

Elijah was a prophet. And his story is an interesting one! With all the adventures he had, it would fit right in to a movie or graphic novel. His prophetic work began during the reign of King Ahab, a king of Israel who was frustrating God by worshipping the Canaanite gods. God spoke to Elijah and let him know that, because of Ahab, there would be no rain or even dew in Israel until God made it rain again. “Go across the Jordan to the Kerith Ravine,” God told him. “You can drink from the brook there, and I’ll send ravens with food for you to eat.” Elijah did what God said, and sure enough, the brook had water and ravens brought him meat and bread every morning and evening.

But then after a while the brook dried up. So God spoke to Elijah again and told him to go to the town of Zarephath, where he would find a woman, a widow, who he could stay with. So he went, and he asked the woman for a place to stay and some food to eat. She told him that she’d love to help, but she had barely anything left for herself and her young son: she was just getting ready to cook the last of their food, and then she expected to starve to death. “Don’t worry,” Elijah told her. “Just make me some bread, then make something for your son. God has told me that your jar of flour and your jug of oil won’t run out until the rain comes again.” And it didn’t! The woman was amazed. Even more amazing, when the woman’s son got so sick that he stopped breathing Elijah cried out to God for him, and the boy came back to life!

All this time, Ahab had people out looking for Elijah. He knew that Elijah was telling people about God and about how God wanted Ahab to change his ways. Ahab would have killed Elijah if he could have gotten his hands on him. Then one day God sent Elijah to Ahab. “Is that you, you troublemaker?!” Ahab shouted when he saw Elijah.

“I’m not the one who’s making trouble,” Elijah told him. “It’s you who’s brought trouble on Israel by turning away from God.” Elijah went on to explain how God loved and cared for the people of Israel, but that the other gods weren’t doing them any good. “You can’t follow both,” he said. “You need to pick one or the other!” And Elijah proposed a test. “I’m the only prophet of God left,” he told Ahab, “and there are 450 who follow the other gods. Let’s each prepare a sacrifice and then ask our god to send down fire on it. Invite everyone to watch, and we’ll see which god is better!”

So that’s what they did. The other prophets went first: they killed a bull and put it on a pile of wood, then they danced around it all morning calling on their gods. But nothing happened. Elijah made fun of them. “Call louder!” he taunted. “Maybe your gods are busy, or traveling. Maybe they’re sleeping and you need to wake them up!” They did call louder, and they danced harder, and they cut themselves so their blood fell onto the pile. They kept it up all day, but nothing happened.

When dark fell, it was Elijah’s turn. He built a simple altar, piled sticks on it, and put his bull on top of them. Then he called for the people watching to bring jugs of water and pour them over the bull and the wood. They did, coming back three times until the wood and meat and altar were drenched and water was running off onto the ground. Then Elijah prayed to God: “God of Abraham and his children, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Answer me so these people will see that you are the Lord!” Right away, God’s fire fell on the altar and burned everything up.

When the people saw, they fell to the ground and cried out, “that’s the real God!” And the sky began to fill with clouds; before long, it was raining.

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Wondering Questions

I wonder why Elijah had people pour water on the altar if he was trying to light it on fire?

I wonder why King Ahab was so mad at Elijah? And why did he agree to the test, instead of just having Elijah killed?

I wonder why God had Elijah stay with a widow? Would the story be different if he had stayed with a rich person?