

Greetings.

I am setting out below Part 4 of the series of studies on the life of Elijah as recorded for us in chapters 17 and 18 of the First Book of Kings.

The following details are not directly relevant to our current studies but it is worth noting that **Elijah is of sufficiently great stature** on the pages of scripture ...

... **that**, together with Moses, he:

- (i) is mentioned by name in the closing verses of *the last book of the Old Testament* (Mal. 4. 4-5);
- (ii) is clearly alluded to (although not named) in *the last book of the New Testament* (Rev. 11. 6); and, notably,
- (iii) is said to have 'appeared in glory' with the Lord Jesus on the so-called 'Mount of Transfiguration' (Luke 9. 30-31; cf. Matt. 17. 3; Mark 9. 4)

... **that** an angel announced that it was in his 'spirit and power' that the greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist, prepared the way for the Lord (Luke 1. 13, 16-17; 7. 28).

... **that** it is recorded that he was (wrongly) thought by some:

- (i) to have returned to earth in the person of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 16. 14; Mark 8. 28); or
- (ii) to have been called for by the Lord Jesus just before He died at Golgotha (Matt. 27. 47, 49; Mark 15. 35-36).

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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## **Elijah. Part 4: 1 Kings 18. 1-20.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the fourth of our series of studies in the life of Elijah, as recorded in 1 Kings 17 and 18, where you and I sit in as spectators to observe how the Lord sets about discrediting the claims made for Ba'al by his followers by demonstrating that He ('Jehovah') – and only He – is the true and 'living' God.

In the first three parts of our series, we have traced how the events of chapter 17 have exhibited successfully that Jehovah is the one and only true God. We noted how:

- (i) The *dry brook at Cherith* declares, '**Round 1** to Jehovah!'<sup>1</sup>
- (ii) The *well-fed family at Zarephath* proclaims '**Round 2** to Jehovah!'.<sup>2</sup>
- (iii) The *raising to life of the widow's son* positively thunders, 'And **Round 3** to Jehovah!'<sup>3</sup>

### **SCRIPTURE**

And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab ... .

And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him ... And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

1 Kings 18. 1-2a, 7, 15-20 (*King James Version*)

## THE OPENING SCENES OF 1 KINGS 17 and 18

Chapter 17 opens with a brief scene<sup>4</sup> which paves the way for the remainder of that chapter, a scene where Elijah suddenly leaps on to the page of scripture to confront Ahab, king of Israel, with the declaration that there is to be no more rain until he, Elijah, gives the word.

In much the same way, the opening scene of chapter 18 paves the way for what follows through the rest of the chapter.

There are several obvious links between these two opening scenes.

For example:

(i) verse 1 of chapter 17 announces, 'there shall not be dew nor rain', whereas the first verse of chapter 18 announces, 'I will send rain';

(ii) according to verse 3 of chapter 17, 'the word of the Lord came to Elijah, 'saying ... hide thyself by the brook Cherith', following which we are told, in verse 5, that he 'went and ... dwelt by the brook Cherith', whereas chapter 18 opens by relating that 'the word of the Lord came to Elijah ... saying ... 'Go, (not now 'hide yourself' but) shew thyself unto Ahab', following which we are told that 'Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab'.<sup>5</sup>

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE SPECTACULAR KNOCKOUT IN 'ROUND 4'

### EXPECTATIONS

**Verse 1.** 'The word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth'.

Before we consider the rest of the chapter, I want us to pause for a moment to ask what, in the light of the Lord's declaration to Elijah, we would expect to happen next.

I suspect that, if we weren't so familiar with the events of the chapter (which must surely rank as one of the best-known chapters in the whole Bible), we would probably expect Elijah:

(i) to return immediately to Ahab's palace and

(ii) to inform the king that the time was up—that the long drought which he (Elijah) had previously predicted in the name of the living Lord had served its purpose of totally discrediting Ba'al and all the fancy claims made for him by his followers<sup>6</sup> and that, having made this point, the Lord was going, without any further ado, to send the much needed rain.

As like as not, we would have expected something along those lines.

And before we proceed with our study, I need to make **two points** to help us understand (i) why *this* didn't *happen* and (ii) why *the events we find in the main body of our chapter* needed to happen just as they did.

### NOT RISKING THE LIFE OF A MAN WHO WOULD NEVER DIE<sup>7</sup>

**1.** First, I doubt very much that it would have been safe for Elijah to return to Ahab's palace and confront the king again. I suspect that, had he actually ventured into the palace precincts, there was a very real risk that Jezebel would have had him killed on sight.

At the close of Part 1 of our studies, we noted that, according to the beginning of chapter 19, even though

(i) the Lord had then demonstrated in the most dramatic fashion (a) that He (and not Jezebel's precious 'Most Mighty Ba'al') was the only true and living God and (b) that he, Elijah, was the Lord's servant and

(ii), courtesy of Ahab's blow-by-blow account of all that had taken place on Mount Carmel,<sup>8</sup> Jezebel knew all this,

Jezebel still served Elijah notice of her intention to have him killed, just as previously she had slain all the other prophets of the Lord on whom she could lay her hands.<sup>9</sup>

I suggested there that, even though Elijah had claimed that any future rainfall would come only 'according to' his word,<sup>10</sup> Jezebel, as a devoted follower of Ba'al, firmly believed:

(i) that the *real* reason there had been no rain for several years was that Ba'al had been enraged by Elijah's blasphemous claim and

(ii) that, in his anger, Ba'al had withheld the rain. If that is right, as Jezebel saw it, for her to have eliminated Elijah, far from extending the lengthy drought, would, in fact, have brought it to a speedy end.

Unless I am mistaken, then, if Elijah is to 'show' himself 'to Ahab',<sup>11</sup> as God commanded him, it would need to be well away from Ahab's winter palace at Jezreel, where Jezebel is currently in residence.<sup>12</sup> Hence, the need for some kind of private meeting, the arrangements for which, as we shall shortly discover, occupy one third of the entire chapter.<sup>13</sup>

But I said above that, before we proceed with our study, I need to make two points.

### PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS (AND THE MEDIA)

**2.** The second and, in one sense, by far the more important point concerns the perception of the people if the Lord had, so to speak, simply 'turned the tap back on'.

For there was the very real danger that Jezebel and the prophets of Ba'al (who between them, no doubt, controlled whatever media existed in those days) would have attributed the reopened heavens to the working of Ba'al, who (so the story put out would likely run) had graciously heard and responded to their prayers. You may recall that, as I mentioned in an earlier study, the ancient historian Menander claimed that a year-long drought in the area of Tyre around this time had been ended by the prayers of Jezebel's father, IttoBa'al.<sup>14</sup>

Nor would Elijah have been able to point publicly to the timing of the rainfall as evidence that it had come at his word. For when he announced the drought to Ahab, three and a half years earlier, he had not set any timetable for the rain to return.<sup>15</sup> And we can safely assume that Jezebel was sufficiently powerful to ensure that any message which Elijah now relayed to Ahab privately would never make the evening news!

And, consequently, the sudden arrival of the welcome rain *could* – and I have no doubt *would* – have been attributed, by at least many in Israel, to the power of Ba'al.<sup>16</sup>

### THE NEED FOR A PRIVATE MEETING AND FOR A PUBLIC SHOWDOWN

Although, then, on account of Jezebel's violent hostility, it would be necessary for Elijah to have some kind of private meeting with Ahab, that encounter could serve only as a 'pre-meeting'—as the lead-up to something far bigger.

For, before ever the rain came, there would have to be a public (a *very* public) showdown to prove beyond dispute which of the two claimants to the title was indeed the only true God. It was essential that, when the heavens opened, there would be no doubt who was opening them. Before, then, the long-awaited rain could burst from the sky, Ba'al must be totally and unquestionably discredited in the eyes of the entire nation.

And such a showdown would require a very public arena.

It has been well said that the Lord's words to Elijah, 'Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth', 'express a sense of purpose ... Elijah's audience with the king is not simply to inform him of the impending end of the drought. It is somehow a necessary step toward accomplishing that result'.<sup>17</sup>

### 'TIME WOULD FAIL ME TO TELL'<sup>18</sup>

**Verses 2-14.** 'And Elijah went ... thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me'

I do not have the space to consider the train of events which (following receipt of his heaven-sent 'marching orders') led to Elijah's face-to-face meeting with Ahab. I must leave you, therefore, to read the section from verse 2 to verse 14 for yourself.<sup>19</sup>

We pick up the threads in verses 15 and 16 with (i) the words of Elijah to Obadiah (a devout worshipper of Jehovah, who held a very high office in Ahab's administration<sup>20</sup>), (ii) the errand of Obadiah and (iii) the response of Ahab.

**Verses 15-16.** 'And Elijah said, ... I will surely shew myself unto him to day. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah'.

## ELIJAH'S SECOND MEETING WITH THE KING

Possibly “the very fact that the prophet was seeking him out, yea, had sent Obadiah before him to say, “Behold, Elijah is here”, must have rendered the king uneasy’.<sup>21</sup>

In any case, from the wording of the text, I get the impression that ‘Ahab went’, not only readily but also immediately, ‘to meet Elijah’:<sup>22</sup>

- (i) in part, perhaps, to reduce the risk that Elijah might disappear again before he reached him<sup>23</sup> and
- (ii) in part because, in Ahab’s mind, ‘anything was better than suspense and famine. And Elijah’s very return contained in it a promise of rain’.<sup>24</sup>

### TROUBLEMAKERS?

**Verse 17.** ‘It came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?’

The king’s opening question is, in reality, an accusation: ‘*Is it you, the troubler of Israel?*’ (literal translation)—‘Is it you, the disturber, the calamity-bringer of Israel?’ Such a *disrespectful* mode of address by Ahab stands in marked contrast to the *deferential* mode of address used only a short time earlier by Ahab’s God-fearing steward, ‘*Is it you, my lord Elijah?*’<sup>25</sup>

It has been rightly (if sadly) said that,

‘The land may be filled with idols and idol temples; idol groves and idolatrous altars, served by idolatrous priests, may stand on every side; the people may have forsaken the Lord and followed Baalim; the king may be the leader in apostasy, and his wife a heathen murderess; *these accumulated evils are no trouble to the king.* But is there a drought in the land, and a famine in Samaria which interferes with his pleasures and endangers his stud?—then indeed it is a grievous trouble, and *the man at whose words the heavens are shut is, in the sight of the king, a troubler.*’<sup>26</sup>

Not that such verbal abuse of one or more of God’s servants is confined to ‘the days of Elijah’.<sup>27</sup>

We recall that the masters of the demon-possessed slave girl at Philippi speak of Paul and Silas in a similar fashion: ‘These men, being Jews’, they assert before the local magistrates,<sup>28</sup> ‘do *exceedingly trouble* our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans’.<sup>29</sup>

And when God’s servants then move on to Thessalonica, they are again regarded as troublemakers (this time by the unbelieving Jews there), being branded as those ‘who have *turned the world upside down*’.<sup>30</sup>

Nor did such accusations subside. Some fifteen years later, Christians are charged with ‘*hatred against mankind*’.<sup>31</sup>

Nor, I note, have accusations of troublemaking been limited to the Lord’s servants. I was interested to discover that the word ‘*troubles*’, used by Ahab here of Elijah, is translated in the Greek Old Testament by the same word<sup>32</sup> which Luke uses centuries later to describe the accusation brought by the Jewish Sanhedrin against the Lord Jesus: ‘We found this fellow *perverting* the nation’.<sup>33</sup> In effect, therefore, our Lord Himself is labelled as one ‘that troubles Israel’!

We can say, therefore, that, when Ahab addresses Elijah in the way that he does, ‘the most wanted man’ in many kingdoms<sup>34</sup> is found in the very best of company.

It is possible, I suppose, that Ahab shares Jezebel’s likely view of events—that, because Elijah has insulted Ba’al, all the problems which he (Ahab) and his people are currently suffering by way of drought and famine, far from being Jehovah’s doing, are the expression of Ba’al’s anger, and that Elijah is, therefore, responsible for all Israel’s ‘*trouble*’.

I recall that, back in the days of Joshua, following the ‘fall’ of Jericho, Achan, ‘of the tribe of Judah’, stole several articles of spoil which had been consecrated to the Lord. This action provoked the Lord to anger and led to Israel’s unexpected and humiliating defeat at Ai, with the loss of thirty-six Israelite warriors.<sup>35</sup>

Following the Lord’s identification of Achan as the culprit, Joshua confronted Achan with the words, ‘Why have you *troubled* us? The Lord shall bring *trouble* on you this day’, following which, Achan, together with his family, was put to death.<sup>36</sup> It is hardly surprising that Achan became known to later generations as, ‘*Achan, the troubler of Israel*’.<sup>37</sup>

'And you, Elijah', Ahab is saying in effect, 'are nothing less than a modern-day Achan'.

### TROUBLESHOOTER NOT TROUBLEMAKER

**Verse 18.** 'He answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim'.

But Elijah is having none of that and, metaphorically speaking, without hesitation he wallops the 'accusation' ball back into the king's end of the court:<sup>38</sup> 'I have not troubled Israel but you'; 'it is not me, but you, O king, who is the modern-day Achan'.<sup>39</sup>

As an earlier prophet once famously said to an earlier king,<sup>40</sup> so now, in effect, the prophet Elijah says to king Ahab, 'Thou art the man'.

No, Elijah was most certainly not the troublemaker; if anything, he was the troubleshooter, on a mission to identify and to correct the sins and idolatry of God's people.

It is important to note the change from plural to singular in Elijah's accusation: 'ye (plural) have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou (singular) hast followed Baalim ('followed Ba'al', that is<sup>41</sup>)'.

Elijah's point is that Israel's earlier kings (from its first king Jeroboam onwards), together with the people at large, had been guilty of transgressing God's commandments (in particular, by their worship of the calves at Dan and Bethel) but that Ahab himself had added the more serious sin of introducing the worship of Ba'al wholesale into Israel.<sup>42</sup>

**Verse 19.** 'Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves ('of Asherah', that is) four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table'.

Having indicted Ahab with his sin, Elijah proceeds to command him what he is to do. Indeed, from the way the prophet speaks to Ahab, anyone would think that their roles are reversed and that he, Elijah, is the king and that Ahab is his subject and servant.<sup>43</sup>

'You have followed Ba'al', Elijah charged Ahab. 'Now', in effect, he adds, 'and speaking of Ba'al, send, and gather to me representatives of all Israel – the nation's leaders, elders, and other influential people – to mount Carmel, together with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Ba'al and the four hundred prophets of Asherah'.

### JEZEBEL AND ASHERAH

In passing:

(i) we recall that Asherah was 'the principal goddess of Tyre and Sidon'<sup>44</sup> and, given that Jezebel was 'the daughter of Ethbaal (ItoBa'al I), king of the Sidonians', we can well 'understand her attachment to the worship of Asherah, which ... was particularly rife in the city of her birth'.<sup>45</sup>

(ii) we note from the expression, 'which eat at Jezebel's table', that the prophets of Ba'al and Asherah not only enjoyed royal sanction but were supported practically by the state.<sup>46</sup>

Clearly, the time has come for a showdown. But Elijah does not spell even that much out to Ahab.

Making no mention whatever of any fire contest,<sup>47</sup> he offers Ahab no explanation of why the king must gather Israel to mount Carmel. Elijah simply requires that he do it—although the specific inclusion of the prophets of Ba'al and Asherah should have alerted Ahab to the fact that Elijah was planning a confrontation of some kind.

### ALL ROADS LEAD TO CARMEL

**Verse 20.** 'So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel'.

Yet, whatever Ahab made of Elijah's demand, he meekly complies with the prophet's bidding. And so, for some (as yet) unexplained purpose, all the participants convene on mount Carmel.

### BUT WHY CARMEL?

Yes, indeed, 'but why mount Carmel?' Ahab may not ask but the careful reader of scripture surely does.

## 1. Geography

I begin by noting that Carmel itself is more a ridge than a single mountain, extending some twelve miles in length.<sup>48</sup>

At its eastern end, there is a natural platform,<sup>49</sup> about 1,000 feet above the Kishon below.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, this tableland boasts a spring of water less than a hundred yards away, a spring which is said to flow even in the driest seasons and which, in all likelihood, I suspect, supplies the water of which we read later in the chapter.<sup>51</sup>

Although the Mediterranean Sea is not visible from the plateau itself, it can be seen from a point some 300 feet higher<sup>52</sup>—a detail which dovetails perfectly with the account of Elijah's prayer at the end of the chapter, especially his command to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea'.<sup>53</sup>

The plateau can easily accommodate many hundreds of spectators<sup>54</sup> and, because of its elevation, is easily visible from considerable distances, including, for example, from Nazareth, some twenty miles away.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, it is highly likely that the 'fire of the Lord' which fell later could be seen by Jezebel from her palace window at Jezreel, which was located seventeen miles away.<sup>56</sup>

For this reason alone, Carmel was the ideal arena for a public showdown between Ba'al and the God of Israel.

But there was far more to Elijah's choice than just its visibility.

## 2. Theology

The Assyrian king Shalmaneser III reigned from the days of Ahab to the days of Jehu, king of Israel.

In his annals, Shalmaneser referred to Carmel as 'Mount Ba'al of the Headland'.<sup>57</sup> The actual quotation is: 'I went to Mount Ba'li-ra'si ["Mount Ba'al of the Headland", that is] which is over against the sea and over against the land of Tyre'.<sup>58</sup> It was there, Shalmaneser recorded, that he received tribute both from the king of Tyre and from Jehu king of Israel.<sup>59</sup>

In those days, Carmel, at the seaward end of the ridge, was recognised as belonging to Tyre and Sidon and, therefore, as the territory of Ba'al.<sup>60</sup>

Even though the Carmel range of mountains had once formed a border of the inheritance of the tribe of Asher,<sup>61</sup> it was now 'on the border between Israel and Tyre'<sup>62</sup> and, indeed, although it had once boasted an altar of Jehovah,<sup>63</sup> it had more recently been taken over by the worshippers of Ba'al.

And so, in his choice of Carmel as the battlefield between Jehovah and Ba'al, Elijah is giving the prophets of Ba'al the decided advantage of fighting on their own ground.<sup>64</sup> And, since Carmel is very much Ba'al's 'home turf', Ba'al's prophets enjoy what today is called 'home court advantage'.

### 'SO AHAB SENT ...'

The king of Israel plays his part according to the divinely-written script and then fades into the background. We shall not meet Ahab again until the bout between Jehovah and Ba'al (together with the consequent shouting by the crowd) is over.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, for the next twenty verses, the spotlight focuses on Elijah, the Phoenician prophets and the people.

With the stage now set, you and I hold our breath as we wait for the action to begin. But, sadly in many ways, this is where the curtain must fall on this week's study.

God willing, we shall pick up the story in Part 5—with Elijah's challenge to the people, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Ba'al, then follow him'.

To be continued.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 17. 1, 7.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 17. 16.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 17. 22.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 17. 1-5.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings 18. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Ba'al's 'elevated position shows itself in his power over clouds, storm and lightning, and manifests itself in his thundering voice. As the god of wind and weather Ba'al dispenses dew, rain, and snow and the attendant fertility of the soil. *Baal's rule guarantees the annual return of the vegetation*; as the god disappears in the underworld and returns in the autumn, so the vegetation dies and resuscitates with him' (references to ancient texts removed), W. Herrmann, '*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*', page 134.

'When he is dead, the "furrows in the fields are cracked", but *when he lives the heavens rain down oil and the ravines flow with honey*', Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., '*The Polemic against Baalism in Israel's Early History and Literature*', *Bibliotheca Sacra* (BSac—V151 #603—Jul 94—270).

<sup>7</sup> 2 Kings 2. 11.

<sup>8</sup> 'Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword', 1 Kings 19. 1.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings 18. 4, 13.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Kings 17. 1.

<sup>11</sup> The third year' (1 Kings 18. 1), probably refers to 'the third year of his sojourn at Zarephath', C. F. Keil, '*Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch*', Volume III, page 240. Given that the drought lasted for three and a half years in total (Luke 4. 25; James 5. 17), Elijah may have spent about one year at Cherith, and some two and a half years in the house of the widow. By this time, 'great famine was throughout all the land' (Luke 4. 25).

<sup>12</sup> I take it that, as Ahab himself viewed everything, 'you don't kill the goose that lays the golden egg or *the prophet who possesses the power to restore the rain!*'

<sup>13</sup> 1 Kings 18. 3-19.

<sup>14</sup> Page 8, together with note 99, of Part 2.

<sup>15</sup> 'There shall not be dew nor rain *these years*, but according to my word, 1 Kings 17. 1.

<sup>16</sup> 'Had the rain returned apart from the public testimony of Elijah, he would at once have been set down as a false prophet and a boaster, and still worse, the deliverance would have been attributed by the prophets of Ba'al to their idol', Hamilton Smith, '*Elijah: A Prophet of the Lord*', page 29.

<sup>17</sup> J. T. Walsh, '*1 Kings: Berit Olam*', page 237.

<sup>18</sup> Heb. 11. 32.

<sup>19</sup> The following quotations and comments on verses 4 to 14 may be of interest:

**Verse 4.** Jezebel 'cut off' (בהכרית) v. 4 and 'killed' (בהרג) the Lord's prophets, v. 13, but, rather than intervene on their behalf, Ahab's only fear consists of having to 'cut off' (נכרית) his livestock, v. 5. For his part, Obadiah's fear is that Ahab may 'kill' (והרגני) v. 12, 14) him; that is, that, by Ahab's hand, Jezebel would slay him as she had formerly slain the Lord's prophets.

'Jezebel had resolved upon exterminating the worship of Jehovah, and sought to carry out this intention by destroying the prophets of the true God', C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament by Keil and Delitzsch*, Volume III, page 241.

'It is extremely probable that this work of extermination was begun as an act of reprisals for the drought denounced by Elijah'. J. Hammond, *1 Kings: The Pulpit Commentary*, Volume 5, page 418.

If Obadiah had been caught sheltering God's prophets, he would likely have lost more than his job. It would not have only been Ahab's civil service that would have lacked a head.

'Probably the division into two companies was partly for the sake of security (see Gen. 32. 8), and partly for the sake of convenience. The greater the number to be fed, the greater the chance of detection'. J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 418.

**Verse 5.** If Obadiah is concerned to save prophets (verse 4), Ahab's chief concern is to save horses and mules.

'So far from seeking God, he (Ahab) is merely seeking grass', Hamilton Smith, *ibid.*, page 30.

'Pasture for the royal stables was probably a priority claim throughout the Hebrew monarchy, cf. 'the king's mowings' (Amos 7. 1), as it was for the imperial chariot-force in Syria in the Roman imperial period', John Gray, *I and II Kings*, page 390.

**Verses 9-14.** Both the widow of chapter 17 and the 'governor' of chapter 18:

(i) charge Elijah with visiting their 'sin' upon them and endangering life (1 Kings 17. 18; 18. 9);

(ii) initially resist Elijah's command (1 Kings 17. 12; 18. 9-14);

(iii) invoke the oath, 'As the Lord your God lives', when voicing their reluctance to do as Elijah asked (1 Kings 17. 12; 18. 10);

(iv) finally accept Elijah's assurance and comply with his demand (1 Kings 17. 13-15, 'she went'; 18. 15-16, 'he went').

**Verse 10.** 'There is an obvious but not unnatural exaggeration in the description of Ahab's efforts to discover Elijah'. J. Skinner, *Kings: The Century Bible*, page 228.

'All that is meant is that all neighbouring and accessible courts had been communicated with', J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 419.

**Verses 12-13.** Obadiah 'seeks to be excused the mission, pleading the wickedness of the king on the one hand (1 Kings 18. 12), and his own goodness on the other (1 Kings 18. 13)', Hamilton Smith, *ibid.*, page 33.

<sup>20</sup> Obadiah 'is responsible for the king's household and estates, including livestock', L. M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings: Apollos Old Testament Commentary*, page 242.

'The royal chamberlain (lit. over the house, i.e. palace) ... a very high office', John Gray, *I and II Kings*, page 133 (with page 389).

<sup>21</sup> A. W. Pink, *The Life of Elijah*, page 109.

<sup>22</sup> The Greek Old Testament goes so far as to say that Ahab 'ran' to meet Elijah; 'Ahab ran forth and went to meet Elijah', 1 Kings 18. 16 ('The Septuagint Version', footnote to Brenton's Translation).

<sup>23</sup> Compare the report of Obadiah: 'there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee', 1 Kings 18. 10.

<sup>24</sup> J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 420.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Kings 18. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Hamilton Smith, *ibid.*, page 36.

<sup>27</sup> 'The days of Elijah' being a quotation from our Lord's own lips, Luke 4. 25.

<sup>28</sup> 'These were, in Latin terminology, the *duumviri* or *praetores*, so called in towns which [such as Philippi] were Roman colonies', W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'Magistrate'.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 16. 20-21.



- <sup>30</sup> Acts 17. 6. “Those”, they said, “who are upsetting the civilised world have arrived here” ... T. R. Glover quoted with delight the saying of *the child who remarked that the New Testament ended with “Revolutions”*. When Christianity really goes into action it must cause a revolution both in the life of the individual and in the life of society’, William Barclay, *‘The Acts of the Apostles: The Daily Study Bible’*, page 128.
- <sup>31</sup> ‘An immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of *hatred against mankind*’, Cornelius Tacitus, *‘The Annals’*, Book 15, Chapter 44.
- <sup>32</sup> The Greek word, *‘διαστρέφω’*; to distort, to twist, to pervert, to mislead, to confuse, to corrupt, to turn from. See Georg Bertram, *‘Theological Dictionary of the New Testament’*, Volume VII, pages 717-719 (article *‘διαστρέφω’*) and Spiros Zodhiates, *‘The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament’*, page 441(article 1294, *‘διαστρέφω’*).
- <sup>33</sup> Luke 23. 2.
- <sup>34</sup> 1 Kings 18. 10.
- <sup>35</sup> Josh. 7. 1-5.
- <sup>36</sup> Josh. 7. 24-25.
- <sup>37</sup> 1 Chron. 2. 7. This is the very same expression (עכר ישראל) as in used by Ahab of Elijah.
- <sup>38</sup> ‘With great boldness and plainness of speech the prophet throws the charge back upon the king, “I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father’s house.”’, Hamilton Smith, *ibid.*, page 37.
- <sup>39</sup> ‘The woes of Israel are not to be charged to the prophet who declared the doom, but to the kings who made the nation deserve it’, F. K. Farr, *‘The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; edited by J. Orr’*, Volume 2, page 931.
- <sup>40</sup> 2 Sam. 12. 7.
- <sup>41</sup> ‘The plural [“Ba’alim”] may refer to the various names and forms under which Baal was worshipped (Ba’al-Berith, Ba’al-Zebub, etc.), or more probably to the various images or statues of this god set up in the land’, J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 420.
- <sup>42</sup> ‘As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat ... he went and served Ba’al, and worshipped him ... Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him’, 1 Kings 16. 31-33.
- <sup>43</sup> Throughout chapters 17 and 18, everybody obeys the word of God’s prophet (namely, the widow of Zarephath, Obadiah, Ahab, the prophets of Ba’al, the people in general and Elijah’s own servant, 1 Kings 17. 10-15, 19; 18. 8-16, 19-20, 25-26, 30, 40- 45). In sad contrast, at the beginning of chapter 19, it is the word of Jezebel which calls the tune!
- <sup>44</sup> See Part 1: (i) under the heading, ‘Jezebel (and her father)’ and (ii) Note 8.
- <sup>45</sup> ‘In the Epic of Keret, Asherah is designated the “Asherah of the Tyrians” and “the goddess of the Sidonians”—an indication that she was particularly worshipped in Tyre and Sidon. She was regarded as the goddess of fertility ... Consonant with her character, she supported Baal, the god of the heavens and life, in his war against Môt, the god of the netherworld and death ... Jezebel was the daughter of the king of Tyre, a fact that enables us to understand her attachment to the worship of Asherah, which, as we have seen, was particularly rife in the city of her birth’, U. Cassuto, *‘The Goddess Anath’*, pages 58-59.  
Additionally, Jezebel’s father, Ethba’al (IttoBa’al I), the then king of Tyre and Sidon, was a priest of Astarte (in all likelihood, the same as ‘Asherah’); ‘IttoBa’al, the priest of Astarte, who reigned thirty-two years, and lived sixty-eight years’, Flavius Josephus, *‘Against Apion’*, Book 1, paragraph 18.
- <sup>46</sup> ‘There is nothing in the Hebrew to imply that they sat with her at the same board; and it is certain that this would be altogether repugnant to Eastern ideas of propriety. All that is meant is that they were fed by her bounty. See 1 Kings 2. 7’. J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 421.  
‘To eat at the table of the king or queen was to be subsidized by the state’, G. Rice, *‘1 Kings: Nations Under God’*, page 149.
- <sup>47</sup> ‘The God that answereth *by fire*, let Him be God’, 1 Kings 18. 24.

- 48 'Mount Carmel is not a single mountain but a range of hills running inland in a south-easterly direction for about twelve miles', J. J. Bimson, *'New Bible Commentary'*, IVP, page 358.  
'It is a noble ridge ... extending southeast, for a little more than twelve miles', *'Smith's Bible Dictionary'*, article 'Carmel'.
- 49 'As the westernmost headland in Palestine, Mount Carmel is the first and most frequently watered portion of the land and consequently famous for its fertility. The name itself means "the garden land" ... The site of this convocation is traditionally located at *El Murahkah* ("the place of burning")'. G. Rice, *ibid.*, page 149.  
'There is not a more conspicuous spot on all Carmel than the abrupt, rocky height of *El Murahkah*, shooting up so suddenly on the east', C. W. M. Van de Velde, *'Narrative of a Journey through Syria and Palestine'*, Volume 1, pages 322-323.  
'There is an ancient road from the plain to this locality, which is necessary to explain the fact that Ahab was able to bring his chariot up (1 Kings 18. 44)', John Gray, *ibid.*, page 402.
- 50 '*El Murahkah* ... is a sort of natural platform, or pulpit, raised 1000 feet above the adjoining plain', J. Hammond, *ibid.*, pages 420.  
'Nowhere does the Kishon run so close to Mount Carmel as just beneath *El Murahkah*, which is ... perhaps 1000 feet above the Kishon', C. F. Keil, *ibid.*, page 244.
- 51 1 Kings 18. 33-35. So J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 421: 'a spring which is said to flow even in the driest seasons'.
- 52 'On its west and north-west side [of *El Murahkah*, that is] the view of the sea is quite intercepted by an adjacent height. That height may be ascended, however, in a few minutes, and a full view of the sea obtained from the top', C. W. M. Van de Velde, *ibid.*, page 326.
- 53 1 Kings 18. 43.
- 54 'A sort of plateau near the summit—the table-land where the altars were built—would accommodate a vast number of spectators', J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 421.
- 55 J. Hammond, *ibid.*, page 420.
- 56 2 Kings 9. 30.
- 57 'Ba'al was 'particularly associated by the Pheonician seafarers with headlands', John Gray, *ibid.*, page 385.
- 58 Yohanan Aharoni, *'The Land of the Bible'*, 1967, page 310.
- 59 Yohanan Aharoni, *loc. cit.*
- 60 'Mount Carmel was the western end of a ridge of hills whose ownership had been disputed by Tyre and Israel. The seaward end was recognized Tyrian (and therefore Baal's) territory. The prophets of Baal and Asherah would be challenged on their own ground', C. G. Martin, *'1 and 2 Kings'*, comment on 1 Kings 18. 20.  
'Mount Carmel is on the only jut of land breaking the straight Israelite Mediterranean coastline ... At Elijah's time, it was near the border between Israel and Phoenicia. Possession of it had fluctuated between Israel and Tyre through the previous centuries. Since it had been possessed part of the time by the Phoenicians it was the one of the first places Baal worship had been introduced to Israel ... In the minds of the people the home court advantage would belong to Ba'al', Roger Hahn, *'1 and 2 Kings: CRI'*, comments on 1 Kings 18. 17-40.  
Carmel 'had long been used as a site sacred to Baal the slayer of the sea, god of storm and rain, and giver of abundant vegetation', L. M. Wray Beal, *'1 & 2 Kings: Apollos Old Testament Commentary'*, page 243.
- 61 Josh. 19. 26. 'Asher's territory stretched along the Mediterranean coastline from where the Carmel range of mountains meets the Plain of Sharon northward to the northern border of Canaan', Thomas Constable, *'Expository Notes on the Bible'*, comments on Josh. 19. 24-31.
- 62 "'Baal of the headland" was on the border between Israel and Tyre at this time', Yohanan Aharoni, *ibid.*, page 310.
- 63 1 Kings 18. 30.
- 64 See Dale Ralph Davis, *'The Wisdom and the Folly'*, page 237 (top).
- 65 1 Kings 18. 41.