

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION TO 1 KINGS 18

In this chapter Elijah has an order from the Lord to show himself to Ahab, who, going first, and meeting with a servant of his, Obadiah, charges him to tell his master where he was, that he might meet him, (^{<1180>}1 Kings 18:1-16), and, upon meeting him, desires that all Israel, and the prophets of Baal, might be convened, which was accordingly done, (^{<1187>}1 Kings 18:17-20), when he expostulated with the people of Israel for their idolatry, mocked and confounded the prophets of Baal, and gave the strongest proofs, to the conviction of the people, that Jehovah is the true God, (^{<1182>}1 Kings 18:21-39), on which all the prophets of Baal were slain, (^{<1180>}1 Kings 18:40), and rain in great abundance was given at the prayer of the prophet, (^{<1184>}1 Kings 18:41-46).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass after many days*, etc.] When two years and more were gone from the time the drought and famine began; or rather from the time of the prophets departure to the brook Cherith, which might be six months after the famine began:

that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year; of his absence from Ahab:

saying, go show thyself unto Ahab; whom he had not seen so long, and who had been seeking for him, but to no purpose:

and I will send rain upon the earth; the term of three years and six months being almost expired, (see ^{<3187>}James 5:17).

Ver. 2. *And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab*, etc.] Which showed his cheerful and ready obedience to the will of God, and his great courage and magnanimity, to face a king enraged against him, and that sought his life:

and there was a sore famine in Samaria; the metropolis of the kingdom, where Ahab kept his court, and therefore must be sensible of it, and bore the greater indignation against the prophet who had foretold it.

Ver. 3. *And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house,* etc.] Perhaps his steward: the Jews^{f384} take him to be Obadiah the prophet, who wrote the small prophecy that goes by his name:

(now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly:) who, though he did not go up to Jerusalem to worship, which ceremonial service was dispensed with in him, yet he did not worship the calves, nor Baal, but served the Lord in a spiritual manner.

Ver. 4. *For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord,* etc.] Or slew them, as the Targum; put them to death some way or another; such as were brought up in the schools of the prophets, trained up in religious exercises, and instructed others therein:

that Obadiah took one hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave; fifty in one cave and fifty in another; for there were large caves in the land of Israel capable of holding such a number, and many more, (see ^{<0221>}1 Samuel 22:1 24:3) and fed them with bread and water; which in this time of famine were very acceptable; though these may be put for all the necessaries of life.

Ver. 5. *And Ahab said unto Obadiah, go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks,* etc.] To observe in what condition they were, and the places adjoining to them, the meadows and valleys:

peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive; particularly those which belonged to the king's stables, to find provisions for which it was found difficult:

that we lose not all the beasts; many of them, doubtless, were lost through the drought already, and there was great danger of the rest, and so, in time, of there being none to procreate and preserve their species, and to prevent which Ahab proposed to take this method.

Ver. 6. *So they divided the land between them, to pass through it,* etc.] And one took one part, and the other the other part:

Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself; Ahab not caring to trust any but Obadiah, who he knew was a faithful man, lest they should be bribed by those that had grass not to discover it.

Ver. 7. *And as Obadiah was in the way,* etc.] In his district, making his observations:

behold, Elijah met him: where is not said; but he was, no doubt, upon the road from Zarephath to Samaria:

and he knew him that is, Obadiah knew Elijah, having seen him at Ahab's court before he absconded:

and fell on his face, and said, art thou that my lord Elijah? thus doing him honour and reverence both by words and gesture, as being an extraordinary prophet of the Lord.

Ver. 8. *And he answered him, I am,* etc.] He did not desire to be concealed, his orders were to show and make himself known to Ahab, and Obadiah was one of his domestic servants:

go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here; in such a place, ready to face him at any time. Elijah, by calling Ahab the lord of Obadiah, as he tacitly reproveth him for calling him lord, shows reverence to Ahab as a king, and yet that he was fearless of him, as he was the prophet and ambassador of the Lord of hosts to him.

Ver. 9. *And he said, what have I sinned,* etc.] Or in what have I offended God or his prophet, that revenge should be taken on me in this way:

that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? for that he supposed would be the consequence of it, as he argues and more plainly expresses his sense in the following words.

Ver. 10. *As the Lord thy God liveth,* etc.] Which is the form of an oath he thought fit to make, to ascertain the truth of what he was about to say:

there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee; which is either an hyperbolical expression, signifying he had sought for him in many places, and in every place he could think of; or it must be understood either of the ten tribes, which were as so many nations and kingdoms as they had been; or were more in the times of the Canaanites; or of the nations round about, that were in alliance with or tributary to the king of Israel:

and when they said, he is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation that they found thee not; which he might exact of his own subjects, but could not of other nations, unless they were free to it of themselves; or he might take it of their ambassadors or merchants that came into his land, of whom he inquired, and adjured them to tell him the truth.

Ver. 11. *And now thou sayest, go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here.]* Which, if I should not be able to make good, would be of fatal consequence to me; and that it is plain he feared, by what he next says.

Ver. 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, etc.]* This he supposed might possibly, and very probably, be the case, since small raptures might have been already, and known to Obadiah, as there were afterwards, (see ^{<1126>}2 Kings 2:16 ^{<2482>}Ezekiel 3:12,14 ^{<4189>}Acts 8:39), and then he should not know where he was, nor be able to direct his master where to find him:

and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me; for telling him a lie, and deceiving and mocking him; or for not seizing on Elijah, and bringing him, when he knew he was so desirous of getting him into his hands:

but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth; and therefore did not deserve to be treated after this manner, having been an early and conscientious worshipper of the true God.

Ver. 13. *Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord? how I hid one hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?]* (see Gill on ^{<1180>}1 Kings 18:4"), this he said not in a way of ostentation, but to show that it would be very ungenerous and ungrateful, as well as impolitic, to sacrifice such a friend at court to the Lord's prophets as he had been, and might still continue to be.

Ver. 14. *And now thou sayest, go tell my lord, behold, Elijah [is here]: and he shall slay me.]* That is, should he carry such a message to him, and Elijah should be ^{<206>}removed elsewhere, and not to be found.

Ver. 15. *And Elijah said, as the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, etc.]* In whose presence he was, and whose prophet and minister he was; he takes this oath, to assure Obadiah that he would certainly be upon the spot, or to be found, and not expose him to any danger:

I will surely show myself unto him today; he was determined at all events to present himself to him that day.

Ver. 16. *So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him,* etc.] That Elijah was in such a place, and had desired him to inform him of it, and was ready to appear before him that day wherever he pleased; for upon the prophet's oath Obadiah was entirely satisfied, and was in no fear of delivering the message:

and Ahab went to meet Elijah; though perhaps the bold message of the prophet might make him fear he had something to say to him not very agreeable.

Ver. 17. *And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah,* etc.] As soon as he came up to him, and knew who he was; Abarbinel thinks, because his hair was grown so long that Ahab did not know him certainly, and therefore put the following question:

that Ahab said unto him, art thou he that troubleth Israel? by opposing the religion of Baal, which prevailed among them; but chiefly rain being withheld from them according to his word, and at his prayer.

Ver. 18. *And he answered,* etc.] That is, Elijah, with great boldness and undaunted courage, not fearing the face of the king, being sent to show himself to him in the name of the King of kings:

I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house; they, by their sins, were the cause of all the troubles, those sore evil and sad calamities that were upon them:

in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord: to have no other gods before him, and not to make images, and worship them, which they had done:

and thou hast followed Baalim; the several Baals, the Sun, moon, and stars, the whole host of heaven, worshipped under this name; or, not content with the Phoenician Baal, or Baal of the Zidonians, followed others, (see ^{<0021>}Judges 2:11).

Ver. 19. *Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel.* etc.] No doubt but more discourse passed between Ahab and Elijah, though not recorded, before he made this motion to him; it is very probable, that after some dispute between them, who was the true God, and about idolatry, as the cause of want of rain, Elijah proposed to the king what he afterwards did to the people, to which he could not object; and

being desirous of gratifying his curiosity, and especially of having rain, which the prophet might promise him in the issue of this affair, he agreed unto it; and therefore Elijah desired that all Israel might be convened, that it might be openly and publicly done, and to the conviction and reformation of them, which was what was chiefly designed; and he chose Carmel, a mountain in the tribe of Issachar, well situated for the people that came from all parts; and the rather this than Samaria, that he might meet with no obstruction from Jezebel, and from whence: he might be able to see the rain when coming, as he did. Of this mountain, (see Gill on “~~2468~~ Jeremiah 46:18”), to which may be added, the description of it by Mr. Sandys ^{f385}.

“Mount Carmel stretcheth from east to west, and hath its uttermost basis washed with the sea; steepest towards the north, and of an indifferent altitude; rich in vines and olives when farmed, and abounding with several sorts of fruits and herbs, both medicinal and fragrant, though now much overgrown with woods and shrubs of sweet savour.”

From the following solemn transaction at it, it seems in later times, to have become sacred, and was very venerable with the Heathens; from this mountain, a deity with them had the name of Carmel, and was worshipped here, without an image or a temple, only had an altar erected for it, in imitation of the God of Israel, worshipped here in like manner; here Vespasian sacrificed to this deity, assisted by the priest of it, Basilides, as Tacitus ^{f386} relates; Suetonius ^{f387} also makes mention of this deity, and of Vespasian’s consulting its oracle, which gave him hopes of obtaining the empire; and from hence, in Popish times, there were an order of friars called Carmelites, instituted in the year 1180, pretending to be the successors of the children of the prophets Elijah left there:

and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty; who are supposed to be dispersed in the various parts of the kingdom, to teach and practise the worship of Baal, and encourage and spread it in the nation:

and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table; for it seems there were now more groves than that one Ahab first made, (~~1168~~ 1 Kings 16:33), for which such numbers were appointed to attend, and which, perhaps, were near Samaria, since they ate at Jezebel’s table, and were a sort of domestic chaplains of her’s. “Asheroth”, we render “groves”, the learned Selden ^{f388} takes to be Ashtoreth, or Ashtareth, or

Astarte, the goddess of the Zidonians, for whom, and so for these prophets, Jezebel might have a peculiar respect, (see ^{<III>}1 Kings 11:5).

Ver. 20. *So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel*, etc.] By messengers, requiring their attendance at Mount Carmel at such a time, at least their chief and principal men:

and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel; the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, but not the four hundred prophets of the groves; for of them we have no account afterwards, only of the former; it may be they were not at the command of Ahab, only of Jezebel, at whose table they ate, who would not suffer them to go.

Ver. 21. *And Elijah came unto all the people*, etc.] Assembled at Mount Carmel:

and said, how long halt ye between two opinions? sometimes inclining to the one, and sometimes to the other: as a lame man in walking, his body moves sometimes to one side, and sometimes to another; or “leap ye upon two branches” ^{f389}, like a bird that leaps or hops from one branch to another, and never settles long; or rather it denotes the confusion of their thoughts, being like branches of trees twisted and implicated; thus upbraiding them with their inconstancy and fickleness; what their two opinions were, may be learnt from the next clause:

if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him; for there is but one God, one infinite, immense, and incomprehensible being; one that is omnipotent, all sufficient, good, and perfect; there cannot be more, and therefore but one to be followed, served, and worshipped:

and the people answered him not a word: through conviction and confusion, his reasoning being unanswerable; or not knowing which to choose at present; or fearing they should be drawn into a snare, should they name any; either incur the displeasure of the king, who was for Baal, or of the prophet, who was for the Lord, at whose word rain was withheld, and might be given, which they were desirous of.

Ver. 22. *Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only remain a prophet of the Lord*, etc.] At least as he thought, all the rest being slain, as he supposed; however there were none present but himself:

but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men; which were very great odds he had to contend with.

Ver. 23. *Let them therefore give us two bullocks*, etc.] Who, being so many, were better able to be at the expense of them, and having the king on their party too; though perhaps no more is meant than that two bullocks should be brought thither, and presented before them:

and let them choose one bullock for themselves; which of the two they would, if they thought one was any ways preferable to the other, it was at their option to take it:

and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood; as sacrifices usually were:

and put no fire under; which was wont to be done for burnt offerings, as this was designed to be:

and I will dress the other bullock; by slaying and cutting it in pieces;

and lay it on wood: as for a burnt offering:

and put no fire under; to consume it.

Ver. 24. *And call ye on the name of your gods*, etc.] The Baalim, the many lords and gods they served:

and I will call on the name of the Lord; the one true Jehovah and God of Israel, whom I serve:

and the God that answereth by fire; by causing fire to come down upon the sacrifice, and consume it:

let him be God; accounted, owned, and acknowledged as the true God, and so afterwards worshipped as such:

and all the people answered and said, it is well spoken; they thought it a very reasonable proposal, a very good method to determine the controversy, and come at the truth, and know who was the true God, and who not.

Ver. 25. *And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal*, etc.] Who agreed to this proposal, though not expressed; or they signified it by their silence. Ben Gersom thinks they agreed to it, because that, according to their belief, Baal was Mars, and in the sign of Aries, one of the fiery planets, and therefore fancied he could send down fire on their sacrifice; but Abarbinel

is of opinion that it was the sun they worshipped, under the name of Baal, the great luminary which presides over the element of fire, and therefore had power to cause it to descend; and if not, they agreed to it, he thinks, for three reasons; one was necessity, they could not refuse, after the people had approved of it, lest they should rise upon them, and stone them; and another was, that Elijah proposed to offer without the temple, contrary to the law of his God, and therefore concluded he would not answer him by fire, and so they should be upon a par with him; and the third was, that they thought they should offer their bullocks together, so that, if fire descended, it would come upon them both, and then the dispute would be, whether his God, or their god, sent it; and so no proof could be made who was God, nor the matter in controversy decided:

choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; therefore in civility to them gave the choice of the bullock and the altar first, he being one and they many:

and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under; under the wood on which was the sacrifice cut in pieces; and when they had so done, then they were to call on their gods to cause fire to descend upon it.

Ver. 26. *And they took the bullock which was given them,* etc.] By such of them as made the choice:

and they dressed it; slew it, and cut it in pieces, and laid it on the wood, but put no fire under it:

and called on the name of Baal, from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us; and send fire down on the sacrifice; and if the sun was their Baal, they might hope, as the heat he gradually diffused was at its height at noon, that some flashes of fire would proceed from it to consume their sacrifice; but after, their hope was turned into despair, they became and acted like madmen:

but there was no voice, nor any that answered; by word, or by sending down fire as they desired:

and they leapt upon the altar which was made; not by Elijah, but by themselves, either now or heretofore, and where they had formerly sacrificed; and they danced about it, and leaped on it, either according to a custom used by them; such as the Salii, the priests of Mars, used, so called from their leaping, because they did their sacred things leaping, and went

about their altars capering and leaping ^{f390}; or rather they were mad on it, as the Targum renders it, and acted like madmen, as if they were agitated by a prophetic fury and frenzy.

Ver. 27. *And it came to pass at noon*, etc.] When they had been from the time of the morning sacrifice until now invoking their deity to no purpose:

that Elijah mocked them; he jeered and bantered them:

and said, cry aloud; your god does not hear you; perhaps, if you raise your voice higher, he may;

for he is a god; according to your esteem of him, and, if so, he surely may hear you: unless

either he is talking; with others about matters of moment and importance, who are waiting on him with their applications to him; or he is in meditation; in a deep study upon some things difficult to be resolved:

or he is pursuing; his studies, or his pleasures, or his enemies, to overtake them; or he is employed on business ^{f391}:

or he is in a journey; gone to visit his friends, or some parts of his dominions; so Homer ^{f392} represents Jupiter gone to pay a visit to the Ethiopians, and as yesterday gone to a feast, and all the gods following him, from whence he would not return until twelve days; and in like manner Lucian ^{f393} speaks of the gods, mocking at them:

or, peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked; with a loud crying to him: it being now noon, Abarbinel thinks this refers to a custom of sleeping after dinner; Homer ^{f394} also speaks of the sleep of the gods, and which used to be at noon; and therefore the worshippers of Baal ceased then to call upon him; and it is said ^{f395}, the Heathens feared to go into the temples of their gods at noon, lest they should disturb them; but such is not the true God, the God of Israel, he neither slumbers nor sleeps, (^{C104} Psalm 121:4).

Ver. 28. *And they cried aloud*, etc.] Trying to make him hear, if possible:

and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them; so the priests of Heathen deities used to slash themselves on their shoulders, arms, and thighs, in their devotions to them, as many writers observe ^{f396}, fancying their gods were delighted with

human blood; particularly the priests of Bellona^{f397}, and the worshippers of the Syrian goddess^{f398}, and of the Egyptian Isis^{f399}.

Ver. 29. *And it came to pass when midday was past*, etc.] And nothing done, no fire descended:

and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; continued praying to Baal, and singing his praises, but all to no purpose; or they behaved like madmen, as the Targum; thus they went on until it was time to offer the evening sacrifice; so that they had no interruption in their service, and had all the time they could desire to have to importune their god to do the favour for them they requested:

that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded; no voice was heard that returned them any answer; nor was any answer made by fire, nor any regard shown to their mad gestures, and barbarous actions; and very likely the people also, by this time, paid no regard unto them, perceiving they were not able, by all their cries and methods they took, to obtain an answer.

Ver. 30. *And Elijah said unto all the people, come near unto me*, etc.] And observe what I do, and what will be done at my request:

and all the people came near unto him; left the prophets of Baal to themselves, and took no more notice of them, but attended to what the prophet should say and do:

and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down; which had been set up when high places and altars were allowed of, while the tabernacle was unsettled, and the temple not built; this is supposed to have been erected in the times of the judges; though, according to a tradition of the Jews^{f400}, it was built by Saul, (see ^{<D152>}1 Samuel 15:12) but had been thrown down by the idolatrous Israelites, who demolished such as were erected to the name of the Lord everywhere, and built new ones for their idols, (^{<1190>}1 Kings 19:10). Benjamin of Tudela^{f401} says, that on the top of Mount Carmel is now to be seen the place of the altar Elijah repaired, which is four cubits round.

Ver. 31. *And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob*, etc.] Which he might very easily come at from the mountain:

unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name, which signifies one that has power with God, as Jacob had, when the word came to him to make a change in his name at Penuel, (~~Gen~~Genesis 32:28), and as Elijah hoped and believed he should have at this time, being a prophet, and a worshipper of Israel's God.

Ver. 32. *And with the stones he built an altar in the same of the Lord,* etc.] Whom the twelve tribes had formerly worshipped; and though now divided in their civil state, yet ought to be united in the worship of God:

and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed; or two seahs, one of which was the third part of an ephah, and two of them were more than half a bushel; and this trench or ditch round the altar was as broad as such a measure of seed would sow.

Ver. 33. *And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood,* etc.] Just in such manner as sacrifices usually were:

and said, fill four barrels with water; either from the brook Kishon, or, if that was dried up, from the sea; for both were near this mountain, and so to be had, though a time of drought:

and pour it on the burnt sacrifice; that which was intended to be one:

and upon the wood: wherewith it was to be burnt, and so made unfit for it; and which would make the miracle appear the greater, when fire came down and consumed it.

Ver. 34. *And he said, do it the second time, and they did it the second time,* etc.] That is, poured four barrels of water more upon the wood:

and he said, do it the third time, and they did it the third time; so that there were in all twelve barrels of water poured on the wood, agreeably to the number of the twelve stones the altar was built with, and may have respect to the same as they.

Ver. 35. *And the water ran round about the altar,* etc.] There being such a large effusion of it on it;

and he filled the trench also with water; which surrounded the altar, so that it seemed impracticable that any fire should kindle upon it; and this gave full proof and demonstration there could be no collusion in this matter.

Ver. 36. *And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice,* etc.] Which the people of God at Jerusalem were now attending to:

that Elijah the prophet came near; to the altar he had built, and on which he had laid the sacrifice:

and said; in prayer to God:

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the covenant God of the ancestors of his people, though they had now so fully departed from him:

let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel; and that there is no other:

and that I am thy servant; a true worshipper of him, and his faithful prophet and minister:

and that I have done all these things at thy word; restrained rain from the earth for some years past, and now had convened Israel, and the false prophets, together, that by a visible sign from heaven it might be known who was the true God; all which he did not of himself, but by the impulse, direction, and, commandment of the Lord.

Ver. 37. *Hear me, O Lord, hear me;* etc.] Which repetition is made to express his importunity, and the vehement earnest desire of his soul to be heard in such a case, which so much concerned the glory of God; the Targum is,

“receive my prayer, O Lord, concerning the fire, receive my prayer concerning the rain;”

as if the one respected the sending down the fire on the sacrifice, and the other sending rain on the earth; and which sense is followed by other Jewish writers:

that this people may know that thou art the Lord God; and not Baal, or any other idol:

and that thou hast turned their heart back again; from idolatry, to the worship of the true God; though some understand this of God’s giving them up to a spirit of error, and suffering them to fall into idolatry, and hardening their hearts, as he did Pharaoh’s; but the former sense is best.

Ver. 38. *Then the fire of the Lord fell*, etc.] An extraordinary fire from God out of heaven, as the effects of it show:

and consumed the burnt sacrifice; as it had done in former instances, (^{<1012>}Leviticus 9:24 ^{<1021>}Judges 6:21 ^{<1325>}1 Chronicles 21:26 ^{<1401>}2 Chronicles 7:1,3), and besides this, which is still more extraordinary,

and the wood, and the stones, and the dust; of the altar, thereby signifying that even such were not to be used any more:

and licked up the water that was in the trench; around the altar, (see ^{<1182>}1 Kings 18:32).

Ver. 39. *And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces*, etc.] In reverence of God, astonished at the miracle wrought, ashamed of themselves and their sins, particularly their idolatry, that they should turn their backs on the true God, and follow idols:

and they said, the Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the God; which acknowledgment of God, as the true God, in opposition to Baal, is repeated, to show their firm belief and strong assurance of it.

Ver. 40. *And Elijah said unto them, take the prophets of Baal*, etc.] The four hundred and fifty that were upon the spot; for the number of the people of Israel, now gathered together, were equal to it; nor was it in Ahab's power to hinder it, and he might himself be so far surprised and convicted as not in the least to object to it:

let not one of them escape: that there might be none of them left to seduce the people any more:

and they took them; laid hold on them, everyone of them:

and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon; which ran by the side, and at the bottom of Mount Carmel, into the sea; (see Gill on "^{<1007>}Judges 4:7") (see Gill on "^{<1021>}Judges 5:21").

and slew them there; intimating, that it was owing to the idolatry they led the people into that rain had been withheld, and the brooks were dried up, as this might be; or, as Ben Gersom thinks, that the land might not be defiled with their blood, but be carried down the river after it: these he slew not with his own hand, but by others he gave orders to do it; and this not as a private person, but as an extraordinary minister of God, to execute

justice according to his law, (^{<610E>}Deuteronomy 13:1) by which law such false prophets were to die; and the rather he was raised up and spirited for this service, as the supreme magistrate was addicted to idolatry himself.

Ver. 41. *And Elijah said unto Ahab, get thee up*, etc.] From the brook and valley where the execution of the prophets had been made; either up to his chariot, or to the tent or pavilion erected on the side of the mount, where the whole scene of things was transacted;

eat and drink; which he had no leisure for all the day, from the time of the morning sacrifice to the evening sacrifice, which was taken up in attending to the issue of the several sacrifices; but now he is bid to eat and refresh himself, and that in token of joy and gladness, as became him, both for the honour of the true God, which had been abundantly confirmed, and for the near approach of rain, of which he assures him:

for there is a sound of abundance of rain; the wind perhaps began to rise, and blow pretty briskly, which was a sign of it ^{f402}; besides, according to the Tyrian annals ^{f403}, there were loud claps of thunder at this time, at least when the heavens became very black, as in (^{<1185>}1 Kings 18:45).

Ver. 42. *So Ahab went up to eat and to drink*, etc.] Up to his chariot, as some think, or rather to some place higher than that in which he now was:

and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; higher still, where he both might be alone, and have the opportunity of observing the clouds gathering, and the rain coming:

and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees; expressive of his humility, and of his earnestness, and vehement desire, and continued importunity, that rain might fall; for this was a posture of prayer he put himself into, and continued in; and it is certain that it was through his prayer that rain came, (^{<3058>}James 5:18) and from hence came the fable of the Grecians concerning Aeacus praying for rain in a time of drought, when it came ^{f404}. So the Chinese writers ^{f405} report that at the prayers of their emperor Tangus, after a seven years' drought, great rains fell.

Ver. 43. *And said to his servant*, etc.] Whom some take to be the son of the widow of Sarepta, but he must be too young to be employed in such service as this was:

go up now; still higher on Mount Carmel; than where he was, even to the highest point of it:

look towards the sea: or the west, as the Targum, the Mediterranean sea, which lay to the west of the land of Israel:

and he went up and looked, and he said, there is nothing; there was nothing in the sky, or arising out of the sea, that looked like or foreboded rain:

and he said, go again seven times; till he should see something.

Ver. 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*, etc.] Either about the size or in the form of it; rain water comes out of the sea, and, being strained through the clouds and air, becomes fresh:

and he said, go up: the meaning seems to be, that he should first go down from the mount, and then go up to that part of it where Ahab was:

say unto Ahab, prepare thy chariot; bind or fasten the horses to it, as the phrase seems to signify:

and get thee down; from the mountain where he was, to go to Jezreel, which lay low in a valley:

that the rain stop thee not; on the road, that might be made impassable by it, signifying that such abundance should fall as would make it so.

Ver. 45. *And it came to pass in the mean while*, etc.] That the servant was gone with the message to Ahab, and Ahab was getting ready his chariot:

that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain; which all sprung from the cloud like a man's hand; and so we are told^{f406}, that sometimes a little cloud called the ox's eye is seen on a mount of the Cape of Good Hope, called Tafesbery, when the sky is most serene, and the sea quiet; which is at first scarce so big as a barley corn, and then as a walnut; and presently it extends itself over the whole surface of the mountain:

and Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel; as fast as he could.

Ver. 46. *And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah*, etc.] Giving him more than common strength of body, as well as courage and fortitude of mind; so the Targum, the spirit of strength from the Lord was with him:

and he girded up his loins; gathered up his long loose garment, and girt it about him, that he might be more fit for travelling:

and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel; reckoned about sixteen miles from Carmel^{f407}; this showed his humility, that he was not elated with the wonderful things God had done by him, and that he bore no ill will to Ahab, but was ready to show him all honour and respect due to him as a king; and that it were his sins, and not his person, he had an aversion to; and that he was not afraid of Jezebel, and her prophets, but entered into the city where she was, to instruct the people, and warn them against her idolatries; though some think he went no further than the gate of the city, prudently avoiding falling into her hands.