

Showdown on Mount Carmel (c. 857n BC)**1 Kings 18****God Sends Elijah Back to Ahab**

- 1 Some time later, in the third year of the famine, the LORD told Elijah, “Go, make an appearance before Ahab, so I may send rain on the surface of the ground.”
- 2 So Elijah went to make an appearance before Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.
- 3 So Ahab summoned Obadiah, who supervised the palace. (Now Obadiah was a very loyal follower of the LORD.
- 4 When Jezebel was killing the LORD’s prophets, Obadiah took one hundred prophets and hid them in two caves in two groups of fifty. He also brought them food and water.)
- 5 Ahab told Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grazing areas so we can keep the horses and mules alive and not have to kill some of the animals.”
- 6 They divided up the land between them; Ahab went one way and Obadiah went the other.
- 7 As Obadiah was traveling along, Elijah met him. When he recognized him, he fell facedown to the ground and said, “Is it really you, my master, Elijah?”
- 8 He replied, “Yes, go and say to your master, ‘Elijah is back.’”
- 9 Obadiah said, “What sin have I committed that you are ready to hand your servant over to Ahab for execution?”
- 10 As certainly as the LORD your God lives, my master has sent to every nation and kingdom in an effort to find you. When they say, ‘He’s not here,’ he makes them swear an oath that they could not find you.
- 11 Now you say, ‘Go and say to your master, “Elijah is back.”’
- 12 But when I leave you, the LORD’s spirit will carry you away so I can’t find you. If I go tell Ahab I’ve seen you, he won’t be able to find you and he will kill me. That would not be fair, because your servant has been a loyal follower of the LORD from my youth.
- 13 Certainly my master is aware of what I did when Jezebel was killing the LORD’s prophets. I hid one hundred of the LORD’s prophets in two caves in two groups of fifty and I brought them food and water.
- 14 Now you say, ‘Go and say to your master, “Elijah is back,”’ but he will kill me.”
- 15 But Elijah said, “As certainly as [Yahweh of hosts lives, before whom I stand], I will make an appearance before him today.”

Elijah Orders Ahab to Assemble Israel and the Prophets of Baal

- 16 When Obadiah went and informed Ahab, the king went to meet Elijah.
- 17 When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is it really you, the one who brings disaster on Israel?”
- 18 Elijah replied, “I have not brought disaster on Israel. But you and your father’s dynasty have, by abandoning the LORD’s commandments and following the Baals.
- 19 Now send out messengers and assemble all Israel before me at Mount Carmel, as well as the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah whom Jezebel supports.
- 20 Ahab sent messengers to all the Israelites and had the prophets assemble at Mount Carmel.

Elijah’s Challenge

- 21 Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long are you going to be paralyzed by indecision? If the LORD is the true God, then follow him, but if Baal is, follow him!” But the people did not say a word.
- 22 Elijah said to them: “I am the only prophet of the LORD who is left, but there are 450 prophets of Baal.
- 23 Let them bring us two bulls. Let them choose one of the bulls for themselves, cut it up into pieces, and place it on the wood. But they must not set it on fire. I will do the same to the other bull and place it on the wood. But I will not set it on fire.
- 24 Then you will invoke the name of your god, and I will invoke the name of the LORD. The god who responds with fire will demonstrate that he is the true God.” All the people responded, “This will be a fair test.”

Elijah Mocks the Prophets of Baal

- 25 Elijah told the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls for yourselves and go first, for you are the majority. Invoke the name of your god, but do not light a fire.”
- 26 So they took a bull, as he had suggested, and prepared it. They invoked the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “Baal, answer us.” But there was no sound and no answer. They jumped around on the altar they had made.
- 27 At noon Elijah mocked them, “Yell louder! After all, he is a god; he may be deep in thought, or perhaps he stepped out for a moment or has taken a trip. Perhaps he is sleeping and needs to be awakened.”
- 28 So they yelled louder and, in accordance with their prescribed ritual, mutilated themselves with swords and spears until their bodies were covered with blood.
- 29 Throughout the afternoon they were in an ecstatic frenzy, but there was no sound, no answer, and no response.

Yahweh Demonstrates His Power

- 30 Elijah then told all the people, “Approach me.” So all the people approached him. He repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down.

31 Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of tribes that descended from Jacob, to whom the LORD had said, “Israel will be your new name.”

32 With the stones he constructed an altar for the LORD. Around the altar he made a trench large enough to contain two seahs of seed.

33 He arranged the wood, cut up the bull, and placed it on the wood.

34 Then he said, “Fill four water jars and pour the water on the offering and the wood.” When they had done so, he said, “Do it again.” So they did it again. Then he said, “Do it a third time.” So they did it a third time.

35 The water flowed down all sides of the altar and filled the trench.

36 When it was time for the evening offering, Elijah the prophet approached the altar and prayed: “O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.

37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are the true God and that you are winning back their allegiance.”

38 Then fire from the LORD fell from the sky. It consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, and the dirt, and licked up the water in the trench.

39 When all the people saw this, they threw themselves down with their faces to the ground and said, “The LORD is the true God! The LORD is the true God!”

Prophets of Baal Executed

40 Elijah told them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Don’t let even one of them escape!” So they seized them, and Elijah led them down to the Kishon Valley and executed them there.

The Prayer of a Righteous Man

41 Then Elijah told Ahab, “Go on up and eat and drink, for the sound of a heavy rainstorm can be heard.”

42 So Ahab went on up to eat and drink, while Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel. He bent down toward the ground and put his face between his knees. [[James 5:16–18](#)]

43 He told his servant, “Go on up and look in the direction of the sea.” So he went on up, looked, and reported, “There is nothing.” Seven times Elijah sent him to look.

44 The seventh time the servant said, “Look, a small cloud, the size of the palm of a man’s hand, is rising up from the sea.” Elijah then said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up the chariots and go down, so that the rain won’t overtake you.’”

45 Meanwhile the sky was covered with dark clouds, the wind blew, and there was a heavy rainstorm. Ahab rode toward Jezreel.

46 Now the LORD energized Elijah with power; he tucked his robe into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

The Aftermath—Elijah’s Discouragement and Elisha’s Call (c. 857n BC)

1 Kings 19

Jezebel Threatens to Kill Elijah

1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, including a detailed account of how he killed all the prophets with the sword.

2 Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah with this warning, “May the gods judge me severely if by this time tomorrow I do not take your life as you did theirs!”

Elijah On the Run

3 Elijah was afraid, so he got up and fled for his life to Beer Sheba in Judah. He left his servant there,

4 while he went a day’s journey into the desert. He went and sat down under a shrub and asked the LORD to take his life: “I’ve had enough! Now, O LORD, take my life. After all, I’m no better than my ancestors.”

5 He stretched out and fell asleep under the shrub. All of a sudden an angelic messenger touched him and said, “Get up and eat.”

6 He looked and right there by his head was a cake baking on hot coals and a jug of water. He ate and drank and then slept some more.

7 The LORD’s angelic messenger came back again, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat, for otherwise you won’t be able to make the journey.”

8 So he got up and ate and drank. That meal gave him the strength to travel forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Yahweh Questions Elijah

9 He went into a cave there and spent the night. All of a sudden the LORD spoke to him, “Why are you here, Elijah?”

10 He answered, “I have been absolutely loyal to the LORD, the sovereign God, even though the Israelites have abandoned the agreement they made with you, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left and now they want to take my life.”

11 The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD. Look, the LORD is ready to pass by.” A very powerful wind

went before the LORD, digging into the mountain and causing landslides, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the windstorm there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

12 After the earthquake, there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire, there was a soft whisper.

13 When Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his robe and went out and stood at the entrance to the cave. All of a sudden a voice asked him, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

14 He answered, "I have been absolutely loyal to the LORD, the sovereign God, even though the Israelites have abandoned the agreement they made with you, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left and now they want to take my life."

Elijah's Commission

15 The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came and then head for the Desert of Damascus. Go and anoint Hazael king over Syria.

16 You must anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to take your place as prophet.

17 Jehu will kill anyone who escapes Hazael's sword, and Elisha will kill anyone who escapes Jehu's sword.

18 I still have left in Israel seven thousand followers who have not bowed their knees to Baal or kissed the images of him." [\[Rom 11:1-5\]](#)

The Call of Elisha

19 Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen; he was near the twelfth pair. Elijah passed by him and threw his robe over him.

20 He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, then I will follow you." Elijah said to him, "Go back! Indeed, what have I done to you?"

21 Elisha went back and took his pair of oxen and slaughtered them. He cooked the meat over a fire that he made by burning the harness and yoke. He gave the people meat and they ate. Then he got up and followed Elijah and became his assistant.

Ben-Hadad of Syria Attacks Ahab (c. 857n BC)

1 Kings 20:1-22

Ben-Hadad Besieges Israel's Capital Samaria

1 Now King Ben Hadad of Syria assembled all his army, along with thirty-two other kings with their horses and chariots. He marched against Samaria and besieged and attacked it.

Negotiations Fail

2 He sent messengers to King Ahab of Israel, who was in the city.

3 He said to him, "This is what Ben Hadad says, 'Your silver and your gold are mine, as well as the best of your wives and sons.'"

4 The king of Israel replied, "It is just as you say, my master, O king. I and all I own belong to you."

5 The messengers came again and said, "This is what Ben Hadad says, 'I sent this message to you, "You must give me your silver, gold, wives, and sons.'"

6 But now at this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you and they will search through your palace and your servants' houses. They will carry away all your valuables."

7 The king of Israel summoned all the leaders of the land and said, "Notice how this man is looking for trouble. Indeed, he demanded my wives, sons, silver, and gold, and I did not resist him."

8 All the leaders and people said to him, "Do not give in or agree to his demands."

9 So he said to the messengers of Ben Hadad, "Say this to my master, the king, 'I will give you everything you demanded at first from your servant, but I am unable to agree to this latest demand.'" So the messengers went back and gave their report.

10 Ben Hadad sent another message to him, "May the gods judge me severely if there is enough dirt left in Samaria for my soldiers to scoop up in their hands."

11 The king of Israel replied, "Tell him the one who puts on his battle gear should not boast like one who is taking it off."

12 When Ben Hadad received this reply, he and the other kings were drinking in their quarters. He ordered his servants, "Get ready to attack!" So they got ready to attack the city.

Yahweh Promises to Deliver Ahab

13 Now a prophet visited King Ahab of Israel and said, "This is what the LORD says, 'Do you see this huge army? Look, I am going to hand it over to you this very day. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

14 Ahab asked, "By whom will this be accomplished?" He answered, "This is what the LORD says, 'By the servants of the district governors.'" Ahab asked, "Who will launch the attack?" He answered, "You will."

God Helps Ahab Defeat the Syrians

15 So Ahab assembled the 232 servants of the district governors. After that he assembled all the Israelite army, numbering 7,000.

16 They marched out at noon, while Ben Hadad and the thirty-two kings allied with him were drinking heavily in their quarters.

17 The servants of the district governors led the march. When Ben Hadad sent messengers, they reported back to him, “Men are marching out of Samaria.”

18 He ordered, “Whether they come in peace or to do battle, take them alive.”

19 They marched out of the city with the servants of the district governors in the lead and the army behind them.

20 Each one struck down an enemy soldier; the Syrians fled and Israel chased them. King Ben Hadad of Syria escaped on horseback with some horsemen.

21 Then the king of Israel marched out and struck down the horses and chariots; he thoroughly defeated Syria.

Ben-Hadad’s Second Attack Foretold

22 The prophet visited the king of Israel and instructed him, “Go, fortify your defenses. Determine what you must do, for in the spring the king of Syria will attack you.”

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