

# 1 Kings 18 - Contest on Mt Carmel; Elijah slays prophets of Baal

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(12) Israel during Elijah's Ministry (1 Kings 17:1—2 Kings 1:18)

(A) The Lord's supremacy over Baal (1 Kings 17:1—18:46)

(d) The Lord is the giver of fire from heaven (18:1-40)

(e) The Lord is the giver of rain (18:41-46)

## 1 Kings 18

(d) The Lord is the giver of fire from heaven (18:1-40)

1 Now it happened *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will provide rain on the face of the earth."

1 Now it happened *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."

1 Quite some time later—three years later!—this message from the LORD came to Elijah: "Go visit Ahab, and I'll send some rain to the surface of the ground."

1 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.

- In the third and last year of the famine, God directed Elijah to present himself to King Ahab. Elijah had God's word that He would soon end the drought.

2 So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine *was* severe in Samaria.

2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine *was* severe in Samaria.

2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab, right when the famine in Samaria was most severe.

2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.

- The famine in the land was particularly severe in the capital, Samaria (Cf. the famine[s] in Elisha's days, 2 Kings 4:38; 6:25; 7:4; 8:1)

— God was directing this calamity especially at the guilty parties, Ahab and Jezebel

3 Ahab summoned Obadiah, who *was* in charge of the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly;

3 Ahab called Obadiah who *was* over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly;

3 Ahab called for Obadiah, his household supervisor. This man, who feared the LORD very much,

3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly:

- Obadiah had great responsibility in Ahab's court (in charge of Ahab's palace)
- Obadiah was also a devout believer in the LORD (but not the writer of the Bible book of that name)

4 for when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)

4 for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)

4 had taken 100 prophets and had hidden them by fifties in a cave, providing them with food and water when Jezebel was trying to destroy the LORD's prophets.

4 For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

- Whether Jezebel knew of Obadiah's commitment to the Lord is not clear, but undoubtedly he and the queen were not close friends

— Jezebel's aim was to kill the Lord's prophets and replace the worship of Yahweh with Baal-Melqart worship

— Obadiah, aware of her strategy, hid 100 prophets of the Lord in caves and was supplying them with food and water—a difficult task in days of extreme famine and drought

— Surveyors have counted over 2,000 caves in the Mount Carmel area

— Obviously there were many in Israel who believed in the Lord, though Israel as a whole had apostatized

5 Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the river valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not *have* to kill some of the cattle."

5 Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle."

5 Ahab had instructed Obadiah, "Go throughout the land to all of the water springs and to all of the valleys. Maybe we'll find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive. Also, maybe we won't have to kill some of our cattle."

5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

6 So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

6 So they divided the land between them so they could conduct their survey. Ahab went off by himself in one direction and Obadiah went off by himself in the other.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

- This situation prompted Ahab and his trusted servant, Obadiah, to go in different directions, looking for some grass in the valleys or near the springs where the most necessary animals (horses and mules) might graze

7 Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is it you, **Elijah my master?**"

7 Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is this you, Elijah my master?"

7 While Obadiah was on the road, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him and bowed down with his face to the ground. "It's you, isn't it, my master Elijah?"

7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?

- Obadiah recognized Elijah when they met somewhere outside Samaria

— Elijah was a "wanted" man in Israel

- "...Elijah my master" - when Obadiah met Elijah, he voiced his submission to the man of God and to Yahweh by calling Elijah "master"

8 And he said to him, "It is I. Go, say to your **master**, 'Behold, Elijah *is here*.'"

8 He said to him, "It is I. Go, say to your master, 'Behold, Elijah *is here*.'"

8 "I am," he replied. "Go tell your master, 'Look! Elijah!'"

8 And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

- "...master" - Obadiah had two masters, here referring to Ahab

— To rise as high as he had in Ahab's government, Obadiah had to have lived a double life of external support for Ahab while internally following Yahweh

9 But he said, "What sin have I committed, that you are handing your servant over to Ahab, to put me to death?"

9 He said, "What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?"

9 But Obadiah replied, "What did I do wrong, that you would put me in a position where Ahab would execute me?"

9 And he said, "What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?"

- Obadiah was afraid that if he told Ahab that he had found Elijah, he would disappear again (v12) and Ahab would kill Obadiah

10 As surely as the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom to which my master has not sent word to search for you; and whenever they say, 'He is not here,' he makes the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you.

10 As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you.

10 As surely as the LORD your God lives, there isn't a nation or kingdom where my master hasn't tried to find you. Whenever they would say 'He isn't here,' he forced that kingdom or nation to swear that they hadn't seen you.

10 As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

- "...the LORD your God lives" - the same confession that both the widow (17:12) and Elijah had made (17:1)

- Obadiah explained to Elijah how Ahab had searched for him at home and abroad to no avail. He affirmed that fact by the familiar words, "As surely as the LORD your God lives" (Cf. 17:1,12)

11 Yet now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here!"'

11 And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here!"'

11 But now you're saying 'Go tell your master, "Elijah is here!"'

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

- Obadiah obviously struggled with whether he could believe Elijah when the prophet told him that he would speak to Ahab

12 And it will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to where I do not know; so when I come and inform Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill

me, though I, your servant, have feared the LORD from my youth.

12 It will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth.

12 As soon as I've left you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you off to I don't know where! Then when I go tell Ahab and he can't find you, he'll kill me, even though I have been your servant and have feared the LORD since I was young!

12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

- If he reported to his king that Elijah had been found, and then could not produce him, Ahab would regard Obadiah's words as a mocking trick and would execute him

— His fears were not altogether groundless, as may be learned from 2 Kings 2, where we read that Elijah was carried into heaven in a whirlwind

13 Has it not been reported to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water?

13 Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the Lord by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water?

13 Hasn't anyone told you, my master, what I did when Jezebel was killing the LORD's prophets? I hid 100 of the LORD's prophets by fifties in a cave and provided food and water for them.

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

- Obadiah went to great pains to convince Elijah that he was a believer in Yahweh. He must have felt this explanation was necessary because of his position in Ahab's cabinet.

— Obadiah seemed to think Elijah would have heard about his hiding and feeding the prophets of the LORD. Perhaps this was known among many of the faithful in Israel, especially the prophets, though of course not by Jezebel or her sympathizers.

14 Yet now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah *is here*"; he will then kill me!'

14 And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah *is here*"; he will then kill me.'

14 Now you're saying, 'Go tell your master, "Elijah's here!"' He's sure to kill me!"

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

15 Then Elijah said, "As *surely* as the LORD of armies lives, before whom I stand, I will certainly present myself to him today."

15 Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today."

15 But Elijah promised him, "As the LORD of the Heavenly Armies lives, in whose presence I stand, I will appear to Ahab today."

**15** And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

- Elijah's description of God as the LORD Almighty who lives and whom Elijah served (Cf. 17:1; 18:36) indicates that he was confident in God's ability to handle the physical and spiritual situation in Israel, an assurance that had grown as a result of his experiences at Cherith and Zarephath.

— So after receiving a second promise from Elijah that he would not disappear, Obadiah finally obeyed his command and went to Ahab (v16)

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and informed him; then Ahab went to meet Elijah.

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

16 So Obadiah went out to meet Ahab and reported to him. Then Ahab went to meet Elijah.

**16** So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

**17** When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, the cause of disaster to Israel?"

**17** When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?"

**17** When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab asked him, "Is it really you, you destroyer of Israel?"

**17** And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

- When Ahab heard Obadiah's message, the king went to meet the prophet

— Elijah maintained the initiative as the spokesman of God to whom the king must submit. In Ahab's eyes Elijah was the troubler of Israel.

— Ahab had a perception problem—the real source of Israel's troubles was Ahab and Omri's disregard for the Mosaic Covenant and their preference for idolatry (Deut 6:5)

— It was in fact Ahab who was the troubler of Israel at that time (v18)

18 He said, "I have not brought disaster to Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and you have followed **the Baals**.

18 He said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals.

18 But Elijah replied, "I'm no destroyer of Israel. But you and your ancestor's household have been doing that, because you have abandoned the LORD's commandments and have followed the Baals.

**18** 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.

- Elijah met Ahab's insinuating remarks forthrightly by casting the challenge back into his face. Elijah set the record straight and instructed the king who did not perceive or was not willing to admit that he and his father's (Omri's) family (Cf. 16:25-26) were the real reason for Israel's troubles.

— Ahab had abandoned the LORD'S commands in His Law and had instead followed the Baals

- "...the Baals" - refers to local idols of Baal (Cf. Judges 2:11) sometimes with differing names (i.e., Baal-Berith, Judges 8:33; Baal-Zebub, 2 Kings 1:2- 3,6,16). This was the real issue and the root cause of all the trouble in Israel, spiritual as well as physical.

19 Now then, send *orders and* gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, *together* with 450 prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

19 Now then send *and* gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, *together* with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

19 So go gather all of Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. Bring along 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah who are funded at Jezebel's expense."

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 four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

- In view of Elijah's directive that Ahab summon the people from all over Israel, it is likely that hundreds, if not thousands, congregated on Mount Carmel

— The Carmel range of mountains, 1,742 feet in elevation at its highest point, extends about 30 miles to the southeast of modern-day Haifa from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It stood between Israel and Phoenicia, on neutral ground between Yahweh's land and Baal's land.

— The Phoenicians regarded Carmel as a sacred dwelling place of Baal; thus in the minds of the onlookers, Baal had the advantage in this contest

— It is a beautiful series of rounded peaks and valleys from which the sea can easily be seen. It was a geographically prominent location and thus a fit setting for Elijah's contest.

- The extent of Baal worship in Israel can be estimated by the number of priests Jezebel regularly fed: 450 prophets of the male god and 400 of the female goddess Asherah ("groves"), Baal's consort

**20** So Ahab sent *orders* among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

**20** So Ahab sent *a message* among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

**20** Ahab sent for the Israelis and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel,

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

- Mount Carmel was agreed on by Ahab

— No doubt he was highly pleased with this suggested site for the contest because it would have given the Baal prophets a definite advantage; but this did not worry Elijah

21 Then Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long are you going to struggle with the two choices? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him *so much as* a word.

21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.

21 where Elijah approached all the people and asked them, "How long will you keep hesitating between both sides? If the LORD is God, go after him. If Baal, go after him." But the people didn't say a word.

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

- Rather, How long go ye hobbling between the two forks of the road?

— Elijah sought to turn Israel from Baal worship back to Yahweh

— The issue is not that Israel wanted to reject Yahweh and choose Baal, but rather to serve them both. Elijah called for an either/or decision.

— Elijah sought to get a clear decision for Israel on the record: if Baal was to be god, Jehovah must be renounced. If Jehovah was to reign as God, Baal and all his worship must be forever abandoned.

— Many in Israel were being tempted to compromise. When all the people had assembled, Elijah stood before them and challenged them to end their double-mindedness, wavering between two opinions.

22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left as a prophet of the LORD, while Baal's prophets are 450 men.

22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

22 So Elijah told the people, "I'm the only one left over as a prophet of the LORD, am I? But Baal's prophets number 450 men?"

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

- Elijah was not the only prophet who remained in Israel, but likely the only one who was openly serving the Lord (Cf. v13, Obadiah had hid 100 prophets in caves)

- Elijah then pointed out that in this contest the odds would be 450 prophets to 1—a humanly impossible situation in which to win!

— Elijah would also introduce a 3:1 additional handicap (v34)

23 Now have them give us two oxen; and have them choose the one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire *under it*; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire *under it*.

23 Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire *under it*; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire *under it*.

23 So let them provide two oxen. They can choose one ox for themselves. Cut it up, lay it on top of some wood, but don't set fire to it. I will prepare the other ox and lay it on top of some wood, and I won't set fire to it.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

- The oxen, as symbols of service, may have represented the people of Israel (Cf. Num 7:3). Elijah would sacrifice them as a burnt offering of worship (v23).

24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people replied, "That is a good idea."

24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."

24 Then you can call on the name of your god, and I'll call on the name of the LORD. Let the God who answers by fire be our God!"

"That's a good idea!" all the people shouted.

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

- Each side would prepare to sacrifice its bull as a burnt offering to its god/God

— Then they would each call on their god/God and the one who answered by fire would be shown to be the true God

— Baal was supposedly a fertility god, the one who sent rain, caused the crops to grow, and provided food for his people. He was the one who supposedly sent fire (lightning) from heaven.

- The three-and-one-half-year drought and famine had been a great embarrassment to the worshipers of Baal

— It seemed as if Elijah and his God, rather than Baal, were in control of the fertility of Israel

— So Elijah's test to Baal's followers seemed like a good opportunity to vindicate their god and they readily agreed to it. When the preparations were completed, the test began.

**25** So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose the one ox for yourselves and prepare it first, since *there are many of you*, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under the ox*."

**25** So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*."

**25** So Elijah told the prophets of Baal, "Choose an ox for yourselves and you prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but don't set fire to the offering."

**25** And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it, and they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice and no one answered. And they limped about the altar which they had made.

26 Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.

26 So they took the ox that was given to them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from early morning until noon. "Baal! Answer us!" they cried. But there was no response. Nobody answered. So they kept on dancing around the altar that they had made.

**26** And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And at noon Elijah ridiculed them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, since he is a god; undoubtedly he is **attending to business**, or is on the way, or is **on a journey**. Perhaps he is asleep, and will awaken."

27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep

and needs to be awakened."

27 Starting about noon, Elijah began to tease them: "Shout louder! "He's a god, so maybe he's busy. "Maybe he's relieving himself. "Maybe he's busy someplace. "Maybe he's taking a nap and somebody needs to wake him up."

**27** And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

- After six hours with no response from Baal, Elijah began to taunt them, mocking the ineffectiveness of their god

— Elijah's bold sarcasm and mocking of Baal must have shocked everyone. In the ANE, even if a person did not worship an idol, he at least took its status as a god for granted. However, Elijah refused to acknowledge that Baal was a god at all.

- "...attending to business" - Elijah suggested that perhaps Baal was thinking about other things, literally relieving himself!

- "...on a journey" - they believed that Baal accompanied Phoenician sailors, so Elijah suggested he might be on a journey

— All of these possibilities exposed Baal's limited powers

28 So they cried out with a loud voice, and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until blood gushed out on them.

28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.

28 So the prophets of Baal cried even louder and slashed themselves with swords and lances until their blood gushed out all over them, as was their custom.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

- Characteristically, Baal's prophets responded by increasing the fervor of their appeals, working themselves into a frenzy

— To propitiate their god they mutilated their own bodies as the custom of pagan worshipers has been for centuries

— Pagan worship has always proved destructive to humanity

29 When midday was past, they raved until the **time of the offering** of the *evening* sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

29 They kept on raving right through midday and until it was time to offer the evening sacrifice, but there was still no response. Nobody answered, and nobody paid attention.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

- "...time of the offering" - 3pm (so this self-destruction continued for three hours), but still there was no response

— Baal did not respond to their six-hour chant for lightning, though rain and lightning often come readily to the Carmel mountain range near the Mediterranean Sea

In this dramatic spot the lone, majestic figure of Elijah stood apart. He was detached. I think he looked bored after a few minutes of the performance by Baal's prophets. Then that ironic smile crossed his face and you could hear the sarcasm in his voice. He used the rapier of ridicule. He taunted and jeered at these prophets. And finally, with wilting scorn, he waved them aside.

**30** Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come forward to me." So all the people came forward to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down.

**30** Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down.

**30** Eventually, Elijah told everybody, "Come here!" So everybody approached him, and he repaired the LORD's altar that had been torn down.

**30** And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

- Gather around me, folks

— When it was obvious to all that the prophets of Baal had failed, Elijah invited all the people to draw near and observe what he would do

— Yahweh's altar at that site (one of the high places?) had fallen into disrepair, so Elijah rebuilt it, as the Mosaic Covenant specified, with 12 uncut stones, symbolic of Israel's 12 tribes.

— There was still only one LORD, one covenant, and one nation with one destiny in the plans and purposes of God, even though the nation had split into two parts

31 Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."

31 Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."

31 Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Jacob's descendants, to whom the message from the LORD had come that "Israel is to be your name."

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:  
- As Moses built an altar at Sinai and set up 12 stones for the 12 tribes (Ex 24:4), and Joshua erected the twelve stones at Gilgal in the Gilgal covenant festival (Joshua 4:3), so Elijah built an altar of 12 stones "according to the number of the tribes" of Israel

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed.

32 So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed.

32 So Elijah used the stones to build an altar to the name of the LORD. But then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold two measures<sup>6</sup> of seed.

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 Then he laid out the wood, and he cut the ox in pieces and placed *it* on the wood.

33 Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid *it* on the wood.

33 Then he laid the wood in order, cut the bull into pieces, and laid them on top of the wood.

"Fill four pitchers with water," he ordered. "Then pour them out on the burnt offering and the wood."

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, "Fill four large jars with water and pour *it* on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," so they did it a second time. Then he said, "Do it a third time," so they did it a third time.

34 And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour *it* on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time.

34 "Do it a second time," he ordered. So they did it a second time.

"Do it a third time," he said. So they did it a third time.

34 And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

- After the bull had been slain and laid on the wood, Elijah gave another strange directive: he called for an additional handicap! He called for the whole sacrifice and its wood to be soaked with water three separate times.

35 The water flowed around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water.

35 The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.

35 The water ran down around the altar and completely filled the trench.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

- The excess water even filled the trench. The water—four large jars filled three times each! —probably was collected from a spring on the mountain or in the Kishon Valley below (v40), or from the Mediterranean Sea.

- The purpose of this soaking, of course, was to show everyone present that the burning of the sacrifice that was to take place was not a natural phenomenon or a trick, but was a miracle

— Also, the time involved in securing the water would have added to the tension of the hour

36 Then at the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, Elijah the prophet approached and said, "LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You are **God in Israel** and that I am Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word.

36 At the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word.

36 As the time for the evening offering arrived, Elijah the prophet approached and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I, your servant, have done all of this in obedience to your word.

**36** And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

- At the time of the Israelites' evening sacrifice (3pm; Cf. v29), Elijah stepped forward and prayed a simple prayer

— Without any of the theatrics of his adversaries, Elijah simply addressed God as one addresses another living person

— His words were designed to demonstrate to the onlookers that all he had done as God's servant (Cf. 17:1; 18:15) had been in obedience to God's command and not on the prophet's own initiative

- "...God in Israel" - emphasizing the fact that Yahweh had been Israel's God since patriarchal times, Elijah prayed that the LORD would reveal Himself as Israel's God

37 Answer me, LORD, answer me, so that this people may know that You, LORD, are God, and *that* You have turned their heart back."

37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and *that* You have turned their heart back again."

37 Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people may know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning back their hearts again."

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

- The heart of the people needed turning back to God, and Elijah prayed for evidence of that as well

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood, and the stones and the dust; and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

38 Right then the LORD's fire fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and even the water that was in the trench!

**38** Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

- God revealed Himself as He had earlier in Israel's history (Lev 10:1-2)

— He accepted the sacrifice of the nation, symbolized by the 12 stones, from the dust of which He had created the people, and the 12 pitchers of water

39 When all the people saw *this*, they fell on their faces; and they said, "**The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God!**"

39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."

39 When all the people saw what had happened, they fell flat on their faces and cried out "The LORD is God! The LORD is God!"

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

- "...The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God!" - the people were not only announcing their belief, but they were also chanting Elijah's name, which means "The LORD is God."

— It's possible that this chant was the origin of Elijah's name

40 Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slaughtered them there.

40 Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

40 But Elijah said, "Arrest the prophets of Baal. Don't let even one of them get away." So the people seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon and executed them there.

**40** And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

- The Israelites turned back to God. They demonstrated their repentance with obedience to the Mosaic Law, and God's prophet, by slaying the false prophets, as the Law prescribed (Cf. Ex 22:20; Deut 13:1-18; 17:2-7; 18:20).

(e) The Lord is the giver of rain (18:41-46)

**41** Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower."

**41** Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower."

**41** After this, Elijah told Ahab, "Get up and have something to eat and drink, because there's the sound of a coming rainstorm."

**41** And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

- Elijah told Ahab, who had personally witnessed the contest, that he could celebrate by eating. Perhaps he had been fasting to end the drought.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bent down to the earth and put his face between his knees.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.

42 So Ahab got up to get something to eat and drink while Elijah went back up to the top of Mount Carmel, where he bowed low to the ground and placed his face between his knees.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

- Ahab went up Mount Carmel from the Jezreel Valley below to eat, but Elijah went up higher to pray for rain (Cf. James 5:16-18)

43 And he said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked, but he said, "There is nothing." Yet *Elijah* said, "Go back" seven times.

43 He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times.

43 Then he told his young servant, "Go and look toward the sea."

So he went and looked out to sea. "Nothing there," he said.

But Elijah told him to go back seven times.

43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

- Rain normally came from the west off the Mediterranean Sea, so Elijah instructed his servant to look in that direction

44 And *when he returned* the seventh *time*, he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a person's hand is coming up from the sea." And *Elijah* said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Harness *your chariot horses* and go down, so that the *heavy* shower does not stop you.'"

44 It came about at the seventh *time*, that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare *your chariot* and go down, so that the *heavy* shower does not stop you.'"

44 On the seventh look, he said, "Look! There's a cloud, a small one, about the size of a man's hand. It's coming up out of the sea!"

"Get up and find Ahab!" Elijah said. "Tell him, 'Mount your chariot and ride down the mountain so the storm doesn't stop you.'"

**44** And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

- Perhaps the cloud shaped like a man's hand represented God's hand returning to the land to bless His people again

How often our prayers return the same answer: There is no change, no sign of deliverance. 'There is nothing there.' And so we're inclined to give up. We do not know that God's answer is on the way.

45 Meanwhile the sky became dark with clouds and wind *came up*, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

45 In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

45 A little while later, the sky turned black with storm clouds and winds, and there was a heavy shower. So Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

**45** And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

- At first the rain cloud was small (like a man's hand), but soon the whole sky grew black and heavy rain descended

— The torrent evidently overtook Ahab as he rode in his chariot to Jezreel, his winter capital midway between Mount Carmel and Samaria

46 Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he belted *his cloak* around his waist and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

46 Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

46 After Ahab had left, the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah, and he tucked his mantle into his belt and outran Ahab in a race to the city gate of Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

- Elijah overtook him, running the approximate 25 miles with divinely given energy

— Tucking his cloak into his belt enabled him to run without tripping over the long garment (Cf. Job 38:3; 40:7)

— Because of Mount Carmel, Elijah had discredited Baal and his worshipers, but he had also humiliated vindictive Queen Jezebel

This concludes the account of Israel's three-and-a-half year drought (17:1—18:46; Cf. Luke 4:25; James 5:17; 860-857 BC). This drought was a foreview of Israel's three-and-a-half year Great Tribulation in which God will punish Israel even more severely for her apostasy in the future (Cf. Rev 12-18). The major motifs of this section are Yahweh's superiority over Baal and His faithfulness to withhold blessing (rain) as a punishment and to send it in response to repentance.