

and the spirit and power of Elijah is to come after, holding the keys of power, building the Temple to the capstone, placing the seals of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon the house of Israel, and making all things ready; then Messiah comes to His Temple, which is last of all. . . . Elijah was to come and prepare the way and build up the kingdom before the coming of the great day of the Lord, although the spirit of Elias might begin it [*TPJS*, pp. 335, 340].

A. JAMES HUDSON

ELIJAH

[Because of Elijah's prophesied role (Mal. 4:5–6), he has become the subject of tradition and legend, as the article Ancient Sources explains. Moreover, as expressed in the companion essay, LDS Sources, Latter-day Saint teaching illuminates Elijah's latter-day roles as well as the fulfillment of prophetic expectations associated with him.]

LDS SOURCES

During a divine manifestation to the youthful Joseph SMITH on the evening of September 21, 1823, the angel MORONI quoted Malachi 4:5–6, a prophecy that concerns Elijah's activities in the latter days. Moroni's rendering, which differs from the current biblical text, outlines and clarifies Elijah's prophesied role:

Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming [*JS—H* 1:38–39; *D&C* 2].

Malachi's prophecy anticipates that Elijah would play an important role "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). Elijah was endowed with the priesthood power of God. With this power, he declared to King Ahab that no rain would fall upon the land (1 Kgs. 17:1). Accordingly, the heavens were sealed and ancient Israel experienced a disastrous drought for three and a half years. When Elijah was carried up into heaven in a fiery chariot, his earthly mission appeared to have ended. But the sealing power that he exercised marked only the beginning of his responsibility regarding this eternal priesthood power.

At the conclusion of his mortal life, Elijah was translated; that is, he experienced some type of change from mortality without experiencing mortal death (*see* TRANSLATED BEINGS). Latter-day Saints conclude that a major reason for Elijah's translation was to enable him to return to the earth to confer KEYS of authority on the three chief apostles before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (*see* MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION). Since spirits cannot lay hands on mortal beings (*D&C* 129), and since Moses and Elijah could not return as resurrected beings because Jesus was the first to be resurrected (Packer, p. 109; cf. *TPJS*, p. 191), the need for the translation of Elijah and Moses is evident. On the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–9), Elijah specifically restored the priesthood keys of sealing, the power that binds and validates in the heavens all ordinances performed on the earth (cf. *TPJS*, p. 338).

On April 3, 1836, in a vision to Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY in the newly completed KIRTLAND TEMPLE, Elijah appeared and announced that the time had come when Malachi's prophecy was to be fulfilled. He committed the sealing keys of the priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (*D&C* 110:13–16). This restoration was necessary so that the sealing ordinances and covenants of God could be administered in righteousness upon the earth (*DS* 2:117). Joseph Smith explained:

The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God. . . . What you seal on earth, by the keys of Elijah, is sealed in heaven; and this is the power of Elijah [*TPJS*, pp. 337–38].

Through the sealing power of the priesthood, men and women may be sealed to each other in marriage for all eternity in one of the temples of God. In addition, children may be sealed to their parents forever. Thus the family organization continues eternally (Sperry, p. 139).

Because many have died without either a knowledge of saving gospel principles or the opportunity to receive priesthood ordinances, the latter-day mission of Elijah made it possible to have these sealing ordinances performed vicariously on the earth for those who have died, thus

giving all an opportunity for salvation (cf. *DS* 2:118–19). The Prophet Joseph Smith offered the following explanation:

The spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, . . . and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion. But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them; . . . and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah [*TPJS*, p. 330].

When Latter-day Saints speak of the spirit of Elijah (see *ELIJAH, SPIRIT OF*), they mean at least two things. First, the promise of salvation made to the fathers has been renewed to the modern Church (*JS—H* 1:38–39; *D&C* 27:9–10). Second, the hearts of men and women have extensively turned to their fathers, as is evident in the dramatic growth in the number of genealogical societies, libraries, and individual genealogical or family history research organizations throughout much of the world. The spirit of Elijah has motivated thousands to make considerable investment in both money and time to search out the records of family ancestors and bring these records together to form a family history (*DS* 2:123–27; see *GENEALOGY*). In addition to numerous family history centers, the Church has built many temples where sacred priesthood saving ordinances may be performed for both the living and the dead (see *SALVATION OF THE DEAD*).

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FRANKLIN D. DAY

ANCIENT SOURCES

Elijah in Jewish tradition was an Israelite prophet who was active in the northern kingdom during the reigns of King Ahab (and his consort Jezebel) and King Ahaziah (9th cent. B.C.). His name may be a cognomen: Eli-yahu (YHWH, or Jehovah, is God),

expressing the main emphasis of his prophetic ministry: the exclusive and pure worship of YHWH, and uncompromising opposition to the Canaanite pagan cult of Baal. His activities are described in 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2, and account for his becoming in Jewish tradition the symbol of uncompromising religious zeal. The latter came to a dramatic climax in his confrontation with the priests of Baal, after a long period of drought which Elijah had prophesied would come as punishment for the idolatrous Baal-worship, on Mount Carmel. (The Catholic monastic order of Carmelites, taking Elijah’s ascetic life in the desert as a model, considers him as its spiritual father.) Unlike the later “literary” prophets, Elijah is also described as a worker of miracles, but he shares with them the strong emphasis on social justice, as evidenced by his other great clash with the king and queen in the matter of Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kgs. 21), which the royal couple desired for themselves.

According to the biblical account, Elijah did not die an ordinary death but was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind by a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire. Hence, unlike other prophets, a large number of legends and beliefs concerning him developed. He is said to return frequently to earth, usually in the guise of a poor peasant, beggar, or even Gentile and—unrecognized—to help those in distress or danger, disappearing as suddenly as he appeared. A chair is set and a cup of wine poured for Elijah at every Passover celebration. He is also believed to be present at every circumcision ceremony, and a special chair (“Elijah’s chair”) for his invisible presence is placed next to that of the godfather holding the male baby. This particular belief may be due to two factors: Elijah’s angelic status (having ascended to heaven) and the prophet Malachi’s reference to him (Mal. 3:1) as the “angel of the covenant.” In Jewish usage the term *berith* (“covenant”) signifies more specifically the “covenant of circumcision” (cf. Gen. 17:9–10). Elijah also plays an important role in Jewish mysticism, where he appears as a celestial messenger revealing divine mysteries.

More important, however, than all the other aspects is Elijah’s eschatological role in Jewish tradition. How and why this role developed is difficult to reconstruct, but by the time of Malachi, one of the last Old Testament prophets, some such beliefs seem to have already been in existence: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord”

(Mal. 4:5). Elijah gradually assumed the role of precursor of the Messiah and the messenger announcing his advent. Some of the contemporaries of Jesus (cf. Matt. 16:13–14) seem to have thought that he might be Elijah (Matt. 11:14; 17:10–13) in a manner that suggests that John the Baptist, as the forerunner and announcer of the Messiah, was Elijah (namely, fulfilled his eschatological function). Later apocryphal writings (e.g., *The Apocalypse of Elijah*) connect the “revelations” concerning the last things they report with Elijah. Elements from the Jewish Elijah traditions and legends were also adopted and developed in different ways by Islam.

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Postbiblical Jewish sources are conveniently collected in Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Vol. 6, 3rd reprint. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1967, pp. 133–35 (under “Elijah”). A very good summary can be found in M. J. Stiasny, “Le Prophète Élie dans le Judaïsme,” in *Élie le Prophète*, Études Carmélitaines, Vol. 2 (1956):199–255.

For Islamic traditions, see “Ilyas” and “al-Khadir” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

R. J. ZVI WERBLOWSKY

ELIJAH, SPIRIT OF

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the spirit of Elijah is the spirit of family kinship and unity. It is the spirit that motivates the concern to search out ancestral family members through FAMILY HISTORY; and, on their behalf, to perform proxy baptisms, temple ENDOWMENTS, AND SEALING ordinances (HC 6:252). This is seen as fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi that in the last days Elijah “will turn the heart [in Hebrew, the innermost part, as the soul, the affections] of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:5–6).

The appearance of Elijah to the Prophet Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE in 1836 inaugurated anew this spirit (D&C 110:13). The spirit of Elijah is active in the impetus anyone feels toward finding and cherishing family members and family ties past and present. In the global sense, the spirit of Elijah is the spirit of love that may eventually overcome all human family estrangements. Then the priesthood power can bind generations together in eternal family rela-

tionships and “seal the children to the fathers and fathers to the children” within the gospel of Jesus Christ (WJS, p. 329).

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MARY FINLAYSON

ELOHIM

Elohim (God; gods; Heavenly Father) is the plural form of the singular noun *’eloah* (compare Arabic *Allah*) in the Hebrew Bible, where it is used 2,570 times as compared to 57 times for its singular. But as one commentator has noted, why this “plural form for ‘God’ is used has not yet been explained satisfactorily” (Botterweck, Vol. 1, p. 272).

SINGULAR USAGE. Elohim appears in the Hebrew Bible as a common noun identifying Israel’s God: “In the beginning God [*’elohim*] created [singular verb] the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). It was also frequently used interchangeably with Jehovah, the proper name for Israel’s God: “And Jacob said, O God [*’elohim*] of my father Abraham, . . . the LORD [Jehovah] which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country” (Gen. 32:9; *see also* JEHOVAH, JESUS CHRIST).

Latter-day Saints use the name Elohim in a more restrictive sense as a proper name-title identifying the Father in Heaven (*see* GOD THE FATHER). The First Presidency of the Church has written, “God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title ‘Elohim,’ is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race” (MFP 5:26; *see also* Doctrinal Expositions of the First Presidency, “The Father and the Son,” appendices, Vol. 4).

PLURAL USAGE. Ancient Israelites used *’elohim* also as a proper plural form to refer to gods of nations other than Israel. At such times, the accompanying verbs and adjectives used were also plural. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3; here “other” is a plural adjective).

Occasionally, Latter-day Saints use Elohim in its plural sense as a common noun to refer to the plurality of gods known to exist (TPJS, pp. 371–74). However, despite their belief that many lords