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אֵלִישָׁה בֶּן־יְהוֹשָׁפָט – The Prophet as Son of the One
(Elisha in the context of his prophetic mission)

SUMMARY

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CONTENTS

List of abbreviations	3
Introduction.....	4
1. Biblical prophecy – general perspectives.....	14
1.1. General notions about biblical prophecy.....	14
1.2. Who are the prophets? What is their mission?.....	22
1.3. The relationship between unwritten and written prophets.....	27
1.4. The relationship between prophets, society, and political authority.....	38
1.5. The schools of the sons of the prophets.....	45
2. The prophet Elisha in the context of Jewish prophetic events.....	59
2.1. Elijah and Elisha. Servants of the Living God.....	59
2.2. Two prophets and a special/unique relationship.....	60
2.3. About inheritance and responsibility.....	63
2.4. The prophet Elijah and Elisha in relation to political authority.....	69
3. The initiation and activity of the prophet Elisha in prophetic ministry.....	73
3.1. Is prophetic ministry transmissible from one prophet to another, or is it a gift—a calling from God?.....	73
3.2. Chronology of events prior to Elisha's appointment as prophet of the chosen people..	77
3.3. Elisha's call to prophetic ministry – exegetical landmarks (3 Kings 19:19-21).....	102
3.4. Elisha's cloak – a visible element of prophetic investiture?.....	113
3.5. Elijah's ascension to heaven, Elisha's succession (4 Kings 2:1-18).....	116
3.6. Elijah taken up to heaven – historical context and various perspectives.....	160
3.7. Gehazi – an obedient disciple in Shunem? (4 Kings 4:8–37).....	164

<u>3.8. Gehazi in the context of the return of the Shunammite woman from the land of the Philistines (4 Kings 8:1–6).....</u>	<u>175</u>
<u>3.9. Gehazi in the narrative of the healing of Naaman, the Syrian official (4 Kings 5:20–27).....</u>	<u>178</u>
<u>3.10. Elisha – the miracle worker of Naaman the Syrian 4Rg 5:1-19.....</u>	<u>183</u>
<u>4. Elisha – foreshadowing the Savior Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.....</u>	<u>194</u>
<u>4.1. The prophet Elisha as a type of Jesus Christ the Savior in the Old Testament.....</u>	<u>194</u>
<u>4.2. The prophet Elisha – Jesus Christ the Savior – perspectives and similarities.....</u>	<u>203</u>
<u>Conclusions.....</u>	<u>207</u>

Keywords: prophecy, prophets who wrote, prophets who did not write, Elijah, Elisha, ministry, calling, healing, inheritance, coat.

Man was created by God as an act of His boundless love, God representing the supreme Love. The crown of all creation—man did not experience suffering, not being subject to it, until the moment when our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed the ancestral sin of disobedience. This is the key moment when a break with the divine occurs, bringing with it many consequences or repercussions such as the appearance of illness and suffering.

It is well known that the consequences of sin unfold on two levels, the material and the spiritual. In addition to physical suffering, spiritual suffering also makes itself felt, and these two aspects are closely linked.

However, God has revealed to man certain specific treatments for the purpose of healing himself as a whole, body and soul. In this sense, the fields of medicine and theology are varied in various medical and spiritual therapies, with the proviso that all of these must have God at their center.

Healing is a complex, extensive, and lengthy phenomenon in which these therapies must have a complementary element, namely love for the one who is suffering. "Take heart, son! Your sins are forgiven! [...] Get up, take your bed and go to your home. And getting up, he went to his house. And the crowds, seeing this, were afraid and glorified God, who had done such things for men." (Mt 9:1-8). Caring for the sick is one of the greatest Christian virtues. Christian love is the foundation of this service to our neighbor, because we know that by serving the sick, we serve our Savior Jesus Christ^[1]. The Gospel of the Good Samaritan exemplifies the starting point of life in Christ, which consists of two phases. In the first therapeutic phase, prayer is the main activity for cleansing the heart. The second phase consists of healing the soul and attaining a state of dispassion. This process of healing is complete when the second phase is reached, because the human being is fully directed toward God and integrally united with Him through the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

With regard to healings, whether physical or spiritual, the Old Testament is not lacking in such accounts, because Yahweh, through His divine providence, intervenes in creation upon human beings, whom He first tries to remove from sin and then to sanctify, a very complex process.

One of the most representative narratives is that of the healing of Naaman, the Syrian dignitary who, despite his incurable disease, was healed by the prophet Elisha by entering the waters of the Jordan seven times (4 Kings 5:1-19), or even more so, the narrative in the Fourth Book of Kings in which the prophet Elisha, through the power of God, raises the son of the Shunammite woman from the dead, 4Rg 4:8-37. In other words, we can say that healing is not limited to the body but leads to the resurrection of the soul.

As is natural, every research project has certain questions at its core, and the present study aims to provide plausible answers to the questions posed below. These are as follows: Who are the prophets and what was their role in society? To what extent did the "prophetic schools" influence society? What was the relationship between the prophets Elijah and Elisha? Did the prophet Elisha receive the double portion of the spirit when Elijah ascended to heaven? Can Gehazi be considered a successor to the prophet Elisha? Can the healings of the prophet Elisha be considered a foreshadowing of the miracles performed by the Savior Jesus Christ? These legitimate questions are just a few points for reflection throughout the research on which we will insist. It is necessary to mention that they do not claim to be exhaustive, but only indicate possible new directions for research.

From the outset, it is imperative to clarify the expression **בני אחד** present in the title of the research. This phrase can be translated in a broader sense as "the prophet as the son of the One, of Yahweh." This concept includes the meaning of succession—filial relationship. The prophets of the Old Testament are God's spokesmen and even His sons in the proper sense because God manifests His providence over His people through them in a permanent way. The presence of this concept in the Book of Kings is not unique, but we also find it in 3 Kings 19:10; 22:23; 2 Chronicles 18:22, Nehemiah 9:26, 30; Lamentations 2:14; Ezekiel 13:4. The purpose of this concept is to delimit the context of the prophet Elisha in his prophetic mission and to

emphasize his status as the son of Yahweh. The importance of this concept is also attested by its presence in the Qumran or Dead Sea Scrolls discovered between 1949 and 1956.

Another important aspect of the subject we have dealt with is that of the Old Testament prophetic succession. In this regard, I have attempted to highlight the phenomenon of Jewish prophecy from Abraham to the prophets Elijah and Elisha. I have emphasized prophetic ministry in general terms and sought to nuance the role and purpose of the prophetic office in that society with all its implications. Also, in the stories about Elijah and Elisha in 3 Kings 19:19-21 and 4 Kings 2:1-18, I pointed out how the gift of prophecy is passed down, which ultimately comes from God through the prophets. On the other hand, this prophetic ministry can be doomed to failure if moral failure is directly proportional to the failure of the mission, as exemplified by Gehazi, the servant of the prophet Elisha.

Last but not least, the last coordinate addressed in this research was that of Christological typology, in the sense that a large part of the miracles performed by the prophet Elisha, but especially those of a healing nature, prefigure our Savior Jesus Christ in all His activity. This aspect will be treated primarily from a patristic perspective because the Holy Fathers perceived in the most profound way the Christological typology of the miracles of the prophet Elisha.

The theme addressed is a topical one because in this subject we can observe the complex work of God in restoring and healing man after the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, until the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ into the world.

God, seeing His creation alienated and enslaved by sin, but also out of His deep compassion for it, does not abandon it. On the contrary, He chooses from among the people of Israel, whom He delivers from Egyptian slavery, capable people such as the prophet Elisha to work with Him in this endeavor. We can remember the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as deliverers of the chosen people, but there are many more people who fulfill God's will at the head of the people of Israel.

In the Old Testament, it can be clearly stated that God is jealous and harsh, but His relationship with the chosen people is much more complex because God does not forget the

promise He made to Abraham to multiply his people "more than the stars of heaven," and the blessings He pours out bear witness to this. The blessings have a much greater impact on the people than the curses, the latter being a repercussion of the disobedience and stubbornness of some of the chosen people, or even of the entire people. Blessings manifest themselves in many ways, often through miraculous healings, sometimes through the many victories of the people over other idolatrous peoples.

Examples of situations in which God overcomes human nature are manifested, for example, in the healing of various diseases such as leprosy, but these are only a few noteworthy narratives that deserve to be examined in detail.

The words of the psalmist David, "Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled; my soul is troubled...", Ps 6:2-3, capture the condition of all humanity, which is not in its natural state, but in a state of suffering. As for the miracles and healings performed by God's will from the creation of the world to the present day, they are, perhaps more than in other times, a particularly important subject because man has a need for communion with Yahweh and a longing for Him planted in his being. On the other hand, the goal of Christianity is the deification of man. Christ, uniting in His Person the divine and human natures, unmixed and inseparable, restored fallen Adam to his original state, but even more, to the full likeness of God.

The first chapter covers general concepts related to the Old Testament prophetic tradition, addressing topics such as: who are the prophets, what is their role in society, and their relationship with society, as well as concepts about the "schools of the sons of the prophets." The second chapter is dedicated to the prophets Elijah and Elisha, with an emphasis on Elisha in relation to his mentor. Here, the relationship of prophetic succession is developed, as well as the role and place of the prophet Elisha within the Jewish prophetic phenomenon and the prophet's relationship with political authority. The third chapter deals with the sequence of events prior to the election of the prophet Elisha by Elijah the Tishbite, as well as Elisha's investiture into the prophetic ministry itself. In this chapter, I also attempted to highlight the validity of the divine gift of prophecy through miracles—the healings performed by the prophet

Elisha. The fourth chapter is reserved for the Christological typology of the healings of the prophet Elisha with a patristic approach.

In Romanian specialized literature, the theme of "The Prophet as the Son of the One (Elisha in the context of his prophetic mission)"—or themes related to it—is mentioned in several studies, but at the national level, there is no extensive research that addresses this subject individually. In this line of research on human healing, the work *Therapeutics of Spiritual Illnesses* is more than an opening to a moment of meditation. It is an invitation to heal passions through the Holy Sacraments of the Church and to regain physical and spiritual health through various therapeutic methods. The author, Dr. Jean-Claude Larchet, conceived the book as a solution in the context of a modern society facing numerous challenges. The research starts from anthropological premises highlighting existing pathologies. The author then describes the manifestations of spiritual illnesses, but also offers solutions for healing them in order to regain the integral health of the human being. The gift of life given to man by God is reflected in the boundless love of Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

When we talk about the other direction of research and focus on Jewish prophecy, we find another study^[3] by Father Professor Ioan Chirilă on the Book of Hosea, when he announces their destruction as a people. Father Ioan emphasizes that, in terms of the Old Testament, Jewish prophecy represents the peak of human openness to divine revelation. The prophetic phenomenon is a sequential foretaste of eternity, with the prophet representing the peak of human nature assumed in a theophanic sense. The research focuses on two complementary directions, namely: the prophetic phenomenon assumed by a character called to this ministry through a revelatory act, and the second aspect that leads the entire creation towards a Christological dimension in terms of its existence.

The research is structured in an elevated style and is addressed to both specialists and anyone interested in the personality and activity of the prophet Hosea as a whole, as a precursor of the Lord Jesus Christ and His boundless love.

Two other related studies are those of Father Professor Viorel-Cristian Popa^[4], which address themes such as the prophetic vocation and mission, as well as that of the Old

Testament prophets. The first work by Father Viorel-Cristian Popa, *Profeții oratori ai Vechiului Testament* (Oratorical Prophets of the Old Testament), reinforces the idea that the prophetic message, spoken thousands of years ago, is still relevant today, but at the same time represents a rich source of inspiration for Christians today. There are numerous similarities between the problems that the prophets of those times solved, being fully involved, and the problems of today's society, so that the model of the prophets is necessary. In this context, the topic addressed is a topical one, because it is necessary to restore Christian faith and morals in society as a whole, as it is increasingly lacking in these Christian values.

The author of the work traces the most important moments in the life and work of the prophet Elisha, and throughout it he calls the prophet Elisha a devoted worshipper of Yahweh and an opponent of other pagan deities. Throughout his life, the prophet fought against idolatry, which unfortunately could not be completely abolished. Certainly, the narratives about the prophet Elisha characterize him as more of a man of action than a man of words. The author highlights the prophet as a man of divine justice who always enjoyed God's help.

Towards the end of the work, the author gives a brief presentation of the prophetess Huldah and the anonymous prophets. The work is written in an elevated style and is intended for both specialists and anyone interested in the personality and activity of the Old Testament prophets.

In his second work, "Vocation and Mission: Fundamental Aspects of Old Testament Prophecy," the author emphasizes two terms: vocation and mission in the prophetic context. The first term is linked to prophetic ministry, so that it can be said that the Old Testament prophets were, par excellence, people of vocation. In other words, the prophetic current is associated with a divine calling, because it is God who chooses the one who will become His spokesman. In this case, we are talking about a special vocation, but at the same time we can also speak of a universal vocation, such as the call of all humanity to eternal life.

When referring to the term mission in the context of the prophetic office, the author has in mind several coordinates such as: the prophetic, religious, and social-moral mission of the prophets. The author develops each of these aspects, which are particularly important in the

work of prophets. The central point of the prophetic mission is the preaching of the Messiah, the defense of monotheism, and the emphasis on moral primacy in divine worship.

This research also analyzes certain characteristics of false prophecy and the relevance of the prophetic message today. The work is carefully structured and provides important details regarding the characteristics of the prophetic office.

In this context, we can also mention the work of Father Alexandru Isvoranu[\[5\]](#), which addresses the social and religious activity of the prophets, with an emphasis on the ancient unwritten prophets (orators). The first part focuses on terms and definitions, as well as other information such as the number and division of prophets. The research then lists both female and male prophets, starting with Moses and ending with Elisha. In other words, the author invites us on a journey into the past of the chosen people to get to know the preachers of monotheism more closely.

The work is written in an elevated language accessible to the general public and to all those who wish to learn about the personalities of some of the formative leaders of the Israelite people.

Also in this area, we mention the work of Father Constantin Oancea[\[6\]](#), which addresses the attitude of the prophet Elijah in 3 Kings 17:1-18:46. This extensive work aims to highlight the various reactions and concerns of the prophet Elijah as representative and spokesman of Yahweh during the Omri dynasty. The struggle for truth characterized him throughout these narratives, which have King Ahab and Queen Jezebel as his main opponents. The prophet Elijah emerges victorious in the contest on Mount Carmel, ultimately winning over the people who had fallen into idolatry because of the royal house.

Another relevant study in this context is that of Mother Eliane Poirot[\[7\]](#), who provides relevant details about the life and work of the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the Byzantine cult. Throughout her work, the author offers a Christological perspective on the prophets mentioned, but at the same time considers them as precursors of monasticism. The work is extensive and focuses on manuscripts and editions of Greek, Slavonic, and Romanian mineias in the first part.

The second part analyzes the liturgical texts from the vast majority of religious books. The last part focuses on the life and work of the prophet Elijah, emphasizing his Christological typology.

Current bibliographic sources include a series of biblical commentaries that analyze the biblical verses referring to the cycle of the prophets Elijah and Elisha or the narratives in which they are protagonists. These include: Word Biblical Commentary, New American Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Pulpit Commentary, Walton, John H. Conti, Marco, and Gianluca Pilara. 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 5. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008; Lange, John Peter, Philip Schaff, W.F. Bähr et al. A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 2 Kings. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008; Michał Karnawalski, Heaven for Elijah? A Study of Structure, Style, and Symbolism in 2 Kings 2:1–18, Peter Lang, 2022; Walter Brueggemann - 1 & 2 Kings_ A Commentary (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary)-Smyth & Helwys Publishing (2000) and others.

The rich resources of specialized dictionaries also played an important role in explaining theological phrases, such as: The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary. Edited by David Noel Freedman, Gary A. Herion, David F. Graf et al. New York: Doubleday, 1996 , Elwell, Walter A., and Philip Wesley Comfort. Tyndale Bible Dictionary. Tyndale reference library. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001, Freedman, David Noel, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck. Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000. VanGemeren, Willem. New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998, Myers, Allen C. The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987, and others. In summarizing the theological conclusions on this subject: McKenzie, Steven, L. 1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 16, International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament; Kohlhammer GmbH, Stuttgart, 2019.

Internationally, this topic has obviously been addressed in a fairly rich and complex bibliography, providing the necessary material for the conception of a work on Yahweh the Healer and the healings performed through the prophet Elisha. However, the novelty of the present research in the context of international bibliography is the interweaving of patristic

references with biblical information and commentary and contemporary theological works, in an attempt to synthesize these bibliographic resources.

Throughout the biblical study within this project, I will frequently refer to the collection of volumes that make up the Septuagint^[8]. This is necessary because the aforementioned collection contains a wealth of information without which this project could not be completed.

In our research, we will start from the verse found in Deuteronomy 32:39, "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God like Me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand." This verse highlights the relationship established between God and creation, with all that it encompasses. Countless times, God draws the attention of the Israelites and tries to make them aware of their status and their fate depending on how they use their freedom. Depending on what they choose, that is, obedience or disobedience to the true God, what befell the Egyptians will befall them, Isaiah 19:22, but also the other idolatrous and pagan peoples who stood in certain situations against God's chosen people to serve Him. There is no other god but Him, and all attention must be directed toward Him, as we see in Hosea 6:1, because this is the only way to healing, as also highlighted in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Other important texts from the Old Testament prophets that we will analyze are: 3 Kings 19:19-21, 4 Kings 2:1-18, 4 Kings 4:8-37, 4 Kings 8:1-6, 4 Kings 5:20-27, 4 Kings 5:1-19.

In addition to presenting the topic, my contribution consists in enriching the Romanian specialized bibliography with several theological works that are not well known to the general public. At present, the majority of the specialized bibliography comes from the West, from mainstream Catholic and Protestant theologians. In this context, the Russian bibliography remains untouched and undiscovered. Of course, through the research I wish to carry out, I hope to make a small contribution to the development of the Romanian specialized bibliography.

When we talk about this phenomenon of biblical prophecy, we can say that it has its roots deeply embedded in the history of Israel since Abraham, through his covenant with God, continued under the guidance of Moses and Joshua, as well as the judges. In my thesis, I also

highlighted the fact that with the advent of the monarchy, this prophetic current took on new dimensions. In the person of the prophet Samuel, this phenomenon expanded because so-called "schools of prophets" were created and organized, where specific activities took place. The places mentioned in the Holy Scriptures where they lived are Ramah, Bethel, Gilead, Jericho, Carmel, and Samaria. The mentors who were responsible for their training were first Samuel, then Elijah and Elisha. These "sons of the prophets" were trained to know how to worship God and how to prophesy, and they were also initiated into sacred music with instrumental accompaniment. Their activities included daily study and worship of God, but they also had other tasks to perform for their mentors and for God. We can assume that they also had other regular duties specific to prophets. An important aspect is that they depended largely on the charity of the people. Also in the first chapter, I have attempted to outline a general picture of the prophets as God's spokesmen and highlighted their importance in that society. All these facts and conclusions shed new light on the subject of the prophets and the schools they established in the Old Testament.

Analyzing the historical context of Jewish prophecy, we have concluded that starting with Abraham and Moses and continuing with Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, this movement persisted and grew among the Jewish people.

However, there were numerous contexts in which the idolatrous Jewish people manifested themselves in a rebellious manner and were visibly heading towards apostasy. In this context, I have attempted to highlight the role of the prophetic office in relation to society. Throughout my research, I have highlighted the role of the prophet Elisha in the prophetic phenomenon.

We can say that he is an example worth considering because, through his determined attitude, his deeds, and his miracles, he becomes a model of the simple man who fears God. This was proven by the fact that, although he did not know Elijah the Tishbite beforehand, he had the courage to follow him shortly thereafter. The narrator does not tell us anything about Elijah calling Elisha to follow him before throwing his cloak or after this gesture. We can assume from the narrative that things happened silently, only at the level of gestures. It is clear from the

text that Elisha understood the mission to which he was called, because he approaches Elijah verbally, telling him that after kissing his parents he will follow him. The prophet Elijah, through his words, reinforces Elisha's request, stating that he is expected to fulfill a new mission on this earth. We have elaborated on this aspect based on the narratives in 1 Kings 19. Another aspect was to highlight the relationship between him and his mentor, Elijah the Tishbite, but also the fact that both the mentor and his successor are servants of the Living God.

Elisha also demonstrated strong faith in his response to Elijah when he was called to prophetic ministry. Hope in God, in the fulfillment of His promises, in His boundless goodness and justice, doubles and strengthens faith. Elijah's double grace upon Elisha, IV Kings chapter 2, is telling in this regard. God's grace works in each of us only with the cooperation of our will and thus bears fruit in the good deeds we do.

It can be seen that the idea of God as the giver of life, the master of life and abundance, is found in this context. Elisha follows the example of the prophet Elijah in feeding the hungry. We remember the moment when Elijah was fed by ravens, 3 Kings 17:6, then the feeding of the widow of Zarephath Sidon and her son, 3 Kings 17:15-16, but also the incident in which Elijah is fed by an angel in the desert, 3 Kings 19:5-6.

With the completion of the prophetic succession, Elisha will also take care of this aspect. Elijah's gesture of throwing his cloak over Elisha is a unique gesture of investiture in prophetic ministry throughout the Old Testament. This act is very rare, because in general the ritual consisted of the actual anointing of future prophets with oil.

The ministry to which Elisha is called also presents numerous risks. Many prophets were killed, others had to go into hiding, and others were exiled. Relevant in this context is the passage in 3 Kings 18:4-13, where it is mentioned that Queen Jezebel committed these bloody acts. It can be seen from Elijah's dialogue with Obadiah that the latter is also afraid of Queen Jezebel. The prophets were not very popular among the people because they still tended to worship idols. Those who received this ministry did not enjoy prosperity, but rather humiliation, and in our case, the one who was a prosperous farmer had to be the servant of the prophet

Elijah. In addition to all this, Elijah's call meant a complete change of lifestyle for Elisha. His decision came quickly, and he accepted this ministry by running after Elijah.

Elijah's act is considered a figurative anointing of Elisha, even though this aspect is not mentioned in the narrative itself. What Elijah did does not contradict the command given to him by God in the cave on Mount Horeb, 3 Kings 19:14-18.

Above all, it was the Lord God of Israel Himself who called him to prophetic ministry, and it is He who gives him the gift of prophecy through Elijah's actions. The prophet Elijah obeys the Lord and in this case mediates between Him and Elisha. Elijah's disciple, in turn, accepts the mission, which is also a challenge, knowing that this call comes from God. This study does not claim to be exhaustive, as 3 Kings 19:19-21 recounts only a few aspects of the beginning of Elisha's discipleship. The other aspects, as well as the climax of the narrative, are outlined in 4 Kings 2:1-18.

These distinct narratives in the books of 3 Kings and 4 Kings, which mark the transition from Elijah to Elisha, open the door for the collection of accounts about the latter. They work together to initiate and legitimize Elisha's complete and independent career. The first narrative in 4 Kings 2:1-18 cooperates with the corresponding one in 3 Kings 19:19-21 and develops it to explain how Elisha succeeded Elijah. The cloak that Elijah threw over Elisha in 3Rg 19:19-21 attested to his mastery as a companion, but the transfer of the cloak was not permanent, as it is in 4Rg 2, where Elisha takes over the role of his mentor. Therefore, the succession is presented in stages, just like Joshua's succession to Moses. The narrative elevates Elijah as a paradigmatic prophet. He is a leader, a pioneer, a founding father like Moses. Also, as with Moses, there is no memorial tomb for him. This is because Elijah did not die; he was taken up bodily into heaven. Elisha is the successor and heir of the prophet and man of God par excellence. He receives the gift of second sight, and this marks his succession and inheritance from Elijah. Elisha will die; he is not equal to his master, but he receives a double portion of his mentor's spirit. By extension, all true prophets are also heirs of Elijah, although only Elisha can claim the inheritance of the prophetic gift. The other narratives show Elisha coming into his own in his new role as Elijah's successor.

In the same context, new directions for research can be seen, such as a deeper study of rabbinic literature, which is a rich source of information on how to interpret biblical prophecy, the Elijah-Elisha narrative cycle, and possible New Testament connections. Also, the Christological typology and the close connection between the Old Testament prophets and the Person of Jesus Christ the Savior, based on patristic literature and recent international sources, can be another research focus.

The paradigm of the prophet Elisha's attitude is worthy of consideration because through all his deeds and miracles he comes and supports the suffering, the poor, and the needy. Elisha's strong faith and his unhesitating response to the call to mission are landmarks for every human being. Hope in God, in the fulfillment of His promises, in His boundless goodness and justice, doubles and strengthens faith. Elijah's double grace upon Elisha is telling in this regard. God's grace works in each of us only with the cooperation of our will and thus bears fruit in good deeds. Like Elisha, we Orthodox Christians must also be people of deeds and not just words, regardless of our social status. If our life is closer to God, like that of the prophet Elisha, manifested through all good words and deeds, then God will certainly not remain indifferent, but we will feel more and more in our lives the blessings that come from Him.

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