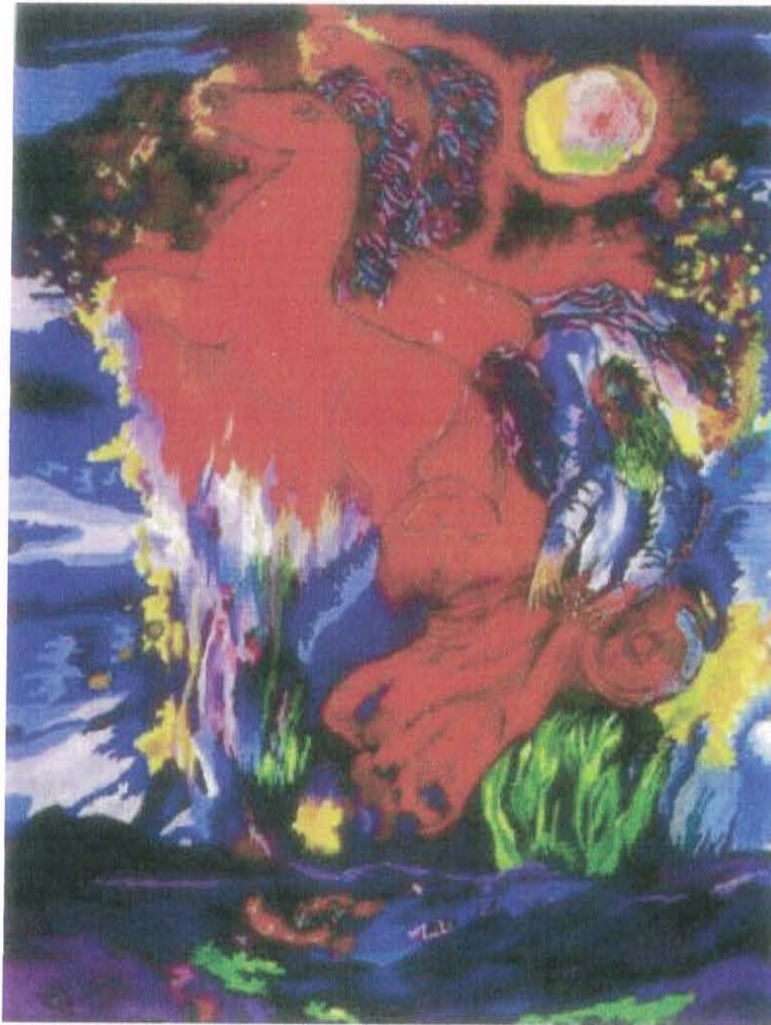


The Elijah Mystique



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<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Literature Survey	
Introduction: What is The Elijah Mystique?	1
Bible	4
Apocrypha	13
Talmud	15
Selected Aggadot	22
Jewish Mysticism	26
Folktales	30
II. Curriculum	
Rationale	35
Lesson 1: The Story of Navot <i>Ancient Tale of a Current Issue: Eminent domain</i>	38
Lesson 2: Chariots A-Fire <i>Text as Art</i>	41
Lesson 3: Mendelssohn's "Elijah" <i>A Musical Text Study</i>	46
Lesson 4: A Lesson From the Talmud <i>The Messiah at the Gates of Rome... and at Our Own Doorposts</i>	51
Lesson 5: Folktales <i>Stories of Enduring Message</i>	55
Lesson 6: 20 th Century Idol Worship <i>Elijah Still Rocks Today!</i>	57
III. Bibliography	60
IV. Appendix	
Folk Tales	62
Art Work	80
<i>Citation format discrepancies due to scan / copy issues</i>	

The Elijah Mystique

This thesis is a two part project. Part I is a literature review and Part II is a curriculum, with the following overall goals in mind.

I. Literature Survey Goals

To review the evolution of Elijah's character through primary literary sources in

- A. Tanach / Bible
- B. Apocrypha
- B. Talmud / Aggadah
- C. Mysticism
- D. Folktales

II. Curriculum Goals

- A. To produce a curriculum guide about Elijah in order to promote Elijah as a worthy contemporary role model
- B. To determine the relevance of Elijah as a significant role model for contemporary Jewry

Introduction

Every Saturday night, as we complete Havdalah, we invoke the name of Elijah the prophet with his well known theme song. Every Passover seder we invite Elijah into our homes when we open the door with the enigmatic extra cup of wine, Elijah's cup. At every *Bris* Elijah is the guest of the *sandek*. Elijah is quite the popular, charismatic prophet. But how well do we actually *know* this mysterious prophet? Most of the other well known prophets have an entire book all to themselves; some, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, have over 50 chapters chronicling their words and their deeds. And yet they don't have quite the same mystique or charisma as Elijah. Elijah gets merely a few chapters of narrative to his name, yet he is a familiar household entity. How did he gain such distinction? What is his message? More to the point, is his message still relevant for us today, in the 21st century?

We know of Elijah from two primary sources in the Tanach: Kings and Malachi. His deeds are recounted in the last chapters of I Kings and the beginning of II Kings. His spiritual mission as the herald of the Messiah and the reconciler of rifts between parent and child are pronounced by the prophet Malachi. Elijah is a major prophet who receives relatively minor text in the Bible. However, beyond the text,

Elijah's character, his persona, his mission and symbolic connotations abound, as witnessed by the volumes of midrashic and post-midrashic literature in which he is cited or which are attributed to him.

The Elijah stories recounted in Kings emphasize his miraculous deeds and his miraculous demise. Indeed, Elijah has the distinction of being one of the only two people in the Bible who does not die (Enoch was the other), but who rather ascends to heaven via a chariot of fire. The stories are intriguing and entertaining, but do they explain his charismatic image which has evolved well into the modern era, when miracles no longer hold their impressive sway? The terse, yet significant addendum to Elijah's miracle working, which we find in Malachi, shifts the role of Elijah to one of future as well as past significance.

The mysterious nature of Elijah's human presence here on earth and in the heavenly realms, represents what I call the Elijah Mystique. The mystique is so compelling that over the course of Jewish history, this prophet has risen above and beyond all others save Moses, into popular recognition and acclaim. The mystique is such that Elijah's persona has evolved into someone far greater than a prophet. He is a miracle worker. He is a folk hero with continuously evolving stories. He is the subject of numerous works of art and music. He is associated with the coming of the Messiah in Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions. For some, he is the Messiah himself. After studying this fascinating character, I conclude that he is the quintessential Biblical mythic superhero, and a role model for others that followed.

What is it about Elijah that enabled him to rise to such distinction within the Jewish, Christian and Islamic religions? In order to answer these questions we will first and foremost need to do a literature survey of the texts as we find them in the Tanach (Bible), the Talmud, and Midrash. Like the famous construct of PARDES, the acronym for four distinct methods of understanding a text (Peshat, Remez, Drash, Sod) Elijah is a multi-faceted prophet. On the *Peshat* level, he is the zealous prophet who rallies against idolaters and oppressors, yielding miraculous feats along the way. He is also the designated herald of the Messiah, and the one who will resolve all unresolved disputes in the days to come. On the *Remez* level, he bears hints of association with other critical Biblical figures, in particular, Enoch, Moses and Aaron's grandson Pinchas. In the realm

of *Drash*, numerous midrashic legends have evolved which we find in the Talmud and other aggadic collections, elaborating and expanding upon his character. These *midrashim* in turn have led to an even further expansion of Elijah's character in the guise of folktales. In the realm of *Sod*, the Kabbalists have capitalized on Elijah's miraculous qualities, and have deepened the ethos of this already mysterious prophet, through the Zohar and other mystical texts. Because of the mystical nature of his being, not having an identified birth mother, and not succumbing to a normal death, he has the capacity to bestow the privilege of *Gilui Eliyahu*, the revelation of Elijah, upon those who seek this mystical form of enlightenment.

Elijah begins his career as a formidable and zealous miracle worker, who presides over executions and droughts, but evolves into a compassionate cosmic traveler who revisits earth time and again to bestow healings, wealth and blessings to those who deserve them. How does his character change from the zealous judge into the compassionate listener? How can we learn from this transformation? In short, why was Elijah such a popular character, and how can we reclaim his mystique?

This paper will trace the evolution of Elijah from miracle worker to herald of redemption to proponent of ethical values and acts of *chesed*, with the goal of finding relevance for his continued significance in a modern context. Selected examples will be analyzed from the different layers of Elijah sources that exist, from Biblical through contemporary literature.

Literature Survey: Elijah in the Biblical Text

Relative to the vast number of stories about Elijah in Aggadah and folk literature, presentation of Elijah in the Biblical text is sparse. Unlike other familiar prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, he is not a literary prophet; he does not have a canonized book of his own, nor do we have poetry and prophecy that are directly attributed to him. He is a man of action rather than words. His narrative is couched in a few chapters, at the end of I Kings and beginning of II Kings, II Chronicles and Malachi. Yet within this limited text exposure, a large persona evolves.

There are essentially four distinct Biblical tales about Elijah in Kings. The first of these is multi-layered, and provides us with his basic character traits. He appears in I Kings:17 through II Kings:2 (full texts appear in the appendix). Elijah the Tishbite appears rather suddenly during the Israelite reign of Ahab, and the miracles come fast and furious. As background it must be understood that Ahab married the notorious Jezebel Princess of Phoenicia, who was an ardent worshipper of Baal. She influenced her husband to build a Temple to Baal, god of rain and water, in Samaria, and attempted to enforce Baal worship over worship of Yahweh. Jezebel ordered the assassination of all true prophets of Israel. Many were thus done away with, but Obadiah, who had a high position in the palace of Ahab, continued to revere God, and was able to secretly hide one hundred true prophets, fifty to a cave.

Miracles abound in this narrative, and it is sometimes unclear whether the miracles are generated directly by Elijah or through divine intervention. Miracle Number One: In confronting Ahab, Elijah first pronounces a warning that there will be neither rain nor dew, presumably as a punishment for idolatrous behavior. It is curious that Elijah does not say that God will cause the drought, but rather, *There shall not be dew nor rains these years, but according to my (Elijah's) word*. Sure enough, the rains cease and famine begins to plague the land. (I Kings 17:1)

Miracle Number Two: Immediately after this event Elijah runs for his life, as the royal couple are none too pleased with his interventions. At the bidding of God he hides out at Wadi Cheroth, where he is sustained with nourishment brought to him by ravens. *The ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and every evening, and he drank from the wadi* (I Kings 17:6)

Miracle Number Three. Once the Wadi dries up, Elijah is bidden to find a widow in Zarephath, (a Phoenician town) who continues to sustain him. She herself, like most victims of the famine, has only handful of flour and a drop of oil left, but Elijah assures her, *The jar of flour will not give out and the jug of oil shall not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the ground.* (I Kings 17:14)

Miracle Number Four: While Elijah is in residence with the widow, her son falls sick and dies. The widow initially accuses Elijah of bringing about his death, but Elijah is not out of miracles. He carries the lifeless boy up to his loft. Thereupon, he called to God, *Let this child's life return to his body!* He stretches himself out over the child three times, *and the child's life returned to his body.* (I Kings 17:21-22)

During this particular time frame in the evolution of the Israelite people, there is a need for prophets to perform miracles in order to be credible. Miracles of this grandeur had not been witnessed since Moses and Joshua, nor are they subsequently repeated with so much relish and color. Rashi and other commentators do not bother themselves with trying to justify the fantastical nature of Elijah's miracles. Rather they focus on other details which link Elijah to previous Biblical episodes. In this instance of the woman of Zarephath, Rashi points out that Elijah's asking the widow for water, which he does upon arriving in the designated city, echoes the circumstances of Eliezer, servant of Abraham asking a young maid for water upon arriving at his destination. In both cases some kind of test is implied in order to determine if this was indeed the designated woman.

The sages in Sanhedrin 113a shed further light on these miraculous dealings, again with no thought that the miracles themselves were worthy of remark:

When he created the world, God assigned control of most natural phenomenon to various forces, which we call the laws of nature. Three "keys" however, he kept for himself: the keys of childbirth, rain and resurrection. When Elijah swore there would be no rain except by his word, God entrusted him with the key to rain. In his zeal to force the nation to repent, Elijah did not call for rain, despite the increasing suffering of the people. Seeing that Elijah was not relenting, God devised a plan to take back control over rain. The son of Elijah's hostess became ill and died, and Elijah wanted to resuscitate him, but to do so he needed the "key" (the ability to restore life). God would give him this ability for the moment, but only in exchange for the key of rain. God then was able to command Elijah to return to Ahab and end the drought.¹

¹ Artscroll, I & II Kings, p 171

I Kings 18 moves to the climax of this miraculous tale. Miracle Number Five: Three years into the famine, Elijah is told by God to revisit King Ahab. The famine has been so harsh that Ahab and Obadiah are out on a personal search for grass to keep the royal animals alive. In the presence of Obadiah, Elijah reminds Ahab that the drought in Israel is a result of idolatrous misdeeds. He challenges Ahab to a duel of the prophets – himself against 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, on top of Mt. Carmel in the presence of all Israel. Two bulls were to be prepared for sacrifice. Each prophet would call on his deity to ignite the sacrifice. Whichever deity responded with fire would be deemed the true God of Israel. All was prepared; Baal was called upon by all his prophets with great fervor, with shouts, with raving, with dancing, even lacerations to the body. But there was no response. Then Elijah, like a truly theatrical magician, set further challenges to himself by dousing his bull with water and filling a trench around the sacrificial alter with water. Then he called out:

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel! Let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, Lord, that these people may know that You are God... Then fire from the Lord descended and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the earth, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. (I Kings 18: 36-38)

Miracle Number Six: After this event, Elijah had all the prophets of Baal rounded up, marched to Wadi Kishon and slaughtered there. One man slaying 450 others is a feat in itself, worthy of being called a miraculous feat.

Miracle Number Seven: After Elijah's impressive display, the people reaffirm that God is the One. Elijah bows, puts his face between his knees and sends his servant out seven times to check for a weather report by scouting the skies over the sea. Clouds come, the winds come, and sure enough a heavy downpour follows.

Miracle Number Eight: Elijah, most likely in an ecstatic adrenalin rush, then runs in front of Ahab's chariot all the way to his palace in Jezreel (perhaps some fifty miles), again a miraculous feat for a human.

The *Peshat* of this miraculous tale is clear: The goal is to eradicate once and for all the ambivalence in god worship that was rampant throughout the land.

How long will you keep hopping between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him and if Baal, follow him. (I Kings 18:20)

After this episode, Elijah flees from Jezebel, who did not react with the same contrite devotion as the Children of Israel. Miracle Number Nine: Elijah himself, rather than being elated from his miraculous feats, is exhausted, spiritually, physically and emotionally; he reaches the wilderness below Beer Sheva and pleads with God for his life to end. No such swift ending for our zealous prophet: An angel comes to him and bids him eat. *He looked about and there beside his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.* (I Kings 19:6). This miraculous feeding happens two nights in a row, nourishing Elijah enough to walk 40 days and nights until he reaches Har Horev, another name for Mt. Sinai. Elijah takes a 40 day journey to the very same mountain upon which Moses ascended! This is one of several overlays between Elijah and Moses. Like Moses, Elijah has an intimate revelatory encounter with God, reminiscent of the Sinai experience. Elijah covers his face with his mantle; Moses hid his face. Elijah spends the night *b'ha-me'arah* (the cave); Rashi claims this to be the same clef of rock where Moses encountered God.² Wind, earthquake, fire present themselves in some form to both prophets, but for Elijah, God is not in any of these. When next comes the still small voice, however, a divine voice addresses Elijah directly, as it does Moses.

The interpretation of this unusual revelation has kept rabbis intrigued for centuries, particularly its similarities and dissimilarities to the revelation of Moses. It is significant that in Moses' encounter on Sinai, the firework effects (thunder, lightening, clouds, blasts as noted in Exodus 20:15) are specifically attributed to God, and in this story, they are a foil for God. Rabbi Ruth Gelfarb points out that in the Revelation at Sinai, *the* primary moment of encounter between God and all of the Children of Israel, it was necessary to have God come with fire and brimstone in order to captivate and convince the people of His might and authenticity. In the case of Elijah, who had just come from a display of God's fire and brimstone in the confrontation with the prophets of Baal, there was a need to experience God on a deeper, more intrinsic level. God comes to each prophet in the way that each individual needs in order to acknowledge and experience the Divine. Malbim notes that "prophecy can have two purposes: a) a mission to the people, such as Elijah's at Mt. Carmel, and b) personal spiritual elevation of the

² All commentator references in this section, including Rashi, Malbim, Kli Yakar, Radak and Ralbag sources from *Mikara'ot Gedolot Nevi'im Rishonim* and Artscroll Prophets.

individual, such as the disciples of Samuel...At this time, Elijah's public mission had been completed, so that he now sought to elevate his personal spiritual level."³ In the end, Elijah's revelatory dialogue addresses both prophetic capacities; he encounters the divine essence in the still small voice, and is then instructed to continue with his next public mission, as described below.

Another essential difference between the encounter of Elijah and Moses lies in the intent of their communication with God. Kli Yakar explains that Moses pleads with God for mercy on behalf of the recalcitrant Israelites, while Elijah wants the people to be punished⁴ This additional example of the harsh zealousness of Elijah has the Sages and commentators in disagreement with each other. Radak and Ralbag offer different views of the vision that was to unfold. According to Radak, God was now rewarding him for his enormous accomplishment on Mt. Carmel, but for Ralbag the vision holds an implied rebuke to Elijah for having criticized Israel in such harsh terms. God would rather show patience and compassion to His people. Elijah should likewise understand that his role should be to pray for them rather than condemn them. Accordingly, the vision reveals three potentially destructive forces that *could* be used to punish the Israelites, but God does not maintain Himself in these forces. Rather, he encounters Elijah with His still small voice. Targum Yonatan understands it to be the voice of angelic praise. Malbim further explains that by not appearing in the peak of fire and brimstone, God meant to show Elijah that the preferable way to teach people is calmly and lovingly, not through anger and force, as Elijah had done previously in the episode with the prophets of Baal.⁵ This lesson, if not carried out in Elijah's earthly lifetime, is integrated into the transformed persona of Elijah, who comes back to earth often with words of patience and compassion, pointing out the good deeds of humankind rather than admonishing the shortcomings.

After this sacred encounter, Elijah is given yet another challenging assignment: to make his way to Damascus, which is a distance of several hundred miles from Sinai. There, he is to anoint Hazael as king of Aram, Jehu ben Nimshi as King of Israel, and Elisha ben Shafat to succeed Elijah himself as the preeminent prophet of his day. Here is

³ Op cit, Artscroll, p 189

⁴ Ibid, p 191

⁵ Ibid, p 189-192

another echo of Moses, who also appoints follow-up leaders in the wilderness. Hazael and Jehu would accordingly keep each other in check. Elisha is anointed, or rather “mantled,” and the two continue on together after Elisha says a proper farewell to his family. The mantle is to Elijah what the staff is to Moses. Both prophets use their respective sacred object to part the waters. It is a symbol of God given authority through which many a miracle is rendered. So ends the first tale, a tale of miracles, zealotry and action.

In I Kings 21 we find a different type of narrative, the story of Navot and the vineyard. This is perhaps the first direct example in the Bible of a prophet condemning social injustice. Navot owned a prime piece of land just outside the palace of King Ahab. Ahab was determined to take possession of this land and plant a royal garden. He offered Navot compensation, a better vineyard somewhere else or money. But Navot refused. *Give up my family inheritance? Far be it from me!* (I Kings 21:3) What could Ahab do? Legally it was not only Navot’s right, but his obligation to maintain his family heritage. Ahab went back to his palace and sulked.

Jezebel decided to take things into her own hand. She wrote official letters, signed the Kings’ name and sent them off to the nobles and elders of that same town.

Proclaim a fast day and seat Navot at the front of the assembly. Seat two scoundrels opposite him to testify against him, claiming that he vilified the name of G-d and King. Then... take him out and stone him to death! (I Kings 21:9-10)

So she ordered, and so it was done. Upon Navot’s execution, the land reverted to the king. Ahab lost no time surveying his new piece of land, and neither did Elijah. The prophet confronted the king on the spot. Elijah condemned the house of Ahab and Jezebel for abominable behavior, and condemned them to be *devoured by the dogs*. (I Kings 21:23). This second tale, in contrast to the first, is miracle-free, other than Elijah showing up out of nowhere. It is a timely story, whose message reverberates loud and clear even in our own day.

The third tale is found in II Kings 1, where we are first provided with a visual description of Elijah the Tishbite: *A hairy man with a leather belt tied around his waist* (II Kings 1:7) A brief episode chronicles yet another miraculous feat of the prophet. King Ahaziah, Ahab’s successor, had fallen through a lattice in his upper chamber. Critically wounded, he sends to Baal Zebub, god of Ekron to determine whether he will survive the

injury. Elijah hears of this and is incensed that Ahaziah had not thought to ask Adonai, the true God, concerning his welfare, and so he sends word that Ahaziah will not survive. Ahaziah sent a troop of 50 soldiers to bring Elijah personally to him, but Elijah responds with devouring fireworks: *Man of god* (said the Captain of the troop), *by order of the king, come down*. “*If I am a man of God*, (came Elijah’s response), *let fire come down from heaven and consume you with your fifty men!*” And so it did. Another troop of 50 is sent and meets the same fate. A third troop is sent, and spared after the Captain begs for mercy. Elijah finally goes with the troop and reports to Ahaziah personally concerning his fate. *You shall not come down from the bed you lie upon, but you shall surely die* (II Kings 1:16)

The last tale is the shortest and most miraculous, as it tells of Elijah’s miraculous ascent into heaven, as found in II Kings 2. Journeying together with Elisha, Elijah tries to separate himself from his protégé three times, but Elisha refuses, claiming, *As Adonai lives and as your soul lives I will not leave you*. The line is somewhat reminiscent of Ruth and Naomi. Whoever wrote this text was unaware of the cardinal rule of storytelling – don’t give away the punch line of the story before the story is over. In the opening line of the chapter we are told, *and it came to pass when Adonai would take Elijah up by a whirlwind*. Subsequently, two other prophet bands, in Bethel and in Jericho, warn Elisha, *Don’t you know that God will take your master from you today?! With fifty prophets as witness, Elijah wraps up his mantle and parts the waters of the Jordan* (another echo of Moses). The two walk through on dry ground, whereupon Elijah asks, *What can I do for you before I am taken away?* Elisha is no shy and humble protégé. *I pray, let me have a double portion of your spirit!* Elijah replies that if he were to witness his ascent, (which Elisha does) his prayer will be granted.

And it came to pass as they continued to walk and talk that behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which separated between them, and Elijah went up in a whirlwind into heaven. (II Kings 2:11)

So end the primary Biblical tales of Elijah, but not the end of Elijah’s presence in the Tanach. II Chronicles 21:12-15 mentions a letter from Elijah to King Jehoram, who chronologically, would have reigned after Elijah’s ascent to heaven. Mentioned only once in Chronicle, scholars explain this anomaly by suggesting that since Jehoram was married

to Ahab's daughter, and his troubles are naturally linked to religious infidelity, Elijah was the prophet of choice for admonition. (Chronicles, Jewish Study Bible, p 1797) One explanation of this inconsistency that Elijah continued his prophetic admonitions from the other realm, but this is in disagreement with other sages, as noted above, who emphasize that Elijah transformed into a more compassionate being. The letter is a stark admonition and prediction of Jehoram's ignoble ending.

Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphet your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and have led Judah and its inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, as the house of Ahab led Israel into unfaithfulness, and also you have killed your brothers of your father's house who were better than yourself, behold God will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out because of the disease, day by day.

And so it came to pass.

The other biblical reference to Elijah comes from the prophet Malachi. The terse, yet significant addendum to the book of Malachi deepens Elijah's relevance and role in ancient Judaic history enormously. This is where Elijah becomes fused with the notion of messianic redemption. The concluding lines of Malachi, the last prophet of the *Nevi'im*, reads as follows:

Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents, so that when I come I do not strike the whole land with utter destruction. (Malachi 3:23)

This cryptic line, which is echoed in the second half of the Elijah song with the words, *bimhara b'yamenu, yavo aileinu, im nashiach ben David*, is the seed from which Elijah's role in the world to come has germinated. Once the concept of Messiah evolves, Elijah evolves along with it to become the Herald of the Messiah and resolve all future disputes.

There were Sages who believed that through hints in the text of the Torah, Elijah's role was predetermined even before his appearance in Kings. For example, there are several times when Elijah's name (Eliyahu) is missing a "vav" in the Hebrew, while Jacob's name (Yaakov) has an added "vav" that same number of times. A prime example of this is found in Leviticus 26:42 *I will remember my covenant with Yaakov...* Rashi explains thus: "In five places the name Yaakov is written in full, and the name of the

prophet Eliyahu is spelled defectively in five places. Yaakov took a letter from the name of Eliyahu as a pledge that he (Eliyahu) should come and announce the redemption of his children.” Russell Hendel explains that Jacob’s name appears about 350 times in the Torah, almost always without a “vav” The few times when the “vav” is present, the context concerns the redemption of *B'nai Yisrael*. This kind of letter “pun” as he refers to it, “has evolved into a grammatical rule of style: Use the deficient spelling “YAAKOV ” when referring to Jews in a state of exile but use the full spelling “Y AAKOV” in a context of redemption.”⁶ Of the five missing “vav”s in Eliyahu’s name, one of them is notably in Malachi 3:23, the famous link between Elijah and the Day of Judgment:

Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great terrible day that God will come.

⁶ Hendel, Russell, *Biblical Puns, Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol 34 # 3

Elijah in the Apocrypha

In Apocryphal literature Elijah is mentioned frequently, either directly or by intimation. These sources come from the later Temple and early Christian periods, (200 BCE – 200 CE) a time when the messianic concept was evolving in its numerous variations. The references allude to Elijah's past accomplishments, particularly his ascent into heaven, but more important is the emphasis on his having a future redemptive role, echoing the pronouncement in Malachi. It is not until the Apocryphal works that Elijah is distinctly considered to be *Mashiach ben David*, the herald of the Messiah,.

He is noted in the Book of Maccabees (I Macc 2:58) for his zealousness and his ascent into heaven. *Elijah because of great zeal for the law was taken up* into heaven. In I Macc 4:46 it says that the stones of the alter have been stored *until a prophet will come to tell what to do with them*. In I Macc 14:41 likewise, we find the reference, "*until a true prophet shall arise in Israel...who will take charge of the sanctuary*." References to such a prophet are presumed to be pointing to Elijah, according to Aharon Wiener, who has written an in-depth study on the prophet. (Wiener, Aharon, *The Prophet Elijah In the Development of Judaism*, Routledge & Kegan: London, 1978, p 39)

Ben Sira (48:1-12) dedicates an elaborate biographical poem to Elijah. It begins metaphorically, "*Then the prophet Elijah arose like a fire and he burned like a torch*," and then moves into familiar detail. The author portrays Elijah's personal history and his miraculous deeds. But the emphasis of the poem is on his future role, which is a reworking of the reference from Malachi. "*You who are ready for the time, as it is written, to still the wrath before the fierce anger of God, to turn the heart of the fathers unto the children, and to restore the tribes of Israel*."

In the Books of Enoch, an association is created between Enoch and Elijah. Enoch's mysterious finale is mentioned in the Torah (Genesis 5:24) only briefly. "*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not. For God took him*." He is the only other mortal mentioned in the Torah to be taken while still alive, which provides as obvious connection with Elijah. In Enoch 70:2 he described as *one who was raised aloft on the chariots of the spirit, and his name vanished from those who dwell on earth*, and in II Enoch 1 and 3, two angels carry him up to the seventh heaven by degrees. Are Elijah and Enoch one and the same person, in two different time frames? Clearly there is a crossover

between these two Biblically designated immortals. The section on Folktales further elaborates on the Enoch – Elijah connection.

In IV Book of Ezra (7:109) Elijah's prays for rain and his resuscitation of the widow's son is noted. There is also a prophesy that when "*the men who have been taken up, who have not tasted death from their birth, shall appear before the Messiah, then shall the heart of the inhabitants of the world be changed and be converted to a different spirit*" (6:26) Here Elijah and Enoch seem to have been assigned team work.

In the Book of Sybillines, Elijah is elevated to the status of an archangel, along with Moses, Isaiah and Ezra, to be witness to the Last Judgment. Philo, the Greco-Roman historian, likewise reiterates that Elijah did not die, but was carried up with a whirlwind to be among the angels. (Wiener, p 41)

In tracing the development of the messianic role of Elijah, Wiener points out that in Malachi and Ben Sira, Elijah and "the savior" seem to be one and the same, while in other pseudoepigraphical books, he takes on the role of an angelic adjunct to the Messiah. (Wiener, p 41). In later Kabbalistic writings, Enoch and Elijah are paired angelically, Enoch being aligned with Metatron and Elijah with Sandalphon (Wiener, p 97) The angel Sandalphon has his feet on the ground, but he reaches all the way up into the heavens. One of his primary jobs is to deliver the prayers of mankind to the heavenly throne.

Elijah in Talmud

Contrary to the sparse references to Elijah in the biblical text, aggadic references in the Talmud and Midrash abound. Elijah is cited over 100 times in the Soncino Talmud Index and over 200 times in Ginsberg's *Legends of the Jews*. Elijah is referred to in a wide variety of contexts. Because the details are sparse in the Biblical source, the aggadists have a large open frame in which to paint their fanciful embellishments. There are references to Elijah's mysterious origins and demise, his connection with the Messiah, and his zealotry. He is a teacher and a role model. (See selected examples in the following section) But most intriguing are his personal appearances among the Sages. He talks and interacts with them as if he were living in their day. The Rabbis, for their part, do not deem it uncanny or even unusual to be visited by one who has been taken up to the heavens. The aggadic tales come from the Talmud and various midrashic sources. They in turn have become prototypes for the numerous folk stories that have subsequently come down through the centuries.

There is considerable musing, based on mere hints from the Tanach, as to whether Elijah the Tishbite descends from the tribe of Gad, Benjamin or from the Levites. The link to Gad comes from Jacob's blessing to his sons. Jacob ascribes attributes to each son and just before he gets to Gad, there is an extraneous exclamation: "*I wait for your salvation, Oh God.*" (Gen 49:16-19) Some interpret this to mean that Elijah, as the redeemer, will spring from Gad. Also Gilead, where he originally lived, is geographically situated in the territory of the tribe of Gad. In I Chronicles 8:27 there is mention of the name Elijah in a list of the tribe of Benjamin, associating him with the Benjamites. (Midrash Rabbah Genesis 71:9)

Another take on Elijah's ancestry is that he was a Levite, from the priestly clan. This is because he is identified with the priest Pinchas, son of Aaron, and also with Moses himself. As Pinchas was zealous unto the Lord, so was Elijah in his day. As Moses was the first prophet redeemer of Israel, so Elijah was the second. Mishna Tehillim 43:1 claims, "*Two prophets are descendants of the house of Levi: Moses and Elijah.*" Although there is no rabbinic conclusion on the matter, there is a tendency to associate Elijah's origins with spiritually elevated lineage.

Certainly in his transformed state he is often cited as “a man of God” and numbered among the highest of *Tzadikim*, righteous ones. (Weiner, p 46) For all his austere actions and miraculous feats in the Bible, in the Talmud when Elijah pays a visit he often appears quite naturally and is depicted quite humanly. He hangs out at the entrance to Shimon Bar Yochai’s cave. He has regular friendly visits with R. Judah bar Baba. (See selections following this section).

Though acknowledged for his zealous acts of devotion, Elijah is also critiqued by the rabbis’ for his audacious qualities. For example, he pronounces prophetic consequences in his own name, like the drought at the beginning of the Ahab episode, rather than attributing them to God. He is more intent upon carrying out zealous acts than giving the Israelites the benefit of doubt. (See Arab selection in following section) This zealous tendency is significant and becomes more pronounced after his ascension when the pattern reverses. Through the process of transformation Elijah becomes more intent on serving individuals in their time of need. We learn from this that compassion trumps zealotry.

The aggadah offers various interpretations of Elijah’s ascent to heaven in a fiery chariot. Some view it as temporary concealment from humankind, others as purely symbolic, but most view the event as a physical transposition from earth to the heavenly spheres. Through his transformation Elijah takes on a variety of new roles, as he now belongs to God’s immediate entourage. He is privy to the secrets of the Divine. Decisions of the heavenly house of study (counterpart to the earthly house of study) are known to him. Records the deeds of individual people as well as the history of mankind are his responsibility. He is in charge of guarding the souls of the dead and he directs the righteous to their place in paradise. At the beginning of every Shabbat he brings the sinful souls to heaven and at the end of Shabbat he leads them back to their punishment. After they have atoned for their sins he escorts them to their final place in heaven. Most importantly, he promotes repentance with the ultimate goal of bringing about redemption. (Weiner p 51) In Mishnah Sotah 9:15 a famous chain of the stages leading to redemption is pronounced by R. Pichus b Yair:

The Torah leads to attention, attention to zeal, zeal to purity, purity to abstinence, abstinence to holiness, holiness to humility, humility to fear of sin, fear of sin to piety, piety to the holy Spirit, and this to the resurrection of the dead through Elijah.

Elijah's designation as the herald of the Messiah, prompted the sages to link him directly to the notion of *teshuva* (repentance) in order to bring about redemption in the world to come. It is stated in Tanna debe Eliyahu 5:11: *In every generation that Elijah found righteous men, he would embrace and kiss them and bless the Holy One.* It is in this role that Elijah would descend from his mysterious heavenly abode to teach lessons that still hold merit in today's world. This model of compassionate humanity exemplified by the transformed Elijah evolves to an even greater degree in the later folktales. Although Elijah is meant to be one who encourages *teshuva*, it appears as if he comes back to earth as an act of *teshuva* for himself, to compensate for his previous zealotry. In his transformative mode he is more humble and less audacious.

Another indication of Elijah doing *teshuva* is evidenced in his link with the *brit mila* (circumcision). There is an understanding that an angelic being has accompanied the Israelites throughout their history, beginning with their wanderings in the desert. Elijah has been identified in aggadic literature as *the* angel of the covenant, assigned that role in response to his accusation that the Israelites have broken the covenant. (Schwartz, p 201) In having made this accusation, Elijah supposedly was referring not only to their worship of Baal, but to the cessation of the practice of *brit milah* (circumcision) the original mark of the covenant, during the days of the divided Kingdom. Because of this, Elijah was personally assigned the role of overseeing the *brit milah* of every new born boy, so that he would see for himself that their negligence was only temporary. (Artscroll, p 191) Hence the provision of a special chair, *kiseh Eliyahu* at this life cycle event. Bringing Elijah onto the scene at the beginning of life, throughout the generations, has contributed to the popularity of Elijah well beyond the days of the aggadists.

Perhaps more significant than his heavenly roles are his missions and journeys back to earth. He does these in many guises, with the goal of promoting *teshuva*, helping, teaching or setting an example in countless situations. He also comes back to resolve questions and settle disputes, as indicated by Malachi. The Aramaic word *teku*, meaning 'let it stand', indicates that a given dispute remains unresolved; it appears no fewer than 319 times in the Babylonian Talmud. When an argument cannot be resolved it is meant to be left for Elijah to deal with when he returns before the Messiah. Some say the word is derived from a combination of the initials of the phrase *Tishbi y'taretz kushiyot u'ba'ayo*,

Elijah the Tishbite will solve all difficulties and enquiries. (Birnbaum, Philip, Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts, p 636)

From Talmudic references, Elijah has a personal close relationship with a number of the Talmudic sages, including Eliezer, Nahum-Ish-Gamzu, Akiva, Meir, Jose, Judah ha-nasi, and Shimon bar Yochai. (Weiner p 52). To these distinguished sages he appears as himself, and not in disguise, and acts as counselor, teacher and friend. There is no reaction of surprise from those he is visiting, indicating that his role as an angelic messenger is somewhat taken for granted. He helps with understanding of difficult texts, and mediates between the House of Study above (divine) and below (rabbinic) As rabbinic tradition is fraught with debate and diverse opinions, Elijah comes to resolve. It was Elijah who announced the oft quoted response of God concerning a particularly divided opinion in the Oven of Akhni story. *"My children have defeated me"* (*Bava Meziah* 59b, see full story in following section). There are many more instances of Elijah visiting for scholarly purposes. He clarifies difficult texts of Torah, (see Elijah as teacher selection) and he elucidates details of Tefila (see *mincha* selection).

In addition to scholarship there are comments that expand upon Elijah's miraculous physical capabilities, using hints of text wherever found. He can *"soar like an eagle"* in order to observe mankind and *"He can appear upon earth with four wingbeats"* (*B'rachot* 4b). The Aggada sees post Biblical Elijah as an angelic being who can hover and fly about the earth at will.

Although Elijah is cited in a variety of aggadic sources, he is conspicuously featured in the midrashic work written in his name, *Tana debe Eliyahu* (TdE). This text was likely compiled at the time of the first Amoraim, around 150 CE. (Weiner, p 57) The primary translator of the text, William Braude, attributes the compilation to one master scholar or scribal school, but tradition attributes it to the prophet Elijah himself. Legend has it that the prophet dictated the work in two parts. As the first part was larger it was called *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* (the Greater), and the second part being shorter was called *Seder Eliyahu Zutta* (the Lesser). TdE frequently make references to the School of Elijah, or Father Elijah, this later phrase being one that Elisha called out as he witnessed his master's ascent in the chariot. Father Elijah journeys above, around and upon the earth. As in the Talmud, the goals of Elijah's visitations in this text are vast and varied,

ranging from Torah study and prayer, to family life, friendship, and *tikun olam* (repairing the world)

There is a premise in *Tana debe Eliyahu* that the journey of life extends through a cycle of 3 x 2000 years. The first 2000, after the expulsion from Gan Eden, are chaos, the next 2000 years are of Torah, and then there will be 2000 years of a Messianic Age. But that is not the end of the story. Return to Paradise is the ultimate climax, and Elijah is meant to be the angelic one who can lead us back there, because “Some pronounce Elijah free of sin and compare him with Adam before the Fall.” (Weiner, p 46)

Elijah’s Messianic Role:

Elijah’s association with redemption is prevalent in the Talmud. This is what merits him entry into the *Hagadah* which was formulated during that era. There is a discrepancy concerning the origins of Elijah’s cup at the Seder. Some say it evolved from a dispute about the number of cups to be drunk at the Seder. The four cups symbolize the four types of redemption that will come to us at the time of the Messiah, based on four different synonyms for redemption that we find in Exodus 6:6 *V’hotzaiti, V’hitzalti, V’ga’alti, V’lakachti* (I will free you, I will deliver you, I will redeem you, and I will take you to be my people). However, the very next word after these four is *V’hai’vaiti* (and I will bring my children to the Promised Land). It is difficult to locate the origins of this dispute because apparently it is indicated only in certain Talmudic additions. A Chabbad website, SichosinEnglish.org, reveals the following:

“In the Babylonian Talmud, although the standard published text mentions only four cups of wine, the version of Pesachim 118a possessed by the Geonim (*Cited by Rabbenu Yitzchak Alfasi*) states: ‘On the fifth cup, one should recite the Great Hallel,’ these are the words of Rabbi Tarfon.” (The Fifth Cup of Wine: [Sichos in English.org](http://SichosinEnglish.org), adapted from *Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXVII, p. 48*)

(apparently there was such controversy over Rabbi Tarfon’s position that it was extracted from the Talmud)

It would follow that redemption is not complete until the final reward of a Promised Land is fulfilled, and hence we have a fifth cup. To resolve the dispute, a fifth cup was added, over which the Great Hallel was to be recited, but not to be drunk. Those who use this line of reasoning explain that “since there is an unresolved Talmudic

question regarding the matter, a cup is poured out for Eliyahu, regarding whom it is said: "The Tishbite will resolve questions and difficulties,"... he will also resolve the questions regarding this cup of wine." However, it is further pointed out through Sichos that the cup of Eliyahu is unrelated to this argument and it is not mentioned by the Rambam. Rather, it originated with the Ashkenazi community, as it is written in Shulchan Aruch HaRav, "It is customary in these countries to pour out another cup of wine, besides those poured for those attending [the Seder]. This is called the cup of Eliyahu the prophet." (Sichos in English) With either explanation, Elijah became associated with the fifth cup because of his connection with the Messiah.

Elijah's link to the Messiah is implied as early as the beginning of Genesis: *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 2.4 tells us that

The spirit of God hovered alludes to the spirit of the Messiah... In the merit of what will the spirit come? ... in the merit of repentance, which is likened to water.

Further on Ben Zoma states:

"I was contemplating creation and have come to the conclusion that between the upper and the nether waters there is but two or three fingerbreaths, for is it not written and the spirit of God blew but hovered, like a bird flying and flapping with its wings, its wings barely touching the nest over which it hovers."

In addition to the connection between Elijah and the Messiah there is also a connection between Elijah and water and Elijah in flight. Concerning water we saw that Elijah in his zealous stage pronounced the cessation of rain (curtailing of water) on his own volition, before being directed by God. Concerning flight, we find in *B'rachot* 4b: *It is written, "Then flew to me one of the seraphim" Tanna taught: Michael reaches his goal in one flight, Gabriel in two, Elijah in four, and the Angel of Death in eight.*

Similarly, in *Targum Kohelet* 10:20 we find that he "soars like an eagle above the face of the earth and observes the hidden activities of men." The eagle, like Elijah, is a Biblical metaphor based on Exodus 19:4, *I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself*, which implies that God, the loving Father, gives security to His young and at the same time guides them toward independence. (Weiner, p 52)

It is apparent that Elijah is associated with many concepts in the Talmud and aggadic texts. He is a role model of teshuva. He advocates diligent study of Torah and observance of *mitzvot*. He symbolizes both spiritual and physical redemption.

Elijah in the Talmud: Selected Aggadot

The following selections are aggadic stories which exemplify Elijah in various roles which evolved from and beyond his character in the Biblical text. Of the many possible examples, I have selected these to show the wide variety of lessons and role modeling Elijah provides. These are paraphrases or summaries based on Soncino English translation of the Talmud and *Ein Yaakov*.

B'rachot 6b* **Elijah as an Arab*

R. Huna said that anyone who prays behind a synagogue is considered wicked by the Sages, and whoever transgresses the words of the sages is liable to death (4b)! It happened that a certain man was praying behind the synagogue, and furthermore, he did not turn and face in the proper direction. Elijah happened upon the scene and approached him as an Arab merchant. So disguised, Elijah said to him, "You stand before your creator and act as if there are two powers governing the world!" Thereupon Elijah drew his sword and killed him!

This is clearly reminiscent of the original zealous Elijah we find in the text.

Avodah Zarah 18a-b* **Elijah as a harlot*

The story is that Bruria, wife of R. Meir and daughter of R. Hanina of Taradion (of martyrology fame) had a sister who was taken and placed in a brothel. Feeling shame about this, she urged her husband to try to rescue her. R. Meir took some *denarii*, disguised himself as a knight and went to the place where she was kept, and approached her. "Prepare yourself for me!" he demanded. To which she replied that she was "in the manner of women". When he claimed he would wait, she replied "there are many prettier than I." Her answers convinced R. Meir that she was innocent of wrongdoing, and he asked her guardian that she be released for a sum of money. Despite the bribe, the guardian was hesitant and feared for his life from the government. R. Meir assured the guard that if anything did happen, he was to exclaim, "O God of Meir, answer me!" The guard handed her over. Sure enough, this same guard was brought to judgment and taken to the gallows. He exclaimed, "O God of Meir, answer me!" whereupon he was taken down and questioned. The guard told the whole incident, and the Romans proceeded to search for R. Meir. They went so far as to engrave his likeness upon the Gates of Rome, proclaiming that he should be sought and brought to justice. One day, he was spotted and pursued. Attempting to run away, he entered a harlot's house, so as not to be identified as R. Meir, who would certainly not enter such a place. Some say, it was Elijah the prophet, who just happened to come along in the guise of a harlot, to embrace him, and rescue him from his peril.

This story reveals Elijah in a transformed compassionate mode.

B'rachot 6b Elijah in support of mincha

Mincha is such a short tefila. Why give it so much weight?

R. Chelbo said one should always be diligent with regard to *mincha* because Elijah was answered only through *mincha*. In the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18) they both prepared a sacrifice on Mount Carmel, and prayed that fire would come from their respective God / gods to consume it. At the time of *mincha* Elijah's prayer was answered, while that of the prophets of Baal was not. Furthermore, Elijah pleaded with God, using the word *anaini* (answer me) twice because he was asking for two things: a) that his request for fire to come down from heaven should be answered b) that it should be apparent that this heavenly fire should not be deemed as witchcraft.

This story exemplifies how details of Elijah's story in the text prioritized the Sages attitude towards *Tefilat Mincha*.

Baba Metzia 59b Elijah's summary role in the Oven of Akhni story

(A particularly well-known *aggada* this story follows a *halakhic* discussion in which the rabbis debated whether a certain portable oven could become *tamai* (impure). While almost all the sages felt it could be, Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus disagreed)

On that day, Rabbi Eliezer put forward all the arguments in the world, but the Sages did not accept them. Finally he said to them, "If the *halakha* is according to me, let that carob tree prove it." He pointed to a nearby carob-tree, which then moved from its place a hundred cubits, and some say, four hundred cubits. They said to him "One cannot bring a proof from the moving of a carob-tree." Rabbi Eliezer said, "If the *halakha* is according to me, may that stream of water prove it." The stream of water then turned and flowed in the opposite direction. They said to him, "One cannot bring a proof from the behavior of a stream of water." Rabbi Eliezer said, "If the *halakha* is according to me, may the walls of the House of Study prove it." The walls of the House of Study began to bend inward. Rabbi Joshua then rose up and rebuked the walls of the House of Study, "If the students of the wise argue with one another in *halakha*, what right have you to interfere?" In honor of Rabbi Joshua, the walls ceased to bend inward; but in honor of Rabbi Eliezer, they did not straighten up, and they remain bent to this day. Then Rabbi Eliezer said to the Sages, "If the *halakha* is according to me, may a proof come from Heaven." Then a heavenly voice went forth and said, "What have you to do with Rabbi Eliezer? The *halakha* is according to him in every place." Then Rabbi Joshua rose up on his feet, and said, "*Lo Ba'shayim he!* It is not in the heavens" (*Deut 30:12*). What did he mean by quoting this? Rabbi Jeremiah said, "He meant that since the Torah has been given already on Mount Sinai, we do not pay attention to a heavenly voice, for You have written in Your Torah, "Decide according to the majority" (*Exodus 23:2*). Rabbi Nathan met the prophet Elijah. He asked him, "What was the Holy One, Blessed be He, doing in that hour?" Elijah said, "He was laughing and saying, "My children have defeated me, my children have defeated me."

Although Elijah's role in this story seems minimal, it is significant that he takes on the privileged role of transmitting God's reflections, thus bringing resolution to unresolved

issues. This is one of the designated roles predicted by Malachi (3:24), that Elijah will be the one to resolve future disputes.

***Eduyot 10a Mishnah 8:7* Elijah as resolver of disputes**

R. Yehoshua presents the following tradition traced back from R. Yochanan ben Zakkai to Moses from Sinai: that Elijah will not come to declare which families are from pure or impure ancestry, but rather to remove families if impure lineage who forced their way into the Jewish community, and to bring in families of pure lineage that were forcibly kept out of the Jewish community. (Further discussion ensues) R. Shimon said, Elijah will come to settle disputes among the Sages. And the Sages said: He will come neither to remove nor to bring near, but to make peace in the world, as it is said, “Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of God. He will turn back to God the hearts of fathers with their sons, and the hearts of sons with their fathers.” (Malachi 3:23-24)

Here is another indication of how important Elijah’s future role was considered in settling of disputes.

***Baba Batra 7b* Elijah’s sensitivity to the needy**

The discussion in this case concerns the building of a gate house in the courtyard. Building a gatehouse inside the courtyard would preclude a poor man’s cries from being heard. Thus it would not be ethical to build it so. When Elijah learned that a particular pious man had built such a lodge (presumably Judah bar Baba or Judah bar Ila), he ceased his friendly visits him, since it infringed upon the poor man’s accessibility. This anecdote highlights Elijah’s empathy with those in need, to the extent that those who are not empathetic, he no longer deems worthy of friendship. Here is another indication of the transformed Elijah.

***Ketubot 77b* Elijah’s endorsement of those who show sympathy**

R. Yehuda ben Levi was so empathetic to sufferers, even those who were contagious and therefore shunned even by other rabbis, that he would study Torah with them, believing that the grace of Torah study would protect him from contagion. When he was about to die, Elijah heralded him, proclaiming, “Make room for the son of Levi!” Entering Paradise, they found Shimon bar Yochai sitting on 13 golden stools. The later asked him if he was indeed the son of Levi. “Yes”, he replied. Shimon further asked, “Has a rainbow ever appeared in your lifetime?” During the lifetime of a saint, whose merit alone is sufficient to save the world from destruction, a rainbow should not have been necessary to appear, explains Rashi. When R. Yehuda ben Levi responded, “Yes,” once again, Shimon exclaimed, “Then you are Not *the* son of Levi.” Actually there was no rainbow in his lifetime, but R. Yehuda was being modest.

While Elijah withholds his friendship from one who shows no empathy, he endorses those who sympathize with the sufferers.

***Taanit 22a* Elijah as non-judgmental exemplar**

R. Baroka Hoza’ah used to frequent the market at Be Lapat (Khuzistan) where Elijah often appeared to him. Once he asked the prophet, “Is there anyone in this market who

has a share in the world to come?" He replied, "No." Meanwhile, he caught sight of a man wearing black shoes and who had no thread of blue on the corners of his garment and he exclaimed, "This man has a share in the world to come!" R. Beroka ran after him and asked, "What is your occupation?" The man replied, "Go away and come back tomorrow." Next day he asked him again, and he replied "I am a jailor and I keep men and women separate and I place my bed between them so that they may not come to sin... While they were conversing thus, two men passed by and Elijah remarked, "These two have a share in the world to come." R. Baroka then approached them and asked "What is your occupation?" They replied, "We are jesters: When we see men depressed we cheer them up. Furthermore, when we see two people quarreling, we strive hard to make peace between them."

In this anecdote the transformed Elijah exemplifies the principle of not judging others by occupations or appearances. Sometimes the least likely suspects earn a place in the world to come.

Sanhedrin 98a* **Elijah as teacher concerning the Messiah and patience*

One day R. Joshua ben Levi met Elijah standing at the entrance to R. Shimon bar Yochai's tomb. He asked Elijah, "Have I a portion in the world to come?" To which Elijah replied, "If the Master desires it." "When will the Messiah come", he continued to ask? "Go and ask him for yourself," was his reply. "Where is he sitting?" was the next question. "At the gates of Rome," was the reply. "And by what sign may I recognize him?" "There he sits among the lepers. The Messiah is the only one who unwinds and rewinds his bandages one at a time, thinking, 'I want to be ready at a moment's notice if I am called'." So R. Joshua went to him and greeted him saying, "When will you come, Master?" "Today," was the answer. Rabbi Joshua returned to Elijah in the blink of an eye. Elijah said to him, "What did the Messiah say to you?" Rabbi Joshua replied, "He lied to me, saying, 'Today I will come.' But he has not come." Elijah said, "No, he did not say that he would come 'today'. Rather, he was quoting a verse of Psalms to you: *Today—if only you will listen to God's voice* (Psalm 95:7). "Today, *if* you will hear his voice!"

Again in his transformed role, Elijah teaches the importance of patience and the detriments of presumptuousness. Most important, the Messiah is ready to come to those who are receptive to him, a rather advanced notion for Talmudic thought.

Elijah and Jewish Mysticism

Webster defines theosophy as the belief or practice in which a claim is made of having mystical insight into the Divine nature, or to having a special divine revelation. Theosophy is, therefore, one of the primary components of mysticism, and Elijah by biographic description, is one who encompasses such experience. After Moses, Elijah is not only the earliest but one of the most dramatically mystical of the prophets.

Elijah's association with Jewish mysticism can be traced to Talmudic associations with R. Shimon bar Yochai, the acclaimed (though not historically corroborated) author of the Kabbalistic text, the Zohar. (Zohar was more likely written by Moses de Leon in 1280) Shimon was a protégé of Rabbi Akiva and later a significant teacher of his generation of Tannaim in the 2nd century. In *Shabbat* 33b we find the famous story of his internment in a cave with his son for 12 years. While hiding from the Romans, who were after him for his outspoken nationalism subsequent to the Bar Kochba revolution, Shimon and his son...

"went and hid in a cave. A miracle occurred and a carob tree and a water well were created for them. They would strip their garments and sit up to their necks in sand. The whole day they studied; when it was time for prayers they robed, covered themselves, prayed and then put off their garments again, so that they should not wear out. Thus they dwelt for 12 years in the cave. Then Elijah came and stood at the entrance to the cave and exclaimed, "Who shall inform the son of Yochai that the emperor is dead and his decree annulled?"

It is Elijah who informs Shimon and his son that they are no longer fugitives. Although they are subsequently condemned to yet another year of internment because of their pious arrogance, Elijah is their initial redeemer. Like in the aggadah of the Oven of Akhna story, Elijah plays a seemingly small role in this story. However, Shimon's behavior echoes that of the biblical Elijah; Shimon's zealous arrogance requires him to do an extra long year's worth of repentance before he is deemed worthy of becoming the exemplary teacher. The Zohar, which tradition tells us was written by Shimon and son during those long years in the cave, expands upon Elijah's role. *Elijah appeared to them twice daily and instructed them. (Zohar Chadash 59c)* If Shimon is deemed the first Jewish mystic, it follows that the theosophical experience of Elijah's visitations were a significant component of this primary Jewish mystical experience.

Although Shimon was perhaps the first to experience it, this kind of Elijah revelation was an experience coveted and claimed by subsequent Jewish mystics, and came to be known as *Gilui Eliyahu*. The revelations happened sometimes in dreams, sometimes in direct encounters, and always with a message or teaching involved. Elijah was said to have transmitted to Shimon, and to other mystics, the secrets of the divine house of study, the hidden mystic meaning of the Torah.²²¹ The kabbalists loved to claim revelation from Elijah. The list of significant mystics who have purportedly experienced *Gilui Eliyahu* include the following: R. Joseph ben Abba (9th C); R. Hai Gaon (11th C); R. Judah heHasid and his pupil R. Eliezer (13th C), the alleged co-authors of *Sefer Hasidi*; R. Isaac Luria, the most influential figure in the Tzefat kabbalistic community of the 16th C; R. Haim Vital his disciple and recorder; R. Joseph Karo; R. Moshe Cordevero; R. Judah Loew, the Maharal of Prague; R. Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement; and R. Moshe Yaim Luzzatto.

It became an aspiration, a goal for kabbalists to achieve *Gilui Eliyahu*. Haim Vital's writings in *Sha'are ha-Kedusha* explain how an individual can prepare himself to be receptive to *Gilui Eliyahu*:

"After the necessary preparation through conscientious observance of the religious commandments, through asceticism, immersion in the teaching of the Torah, devout prayer and meditation, spiritual illumination can be attained in five different ways: through the *ruach hakodesh* (holy spirit), a *maggid* (a teller or angel who relates celestial messages through stories), the prophet Elijah, a deceased pious man, or dreams."²³²

Mystics have claimed to achieve *Gilui Eliyahu* through one or more of these formats.

Each method allowing the seeker to experience the persona of Elijah in some fashion. Haim Vital claims furthermore, that one can only be a genuine mystic if he has experienced *Gilui Eliyahu*. In addition to the ascetic practices described above, Kabbalists today continue to maintain folk beliefs in the hopes of experiencing some form of *Gilui Eliyahu* by inscribing his name on amulets and visiting his cave at Mt. Carmel.^{3 24}

¹ 22 Op cit. Weiner. p81

² 23 Ibid. p 84

³ 24 Noy, Dov, *Encyclopedia Judaica* Vol 6, p 639

Gilui Eliyahu: Revelations of Elijah

A number of the great sages attribute their wisdom in some way to *Gilui Eliyahu*. *Pirkai de Rabbi Eliezer*, a pseudoepigraphical text, begins with such a tale, as summarized:

Eliezer was the son of the wealthy and powerful landowner Hyrcanos, in the 1st century CE. His father wishes for his sons to continue the good life he has provided, by plowing the land, marrying and raising sons of their own. Yet Eliezer, at age 28, feels unfulfilled and cries over his plight. "Oh my son", Hyrcanos asks, "Why do you weep? Are you distressed because the plot of land you plow is too stony?" Whereupon, Hyrcanos he gives him an arable plot. Yet he still sits down and weeps. "Is it now because the plot is too arable?" "No", he replies, "I weep only because I desire to learn Torah!" Hyrcanos reprimands his son, "At your age, study Torah? Rather get a wife and have sons, and let them study!" Eliezer fasts for two weeks, not tasting anything until Elijah, may he be remembered for good, appears to him and asks, "Son of Hyrcanos! Why do you weep?" He replies to him, "Because I desire to learn Torah." Elijah says to him, "If you desire to learn Torah, go up to Jerusalem, to R. Yochanan ben Zakkai." He arose and went up to Jerusalem to R. Yochanan ben Zakkai and sat down and wept. (A series of questions follows, each generating the same reply from Eliezer... "Because I wish to study Torah!") After one more fast, Eliezer finally proves his sincerity to the great ben Zakkai, and reveals to him his illustrious heritage. R. Yochanan then proclaims, "Just as the odor of your mouth (from prolonged fasting) has ascended before me, so may the savour of the statutes of the Torah ascend from your mouth to heaven." And Eliezer begins to study in earnest. (paraphrased from opening chapters of *Pirkai de Rabbi Eliezer*)

From early on in his studies, Eliezer's words of Torah are so potent that R. Yochanan proclaims them to be, "As a fountain which is bubbling and sending forth its waters and is able to effect a discharge more powerful than what it secretes. In like manner, you are able to speak words of Torah in excess of what Moses received at Sinai." Eventually, Eliezer's father, Hyrcanos, who had in mind to disinherit his son, bestowed upon him great honor, and Rabbi Eliezer became one of the most learned and respected sages of his time. He is quoted more frequently in the Talmud than any of his contemporaries (although he was eventually excommunicated because of the oven of Akhna incident) *and* he is privileged to numerous subsequent encounters with Elijah.

What makes this biographical episode so intriguing is not only that Elijah was the initial interface between Eliezer and his ultimate goal, but that the symbolic act which led to a visitation by Elijah was the act of fasting. This is a relatively early example of one of the various ascetic

devices used by the mystics to achieve personal revelation. Elijah himself had significant experiences with fasting, in his days of hiding out in the wilderness of a famine ridden land.

Initially Elijah does not directly take Eliezer under his wing to teach him, but rather guides him to an appropriate teacher in the real world. Only after R. Eliezer establishes himself and his reputation does he have numerous other encounters / learning with the prophet. Elijah thus serves in a variety of roles: the mystic guide for studying Torah, teacher, and personal friend. In today's neo-spiritual climate, the term spiritual guide or mentor or mediator is not so uncommon. But in the early rabbinic period, just after the destruction of the Temple, this was a relatively new idea. Mysticism was just a fledgling concept to which the character of Elijah readily lent itself. He became the new spiritual role model for the early mystics like Eliezer and Shimon bar Yochai. Being the recipient of *Gilui Eliyahu* was to become a privilege of spiritually elevated individuals, which sometimes gave entrée into direct revelations of their own.

Elijah and Folktales

As Jewish folk tales are often told in the form of riddles, Peninnah Schram presents what she calls “the puzzle”, in regard to Elijah’s tales:

How did Elijah become the favored Jewish folklore hero, surpassing in numbers of stories, even our forefathers, King David and King Solomon?

Dov Noy, a noted pioneer of Jewish folklore, calculates that there are approximately 600 Elijah stories officially catalogued in the Israel Folktale Archives (IFA) and they originate from over ten geographic locations in the Diaspora. The IFA is considered *the* most comprehensive resource of Jewish folklore. These are stories that are not replicas or retellings of the biblical narratives.

“Not one of them is an expanded biblical legend with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel... confrontation of Elijah with the prophets of Baal... the woman of Zarephath... Nor do we have among these “living” stories narratives about Elijah as the herald of the future redemption or as the precursor of the Messiah, motifs so well known from Rabbinic literature and written sources (midrash).” Rather, they are tales which are more nuanced by the specific ethnic culture in which they evolved, and may or may not rely on aggadic sources. (Schram, Peninnah, *Tales of Elijah the Prophet*, Jason Aaronson: New York, 1991, p xiii)

Noy emphasizes the impressive diversity of Jewish culture and story motifs that use Elijah as a prototype. The stories, for the most part, move beyond the messianic redemption motif stressed in rabbinic literature. The one common element is that Elijah unexpectedly appears from another world in some form of disguise, in order to make his point.

“He is rather portrayed as the heavenly emissary sent on earth to combat social injustice. He rewards the poor who are hospitable and punishes the greedy rich. In his attempts to right wrongs, he seeks to bridge the gap of social inequality and does not hesitate to punish the unjust, regardless of their status, even if they be rabbis or respected communal leaders. In one collection of folktales Elijah strangles the local rabbi while the latter rests after the *seder*. The prophet admonishes the rabbi: ‘You collected all the money as charity, but you distributed it according to your will. The cries of the needy reached heaven and came before God Almighty...’ Many of the stories about Elijah are an outcry of the wretched and unfortunate against the proud and oppressive elements in the Jewish community.” (Op cit, Noy, p 639)

The Elijah tales, therefore, were a vehicle for social protest within the Jewish community, often against figureheads in their own community. They also lent comfort to the poor and underprivileged, similar to the Wise Men of Chelm. Elijah's presence was particularly conjured on the eve of Passover, and in situations of danger, as he is often pitted against the Angel of Death. Still, Elijah's versatility and popularity does not quite answer the puzzle to which Peninnah Schram eludes.

If we answer the puzzle by simply attributing this vast array of folk tales to the immortal nature of Elijah, thereby giving him carte blanche to come and go as a kind of angelic emissary from the Almighty, then why not just as well use Enoch as that character? Some scholars, including the 16th century kabbalist Moshe Cordovero, explain this phenomenon precisely *because* of Elijah's similarities with Enoch. (ibid) They both were inexplicably taken from earth to some cosmic realm, while still alive. Enoch's Biblical story is much shorter and less defined than Elijah's.

And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begot Methuselah. And Enoch walked with God after he begot Methuselah three hundred years, and begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years. And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him. (Genesis 5: 21-24)

Three significant details can be extracted from this rather brief biography: Enoch lives the same number of years as days in our current year. Enoch is the seventh generation from Adam, counting from the genealogy provided in Genesis 5. Enoch is God fearing, as a result of which, he is taken by God. We are not even told if he was taken up in a chariot like Elijah, or some other miraculous vehicle. The lack of details in Enoch's biblical biography leave him conveniently wide open for legends to abound. Evidently, Enoch was quite a popular figure in early post-biblical literature, as there are several pseudoepigraphical books written in his name. Dov Noy elaborates:

“ He became *the* significant protagonist in the various spiritual and sectarian circles and movements during the last centuries of the 2nd Temple period. His figure was used more and more in Gnostic and sectarian speculations, and the early Christians, elaborating on the immortality of their Messiah (born as a human being) regarded Enoch as the prototype of Jesus. This penetration of the Enoch figure into the speculative apocalyptic identifications in non-Jewish sects probably aroused the opposition of the Jewish sages and of normative Judaism. However, Enoch was rooted too much in early Jewish legends...There were only two ways to eliminate Enoch from the Jewish tradition: by sully his reputation, or by replacing him.” (op cit, p xiv)

Enoch had become associated with Jesus in the early years of Christianity. For Enoch to remain the favored immortal hero once this association was made, was too uncomfortable for the rabbis. There were already three apocryphal Books of Enoch. According to Dov Noy, Both of the above mentioned antidotes were applied in order to alleviate the danger. In Geneses Rabbah, for example, we find that Enoch's reputation was sullied even as he approached heaven:

"R. Hama b. R. Hoshaya said that he was not inscribed in the roll of the righteous but in the roll of the wicked. R. Aibu said: Enoch was a hypocrite, acting sometimes as a righteous, sometimes as a wicked man. Therefore the Holy One Blessed Be He said: While he is righteous I will remove him. (Genesis 25:1)

Once Enoch fell from favor, Elijah was the natural substitute. Even legends that were initially connected with Enoch were transposed to Elijah. For example, there is a midrash in Pirkai de Rabbi Eliezer (7:40 as cited from Dov Noy) attributing the rod with which Moshe performed the miracles in Egypt to Enoch. The association of the rod with Enoch disappears in later writings, but a miraculous rod called Elijah's rod is referred to even today among Jews of middle eastern origin to ease births pangs and overcome dangers and threats. (op cit, p xiv)

The negating of Enoch and promoting of Elijah in Talmudic and aggadic literature may explain the quantity and quality of Elijah legends which evolved.

The Talmud, as we have discussed, refers to Elijah numerous times, and gives much weight to his earthly visitations. Tanna debe Eliyahu, which is pseudoepigraphically ascribed to Elijah, is considered by some to be a lost tractate of the Talmud. It is particularly concerned with God's intervention and guidance as exemplified through the patriarchs, and the value of studying Torah. A survey of the chapter headings of this work reveal an overwhelming emphasis on future messianic rewards for righteous behavior as prescribed by the guiding words of Elijah. Similar words of counsel, guidance or advice were not attributed to Enoch. This preoccupation with the messianic outcome, not coincidentally, is prevalent during the later centuries of Talmudic redaction, when Tanna debe Eliyahu was thought to have been written.

While there are intriguing stories in aggadic literature, they are generally of a past rabbinic world looking towards the messianic future. The folktales, which evolved from the Middle Ages through the Modern Era, are stories in which Elijah immediately impacts on the specific community to which they speak. These stories span the entire Jewish Diaspora geographically. Variants of stories with similar messages can be found in Morocco, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Eastern Europe, Yemen, Tunisia, Spain, and of course, Israel. Holy sites, synagogues and caves bear Elijah's name because he either "visited" there or his stories were recited there, from Alexandria to Damascus. Noy claims that many of the folktales collected were found in the Mt. Carmel Elijah cave. Mt Carmel, it should be remembered, is where Elijah initially challenged the 400 prophets of Baal. But these newer stories, by and large, are not reflective of the Biblical narrative. They are more concerned with the immediate needs of the contemporary society.

Noy turns to the kabbalistic preoccupation with Hebrew letters and God names in order to resolve the discrepancy between the biblical Elijah and the newer, cosmic messenger Elijah.

"The Biblical Hebrew name of Elijah (Eliyahu אליהו) consists of five letters (א ל י ה ו) which are the five letters of the two names of God: El and YHVH. As the two divine names stand for justice (din – El) and mercy (rachamim – YHVH) and for other abstract ideas confronting and opposing each other, their combination into a single entity symbolizes the whole world of ideas. Accordingly the name of Elijah endows him with multifaceted, all-embracing and multi-dimensional merits that unite confronting and seemingly opposed values: leniency and strictness, love and hatred, zealotry and tolerance, and so-on." (op cit, p xv)

While many Biblical characters have names that incorporate one or another of God's names into theirs (Shmu-el, Yechezk-el, Yirmi-yahu, Hizki-yahu) Elijah is the only one, according to Noy, who has a blend of two God name into one.

"There is no other name of this kind in the Jewish tradition, and according to the belief of nomen-nomen the bearer of the name is like the name itself."

This, then is the common denominator in the numerously diverse folk tales that have come down to us.

Dov Noy calls the Elijah stories pearls. “As pearls are enhanced by becoming part of a necklace, so too should these stories be adapted for plays and expanded in prose and Poetry.” (ibid, p xv)

Ten folktale stories are included in the appendix, including annotations of the sources, disguises and motifs. Some have their origins in aggadah, some a more obvious blend of Jewish and ethnic culture from which they came. They are as follows:

1. Elijah in Heaven
2. The Three Wishes 1
3. The Three Wishes 2
4. Feeding His Clothes
5. Enough
6. Castles in the Air
7. Because of a Loaf of Bread
8. Her Wisdom is Her Beauty
9. Elijah's Violin
10. Elijah on the Seder Night

Curriculum Rationale

Why a curriculum on Elijah, an antiquated miraculous prophet, for students of the rational 21st century? Unlike other prophets of the Bible, Elijah is a multi-dimensional character, who was accessible and available in every age of Jewish history. Because of the “event” of his transportation into the heavens, he metaphorically has the capability of returning to teach and serve every generation as needed. The scope of Elijah’s personality on those visitations attest to this phenomenon.

The folktales indicate the extent to which he has evolved into a ubiquitous folk hero. Peninnah Schram claims that, “Not only is Elijah the Prophet the most beloved character in all of Jewish folklore, but also the most popular. He appears significantly more often in folk tales than does any other character, far more often even than Maimonides, King Solomon, King David, and Moses.”^a However, in our current generation, it is increasingly evident that, other than students who are raised with a yeshiva education, few Jewish people today have any idea who Elijah is or why he has such clout.

I am a case in point. This project began as a response to an inner fascination. I have been fascinated by the Elijah mystique for many years. The quaint folktales I heard about some mysterious stranger appearing in disguise to bestow blessings of wealth or children upon a deserving couple touched me. The captivating picture of Elijah being whisked into the heavens on a fiery chariot made an impression on my young impressionable mind. Beyond that one detail, I knew very little about the biblical prophet. And yet, in my family we sang of him after every *havdalah* and invited him to every seder. I came to think of him as The Elijah Mystique ... the invisible stranger for whom I willingly and curiously open the door. I knew his name, but I truly did not know what he stood for. He is so familiar and yet so far away.

So I began reading his story, which is found primarily at the end of I and II Kings and Malachi 3. As the details emerged, my fascination became confused with an embarrassment. Elijah was a prophetic miracle worker. And Elijah was to be the personal herald of the Messiah. So now I knew what made him so famous. But I do not believe in the miraculous, nor do I believe in the coming of the Messiah... at least not literally.

^a Schram, p xxii

And Elijah seems to have been taken quite literally by the rabbis and the sages, who refer to him frequently. How was I to reconcile my own embarrassment factor with my desire to revitalize his story? I decided initially that I would focus on the folktales, where Elijah's role as an advocate for ethical values was most salient. But the more I read, the more inauthentic and unjust it felt to let the folktales overshadow the original prophet. And then it came to me. I had fallen into my own trap. I was feeling the need to somehow validate Elijah's miraculous nature before I could accept its underlying truths. I was unwilling to legitimize the meaning without the miracle.

One day I caught myself completely absorbed in a fantasy film at the movie theatre. I was reviewing all the minute details in my head, giving credence to every one, and marveling at how the fantasy supported the underlying message. And "*duh!*"... the *raison d'être* of myth began to make sense. The stories are vehicles for the ultimate truths of a particular culture. Those truths do not need to be empirically or scientifically or historically accurate in order to have validity. What they do need, is to be indicative of the moral, ethical, and spiritual tendencies of the culture or religion which they represent. They need to convey the values of the society which birthed them. Esoteric ideas are difficult to grasp without accompanying pictures or diagrams to make the point. The fiery, dramatic, and yes, miraculous stories of the Torah, fill this vital need. They make the message humanly tangible, fathomable...and even entertaining. If the Eternal One is unfathomable, how much more so do we need the assistance of a story line to help us along. The miraculous nature of our early myths should not be seen as an embarrassment, but rather an embellishment of the best kind. It's what keeps us going back time and again to the magic of Harry Potter. It's what tempts us to watch episode after episode of Superman, and Spiderman. It is *precisely* the magical moments that keep these superheroes soaring in our imaginations. If I have any intention of revitalizing Elijah's reputation, I would have to be intentionally utilizing the mystique, not sanitizing it, as I originally thought. Once I personally let go of my need for historical truth, Elijah could resume his charismatic mystique for me, and I could proceed with my project. This time I would embrace the miracles rather than shy away from them.

One might argue that the reason for Elijah's falling out of popular favor is that his miraculous qualities, which were once so enticing, are no longer relevant in a world of hi-tech empirical evidence. But what goes on in academic research does not necessarily

correlate with what is popular in the movie theatre. Wizards and super-heroes are still major box office draws. Elijah certainly rivals Harry Potter when it comes to wizardry. So why not capitalize on our very own Biblical super-hero, and bring him back to life?

One other aspect I wish to address in the curriculum is that of divergent learning styles. The theory of multiple intelligences suggests that there are a number of distinct forms of intelligence that each individual possesses in varying degrees. Howard Gardner proposes seven primary forms of intelligence: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, intrapersonal.^b Academic curricula tend to emphasize the linguistic and logical only. But many students understand and integrate material more naturally through the aural or visual senses. It is pedagogically expedient to present text through a variety of modalities. Therefore, the lessons in this curriculum intentionally address a variety of intelligences, including special (art), musical, linguistic (literary) and logical (thought provoking).

A relatively new format of curriculum organization uses the concept of “enduring understanding” rather than goals and objectives as the over-riding principle. The premise is that the ultimate goal in a lesson should be something that has enduring value, that lasts beyond the space of the lesson.

“Enduring Understandings are big ideas with important, enduring value. They are the core concepts, principles, theories, and processes that should serve as the focal point of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Big ideas are important, enduring, and transferable beyond the scope of a particular unit. They answer the teacher's question, “What do we want students to understand and be able to use several years from now, after they have forgotten the details?”^c

While the lessons in this curriculum generally focus on specific texts and ideas within the Elijah narrative, certain overarching Jewish concepts are included that have the weighted value of enduring understanding. These include the core concepts of social justice, messiah, midrash, and idolatry as a modern phenomenon. Using the prophet Elijah as a role model, it is hoped that the lessons which follow will fully engage the imagination, the senses and the mind with concepts of enduring value.

This curriculum is intended from adolescent through adult students.

^b Gardner, Howard, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. NY: Basic Books, 1993.

^c McTighe and Wiggins, 1999, pp. 275, 277).

Lesson 1: The Story of Navot

Ancient Tale of a Current Issue: Eminent domain

Goal of Lesson

This lesson will provide students with an opportunity to see how a Biblical text can be relevant in today's world. The story of Navot is one of the oldest examples of prophetic intervention with social justice issues, as Elijah is one of the earliest prophets to focus on the social welfare of the people.

The Text: Summary

Ahab is interested in a plot of land, a yielding vineyard, near his palace. He offers the owner, Navot, compensatory money or property in exchange for the land, but Navot is not interested in giving up his inherited property. Ahab returns to the palace dejected. Jezebel steps in. She trumps up charges against Navot, the consequence of which is execution. His property is thereby confiscated by the King. As Ahab is surveying his newly acquired property, Elijah miraculously appears on the scene, under God's bidding, and condemns him for the loathsome way in which he and his wife procured the land. Elijah predicts that his blood will be licked by the dogs.

Objectives:

1. Students will gain text study skills by exploring a chapter of Biblical text, I Kings I in chevruta.
2. Students will focus on details of the story through comparison of King Ahab's behavior with Queen Jezebel's behavior.
3. Students will identify the acts of social injustice that take place in the text.
4. Students will identify unethical behavior exemplified through the story.
5. Students will identify infractions of the 10 commandments that can be found in the Story, using a chart provided.
6. Students will compare this ancient text with modern day issues concerning Eminent Domain, after learning the meaning of this label.
7. Students will learn about the modern day issue of powerful constituents (ie government and big business) taking ownership of land belonging to those with little power.

Background on the Text:

This episode is found in I Kings chapter 21 and takes place after the opening Elijah narrative in which he challenges King Ahab and Queen Jezebel concerning their promotion of Baal idol worship. Ahab reigned over Israel for 22 years, contemporarily with Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, approximately 870 BCE. Jezebel had imported the practice of Baal and Ashera worship from Sidon, where her father was king. The text has already portrayed Elijah as a zealous prophet who is capable of the miraculous, and Ahab and Jezebel in particular as unethical royalty role models. We are told in I Kings 16:30; *Ahab son of Omri did what was evil in the eyes of God, more than all who had preceded him.* Nevertheless, Ahab was apparently successful both militarily and economically, as the chapter preceding this one describes a victorious battle against Aram and the chapter after alludes to his conspicuous wealth in the form of the House of Ivory that he built.

Teaching Strategy

This will be a two part lesson, which may take two sessions to complete.

Part I

This lesson will rely on chevruta study and analysis. Students will work with partners, working with English or Hebrew text, as appropriate. They will go through the text with the following questions in mind:

1. What are the unethical behaviors exhibited by Ahab and Jezebel?
2. How do their actions compare with one another?
3. Do either of the royalty show any remorse for actions taken?
4. Which of the 10 Commandments can be identified in the course of this story?

A commandment chart should be supplied to students ahead of time.

5. Share chevruta insights with the class.

Part II

Define the term Eminent Domain: The power of a governmental entity (federal, state, county or city government, school district, hospital district or other agencies) to take private real estate for public use, with or without the permission of the owner. The Fifth Amendment to the Constitution provides that "private property [may not] be taken for public use without just compensation." The Fourteenth Amendment added the requirement of just compensation to state and local government takings. The usual process includes passage of a resolution by the acquiring agency to take the property (condemnation), including a declaration of public need, followed by an appraisal, an offer, and then negotiation. If the owner is not satisfied, he/she may sue the governmental agency for a court's determination of just compensation. The government, however, becomes owner while a trial is pending if the amount of the offer is deposited in a trust account. Public uses include schools, streets and highways, parks, airports, dams, reservoirs, redevelopment, public housing, hospitals and public buildings. *legal-explanations.com*

Discuss and clarify the use of the term.

Many eminent domain projects become valuable contributions to the community at hand. Properties are often claimed by the government for such things as expedient highways, schools or municipal projects. Supposedly the original owner gets a fair price for his property. But property is often worth more than just monetary value, as we saw in the case of Navot. Also, the conversion of the property to another function is not always in the public interest, but rather in the interest of powerful businesses. When a "public use" is really a pretext for a private use, eminent domain becomes an abuse.

1. What does Judaism teach us about eminent domain through the Navot text?
2. Are there cases where you think eminent domain is justifiable?
3. Chevruta pairs will be handed one of two eminent domain cases cited below.

Discuss in pairs and then debate with the whole group.

Challenge note: The cases presented have a bias towards the private citizen.

Can you present a convincing argument for the other side?

4. How do these cases compare with the story of Navot? Is there an Ahab, Jezebel or Elijah in either case?

Eminent Domain Cases

Information on these cases is obtained through CastleWatch. CastleWatch is the online publication of the Castle Coalition, the Institute for Justice's nationwide grassroots

property rights activism project. The Castle Coalition helps home and small business owners fight eminent domain abuse through the public and political processes and this is our way of letting you know what's happening. Castle Coalition | A Project of the Institute for Justice. Additional case studies available from the website:

www.castlecoalition.org

1) Bristol, CT

The Bugryns, four siblings in their 70's and 80's, owned two homes and a Christmas tree farm in Bristol, totaling 32 acres. They had lived on the property for most of their lives, in a home Frank Bugryn built with his own hands. This all changed when Bristol officials decided to condemn the Bugryns' land for an industrial park. The property was not blighted, but the City believed the property should be put to industrial use, where it would generate more taxes and jobs than the houses and trees did. The City originally planned the industrial park to allow a local metal business to expand. After that company relocated to another municipality, the City continued its condemnation efforts.

1. The Bugryns challenged the condemnation in court, but lost both in the trial court and before the Connecticut Appeals Court.
2. The Connecticut and U.S. Supreme Courts declined to review the case
3. In September, 2002, the City began eviction proceedings to remove the family from their home of 60 years
4. In March 2003 the Bugryns lost their appeal of the eviction. They were ordered to vacate their homes by July 2003

2) Brooklyn, NY

Developer Bruce Ratner wants the city to help him acquire 21 acre of homes and businesses in a historic Brooklyn neighborhood for a new Nets basketball stadium and surrounding residential, retail, and office development. 11 properties have been seized so far, and many others sold under the threat of eminent domain. His most trusted ally, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, even said the project was too big. In December 2005, three Brooklyn elected officials demanded an independent evaluation of six office buildings that have been declared "blighted" (condemned). City Councilwoman Letitia James said, "I know these buildings, and some of them are as sound as the Empire State Building."

Evaluation:

Students will write a letter to an appropriate government agency, housing authority or developer, expressing their concerns about a current eminent domain issue. They may take a pro or con position. Information provided by organizations like *Castle Watch* can help students write letters to designated targets.

Questions of Enduring Understanding:

1. If you were a modern day Elijah, how might you deal with cases like these?
2. Is there a Jewish position on social Justice issues like eminent domain?

Lesson 2: Chariots A-Fire Text as Art

Goal of the Lesson:

The primary purpose of the lesson is to expose students to other modalities of understanding text. Students learn with varied types of intelligence and sensitivities. Relating to a text in a mode other than words opens new potential of awareness and appreciation. There are numerous works of art related to Elijah. Almost all are specific text renderings, as opposed to midrash or folk tale, and therefore provide an intriguing additional opportunity for text study. Not surprisingly, they are almost all about a miraculous incident from the Elijah narrative. The Biblical Art Archives, one of the largest collections available on line, contains some 247 works of art that are Elijah-related.

Two specific topics will be used for the purpose of this lesson: Reviving the son of the Widow of Zarephath, and the Ascension in the Chariot. Six artistic examples of each topics have been chosen, though more than six are extant. They have been chosen with an eye towards variety of artistic and midrashic quality, and include examples that are more and less sophisticated. Other artworks can be viewed at the websites indicated in the appendix.

Objectives

1. Students will become aware of how a specific line of text can be interpreted visually.
2. Students will appreciate the broad range of visual interpretation that a verse can generate, analyzing the picture for specific symbols, colors, and stylistic nuances
3. Students will recognize that artistic interpretations are the 'personal midrash' of the artist, while trying to uncover any messages in the picture that go beyond the words of the text.
4. Students will try their own hand at visual interpretation of a verse from the Elijah texts, using a particular art media.

Teaching Strategy:

By experiencing the Elijah text through color and image, the viewer has a glimpse of Elijah through visual lenses that bring a new dimension to his character. When students are exposed to an entirely different presentation of the prophet, they might experience his essential qualities in a more creative and immediate light. This is particularly important because as educators we recognize that students indeed learn through various intelligence modalities. Students may relate to the visual modality in ways that have not touched them intellectually. Furthermore, by viewing art as a kind of *midrash* students will learn that the visual is a personal interpretation of a story, bringing to it unique nuances and insights. It is therefore important to review a working definition for the term *midrash*.

Define Midrash: The term, which literally means investigation, signifies clarification through interpretation of a biblical text. It often involves embellishments that help to promote an ethical or devotional point of view.^d

^d Birnbaum, Philip, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts*, p 335

Set Induction:

Picture in your minds' eye:

what the widow and her son might have looked like

OR

what that chariot might have looked like

Lesson Plan:

1. Choose which topic you would prefer to focus on, the widow or the chariot.
2. We have before us two sets of artwork and two sets of verses related to Elijah.
Match the picture to the text.
Find the exact verse or verses you think the artist is attempting to depict.
3. Now study the picture with your partner. Consider these questions:
What calls out to you from the shapes, colors and images?
In your opinion, does the artist succeed in conveying the meaning of the text?
What do the pictures (within each set) have in common / how do they differ?
Does the artist have a purpose in mind other than illustrating the text?
Are there messages in the painting that go beyond the verse of text?
Is there an overall feeling that comes to mind from the artwork?
4. Share with the class.
*Discuss: In what way are these paintings what you might call midrash?

Evaluation:

1. Students will create their own visual representation of Elijah, using a method called 'paper midrash.' Using cut up colored tissue paper students will choose one topic from the Elijah narratives from a suggested list. This project method is suggested because it alleviates awkwardness for students who feel they are "not good at art". Other art projects may be substituted by the teacher.
2. Students will locate an appropriate verse related to their topic by studying the related chapter of text

Suggested list of topics:

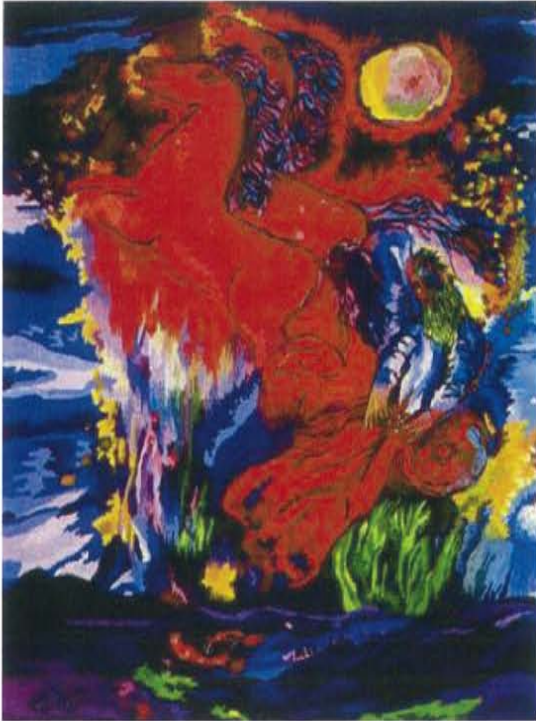
Elijah with Prophets of Baal	I Kings: 18
Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath	I Kings: 17
Elijah in the Wilderness	I Kings: 17
Elijah on Mt. Horev – Revelation of the Still Small Voice	I Kings: 19
Elijah in Navot's Vineyard	I Kings: 21
Elijah and the Chariot	II Kings: 2

3. Students will share creations with the class, including reactions and goals of each student artist

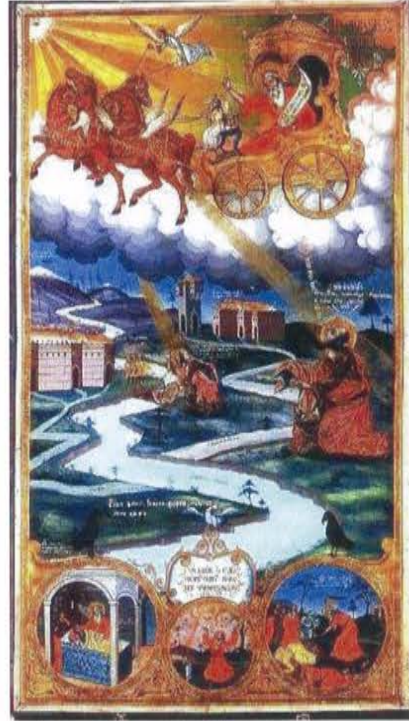
Questions for Enduring Understanding:

1. How does the concept of midrash, the personal interpretation of text, story or work of art, effect our daily perceptions and interactions?
2. How do visual presentations compare to literary presentations, considering your own personal learning style?

**See Appendix for Color Renditions of the following Art*



Rueven Rubin



Diameter Morel 1850



Eddie Atkinson



Gustave Dore



joyceimages



Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's (1794-1872)



Gustave DORÉ



Marc Chagal



Isabella Colette



Unknown. Crossmap Website



Ford Madox Brown



Edouard Edy-Legrand

Text for Artworks

1 Kings 17 The Widow at Zarephath

17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. 18 She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

19 "Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. 20 Then he cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" 21 Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

22 The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. 23 Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

2 Kings 2 Elijah Taken Up to Heaven

1 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

3 The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "but do not speak of it." 4 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

5 The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," he replied, "but do not speak of it." 6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on.

7 Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

10 "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise not."

11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart.

Lesson 3: Mendelssohn's "Elijah" A Musical Text Study

**Requires cd player and cd as edited specifically for the lesson*

Goal of Lesson:

The subject of Elijah is one that figures prominently in all genres of artistic expression, including music, where a major classical composition and a well known spiritual immediately come to mind. Musical expression has the unique ability to draw upon human emotions in a way that goes deeper than the mere words of a text. Students are divergent learners, and they deserve varied modalities through which to absorb the subject being taught. Elijah's popularity is partly a function of his ability to reflect the direct needs, or spirit, of a particular age and culture. By listening to and analyzing a few examples from Felix Mendelssohn's oratorio, "Elijah" students will experience the story through the auditory and kinesthetic senses. They will also learn that Mendelssohn had his own personal agenda regarding what he considered idol worship in his own day.

Background on Mendelssohn's "Elijah":

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), the Romantic composer, was the grandson of Moses Mendelssohn, the great Jewish philosopher. His father, a wealthy prominent German banker, chose to convert the family to Christianity, likely to overcome the impediments which otherwise blocked Jews from access to the elite of European society. It is the case that Felix Mendelssohn wrote his first oratorio, St. Paul, based on a Christian theme. Nevertheless, his Jewish roots were inescapable, and found expression in his masterwork, "Elijah". The oratorio "Elijah" was completed in 1846.

Mendelssohn composed at a time when dramatic musical experimentation was taking place. Mendelssohn thought the "new" music of his day was inappropriate, even outlandish. Music was his religion, so to speak, and the *avant garde* composers of his time were overstepping the bounds of what he considered to be proper classical music. They were, in that respect, being idolatrous. Biblical oratorios and cantatas were quite popular in the days of Bach (1685-1750) and Handel (1685-1759). Mendelssohn chose to write the "Elijah" oratorio in the Baroque style of his musical role models from a century earlier. He did this in a pronounced way by making prominent use of fugues and chorales, a conventional Baroque technique of the 18th century, but no longer in vogue in the 19th century. Romantic composer who were contemporaries of Mendelssohn included Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Berlioz. Their music was known for deep emotional expression and experimentation with new instrumental and orchestral sounds. Mendelssohn's music, however, remained predictable and traditional, using form and stylistic elements from previous generations. Nevertheless, even his contemporaries considered his music masterful.

Mendelssohn was not about to hide his sentiments concerning the current music scene. He wrote in a letter to one of his closest associates:

"I imagined Elijah as a real prophet through and through, of the kind we could really do with today: strong, zealous, and yes, even bad-tempered, angry and brooding – in contrast to the riff-raff, whether of the courts or of the people, and indeed at odds with almost the whole world – and yet borne aloft as if on angel's wings."^e

^e Temperley, Nicolas: *The world owes good thanks to Dr. Mendelssohn*, Decca CD, 1997 disc notes

Mendelssohn regarded himself as a guardian of true values of classical musical composition. His biographer wrote, “He was dismayed equally by the virtuoso schools of singing and piano playing, and by the irreverent and impatient radicalism of composers such as Berlioz and Wagner. One of the lines in the libretto is: “Will then the Lord be no more in Zion?” Mendelssohn’s answer to this ancient question was to bring forth a work that would reassert the moral and musical power of the old values...He confined himself to well-tried, familiar musical idioms and procedures. “*Oh show to all these people that I have done these things according to thy word.*” In destroying the Baal worshippers Elijah strikes a satisfying blow against all the corruptions of modern times.” For Mendelssohn, Elijah held a prophetic message to the artistic world of his day. He was the prophet poignantly addressing the musical idolaters of his era. Those idolaters, like Jezebel, deserved appropriate chastisement, which for Mendelssohn meant asserting the Lord God of Abraham over the pagan god Baal through his majestic music.”^f

Summary of Related Text:

The libretto is based on the first narrative of Elijah, found in I Kings 16 -21. (See Literature Survey for more detail) Elijah confronts the Israelite King Ahab and Queen Jezebel for promoting Baal worship in Israel. So pronounced is this pagan practice that Ahab even builds a temple to worship the Baal. Elijah declares that there will be a drought as punishment, and then takes to the wilderness where he has a series of miraculous adventures. Three years into the drought, people are becoming rather desperate, but still have not changed their ways. Elijah returns to challenge the prophets of Baal to a duel – who can persuade their God to ignite the sacrificial bull with no human intervention! Four hundred prophets of Baal, two bulls, Elijah and a royal entourage ascend Mount Carmel for the event. All is prepared; Baal is called upon by all his prophets with great fervor, with shouts, with raving, with dancing, even flagellations. But there is no response. Then Elijah, with dramatic flare, sets further challenges to himself by dousing his bull with water and filling a trench around the sacrificial alter with water. He prays for God’s intervention *and a fire from Adonai descended and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the earth, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.* (I Kings 18: 36-38)

Rather than being elated, Elijah slumps into a spiritual depression after this miraculous feat. He travels 40 days (like Moses) to Har Horev, another name for Mt. Sinai. Again like Moses, Elijah has an intimate revelatory encounter with God. Wind, earthquake, fire present themselves, but God is not in any of these. When next comes the *still small voice*, however, a divine voice addresses him directly. The narrative provides us with one of the most often quoted verses of the Bible:

And, behold, Adonai passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Adonai; but the Adonai was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Adonai was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Adonai was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. (I Kings 19: 11-12)

^f ibid

Teaching Strategy:

The lesson focuses on three verses from the narrative text. Although a verse of text can be read in a few seconds, the music expands the message of the line into several minutes of audio time. Each piece will be listened to and analyzed in turn, emphasizing the musical style being utilized.. A musical “fugue” gives it the power of chant. It imprints the message on a different part of the brain and the message becomes more than informational words. Using choral voices can produce a meditative effect. These will be detected in the composition, along with other effects of dramatic musical expression such as tempo, crescendo and decrescendo.

Objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with the narrative text of I Kings 18 and 19, Elijah’s challenge to the prophets of Baal, and his revelation on Har Horev.
2. Students will recognize the specific Baroque techniques of fugue, recitative and chorale.
3. Students will become sensitized to basic musical expression created by tempo, pitch and varied instrumentation.
4. Students will be challenged to listen critically to music they are likely not familiar with and discover what creates dramatic effect.
5. Students will compare the meaning of the text in itself with the feeling created by the music.
6. Students will recognize that text put to music can effect them on a different, often deeper level.
7. Students will learn about Mendelssohn’s personal reasons for composing “Elijah” (his personal vendetta against what he considered to be idolatrous musical composition) and compare it to ancient idol worship.
8. Students will grapple with the famous passage of “the still small voice”

Lesson Plan: 3 texts corresponding to 3 musical selections are provided. The number of selections actually used to be determined by the teacher. The third text, *still small voice*, could be used itself for the whole lesson.

A. Bible Text: The narrative begins with Elijah declaring: *As the Lord God of Israel lives, there shall not be dew nor rain these years.* There is no response of the people in the biblical text, but the libretto focuses specifically on the reaction of the people: (17:1)

Libretto text: *Help, Lord! Wilt Thou quite destroy us! The harvest now is over, the summer days are gone, and yet no power cometh to help us! Will then the Lord be no more God in Zion? The deeps afford no water! And the rivers are exhausted! The suckling's tongue now cleaveth for thirst to his mouth! The infant children ask for bread! And there is no one breaketh it to feed them*

B. Bible Text: *And they took the bullock which was given to them, and they dressed it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying: O Baal answer us.* (18:26)

Libretto text: *Baal, we cry to thee, hear and answer us! Heed the sacrifice we offer! Hear us, Baal! Hear, mighty god! Baal, oh answer us! Baal, let thy flames fall and vanquish the foe! ... Baal! Baal! Hear us and answer, Baal!*

C. Bible Text: *And God said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before God. And, behold, Adonai passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Adonai; but the Adonai was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake: but the Adonai was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Adonai was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. (1 Kings 19: 11-12)*

Libretto text: *Behold, God the Lord passed by! And a mighty wind rent the mountains around, brake in pieces the rocks, brake them before the Lord. But yet the Lord was not in the tempest. Behold, God the Lord passed by! And the sea was upheaved, and the earth was shaken. But yet the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there came a fire. But yet the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came a still small voice. And in that still voice onward came the Lord.*

1. Students will review the story, with copies of the specific focus text lines.
2. First listening: Follow the music and text and discuss the feeling exuded by the music.
3. Prompt students to listen for these specific techniques in the music:
 - Chorus vs orchestra
 - Crescendo & decrescendo
 - Forte (loud) & Pianissimo (soft)
 - Fugue (repetition of the same line by another voice (alto, soprano, tenor, bass) in succession, heard with the words “and yet no power cometh to help us!”
 - Use of instrumentation – which instruments can be heard prominently?
4. Second listening: Follow the music and text, discuss new insights, and how the music dramatizes the message of the story.

Text B makes use of a technique called antiphonal singing, in addition to fugue. Antiphonal singing is alternate singing by two choirs or singers, like call and response. This style was likely used in the Temple, as many Psalms are written in such a format. In this example the alternate singing is done by the male female sections of the chorus. Also note the pronunciation of the name Baal as *bail*.

Text C is longer and more complex than the previous selections. The focus of this example should be on the meaning of the text, concerning the revelation through the *still small voice*. Consider the following midrash:

The four phenomena that god sent before His appearance – the wind, earthquake, fire, and a still small voice – were to instruct Elijah about the destiny of man. God told Elijah that these four represent the worlds through which man must pass: the first stands for this world, fleeting as the wind; the earthquake is the day of death, which makes the human body to tremble and quake; fire is the tribunal in Gehenna, and the still small voice is the last day of judgment, when there will be none but God alone.⁸

⁸ Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Vol IV, p 200

Students are encouraged to deliberate the meaning of the words, and then discover how Mendelssohn interprets them musically.

Evaluation:

1. Students will draw a squiggle / doodle rendition of the music as they listen for a third time. With their pencil they will indicate the various musical effects through their free style drawing. There is no correct format for this. It is meant to help integrate reactions to the music in a modality other than words, which are often inadequate.

2. Students will write a paragraph indicating how the music made them feel or react to a specific piece of the Elijah story. Did it have more or less of an impact than the text itself? Why or why not?

3. For the *still small voice* selection, a Guided Meditation follow –up:
(*Begin the meditation with the boisterous part of the music. Then turn down the volume*)
Close your eyes. Breathe in deeply, that slow releasing breathe.

Listen carefully. First to the sounds around you... to the distracting sounds and the distracting thoughts... the obvious, noisy intrusive thoughts of your current life. Now focus on your breathing... and let the sound of your breath overshadow the distractions.

Meditative space

Now try to go deeper. Listen to what's behind your breath.

Listen to what Elijah called the *still, small voice* within you.

Meditative space

Listen to your inner most thoughts. Listen to the whole message, to the healing message.

Meditative space

(*Come out of the meditation with the finale music from the selection. This must be times out in advance*)

Questions for Enduring Understanding:

1. Are there forms of idolatry in your current life that you feel are worth speaking out against? How might you do that?

2. Is the presence of God something that has come to you in an awesome, fire and brimstone way, or in a still small voice?

3. How do ideas presented musically compare to ideas presented through the written word, considering your own personal learning style?

Lesson 4: A Lesson From the Talmud

The Messiah at the Gates of Rome... and at Our Own Doorposts

Goal of Lesson:

This lesson will exemplify ways in which Elijah's character develops beyond the austere and distant image of him in the biblical text. By analyzing this *aggadah*, found originally in the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a, students should notice a distinctly different character has evolved. While Elijah is zealous, threatening and rather inapproachable in the biblical text, he is often quite personable and accessible for guidance in the *aggadah*.^h Significantly, in the act of transporting to a quasi-angelic figure of the cosmic realm, Elijah's 'holier-than-thou' personality transforms into a compassionate, though still instructive, human being. Students will also explore the notion of "the coming of Messiah" for today's liberal, non-orthodox constituency.

Background information:

The Messiah as a future redeemer or savior does not appear in the biblical text. There are only hints of such a concept in some of the later prophets. Specifically, the prophet Malachi proclaims that Elijah will be the one who returns at the end of days to reconcile parents and children. From this verse evolves the idea in rabbinic literature that Elijah will be the herald to the Messiah.

Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and awesome day of the Lord; and he will turn the hearts of the fathers (parents) towards the children and the hearts of the children towards the parents lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction.

(Malachi 3:23-24)

In Rabbinic times, the messiah refers to an actual person, thought to be a king descended from the Davidic line, who will redeem Israel at the end of days, and re-establish a Kingdom of God. He is expected to defeat the enemies of Israel, physically restore the righteous to Zion, reconcile them with God, rebuild the Temple, reinstate sacrificial worship, and bring on a period of spiritual and physical bliss. This being no small task, the messiah was to be the ultimate, all-in-one prophet, warrior, judge, king and teacher of Torah; and Elijah was to be his predecessor.ⁱ

Traditional Orthodoxy today still believes that this personal messiah will come at some future date, and therefore a primary motivating factor of our religious behavior is to live an exemplary life of *Torah* and *Mitzvah* in order that the messiah will come sooner than later. But Reform and other liberal strands of Judaism have reinterpreted the idea of Messiah, from a person who will come to redeem the Jewish people exclusively to a Messianic Age of spiritual, political and religious harmony. All mankind will come to respect one another, and peace will prevail throughout the universe. For some, this Messianic Age is a real and attainable future happening; for others, it is an purely an ideal model to strive towards. These contrasting views, with numerous variations in between, have been highly debated throughout Jewish history. Students will have an opportunity, through this lesson, to explore their own thoughts on the issue.

^h Aggadah is similar to midrash, encompassing legends which illustrate moral and ethical teaching. They aim at edifying and inspiring righteous behavior.

Op cit, Birnbaum, p 16.

ⁱ Paraphrased from Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 11, p 1411

Objectives:

1. Students will gain text study skills.
2. Students will recognize that Elijah is not the same character in the Bible that he is in the Aggadah.
3. Students will grapple with the notion of “messiah” then and now.
4. Students will explore how we, as contemporary Elijah’s, might help to promote a Messianic Age.

The Text: Sanhedrin 98a (*from Soncino translation, italics added for clarity*)
(The Sages are discussing when and how they might expect the Messiah to arrive)

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi met the prophet Elijah while the prophet was standing at the entrance to the cave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Rabbi Joshua asked Elijah “Have I a portion in the world to come?” Elijah replied: “If this Master desires it” (*if you are worthy*) R. Joshua said, “I saw two, but heard the voice of a third.” (the *Shechina*) He then asked him, “When will the Messiah come?” “Go and ask him, yourself,” was his (Elijah’s) reply. “Where is he sitting?” “At the entrance of the town” (*Rabbi Joshua was amazed: You mean I could find him, talk to him now? Where is he?*) Elijah said, “You can find him at the gates of Rome.” “And by what sign may I recognize him?” “He is sitting among the poor lepers. All of them untie (*the bandages of their sores*) all at once, and re-bandage them together, whereas the Messiah unwinds and rewinds his bandages each separately (*before treating the next*), thinking, ‘Should I be wanted (*it being time for my appearance as the Messiah*) I must not be delayed (*through having to bandage a number of sores. If they have many leprous sores, the lepers first take off all the bandages, treat each sore, and replace them together. Whereas, the Messiah needs to be ready at a moment’s notice if called*).

Rabbi Joshua went to him (*The Messiah*) and greeted him saying, “Peace upon thee, Master and teacher.” “Peace upon you, O son of Levi.” Rabbi Joshua asked him, “When will you come, Master?” “Today,” was his answer. Upon returning to Elijah, the latter enquired, “What did the Messiah say to you?” “Peace upon you, O son of Levi,” he answered. Thereupon Elijah observed, “He thereby assured you and your father of (*a portion*) in the world to come. Rabbi Joshua countered, “He spoke falsely to me, stating that he would come today, but he has not come.” Elijah answered him, “This is what he said to you: *Today—if only you will hear God’s voice!* (Psalm 95:7). (*Elijah explains that the Messiah was quoting a verse from Psalms 95:7, indicating that he would only come only when you are ready to hear God’s voice*)

Teaching Strategy:

1. Students will study the text in chevruta with focus on the character traits of the leper/messiah, R. Joshua and Elijah.
What character traits are exhibited by each in this text?
Check details: where he is located, what types of questions are being asked ?
2. Explore the Messianic message in the text.
Does this text portray the Messiah as an actual person who will come and redeem Israel or otherwise?
Why is the Messiah portrayed as a leper and what is his relationship to Elijah?
What message is being conveyed here about the coming of Messiah?
3. Explore definitions of Messiah, from other traditional and liberal sources:

Orthodox Position: (Encyclopedia Judaica)^j

The messiah is the scion of the House of David. He will reign in Jerusalem, will rebuild the Temple, will reinstitute the sacrificial system, and usher in an era of peace.

Reform Pittsburgh Platform 1885:

With the development of Reform Judaism on the heels of Enlightenment in the 19th century, there was a sense that the Enlightenment itself was a precursor to the Messianic Age. The Jewish people were to herald this golden age of social reform, progress, liberalism and equal rights as emissaries for the rest of mankind. Zion and Jewish particularism were no longer part of the Messianic dream.

We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any laws concerning the Jewish State.^k

Reform Pittsburgh Platform 1937:

With the advent of Zionism and the impending specter of WWII on the horizon, the Reform movement altered its position accordingly:

In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship, and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion. In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in the upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven or refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life. Throughout the ages it has been Israel's mission to witness to the Divine in the face of every paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, justice truth and peace on earth. This is our messianic goal.^l

^j ibid

^k www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/pittsburgh

^l ibid

Reconstructionist Position, Mordecai Kaplan 1956: *(Questions Jews Ask)*^m

We can no longer believe that any person or semi-divine being, is divinely destined to rule as the Messiah and usher in the millennium. Nevertheless, the idea of the Messiah can still figure symbolically to express the valid belief in the coming of a higher type of man than this world has yet known.

Liberal Modern Position, Will Herberg *(Jews and the Modern Man, as cited in Encyclopedia Judaica)*ⁿ

Even the most perfect world state could do no more than enforce peace throughout the world, but the hatred and conflicts among men would remain. The peace in the messianic age dreamed of by the prophets is, on the other hand, an inner harmony that needs no external sanctions.

Evaluation:

Students will write a short essay or newspaper Op Ed on one of the following topics:

If you were Elijah today, what specific words of advice, warning or condemnation would you give to your people?

Where can we find the messiah today? Is there some *gateway* where he might be lurking?

What might *the messiah in our world today* look like?

What does it mean: *if only you will hear God's voice* ?

Questions for Enduring Understanding:

1. Which view of a messiah resonates for you in the world today?

A personal redeemer, specifically linked to the Jewish people

An age of peace and harmony modeled by example of the Jewish people

A universal utopian age, not Jewish specific

An inner state of peace and harmony

Other

2. If you were informed that you were to be the herald of a Messianic Age, what would you do specifically to bring it about sooner?

^m Kaplan, Mordecai, *Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers*

ⁿ Herberg, Will, *Jews and the Modern Man, as cited in Encyclopedia Judaica*

Lesson 5: Folktales *Stories of Enduring Message*

Goal of Lesson: The Elijah character in folktales is usually depicted as a cosmic visitor who unexpectedly visits an earthly person or family in order to reward them or reprimand them. On the other hand, there are Elijah stories which seem to be merely entertainment tales. There are some 600 folktales officially catalogued in the Israel Folktale Archive, the most comprehensive collection of extant Jewish stories. The primary goal of this lesson is simply to appreciate how vastly and variable Elijah's character has become, adapting to the culture needs of each setting and each generation. This lesson is meant to highlight the value and enjoyment of story telling.

Background Information: The folktales about Elijah are much more recent than the legends found in Aggadah. Aggadic material is generally known from Talmudic and Midrashic texts (redacted approx 200 C.E. – 500 C.E.) while folktales evolved from the Middle Ages on. The Aggadic stories are reflective of Elijah's role as herald to the Messiah, encouraging repentance, study and exemplary behavior in order to bring that about. Often Elijah plays a small or tangential role in these early Aggadot. Many folktales are based on nuggets of story found in Aggadah, but then become expanded into a full story with Elijah as the focus. The folktales come from all parts of the Diaspora, often with variants of the same folktales reworked to reflect the culture or ethnic influence of a particular geographic location. In each generation, in each age, the immediate difficulties, trials and tribulations that face the population find expression in tales of Elijah. The stories offer comfort, solace, hope and resolve that they can endure their current difficulties because a compassionate angel, Elijah, is hovering in their midst.

Over the centuries, Elijah has evolved into a quasi-angelic, quasi-human being who has a vast array of resources at his disposal. He performs all types of *tikun olam* (repairing the world). He is the quintessential folk hero, who can appear and be helpful in any circumstance. He helps those in need and teaches lessons to those who don't know what they need. He tests; he gives charity; he reconciles injustice. He usually appears in disguise, which adds an element of mystery and intrigue. However, the disguises provide another underlying message, that we must not judge from external appearances.⁹ Though the stories are quite diverse in scope and location, they generally contain a message of ethical or moral teaching. That is, the protagonists of the story, those who are being visited, are either rewarded for exemplary behavior, or reprimanded for unethical behavior. Becoming familiar with a range of these folktales, students will appreciate the role modeling that is provided. They will also appreciate the sheer entertainment value of the stories, even to the modern sophisticated ear.

Objectives:

1. Students will recognize the various disguises that Elijah takes on in his visitations.
2. Students will recognize the various forms of *tikun olam* Elijah promotes in his visitations.
3. Students will recognize that Elijah does not have one clear and distinct purpose in his visitations.
4. Students will enjoy the mystery and entertainment value in these folktales.

⁹ Op cit, Shram, p xxvi

Teaching Strategy:

Choose from the selection of folk tales in the appendix or supply your own.
Stories suggested are as follows:

Elijah and the Three Wishes Disguise: Elijah as beggar

Motif: Gold causes man to become miserly

A Loaf of Bread Disguise: Elijah as Dashing Soldier

Motifs: Elijah rewards of Torah study, patience, as matchmaker

Caste in the Air Disguise: Elijah as Servant Motifs: Giving to the needy, *gemilut chesed*

Enough

Disguise: Elijah as Beggar

Motifs: Elijah rewards hospitality, power of a wish

Elijah's Violin Disguise: Elijah's spirit as the violin

Motif: The quest for precious object, reward for kindness

Four folktales will be presented by students to the class. Students will have five to ten minutes to practice the story, working in groups or pairs.

While each tale is presented, students will keep a chart of Elijah's disguises, who he is visiting, and the purpose of the visit.

Evaluation:

Assume that you are Elijah looking for a job in today's job market.

- 1) What would be your ideal type or place of employment ?
- 2) What would you put on your resume for past work experience and accomplishments ?

Make personal notes and share with class.

Questions for Enduring Understanding:

1. What types of stories do you find stay with you the longest... the most enduring?
Fantasy or otherwise? Why do you think it is so?
2. What kinds of *tikun olam* actions or projects are you interested in promoting?
Would you want to do *tikun olam* as an individual or group process?
3. What is the value of doing *tikun olam* in disguise?

Lesson 6: 20th Century Idol Worship *Elijah Still Rocks Today!*

Goal of Lesson:

Elijah stood for zero tolerance concerning idol worship. The idols of his day were the cult of Baal and Ashera, and they enticed the nation. Our current idols are no less seductive... celebrities, fame, materialism to list a few. To witness, look at some of the most popular TV and Reality shows today, from *The Apprentice* with Donald Trump to *American Idol*. The American obsession with fortune and fame is in itself a cult of idol worship. Pop singers, movie stars and sport heroes have become the people to emulate! But icons of pop culture are not the only contemporary idols. Money and possessions can become idols. Likewise, ideas and causes can become idols when taken to an extreme. Using Elijah as ground zero, we will explore what idol worship means in the 21st century. Though Elijah's original message is over 2000 years, it remains poignantly relevant for contemporary Western society. This lesson will explore the meaning of contemporary idol worship.

Teaching Strategy:

1. Teach students the folk song / spiritual “**Elijah Rock**” by Mahalia Jackson. This song was written by Mahalia Jackson, a black singer of the 1960's who was a major advocate of the Civil Rights movement. It is significant that she chose Elijah as the redeemer whom she called upon as she garnered support for the cause.

Elijah Rock shout shout (chorus)
Elijah Rock comin' up Lord
Elijah Rock shout shout
Elijah Rock comin' up Lord

Satan is a liar and a conjure too
If you don't (mind high) watch out
He'll conjure you
If I could I sho'ly would
Stand on the rock where Moses stood

Call my rock in the morning, Call him late at night
He's always with me, all my battles he'll fight
When I'm in trouble, I can call him on the line
He put a phone in my heart, And I can call anytime!

2. Using the chorus of this song as a refrain for all to join in, present (or have students present) **The Elijah Rap** (found at end of this lesson plan) which depicts Elijah's first mission, the condemnation of Baal idol worship.

3. Have students write a sequel rap which reflects a contemporary version of idolatry.

4. Generate a discussion about idol worship today.

In the biblical context idolatry refers to the pagan worship of a material object that has been raised to the status of divine under false pretense. To worship an idol was to negate the one True God, the Jewish monotheistic God.

Surely we do not have a problem in our era of Jews worshipping gods made of wood and stone. But idol worship is, nevertheless, as prevalent now as it was then. It is just a different genre of idol worship. How might we understand idol worship today?

Following are some alternative thoughts on idolatry for discussion:

1. *In modern times, when very few Jews are tempted to worship idols in the older sense, Jewish thinkers have called attention to different forms of idolatry--the worship of the State, for instance, as in totalitarian regimes, or the worship of causes, persons, and "isms" of various kinds.*
2. *A constant complaint of the Mitnag'dim (opponents of the Hasidim) against Hasidism was that the Hasidic veneration of the tzaddik (the righteous leader) bordered on idolatry.*
3. *"Pride is truly equivalent to idolatry. For the main root principle of idolatry consists in man's acknowledgement of something existing in its own right apart and separate from God's holiness, and does not involve a complete denial of God" (Tanya, chapter 22)."*

1 – 3 excerpted from Jacobs, L. The Jewish Religion: A Companion^p

Believing that any of the biblical anthropomorphisms of God are meant to be taken literally is idolatrous. (i.e. God on a throne, God's right hand) Maimonides

"Maimonides spends the first one-third of the *Guide to the Perplexed* attempting to show that a literalist understanding of the metaphors, idioms, and homonyms in the Hebrew Bible are idolatrous in this regard. For Maimonides, and other philosophers in the neo-Aristotelian mold, it is idolatry to believe even that God has positive attributes."^q

- A very strong attachment to one's country; excessive nationalism could be considered a form of idolatry.
- A very strong desire to gain money and wealth; greed could be considered a form of idolatry.
- A very strong desire to gain fame or recognition; egocentrism could be considered a form of idolatry (a view expressed by the Vilna Gaon).^r

Questions for Enduring Understanding:

1. How is idolatry still a current issue?
2. If you were to write a movie script with Elijah as the main character, visiting earth today, what would the plot look like?

^p Jacobs, L. *The Jewish Religion: A Companion*^p, reproduced at www.myjewishlearning.com/ideas_belief/Jews_NonJews/NJ_Legal_TO/NJ_Idolatry.htm

^q www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idolatry_in_Judaism

^r en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idolatry_in_Judaism#Modern_Jewish_views

The Elijah Rap

Elijah rock, shout shout Elijah rock, comin' up Lord...

King Ahab was hitched to Jezebel,
Stone idols she was determined to sell.
Baal, Asherah, fertility, you name it...
Her stone age collection became quite the hit!

People worshipped idols made of stone
They would sacrifice animals, wail and moan
To some strange inert effigy, a bull or a cow
That was way back when,
But is it different now?

Elijah made a challenge to the prophets of Baal
He said, c'mon up to MT Carmel, y'all!
400 of you against little ole me
Who can get these fires burning, let's just see
We'll each prepare an animal
Strap him on the alter
Tell you what – I'll even hose mine down with water!
Now there's a real challenge – a soaking wet sacrifice
Matter of fact, I'll douse him twice!

Ten the prophets of Baal, they wailed and moaned
No fire forth comin' – you could hear them groan!
They tried ecstasy. They tried flagellation!
They pleaded with their Baal for a major conflagration!
Til finally they dropped of sheer exhaustion!

Elijah took his stand, and with no slight of hand,
Elijah made his move. He was in the groove.
Through zealotry, by the power of the word,
He beseeched the heavens, that his prayer be heard
From the skies above there burst forth fire
Consumed both bullocks on the sacrificial pyre!

Keepers of Yahwah became minority
It deemed the hidden faithful a conspiracy!
Elijah, already some what reclusive
Now was designated #1 fugitive!
Off he ran to the desert sand
There was drought, there was famine, across the land.
Black birds fed him in the dead of night\arched, broken
winged, they eased his plight.

Idol worship was all the rage back then,
Distorting the spirits of women and men.
But is it so different in the world today / what we find
today?

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Appendix: Elijah Folktales

Following are ten folktales representing a range of Elijah stories. They are from all parts of the Diaspora, retold by contemporary story tellers. Most are Middle Ages to Modern in origin, but the first tale is based purely on a collage of traditional Elijah midrashim.

Elijah in Heaven

Source: Midrash and Talmudic texts, Ginzburg Vol IV, p 201 including, Eruvim 45a, Pirke de Rav Kahana 9, Zohar Hadash Ruth, Baba Batra 121b, Pirke de RebeEliezer

Retold: Ellen Frankel from *The Classic Tales*

Motif: Elijah as Angel, pitted against Angel of Death

When it was time for Elijah to depart from the earth, the Angel of Death complained to God that it was not right that this man should escape death and ascend to heaven with the breath of life still within him.

"For if he escapes my grasp, then others will protest their fates," the Angel said, "and so my power will wither away!"

"Be still!" ordered God. "For at the beginning of the world I decreed that you would have no power over this soul. He is none other than the angel Sandalfon who chose to descend to earth in human form to intercede in the affairs of Israel during the reign of the evil Ahab. Now he is returning to My service in the heavens. Beware of his power, for if you do not, he will vanquish you."

But the Angel of Death paid no attention to God's warning and tried to defeat Elijah. And in the fierce battle that took place, Elijah conquered the Angel of Death and would have destroyed him had not God intervened to spare the Angel's life. For Death has its rightful place in the affairs of humankind. But Elijah ascended to heaven with the Destroying Angel pinioned under his feet.

Then God seated him under the Tree of Life and directed him to record all the deeds performed on earth. And so he has done throughout the ages.

When souls ascend to heaven, Elijah greets them at the crossroads of Paradise, directing the righteous toward the path of Love and the sinners toward the path of Justice.

At the beginning of each Sabbath, he brings the souls of the sinners up to heaven to enjoy the pleasures of the holy day, and at sunset he leads them back, sorrowing, to Gehinnom. And after they have atoned for their evil deeds, he leads them heavenward to everlasting bliss.

And from the prayers of those still on earth, Elijah weaves garlands for the Holy One and offers sacrifices in the heavenly Sanctuary, for the Temple was never really destroyed, but only hidden in heaven until the End of Days.

And from time to time, Elijah leaves heaven and descends to earth to do God's will among the living

Elijah and the Three Wishes 1

Source: Author's Memory. Versions known from Europe to China

Retold: Peninnah Schram from *Tales of Elijah the Prophet*

Disguise: Elijah as Beggar

Motif: Rewarding hospitality, punishing inhospitality

When Elijah the Prophet wanted to see how the people were behaving in a certain town, he would disguise himself as a beggar and walk around its streets. He would observe how the people were acting toward one another in the shops, in the parks, in the marketplace, in the synagogue. As he walked, he would blink his eyes, nod his head, shrug his shoulders, stroke his long white beard, or tap his walking stick as though he were recording what he saw, adding that message to the already bulging sack he carried over his shoulder. He often smiled to himself, too, while humming a melody as he walked from place to place.

One day, he noticed a small cottage. "This place needs a great many repairs," he observed. "A new roof, better window shutters, a gate. Yet here are some beautiful flowers growing in the tiny front yard. Hollyhocks, poppies, a mandrake plant. I like that!" Weary from traveling, and hungry, too, Elijah decided to stop at this house to rest a while. He knocked on the door.

In this cottage there lived a poor man and his wife. The man came to the door. When Elijah asked him for some water to drink, the man invited him in. Seeing how hungry and tired this traveler was, the couple asked him to stay and share their meal.

"Come and eat with us," said the good wife. "Eating with a guest makes the meal feel like a banquet, even though we cannot offer you more than the little we have." "Come," said her husband. "We will gladly share whatever we have." The couple offered him what they had prepared for their dinner. There was a small piece of herring and a thick slice of black bread, and some water to drink. The meal was hardly enough even for the two of them.

When the stranger had eaten and was refreshed, he turned to the couple and said, "Because of your kindness to me, I will grant you any three wishes."

At first not believing what he had heard, the poor man just stood there quietly. Then he began to think, "Let me test him to see if what this bedraggled traveler says is true. There is some mystery about him. Maybe God has answered our prayers to help us out of our hard times."

After a few minutes, the poor man replied, "This house needs so much repair and it is so tiny that I don't have room enough for my books. I would like to have a large house, like a palace."

Elijah whistled, and instantly a mansion appeared where the cottage had stood.

At that moment, the woman, looking down at her clothes and quickly taking off her old apron, exclaimed, "Oh, we should have beautiful clothes, with shining, glittering jewels," gesturing wildly as she pointed to her hair, ears, neck, and wrists. "We look so plain in this wonderful house," she explained.

Again Elijah whistled, and the couple was instantly dressed in clothes of velvet and satin, with magnificent diamond, pearl, and emerald jewelry covering the wife's head, ears, neck, and wrists.

"Gold!" they both shouted together with great excitement for their third wish. Elijah whistled for the third time, and sacks of gold appeared. A moment later, Elijah disappeared.

Several years went by, and Elijah wanted to see how the good couple had fared. When Elijah appeared at the gate of their mansion, again disguised as a beggar, he looked around first. He saw heavy shutters on the windows and high fences around the house. While there was a great deal of land around the house, nowhere were there any flowers. As he stood looking through the gate, the servants, seeing this stranger through the watchman's door near the gate of the yard, would not let him stand there.

"I would like to see the master of the house," demanded Elijah. The servants laughed and brought the dogs closer to the gate, signaling the beggar to leave. The master of the house himself came to the door to see what the commotion was. Since he did not recognize the beggar, he shouted orders for the beggar to leave or be chased away.

Disappointed and saddened by what he had seen, Elijah whistled once and the gold disappeared. He gave another whistle, and the beautiful clothes and jewels vanished. Then Elijah gave a third whistle, and the mansion instantly turned back into the small cottage that had once before stood in that place.

In the same moment, the couple realized how selfish they had become. They understood then how poor they had been, even when they had all the riches in the world.

Elijah and the Three Wishes 2

Source: Ginzberg, *Legends of Jews*, Vol. IV p 209

Retold: Ellen Frankel from *The Classic Tales*

Disguise: Elijah appears in dream, beggar

Motif: Rewarding decent values, punishing arrogance

There once lived a man who owned a beautiful spice garden. When the time came for him to die, he called his three sons and said to them, "Promise me that you will never quarrel but will always love one another. And promise to guard our spice garden from thieves, for it is my most precious possession."

And the sons swore to do what their father had asked.

After the father died, the sons agreed to take turns watching over the garden. On the first night Elijah appeared before the oldest son and asked him, "Would you rather have wealth, learning, or a virtuous wife?"

The son replied, "I would rather have wealth."

So Elijah gave him a gold coin, and he became rich.

The next night Elijah appeared before the second son.

"Would you rather have wealth, learning, or a virtuous wife?" he asked.

The second son said, "I would rather have learning." So Elijah handed him a book, and at once he knew the whole Torah. On the third night Elijah appeared before the youngest son. "Would you rather have wealth, learning, or a virtuous wife?" he asked him. "I would rather marry a virtuous woman," replied the youngest son, "for her price is above rubies." "Then you must come with me," said Elijah.

The next day they journeyed to a town and stayed at an inn. That night Elijah overheard the geese and the chickens saying, "What a sinner this young man must be to deserve such a wicked wife! For the people here are evildoers and idolaters."

The next day they traveled to a second inn. Again Elijah overheard the geese and chickens saying, "How sinful this young man must be to deserve such a wretch for a wife, for the people here are heartless and without faith."

The third day they traveled to another inn. That night Elijah overheard the geese and chickens saying, "He must be a virtuous young man to merit such a worthy bride! For the family here is pious and full of kind deeds."

So Elijah became the *shadkhan* and arranged for the two young people to be married.

Years later Elijah disguised himself as a beggar and returned to see what had happened to the three sons. When he came to the house of the oldest son, he was not admitted, for the son had become a heartless miser and shared none of his wealth with the poor. Elijah appeared before him and said, "I gave you wealth, but you have proved unworthy of it." And he took back the gold coin, and the man lost all he had.

He next went to the house of the second son to whom he had given learning. But this son had grown arrogant because of his great knowledge and held himself above all others. Elijah took back the book, and he forgot all he knew.

Then he came to the house of the youngest son. His wife welcomed him graciously into the house and fed him the finest foods on her best dishes. When her husband returned, Elijah said to him, "Because of the merits of your wife, I am giving you wealth and learning, for the two of you will make good use of them."

And so the youngest son's wish for a virtuous wife proved a true blessing.

Enough!

Source: Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* IV 211. Many versions of this story exists in the IFA including those from Turkey, Poland, Morocco, Eastern Europe and Aleppo.

Retold: Sheldon Oberman from *Solomon & the Ant and Other Jewish Folktales*

Disguise: Elijah as Beggar

Motifs: Elijah rewards hospitality, power of a wish

A poor young man and his wife were celebrating the Passover holiday with the best meal they could manage. They raised their glasses to wish for a better future in a better world, and just then, there was a knock at the door. A traveling beggar stood outside with his hand outstretched, saying nothing.

They told him, "You are welcome here. Please join us. We don't have much to eat or drink, but we have a wonderful story that we can share with you." They shared their food and drink, and they shared the story of Passover: the story of how their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt and how they had been freed to seek the Promised Land.

The three of them stayed up late that night describing the wonders of that time: how Moses ran from Egypt but stopped his running when he found a burning bush that told him, "Go back!"

They counted the ten catastrophes that struck Egypt until the pharaoh let the people go, and they sang about how the people found their freedom. Finally, the candles were burning out, and there were no more candles left to light.

"Please stay," they told the traveler. "You can sleep in our bed, and we will make ourselves a bed of hay."

"Thank you for all your kindness, but I must continue on my journey," said the traveler. As he headed out the door, he smiled warmly and said, "May the next thing you do have no end until you say, 'Enough!'" Then he was gone.

"He will need money on his journey," said the wife. She reached into her pocket for the only money they had, a silver coin. When she took it out she felt another coin in her pocket. She took that one out and felt another. No matter how many coins she took out, there was always one more in her pocket. She piled the table high with silver coins until they were spilling over and covering the floor. pg 65

The wife said, "We have all the money we will ever need." "You are right," said the husband. "It's enough." The moment he said the word "Enough," there were no more coins in her pocket. The magic was over. The two of them sat down and stared at their great fortune.

"That was no ordinary man," said his wife. "That must have been the prophet Elijah in disguise."

At that moment there was another knock at the door. Had Elijah returned? They rushed to open the door, but instead of Elijah, there stood the husband's hardhearted brother and his brother's hardhearted wife. They had come to collect the rent. The rich brother was amazed at all the coins. "Where did you get that money?" he asked.

They answered, "It was a gift from the prophet Elijah. We shared the little that we had, and he gave us all of this." They told them the whole story.

"Where is Elijah now?" asked the rich brother.

"He is walking down the road," they said.

The rich brother and his wife rushed to their carriage and whipped the horses into a mad gallop. They caught up to Elijah and called out, "Sir, you must be tired. Come rest in our home."

Elijah refused, but they kept insisting until finally he agreed, and they took him back to their home. The rich brother showed Elijah his huge house, saying, "My mansion is better than my poor brother's little shack." Elijah looked at the many rooms with marble floors and fancy furniture, but he was not impressed.

The wife ordered the servants to serve the finest foods. She said, "This dinner is better than their poor scraps of food." Elijah hardly ate anything.

They brought in a band of musicians to play. "Our music is better than their singing!" they said. Then the rich brother and his wife told stories, but not the Passover story about their ancestors who were slaves in Egypt. They only talked about themselves. They bragged about how they had become so rich and important. Elijah said nothing.

Finally, they said, "We'll show you to your bed."

"No," said Elijah. "I must continue on my journey."

"Then, here is some money," said the rich brother, and he slyly gave him five gold coins. "Now what are you going to give us in return?" "What do you want?" asked Elijah.

The rich brother said, "We want more than you gave my brother

and his wife. After all, we gave you more than they did."

Elijah replied, "You gave me less than they did because you gave nothing out of kindness. "

"We still deserve something," they both said.

"Yes, you do deserve something," he said. "So I will give you what I gave them. May the next thing you do have no end until you say, 'Enough!'" He walked out the door, and when they looked for him, he was nowhere to be seen.

The rich brother rushed back inside and was about to grab his money box so he could pull out a large gold coin. "Wait," said the wife. "Let's be sure no one sees what we are doing. You close the front door, and I'll shutter the front window. "

He shut the door, and she closed the shutters of the window.

"Good!" she said. "Now let's fill the house with gold!"

But suddenly she found herself opening the shutters again and closing them with a bang. The husband found himself opening the door again and slamming it shut. And again. And again.

"I can't stop!" cried the husband.

"Neither can I!" cried the wife. "We have to say the word your brother said."

"No!" the husband yelled. "That will end the magic, and we'll lose our chance to make a fortune. We have to think of something else."

However, they could not think of anything else or do anything else. So on and on they went, slamming the door and banging the shutters. All the neighbors heard the racket and saw what they were doing. Soon everyone in town came to look and laugh at the richest, most important man and woman slamming their door and shutting their shutters. The two of them would not and could not stop all day and all night long until the sun came up and they finally gave up. Together they called out, "Enough!" The spell broke, and they fell backward into the house exhausted as everybody clapped and laughed. They were so upset that they stayed inside for weeks, and when they finally did come out they never dared to brag to anyone again. They had had enough!

Feeding His Clothes

Source: B.S. Weinrich, *Modern Yiddish Folktales*, Poland, Persia, Yemen, Afghanistan

Retold: Peninnah Schram from *Tales of the Prophet Elijah*

Disguise: Rich man, poor man

Motif: Test of hospitality, don not judge by clothes

Once it happened at a wedding feast that Elijah arrived dressed like a beggar. Seeing him at the door, the father of the bride ordered him to leave-and quickly or else he would have the servants throw him out.

A while later, a handsome man, wearing a well-tailored suit, an elegant sable hat and carrying a cane with a golden handle, arrived at this same wedding. The guests all stood up, out of respect for this gentleman. They all greeted him with *Sholom aleichem* and the mother of the bride said to him, "Please do us the honor of sitting at the head table with the bride and groom." And they all vied to serve him the finest wine and the best of foods.

As the guest sat there being served one course after another of the choicest foods, he took each plate and shoved its contents into his pockets - the meat into his right pocket, the potato pudding into the left, the fish into his upper pocket, the carrots into his inner vest pocket. And when he had finished stuffing the food into his pockets, he poured the fine red wine over it all.

The guests stood there amazed, with their mouths and eyes wide open, not understanding what this strange behavior meant. They certainly had never seen such a ritual before. Finally, with great curiosity, one of them asked him for an explanation. Then the guest explained, "When I came to the door to celebrate the wedding with you but dressed as a beggar, you practically threw me out. Then when I came dressed in such elegant clothes, you suddenly rushed over to me to show me, a stranger in your community, such *kavod* (honor). But what you were doing was really showing this respect and honor only because of my clothes. As a person, I had not changed from the beggar who first appeared here. I remain the same. But since you showed such respect for my clothes, then why should not the clothes be fed the feast?"

With that explanation, Elijah laughed, and when the company at the wedding feast looked again at the chair, Elijah was no longer there. But there was something lying across the seat of the armchair-the gold-handled cane.

Castles in the Air

Sources: Me'i Zedaka, from Klapholtz

Retold by Yisroael Ya'akov Klapholtz from Stories of Eliyahu Hanavu

Disguise: Elijah as Servant

Motifs: Giving to the needy, *gemilut chesed*

There was once a poor man who had a wife and children; the world had darkened for them for they had not even enough to provide for one day's needs. His wife said to him: "Oh, cousin, get up and go out to the market. Perhaps you'll find some work by which we can earn a living so that we do not die of hunger." He said: "Oh, sister, who shall I turn to and where shall I go? I have neither kin nor friend, I have no-one but the Holy One blessed be He." She stopped urging him. The children suffered want and hunger and shouted and cried out. She spoke to him again. "Go out, you good for nothing, perhaps some job will turn up, or you'll die in the place you go to. And that's better than for us to die one after another." He said, "How can I go out without clothing?" She was wearing a shift and put it on him and he went out.

When he came out he stood perplexed not knowing where to turn to. He wept bitterly. Then he lifted his eyes to heaven and said; "Master of the universe, you know I have no-one to turn to and no-one I can complain to of my poverty and need. I have set out, but don't know where to turn to. I have no friends or kin and I know no way of making a livelihood. The children are young, they are hungry, who can help me? You created me, turn to us in Your mercy or take my life away speedily so that it may be easier for me." He walked a little way weeping and full of anxiety.

Elijah of blessed memory met him. He said: "What ails you, old man?" He told him his story. Elijah told him: "Sell me and take the money, and things will become easier for your family!" He asked: "How can I sell you? Everyone knows I have neither slave nor servants." Elijah said "Do not worry, follow my advice and no evil will befall you. And when you receive the money, give me one dinar which I will return to you but take heed to sell me to the man I

advise you and don't accept any fee in addition to the price fixed." He went with him to the market and whoever asked him if the man was his slave he replied "Yes, this is my slave." When Elijah was asked if this was true he confirmed what the man said.

One of the king's ministers went through the market. He was a good-looking young man and desired to buy him. He waited until it was his turn to be sold and the minister offered eighty dinars for him. Elijah said to the poor man: "Sell me." Others present offered up to 200 dinars but he did not accept their offers. He took the money from the minister and gave Elijah one dinar. Elijah came back and gave him back one dinar as he had said. Later Elijah said to him: "Go and make a living, you, your family and your wife and no evil will ever befall you." Elijah went away with the minister. The seller went to market and bought bread, meat, oil and cereals and everything he required and went home. He came home and found his children starving. He gave them food quickly and they were satisfied. His wife said: "Tell me what happened." He told her all that had befallen him. She said; "How did the idea occur to me? If you had delayed any longer you and all of us would have perished." After that he bought a great deal of property and never again knew want.

It is related that the minister went with Elijah to the king. For a long time the king had been thinking of building a palace outside the city. For this reason he bought numerous slaves to carry stones and wood and all the tools he required for the building.

When Elijah came to the king, the latter said: "Do you have any trade?" He said he had and that he was a builder. The king continued: "It was agreed when I bought you that you would build me a palace outside the city." Elijah said: "I will do as you wish, and even more so." After this the king said: "I would like you to do your work quickly so that it will be completed within 6 months. Then I will set you free and benefit you." And Elijah told him to order the servants to bring all the tools and the king ordered them to do so.

When night fell Elijah rose and asked the Holy One, to perform a miracle and build the palace according to the plan the king had demanded. G-d received his prayer and by dawn the palace was complete and Elijah of blessed memory went on his way.

The king was puzzled and surprised and was very pleased that his desire to build the palace had been fulfilled. He looked for the man but did not find him and thought he was an angel.

Some days later the poor man who had sold him met him. He said: "What did you do for the king?" He said: "I could have left him at once but I did not want to go back on my word. I had made a promise and was duty bound to fulfill it and when he told me to build a palace for him and he would set me free I built it and disappeared, not wishing that he should regret that he had bought me and weighed out silver for me. I did work worth twice the amount he paid for me." The poor man thanked him and said: "Sir you have restored me to life." He said: "Thank G-d who did this for you," and disappeared.

Elijah's Violin

Source: Egypt, Oral Tradition

Retold: Howard Schwartz, *Elijah's Violin & Other Jewish Fairy Tales*

Disguise: Elijah as the old man giving directions, Elijah's spirit as the violin

Motif: The quest for precious object, reward for kindness

Once upon a time there was a king who had three daughters. Now he loved them dearly, but one day he had to leave them to go off to war. Before he left he spoke to his daughters and said: "If I am victorious in this war, I will bring each of you a gift. Tell me, what would you like?" The eldest spoke up and said: "I would like a diamond in the shape of a star." And the second daughter said: "I would like a gown woven from pure gold." But the youngest said: "I only want you to come home safely from the war." The king was pleased to hear this, and he said: "Thank you, daughter, for your good wish. But you must ask me to bring you something, as your sisters did. Think it over for three days, then tell me before I depart what it is that you want. "

Now the youngest daughter was sitting alone on a rock next to the lake outside the palace, when there appeared before her an old woman, who asked her: "What is wrong, child?" And she replied: "I do not know what gift to ask of my father, the king." The old woman said: "You must ask your father for Elijah's violin." So the princess agreed that this would be her request.

At the end of three days the king said to his daughter: "What gift have you decided upon?" And the princess replied: "I would like you to bring me Elijah's violin." The king agreed and set out to war.

Now the king led his troops to victory in every battle, and after his triumph he sought and found the gifts for his two eldest daughters, the star-shaped diamond and the golden gown, but he was unable to find Elijah's violin anywhere. The king asked his generals if they knew where it could be found, but none of them had heard of it in any of the countries in which they had fought. And he asked his wise men, but none of them had read of it in

any book. And he asked his soothsayers, but none of them could find it in the stars. So the ship of the king departed, and sailed until it came to land. The king ordered his crew to cast anchor there, to see if Elijah's violin was to be found in that place. And in this way he embarked on a long quest, which took him to the four corners of the world. After many trials and tribulations, he

was led to an old man who lived in a cave, and the old man said:

"Elijah's violin is in the possession of the king of this country." !

He also said that the king had a daughter imprisoned in stone and whoever freed his daughter from the stone would be richly rewarded. Then the old man gave the king three long hairs and he said: "These three strands are from the bow of Elijah's violin. Burn these when you are in the presence of the princess."

The king thanked the old man, and took the three hairs from the bow of Elijah's violin, and put them safely away. Then he asked the old man what he might give him in return. And the old man said: "There will come a day when you will repay me in full, for your daughter will set free the imprisoned melodies." And the king wondered at this, and he said: "Tell me, old man, what is your name?" The old man replied: "My name is Elijah." And then the old man returned to the shadows of the cave, and the king set off to rescue the princess who was imprisoned in stone.

When the king approached the palace in which the stone princess lived, he advised his generals and wise men and soothsayers that he preferred to proceed on his own, and that they should camp there and wait for him. And when he came to the gates of the palace and announced that his purpose was to set free the imprisoned princess, he was

given an audience with the king and queen at once. For they had left orders that no one who offered to free her was to be refused, but that anyone who failed was to be put to death. That same day the visiting king was taken into the presence of the princess. Now it was a great shock for him to see the princess, for she seemed to be alive and dead at the same time, as if she were a living sculpture. But much greater was his surprise when she began to speak – for the enchantment under which she had fallen permitted her the power of speech but no other. While the princess was speaking, it seemed as if she were alive. But when she fell silent, it was as if she had turned completely to stone. He could not bear her silence, so he asked her: "Tell me, how did it happen that you were turned to stone?"

The princess replied: "One day I was wandering through the palace, and I came upon a stairway I had never known about, and I followed it until I came to a room where there was a mirror with a golden frame. As I stood before it, my mirror image stole out of the glass and forced me to take its place within. And from that moment I found myself turned to stone, with only my power of speech remaining. No one has known how to set me free. Since then there have been reports that someone who looks exactly like me, and claims to be me, has been seen in the kingdom, but slips away like a shadow if anyone comes too close." And then the princess was silent, and it was the silence of stone.

The king remembered the strands from the bow of Elijah's violin that the old man had given him, and took them out and threw them into the fire that until then had done little to keep the room warm. Then the chill of the room seemed to melt, and at the same time the stone princess turned to flesh and blood again. And the king who had set her free said to her: "Now that you have been freed from this spell, your mirror image surely has been returned to its place in the mirror. To keep it there you must blindfold yourself and take a stone and shatter the glass. That way your mirror image will remain in its world of reflections, and will not take your place in this world again." The princess promised she would do this, and she did so before the end of the day. Her father, the king, was so grateful that he told the king who had broken the spell that he could have any gift of his choice. Nor did he refuse him Elijah's violin, for that is what he requested as his reward.

Now that the king had gathered the gifts for all three of his daughters, he sailed with his soldiers directly home. And because the winds were with them, it took them only seven days, and when the king arrived he gave the gifts to his daughters. The first two took their gifts and hurried off to try them on, but the youngest hugged her father first, and then took the violin to her room. And that is how the princess who was the youngest daughter of the king came to possess Elijah's violin.

Now when the princess first opened the case of the violin, what did she find? A small, perfectly carved violin that had been preserved for many centuries, and next to it a bow. And when she put the bow to the strings, a clear melody sailed forth, effortlessly. And while she played the violin, it seemed that the violin was playing itself, as if it had many melodies stored up, which sought to emerge from within. And even before she finished playing there appeared before her a handsome young man, who asked her: "Why have you brought me to this place?"

The princess was amazed to see him, and she said: "But how did you enter this room?" He showed her the window through which he had entered. Then the princess asked: "But where do you come from?" To which the young man replied: "From far

away." And the princess asked: "Then how did you come to be here?" The young man answered: "The music of the violin brought me." Nor did the princess question him more than that, for she understood at once that the violin she had played was enchanted, and that she and the prince, for he was a prince, had been brought together through its magic.

After that, the princess would take out Elijah's violin whenever she missed the prince, and each time she would play it, the prince would arrive soon after the melodies floated outside her window. Before long the prince and the princess exchanged rings and vowed that one day they would be wed.

Then it happened, after some time had passed, that the eldest sister of the princess heard her speaking to the prince in her room. She hurried to the second sister, and said: "Someone has been visiting our sister in her room." They decided to search her room to see what they could learn, and so they persuaded the youngest princess to join them in the baths. When they arrived there the eldest said she had forgotten her soap, and left to fetch it. But instead she went to her sister's room and began to search through it. When she found the ring of the prince, she threw it and broke the window through which the prince entered the room. And when she saw the case of the violin, she opened it and began to play, but the melody that emerged was a dark one, filled with brooding. And as the music filled the air, the prince was compelled to appear. He sought to enter by the broken window, but was wounded by the sharp glass and was forced to turn back.

When the youngest princess returned from the baths, she could feel that something had happened in her room, but she did not know what it was. So she took out Elijah's violin and began to play, but this time the prince did not appear. Then she saw that the window was broken, and that three drops of blood were on the curtain. When she realized that her sisters must have discovered her secret, and brought harm to the prince, the princess became very sad and left the palace to sit on the rock by the lake. While she was sitting there the old woman appeared, and asked her what had happened. The princess told her all that had taken place, and the old woman said: "Pretend that you are ill, so that the doctor will order that no one be admitted to your room until you are well. Meanwhile, you must set out and find the prince who has been wounded, for only you can heal him. To do so you must pluck three strands from the bow of Elijah's violin, and take them with you. Then you must burn those strands when you are in the presence of the prince."

The princess did as the old woman had said, and the doctor ordered that no one be admitted to her room. She then set out on a quest to find the wounded prince, so that she might heal him.

So it was that the princess walked and walked through all of that kingdom and the forest surrounding it, until she grew tired and sat down to rest beneath an elder tree. She was so tired that she lay down to sleep. But no sooner did she close her eyes than she discovered she understood the speech of the doves that perched on the branches above her. When she opened her eyes, their speech sounded only like chirping, but when she closed her eyes once more, the language of the doves was clear to her, and she heard them say: "The prince has been wounded, and the way to his palace is impossible to find without a map. And where can a map be found? Only in the leaves of this tree."

Then the princess arose at once, and plucked one of the leaves from the tree. And when she looked at it, she read it like a map. She saw where she stood in the forest, and the way she must take to emerge from that labyrinth, and how she could reach the palace

where the wounded prince waited to be healed. After this she followed the map directly to that kingdom. There she disguised herself as a man, and presented herself as a doctor before the king. The king warned her that thirty-nine doctors had already tried to heal the prince, and all had failed and been put to death. The fate of this doctor would be the same as that of the others if he did not succeed.

The disguised princess agreed to these terms, but requested that she be left alone with the prince. As soon as she entered the prince's room and saw him asleep on the bed, she was overcome with emotion and wanted to embrace him. But, remembering her purpose, she cast the strands from the bow of Elijah's violin into the flames of the fireplace, and as soon as they started to burn, the wounds of the prince healed, and he opened his eyes and saw the princess, who had cast off her disguise. Then she called in the king and queen, who were overjoyed to find that the prince had recovered, and they agreed at once that the prince and princess should be wed. So it was that they came to be married and that they lived together in great wealth, peace, and virtue for all the days of their lives, and many were the times when the melodies of Elijah's violin were heard drifting over that land.

Notes: *This story differs from the others in that it is officially a fairytale, encompassing normative fairytale elements like marvels and enchantments, a hero on a quest beset with obstacles, royalty and rich rewards. Howard Schwartz explains that there is a long standing tradition of blending fairy tale format with Jewish content. What makes it a Jewish fairy tale is the inclusion of Biblical characters, and an underlying assumption that divine intervention takes the place of devices of enchantment. In this case Elijah is the disguised guiding power, and the true reward, beyond the riches of royalty, are the melodies that come from his violin, melodies that, like the princess, have been held captive far too long. "The quest for Elijah's violin.. is of a religious nature. For the successful completion of the king's quest enables the violin's imprisoned melodies, emblematic of the Jewish spirit, to be set free... The violin itself can be seen as a symbol for the positive attributes of the legendary Elijah, as well as the magical device exactly like those so often found in fairy tales – a Jewish equivalent to Aladdin's lamp." (Schwartz, p 16)*

A Loaf of Bread

Sources: Klapholtz, Yisrael Ya'akov, vol 4, p 34-36

Retold: Peninnah Schram from *Tales of Elijah the Prophet*

Motifs: Elijah as matchmaker, rewards of Torah study, rewards of patience

Disguise: Elijah as Dashing Soldier

In the city of Vormeise there lived a wealthy landowner. His name was Reb Shmuel ben Yaakov, and he had a daughter Peninnah. When his daughter reached the age of marriage, the father went to the academy to choose a young scholar for her. And he chose a young man, 15 years of age, who was a *talmud chakham*, already known for his good mind. When the betrothal agreement was drawn up, it was agreed that Reb Shmuel would pay for all expenses so this young man could go to the academy of the Maharshal and live there and study for three years, without any worries about money. Everything was to be paid in advance. The young man agreed and left to begin his studies with one of the greatest sages of the generation.

But, as we know; nothing is assured forever. The wheel turns, and Reb Shmuel's fortune was lost. He entered into a business venture that destroyed his entire wealth, money, and land, and the only things that grew were his debts. (May none of us know about such creditors who made his life bitter like gall.) The only person left who gave him some pleasure was his beloved daughter-and what could she do but wait for God to have mercy and pity them.

All this time, the bridegroom-scholar was in the academy of the Maharshal, devoting himself to the study of Torah. He did not need much money, for he spent his entire days and nights learning, studying, praying. Of course, he did not know-how could he - what had happened to Reb Shmuel.

After three years, the scholar received a letter from Reb Shmuel, who wrote: "Our sages say that when a young man reaches the age of 18, it is the right time to marry. But know that I am now unable to pay the dowry and fulfill the other conditions written in the betrothal agreement. I do not want to bind you to this, and so I am informing you that you are free to arrange a marriage with anyone you choose. Please forgive us."

When the scholar read this letter, he replied in writing: "I am of course very unhappy to hear what you have written. I know that God will help you out of your plight. Have courage and patience, for God helps in mysterious ways. I would still desire to marry your daughter under any condition. But if you, sir, do not wish to bind your beloved daughter to me, then you are also free to do as you wish, and you may betroth her to someone else. Then I will decide what to do."

Both bride and groom waited for God's mercies. She sat alone in her parents' house. He remained in the academy, devoting himself to the study of Torah.

When the matchmakers heard about the broken engagement, many approached the young scholar with proposals of all kinds. But his only reply was, "I only desire to study Torah." And although many students left the academy after a certain number of years, many to return home to marry, the young scholar stayed on. Soon he gained a reputation as being strange, and people referred to him as "Reb Leib the-one-who-prefers-to-remain-alone."

When Reb Shmuel's fortunes did not improve, his daughter Peninnah decided to do something to help them. She opened a small shop and sold bread and cakes to make a living for her parents. More and more people outside of the neighborhood heard about the delicious baked goods and came to buy. From this Peninnah earned a modest income. At least they did not have to accept charity from anyone. And this continued for ten years.

At this time war broke out in the state. Armies marched through Vormeise, and the streets and markets were filled with soldiers.

One day a troop of cavalry marched by in front of Peninnah's shop. At the very end of the troop, which had just passed through, came a rider on a very handsome horse. He stopped in front of the bakery. He got off his horse, looked around to see if anyone was watching, and with his sword pierced a loaf of bread that was on the counter and then rode off. Peninnah came into the shop just as this happened. She ran into the street shouting after the horseman, "Come back! Do not steal from a poor girl who is trying to support her elderly parents! We have nothing but the money I earn from this bread!"

The horseman, hearing her cries and words, slowed down, returned to the shop, and said to her, "But I have been riding for three days without food. I am very hungry, so what could I do? I wish I had money to pay you for this bread." And he thought a moment and then said, "Good woman, I'll tell you what I'll do. I have two saddles that I'm sitting on. I'll give you one in payment for the loaf of bread." And as he spoke, he pulled out one saddle and flung it into the shop with great force. Then he spurred his horse and rode off.

The young woman cried bitterly. That soldier had taken a loaf of bread, and what he gave her in return was an old, torn, worthless saddle. She went over to the saddle to pull it out of the way-but when she did, to her amazement gold pieces spilled out. She could not even lift it because it was so heavy with gold coins.

Quickly Peninnah ran off to her parents to tell them all that had happened. "We will keep it for three days," the father answered, "and if the soldier does not return, then it is a sign that this is a gift from God."

But no one ever came to claim the saddle and its contents. The parents thanked God for not abandoning them in their old age. "That soldier must have been Elijah the Prophet," they agreed.

Reb Shmuel sat down and wrote a letter to the scholar, telling him that a miracle had happened and that he was now prepared to arrange the wedding as planned and to fulfill all the agreed-upon conditions, that is, if the scholar was willing.

When the scholar received this letter, he was overjoyed with the news-and not surprised. He wrote back agreeing to all the conditions.

On the day of the wedding, the young scholar arrived in Vormeise, and the wedding was held with joy and happiness.

Everyone in town had been invited to share in the *simchah*. And some even said that there was a mysterious handsome soldier who had come in to witness the couple being led to the wedding canopy and that he had wept tears of joy.

Her Wisdom Is Her Beauty

Source: Parallels of the story from Yemen, Iraq and Easter Europe

Retold: Peninnah Schram from *Tales of the Prophet Elijah*

Disguise: Elijah as healing water

Motif: Magic cures, identity tokens, child reunited with parents

Once upon a time there was a girl who was born with the face of a beast. So hideous and frightening did she look that her parents hid her from the world. They could not bear to see how people would grimace or laugh at their child, nor could they bear the thought of the cruel things people would say about her. "We must protect our daughter from such evils," they decided. And so, out of love for her, they kept the child at home, cut off from the outside world. When visitors came to the house, the daughter would stay in her room alone.

As she grew older, the girl began to ask questions and to listen to her father studying out loud. She eagerly absorbed everything she heard and asked more questions. Soon she was reading and learning Talmud, studying the Mishnah and the Gemara. Once, when her father began to ask her questions, he found to his surprise that he could learn something from his daughter.

One day, a particularly difficult passage of Talmud was being discussed in the synagogue and no one, not even the rabbi, was able to interpret it to everyone's satisfaction. When the father returned home, his daughter saw that he was deep in thought and she asked him, "Father, what did you discuss in the synagogue today?"

The father told her of the talmudic passage and the difficulty everyone had in understanding it. The daughter then began a discourse that made that passage crystal clear. When she finished, her father blessed her and thanked God for a daughter gifted with such wisdom.

The next day, the father went to the synagogue and presented his daughter's wise words. The men in the synagogue were amazed. "Elijah must have visited you in a dream," they said. "No woman could be as wise as that when not even our rabbi could understand how to solve this problem." But the father swore that the wisdom he had uttered came directly from his daughter. This experience was repeated many times, and everyone soon knew of the young woman's great wisdom.

One day, a young scholar came to this town in search of wisdom and knowledge. He had heard of a certain woman whose words were "pearls of wisdom," and when he came to the synagogue, he asked about her: Could he meet her? Where could he find her? He was told that he could only meet her father, and through him, he could ask any

question, no matter how complex, and the daughter would give him the answer, but again only through her father as mediator.

So the young scholar asked her father to ask his daughter about a certain difficult problem. And the next day, the father brought his daughter's answer to him. The young man was amazed.

The young scholar asked two more questions, and each time the young woman unraveled the mystery and gave a clear explanation.

After the third answer, the young scholar said, with tears in his eyes, "I have been looking for such a woman to marry—one who is learned and wise. I would like to have such a companion to study with. I see I have much to learn from such a woman, for her wisdom is like that of Deborah the judge. I would be greatly honored if you consented to this marriage."

At first the father refused to consider this proposal, not that there were any others. Then the father hesitated. Perhaps he would consider it. The man persisted, even after being told that the young woman was different, that she had a blemish that marred her womanly appearance.

"No, I will have none other for my bride," the young scholar insisted. "Her wisdom is her beauty." Upon hearing this, the father decided to give his consent. And so the wedding took place.

That night, the bridegroom saw his wife for the first time, and her face startled him. The bride wept upon seeing how she had shocked him, and she said softly, "You mock at the work of the Creator, which no creature can change. But whatever could be learned, I have learned. Was it not Joseph's wisdom that brought him out of his prison, while his beauty caused him harm?"

Moved by his wife's words, the young scholar remained that night with her. But at dawn, leaving his ring and his tallit on the table, he left the house.

Months passed, and in time the young woman gave birth to a son. Her joy was mixed with bitter tears. As the child grew, it became more and more difficult to keep him hidden in the house. So one day the grandparents took the child to school, claiming that he was their own son. And that is what the child believed, too.

Once, the child overheard someone say, "Those old people could not be his parents. They are surely his grandparents. His father must have come and gone in the night." And they laughed.

The child returned home and said to his grandfather, "Tell me the truth. Are you really my father?" At first his grandfather lied, but the youngster kept doubting his replies.

Finally the boy's mother decided to answer her son's questions. "I will tell you the truth," she said. "You are old enough now and we cannot, we must not, keep it from you." And she told her son, in a gentle voice, everything that had happened. "And here is your father's ring and the tallit that belongs to him."

"Where is my father?" asked the boy. And the mother told him the name of the town her husband had come from. It was far away, in another land.

The boy took the ring and the tallit. He kissed them and held them close and said, "I will go and search for my father."

The boy took the ring and the tallit and set out to find his father. Months passed, and he finally came to the town where his father lived. He went directly to the synagogue

and asked for his father by name. One old man heard the boy asking about the young scholar and he said, "I am his father. Who are you, and why do you ask for my son?" The young man stared at this old man, and finally he said,

"Your son married my mother and then left her after the wedding night. I am your grandchild." The old man looked at the boy, not believing what he had heard, and yet the child, strangely enough, resembled him. It was like looking into the mirror of years ago, so much did the child resemble the old man in his youth. "Tell me, my child," said the old man slowly, "do you have any proof of this?" The boy took out the ring and the tallit to show the old man. "These my father left with my mother."

The old man recognized the ring and the tallit, gifts he had given his son many years before. He embraced his grandson and in a trembling voice said, "Come, my child, I will introduce you to your father."

When the old man and the boy came to the house, the old man said, "Wait near the door, and let me go inside alone." He entered and saw his son sitting at the table. "My son," he began, "do you remember the ring I gave you many years ago? Well, could this be the ring?" And when the old man showed him the ring, his son gasped. The old man knew then that the boy had been telling the truth. And he continued, "So this must be your tallit?" And the old man turned to call in the boy, saying, "And perhaps you will also recognize that this is your son."

The boy, now reunited with his father, said after a time, "Father, we must return home. My mother is the most beautiful mother who ever lived and also the wisest. I love her so. And I love you, too. Let us become a true family." After much pleading, the father agreed to return home with his son.

When they entered the house, the boy's mother was sitting at the table absorbed in a volume of the Talmud. Only when she heard a voice whisper, "Mother?" did she look up. A smile came over her face when she saw her son, and she was very beautiful. "You see, Father. Look well and see how beautiful my mother, your wife, really is," cried the boy. "Look, Mother, see whom I've brought home with me. My father! Your husband! Now we can be happy together!"

The boy's father stood at the door, not daring to enter in case his wife would not welcome him. When she looked up and he saw her face, he held his breath, for she was very beautiful. He waited, hoping she would invite him in.

As soon as the woman looked to see who was standing at the door. She recognized her husband. They looked at each other for a very long time, she sitting at the table, he standing at the door. Then she nodded, giving him permission to enter. So the husband and wife and their child joined hands in a blessing of thankfulness.

From that time on, the wife kept the ring next to a mysterious bottle that had a few drops of water in it. Whenever the son asked his mother about the bottle, she would laugh and say, "It came from Elijah the prophet." "And what kind of water is inside it?" the boy would ask. And his mother's answer was always the same, "Miraculous water that washed away the veil from my face." And she would laugh a bit sadly and add, "I keep the ring next to it as a reminder of the miracle that brought us together again – your love for us both."

The reunited family lived in great happiness and great wisdom.
So may we all.

Elijah on the Seder Night

Source: Marcus, IFA Publication, Greece told by Sol Okonos

Retold: Peninnah Schram from *Tales of Elijah the Prophet*

Disguise: Old Peddler

Morif: Pact with Angel of Death, Seder Night

In the town of Salonika in Greece, there was a man who didn't have anything. One day, in the week before Pesach, the man went for a stroll on the beach. He was very bothered by all of his troubles. How would he celebrate the seder? After all, he still had nothing for the holiday.

He walked nervously along the beach. Directly toward him walked the Angel of Death, in the disguise of a person.

"Why are you so sad?" asked the disguised Angel.

"My house is so empty. Pesach is coming and I have nothing prepared for the holiday," answered the poor man.

"Come, we'll make an agreement," replied the Angel of Death. "I will give you a hundred gold *dinarii* and you'll prepare a beautiful and festive seder in your home. As soon as you bless the first cup of wine, I will arrive at your house and ask you three questions. If you answer them, you will stay alive and rich and happy with your lot. But if you can't answer them, then I'll take you with me and you will die. What do you say to this challenge?"

Because he had no choice, the poor man agreed to this suggestion, took the money, and returned home and told his wife about the meeting. His wife was surprised. "Was it worth it to take the money on those conditions?" she questioned. "But Pesach is such a festive holiday and, after all, it is a big *mitzvah* to make a seder. So go buy what we will need and God will help us."

And so the man went out to buy everything they would need. His wife cooked and prepared and set the table with everything the way it was supposed to be. And the evening of the first seder came. Everyone sat at the table. No one dared to begin the blessing over the first cup of wine.

All of a sudden, a light tapping was heard at the door of the house. The door opened and in came Elijah the Prophet, disguised as an old peddler. He asked the family, "Is it possible for a guest to join you at the seder and to spend the night here?"

"Of course. You are welcome!" The man and his wife showed him great honor and gave him water for washing and made a place for him at the table. When he sat down, he saw that they were not starting the seder, always finding some excuse to delay the *Kiddush*.

"Why aren't you reciting the blessing over the wine?" Elijah finally asked.

The poor man then told him all that happened on the beach. Elijah calmed them down. "Don't worry. I am with you. Begin the first blessing."

Just then there was a knock on the door.

Elijah said, "Do not answer it. I will answer in your place." And Elijah turned to the door and called out, "Who is it that is knocking on the door?"

And the Angel of Death answered from the outside, "Is that you, Elijah? Listen and tell me how I knew it was you, even though I was on the other side of the door?"

"Very easily, for you saw me from the keyhole," replied Elijah. And the Angel of Death said, "Your wife gave birth."

"Oh what good luck!" answered Elijah.

"Yes, she gave birth to twins," continued the Angel of Death. Elijah replied, "It's God's will."

"And one of them died."

"He paid a debt. God gives and God takes away," replied Elijah.

And then the Angel of Death added, "And the second one is sick. And do you know why?"

"From the pain and the loss of his brother," answered Elijah.

And the Angel of Death saw that he couldn't enter, nor could he best Elijah with his words and questions.

Suddenly the Angel of Death disappeared in a gust of wind.

Elijah's Miracles



Elijah races Ahab



Elijah fed by Ravens



Elijah challenges Prophets of Baal



Elijah with son of Widow Chagall

Widow of Zarapeth and Son



Gustave DORÉ



Marc Chagal



Unknown. Crossmap Website



Ford Madox Brown

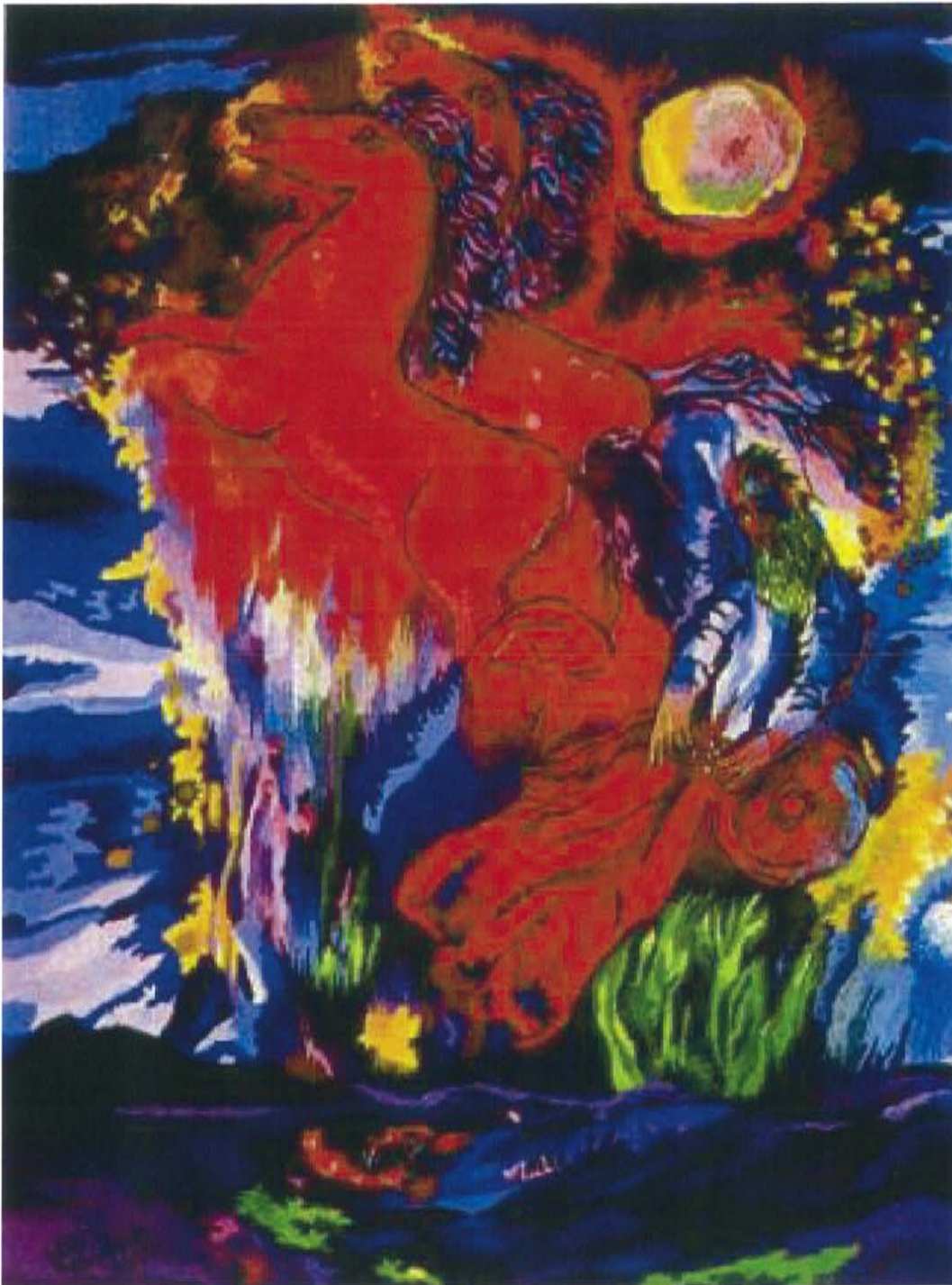


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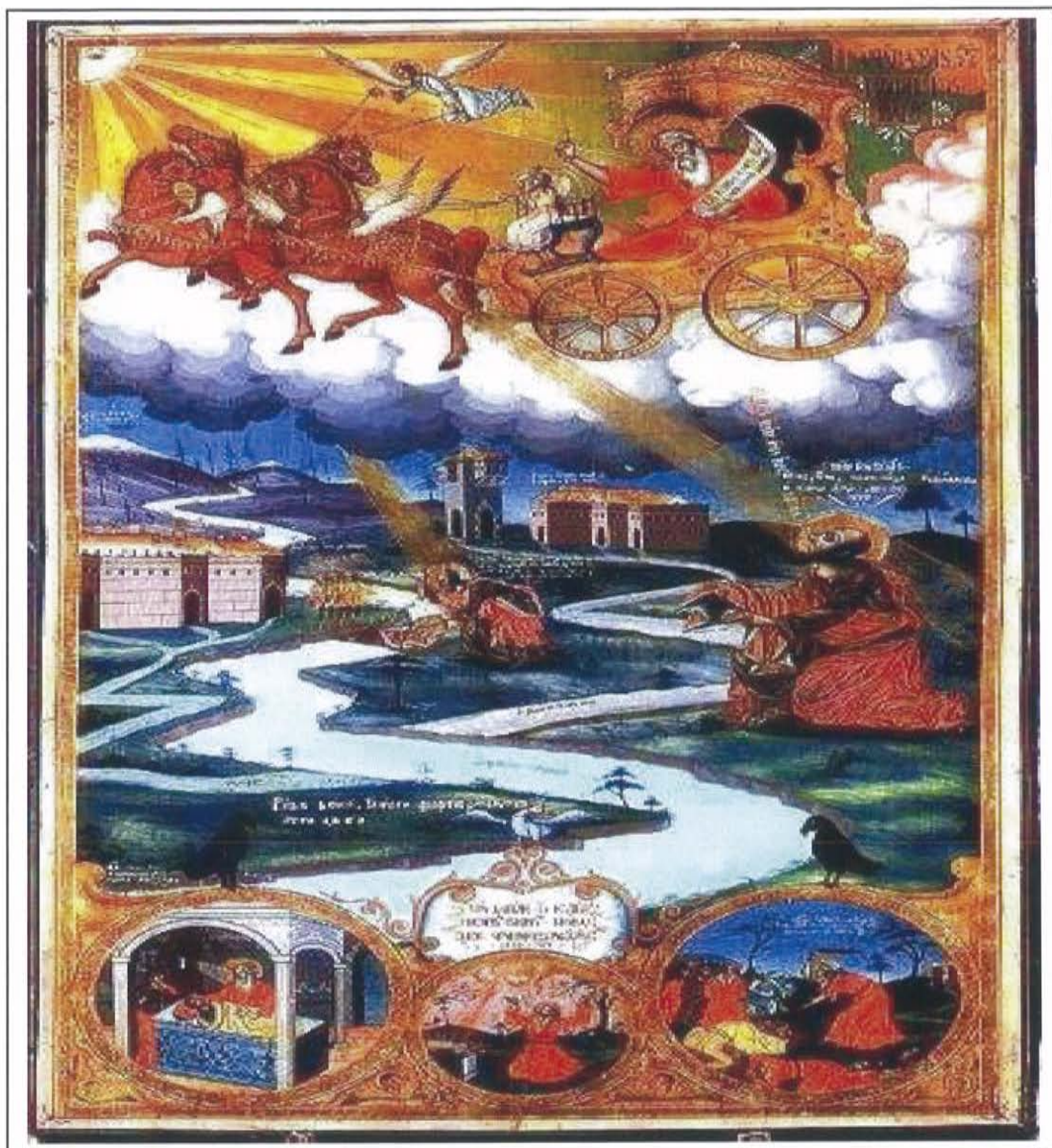


Isabella Colette

Elijah's Ascent in the Chariot



Rueven Rubin Israeli Artist: The Miller Museum Collection, tapestry



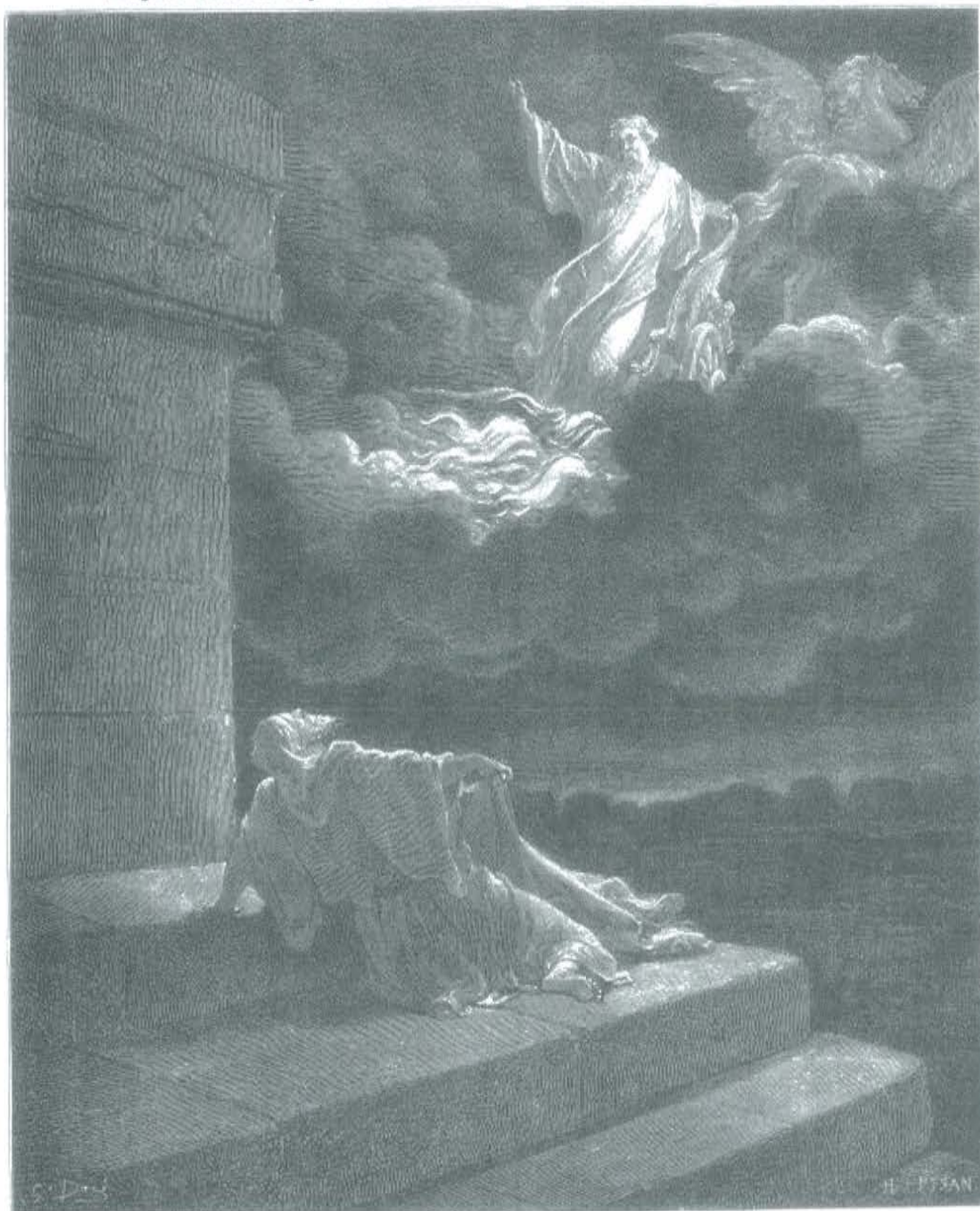
Diameter Morel 1850
and Greek.

St. Elijah's Ascension and Three Scenes from His Life Church of St. Diameter Inscriptions in Bulgaria

The icon illustrates the Prophet's Ascension in Heaven in his chariot of fire, witnessed by his awed disciple Elisha, upon whom the Prophet's garment fell from above. Splendid Baroque medallions represent three of Prophet Elijah's miracles (3 Kings 17:20). Ravens are painted above two of the medallions at the bottom, symbolizing the time when the Prophet was fed by the ravens in the cave. In the entire field above the medallions, next to the chariot, which takes up only a quarter of the upper half, is a multiplane mountainous landscape with fortress walls and a picturesque winding road leading to architectural sites at the background. Hills, bushes and trees are incorporated in the beautiful landscape, which occupies about half the icon's space. Above it a sky full of clouds begins, and topmost is the Prophet's remarkable chariot. Four running horses, rendered with expert skill and knowledge of anatomy draw it. Above them a little angel is holding the bridles. Another angel is sitting in the front, flourishing a whip.

The disciple Elisha features twice in the landscape. He can be seen kneeling, looking up at the chariot and the Prophet's falling garment and for a second time - bent to pick up the garment from the ground.

"Elijah Taken Up To Heaven in a Chariot of Fire" by Gustave Doré



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2Ki 2:11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Gustave Dore



Eddie Atkinson



Unknown, Bible Art Illustration



Joyceimages
 Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's (1794-1872)

