

From Miracle-makers Elijah and Elisha to Jesus and Apocrypha

Peter Dubovský

Introduction

Elijah and Elisha are probably the two best-known early prophets in the Old Testament and the interest in these figures has not diminished despite numerous books and articles published on them.

The Bible attributes to Elijah and Elisha various types of actions. They announced future events and they interpreted the current situation. They contested the kings, on the one hand; on the other hand, they anointed new kings. They were mystics but also fully involved in daily life. Seeing the large variety of deeds performed by these two prophets, let us, first, define upon which kind of deeds this paper focuses. In other words, before proposing a classification of Elijah's and Elisha's miracles, let us briefly review the definitions of a miracle.

Merriam-Webster dictionary gives three definitions of a miracle: 1) an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs; 2) an extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing, or accomplishment; 3) a divinely natural phenomenon experienced humanly as the fulfillment of spiritual law¹.

David Hume defined a miracle as “a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent”². His study has deeply influenced the perception of miracles and until now a miracle has been often regarded as an event that implied a breaking of natural law. However, several Christian thinkers have suggested that the idea of miracle does not have to be conceived in this way. Already Augustine defined miracles as unusual events that contradict our accustomed views of the course of nature but not necessarily nature itself³. From this viewpoint, as suggested by Wolfhart Pannenberg, it is sufficient to regard unusual occurrences as “signs” of God's

¹ Cf. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Miracle.

² HUME, *Of Miracles*, 45.

³ For study of Augustinian concept, see PANNENBERG, Miracle, 759-762.

special activity in creation⁴. Along the same line, Friedrich Schleiermacher concluded that “every event, even the most natural and usual, becomes a miracle as soon as the religious view of it can be the dominant”⁵. This notion of miracles was adopted by the Catechism of the Catholic Church that understands the miracles as “the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all; they are motives of credibility which show that the assent of faith is by no means a blind impulse of the mind” (CCC § 156).

The studies of medieval hagiographies also showed that Hume’s definition is not sufficient to embrace the diversity of miracles attributed to the saints. Thus, it was suggested that, for example, Bede’s miraculous episodes can best be appreciated as signs that point to a meaning beyond the literal. Eogan Ahern concluded that

[i]t is imperative that we develop a more refined understanding of Bede’s conceptualization of the miraculous if we are to better comprehend the mechanics of his celebrated narrative of the English church.⁶

Applying to the Bible the notions of miracles exposed above, it can be noticed that the biblical miracles were not only those that violated natural laws, but the spectrum of biblical miracles is much larger. Therefore, the concept of miracles as presented by Augustine, Schleiermacher, Pannenberg, and Ahern fits the biblical miracles better.

Another point important for our investigation of the biblical miracles regards the religious premises of that period⁷. The main difference between the modern and ancient concept of miracles was that that the nations of the ancient Near East believed the gods were beyond most, if not all, events of history⁸. Without entering into details, let us present an example taken from the royal inscriptions of the region Suhu dated to the 8th cent. B.C. One of the kings, Ninurta-kudurri-usur, after having defeated local Aramean tribesmen wrote:

Anyone in the future who comes forward and says: “How [did] Ninurta-kudurri-ušur, the governor of the land of Suhu and the land of Mari [inflict] this defeat?” (should be told that) I did [not] inflict (this) [by

⁴ PANNENBERG, *Miracle*, 759.

⁵ SCHLEIERMACHER, *Second Speech*, 23.

⁶ AHERN, *Bede’s Miracles*, 282-303.

⁷ One of the first important theological studies on the topic represents KNIGHT, *Miracle*.

⁸ Cf. for example DUBOVSKÝ, *Boží hnev*.

my own power, (but rather) I inflicted this] defeat by the power of the gods Šamaš and Marduk, A[dad and Apla-Adad, the great gods], my lords. (RIMB 2 S.O.1002.2 ii 29-33)

This inscription shows that a belief that gods ruled the universe and history was deeply rooted in the ancient mentality.

Taking into consideration this religious background, which the biblical scribes shared with their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, it is obvious that the gods were the ultimate cause of any event of history and therefore any event could be classified as a miracle⁹. For this reason, it is necessary to add another criterion that might help us to distinguish between divine presence in history and nature, on the one hand, and the miracles, on the other hand.

To this aim it might be useful to realize that in some cases the divinity intervened directly, in others a human intermediary played an essential role in performing miracles. Using the terminology applied to ancient Near Eastern *omina*¹⁰, it might be helpful to distinguish between provoked and unprovoked miracles. The former presupposed a human action that “triggered” a miracle and this type of miracles will be the object of our study. Therefore, we can exclude from our research all miracles in which Elijah and Elisha were passive agents; thus, for example the miracle of the ravens who brought food to Elijah (1 Kgs 17:6), Elijah nourished by an angel (19:5-8), Elijah transferred by the spirit to another place (18:12; 2:16), or Elisha seeing the army of God (2 Kgs 7:13-16). In these episodes, the mediators of the miracles were other beings such as angels and ravens, or God performed the miracle without any intermediary. Similarly, we should exclude the theophanies such as the revelation of God to Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:9-18). In sum, God or other mediators were the active agents in these events, whereas Elijah and Elisha were the passive agents. On the contrary, there were cases when a miracle was triggered or provoked by Elijah’s and Elisha’s actions; for example, the parting of the river of Jordan (2 Kgs 2:8. 14), the healing of the sick (ch. 5), bringing down fire from heaven (1:9-12), etc.

⁹ Cf. for example GOODMAN, To Make a Rainbow.

¹⁰ The *omina* in the ancient Near East were needed to communicate with the gods. This communication could have been initiated by humans or by the gods. If initiated by the former, the communication was achieved by means of special inquiry techniques such as sacrifices, casting lots, etc. With the passing of time some of the techniques within this group acquired higher scientific and social status such as extispicy and others fell out of use such as *omina* derived from observation of smoke patterns or oil-pool shapes. The scholarly recognition gained the second group—the unprovoked *omina*; FREEDMAN, *If a city*, 1-2.

Finally, not all extraordinary events can be considered miracles. The encounter between Elijah and Obadiah (1 Kgs 18:1-15) can be taken as an illustrative example. Even though this meeting was totally unexpected, the reader is not led to conclude that it was a miracle. It can be considered an act of divine providence, but not necessarily a miracle. Consequently, another important characteristic of a miracle is that a miracle should lead a person to recognition of God's power and glory mediated through a human being. So, the widow recognized that God acted through Elijah when he resuscitated her dead son: "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth." (17:24) What turns an extraordinary event into a miracle is a reference to divine power. This reference can be explicitly voiced, but sometimes it can be only implied.

The matter of biblical miracles becomes more complex since the biblical description of the miracles underwent multiple redactions. As the result of the redactional and editorial interventions, a reader has no longer access to Elijah's and Elisha's miraculous deeds nor to miracle-makers themselves, but to the literary presentation of the miracles and the biblical redactors' adaptation of the narratives for their audience. Consequently, the biblical accounts do not intend to describe what really happened, but it presents a theological elaboration of miraculous events. In sum, the miracles attributed to Elijah and Elisha reflect what the biblical authors and later editors considered miracles. So, this paper cannot engage the miracles really performed by Elisha and Elijah, but rather the literary description of what certain scribal groups considered more or less important miracles¹¹.

Despite these limits, the above presented theoretical overview can help us to understand which kind of miracles the authors and editors of the Bible considered authentic and important enough and attributed them to the miracle-makers, on the one hand. On the other hand, the elimination of some types of miracles points to other redactional tendencies, namely, the biblical authors and editors for some reasons considered some miracles inappropriate for the prophets, Jesus, or his disciples.

Taking into consideration these conclusions, let us list four points that will delimit the following study of biblical miracles:

¹¹ When we refer to the miracles worked by Elijah and Elisha in the following paragraphs or by other miracle-makers, we refer to the miracles that the biblical authors or redactors attributed to these figures.

1. The miracle-maker should be an active hero; in other words, the prophet utters a word or performs an action that “provokes” a miracle. Therefore, we are not going to focus on the episodes when the prophets are the passive recipients of divine intervention.
2. The miracles can be of various types, not exclusively those that transgress natural laws. Therefore, as argued above, we will use Augustine’s and Pannenberg’s not Hume’s definition of miracles.
3. The miracles described in the Bible and attributed to biblical heroes do not have to be taken at their face value since they reflect the theology of the biblical authors and editors.
4. For both the implied and the real audience the miracles are in one way or the other a manifestation of divine power in history.

Setting the Scene

Both the Old and the New Testament as well as apocrypha, pseudo-apocrypha, and the stories of saints report numerous miracles performed by the men of God, military leaders, prophets, Jesus, apostles, and saints that match the criteria listed above. The highest concentration of biblical miracles is in the Elijah-Elisha cycles and the Moses-Aron narratives. In the following paragraphs, we will present and classify Elijah’s and Elisha’s miracles that match the criteria mentioned above. Then we will compare the miracles attributed to Elijah and Elisha with the miracles attributed to other biblical figures. Finally, we will study which kind of miracles were attributed to Jesus in the canonical gospels and apocrypha.

Classification of Elisha and Elijah’s Miracles

Without entering into a detailed discussion of the composition of Elijah-Elisha cycles¹², let us divide the miracles presented in the Elijah narrative into two cycles: Cycle I (1 Kgs 17–19) and Cycle II (2 Kgs 1–2). There are nine miraculous events in Cycle I out of which five match the criteria listed above (in

¹² For the most recent studies, cf. MCKENZIE, *1 Kings*, 25-45; KNAUF, *1 Könige*, 127-150.

italics), especially, the criterion concerning the active involvement of the prophet¹³:

1. *Drought ordered by Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1)*
2. Elijah fed by the ravens (17:4-6)
3. *The multiplication of oil and flour (17:12-17)*
4. *Widow's son raised from the dead (17:17-23)*
5. Elijah (could be) transferred by a spirit (18:12)
6. *Sacrifice consumed by fire (18:38)*
7. *Rain in answer to Elijah's prayer (18:41)*
8. Elijah fed by angels (19:1-8)
9. God's revelation to Elijah in a cave (19:11-18)

Cycle II of Elijah's narrative presents four miraculous actions of which two matched the criteria established above (in italics):

1. *Captains destroyed by Elijah's command of fire (2 Kgs 1:9-12)*
2. *Jordan divided by Elijah's mantle (2:8)*
3. Elijah transported to heaven (2:11)
4. Elijah (could be) transferred by a spirit (2:16)

The type of miracles attributed to Elijah in Cycle I and II concerns four important areas: 1. Controlling celestial elements such as rain (Cycle I, nos. 1 and 7) and heavenly fire (Cycle I, no. 6; Cycle II, no. 1); 2. Food resource especially when lacking (Cycle I, no. 3); 3. Controlling life and death (Cycle I, no. 4); 4. Controlling the waters (Cycle II, no. 2).

The first sphere of Elijah's miracles (rain and fire) were normally under the control of gods in the ancient Near East and thus Elijah's capacity to unleash the forces, which were the prerogatives of gods, gave him a special status as a miracle-maker. The second sphere presents Elijah as the miracle-maker who could control the essential need of human beings, namely, food. The food miracles, however, bring forward a nuance regarding the addressees of Elijah's miracles. The beneficiaries were not the members of the royal court but the poor.

¹³ Chapter 1 Kgs 21 is not included in this list since Elijah only foretold a divine intervention of God but not triggered it.

The third sphere of Elijah's miracles – the raising of the widow's dead son – also shows that Elijah could perform the deeds that were reserved to God. Finally, the division of the Jordan river presents Elijah as a miracle-maker who had control over the uncontrollable natural elements among which were the waters.

The list of Elijah's miracles presented above shows that the biblical scribes mixed together the negative and positive types of miracles. While some miracles had an explicitly positive character such as the multiplication of oil and flour for the poor widow or the raising of the dead son, others can be classified as negative, such as the fire coming down from heaven and consuming soldiers who were obeying the command of their king (2 Kgs 1:9-12), as well as the drought ordered by Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1). It seems that the authors and the editors of Cycle I and II had no or little concern for the ethical dimension of the miracles.

In comparison with Elisha, whose miracles amounted to fourteen of which thirteen match the criteria listed in the introduction (in italics), Elijah looks like a beginner. Some of Elisha's miracles are similar to those performed by Elijah, so some scholars think that they are duplicates¹⁴. Moreover, while Elijah's miracles are well integrated into a larger narrative, in particular, into Cycle I, Elisha's miracles are rather unconnected episodes called *legendae*¹⁵. Let us list Elisha's miracles:

1. *The division of the Jordan (2 Kgs 2:13-14)*
2. *The healing of the waters of Jericho (2:19-22)*
3. *The bears killing children (2:23-24)*
4. Water supplied for the army (3:16-20)¹⁶
5. *The multiplication of oil (4:1-7)*
6. *The raising of the dead son of the rich woman (4:18-37)*
7. *The healing of a poisoned potage (4:38-41)*
8. *The multiplication of bread (4:42-44)*
9. *The healing of Naaman (5:1-19)*
10. *The punishment of Gehazi's greed by leprosy (5:20-27)*

¹⁴ See for example AMIT, A Prophet Tested, 280-292.

¹⁵ ROFÉ, Storie di profeti.

¹⁶ This passage, like 1 Kgs 22, is a prophecy foretelling the future events, but there is no word or gesture of the prophet triggering the miracle.

11. *The ax head recovered (6:1-6)*
12. *The opening of the eyes of a servant (6:16-17)*
13. *The making blind and opening of the eyes of the Aramean army (6:18-20)*
14. *The raising of a dead man (13:20-21)*

As argued above Elijah's miracles showed his control over the uncontrollable elements of nature (celestial fire and rain), on the one hand; on the other hand, his miracles had also a deeply human dimension since he took care of the needs of the poor (multiplication of oil and flour) and raised the dead son of the poor widow. In sum, a miracle-maker according to the pattern of Elijah had to control celestial elements (celestial fire and rain), terrestrial elements (water), life-death, and take care of the needs of the poor.

Table 1 presented below shows that Elisha's miracles follow the pattern of those performed by Elijah yet with some differences. Elisha performed more healing miracles. Elijah, in fact, only raised the dead son of the poor widow, whereas Elisha's power also extended over other dimensions of human life. Thus, he not only raised the dead son of the rich widow, but also controlled the most contagious disease—leprosy, made persons see or become blind, and even commanded the inanimate objects. He performed more food miracles. His positive miracles were not restricted to the poor, but he helped the rich as well. He, like Elijah, controlled more indomitable elements of nature, such as water, as well as wild animals (bears). Finally, Elisha performed more negative miracles.

The major difference between Elijah's and Elisha's miracle concerned the control of the celestial elements, in particular, the heavenly fire and rain. Elisha never brought down fire from heaven or stopped rain. Table 1 shows that the focus of Elisha's miracles moved from the celestial sphere to terrestrial sphere. The absence of the celestial miracles can be interpreted in the light of the end of Elijah Cycle I. The composition of Cycle I shows that the last miraculous deed was the theophany on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:9-18), which was a passive miracle:

Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was

not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. (1 Kgs 19:11-13; NRSV)

In fact, the conclusion of Cycle I challenges the pattern of Elijah's miracles. What is the meaning of the revelation on Mount Horeb? Is it an indirect prohibition of certain types of miracles? In other words, are the miracles concerning earthquake, wind and especially fire reserved to God and no human miracle-maker should use them, not even the greatest prophets on the earth such as Elijah?¹⁷ If this is the message, then Elijah did not understand it since in Cycle II he brought down fire from heaven. On the contrary, Elisha's not performing the celestial miracles made him a "correct" miracle-maker as intended by 1 Kgs 19:11-13. This view is later confirmed by Jesus who prohibited his disciples from bringing down fire from heaven (Luke 9:51-56). This suggestion can be also supported by the fact that after the revelation on the Mount Horeb, God no longer communicated with Elijah directly but only through his angel (cf. 2 Kgs 1:3.15). This might be a sign of a subtle critique of Elijah as miracle-maker in Cycle II by subversive scribes.

Table 1: Classification of Elijah's and Elisha's miracles

	Elijah cycle I	Elijah cycle II	Elisha
Celestial elements	Fire from heaven consumes the stones (1 Kgs 18:30-38) No rain (17:1) and rain as an answer to Elijah's prayer (18:41)	Fire from heaven consumes the soldiers (2 Kgs 1:9-16)	None
Water		The parting of the Jordan River (2 Kgs 2:8)	The parting of the Jordan River (2 Kgs 2:13-14)
Life-death	Raising the dead son of the widow (1 Kgs 17:17-24)		Raising the dead son of the rich woman (2 Kgs 4:18-37) Raising of the dead man touching the bones of Elisha (13:20-21)

¹⁷ For different proposals, see BRUEGGEMANN, *1 & 2 Kings*, 235-238; COGAN, *1 Kings*, 453, LEITHART, *1 & 2 Kings*, 140-142.

	Elijah cycle I	Elijah cycle II	Elisha
Curing leprosy/ producing it			The healing of Naaman struck by deadly sickness (2 Kgs 5:1-19) Punishment of Gehazi's greed - leprosy (5:20-27)
Sight miracles			Opening of the eyes of the servant to see the Lord's army (2 Kgs 6:16-17) Blindness and opening the eyes of the Aramean army (6:18-20)
Animals			Bears killing children (2 Kgs 2:23-24)
Food	Multiplication of oil and flour (1 Kgs 17:7.8-16)		Multiplication of oil (2 Kgs 4:1-7) Multiplication of bread (4:42-44) Healing of waters of Jericho (2:19-22) Water supplied for the army (3:16-20) Healing of a poisoned potage (4:38-41)
Inanimate objects			The ax head (2 Kgs 6:1-6)

Comparison with Other Biblical Miracle-markers

The Old Testament attributed miracles to prominent figures among whom were Abraham, Moses and Aron, Joshua, Manoah, Samson, Samuel, a man of God coming from Judah, Isaiah, Daniel, and the priest Azariah¹⁸. Table 2 lists the miracles conforming to the criteria presented in the introduction of this paper and shows that the highest number of miracles was attributed to Moses-Aron¹⁹. Comparing Moses' and Aron's miracles with those performed by Elijah and Elisha, we can notice that both performed similar miracles: both controlled celestial and earthly elements, had power to cure or to punish with leprosy, and both performed numerous food miracles. Nevertheless, the difference between

¹⁸ For a theological examination of the Old Testament miracles, see MARX, *Le miracle*, 35-43.

¹⁹ For a discussion of a theological nature of Moses' miracles, see LORKOWSKI, *The Miracles*, 181-188.

both groups is striking. Moses-Aron's most numerous miracles were those that aimed at punishing the adversaries using celestial and terrestrial elements. While Elijah and Elisha performed only five negative miracles out of twenty (25%), Moses and Aron performed fifteen negative miracles out of 24 (62.5%).

Even though Moses and Aron cured leprosy, they did not raise a dead person. As shown below the raising of a dead person became a normative miracle for Jesus and his disciples. In this view Moses and Aron did not qualify as top miracle-makers. Moreover, there is a new type of miracles introduced in the Moses-Aron narratives that did not occur in the Elijah-Elisha cycle, i.e. the transformation miracles. Comparing these two groups of miracle-makers, we suggest that the biblical tradition developed two models of miracle-makers: Elijah-Elisha and Moses-Aron. The former was focused mainly on positive miracles, the latter on the negative miracles. The former had more food miracles, the latter added transformation miracles. The former had a power to raise a person from the dead, the latter did not.

Table 2 also lists other Old Testament miracle-makers. The table indicates that the later prophets were not primarily miracle-makers, except Isaiah who performed two miracles. No miracle was ever attributed to a king. The miracle-makers were Joshua being a successor of Moses, the judges including Samuel, an unspecified prophet from Judah, and only the later tradition in the Chronicles attributed a miracle to a priest. Some types of miracles were similar to those performed by Elijah and Elisha, such as the control of the celestial and terrestrial elements and the healing of the sick. The miracle of the parting waters was repeated by Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha. The table, thus, demonstrates that even though other Old Testament figures performed miracles, Moses-Aron and Elijah-Elisha became the most important miracle-makers of the Old Testament (cf. Sir 45 and 48).

The result of this comparison allows us to create a profile of an Old Testament miracle-maker. The miracles that occurred in most narratives constitute four conditions *sine qua non* for becoming a respectable miracle-maker: 1) the control over celestial elements that was a prerogative of the gods in the ancient Near East, 2) the parting of the waters of a river or of a sea, 3) health miracles including raising a dead person and healing or infecting with leprosy, 4) food miracles.

Table 2: Comparison and Classification of the Miracles Described in Both Testaments and Apocrypha (the negative miracles are in italics)

General Reference to Miracles	Elements	Elijah & Elisha	Moses/Aron	Other OT Heroes	Elijah-Elisha Cycle Inter-biblical Reference	Direct References to Elijah-Elisha Miracles	Jesus' Miracles	After-Jesus' Death	Apocrypha (The Infancy Gospel of Thomas; Gr. Text A)
	Celestial Elements	Fire from heaven consumes the sacrifice (1 Kgs 18:30-38) and the soldiers (2 Kgs 19:16)	Fire consumes sacrifice (Lev 9:22-24) <i>Thunder and Hail</i> (Exod 9:18-24)	Manoah: fire consumes sacrifice (Judg 13:20) <i>Samuel; Thunder destroys Philistines</i> (1 Sam 7:7-11) <i>Samuel; Thunder and rain coming from heaven</i> (1 Sam 12:18) Three men delivered from fiery furnace (Dan 3:19-27) Joshua: Sun stood still (Josh 10:12-14) Isaiah: sundial miracle (2 Kgs 20:11)	Gehazi was narrating the deeds of Elisha to the king (2 Kgs 8:4) Elisha's marvelous deeds (Sir 48:12-14) <i>Reference to fire coming down three times</i> (Sir 48:3)		Miracles by the seventy (Luke 10:17) Miracles of Christ not recorded (John 20:30; Acts 10:38-39) Jesus refused to send fire from heaven (Luke 9:51-56)		
	Water	<i>No rain</i> (1 Kgs 17:1) and rain as an answer to Elisha's prayer (1 Kgs 18:41) The parting of the Jordan River (2 Kgs 2:8) The parting of the Jordan River (2 Kgs 2:13-14)	The parting of the Red Sea (Exod 14:21-23)	Joshua: The parting of the Jordan River (Josh 3:14-17)	<i>Reference to no rain as raining up the heavens</i> (Sir 48:3)	<i>Reference to no rain</i> (Luke 4:25; Jas 5:17-18; Rev 11:6)	Walking on water (Matt 14:25-33) Tempest stilled in lake Galilee (Matt 8:23-27)	Gathering the waters into pools (Inf. Gosp. II 1)	
Human Beings	Life-death	Raising the dead son of the poor widow (1 Kgs 17:17-24) Raising the dead son of the rich woman (2 Kgs 4:18-37) Raising of the dead man touching the bones of Elisha (2 Kgs 13:20-21)	<i>First-born killed in Egypt</i> (Exod 12:29-30) <i>Korah and his gong swallowed by the earth</i> (Num 16:1-35) <i>Defeating the Amalekites</i> (Exod 17:9-13)	<i>Samson: killing of thirty Philistines</i> (Judg 14:19)	Reference to Elijah's and Elisha's raising of the dead person (Sir 48:5.13) and raising the dead man touching Elisha's bones (Sir 48:14)		Widow's son raised in Nain (Luke 7:11-17) Jairus' daughter raised from the dead (Matt 9:23) Lazarus raised from the dead (John 11:38-44)	Doves restored to life (Acts 9:40) Eutychus restored to life (Acts 20:10) <i>Death of Ananias and Sapphira</i> (Acts 5:3.10)	Rich young man raised from the dead (Secret Gospel of Mark 1) Raising a dead child (Inf. Gosp. IX 1-3) Raising a dead child (Inf. Gosp. XVII) Resurrected a dead man (Inf. Gosp. XXVIII) <i>Jesus' raising of the dead</i> (Inf. Gosp. VI) <i>Jesus' teacher dropped dead and then raised</i> (Inf. Gosp. XII-XIV)
	Leprosy	Healing of Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1-19) <i>Gehazi's leprosy</i> (2 Kgs 5:20-27)	<i>Miriam's leprosy</i> (Num 12:10-15)	<i>Priest Azarjah: Uzziah hit by leprosy</i> (2 Chr 16:16-21)		Reference to Naaman's healing from leprosy (Luke 4:27)	Leprosy cleansed in Capernaum (Matt 8:1-4) Ten lepers cleansed (Luke 17:11-19)		
	Sight Miracles	Opening of the eyes of the servant to see the Lord's army (2 Kgs 6:16-17) <i>Blindness and opening the eyes of the Aramean army</i> (2 Kgs 6:18-20)					Blind men healed (Matt 9:27-31) Blind man healed (Mark 8:22-26) Two blind men healed (Matt 20:29-34) Blind man healed by Jericho (Mark 10:48-52; Luke 18:35-45) A born blind healed (John 9:1-7) Deaf and dumb man healed (Mark 7:31-37)	Paul's sight restored (Acts 9:17-18) <i>Elymas blinded</i> (Acts 13:11)	<i>Jesus' accusers struck by blindness</i> (Inf. Gosp. V 1)
	Speech/Hearing								

Direct References to Elijah's and Elisha's Miracles

Table 2 also lists the inter-biblical references to Elijah's miracles. The first reference to Elijah's miracles is in 2 Kgs 8:4, when the great deeds of Elijah are narrated to the king as past events. In the second temple period the miracles of Elijah and Elisha were treated as one group. In this phase of the development of the Bible, there is no difference between Elijah's cycle I and II, even though the Bible distinguishes between Elijah and Elisha, they form one tradition of miracle-makers as is demonstrated Ben Sirach 48²⁰ and Luke 4.

Another aspect to be noticed is that the later biblical texts refer to both negative and positive miracles of Elijah and Elisha. It seems that they did not prefer one or the other type of the miracles.

The Book of Ben Sirach concentrated on two types of miracles: controlling the celestial elements (fire) and the raising dead people. The direct New Testament references to Elisha and Elijah have different emphasis. The stories refer to healing the sick and feeding the hungry. The reference to the negative miracle—stopping the rain—does not occur in the canonical gospels but is mentioned in the Letter of James and Revelation²¹. Luke's gospel uses the stopping of the rain as a narrative background and it is in the passive form. In other words, the shutting down heaven is not directly attributed to Elijah. None of the Old and New Testament references to Elijah's and Elisha's miracles mention the miracle of the parting of the waters.

In sum, the direct inter-biblical references to Elijah's and Elisha's miracles brought forward five miracles, two negative (in italics) and three positive ones, that were considered prototypes of miracles that partially differ from the profile of the miracle-makers reconstructed above:

Profile of the Old Testament Miracle-maker	Inter-biblical References to Elijah and Elisha Miracles
Control of the celestial elements (fire) –	Fire from heaven Control of the rain
Parting the waters Life and death miracles –	Raising the dead Healing the sick, in particular, leprosy
Food miracles	Feeding the hungry

²⁰ Cf. CORLEY, *Elijah*.

²¹ BOTTINI, *Continuity*, 120-129.

Jesus as the Miracle-maker

Table 2 also presents the miracles performed by Jesus. A comparison between the Old Testament miracle-makers and Jesus shows that Jesus performed the same types of miracles as Elijah and Elisha, on the one hand²². On the other hand, some miracles were more emphasized, and others completely disappeared²³.

There are no miracles that would involve the celestial elements, namely, rain and fire. Verses Luke 9:51-56 show that Jesus explicitly forbid his disciples to bring down fire from heaven in order to punish the Samaritans. This was not only Jesus' momentaneous reluctance to activate the celestial elements, but rather a programmatic decision (cf. John 18:36) even though the Gospel of John attributes to Jesus this power (18:4-9). Moreover, the canonical gospels list no negative miracle, except the curse of the fig tree (Mark 11:12-14; Matt 21:18-19). The absence of the negative miracles during Jesus' public activities shows that according to the canonical gospels Jesus distanced himself from the miracle-makers as Elijah-Elisha or Moses-Aron who did not hesitate activating celestial and terrestrial elements to punish their adversaries. Jesus' only negative miracle afflicted a tree but no human being²⁴. Even in case of extreme emergency Jesus refused mobilizing natural or supernatural forces to punish the enemies and blasphemers (cf. for example Luke 22:50-51; John 18:36)²⁵.

Despite Jesus' reluctance to use celestial elements in his miracles, he showed his control about terrestrial elements, in particular, when he calmed down the sea storm (Matt 8:23-27). The miracle of walking on water (14:25-33) indicates that Jesus did not need to part the waters of the Jordan or of the Red Sea as Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha did in order to cross the river/the sea. Jesus simply walked on water. Thus, by means of the miracle "walking on water" the evangelists presented Jesus as a superior miracle-maker than those of the Old Testament.

²² There have been presented numerous parallels between the gospels and Elijah-Elisha cycles; see, e.g., BRODIE, Luke, 457-485; RINDOŠ, *He of Whom*; WILSON, Healer, 60-65.

²³ For a complete list of miracles repeated in the gospels, see GUILLAUME, Miracles, 21.

²⁴ Cf. ŠTRBA, Warum, 43-59.

²⁵ GUILLAUME, Miracles, 22.

The evangelists also conveyed Jesus' superiority by attributing to Jesus a higher number and a higher quality of miracles than the Old Testament miracle-makers did. Moses did not raise anyone from the dead, Elijah raised one, and Elisha two. Jesus raised three people: widow's son raised in Nain (Luke 7:11-17), Jairus' daughter (Matt 9:23), and Lazarus (John 11:38-44)²⁶. The last one had been dead four days when Jesus raised him.

Elisha was the only Old Testament miracle-maker who healed a leper. The gospels attributed to Jesus two miracles of healings of lepers (Matt 8:1-4; Luke 17:11-19). The lepers healed by Jesus amount to eleven. Moreover, Jesus never used leprosy to punish anyone.

The healing miracles are the most frequent miracles of Jesus. In fact, according to the canonical gospels, the healing miracles defined Jesus as a miracle-maker, while the Old Testament describes only two healings (Num 21:9; 2 Kgs 20:7).

Jesus performed less food miracles, but the numbers of people was much higher. Jesus also exercised in his miracles his control over the animals, but never in a negative way as it was in the cases of the Old Testament miracle-makers. Finally, Jesus made only one transformation miracle (John 2:1-11)²⁷.

In sum, the canonical gospels attributed to Jesus miracles similar to those performed by Elisha and Elijah²⁸. However, the profile of Jesus as a miracle-maker is different from that of Elijah-Elisha and Moses-Aron. Jesus' miracles, except one, are all positive and he refused to use the celestial elements to punish his adversaries. By raising a person from the dead, the evangelists linked Jesus with the Elijah-Elisha type of miracle-makers and not with the Moses-Aron type. Similarly, by attributing to Jesus three healings from leprosy, Jesus is linked more closely with the Elijah-Elisha type of miracle-makers. Putting the emphasis upon the healing miracles, other miracles, such as food²⁹ and transformation miracles, were moved to the background.

²⁶ For a new study on this type of miracles, see FENÍK, *Children*, 87-90.

²⁷ Elisha's miracle of floating axe's head might have a parallel in a miracle of tribute money found in the mouth of fish (Matt 17:24-27).

²⁸ Cf. LINDARS, *Elijah*, 61-79.

²⁹ Some scholars noticed that two multiplications of bread might have a parallel in two multiplication of oil and flour; GUILLAUME, *Miracles*, 22.

Acts and Apocrypha

The second temple Judaism and early Christian writers did not hesitate to attribute new miracles to famous ancient figures. Thus, for example Solomon became an esoteric king who performed numerous wonders (cf. *Testament of Solomon*)³⁰. The Acts of the Apostles continued with the tradition of the canonical gospels, in particular putting emphasis on the healing miracles and raising a person from the dead. However, the negative miracles started reappearing (Acts 5:5.10; 13:11).

While the Acts of the Apostles followed the pattern of miracles canonized by the gospels, some apocrypha, in particular the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, resumed the miracles of Elijah and Elisha³¹, others prefer the pattern of Moses-Aron (cf. Table 2). Thus, the negative miracles became more numerous and were used to punish the adversaries. The transformation miracles as well as the miracles involving the inanimate objects were employed to prove Jesus's special power.

Conclusion

Let us briefly summarize the results of this research. The short *legendae* narrating the wonderous deeds of Elijah and Elisha were gradually incorporated into larger narrative cycles. In the later tradition, the previous strata merged into one and Elisha and Elijah became prototypes of the miracle-makers. Other miracle-makers, such as Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, etc., had to measure themselves with them. Besides the Elijah-Elisha model, the biblical tradition developed another model of miracle-makers, namely, that of Moses and Aron. Their miracles were partially similar, yet different. They introduced the transformation miracles, that did not exist in the Elijah-Elisha cycle, and they accomplished more negative miracles, etc. The Second Temple writings and the New Testament also referred to Elijah's and Elisha's miracles. Jesus, the miracle-maker of the canonical gospels, partially accepted the model of miracle-makers Elijah and Elisha yet changed it. He refused using the celestial elements to punish his adversaries. The healing miracles of Elijah and Elisha became the prototype of the New Testament and became the specific trait of Jesus as a miracle-maker

³⁰ Cf. TORIJANO, *Solomon*.

³¹ Cf. ZELYCK, *Elisha*, 149-156.

as well. The picture of Jesus as a miracle-maker in the apocrypha radically changed. The negative miracles became more prominent and the miracles became more spectacular.

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Zhrnutie

V tomto článku autor porovnáva Eliášové e Elizeové zázraky. Na základe tohto porovnania autor predložil profil proroka, ktorý robil zázraky. Tento profil je potom porovnaný s profilom iných postáv Starého Zákona, ktoré tiež robili zázraky ako aj s Ježišom tak v evanjeliách ako aj apokryfných spisoch.

Kľúčové slová: zázrak, Eliáš, Elizeus, apokryfy, Ježiš.

Summary

This paper will compare, first, the miracles performed by Elijah with those performed by Elisha. This comparison allows us to reconstruct “profiles” of both prophets. In the second part of this paper we will investigate which miracles made it into later texts, in particular, into the Second Temple writings and the synoptic gospels and which miracles were excluded from these writings. Based on this study we can reconstruct prototypes of miracle-makers and how they were transformed in the later periods.

Keywords: Miracle, Miracle-maker, Elijah, Elisha, Jesus.

Peter Dubovský, SJ
 Piazza della Pilotta 35
 00187 ROMA, Italy
 dubovsky@biblico.it