

FLANNEL BOARD FRIDAY

PART 6 ELISHA AND THE BEARS

Elisha's Temperament

Many Bible translations say this group Elisha encountered were *"little children"*, *"boys"*, or *"small boys"* (2 Kings 2:23). However, this was not a small group of children making fun of a bald man; rather, it was a large group of young men. They were pagan priests who assembled for the purpose of coming against God and His prophet. More evidence to this is the fact that Elisha cursed them in the "name of the Lord", meaning the curse was connected to God's covenant with Israel.

Elisha's Bald Head

Calling Elisha "baldhead" doesn't necessarily mean that he was bald; although, he certainly may have been. It could have been that Elisha's "baldness" in the eyes of the young priests was in contrast to Elijah's hairy appearance (2 Kings 1:8).

Bears in Bethel

There are no bears in Israel today, but there used to be. In fact, bears are mentioned 12 times in the Bible. The only bear species of this region today is known as the Syrian brown bear.

EVEN MORE TO THE STORY

Did You Know?

- The trip from Jericho to Bethel is about 12 miles, while Bethel to Mount Carmel is nearly 75 miles. From Mount Carmel back to Samaria is nearly 40 miles (2 Kings 2:23-25).
- Bethel was 1 of the 2 main pagan worship centers in northern Israel where people worshiped a golden calf.
- Elisha asked for a double portion of the spirit that was upon Elijah. Sure enough, Elisha performed exactly twice as many miracles as Elijah.

Quick Fact

The rabbis of the Talmud did not see the mockers of Elisha as anything but children, and were deeply troubled by this act of violence. On the other hand, Rabbi Eleazar suggested that the offenders were not children, and their punishment was equal to their intentional wickedness. Even so, the rabbis of the Talmud could not exonerate Elisha for what they believe to be an obscene overreaction, and choose to believe he was punished by God for his actions.

Questions to Ponder

- Given what you've heard from today's lesson, what is your thoughts on the age of the group that came against God and Elisha?

- Do you think Elisha was bald or do you think there was more to the insult than a man's bald head?

- God's answer to Elisha's curse was 2 bears that mauled or *"tore"* 42 of those present. Do you think God was making some kind of a statement by using bears? Why not lions or snakes? What are your thoughts on this?

