבִים אֲנַחְנוּ וַיֵּצְאוּ מִן־הַמַּחֲנֵה לְהַחֲבֶה בַּהֲשָׁדָה לֵאמֹר
כִּי־יֵצְאוּ מִן־הָעִיר וְנִתְפַּשֵּׁם חַיִּים וְאֶל־הָעִיר נָבֹא: ¹³ וַיַּעַן אַחֵד מֵעַבְדָּיו
וַיֹּאמֶר וַיִּקְחוּ־נָא חֲמִשָּׁה מִן־הַסּוּסִים הַנִּשְׁאָרִים אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאָרוּ־בָהּ הֲנִם כָּל־
הַחֲמֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאָרוּ־בָהּ הֲנִם כָּל־הַחֲמֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר־תָּמוּ וְנִשְׁלַחַה
וְנִרְאָה: ¹⁴ וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי רֶכֶב סוּסִים וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵי מַחֲנֵה־אֲרָם לֵאמֹר
לָכוּ וּרְאוּ: ¹⁵ וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם עַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן וְהָיָה כָל־הַדֶּרֶךְ מְלֹאָה בְּגָדִים
וְכֵלִים אֲשֶׁר־הִשְׁלִיכוּ אֲרָם בַּהֲחִפּוֹם וַיָּשָׁבוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים וַיִּגִּדוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ: ¹⁶ וַיֵּצֵא
הָעָם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶת־מַחֲנֵה אֲרָם וַיְהִי סָאֵה־סֵלֶת בְּשָׁקֶל וְסָאֵתִים שְׁעָרִים בְּשָׁקֶל
כְּדָבָר יְהוָה: ¹⁷ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ הִפְקִיד אֶת־הַשְּׁלִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁעַן עַל־יָדוֹ עַל־
הַשָּׁעַר וַיִּרְמְסֵהוּ הָעָם בַּשָּׁעַר וַיָּמָת כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר
בְּרֹדֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלָיו: ¹⁸ וַיְהִי כְּדָבָר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לֵאמֹר סָאֵתִים
שְׁעָרִים בְּשָׁקֶל וְסָאֵה־סֵלֶת בְּשָׁקֶל יְהִי כַּעַת מִחֵר בַּשָּׁעַר שְׁמֹרוֹן: ¹⁹ וַיַּעַן
הַשְּׁלִישׁ אֶת־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר וְהָיָה עֲשֵׂה אַרְבּוֹת בְּשָׁמַיִם הִיְהִיָּה
כְּדָבָר הַזֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה רָאָה בְּעֵינַיִךְ וּמִשָּׁם לֹא תֹאכַל: ²⁰ וַיְהִי־לּוֹ כֵּן וַיִּרְמְסוּ
אֹתוֹ הָעָם בַּשָּׁעַר וַיָּמָת:

After this, King Ben-hadad of Aram gathered his entire army and went up and besieged
Samaria. There was a great famine in Samaria, and the siege was upon it until a donkey's
head was eighty pieces of silver and a quarter of a kab of doves' dung was five silver

pieces. When the king of Israel was walking on the wall, a woman cried out to him saying, "Help me, my lord king!" He said, "No. Let Adonai help you! Where could I get help for you, from the threshing floor or from the winepress?" The king said to her, "What is with you?" The woman answered, "That woman said to me, 'Give me your son and we will eat him today, and tomorrow we will eat my son.' We boiled my son and we ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give me your son and let us eat him,' and she hid her son." When the king heard the woman's words, he rent his clothes, and he crossed over the wall, and the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth against his flesh in his house. He said, "Thus and more may God do to me if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stands on him today." Elisha was sitting at his home and the elders were sitting with him. He sent a man before him. Before the messenger came, he said to the elders, "Do you see that the murderer has sent this man to take away my head! Watch when the messenger comes, shut the door and push him out the door. Will the sound of his master's feet not follow?" While he was still talking to them, behold! The messenger went down to him and said, "This evil is from Adonai. How much longer will I wait for Adonai?" And Elisha said, "Hear the word of Adonai. Thus said Adonai: This time tomorrow, a seah of choice flour will be a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria." The officer on whose arm the king was leaning spoke up answered the man of God saying, "Behold! Adonai will make windows in the sky, is that what will happen?" And he said, "You behold! You will see it with your own eyes and you will not eat of it." Four men struck with *tzora'at* were at the opening of the gate. They said to one another, "How can we sit here until we die? If we say we will go into the city, the famine in the town will kill us there, and if we just sit here, we will die now. Let's go lie in the

Aramean camp. If they let us live, we will live, and if they kill us, we will die." They got up at twilight to come to the Aramean camp. They came to the edge of the Aramean camp, and not a man was there, for Adonai had caused the Aramean camp to hear a sound of chariots, horses, and a great army. They said to one another, "Behold! The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Mitzraim to come against us!" And they got up and fled at twilight, leaving their tents and horses and asses. The camp was as it was and they fled for their souls. When those men infected with *tzora'at* came to the edge of the camp, they came into one of the tents and ate and drank, and they took silver and gold and clothing from there and went to hide it. They returned and came to another tent, and they took from there and went to hide it. They said to one another, "We are not doing right. This is a day of good tidings, and we are being silent! If we wait until the light of morning, we will find guilt. Now, let us go and tell the king's house." They came and called out to the city porter and told them, saying, "We came to the Aramean camp, and behold, there is not a man there, nor any human sound, and the horses and the asses are bound and the tents are as they are." The porter called out, and told the king's house within. The king got up at night and said to his servants, "Please let me tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are starving, and they have gone out of camp to hide in the fields, saying, 'When they come out of the town, we will sieze them alive and come to the city.'" One of the servants answered, saying, "Please take five of the remaining horses that remain here, like the whole multitude of Israel that remains here, like the whole multitude of Israel that is finished, and let us send and see." They took two horse riders and the king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, "Go and see." They went after them as far as the Jordan, and behold the entire road was full

of clothing and vessels which the Arameans had thrown away in their haste, and the messengers returned and told the king. The people then went out and plundered the Aramean camp. So a seah of choice flour was a shekel, and two seahs of barley was a shekel as Adonai had spoken. Now the king had appointed the officer on whose arm he leaned to the gate, and the people trampled him at the gate and he died, as the words of the man of God, that he spoke when the king came down to him. When the man of God spoke to the king, saying, "A seah of choice flour will be a shekel, and two seahs of barley will be a shekel at the gate of Samaria at this time tomorrow," and the officer answered the man of God and said, "Behold! Adonai will make windows in the sky, is that what will happen?" And he said, "You behold! You will see it with your own eyes and you will not eat of it." And it was thus for him: The people trampled him at the gate and he died.

Elisha Aids the Shunnamite Woman: 2Kings 8:1-6

וְאֵלִישָׁע דִּבֶּר אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־הָחִיָּה אֶת־בְּנָהּ לֵאמֹר קוּמִי וּלְכִי אִתִּי וּבִיתְךָ
וְגוּרֵי בָאִשָּׁר תִּגְוִרִי כִּי־קָרָא יְהוָה לָרֶעֶב וְגַם־בָּא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ שִׁבַּע שָׁנִים:
²וַתָּקֶם הָאִשָּׁה וַתַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַתֵּלֶךְ הִיא וּבִיתָהּ וַתָּגֶר
בָּאָרֶץ־פְּלִשְׁתִּים שִׁבַּע שָׁנִים: ³וַיְהִי מִקְצֵה שִׁבַּע שָׁנִים וַתָּשָׁב הָאִשָּׁה מֵאָרֶץ
פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַתֵּצֵא לְצֶעֱק אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־בֵּיתָהּ וְאֶל־שָׂדֶה: ⁴וַהֲמֵלֶךְ מִדְּבַר אֶל־נָחֳזִי
נָעַר אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר סִפְּרָה־נָּא לִּי אֵת כָּל־הַנִּדְלֹת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה אֵלִישָׁע:
⁵וַיְהִי הוּא מֹסֵפֶר לַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־הָחִיָּה אֶת־הַמֶּת וְהֵנָּה הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־הָחִיָּה
אֶת־בְּנָהּ צֶעֱקָה אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־בֵּיתָהּ וְעַל־שָׂדֶה וַיֹּאמֶר נָחֳזִי אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ
זֹאת הָאִשָּׁה וְזֶה־בְּנָהּ אֲשֶׁר־הָחִיָּה אֵלִישָׁע: ⁶וַיִּשְׁאַל הַמֶּלֶךְ לָאִשָּׁה וַתֹּסֵפֶר־לוֹ
וַיִּתֵּן־לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ סָרִיס אֶחָד לֵאמֹר הָשִׁיב אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לָהּ וְאֵת כָּל־תְּבוּאֹת
הַשָּׂדֶה מִיּוֹם עֲזָבָה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְעַד־עַתָּה:

Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he revived, saying, "Get up and go with your household and live where you will live, for Adonai has proclaimed a famine that will come upon the land seven years." The woman got up and did as the man of God had

spoken, she went up with her family and lived in the land of the Philistines for seven years. At the end of the seven years, the woman returned from the land of the Philistines and went out to cry to the king about her house and farm. The king was speaking to Gehazi, the boy of the man of God, and he said, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done." While he was telling the king about the revival of the dead, behold! The woman whose son he had revived came, crying to the king about her house and field. Gehazi said, "My lord king, this is the woman and this is her son whom Elisha revived." The king questioned the woman, and she told him, and the king gave her one eunuch and said, "Return all that is hers, and all the revenue from her field from the day she left the land until now."

Elisha Predicts the Succession of Hazael: 2 Kings 8:7-15

7 וַיָּבֹא אֵלִישָׁע דִּמְשֶׁק וּבֶן-הַדָּד מֶלֶךְ-אַרָם חָלָה וַיִּגְדֹּל לּוֹ לֵאמֹר בֹּא אִישׁ
הָאֱלֹהִים עַד-הֵנָּה: 8 וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-חֲזַאֵל קַח בִּידְךָ מִנְחָה וְלֵךְ לִקְרֹאת
אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וְדַרְשֵׁת אֶת-יְהוָה מֵאוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר הָאֲחִיָּה מַחְלִי זֶה: 9 וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲזַאֵל
לִקְרֹאתוֹ וַיִּקַּח מִנְחָה בְיָדוֹ וְכָל-טוֹב דִּמְשֶׁק מִשָּׂא אַרְבָּעִים זָמַל וַיָּבֹא
וַיַּעֲמֵד לִפְנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֶךְ בֶּן-הַדָּד מֶלֶךְ-אַרָם שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר הָאֲחִיָּה
מַחְלִי זֶה: 10 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֵלִישָׁע לֵךְ אָמַר-לָא (לֹא) חַיָּה תְּחִיָּה וְהִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה
כִּי-מוֹת יָמוּת: 11 וַיַּעֲמֵד אֶת-פָּנָיו וַיִּשֶׂם עַד-בֶּשׂ וַיִּבֶךְ אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים:
12 וַיֹּאמֶר חֲזַאֵל מְדוּעַ אֲדֹנָי בָּכָה וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי-יָדַעְתִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-תַּעֲשֶׂה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
רָעָה מִבְּעֲרִיָּהֶם תִּשְׁלַח בָּאֵשׁ וּבְחֲרִיָּהֶם בְּחֶרֶב תַּהַרֵּג וְעַלְלֵיהֶם תִּרְפֹּשׁ וְהִרְתִּיהֶם
תִּבְקַע: 13 וַיֹּאמֶר חֲזַאֵל כִּי מָה עֹבְדֶיךָ הַפֶּלֶב כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה הַדָּבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע הִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה אֶתְּךָ מֶלֶךְ עַל-אַרָם: 14 וַיֵּלֶךְ מֵאֵת אֵלִישָׁע
וַיָּבֹא אֶל-אֲדֹנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מָה-אָמַר לְךָ אֵלִישָׁע וַיֹּאמֶר אָמַר לִי חַיָּה
תְּחִיָּה: 15 וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיִּקַּח הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּטְבֹּל בַּמַּיִם וַיִּפְרֹשׁ עַל-פָּנָיו וַיָּמוּת
וַיִּמְלֹךְ חֲזַאֵל תַּחְתָּיו:

Elisha came to Damascus, and King Ben-hadad of Aram was sick. The king was told,

"The man of God is coming here." The king said to Hazael, "Take and offering in your

hand and go meet the man of God, and through him consult Adonai, saying, 'Will I revive from this sickness?'" Hazael went to meet him, taking an offering in his hand, and forty camel-loads of all goodness of Damascus. He came and stood before him and said, "Your son, Ben-hadad King of Aram, has sent me to you to say, 'Will I revive from this sickness?'" Elisha said to him, "Go and say to him, 'You will revive.' And Adonai has made me see that he will surely die." His face stood in place until he was ashamed, and the man of God wept. Hazael said, "Why does my lord weep?" He said, "Because I know what evil you will do to the Israelites. You send fire to their fortresses, kill their young men by the sword, dash their little ones to pieces, and rip open their pregnant women." Hazael said, "But how can your servant the dog, do this great deed?" Elisha said, "Adonai has shown me you as king of Aram." He went from Elisha and came to his master. He said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" He said, "He told me that you will revive." The next day, he took a piece of netting, dipped it in water, and spread it over his face, and he died, and Hazael reigned in his place.

The Anointing of Jehu: 2 Kings 9:1-14

וְאֵלִישָׁעַ הַנָּבִיא קָרָא לְאֶחָד מִבְּנֵי הַנָּבִיאִים וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ חָנַן מְחַנֵּיךְ וְקַח פֶּךָ הַשֶּׁמֶן הַזֶּה בִּידֶךָ וְלֵךְ רֵמַת גִּלְעָד׃² וּבָאתָ שָׁמָּה וּרְאֵה-שָׁם יְהוּא בֶן-יְהוֹשָׁפָט בֶּן-נִמְשִׁי וּבָאתָ וְהִקְמַתוֹ מִתּוֹךְ אָחָיו וְהִבִּיאתָ אֹתוֹ חֹדֶר בְּחֹדֶר׃³ וְלָקַחְתָּ פֶךְ-הַשֶּׁמֶן וַיִּצְקֶתָ עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה מְשַׁחְתִּיךָ לְמֶלֶךְ אֶל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפְתַחְתָּ הַדֶּלֶת וְנִסְתָּה וְלֹא תִחַפֶּה׃⁴ וַיֵּלֶךְ הַנָּעַר הַנָּעַר הַנָּבִיא רֵמַת גִּלְעָד׃⁵ וַיָּבֹא וְהִנֵּה שָׂרֵי הַחֵיל יֹשְׁבִים וַיֹּאמֶר דָּבָר לִי אֵלֶיךָ הָשָׁר וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּא אֶל-מִי מִכָּלֵנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיךָ הָשָׁר׃⁶ וַיָּקֻם וַיָּבֹא הַבֵּיתָה וַיִּצֶק הַשֶּׁמֶן אֶל-רֹאשׁוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מְשַׁחְתִּיךָ לְמֶלֶךְ אֶל-עַם יְהוָה אֶל-יִשְׂרָאֵל׃⁷ וְהִפִּיתָה אֶת-בֵּית אַחָב אֲדֹנֶיךָ וְנִקְמַתִּי דָמִי עֲבָדֵי הַנָּבִיאִים וְדָמִי כָל-עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה מִיַּד אִיזָבֵל׃⁸ וְאַבְדָּ כָל-בֵּית אַחָב וְהִכְרַתִּי לְאַחָב מִשְׁתֵּיוֹן בָּקִיר וְעֶצֶר וְעֹזַיִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל׃⁹ וְנִתְּתִי אֶת-בֵּית אַחָב כְּבֵית יִרְבֵּעַם

בִּן־נֶבֶט וּכְבִּיית בַּעֲשָׂא בֶן־אֲחִיָּה: ¹⁰ וְאֶת־אִיזָבֶל יֹאכְלוּ הַפְּלִבִּים בַּחֶלֶק יִזְרְעֵאל
וְאִין קִבֵּר וַיִּפְתַּח הַדֶּלֶת וַיֵּנֶס: ¹¹ וַיְהִי וַיָּצֵא אֶל־עַבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
הַשְׁלֹם מְדוּעַ בְּאֶהְמָשְׁנָע הַזֶּה אֵלַיךְ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם אַתֶּם יֹדְעִתֶם אֶת־הָאִישׁ
וְאֶת־שִׁיחוֹ: ¹² וַיֹּאמְרוּ שָׁקֵר הִנֵּד־נָא לָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר כִּזְזִית וּכְזֹאת אָמַר אֵלַי לֵאמֹר
כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה מְשַׁחֲתִיךָ לְמֶלֶךְ אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹³ וַיִּמְהָרוּ וַיִּקְחוּ אִישׁ בְּגָדוֹ
וַיִּשְׁימוּ תַּחְתָּיו אֶל־נֶרֶם הַמַּעֲלֹת וַיִּתְּקֻהוּ בְּשׁוֹפָר וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֶלֶךְ יְהוּא: ¹⁴ וַיִּתְּקֹשֶׁר
יְהוּא בֶן־יְהוֹשָׁפָט בֶּן־נִמְשִׁי אֶל־יֹרֶם וַיֹּרֶם הָיָה שֹׁמֵר בְּרַמַּת גִּלְעָד הוּא וְכָל־
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי חֲזָאֵל מֶלֶךְ־אֲרָם:

Elisha the prophet summoned one of the guild prophets and said to him, "Gird up your loins, take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. Come there, see Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi, come to him and get him up from his brothers, and take him into an inner room. Take the flask of oil and pour it on his head and say, 'Thus said Adonai: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee and do not wait." The boy, the boy of the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. He came and the army officers were sitting together. He said, "I have a message for you, Commander." Jehu said, "For which of all of us?" He said, "For you, commander." He got up and came to the house, and poured the oil on his head, and said to him, "Thus said Adonai, the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of Adonai, over Israel. You will smite the House of Ahab your master, and I avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all servants of Adonai at the hand of Jezebel. The whole House of Ahab will perish, and I will cut off everyone from Ahab, bond and free in Israel⁵⁸. I will make the House of Ahab like the House of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the House of Baasha son of Ahijah. The dogs will devour Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, there will be no burial." He opened the door and fled. Jehu went out to the servants of his master, and they said to him, "Peace? Why did that madman come to you?" He said to them, "You know the man

⁵⁸ See note above regarding this phrase.

and his musing!" They said, "You're lying. Please tell us." He said, "This and that he said, 'Thus said Adonai: I anoint you king over Israel!'" Each man hurried to take his cloak and placed it under him, on the strong level. They sounded the horn and said, "Jehu is king!" Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. Joram and all Israel had been defending Ramoth-gilead against King Hazael of Aram,

Elisha's Last Prophecy: 2Kings 13:14-19

¹⁴ וְאֵלִישָׁע חָלָה אֶת־חָלְיוֹ אֲשֶׁר יָמוּת בּוֹ וַיֵּרֶד אֵלָיו יוֹאָשׁ מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבֶן עַל־פָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו: ¹⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵלִישָׁע קַח קֶשֶׁת וַחֲצִים וַיִּקַּח אֵלָיו קֶשֶׁת וַחֲצִים: ¹⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר לְמֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲרֹכֵב יָדָךְ עַל־הַקֶּשֶׁת וַיִּרְכֹּב יָדָיו וַיִּשֶׂם אֵלִישָׁע יָדָיו עַל־יְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: ¹⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר פָּתַח הַחֲלוֹן קִדְמָה וַיִּפְתָּח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע יְרֵה וַיִּזֹּר וַיֹּאמֶר חֵץ־תִּשְׁוַעָה לַיהוָה וְחֵץ תִּשְׁוַעָה בְּאָרֶם וְהָכִיתָ אֶת־אָרֶם בְּאֶפֶק עַד־כְּלָה: ¹⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר קַח הַחֲצִים וַיִּקַּח וַיֹּאמֶר לְמֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל הִךְ־אֶרֶץ וַיִּךְ שְׁלֹשׁ־פַּעְמִים וַיַּעֲמֹד: ¹⁹ וַיִּקְצֹף עָלָיו אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַכּוֹת חֲמֵשׁ אִוֶּשֶׁשׁ פַּעְמִים אֹז הָכִיתָ אֶת־אָרֶם עַד־כְּלָה וַעֲתָה שְׁלֹשׁ פַּעְמִים תִּכֶּה אֶת־אָרֶם:

Elisha was sick with the illness of which he was to die, and King Joash of Israel went down to him. He wept over his face and said, "My father, my father! Israel's chariots and horsemen!" Elisha said to him, "Get a bow and arrows", and he got him a bow and arrows. He said to the king of Israel, "Make your hand ride the bow"⁵⁹. And his hand rode it, and Elisha put his hands over the king's hands. He said, "Open the window eastward," and he opened it. Elisha said, "Shoot!" and he shot. And he said, "An arrow of salvation for Adonai! An arrow of salvation from Aram! You will smite Aram completely at Aphek." He said, "Take the arrows." And he took them. He said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground!" and he struck three times and stood. The man of God

⁵⁹ A euphemism for, "Grasp the bow," as translated by JPS. This is possibly a term that derives from the way a bowstring looks when it is drawn as if to shoot, similar to a chariot's reins.

was angry with him and said, "If you had struck five or six times you would have smote Aram completely. Now you will smite Aram three times."

Elisha's Post-Mortem Miracle: 2Kings 13:20-21

²⁰ וַיָּמָת אֵלִישָׁע וַיִּקְבְּרוּהוּ וַיָּגִדוּדֵי מוֹאָב יָבֹאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ בִּיא שִׁנָּה: ²¹ וַיְהִי הֵם קִבְּרִים אִישׁ וְהִנֵּה רָאוּ אֶת־הַגִּדּוּד וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ בְּקִבְרֵי אֵלִישָׁע וַיִּלָּךְ וַיָּנֶע הָאִישׁ בְּעֵצְמוֹת אֵלִישָׁע וַיְחִי וַיָּקָם עַל־רַגְלָיו:

Elisha died and he was buried. Bands of Moabites come to the land at the coming of the year. It was that they were burying a man, and behold, they saw a band, and they threw the man into Elisha's grave. The man went and touched Elisha's bones, and he came to life and got up on his feet.

Elisha's Last Prophecy Comes True: 2Kings 13:24-25

²⁴ וַיָּמָת חֲזָאֵל מֶלֶךְ־אַרָם וַיָּמָלֶךְ בֶּן־הַדָּד בְּנוֹ תַחְתָּיו: ²⁵ וַיָּשָׁב יְהוֹאָשׁ בֶּן־יְהוֹאָחָז וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָעָרִים מִיַּד בֶּן־הַדָּד בֶּן־חֲזָאֵל אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִיַּד יְהוֹאָחָז אָבִיו בַּמִּלְחָמָה שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים הִכָּהוּ יוֹאָשׁ וַיָּשָׁב אֶת־עָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

King Hazael of Aram died, and his son Ben-hadad reigned in his place, and Jehoash son of Jehoahaz returned and took the towns from Ben-hadad son of Hazael which were taken from his father Jehoahaz in war. Three times Joash smote him, and he returned the cities of Israel.

Appendix B: Character Summaries

A. Gideon

Gideon's story is covered in Judges 6-8. Gideon is chosen by God to lead the Israelites against the Midianites. At first, he is wary of his calling. In a scene characteristic of a prophet being called to action¹, he resists the call, painting a picture of a reluctant leader. His first duty is to destroy the altars to Baal in Ophrah, which belonged to his father, Joash. Gideon, not wanting to be discovered in this act of defiance, destroys his father's altar at night, and builds a new altar to God. The next day, after the townspeople find out it was Gideon who had taken down the altar to Baal, they come after him, but it is Joash who stands up for Gideon, declaring that Baal should fight his own battles if he is a real god. Gideon is then given the name Jerubaal, meaning, "he who contends with Baal" (Judg 6:11-32).

Soon after, Midian, Amalek, and Kedem join forces and camp in the Valley of Jezreel. Enveloped by the spirit of God, Gideon rallies the troops of Israel with a blast from his shofar, gathering the Abiezerites, Manassites, Asherites, and Zebulunites in a massive army. After asking God for two more miracles, Gideon and his army of 32,000 men encamp at En-Harod. God then tells Gideon to let any of the men who are scared to leave, at which point 22,000 of them go, leaving still too many. God then tells Gideon to take the troops to the water, where the ones who lap the water with their tongues are told to remain with Gideon, and the ones who kneel are told to go back to their homes in

¹ Amit, 523 n6.

Israel. The 300 lappers and Gideon make camp above the Midianites who were camped on a plain (Judg 6:33-7:8).

At this point, God tells Gideon that if he is afraid, he may go into the Midianite camp with his servant Purah at night to listen to them. He and Purah hear a man talking about a dream that is interpreted by another as God delivering the Midianite camp into Israel's hands by the sword of Gideon. Upon hearing this news, Gideon devises a plan for the 300 men to overtake the Midianites (Judg 7:9-14).

Gideon and his army surround the Midianite camp while they sleep. On Gideon's cue, they sound their horns, smash jars they were holding, and shout battle cries. The Midianite army, confused and alarmed, has their swords turned on each other by God. Most kill one another, and the rest run away. Then Gideon sends a message to the Ephramites, telling them to cut the Midianites from their water supply. The Ephramite army captures the Midianite generals Oreb and Zeeb, whose heads they bring back to Gideon. Gideon is then rebuked by the Ephramites, who were not asked to join his army. Gideon skillfully calms them, saying that their accomplishment of dealing with Oreb and Zeeb was greater than what Gideon had done (Judg 7:15-8:3).

The army of Gideon then crosses the Jordan, chasing the remainder of the Midianites. As they pass through Succoth and Peniel, he asks their leaders to spare food for his soldiers. At both cities, they refuse, and Gideon promises to wreak havoc on them upon his return. Sure enough, Gideon is able to capture Zebah and Zalmuna, Midian's two kings, which sends the rest of the Midianites into panic, thereby completing the defeat of the Midianite army. When he returns to Succoth, he threshes the town elders

with thorns and briers, and he tears down the tower at Penuel and kills its people (Judg 8:4-17).

Ending his military campaign at the peak of his violent behavior, Gideon then tells his son Jeter to kill Zebah and Zalmuna. When Jeter cannot, the two kings taunt Gideon, so Gideon kills them himself and takes the medallions off their camels' necks (Judg 8:18-21).

The Israelites then ask Gideon to be their king, but he refuses, saying: "Only God will rule over you." This statement seems to characterize Gideon as a noble, selfless Yahwist, but then he makes the mistake of taking an earring from each man the Israelites defeated as booty. He collects 1700 shekels worth of gold, makes an ephod out of it, and sets it up in Ophrah. This ephod becomes the downfall of the house of Gideon, for though the Israelites enjoy forty years of peace because of him. However, it is also because of him that they again go to worship Baal, because they worship the ephod in Ophrah instead of worshiping God at the altar Gideon erected (Judg 8:22-35).

By the time Gideon dies, he has seventy sons from his many wives, among them Abimelech, who becomes king after Gideon's death (Judg 8:30-31).

B. Samson

Samson's story spans Judges 13:24-16:31. His story begins with his parents, Manoah and "his wife," who are unable to have children. An angel approaches the wife and tells her to abstain from strong drink, grape products, and unclean food, for she will bear a son who will be dedicated to God. After she gives birth, she names him Samson, and he is blessed by God (Judg 13:3-25).

While in Timnah years later, Samson falls for a Philistine woman and decides to make her his wife. On his way to meet her for the first time, a lion attacks him, but the spirit of Adonai possesses him and he rips the lion in half with his bare hands. One year later, he returns to the same place to see bees and honey in the lion's carcass, which he takes to share with his parents. At his wedding celebration, he propounds a riddle about the lion and the honey to his thirty wedding companions, posing a bet of thirty linen tunics and thirty sets of clothing if they could not guess the riddle. When they correctly guess the riddle on the seventh day, he knows they had gotten the answer from his wife, because she was the only person with whom he shared the answer. In a rage aided by the spirit of God, Samson kills thirty men of Ashkelon and uses their tunics and clothing to pay for the bet. He then leaves alone for his father's house (Judg 14:1-20).

When he returns to Timnah during the wheat harvest season looking for his wife, he finds that she had been married off to one of his wedding companions. He then attaches torches to the tails of 300 foxes, and sets them about the wheat fields, torching the city's wheat supply for the year. In response to this, the Philistines set fire to Samson's wife and father-in-law, and Samson in response to that vows revenge on the Philistines. He beats them and hides in a cave (Judg 15:1-8).

Then, when the Judahites are being tormented by the Philistines for harboring Samson in their midst, they go to him and ask if they may take him to the Philistines. When he got to them, Samson breaks through the ropes that bound him, picks up a donkey's jaw bone, and kills 1000 Philistine men with it. After his attack on the Philistines, he composes a rhyme about the slaying of the men with a donkey jaw (Judg 15:9-17).

He then becomes thirsty and calls out to God for help. God opens the hollow at Lehi, making water come out for Samson to drink. He then leads Israel for twenty years as its chieftain (Judg 15:8-20).

Some time later, Samson was sleeping with a whore when a group of Gazites was plotting to ambush him at daybreak. But at midnight, Samson tore the town gate off its hinges and set it on the hill near Hebron, somehow thwarting the ambush (Judg 16:1-3).

After that, Samson falls in love with Delilah, which will become his demise and that of the Philistines. Delilah is bribed by the Philistines to tell them the source of his strength. She asks him three times what his secret is, and each time he tells her to tie him up with something different, like seven dried tendons. Each time she binds him according to his instructions, wakes him up, and he would tear through the binding as if he were unbound. Finally, she asks him a fourth time, and Samson tells Delilah that were his hair to be cut, he would lose all of his strength. So Delilah puts Samson to sleep, cuts his hair, and calls in the Philistines, who grab him and gouge out his eyes. They imprison Samson in Gaza, and after a while his hair begins to grow back (Judg 16:4-22).

The Philistines gather for a festival in honor of their god for delivering Samson to their hands, and it is now their turn to chant rhymes, singing praises for the defeat of Samson. As they revel, they call upon Samson to make him dance for them. After he dances, he asks the boy leading him to rest his hands on the pillars in the middle of the room, where he calls to God for help one last time. Samson asks God to give him strength one more time, and then pushes with all his might on the pillars upon which he leaned. With Samson's last feat of strength, he kills himself and more Philistines than he ever did in his life (Judg 16:23-31).

C. Elijah

The story of Elijah is contained in 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2. His story begins with a prophecy to King Ahab that there will be no dew or rain except at God's bidding. After this prophecy, he goes at God's bidding to the Wadi Cherith, where ravens feed him twice daily, and where he drinks from the wadi. After the wadi dries up, as he foretold, God tells him to go to Zarepath of Sidon, where he meets a widow gathering sticks to eat for herself and her son so that they can die. Elijah tells her to make a small cake for him, and then for her and her son, and he promises that the flour and oil will not run out until after the drought. She does as he commands, and sure enough, the flour and oil do not run out (1 Kgs 17:1-16).

Some time later, the son grows ill, and the widow cries out to Elijah that he had saved them in vain, since her son's sickness had him near death. Elijah spreads his own body over the boy's, and brings him back to life through the power of God. The widow then declares that Elijah is a true prophet of God, and that God's word is in his mouth (1 Kgs 17:17-24).

In the third year of the drought, God tells Elijah to go to Ahab and tell him the rains will soon come. On the way, Elijah meets Ahab's servant Obadiah, who Elijah bids to send for his master. Obadiah, afraid of what will happen should Elijah not be there on his return, begs that Elijah remember how Obadiah had been a faithful servant to God by hiding and feeding one hundred prophets of God in two caves when Queen Jezebel, Ahab's wife, had tried to kill them. Elijah promises to remain where he is, and Obadiah

brings Ahab, who calls Elijah "troubler of Israel" (1 Kgs 18:17)² when they see each other. Elijah retorts that it is Ahab who brought trouble to Israel by praying to the Baalim. So Elijah sets a challenge before Ahab. He tells Ahab to summon all of Israel to Mt. Carmel, with the eight hundred fifty prophets of Baal and Asherah. Atop the mountain, Elijah tells the other prophets to build an altar and prepare a bull for sacrifice on it to their gods, and to ask their gods to come and take it with fire. After multiple tries, with Elijah taunting them, they were unsuccessful. Elijah then rebuilds the altar where he was, placed twelve stones around it, cut up a bull and placed it on the altar. He then soaked it with water three times, until the trench around it was filled with water. He called to God, and fire came down from heaven and burnt the bull completely and evaporated the water in the trenches. When the Israelites see this, they declare that Adonai is the true god. Elijah then tells them to seize the prophets of Baal, and kills them by the Wadi Kishon (1 Kgs 18:1-40).

Elijah then sends Ahab off to eat and drink, because he knows the rains are approaching. He sits on Mt. Carmel while his servant goes to check on the weather. When Elijah hears that a small cloud is on the horizon, he tells Ahab to hurry in his chariot before the rains stop him. Ahab heads off toward Jezreel in his chariot, and the hand of God comes upon Elijah, who runs ahead of the chariot all the way to Jezreel (1 Kgs 18:41-46).

Ahab then tells Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and she sends a death threat to Elijah. Frightened, Elijah flees, leaving his servant in Beersheba while he goes a day's journey into the wilderness. After praying for his own death, he falls asleep, to be

² JPS p. 759

awakened by an angel who feeds him twice and sends him on a forty day walk through the wilderness to the mountain at Horeb, where he spends the night in a cave (1 Kgs 19:1-9a).

The word of God comes to Elijah in the cave, and asks why he is there. Elijah answers that he is filled with zeal for God, and that because of the sins of the Israelites he is the only one left who follows the covenant. God then bids Elijah to stand outside on the mountain. When he does, God passes by. There is a great wind, an earthquake, a fire, and a soft murmuring. Not until Elijah hears the soft murmur does he go out to the mouth of the cave, wrapping his mantle around his head. Again, God asks Elijah why he is there and again Elijah declares his zeal for God and that he is the only one left who follows the covenant. God then sends Elijah to Damascus, where he is to appoint Hazael as king of Aram, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as his own successor. God then declares that among the three of them they will destroy the unfaithful of Israel, leaving only the 7000 that have not knelt to or kissed Baal (1 Kgs 19:19b-21).

When Elijah finds Elisha, he is plowing with oxen, doing the work equal to one of his eleven oxen. Elijah throws his mantle over Elisha, and Elisha bids his father and mother goodbye, and then slaughters his oxen to feed the people. From that moment on, Elisha stays with Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19-21).

Some time later, Ahab tries to acquire the land of Naboth the Jezreelite, but Naboth does not want to let go of his family land. So Jezebel devises a plan in which Naboth's name would be desecrated as a blasphemer, so that he would be killed and so Ahab could seize his land. While Ahab is in Naboth's vineyard, Elijah comes to him at the bidding of God, and prophesies his death and the death of Jezebel. Upon hearing

Elijah, Ahab rends his clothes, and puts on sackcloth and ashes, so God tells Elijah that the prophesied destruction of Ahab will instead come in his son's time. Some time later Ahab dies and his son Ahaziah becomes king of Israel (1 Kgs 21:1-17; 22:40).

Ahaziah gets injured in a fall, and sends messengers to ask Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, when he will recover. Elijah, on God's command, confronts the messengers on their way, and sends them back to Ahaziah with his prophecy that he would die on the bed on which he lies. When Ahaziah asks who the man was who told them this, the messengers described him as a hairy man with a leather belt tied around his waist, which Ahaziah immediately recognizes as Elijah (2 Kgs 1:2-8).

Ahaziah sends a captain with fifty men to Elijah, who was sitting on a hilltop. The captain ordered Elijah down, calling him "man of God." Elijah responded, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from the sky and devour you and your fifty men" (2 Kgs 1:10) and sure enough, fire came down from the sky and devoured the captain and his men. Ahaziah sends another captain with another fifty men, and exactly the same thing happens. The third captain Ahaziah sends begs Elijah for mercy, and God tells Elijah to go with the third captain. When Elijah meets the king, he tells him what his messengers told him—that he would not get up from the bed in which he was nursing his injury. As prophesied, Ahaziah dies, and he is succeeded by Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat (2 Kgs 1:9-17).

2 Kings 2 tells about the death of Elijah the Tishbite. Elijah tells Elisha to wait while he goes on to Bethel, because God had decreed for Elijah to die. Elisha, however, vows to stay with Elijah. They travel from Gilgal to Bethel, then to Jericho, and in each place Elijah tells Elisha to stay there while he goes on, and each time Elisha swears to not

leave him. Also at each city, local prophets tell Elisha that Elijah is about to die, and each time, Elisha says that he knows, and that they should be silent. When they go to the Jordan, fifty guild prophets stand and watch from a distance, while Elijah strikes the Jordan with his rolled up mantle, making the waters part so that Elijah and Elisha could cross on dry land. Elijah asks Elisha what he can do for him before he dies, and Elisha asks only for a double portion of his spirit to pass down to him. Elijah tells him that this difficult request will only be fulfilled if he watches him go. As they walk, a chariot and horses made of fire come down between them and take Elijah away in a whirlwind. Elisha sees him and shouts, "Father, father, Israel's chariots and horsemen!" (2 Kgs 2:1-12).

D. Elisha

After Elijah's death, Elisha picks up his mantle and went back across the Jordan, striking it with the mantle and parting the waters, just as Elijah had done before his death. The spirit of Elijah settles on Elisha, but the prophets of Jericho offer to go and look for Elijah, since they saw no body. Elisha refuses them at first, but after they persist he acquiesces. Of course, they are unable to find Elijah (2 Kgs 2:13-18).

Elisha begins performing miracles in the town, starting with purifying the water, making it good for drinking. Then he punishes a group of boys for tormenting him, by having two she-bears attack them. After this, Elisha goes to Samaria (2 Kgs 2:19-25).

Some time later, the wife of one of the prophets' disciples told Elisha that her husband had died and left her in debt, and that a creditor was on the way to take her

children from her. Elisha told her to take as many empty vessels as she could find and pour from her single jug of oil in her home. She did as he said, and the oil miraculously continued to flow into all of the vessels until there were no more vessels left. She then sold the oil and paid off her debt, and still had enough to live on with her children (2 Kgs 4:1-7).

In Shunem, a wealthy couple made a chamber for Elisha in their home, because he used to stop for a meal with them at their urging. Once when he was there he told his servant Gehazi to ask her what he could do in exchange for her kindness. Gehazi spoke to her and found that she wanted nothing but a son, which she did not have, and her husband was old. Elisha told her that within the year she would have a son. A year later she did bear a son, and one day when the child grew up, he complained to his father of head pains and collapsed. He was taken to his mother, and he died in her lap. She laid him on Elisha's bed and went to get the prophet. When she told Elisha what happened to her son, he sent Gehazi with his staff and instructions to lay it on the boy's face. The boy's mother vowed to stay with Elisha, and when they arrived Gehazi had already laid the staff against the boy's face, but the boy did not wake up. Elisha shut himself in the room with the boy and lay over the child until he became warm. Then Elisha paced back and forth across the house and bent over the boy again. The boy sneezed seven times and woke up, and Elisha called in the Shunammite woman and reunited her with her son (2 Kgs 4:8-37).

In Gilgal, there was a famine in the land and Elisha told Gehazi to cook a stew for the guild prophets. One of the disciples sliced up some unknown gourds to put in the pot,

which made it inedible. Elisha threw some flour into the pot, and the disciples could then eat their meal (2 Kgs 4:38-41).

Later a man brought Elisha twenty loaves of barley bread, which he declared should be given to the people. Gehazi asked how twenty loaves could possibly feed one hundred men, and Elisha responded that God had said it would be so. So the men did eat, and even had some left over (2 Kgs 4:42-44).

Some time later the king of Aram sent his commander Naaman, who was a leper, to the king of Israel with a note saying the Naaman should be cured of his *tzora'at*. Elisha told the king to send Naaman to him, so that he would learn that there was a prophet in Israel. So Naaman and his company went to Elisha's home and Elisha told him to bathe in the Jordan seven times, and his flesh would be purified. Naaman stalked off in anger, declaring that if bathing was the solution, there were better waters in Damascus. His servants convinced him that if Elisha had asked him to do something difficult he would do it, so he should also do this simple task. When Naaman came out of the water his seventh time, his *tzora'at* was gone, and his skin was like that of a young boy. He took his company again to Elisha, and declared that he knew now that the only God is Israel's God, and he offered a gift to Elisha. Elisha refused the gift, saying it was for God's service that he did the deed. Naaman then swore that he would never offer sacrifices to any god but YHVH, and he asked forgiveness for any future acts when it might look like he was bowing to a god because his master was while leaning on his arm. Elisha bade him to go in peace (2 Kgs 5:1-19a).

While Naaman was on his way back, Gehazi chased him down and asked him for two talents of silver and changes of clothing, lying about them being for two disciples of

the prophets from Ephraim. Naaman gave them to Gehazi, who hid them in his house. Elisha knew about this treachery and asked Gehazi where he had been. Again, Gehazi lied, saying he did not go anywhere, but Elisha knew, saying his heart was with Gehazi when he went to Naaman. After scolding him, he set Naaman's *tzora'at* onto Gehazi, who was a leper the rest of his days (2 Kgs 5:19b-27).

Later, the guild prophets were building quarters for themselves by the Jordan, when one of them lost a borrowed axe-head in the river. He cried out to Elisha about it, and Elisha threw a stick in the river, and made the metal axe-head float so that the disciple could take it (2 Kgs 6:1-7).

While Aram was attacking Israel, the king would plan ambushes against the Israelites, and Elisha would warn the king ahead of time so that his troops would not go near the areas of the planned attacks. Angered by this, the king asked his officers and asked them who had been telling the king of Israel of his plans, and they told him it was Elisha. So the king of Aram sent horses and chariots and soldiers to encircle his town. In the morning Elisha's servant asked what they should do, and Elisha told him not to worry. Elisha prayed to God to open the eyes of the enemy army, and they saw horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha's city. Still, the Arameans went down, so Elisha prayed that the Aramean army be struck with a blinding light, and they were. Elisha went out to the army and led the blind men into Samaria, where he prayed that God remove their blindness. The king of Israel asked Elisha if he should strike them down, but Elisha told him that they should instead be fed and allowed to return to their master. This ended the Aramean attacks against Israel (2 Kgs 6:8-23).

Later, King Ben-hadad of Aram mustered his entire army against Samaria, besieging the town and causing great economic strife. A woman told the king of Israel about how she had eaten her own son, so he tore his clothes and wore sackcloth in mourning. He then sent men to cut off Elisha's head, but Elisha barred the door to him home. When the king arrived, Elisha prophesied that the next day in the market flour and barley would be sold cheap. The king's aide did not believe this, so Elisha said he would see it with his own eyes but never eat of it (2 Kgs 6:24-7:2).

Four lepers outside the city gates decided to go to the Aramean camp to test their fate. When they arrived they found the camp had been deserted, because God had made them hear the sound of a huge army, and they fled. The lepers ate and drank from the Aramean provisions, and began looting the camp when they realized they were not doing the right thing. They informed the Israelite gatekeepers of what they had found, and the gatekeepers spread the message to the king's palace. The king thought it was a trap, and that the Arameans were waiting in ambush, so he sent a few horses and men to chase after the Arameans. These men found that the road was littered with clothing and gear that the Arameans threw away while they fled. When they reported back to the king, the people went out and plundered the Aramean camp. Then, just as Elisha has predicted, flour and barley was sold cheap in the town, at the exact prices he had prophesied. The aide who had not believed Elisha earlier was put in charge of the gate that day, and he was trampled to death by the people. Elisha's prophecy was then completely fulfilled, for the man had seen the food at cheap prices but had not eaten of it (2 Kgs 7:2-20).

Elisha informed the woman whose son he brought back to life that there was going to be a famine for seven years, and that she should live elsewhere during that time

and then return. She did, and went to live with the Philistines for seven years. When she returned, she went to the king to complain about her house and farm, and he was talking to Gehazi at the time. Gehazi was talking to the king about Elisha's deeds, and the woman came in just as he was describing how Elisha had revived her son. Gehazi told the king that it was she whose son was revived, and the king asked her about it. She told him what had happened, and the king declared that all her property be restored, and that she should receive all the revenue from her farm from the seven years she was gone (2 Kgs 8:1-6).

Elisha once arrived in Damascus when King Ben-hadad of Aram was sick. He told Hazael to take a gift to Elisha and ask if he would recover from his illness. Elisha told Hazael that he would, but that he would die. Elisha stood expressionless, and then burst into tears, telling Hazael it was because of the harm he would bring upon the Israelites. Hazael asked how he could do all this, and Elisha explained that he had seen a vision of Hazael as king of Aram. When Hazael returned to Ben-hadad, he told him he would recover. The next day, Hazael strangled him with a piece of wet netting, and Hazael became king (2 Kgs 8:7-15).

Elisha sent a disciple of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu son of Jehoshaphat as king of Israel, telling him to anoint Jehu and flee without delay. His servant went to Jehu, who was sitting with the other army commanders, brought him inside, and anointed him with oil. He also declared that Jehu would bring down the house of Ahab and become the avenger of Jezebel and all she had done to the Israelite prophets. The servant of Elisha left, and Jehu went back to the other commanders, who asked what had happened. Jehu tried to tell them nothing had happened, but they did not

believe him, so he told them the truth, and they sounded the shofar and proclaimed Jehu king (2 Kgs 9:1-13).

Jehu then went to Joram to conspire against him. Jehu killed Joram, and then he killed Ahaziah, king of Judah. After that, he went to Jezreel to confront Jezebel, who called him a traitor out of her chamber window. Jehu called out to the eunuchs who attended her, and they threw Jezebel out of the window and killed her, damaging her body so badly that only her skull, feet, and hands could be found. She was given no proper burial so that she could not be remembered. Jehu then killed all seventy of Ahab's descendents and all that remained in the house of Ahab. God came to Jehu and said that he had succeeded in fulfilling the prophecy about what would happen to Ahab and Jezebel, and because of that he would be on the throne of Israel for four generations (2 Kgs 9:14-37).

When Elisha had taken ill and was about to die, King Joash of Israel went down to see him. When he saw Elisha, he cried and said, "Father, Father, Israel's chariots and horsemen!" just like Elisha did when he saw Elijah on the brink of death. Elisha told Joash to get a bow and arrows, and to shoot out the window facing east. He did, and Elisha said it was an arrow of victory for Adonai over Aram. He then told Joash to pick up the arrows and strike them against the ground. Joash hit the ground three times with the arrows. Elisha said that if he had been more zealous and hit the ground five or six times, he would have completely routed out Aram. As it was, he would only defeat Aram three times (2 Kgs 13:14-19).

Elisha then died and was buried. When a corpse was once thrown onto Elisha's grave, the body came to life again. Thus the miracles of Elisha went on after his death (2 Kgs 13:20-21).

Captain America

Steve Rogers was born during the Depression and grew up a frail youth in a poor family. His father died when Steve was a child, and his mother passed away when he was in his late teens. Horrified by newsreel footage of the Nazis in Europe, Rogers was inspired to try to enlist in the Army. However, because of his frailty and sickness, he was rejected. Overhearing the boy's earnest plea to be accepted, General Chester Phillips of the U.S. Army offered Rogers the opportunity to take part in a special experiment called Operation: Rebirth. Rogers agreed and was taken to a secret laboratory in Washington, D.C. where he was tested and eventually given the Super-Soldier formula. While being exposed to "vita-rays," to enhance the serum's effects on his body, the scientist supervising the experiment was murdered by a Nazi spy. Since the scientist never wrote the formula down, Rogers remains the sole beneficiary of the Super-Soldier formula.

Not to be deterred by the assassination of the project's originator, the military proceeded to train Rogers in gymnastics, combat skills, and military strategy. After his training, he was given his first assignment: defeat the Nazi agent "Red Skull." Before he embarked on his mission, he was given his signature red, white, and blue costume along with the moniker "Captain America."



Captain America was a symbol of American power and triumph throughout WWII, and his new skills and abilities made him America's most effective special operative. Near the end of the war, however, his plane was shot down by Baron Zemo, and he was thrown into the icy waters of the Arctic Ocean, where he remained for years, frozen in the ice. The Super-Soldier formula allowed his cells to survive frozen without crystallization until he was discovered in 1964 and reanimated.

Since 1964, Captain America has been a symbol not only for the war effort, but for all Americans in need. His base of operations is New York City, where Steve Rogers works as an architect, working out of his home with nobody to miss him sneaking out of work when Captain America is needed. He has served with the Invaders, Nomad, and is a current member of the Avengers, often serving as the team's leader.

The Incredible Hulk

Robert "Bruce" Banner was the son of Dr. Brian Banner, an atomic scientist, and his wife Rebecca. Although Rebecca deeply loved Bruce, who returned her affection, Brian hated the child. Brian Banner went insane with jealousy of Bruce for being an object of Rebecca's love. He murdered Rebecca and was placed in a mental hospital. Bruce, a highly withdrawn, intellectual youth, was raised by his aunt, Mrs. Drake, and internalized his great pain and rage over his childhood sufferings.

As an adult and a genius in nuclear physics, Bruce Banner went to work at a United States Defense Department nuclear research facility at Desert Base, New Mexico. There Banner met General Thaddeus E. "Thunderbolt" Ross, the Air Force officer in command of the base, and his daughter Betty. Banner and Betty Ross eventually fell in love with each other. Banner designed and oversaw construction of the "gamma bomb," a nuclear weapon that had a high gamma radiation output.

Banner was present in the instrumentation bunker at the test site for the first underground test detonation of the gamma bomb. Observing that a civilian had breached security and entered the restricted test area, Banner told his colleague Igor Starsky to delay the countdown while he tried to get the civilian to safety. Starsky, secretly a Soviet agent, did nothing, confident that Banner would die in the explosion, bringing the project to a halt. Reaching the civilian, a teenager named Rick Jones, Banner threw him into a protective trench, but before he could get himself to safety, the gamma-bomb detonated, and intense waves of radiation reached the surface. Banner was irradiated with highly charged, radioactive particles. Due to an unknown genetic factor in his body, Banner was not killed by the radiation, which instead caused him to transform frequently into the vastly powerful, green-skinned beast named "the Hulk" by the military present at the test site.

Banner's body eventually changed so that his transformations into the Hulk were triggered by the release of adrenaline when he became intensely excited, no matter what the time of day or night.



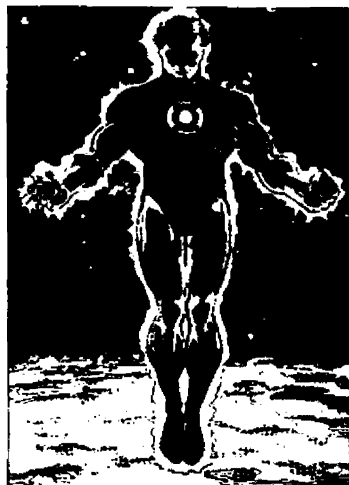
Usually the Hulk possessed little of Banner's memory and intelligence and was easily enraged. Hence, the Hulk was a menace, continually hunted by military forces commanded by the implacable General Ross. For a short time Banner managed through radiation treatments to maintain enough of his own personality when he transformed to control himself in Hulk form, and he even became a founding member of the Avengers at that time. But once again the Hulk lost Banner's intelligence and became a brutish menace. For a surprisingly long time Banner managed to conceal the fact that he was the Hulk, but his secret inevitably became public knowledge. For years Banner wandered the world as a hunted fugitive, cursed by his recurring transformations into the bestial Hulk.

There are three known forms of the Hulk, though they are not necessary to the subject of the thesis as a comparison to Samson. Today, the story of Bruce Banner continues with him roaming the world, never staying in one place too long for fear that he may be discovered should he become agitated. Of course, someone or something always makes him angry, and after a transformation into the Hulk, General Ross or Nick Fury is right on his tail.

Green Lantern

The study of the DC hero Green Lantern will be compared both to Elijah and Elisha. There are 3600 Green Lanterns across the universe, each of whom is entrusted with a power ring with massive power including the ability to create green energy forms according to the wearer's will. These 3600 fearless souls across the universe make up the Green Lantern Corps. The Corps' base of operations is on Oa, the planet at the center of

the universe, where the Central Power Battery, the source of the rings' power, is housed.



The blue-skinned beings that live on Oa are called the Guardians, and they are in charge of the power rings and the Green Lantern Corps. The Lantern responsible for sector 2814 has Earth in his jurisdiction, and that used to be Abin-Sur, until a run in with the super-villain Legion leaves him to crash-land on Earth and die, while his ring searched for a replacement. The ring found Hal Jordan.

Hal was one of the first of a new age of costumed adventurers, defending his home town of Coast City as well as the world from villains and menaces both earthbound and alien. Hal united with the Flash, Aquaman, Martian Manhunter, and Black Canary to form the Justice League of America. The Corps were the universe's most revered peacekeepers, and it was not long before his bravery earned Hal the respect of both his peers and the Guardians of the Universe, who created the Corps. He heroically championed the Guardians' goal to preserve order throughout the galaxies, even when their orders ran contrary to Hal's own rigid sense of morality.

Ironically, Hal would also be their undoing. When Coast City was decimated by Mongul and the Cyborg Superman, Hal was denied the power to resurrect the city and its inhabitants by the Guardians. He set out for Oa to gain the power to set things right. The Guardians set the Corps against him. Hal entered the Central Power Battery and absorbed its emerald energies, and then renamed himself Parallax. Hal then attempted to amend the great wrong by changing the time-space continuum, but was thwarted by Earth's heroes, including new Green Lantern Kyle Rayner, who would clash with Parallax several times.

In the end, however, Hal proved he had not strayed from the path of the hero. During what would have been Earth's final night, Hal used all his energies to re-ignite Earth's sun, redeeming himself in death.

Hal Jordan was Earth's first Green Lantern, but others would follow. Guy Gardener, John Stewart, and Kyle Rayner would all wear the power ring from time to time. Though each sector of the universe could only have one Green Lantern protecting it, occasionally the call would come from other sectors or from Oa itself, and if the current Green Lantern was called away, a replacement would step in while he was gone. There is often jealousy among Earth's Green Lanterns, especially between Gardener and Jordan, but now that Kyle Rayner is the official protector of sector 2814, he is loved and supported by most members of the Justice League of America, and he is considered a senior member of the Green Lantern Corps by the Guardians of Oa.

Appendix C: A Superhero Lesson Plan

For Grades 9-12

Goals:

- To introduce students to the concept of "Watching Movies through Jewish Eyes."
- To familiarize students with the introduction to the Moses narrative and his prophetic call (Exod 2:1-10; 3:1-22).
- To demonstrate the impact the Bible has on popular culture.

Time: One Hour

:00-:05	Set Induction
:05-:15	Clip 1
:15-30	Discussion
:30-:40	Text Study
:40-:45	Clip 2
:50-:60	Discussion/wrap-up

Procedure:

1. Set induction: Tell the students they are about to watch a scene from a famous movie made in 1978 based on a famous biblical passage. Can they guess what it is? Most will not guess "Superman," so hit play if nobody can guess correctly or as soon as someone says the correct answer.
2. Play scene from *Superman* beginning with Jor-Dana walking to Jor-El with the baby in her arms as he finishes the pod (scene 4 on the 2004 Special Edition DVD). As the movie plays, point out the following:
 - a. The planet Krypton is going to be destroyed.
 - b. Jor-El and Jor-Dana's debate about how their son will have to deal with Earth:

Jor-El:	His molecular density will make him strong, nearly invincible.
Jor-Dana:	He will be strange, outcast.
Jor-El:	He will be able to defy their gravity.
Jor-Dana:	He will be alone.
Jor-El:	No, he will never be alone.
 - c. The baby's name is Kal-El ("all God").
 - d. Kal-El is sent in a basket across the universe to Earth.
 - e. Kal-El is picked up by kind earthlings, who give him a name from their culture: Clark Kent.
 - f. He wears the blanket he was sent in.Stop the movie after the boy picks up the truck.
3. Have students read both texts. While they read, set the DVD up for the scene after Jonathan Kent's funeral, when Clark goes to the North Pole and builds his Fortress of Solitude.
4. When they finish reading, ask them which points of the story are similar so far. Discuss.

5. Briefly explain the history of Superman. Created in 1934 by Joe Schuster and Jerry Stein, two Jewish boys from New York who wanted to create the perfect hero. They were influenced by their heritage and by the desire to create someone to give hope for people living in a pre-World War II America. He was a hero who would lead people in the battle against evil, serving "truth, justice, and the American way."
6. Point out parallels in the Biblical text and the movie. Ask if knowing about the parallels changes their perception of the movie. Explain the parallels of the second scene to the burning bush periscope before watching the next scene on the DVD:
 - a. An encounter with a higher power (burning bush and green crystal).
 - b. The need to be prepared for his journey (Moses' years in the desert and Kal-El's years learning about his people).
 - c. The need for a sanctuary (Temple and Fortress of Solitude).
7. Watch the DVD. Have the students point out the parallels. Tell them that watching movies with a knowledge of Jewish texts and thought is called, "Watching Movies With Jewish Eyes."
8. There are also parallels between Superman and the Jewish people writ large. He symbolizes the concept of people-hood, called *klal Yisrael*.
 - a. He wears the symbol of his people (the sign we call an "S" is actually his family's crest, worn by Jor-El on Krypton).
 - b. He has to wear the clothes of the people who occupy his world. (Reference *Kill Bill Vol. 2*, when Bill talks about Superman: "An essential characteristic of the superhero mythology is, there's the superhero, and there's the alter ego. Batman is actually Bruce Wayne, Spider-Man is actually Peter Parker. When he wakes up in the morning, he's Peter Parker. He has to put on a costume to become Spider-Man. And it is in that characteristic that Superman stands alone. Superman did not become Superman, Superman was born Superman. When Superman wakes up in the morning, he's Superman. His alter ego is Clark Kent. His outfit with the big red "S", that's the blanket he was wrapped in as a baby when the Kents found him. Those are his clothes. What Kent wears, the glasses, the business suit, that's the costume. That's the costume Superman wears to blend in with us." This is like Jews wearing jeans and t-shirts outside of the synagogue, but dressing up to go to Temple, including kippah, tallit and tfillin if we so choose.
 - c. This leads to Superman's cape, which is designed to look like a tallit, as opposed to other superheroes' capes, which come from a cowl or are tied at the neck.
 - d. Earth is chosen for Superman, as Jor-El says: "Live as one of them, Kal-El, to discover where your strength and your power are needed. Always hold in your heart the pride of your special heritage. They can be a great people, Kal-El, they wish to be. They only lack the light to show the way. For this reason above all, their capacity for good, I have sent them you... my only son." The idea of chosen-ness is important to *klal Yisrael*. Though Reconstructionist and many Reform Jews have rejected this

notion and believe that all people are equal in the eyes of God, the concept of being a special people effects Jewish theology.

- e. There are many others. Ask the students if they can find more.
- 9. Challenge the students to find the parallels to Judaism in the next three movies they see. They will be surprised by the frequency of occurrences of Jewish influence or Jewish issues in the movies.

Materials:

- Copy of *Superman*, preferably on DVD.
- Television and DVD player.
- Copies of text for study or copies of the Tanakh for each student.

Text Study: Introduction to the character Moses

Exodus 2:1-10

A certain man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months. ³ When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴ And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to learn what would befall him. ⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said, "This must be a Hebrew child." ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?" ⁸ And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰ When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moses, explaining, "I drew him out of the water."

Exodus 3:1-22

Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² An angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. ³ Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." ⁵ And He said, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. ⁶ I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ And the LORD continued, "I have marked well the plight of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings. ⁸ I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the region of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?" ¹² And He said, "I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain." ¹³ Moses said to God, "When I come to the Israelites and say to them 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh." He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ And God said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This shall be My name forever, This My appellation for all eternity. ¹⁶ Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: the LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, 'I have taken note of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt, ¹⁷ and I have declared: I will take you out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' ¹⁸ They will listen to you; then you shall go with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, manifested Himself to us. Now therefore, let us go a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God.' ¹⁹ Yet I know that the king of Egypt will let you go only because of a greater might. ²⁰ So I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he shall let you go. ²¹ And I will dispose the Egyptians favorably toward this people, so that when you go, you will not go away empty-handed. ²² Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians."

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