

2 Kings 2 — The Chariot of Fire and the Fallen Mantle — Elijah's Last Walk, the Double Portion, the Whirlwind into Heaven, and the Salt in a New Cruse

2 Kings 2: Elijah walks his last road from Gilgal with Elisha refusing three times to leave him; the mantle parts the Jordan; Elisha asks a double portion of his master's spirit and watches him go up by a whirlwind in a chariot of fire; the fallen mantle parts the river again, Jericho's deadly spring is healed with salt in a new cruse, and mockers at Bethel meet the covenant's curse; the prophetic office passes from Elijah to Elisha, c. 850 BC (scriptural chronology; scholars typically place the translation c. 852–848 BC, early in the reign of Jehoram of Israel).

The Elijah cycle is closing, and everyone in the chapter knows it. Since the still small voice at Horeb, the Lord's promise of a release has been standing; Elisha was anointed "to be prophet in thy room" (1 Kgs. 19:16), the mantle already thrown across his shoulders in a field at Abel-meholah. Between that day and this one lie the Naboth affair, Ahab's death, and one last confrontation with a king's soldiers (2 Kgs. 1) — and now the account slows down for a single walk. The very first verse gives the ending away: "when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind" (v. 1). No suspense about the *what*; the entire chapter is about the *how* — and above all, about who is still on the road when it happens.

Hebrew Word Studies

***pi-shnayim* — *peh* (H6310) / *shnayim* (H8147) (פִּי שְׁנַיִם) — literally "the mouth of two" — a double portion; the firstborn's share v. 9.** The phrase Elisha reaches for is not superlative language; it is probate language. *Pi-shnayim* — two mouths' worth, two shares — comes straight from the inheritance law of Deuteronomy 21:17: the firstborn receives "a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." When an estate was divided among sons, each received one share and the heir received two, because on the heir fell the weight of the whole house — the father's name, his dependents, his unfinished work. So Elisha is not asking to be twice the prophet Elijah was; he is asking to be counted Elijah's firstborn — to inherit the house, the burden, and the office — and his cry three verses later confirms the reading: "My father, my father" (v. 12). The narrator has been preparing this word all along: *shnayim* — two — is tagged again and again through the walk ("and they *two* went on," v. 6; "they *two* stood by Jordan," v. 7; "they *two* went over," v. 8), a chapter counting in twos until one of the two is taken and the double share settles on the one who stayed. And the request opens onto the gospel's deepest arithmetic. There is a Firstborn (Col. 1:15), and his portion is everything the Father has — yet the astonishment of the covenant is that he does not hoard the birthright: "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), "all that my Father hath shall be given unto him" (D&C 84:38). Elisha asked for the heir's share of one prophet's spirit. The gospel offers the heir's share of the Father's house — on the same terms this chapter teaches: follow, refuse the releases, and be found watching.

***laqach* (H3947) (לָקַח) — to take, receive — scripture's verb for translation vv. 3, 5, 9, 10.** Notice the word this chapter never uses: die. What everyone says instead — the sons of the prophets twice ("the LORD will take away thy master"), Elijah twice ("before I be taken away from thee... when I am taken from thee") — is *laqach*, the ordinary verb of taking, made extraordinary by its résumé. It is the word of the Bible's first translation: "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). It is the word the psalmists reach for when they look past the grave: "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me" (Ps. 49:15); "thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:24). And it is the word the Book of Mormon uses to unlock Moses' unmarked grave: Deuteronomy says the Lord buried him and no man knows his sepulchre (Deut. 34:5–6) — but Alma's record, keeping a tradition the Old Testament only whispers, says plainly that "the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself" (Alma 45:19). Translation, not burial. That is why Moses can stand in tangible glory beside Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3), conferring keys on Peter, James, and John at a time when no man had yet been resurrected — for Christ is "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). The Restoration knows this order of beings well: three Nephite disciples who "shall never taste of death" (3 Ne. 28:7), John the Beloved tarrying till the Lord comes (D&C 7), a whole city "received up into his own bosom" (Moses 7:69). Translation is not a reward of retirement; every translated being in scripture is kept in the flesh *for assignment*. And no verse says so more plainly than the one that closes Elijah's own file: "Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us" — Kirtland, April 1836 (D&C 110:13). The whirlwind was not an ending. It was a deployment.

ruach (H7307) / nuach (H5117) (רוּחַ / נוּחַ) — **spirit, wind, breath / to rest, settle, alight vv. 9, 15–16.** The sons of the prophets pronounce the succession in a wordplay the English cannot keep: "the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha" — the *ruach* doth *nuach*, the words sharing their sound the way the two prophets now share one office. This pair is scripture's technical language for the transfer and bestowal of prophetic power. It is what happened in the wilderness when the LORD "took of the spirit that was upon" Moses and it "rested upon" the seventy elders (Num. 11:25–26), drawing from Moses the widest wish a prophet ever made: "would God that all the LORD's people were prophets" (Num. 11:29). It is the promise of the Branch: "the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him" (Isa. 11:2). And in the succession Elisha's own story shadows, it travels through hands: Joshua "was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Num. 27:18–23; Deut. 34:9). Mantle, hands, ordination — the Restoration recognizes this grammar on sight: "by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by them who are in authority" (A of F 1:5). But the deepest echo runs forward. Elijah's terms — *if thou see me when I am taken, it shall be so* — turn out to be the terms of the greatest departure of all. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (Jn. 16:7); then a Master taken up "while they beheld" (Acts 1:9), disciples watching to the last visible moment — and the Spirit descending on the watchers at Pentecost. Elisha at the Jordan is the Old Testament's rehearsal of Acts: the master must go for the Spirit to fall, and it falls on the ones who stayed to see him leave.

na'ar (H5288) / yeled (H3206) / alah (H5927) (נַעַר / יֶלֶד / אָלַה) — **youth, young man, servant / boy, young man / to go up, ascend vv. 1, 11, 23–24.** Three words that decide what actually happened on the Bethel road. *Na'ar* — the KJV's "children" in verse 23 — is one of Hebrew's broadest words for the young and the serving: Joseph bearing tales at seventeen (Gen. 37:2), David refusing Saul's armor (1 Sam. 17:33), Solomon at his coronation, pleading inexperience as a grown king: "I am but a little child (*na'ar qatan*)" — the identical pair of words used here (1 Kgs. 3:7). *Yeled*, verse 24's word, stretches just as far: Rehoboam's *yeladim*, "the young men that were grown up with him" (1 Kgs. 12:8), were career courtiers past forty. The chapter's mob is drawn from exactly this bracket — young men of accountable age, dozens upon dozens of them. And *alah* is the word that turns their chant from rudeness into blasphemy. It is this chapter's verb of translation — "when the LORD would take *up* (*alah*) Elijah" (v. 1); "Elijah went *up* (*alah*) by a whirlwind" (v. 11) — and the tagging of verse 23 shows it four more times: Elisha "went *up*" to Bethel, was "going *up*" by the way, and the mockers chant "Go *up*... go *up*." They have heard what happened at the Jordan, and their answer is a parody of the ascension aimed at the ascended and his heir alike. The Hebrew leaves the modern reader without the comfortable version of this story: it was not children being childish about baldness. It was the apostate shrine-city's rising generation, ridiculing the translation of a prophet and daring his successor to disappear — contempt of court against heaven itself, at the precise hour the court was proving its authority endured. Read that way, the passage stops being an embarrassment and becomes a warning label the covenant wrote for itself: the LORD's word does not lapse between prophets, and it is not mocked (Gal. 6:7).

From the Chapter's Architecture

There is also a quieter structure underneath: the chapter is the last panel of an apprenticeship the cycle has been building since the field at Abel-meholah. Elisha has been the man who "poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kgs. 3:11) — a servant, as Joshua was Moses' minister (Ex. 24:13) — and this chapter is his final examination: three offered releases refused, one request rightly aimed, one condition met with open eyes. Notice that everything Elisha inherits, he inherits by staying — the walk, the sight, the mantle, the spirit. The fifty sons of the prophets had the same day, the same knowledge, and the same master; they watched from far off and inherited a view. The distance between a spectator and an heir, this chapter says, is the distance between Jericho's bluff and the far bank of Jordan — and it is crossed on foot, one refused release at a time.