

Troparion

Troparion, Tone 4

The glorious Elias, incarnate messenger of God, pillar of prophets, and second forerunner of the coming of Christ, sent grace from on high to Elisha that he might cleanse lepers and heal sickness for all those who honour him.

Kontakion, Tone 2

O Prophet who foresaw the mighty deeds of our God,
O great Elias who through your prayers stopped rain,
intercede for us with the only One who loves humanity.

One of the greatest and most holy prophets of the Old Testament. He lived in the 9th century B.C., during the reign of the sinful King Ahab, King of Israel, who worshipped the idol of Baal.

Prophet Elias was wise and faithful to the true God. God sent Prophet Elias to speak the truth to King Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel. But to no avail. Not only did King Ahab not listen to Prophet Elias, but he threatened to kill him.

To escape, Prophet Elias fled to a mountain. There he stayed and hid in a cave. Everyday, God sent a crow with meat and bread to feed Prophet Elias. He would drink from a nearby stream. But there was a drought in the land. Prophet Elias had prophesied that it would last for 3 years as a punishment for the faithlessness of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. So in time, the stream dried up.

With no water, Prophet Elias had no choice but to leave his mountain hideout. On his way, he met a poor widow with her only son. The unfortunate woman accepted to give Prophet Elias a place to stay, despite her poverty. She had only a little flour and oil with which to make all their food. However, Prophet Elias miraculously increased the amount of flour and oil so that all three people had enough to eat for a long time. Then, when the widow's son fell ill and died, Prophet Elias performed a second miracle and brought him back to life.

The drought, though, continued. For three whole years, not a drop of water fell. The people suffered and many died from hunger. God sent Prophet Elias to appear before King Ahab. Upon seeing Prophet Elias, the sinful King Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" Prophet Elias responded, "I have not troubled Israel; but you and your people have because you have

forsaken the commandments of the Lord." [3 Kings. 18:17,18 (LXX)] To show them that the Lord is the true God and that Baal is truly false, Prophet Elias offered King Ahab a challenge. He told the-King to gather his people and priests the next day. Prophet Elias and the priests of Baal would each make offerings to their own God. No one would have fire. Then they would let the true God send fire from the heavens to light the wood and make the burnt offering.

King Ahab accepted the challenge. The next day they all gathered on Mt. Carmel. The priests of King Ahab made their offerings upon their altar. They danced around their altar, pleading with Baal to send fire from the heavens. But nothing happened.

Then, Prophet Elias drew near to his altar and made his offering. He ordered the people to pour water abundantly on the wood. Before the crowd, he knelt and prayed to the true God, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, I ask you O Lord, hear my prayer and send fire upon this sacrifice that all may know that You are the Lord God of Israel"

[3 Kings 18:36 (LXX)] Prophet Elias had barely finished his prayer when a great fire descended from the heavens and consumed the wood and the offering.

When the gathered crowds saw the miracle, they believed in the true God. Prophet Elias then prayed for rain, and a great rain fell. All the people glorified the true God.

Finally, when his earthly life was over, God decided to bring Prophet Elias close to him without his tasting death. One day, when Prophet Elias was resting near the Jordan River with his disciple Elisha, who was to become a prophet also, a fiery chariot descended from the heavens and took up Prophet Elias. As he was ascending to the heavens, he threw his cloak down to Elisha. With this cloak, Prophet Elisha performed many miracles as well.

We celebrate the memory of Prophet Elias, as well as his presence among us, on July 20.

** Translated from the Encyclopaedia "Ydria".*