

## Elijah The Prophet

**I Kings 16** <sup>29</sup>Ahab son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of King Asa of Judah, and Ahab son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup>Ahab son of Omri did what was displeasing to the LORD, more than all who preceded him. <sup>31</sup>Not content to follow the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Phoenicians, and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. <sup>32</sup>He erected an altar to Baal in the temple of Baal which he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup>Ahab also made a sacred post. Ahab did more to vex the LORD, the God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel who preceded him. **17** Elijah of Tishbi, an inhabitant of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD lives, the God of Israel whom I serve, there will be no dew or rain except at my bidding.” <sup>2</sup> The word of the LORD came to him: <sup>34</sup>“Leave this place; turn eastward and go into hiding by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup>You will drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” ...

**18** Much later, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: “Go, appear before Ahab; then I will send rain upon the earth.” <sup>2</sup>Thereupon Elijah set out to appear before Ahab....

<sup>17</sup>When Ahab caught sight of Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” <sup>18</sup>He retorted, “It is not I who have brought trouble on Israel, but you and your father’s House, by forsaking the commandments of the LORD and going after the Baalim. <sup>19</sup>Now summon all Israel to join me at Mount Carmel, together with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

<sup>20</sup>Ahab sent orders to all the Israelites and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup>Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long will you keep hopping between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; and if Baal, follow him!” But the people answered him not a word. <sup>22</sup>Then Elijah said to the people, “I am the only prophet of the LORD left, while the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men. <sup>23</sup>Let two young bulls be given to us. Let them choose one bull, cut it up, and lay it on the wood, but let them not apply fire; I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, and will not apply fire. <sup>24</sup>You will then invoke your god by name, and I will invoke the LORD by name; and let us agree: the god who responds with fire, that one is God.” And all the people answered, “Very good!”

<sup>25</sup>Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull and prepare it first, for you are the majority; invoke your god by name, but apply no fire.” <sup>26</sup>They took the bull that was given them; they prepared it, and invoked Baal by name from morning until noon, shouting, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no sound, and none who responded; so they performed a hopping dance about the altar that had been set up. <sup>27</sup>When noon came, Elijah mocked them, saying, “Shout louder! After all, he is a god. But he may be in conversation, he may be detained, or he may be on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and will wake up.” <sup>28</sup>So they shouted louder, and gashed themselves with knives and spears, according to their practice, until the blood streamed over them. <sup>29</sup>When noon passed, they kept raving until the hour of presenting the meal offering. Still there was no sound, and none who responded or heeded.

<sup>30</sup>Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come closer to me”; and all the people came closer to him. He repaired the damaged altar of the LORD. <sup>31</sup>Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob—to whom the word of the LORD had come: “Israel shall be your name”—<sup>32</sup>and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. Around the altar he made a trench large enough for two measures of seed. <sup>33</sup>He laid out the wood, and he cut up the bull and laid it on the wood. <sup>34</sup>And he said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it over the burnt offering and the wood.” Then he said, “Do it a second time”; and they did it a second time. “Do it a third time,” he said; and they did it a third time. <sup>35</sup>The water ran down around the altar, and even the trench was filled with water.

<sup>36</sup>When it was time to present the meal offering, the prophet Elijah came forward and said, “O 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. <sup>37</sup>Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God; for You have turned their hearts backward.”

<sup>38</sup>Then fire from the LORD descended and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the earth; and it licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup>When they saw this, all the people flung themselves on their faces and cried out: “The LORD alone is God, The LORD alone is God!”

<sup>40</sup>Then Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal, let not a single one of them get away.” They seized them, and Elijah took them down to the Wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there.

<sup>41</sup>Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink, for there is a rumbling of [approaching] rain...” Then [Elijah] said, “Go say to Ahab, ‘Hitch up [your chariot] and go down before the rain stops you.’”<sup>45</sup>Meanwhile the sky grew black with clouds; there was wind, and a heavy downpour fell; Ahab mounted his chariot and drove off to Jezreel. <sup>46</sup>The hand of the LORD had come upon Elijah. He tied up his skirts and ran in front of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

**21** [The following events] occurred sometime afterward: Naboth the Jezreelite owned a vineyard in Jezreel, adjoining the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. <sup>2</sup>Ahab said to Naboth, “Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it as a vegetable garden, since it is right next to my palace. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange; or, if you prefer, I will pay you the price in money.”<sup>3</sup>But Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give up to you what I have inherited from my fathers!”<sup>4</sup>Ahab went home dispirited and sullen because of the answer that Naboth the Jezreelite had given him: “I will not give up to you what I have inherited from my fathers!” He lay down on his bed and turned away his face, and he would not eat. <sup>5</sup>His wife Jezebel came to him and asked him, “Why are you so dispirited that you won’t eat?”<sup>6</sup>So he told her, “I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and proposed to him, ‘sell me your vineyard for money, or if you prefer, I’ll give you another vineyard in exchange’; but he answered, ‘I will not give my vineyard to you.’”<sup>7</sup>His wife Jezebel said to him, “Now is the time to show yourself king over Israel. Rise and eat something, and be cheerful; I will get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite for you.”

<sup>8</sup>So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived in the same town with Naboth. <sup>9</sup>In the letters she wrote as follows: “Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth at the front of the assembly. <sup>10</sup>And seat two scoundrels opposite him, and let them testify against him: ‘You have reviled God and king!’ Then take him out and stone him to death.”

<sup>11</sup>His townsmen—the elders and nobles who lived in his town—did as Jezebel had instructed them, just as was written in the letters she had sent them: <sup>12</sup>They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the front of the assembly. <sup>13</sup>Then the two scoundrels came and sat down opposite him; and the scoundrels testified against Naboth publicly as follows: “Naboth has reviled God and king.” Then they took him outside the town and stoned him to death. <sup>14</sup>Word was sent to Jezebel: “Naboth has been stoned to death.”<sup>15</sup>As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, “Go and take possession of the vineyard which Naboth the Jezreelite refused to sell you for money; for Naboth is no longer alive, he is dead.”<sup>16</sup>When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out for the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it.

<sup>17</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah of Tishbi: <sup>18</sup>“Go down and confront King Ahab of Israel who [resides] in Samaria. He is now in Naboth’s vineyard; he has gone down there to take possession of it. <sup>19</sup>Say to him, ‘Thus said the LORD: Would you murder and take possession? Thus said the LORD: In the very place where the dogs lapped up Naboth’s blood, the dogs will lap up your blood too.’”

<sup>20</sup>Ahab said to Elijah, “So you have found me, my enemy?” “Yes, I have found you,” he replied. “Because you have committed yourself to doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD, <sup>21</sup>I will bring disaster upon you. I will make a clean sweep of you, I will cut off from Israel every male belonging to Ahab, bond and free. <sup>22</sup>And I will make your house like the House of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like the House of Baasha son of Ahijah, because of the provocation you have caused by leading Israel to sin. <sup>23</sup>And the LORD has also spoken concerning Jezebel: ‘The dogs shall devour Jezebel in the field of Jezreel. <sup>24</sup>All of Ahab’s line who die in the town shall be devoured by dogs, and all who die in the open country shall be devoured by the birds of the sky.’” (<sup>25</sup>Indeed, there never was anyone like Ahab, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the LORD, at the instigation of his wife Jezebel. <sup>26</sup>He acted most abominably, straying after the idols just like the Amorites, whom the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites.)

<sup>27</sup>When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes and put sackcloth on his body. He fasted and lay in sackcloth and walked about subdued. <sup>28</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah of Tishbi: <sup>29</sup>“Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime; I will bring the disaster upon his house in his son’s time.”

**19** When Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had put all the prophets to the sword, <sup>2</sup>Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “Thus and more may the gods do if by this time tomorrow I have not made you like one of them.”<sup>3</sup>Frightened, he fled at once for his life. He came to Beer-sheba, which is in Judah, and left his servant

there; <sup>4</sup>he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush and sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. "Enough!" he cried. "Now, O LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

<sup>5</sup>He lay down and fell asleep under a broom bush. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat."  
<sup>6</sup>He looked about; and there, beside his head, was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water! He ate and drank, and lay down again. <sup>7</sup>The angel of the LORD came a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, or the journey will be too much for you."  
<sup>8</sup>He arose and ate and drank; and with the strength from that meal he walked forty days and forty nights as far as the mountain of God at Horeb. <sup>9</sup>There he went into a cave, and there he spent the night.

Then the word of the LORD came to him. He said to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?" <sup>10</sup>He replied, "I am moved by zeal for the LORD, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life."  
<sup>11</sup>"Come out," He called, "and stand on the mountain before the LORD."

And lo, the LORD passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by the power of the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind—an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>After the earthquake—fire; but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire—a soft murmuring sound. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his mantle about his face and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice addressed him: "Why are you here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup>He answered, "I am moved by zeal for the LORD, the God of Hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and have put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life."

<sup>15</sup>The LORD said to him, "Go back by the way you came, [and] on to the wilderness of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael as king of Aram. <sup>16</sup>Also anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to succeed you as prophet. <sup>17</sup>Whoever escapes the sword of Hazael shall be slain by Jehu, and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu shall be slain by Elisha. <sup>18</sup>I will leave in Israel only seven thousand—every knee that has not knelt to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

### **Malachi 3:23-24**

Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the great, awesome day of Adonai. 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.

### **Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets***

The prophet does not judge the people by timeless norms, but from the point of view of God. Prophecy proclaims what happened to God as well as what will happen to the people. In judging human affairs, it unfolds a divine situation. Sin is not only the violation of a law, it is as if sin were as much a loss to God as to man. God's role is not spectatorship but involvement. He and man meet mysteriously in the human deed. The prophet cannot say Man without thinking God. ... Therefore, the prophetic speeches are not factual pronouncements. What we hear is not objective criticism or the cold proclamation of doom. The style of legal, objective utterance is alien to the prophet. He dwells upon God's inner motives, not only upon His historical decisions. He discloses a divine pathos, not just a divine judgment. The pages of the prophetic writings are filled with echoes of divine love and disappointment, mercy and indignation. The God of Israel is never impersonal.

This divine pathos is the key to inspired prophecy. God is involved in the life of man. A personal relationship binds Him to Israel; there is an interweaving of the divine in the affairs of the nation. The divine commandments are not mere recommendations for man, but express divine concern, which, realized or repudiated, is of personal importance to Him. The reaction of the divine self, its manifestations in the form of love, mercy, disappointment or anger convey the profound intensity of the divine inwardness. ...

...An analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a sympathy with the divine pathos, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet's reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. The typical prophetic state of mind is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine pathos. Sympathy is the prophet's answer to inspiration, the correlative to revelation.