

Prophet Alyasa (as)

## Prophet Alyasa (Elisha as)

Elisha, meaning, "My God is salvation", Greek: according to the Hebrew Bible, a prophet. He is mentioned in the New Testament and the Qur'an, Elisha is venerated as a prophet in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and writings of the Baha'i faith. In the biblical narrative Elisha is a disciple and protégé of Elijah (*Ilyas*), and after Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind, he gave Elisha a double portion of his power and he was accepted as the leader of the sons of the prophets. Elisha then went on to perform twice as many miracles as Elijah.

Before he settled in Samaria, Elisha passed some time on Mount Carmel. He became noted in Israel, and for six decades (892 - 832 BC) held the office of "prophet in Israel." He is called a patriot because of his help to soldiers and kings.

### Bible stories

Elisha's story is related in the Books of Kings (*Second Scroll, chapters 2-14*) in the Hebrew Bible (*part of the Nevi'im*). According to this story, he was a prophet of the Kingdom of Israel who was active during the reign of Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash (*Joash*). Elisha was the son of Shaphat, a wealthy land-owner of Abel-meholah; he became the attendant and disciple of Elijah.

His name first occurs in chapter 19 of the Books of Kings in the command given to Elijah to anoint him as his successor. After learning in the cave on

Mount Horeb, that Elisha, son of Shaphat, had been selected by Yahweh (Allah in Hebrew) as his successor in the prophetic office, Elijah set out to find him. On his way from Mount Horeb to Damascus, Elijah found Elisha, who was ploughing with twelve yokes of oxen. Elijah went over to him, and handed over his prophetic responsibility to him. Elisha delayed only long enough to kill the yoke of oxen, whose flesh he boiled with wood. After he had shared this farewell meal with his father, mother, and friends, the newly chosen prophet. Elisha became Elijah's close attendant until Elijah was taken up to heaven. During all these years we hear nothing of Elisha except in connection with the closing scenes of Elijah's life.

### Elijah taken in a whirlwind to Heaven



Spring, believed to be the fountain purified by Elisha in 2 Kings 2:19-22.

Elijah and Elisha went to the Jordan River. Elijah rolls up his mantle (scroll of writing) and strikes the water, which divided so both could pass over dry ground. Elisha asks to inherit a double-portion of Elijah's spirit. Suddenly, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appear and Elijah is lifted up in a whirlwind. As Elijah is lifted up, his mantle falls to the ground and Elisha retrieves it.

## Miracles

By means of the mantle, Elisha miraculously recrossed the Jordan, and Elisha returned to Jericho, where he won the gratitude of the people by purifying the unwholesome waters of their spring and making them drinkable.

When the armies of Judah were being tortured by drought in the Idumean desert, Elisha consented to intervene. His prediction regarding relief from drought and victory was fulfilled the following morning.

To relieve a prophet's widow importuned by a harsh creditor, Elisha multiplied a little oil to enable her to pay her debt and provide for her family needs. There is a Jewish tradition, or legend, that the woman's husband was Obadiah, the servant of King Ahab, who hid 100 prophets in two caves. To reward the rich lady of Shunem for her hospitality, Elisha obtained for her from Yahweh, at first the birth of a son, and subsequently the resurrection of her child who had died. To nourish the sons of the prophet's pressed by famine, Elisha changed a thick soup made from poisonous gourds into wholesome food. He fed a hundred men with twenty loaves of new barley, leaving some leftover.

Elisha cured the Syrian military commander, Naaman of leprosy, but punished his own servant Gehazi, who took money from Naaman. Naaman, at first reluctant, obeyed Elisha, he washed seven times in the River Jordan. Finding his flesh restored, the general was so impressed by this evidence of

God's power that he expressed his deep conviction that there is no other God on the earth, except Israel." According to Luke's gospel, Jesus referred to Naaman's healing when he said, "There were many leper's in Israel during the time of Elisha, none of them was cleansed but Naaman, the Syrian."

Elisha's actions included repeatedly saving King Jehoram of Israel from the ambushes planned by Ben-Hadad (died c. 841 BC, king of Damascus who led a coalition against the invading forces of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III, repulsing them at Karkar in 853. In a battle with him King Ahab of Israel was killed (I Kings 22:29-36). Ben-Hadad was murdered by the usurper Hazael), Elisha ordered the elders to shut the door against the messenger of Israel's ungrateful king, bewildering with a strange blindness the soldiers of the Syrian king, making iron float to relieve from embarrassment a son of a prophet, and confidently predicting the sudden flight of the enemy at the siege of Samaria and the consequent cessation of the famine in the city. Elisha then journeyed to Damascus and prophesied that Hazael would be king over Syria, while weeping, because of the evil he would do. Elisha directs one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, as king of Israel, and commissions him to cut off the house of Ahab. The death of Jehoram, pierced by an arrow from Jehu's bow, the end of Jezebel, and the slaughter of Ahab's seventy sons, proved how he executed that demand.

## Elisha's final days

While Elisha lay on his death-bed, Jehoash of Israel, the grandson of Jehu, came to mourn over his approaching departure from earth, and uttered the same words as those of Elisha when Elijah was taken up to the heaven, indicating his value to him: "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Jehoash assists Elisha to fire an arrow eastwards from the window of his room, predicting as it lands:

The arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them.

Elisha predicts three successful battles over the Arameans, but no absolute victory. 2 Kings 13:25 records three victories of Joash whereby cities lost to the Arameans, probably on the west bank of Jordan, were regained.

According to the Books of Kings the year after Elisha's death and burial (or, in the following spring) a body was placed in his grave. As soon as the body touched Elisha's remains the man revived and stood up on his feet.

## Veneration

He is venerated as a saint in a number of Christian Churches. His feast day is on June 14, on the Eastern Orthodox, and Eastern Catholic liturgical calendars (for those churches which use the traditional Julian calendar, June 14 falls on June 27 of the modern Gregorian calendar). The Armenian Apostolic Church

commemorates his feast day on the Thursday following the fifth Sunday after Pentecost (July 1 in 2021). John of Damascus composed a canon in honour of Elisha, and a church was built at Constantinople in his honour.

In Western Christianity he is commemorated in the calendar of saints of the Carmelites, a Catholic religious order, following a decree of the Carmelite General Chapter of 1399. He is also commemorated as a prophet in the Calendar of Saints of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Both calendars also celebrate him on June 14. Both the Orthodox and Roman Catholics believe that he was unmarried and celibate.

Julian the Apostate (361 - 363) gave orders to burn the relics of the prophets Elisha, Obadiah and John the Baptist, who were buried next to each other in Sebastia, but they were rescued by the Christians, and part of them were transferred to Alexandria. Today, the relics of Elisha are claimed to be among the possessions of the Coptic Orthodox Monastery of Saint Macarius the Great in Scetes, Egypt.

He is commemorated on 20 June – Translation of the relics and garments of the Apostles Luke, Andrew, and Thomas, the Prophet Eliseus, and Martyr Lazarus of Persia found ca. 960, during the time of the emperor Romano's Lakapenos (919 - 944) in a monastery of Saint Augusta into the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople under Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (c.956 - 970) by Saint Patriarch Polyeuctus of Constantinople (956 - 970).

Eliseus is also commemorated on July 20 with Aaron, Elias and Moses.

### In Islam



Calligraphy of his name

Elisha is venerated as a prophet in Islam, and is a prophetic successor to Elijah. Elisha is mentioned twice in the Qur'an as a prophet, alongside fellow prophets and is among the excellent. Islamic sources that identify Elisha with Khidr cite the strong relationship between al-Khidr and Elijah in Islamic tradition. Some Muslims believe the tomb of Elisha is in Al-Awjam in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. The shrine was removed by the Saudi Government, because such veneration is not in accordance with the Wahhabi or Salafi reform movement, which is dominant in Saudi Arabia. It had been an important landmark for many centuries during the time of Ottoman Arabia, and had been a very popular pilgrimage destination for Muslims of all sects throughout the pre-modern period.

Another claimed grave of Elisha is present in the Eğıl district of Diyarbakir Province, Turkey. The original shrine was near a riverbed that was to be

flooded in 1994. Before the area was flooded, the grave was dug at night and the preserved body of the prophet and witnessed by the nine scholars and official workers, was exhumed to be buried on a hill overlooking the flooded plain. However, many of the townsfolk saw the prophet in their dream that night, and turned out before sunrise to observe his reburial in the new spot.