

1 Kings 18

Verses 1- 6

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.” ² So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. ³ Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly; 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.) 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.” ⁶ So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

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.”

There is some debate whether in the third year is from the beginning of the drought or the time that Elijah had spent with the widow of Zarephath. Jesus said the drought lasted 3½ years so it would seem this is a reference to the time he had spent with the widow.

See Luke 4:24-26

²⁴ But He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵ But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a severe famine came over all the land; ²⁶ and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but *only* to Zarephath, *in the land of Sidon*, to a woman who was a widow.

³Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly; 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.)

The book of Obadiah may have been written by the Obadiah mentioned here.

We are not told where Obadiah hid the prophets but there were many caves under the western cliffs of Mount Carmel.

See pics 1805



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

The drought was so severe that the king was considering killing some of the livestock in order to save the rest of the herd. By creating this drought God was showing the people of Israel that Baal, the god of rain and good crops, was no god at all and could not help them in a time of trouble. If the people were thinking rationally, it would make a lot more sense to seek out the God that made heaven and earth and everything that dwells in it. It was Him that had made them into a great nation and saved them countless times over the last millennium (from Abraham until the time period here).

The fact that the king did half of the surveying is a little surprising but maybe he needed some time away from Jezebel. ☺

Verses 7-15

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?”⁸ He said to him, “It is I. Go, say to your master, ‘Behold, Elijah *is here*.’”⁹ He said, “What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?”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.¹¹ And now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your master, “Behold, Elijah *is here*.’”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 / your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.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?¹⁴ And now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your master, “Behold, Elijah *is here*”; he will then kill me.’¹⁵ Elijah said, “As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today.”

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

Obadiah was a man of faith but making the king angry was not on his to do list.

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.

Here we are given a clear picture of the intention of King Ahab and extent that he was willing to go in order to kill Elijah. The only reason the prophet was still alive was because God was protecting and hiding him from the king.

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.

Here we see how the Lord had been protecting Elijah. In dangerous moments he was whisked away by the Lord in a miraculous way.

When it comes to Obadiah, this is also a good example of how a Godly person can work for an evil master and yet himself be dedicated to the Lord. Obadiah risked his own life to save the lives of these prophets. This is what faith does.

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?

Ahab was seeking to the ends of the earth in order to find and kill Elijah while his wife was killing any prophets of the Lord that she could find. Lovely couple! ☹

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

This tells us that something amazing is about to take place. No one shows themselves to their mortal enemy unless it's part of a well-orchestrated plan.

Verses 16-19

¹⁶ So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and informed him; then Ahab went to meet Elijah. ¹⁷ When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is this you, the cause of disaster to Israel?” 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. 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.”

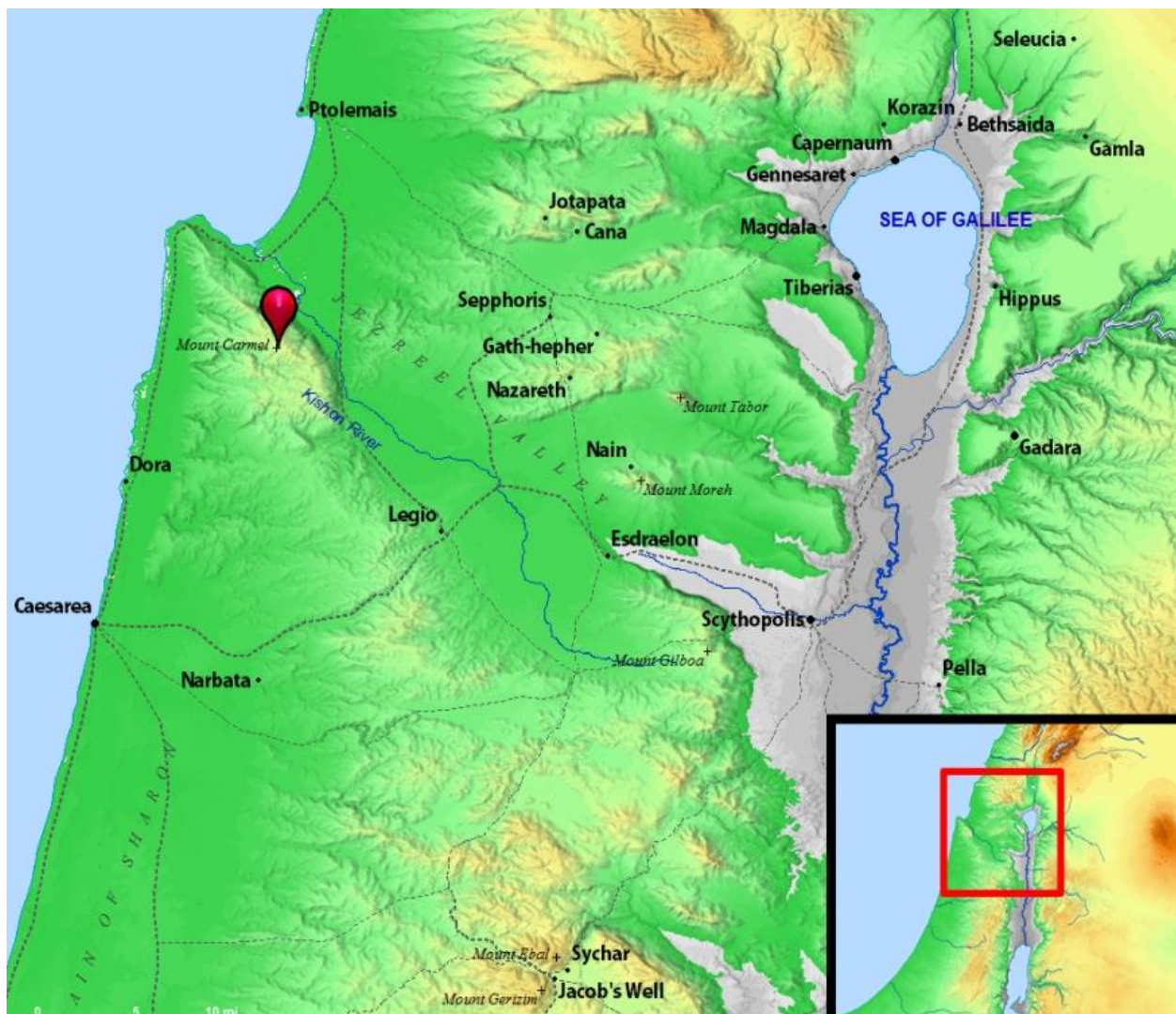
¹⁷ When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is this you, the cause of disaster to Israel?” ¹⁸ He said, “I have not brought disaster to Israel, but you and your father’s house *have*, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and you have followed the Baals.

Ahab blames Elijah for the drought but Elijah was quick to let Ahab know that the guilty party was in fact Ahab and his father’s house. Omri and Ahab had contributed greatly to the continual downfall of Israel by promoting false religions. Ahab and Jezebel were truly evil leaders but the people of Israel were more than willing to follow their lead and for that they (each individual person) will have to answer to God.

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."

Ahab desperately needed rain to save the horses and mules so even though he had been looking high and low for Elijah in order to end his life; he now listens to Elijah and does exactly what the prophet told him to do. He issues a decree for all of Israel to assemble at Mount Carmel.

See Map 1810 Mount Carmel



Jezebel was feeding (an act of support and fellowship) 950 pagan prophets and at the same time she was trying to kill the prophets of the Lord. This is taking place 87 years after the completion of the temple in 959 BC. The temple that meant so much to David was now of little consequence to most of Israel.

Verses 20-24

So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. 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. ²² Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. 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*. 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.”

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

While the mount itself is just another mount amount many others in Israel the area around it is fertile farm land and a beautiful area

See pics 1815 and 1820





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.**

The same challenge could be given to the nations of the world today. Which God is the true one?

For those who are believers of the one and only true God there is a different challenge. Did God create the universe and everything in it in six literal days or did it come into being thru a process called evolution that took billions of years.

How long will people hesitate between the two opinions? If the Lord created then follow Him, but if it came about naturally then follow the god of naturalism (science).

²² **Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men.”**

We know there were 100 prophets hidden in a cave by Obadiah but it is possible that Elijah did not want to reveal this fact to Ahab and Jezebel. Also, this mission was given to Elijah not the other prophets.

This challenge was directed at the prophets of Baal because he was seen as the god of rain, so the 400 prophets of the Asherah are not mentioned here.

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*. 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.”

The people refused to answer when they were asked to choose between God and Baal (verse 21) but when they heard about this contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal they were quick to say it was a good idea.

Verses 25-29

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*.” 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. 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.” 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. 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.

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*.”

The God of Israel had stopped the rain from falling for 3½ years and Baal was unable to restore it during that time so how is he going to win this contest?

It would be interesting to know if these prophets of Baal really believed that their god would send fire down from heaven to demonstrate his power or were they just putting on a good show for Jezebel.

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.

To be fair the Lord God does not always answer His children as quickly as they might like but this situation is quite different because it is a public challenge that the Lord initiated between Himself and Baal.

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.”

In this case, the mocking was appropriate because it was a time of decision for Israel and sitting on the fence was no longer an option.

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.

It is interesting that the shedding of blood was a symbol of sacrifice to the priests of this pagan religion. The difference being that they shed their own blood rather than it being the blood of animals. In the case of Christ he shed his own blood but He was sinless and it was done for the forgiveness of our sin.

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.

You got to give them credit for their persistence but zeal without knowledge did not bring about the result they desired.

See Romans 10:1-3

Brothers *and* sisters, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. ² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Verses 30-35

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.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.”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.³³ Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid *it* on the wood.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.³⁵ The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.

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.

There had been an altar to the Lord at this spot but it had been torn down. Most likely this was done by those associated with Jezebel. Of course there never should have been an altar there but Israel had forsaken the Law long ago.

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.”

This demonstration was not just for the 10 northern tribes but for all of Israel because the two southern tribes had also made altars at various high places in the south.

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.

There was only supposed to be one altar in Israel and that was at the temple in Jerusalem but this exception was made by God so the false prophets of Jezebel could partake in this demonstration. God did not want these false prophets to be given any credibility by allowing them to show up at the temple in Jerusalem and He did not want the temple site to be the place of their destruction.

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

Elijah proceeded like this was a normal sacrifice not wanting to give any indication of what was about to happen.

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

This may appear to be a bit over the top but when you are dealing with a group of people that haven't been thinking clearly for some time now, it's good to be dramatic.

Verses 36 - 40

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. 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.” 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. 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.” 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.

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. 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.”

Elijah wanted everyone to know that this event did not come about by his planning or understanding but by the word of God.

Elijah didn't want to be given any credit for what was about to happen. This was God's plan, His miracle, and the people would repent because of what God had done.

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.

For anyone that might be tempted to explain this miracle by saying that this was the result of a lightning strike they should be reminded that lightning does not consume stones.

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.”

It's great when people respond in a way that is appropriate for the circumstances. They had seen a great miracle and they gave God the glory.

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.

The text does not specifically say that the temple and altar of Baal were destroyed at this point in time but this assumption seems like a reasonable conclusion given the overall context. Also, the fact that Ahab had made a memorial stone of Baal seems to suggest that the temple & Altar had been destroyed. See 2 Kings 3:2.

² He did evil in the sight of the Lord, though not like his father and his mother; for he removed the memorial stone of Baal which his father had made.

Verses 41-46

Now Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a *heavy* shower.” 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. 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. 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. 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. ⁴⁶ Then the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

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

It seems that the relationship between Elijah and Ahab had been mended because Elijah spoke kindly to Ahab and Ahab did as Elijah had recommended.

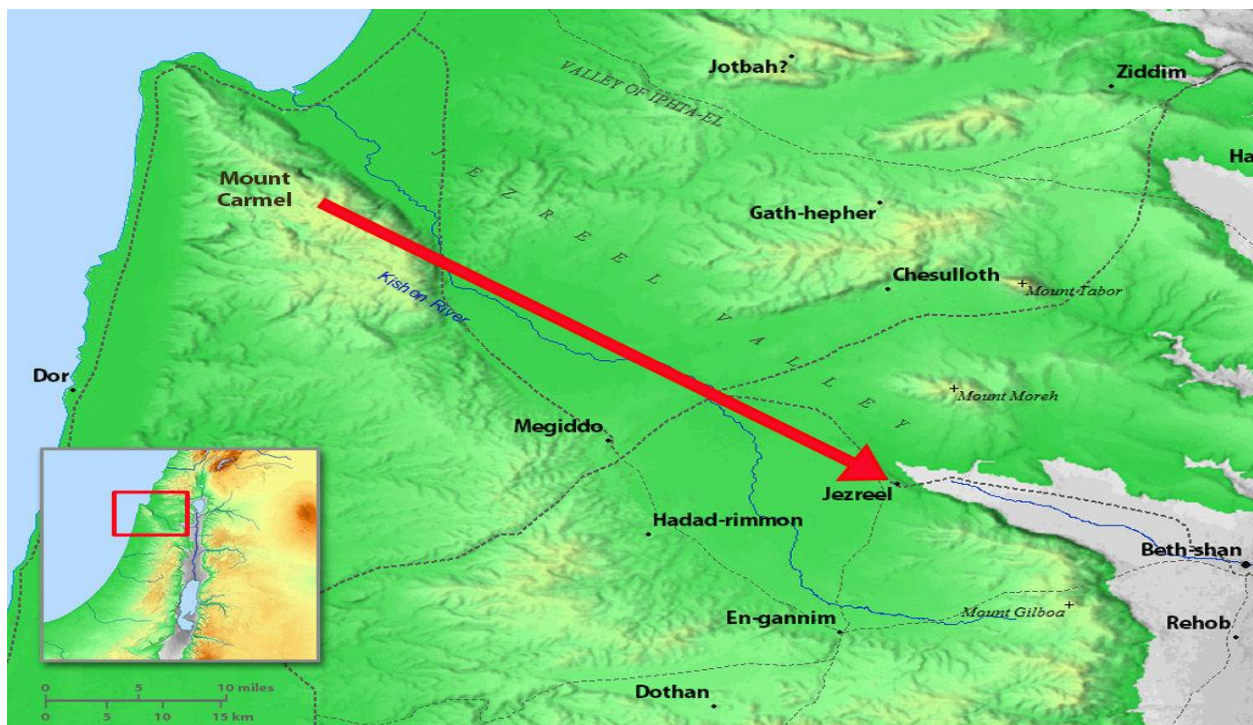
After the people had repented of their indecision and the false prophets had been killed the Lord immediately provided relief from the drought.

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.**

Rain rushing down the mountain could have caused a disaster if he had delayed.

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

See pic 1825



Elijah ran from Mount Carmel to Jezreel (a distance of 20 miles).