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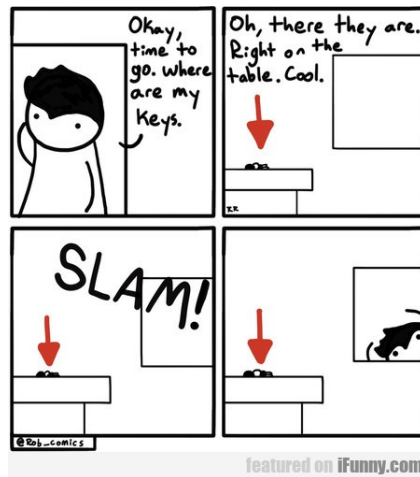
## Stories with a Twist

[253]

### "...to a Man Who Slammed his Door and Lost His Key"

Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 113a

See: Stories with a Twist # 225



## Background to Our Story

### Elijah



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah>

Elijah (Hebrew: **אֵלִיָּהוּ**, *Eliyahu*, meaning "My God is Hashem" was, according to the Books of Kings in the Hebrew Bible, a prophet and a miracle worker who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Ahab (9th century BC). In 1 Kings 18, Elijah defended the worship of the Hebrew God over that of the Canaanite deity Baal. God also performed many miracles through Elijah, including resurrection (raising the dead), bringing fire down from the sky, and entering Heaven alive "by fire". He is also portrayed as leading a school of prophets known as "the sons of the prophets". Following his ascension, Elisha, his disciple and most devoted assistant took over his role as leader of this school.

### Ahab



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahab>

Ahab (Hebrew: **אֲחָזָב**, *Modern Ah'av*) was the seventh king of Israel since [Jeroboam I](#), the son and successor of [Omri](#), and the husband of [Jezebel](#) of [Sidon](#), according to the [Hebrew Scriptures](#). The Hebrew Bible presents Ahab as a wicked king. He is criticized for following

the ways of his wife Jezebel, killing his subject [Naboth](#), and leading the nation of Israel into idolatry.

The existence of Ahab is historically supported outside the Bible. [Shalmaneser III](#) documented 853 BC that he defeated an alliance of a dozen kings in the [Battle of Qarqar](#); one of these was Ahab.

## Hiel

A native of Bethel, who built (i.e., fortified) Jericho some seven hundred years after its destruction by the Israelites. There fell on him for such an act the imprecation of ( **Joshua 6:26** ). He laid the foundation in his first-born, and set up the gates in his youngest son ( **1 Kings 16:34** ), i.e., during the progress of the work all his children died.

## Battle of Jericho

In the narrative of the conquest of Canaan in the Book of Joshua, the Battle of Jericho is the first battle that is described. According to Joshua 6:1-27, the walls of Jericho fell after Joshua's Israelite army marched around the city blowing their trumpets.



## Joshua Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

<sup>2</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. <sup>3</sup> March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. <sup>4</sup> Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. <sup>5</sup> When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

<sup>6</sup> So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant of the LORD and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it." <sup>7</sup> And he ordered the army, "Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the LORD."

<sup>8</sup> When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the LORD went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the LORD's covenant followed them. <sup>9</sup> The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. <sup>10</sup> But Joshua had commanded the army, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!" <sup>11</sup> So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.

<sup>12</sup> Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of

the LORD and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets kept sounding. <sup>14</sup> So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

<sup>15</sup> On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. <sup>16</sup> The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!" <sup>17</sup> The city and all that is in it are to be devoted<sup>[a]</sup> to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. <sup>18</sup> But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. <sup>19</sup> All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury."

<sup>20</sup> When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. <sup>21</sup> They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

<sup>22</sup> Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." <sup>23</sup> So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

<sup>24</sup> Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. <sup>25</sup> But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

<sup>26</sup> At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: "Cursed before the LORD is the one who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho:

"At the cost of his firstborn son  
\_\_\_ he will lay its foundations;  
at the cost of his youngest  
\_\_\_ he will set up its gates."

<sup>27</sup> So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.

## **1 Kings 16:29-34**

### **Ahab Becomes King of Israel**

<sup>29</sup> In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup> Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. <sup>31</sup> He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. <sup>32</sup> He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.

<sup>34</sup> In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

## 1 Kings Chapter 17

### Elijah Announces a Great Drought

<sup>1</sup> Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe<sup>[a]</sup> in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

### Elijah Fed by Ravens

<sup>2</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: <sup>3</sup> "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup> You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there."

<sup>5</sup> So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. <sup>6</sup> The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

### Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath

<sup>7</sup> Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. <sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: <sup>9</sup> "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food." <sup>10</sup> So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" <sup>11</sup> As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."

<sup>12</sup> "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."

<sup>13</sup> Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.'"

<sup>15</sup> She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. <sup>16</sup> For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

<sup>17</sup> Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. <sup>18</sup> She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

<sup>19</sup> "Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. <sup>20</sup> Then he cried out to the LORD, "LORD my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" <sup>21</sup> Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the LORD, "LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

<sup>22</sup> The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. <sup>23</sup> Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

<sup>24</sup> Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

## The Text: Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 113a

תנו רבנן: "היו בה אילנות תלושין אסורין; מחוברין, מותרין. של עיר אחרת, בין תלושין בין מחוברין, אסור". מאי "עיר אחרת"? אמר רב חסדא: יריחו, דכתיב "והיתה העיר חרם... לה'... וישבע יהושע בעת ההיא, לאמר, ארור האיש לפני ה' אשר יקום ובנה את העיר הזאת את יריחו; בבכרו יסדנה, ובצעירו יציב דלתיה".

תנא: "לא יריחו על שם עיר אחרת, ולא עיר אחרת על שם יריחו, דכתיב: 'בנה חיאל בית האלי את יריחה; באבירם בכרו יסדה, ובשגוב צעירו הציב דלתיה'".

תנא: "באבירם בכורו – רשע, לא היה לו ללמוד. בשגוב צעירו – היה לו ללמוד".

אבירם ושגוב, מאי עבוד? מאי קאמר? הכי קאמר: באבירם בכורו היה לו ללמוד לאותו רשע בשגוב צעירו. "ממשמע שנאמר, 'באבירם בכורו', איני יודע ששגוב צעירו? מה תלמוד לומר: 'שגוב צעירו'? מלמד שיהיה מקבר והולך מאבירם עד שגוב".

אחאב שושביניה הנה. אתא איהו ואליהו למשאל בשלמא בי טמיא. יתיב וקאמר: "דילמא פי מילט יהושע, הכי לט: לא יריחו על שם עיר אחרת, ולא עיר אחרת על שם יריחו". אמר ליה אליהו: "איך".

אמר ליה: "השתא לווטתא דמשה לא קא מקיימא – דכתיב: 'וסרתם ועבדתם' וגו'; וכתיב: 'ותרה אף ה' בכם ועצר את השמים' וגו'; ויהוא גברא אוקים ליה עבודה זרה על כל תלם ותלם, ולא שביק ליה מיטרא דמיזל מיסגד ליה – לווטתא דיהושע תלמידיה מקיימא?"

מייד: "ויאמר אליהו התשבי מתשבי גלעד חי ה' אלהי ישראל... אם יהיה... טל ומטר" וגו'. בעי רחמי והבו ליה אקלידא דמטרא, וקם ואזל.

"ויהי דבר ה' אליו לאמר לך מזה ופנית לך קדמה ונסתרת בנחל פריית והערבים מביאים לו לחם ובשר בבקר" וגו'. מהיכא? אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: מבי טבחי דאחאב. "ויהי מקץ ימים ויבש הנחל פי לא היה גשם בארץ". פיון דחזא דאיכא צערא בעלמא, פתיב: "ויהי דבר ה' אליו לאמר, קום, לך צרפתה"; וכתיב: "ויהי אחר הדברים האלה, חלה בן האשה בעלת הבית", בעא רחמי למיתן ליה אקלידא דתחיית המתים. אמרי ליה: "שלש מפתחות לא נמסרו לשלית: של חיה, ושל גשמים, ושל תחיית המתים. יאמרו: שתיים ביד תלמיד ואחת ביד הרב! אייתי הא, ושקיל האי, דכתיב: 'לך, הראה אל אחאב; ואתנה מטר'".

דרש יהוא גלילאה קמיה דרב חסדא: משל דאליהו למה הדבר דומה? לגברא דטרקיה לגליה ואבדיה למפתחיה.

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: In a case where there were trees in the [idolatrous] city, if they are detached from the ground, they are forbidden and must be burned as the spoils of an idolatrous city; if they are attached to the ground they are permitted, i.e., they are not destroyed. By contrast, trees of another city, whether detached or attached, are forbidden.

The Gemara asks: To what is the *baraita* referring with the phrase: Another city?

Rav Hîsda says: The reference is to Jericho, as it is written: *"And the city shall be devoted, it and all that is in it, to the Lord...And Joshua charged them at that time by oath, saying: Cursed be the man before the Lord, that rises up to build this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it"* (Joshua 6:17, 26).

It is taught in a *baraita* that this includes a prohibition not to build Jericho even after changing its name to the name of another city, and not to build another city after giving it the name of Jericho, as it is written: *"Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; with Abiram, his firstborn, he laid its foundation, and with his young son Segub set up its gates"* (I Kings 16:34).

It is taught in a *baraita*: From the death of Abiram, his firstborn, the wicked, it was not incumbent upon him to learn not to build Jericho, as Abiram's death could be attributed to chance. But with the death of Segub his young son, it was incumbent upon him to learn that it was due to Joshua's curse that they died.

The Gemara asks: What did Abiram and Segub do that they are characterized as wicked, and what is the *baraita* saying? The Gemara answers that this is what the *baraita* is saying: From the death of Abiram, his firstborn, that wicked man Hiel should have learned about the cause of the death of Segub his young son. By inference from that which is stated: "With Abiram, his firstborn," do I not know that Segub was his young son? Rather, what is the meaning when the verse

states: "His young son Segub"? It teaches that he gradually buried all his sons from Abiram through Segub, and he should have suspected that Joshua's curse caused the deaths.

[King] Ahab was Hiel's close friend and groomsman. He and Elijah came to inquire about Hiel's welfare in the house of mourning [*bei tamya*]. Hiel sat and said: Perhaps when Joshua cursed, this is what he cursed: Not to build Jericho even after changing its name to the name of another city, and not to build another city after giving it the name of Jericho.

Elijah said to him: Yes, that is the curse.

Ahab said to Elijah: Now the curse of Moses is not fulfilled, as it is written: "And you go astray and worship other gods," and it is written: "Then the Lord's anger will flare against you, and He will close the heavens, and there will be no rain" (Deuteronomy 11:16-17). And that man, referring to himself, established an object of idol worship on each and every furrow in the kingdom of Israel, and the rain is so plentiful that it does not allow him to go and worship it; will the curse of his student, Joshua, be fulfilled?

Immediately: "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab: As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1). Elijah prayed for mercy and they gave him the key to rainfall enabling him to dictate when it would rain, and he arose and went.

It is written about Elijah: "And the word of the Lord came to him, saying: Go from here, and turn eastward, and hide yourself by Wadi Cherith...And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning" (I Kings 17:2-3, 6). From where did they bring him bread and meat? Rabbi Yehuda says that Rav says: They brought it from the slaughterhouse of Ahab. And it is written: "And it came

to pass after some days, that the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land" (I Kings 17:7). Since God saw that there is suffering in the world and Elijah was insensitive to it, it is written: *"And the word of the Lord came to him, saying: Arise, go to Zarephath"* (I Kings 17:8–9).

And it is written: *"And it came to pass after these matters, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick"* (I Kings 17:17). Elijah prayed for mercy, for God to give him the key to the resurrection of the dead. They said to him from Heaven: Three keys were not passed to an agent: The key to a woman in childbirth, the key to rainfall, and the key to the resurrection of the dead. You already have the key to rainfall; do you also request the key to the resurrection of the dead? People will say: Two keys are in the possession of the student and one key is in the possession of the Master. Bring Me this key to rainfall, and take this key to the resurrection of the dead, as it is written: *"Go, appear before Ahab; and I will give rain"* (I Kings 18:1).

A certain Galilean taught before Rav Hîsda: There is a parable for the actions of Elijah; to what is this matter comparable? It is comparable to a man who slammed his door and lost his key. Elijah first prevented the rain from falling, and then no longer had possession of the key to enable it to fall again.



**Explaining the Story (What is the sequence of events that take place in the story?)**

### **Comprehension and Analysis Questions**

**?** Which city is called "another city"? **Bonus ?** Why is it called "another city"?

**?** What is the meaning of Joshua's curse: *"...he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it"*?

**?** What makes Hiel wicked?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** Please explain Ahab's insolence and rebelliousness.

**Bonus ?** How do we know from Elijah's reply to Ahab that he was really angry?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** How do we know from the biblical text that Elijah was given the key to rainfall?

**?** Why does the Gemara ask: "From where did they [the ravens] bring him [Elijah] bread and meat"?

**Extra Bonus ?** "God saw that there is suffering in the world." Why did God see and Elijah didn't?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Extra Bonus ?** Why did the wadi dry up?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** Why did Elijah need the key to the resurrection of the dead?

**?** Why can't Elijah have both keys, the key to rainfall and the key to the resurrection of the dead?

**?** How is Elijah compared to a man who slammed his door and lost his key?

### **"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text**

**!** Slamming doors is a bad idea (in general), but if you are going to slam a door, make sure you have "the key" (a way) to get back!

## EPILOGUE