

ELISHA

His Call:

“Elijah soon went northward and as he passed the lands of Shaphat he saw Elisha plowing in the rich level field of his father's farm. Twelve yoke of oxen were at work, Elisha himself plowing with the twelfth yoke. Crossing over to him Elijah threw his mantle upon the young man ([1 Kings 19:19](#)). Elisha seemed to understand the meaning of the symbolic act, and was for a moment overwhelmed with its significance. It meant his adoption as the son and successor of Elijah in the prophetic office. Naturally he would hesitate a moment before making such an important decision. As Elijah strode on, Elisha felt the irresistible force of the call of God and ran after the great prophet, announcing that he was ready to follow; only he wished to give a parting kiss to his father and mother ([1 Kings 19:20](#)). Elijah seemed to realize what it meant to the young man, and bade him ‘Go back again; for what have I done to thee?’ The call was not such an urgent one as Elisha seemed to think, and the response had better be deliberate and voluntary. But Elisha had fully made up his mind, slew the yoke of oxen with which he was plowing, boiled their flesh with the wood of the implements he was using, and made a farewell feast for his friends. He then followed Elijah, making a full renunciation of home ties, comforts and privileges. He became Elijah's servant; and we have but one statement describing their relationship ([2 Kings 3:11](#)): he ‘poured water on the hands of Elijah.’

His Preparation:

“They seem to have spent several years together ([1 Kings 22:1](#) [2 Kings 1:17](#)), for Elisha became well known among the various schools of the prophets. While ministering to the needs of his master, Elisha learned many deep and important lessons, imbibed much of his spirit, and developed his own religious nature and efficiency until he was ready for the prophetic service himself. It seems almost certain that they lived among the schools of the prophets, and not in the mountains and hills as Elijah had previously done. During these years the tie between the two men became very deep and strong. They were years of great significance to the young prophet and of careful teaching on the part of the older. The lesson learned at Horeb was not forgotten and its meaning would be profoundly impressed upon the younger man, whose whole afterlife shows that he had deeply imbibed the teaching” (biblos.com – encyclopedia).

“Elisha, the second great prophet in the Kingdom of Israel, was Elijah's successor. . . . Elisha's ministry began when Elijah, at divine direction, cast his mantle upon him. . . .

At once he left his work, his family and home, to minister to Elijah. . . . Five years or more of consecrated preparation for his calling were accorded him under the tutelage of Elijah. Elisha also profited by the religious education afforded him through association with the schools of the prophets.

“On the way to the place of his translation Elijah bade farewell to these schools. He went with Elisha from Gilgal (‘circle’). He said, ‘Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Beth-el [”house of God”].’ A second time he commanded, ‘Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho [”place of fragrance”].’ A third time Elijah said, ‘Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord

hath sent me to Jordan [type of immortality].’ Each time Elisah answered, ‘As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.’ How close the unity of purpose and rapport of thought of these two God-directed men!

“Elijah said, ‘Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.’ The desire of his faithful disciple was to be worthy of inheriting the prophetic office from his great master: ‘I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.’ Elijah answered, ‘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.’ Then occurred the glorious translation of Elijah. Elisha saw it, and received that for which he had prayed. Divesting himself of his own garments, tearing them in two pieces, he took up the mantle that had fallen to him from Elijah.

“Elisha labored for approximately fifty years under four of the kings of Israel: Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash. Like Elijah, he was the mouthpiece of God’s will, voicing the divine displeasure at the iniquitous conduct of secular rulers or bringing divine aid when these rulers turned to God for succor” (Shotwell 120-121).

“With approximate accuracy, his ministry can be dated between 850 and 800 B.C.E.” (*IDB* 2.91).

“As successor to Elijah, Elisha continued to represent Jehovah in the land of Israel. In some respects he was like Elijah; though not as stern he was uncompromising. And yet he was quite different from his predecessor. He was not as dramatic, and had more of gentleness in his make-up. He was quieter, calmer and more persuasive, and yet fully as effective.

“Much of his work was done by miracles, most of which were miracles of mercy. For the sake of brevity we are giving a list of the chief miracles attributed to him. . . All these are recorded in II Kings 2-6.

1. Healing the spring of water at Jericho.
2. Supplying water for Israel and her allied armies.
3. Providing oil for the widow.
4. Restoring to life the son of the Shunamite.
5. Removing the bitter flavor from pottage.
6. Multiplying the loaves for the people.
7. Healing Naaman of leprosy.
8. Making the ax head swim.
9. Leading the Syrians into Samaria.
10. Pronouncing a curse on boys who mocked him.
11. Punishing Gehazi with leprosy.

(Hester Old Testament 214).