

People of the Bible

Elijah

The prophet Elijah, whose name means "My God is Yahweh [the Lord]," prophesied in the Northern Kingdom of Israel primarily during the reign of Ahab (874-853 BC).

Ahab, under the influence of his pagan wife Jezebel, had encouraged the worship of Baal throughout his kingdom, even as Jezebel sought to get rid of the worship of Yahweh. Elijah was called by God to denounce this idolatry and to call the people of Israel back to the worship of Yahweh as the only true God (as he did in 1 Kings 18:20-40).

Elijah was a rugged and imposing figure, living in the wilderness and dressing in a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt (2 Kings 1:8). He was a prophet mighty in word and deed. Many miracles were done through Elijah, including the raising of the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24) and the effecting of a long drought in Israel (1 Kings 17:1).

When the end of the drought was nearing, Elijah once more addressed Israel and told them they had a choice to make. They were to either follow the God of Israel or Baal. Elijah proposes a direct test of the powers of Baal and Yahweh. They each had an altar which was to be consumed by the fire. Baal could not deliver but God did. Elijah orders the slaughtering of the prophets of Baal.

Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah because of what happened to her Baal prophets. Elijah forgets the incredible miracle that had just happened and falls into deep depression. He travels for forty days and forty nights to Mt Horeb. He wants to die because he feels like he is the only one following the Lord. The Lord comes to him and assures Elijah that he is not alone in his dedication to the Lord. God also puts in place new religious and political leaders to take over for Elijah.

Later, the prophet Malachi proclaimed that Elijah would return before the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6), a prophecy that was fulfilled in the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14).

The New Testament notes that some people thought that [Jesus](#) was, in some sense, Elijah. But Jesus makes it clear that John the Baptist is "the Elijah" who was promised to come in Malachi 4:5. Elijah also appears with Moses during the Transfiguration of Jesus.

At the end of his ministry, he was taken up into heaven while his successor, looked on (2 Kings 2:11).