

CHAPTER XVI
Bands of Love. Elijah and Elisha
I. II. Kings

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Hints to Bible Study
The Colorado College of Divine Science
Denver, 1920.

The short history of the northern kingdom, Israel, lasting about two hundred years, is interesting and helpful, because it so clearly reveals the never-ceasing action of Divine Love in its endeavor to reclaim its children, no matter how sunken in degradation they be, to return them to uprightness, to lead them to peace with God and man, and to prepare them to receive their inheritance, spiritual peace and blessedness.

To this corrupt kingdom, four great prophets were sent. According to Hosea, all that Love could do for Israel it had done. "I taught Ephraim to go; I took them in my arms; but they know not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them." Three of these prophets were from "the remnant" of the ten tribes; the other was the missionary Amos, who came to Israel, from the southern kingdom of Judah. The three native prophets were Elijah, Elisha and Hosea. But Israel heeded none of them.

At the time Elijah, in the reign of the wicked Ahab and his still more wicked wife, Jezebel, Jehovah said to Elijah: "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed down unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." But one like Elijah is a mighty host in himself to testify to the truth: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

There had been under Ahab a great persecution of the prophets; and many of them had been slain. An overseer of Ahab, Obadiah, secretly sympathized with the prophets and hid many of them in caves, where he fed them. Elijah predicted a drought and was forced to flee from the kingdom. He came to Zidon, where he lived with a widow who had on his arrival but "a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse." She shared her scanty store with the prophet, and during the years of famine "the meal lasted and the oil failed not"; for the infallible law of the spiritual world is: To use and to share gives the increase; to spare and hoard will diminish. [Emphasis added.]

The drought, to Ahab, is not the result of his own sin, but it is Elijah "that troubleth Israel." The saving rain came after three years of famine in answer to the prayer of Elijah; but it did not bring with it redemption for the king. "Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that went before him." Elijah must needs flee

from Israel again, and he came south to Judah, taking shelter under a juniper tree; and here the great heart absolutely yielded itself up, "It is enough; now, Lord, take away my life."

Perfect relaxation results as we yield our lives; mortal thought is always tension; and the refreshing sleep of absolute self-abandonment came to Elijah. He was awakened by the angel, who had prepared his food, and told to "arise and eat." In the strength of this heaven-sent food he traveled to his destination, "forty days and forty nights, until he came to Horeb, the Mount of God." Here he received the command, "Go forth and stand upon the mount of the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord! but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind the earthquake; and after the earthquake the fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

Behind the screen of nature and what we call natural law, yet everywhere present eternally, is the inner realm which Jesus called the Kingdom of God. To every so-called "natural law" Spiritual Law may be applied, a counteracting power. Is it a "law" that fire burns? Spiritualized man may stand in it and be immune. Is it a "law" that the human body will sink and drown in water? Jesus walked upon its surface in safety. Is gravitation a "law"? The resurrection of the Christ contradicts it; levitation alone is law. The whole visible universe, with its elements of air, water, fire and earth, are all subject to spiritual Law, which, if a man knows and applies it, will render what human mind calls "natural law" absolutely null and void. Then it follows logically that there is no such thing as natural law; that they are mere human beliefs which are overruled as man comprehends Spiritual Law. Not in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire shall we find the Lord, but in the "still small voice." Seers of all ages testify to the "miracles" that result when man transcends his belief in natural law and comes under Spiritual Law.

The material realm so apparent to the senses of man is absolutely unknown to God--God who is everywhere equally and evenly present. Where, then, is the material world? Nowhere but in the conception of mortal man. It is human mind's concept of the eternal Real. Jesus consciously lived in the spiritual world, and told his disciples over and over again that they had only to change their concept from a material to a spiritual basis to be able to work the miracles that he did.

Cosmic glimpses of this Real are borne in upon us in our highest moments. These rare moments of revelation are becoming more general in the consciousness of the race. When the spiritual principle of life is firmly established in the race-mind, creation will cease to be "material" to man, for all will be spiritualized. Whenever a truth appears, the false is automatically destroyed.

When man believes in the Real he dwells in the supersensuous realm. The stories of Elijah and Elisha are sustained contact with the Spiritual Reality. The iron hammer does not sink; the dead are raised; the hosts of the Lord visibly fill the mountains. This

is the truth always to "beholding and jubilant souls." Like the infant hands unable to hold the article, it drops to the ground; the mortal consciousness is unable to hold its concepts, and so they appear to drop because [they are] not sufficiently sustained.

In times of greatest revelation the opposite evil is most pronounced. Moses had his Pharaoh; Elijah had his Ahab; Jesus had his Caesar. The appearance of Truth brings evil to a climax, and it is destroyed. Or is it that in times of real wickedness the Divine Love seeks us even more yearningly than it does at any other time? Is not man's extremity always God's opportunity?

Naboth had a vineyard which the king coveted, but he refused to sell it to him. Jezebel, with fiendish cunning, had him put to death, and Ahab took possession of the vineyard. Elijah, stern and menacing, presented himself again before Ahab. Conscience is to the spiritual man what pain is to the physical man. Pain is a friendly warning that physical conditions are not right, and that they must be adjusted. Conscience warns the spiritual man that he is off the track, and danger lurks everywhere to the man who has gone astray. The ignorant condemn pain and ignore its warning; the wicked condemn conscience and defy it. Ahab greets Elijah: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" But conscience, the friend, follows us all, and says as the prophet said to the king, "I have found thee." Regard it as David did Nathan, and we are saved; defy it as Ahab did Elijah, and we are destroyed.

The most fixed belief of human conception is death. Is this a law? Laws are never destructive; they are all beneficent. Would or could Jesus have overcome it had it been Law; he who said that he came not to destroy but to fulfill? Would the great apostle, Paul, have called it an enemy had it been Law? We speak of death as inevitable; yet this to the Christian is as ignorant as it would be to a scientist to persist in calling the earth a flat surface after we have proved it to be round. Jesus, in the resurrection, proved man to be not material but spiritual; and the beautiful story of Elijah gives us the one inevitable thing to every child begotten by the Infinite Love-- the "chariot of fire" that awaits each of us at the end of his mortal belief.

Elijah chose as his successor, Elisha; and touching indeed is the story of Elisha as he walked with Elijah to his transition. Elijah said to him, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel [house of God]. And Elisha answered, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha and said to him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said to him, Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho [a fragrant place]. And he said, As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said to him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said to him, Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan [descender]. And he said, As the Lord

liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they came and stood at Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass when they were gone over that Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee, and Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsement thereof."

Elisha received his gift not because Elijah gave it to him but because he could see Elijah's ascension. What we perceive we understand and can reproduce. Only this can be a real possession to anyone. The story of Elijah and Elisha may be regarded as mythological by the merely intellectual student of the Bible; but, the letter killeth, the spirit alone giveth life; and to read this history believingly is to walk free on the high lands of spiritual Reality. It is these glimpses into the Real that makes this Book separate from all others; the greatest possession of civilized man.

A blind man may deny the brilliant colors of the sunset which we painstakingly describe to him; but that does not prove to the one who sees that the colors are not there; it proves but one thing, the blind man cannot see them. The materialist may call "this world" real, but that does not prove it to be so; it only proves that "this world's" horizon is the limit of his vision. Elijah did not go into another world, for there is no other world. There is only one World, the one in the Mind of the Creator. Elijah is "here" in the only world there is, the spiritual Kingdom; mortals live nowhere but in sense beliefs and limitation; in the pictures which their own imagination makes. When Elijah lost his mortal concept of body and received his spiritual concept of body, those still in mortal concept were not able to see him.

The body of man appears to him natural if his belief of it be material, spiritual if his belief of it be spiritual. "The flesh profiteth nothing," it is but a picture in the thought of man; and if man ever dies, that is, if he ever "leaves the body," he has not yet received the truth in its entirety. The perception of the truth of the body, not passively but actively, must necessarily mean its transition from mortal sight. Man can never see beyond his own concepts; his range of vision is always confined within them. Faith is an active power, which de-materializes the material concept and transmutes it into the spiritual. It is the leaven which changes the composition of thought entirely.

Elisha walks the way of his master; neither is he a citizen of this three dimensional world, he lives in freedom above its confines. He too can part the waters, make the iron swim, raise the dead. The army of the Syrian King sent to capture him he can regard with fearlessness: "More are they that be with us than they that be against us."

And the shining hosts invisible to mortal sense are clearly visible to him and fill the mountains about him.

He who believes "this world" to be real has not had Cosmic Vision, and is not in a world at all; he is in his sense beliefs of a world. He who will receive the testimony of those who do see and prays to Bartimeus, "Lord, that I may receive my sight," will receive it. The believing heart will receive the seeing eye, and the hearing ear that receives into consciousness the world eternally existent in divine Mind, without variableness or shadow of turning.

Cosmic Vision sees the Real; it looks through the material as with the X-rays we look through seemingly solid walls. To spiritual vision there is nothing solid in the material world; but behind everything visible is the substance of Spirit, the Real, of which mortal sight sees but its semblance, its concept of it.

Out on the mountain of Horeb with Elijah; or in the forests of Dothan with Elisha, in my home or your home, be it Calcutta, London, Denver or Seattle, the shining ones are encamped around us; and if we do not see them we are accursed, and walk into the pit of mortality; if we do see them we walk free on the King's Highway of spiritual Reality, and material conditions are entirely subject to us.