ELIJAH AND JEZEBEL.¹

THE CONFLICT WITH THE TYRIAN BAAL.

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On the death of Omri Ahab became king of Israel. His father had founded a new dynasty and seems to have been one of the ablest rulers of the Northern Kingdom. The power of Syria was growing and its menace to Israel was becoming more formidable. Omri himself had been forced to make humiliating concessions to it. It was natural that measures should be taken to strengthen the country's military and diplomatic position. How far this process had gone during the reign of Omri we cannot tell. But we find Ahab in alliance with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, so that the state of war which had existed from the time of Rehoboam was ended and with it a grave source of weakness to both countries. There was also an alliance with Tyre which was sealed by the marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal the king of Tyre.

This alliance of the House of Omri with the royal family of Tyre created grave problems for Israel's religion. Religion entered into the national life to a degree difficult for us to understand who make so sharp a separation between the religious and the secular. The alliance of nations carried with it the alliance of their deities. This would involve in the first instance the provision of a sanctuary in which the foreign princess and her Phoenician suite could worship Melkart, their national deity. There, too, the traders from Tyre might find in Samaria a spiritual home. Had matters gone no further than the provision of this religious hospitality, no crisis would perhaps

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have arisen; though the more rigorous worshippers of Israel’s God might have resented any provision for the worship of a foreign deity. But Jezebel, who was strong-willed and unscrupulous and who had Phoenician rather than Hebrew notions as to the prerogatives of royalty, seems also to have been a fanatical devotee of her national deity and to have shown great zeal in spreading his worship among the Israelites. There is no reason to doubt that Ahab participated in the cult or that the influence of the Court favoured the spread of the foreign religion among the people. This would not necessarily involve any abandonment of the national Deity. The two sons of Ahab, who both reigned over Israel, Ahaziah and Jehoram, and their sister Athaliah who became queen of Judah, all bore names in which the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel, formed an element. In view of the significance attaching to names, which were not among the Hebrews the mere labels of identification they commonly are with ourselves, the giving of such names is significant of Ahab’s attachment to Yahweh. When the king was meditating the ill-fated expedition to Ramoth-gilead which was to cost him his life he consulted four hundred prophets of Yahweh. Prophets of Yahweh were in communication with him in the earlier stages of the Syrian war. (1 Kings xx.).

It is clear from this that Ahab felt no incompatibility between the worship of Yahweh the God of Israel and Melkart the Baal of Tyre. Nor would it seem that those of his subjects who adopted the worship of Melkart abandoned the worship of Yahweh or practised it with less ardour. It was not intended that the two deities should be pitted in rivalry against each other, but that they should stand in friendship side by side. To the politicians of Israel it would have seemed a matter of international comity, not to be neglected without risk of rupture.

How far then may we describe the situation as novel? And was the conduct of the king a violation of the fundamental character of Israel’s religion? It might seem as if Ahab was only following the precedent of Solomon; but Solomon appears to have done little more than provide sanctuaries where his wives and those who had come with them to Jerusalem might practise the worship of their own deities. That Solomon himself occasionally participated in these cults is not unlikely; but apparently there was no attempt to promote
their worship among the people. But in view of the frequent reference in the earlier history to the cult of the Baalim it might seem as if we had simply the reappearance here of a long familiar tendency.

This, however, would be a serious error. When the Hebrews entered Canaan they gradually abandoned their nomadic habits and, in the more fertile districts, learnt from the older inhabitants the art of tilling the soil. This involved more than we should understand the art of agriculture to include. The land belonged to the local divinities and for the use of it and for the water which fertilised it tribute must be paid. Moreover, on their favour or displeasure the success or failure of the husbandman’s labour might depend. These local divinities were collectively known as the Baalim or Baals. The divinity of a particular district was known as its Baal. Presumably at the outset the Hebrews paid their offerings for the use of the land and to express their gratitude or avert the displeasure of the divine owner at the local shrine. The cult of these gods of fertility was undoubtedly inimical to sound morality. Yet they stood in quite a different category from Israel’s national God, much as the saints might receive a homage which the worshipper would insist did not rank with the worship that was due to God alone. At least it is probable that the mass of the people practised the cult of the local Baalim, or of the household deities, without any consciousness that it trenched on Yahweh’s exclusive domain. For Yahweh was the God of the nation; and His worship, practised by all the tribes, was the bond which held them together in spite of geographical separation or political division. Above all He was the God of battles. He went before the Hebrew hosts and led them to victory. The wars of Israel were also the wars of Yahweh; her warriors were Yahweh’s “consecrated ones,” for war was a sacred service. He marshalled the hosts of heaven, the stars in their courses, to fight against His enemies; He routed them with terrible slaughter and often put upon the survivors the ban or the decree of extermination. As the wilderness Deity He might naturally have been regarded as unsympathetic with the agricultural mode of life. At a later period Canaan was for the Hebrews the land of corn and wine and oil; but earlier it was pre-eminently “a land flowing with milk and honey.” The pasturage for their cattle meant more to these hardy emigrants from the desert
than the cornfield, the vineyard and the oliveyard. So when they settled down and cultivated the ground, it might well seem as if with this new mode of life the national God had little or nothing to do. Hence the cult of the Baalim may have been quite naturally adopted without any consciousness of disloyalty to Yahweh, who was lifted far above them and whose primary concern was centred on the fortunes of the nation.

But, as time went on, the feeling that Caanan was Yahweh's land grew stronger; and the tribute paid for the use of the fertile soil was felt to be due to Him. But the ritual which had been practised from time immemorial might still be regarded not only as correct but as essential, though the offerings were now made to Yahweh and not to the Baalim. Change in the destination of the service need not imply any change in its character. Thus into the purer worship of Yahweh heathenish rites might readily intrude. And the contamination was all the easier that the term "Baal" itself was neutral, meaning "lord" or "owner." It was applied to the relation of a husband to his wife, or of the owner to his land. Hence Yahweh Himself might quite innocently be spoken of as a Baal, and so the distinction between Him and the local Baalim might easily be blunted. Thus the peril of moral degradation affected the religion not only in its practice but in its conception of the Deity.

It was not unnatural that protests should be made. And it is the more necessary for our purpose to dwell upon this, since the movement initiated by Elijah and carried out by Elisha brings a figure on the scene who is specially associated with a protest against the agricultural life. When Jehu was playing, with oriental thoroughness, the part of a bloodthirsty usurper and was going from one scene of massacre to another, Jehonadab the son of Rechab went to meet him (2 Kings

1 The use of such names as Ishbaal and Meribaal in the family of Saul, still more such a name as we meet with in 1 Chron. xii. 5, Beliah (Yahweh is Baal) attest this. Hos. ii. 16 f. is specially instructive, "thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall be no more mentioned by their name." It was customary for Israel to call Yahweh 'my Baal,' that is 'my husband.' But this usage will be discontinued and 'Ishi,' also meaning 'my husband,' will be substituted. The evil associations of the term 'Baal' have ruined it for religious use, even though in a sense quite innocent in itself. I see no reason for disputing the authenticity of this passage.
x. 15-28). Jehu accosted him with the question "Is thine heart genuinely with my heart as my heart is with thy heart?" Jehonadab replied, "It is." Then Jehu said to him, "If it is, give me thy hand." So he gave Jehu his hand and Jehu took him up into his chariot inviting him to accompany him and see his zeal for Yahweh. Then Jehu went on to Samaria and completed the extermination of "all that remained unto Ahab." Then he ordered all the worshippers of Baal to attend a great sacrifice to their deity. When they were assembled, Jehonadab accompanied Jehu into the temple, the sacrifice was offered and then the idolators whom he had entrapped were massacred. This narrative makes it clear that Jehonadab was in hearty sympathy with the atrocities perpetrated by the usurper. But religion was the root of his attitude, while the motives of Jehu were more complex. We need not doubt that Jehu had a genuine antagonism to the cult of the Tyrian Baal; but his policy was guided by ambition from which the fanatical son of Rechab was entirely free.

But the point which concerns us is that Jehonadab is specially associated with the total rejection of settled life and the practice of agriculture.\(^1\) In the striking story which we read in Jer. xxxv. his descendants strictly observe the prohibitions which he imposed upon them. When Jeremiah, that he might rebuke the disobedience of Judah to Yahweh by the fidelity of the Rechabites to their ancestral law, invited them to drink wine, they refused. "We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn." The fact that wine happened to be the point at which their obedience was challenged has led to the popular association of the Rechabites with total abstinence from intoxicants; but this completely misses the significance of the rule under which they lived. It is clear from the terms in which it is stated that this rule was directed against settled life in any form. They were to remain true to

\(^1\) For the Rechabites I may refer to my commentary on Jeremiah, Vol. II. 144-146. See further the histories of the Religion of Israel, the dictionaries of the Bible, and the works on Hebrew Archaeology by Nowack, Benzinger, and Volz. B. Luther has an important discussion in E. Meyer's *Die Israeliten und Ihre Nachbarstämme* (pp. 132 ff., 166 f.), cf. Meyer's own remarks on p. 84.
their nomadic ideal. A moveable tent not a fixed house was to be the dwelling; no seed was to be sown or harvest reaped and especially they were to plant no vineyard.\(^1\) For while it is possible for nomads to sow and reap corn, the vineyard demands attention for years before it yields any return, and therefore implies a long settled life. The prohibition of wine was accordingly only incidental; it was not aimed against intoxication or drinking to excess, but against the use of a product of settled life. This loyalty to the nomadic ideal was not merely a conservative prejudice in favour of an older mode of life to which they had been long habituated it was also rooted in religion. From Jehonadab’s complete approval of Jehu’s actions and his participation in the scheme to massacre the worshippers of the Tyrian Baal we may infer that his zeal for Yahweh was very great. And from the form which his prohibitions to his descendants took we may infer that zeal for Yahweh meant for him an utter repudiation of the Canaanite civilisation and a steadfast adhesion to the wandering manner of life characteristic of the wilderness period. And this would be all the more the case since the tilling of the soil carried with it either direct worship of the Baalim, or the service of Yahweh with the rites customary in the Canaanite cultus. For him to build a house and to cultivate the soil was to be disloyal to the God who had made a covenant with Israel in the desert.

It might seem then as if the apostasy against which his movement was a protest was simply that which had been more or less prevalent in Israel from the settlement in Canaan onwards, and that the Baal-worship which Jehu uprooted was no novel form of idolatry. But the narrative in Kings clearly indicates that the idolatry against which Elijah protested and which Jehu extirpated was the worship of the Tyrian Baal. And we ought not to urge against this that the cult of the Canaanite Baalim must be intended because it was against this that Jehonadab’s prohibitions were specially directed. That is, of course,

\(^1\) Diodorus Siculus (xix. 94), as Graf and others have pointed out, tells us that the Nabateans had a similar rule. They lived in the open air and to preserve their liberty had “a law neither to sow corn, nor plant any fruit-bearing plant, nor to drink wine, nor to build a house. Whoever transgresses this law is punished with death.” W. H. Bennett very aptly quotes a parallel from Scott’s Legend of Montrose: “Son of the Mist! be free as thy forefathers. Own no lord—receive no law—take no hire—give no stipend—build no hut—enclose no pasture—sow no grain.”
correct; but if loyalty to Yahweh demanded unswerving hostility to the Canaanite Baalim and the whole form of life associated with their worship, *a fortiori* it demanded unrelenting opposition to the cult of the Tyrian Baal. For with the coming of Jezebel a new problem had been raised—not that of recognising a swarm of inferior divinities but that of placing a foreign divinity on the same level as Yahweh. And it is not unlikely that the Rechabite movement itself took shape at this time, and embodied a protest against the policy of the royal house. For while it had a much wider range and embodied a deep antipathy to the whole practice of agriculture as inconsistent with loyalty to Israel's desert God, the new worship came into even sharper collision with the ideal of monolatry. It is noteworthy that although the movement derived its rule from Jehonadab, its adherents are called the Rechabites; that is they derive their name not from Jehonadab but from his father. It is accordingly not unlikely that Rechab himself was its originator, though his son may have formulated the rule; and if so it is a natural hypothesis that the movement itself dates back to the early period of Ahab's reign when the Tyrian cult would be introduced.

It cannot, then, be too clearly recognised that the action of Ahab created a new situation. The crisis was indeed of the first magnitude. For the issue raised was whether Yahweh would tolerate a companion in the allegiance of His people. Or was He a deity who sat in unchallenged supremacy and undisturbed solitude on His throne? Was the religion of Israel a rigid monotheism or a tolerant polytheism or something between the two? We could answer these questions with more confidence if we could reach any assured conclusion as to the religion of Moses. This is too large and too intricate a question to be discussed here; but if we can scarcely venture to affirm that Moses was a monotheist, we may believe with some assurance that he did not permit the worship of more gods than one. He may have recognised the existence of other deities. But this was no concern of Israel; these other deities were for her as if they did not exist. Such a belief and practice is called "monolatry." It was characteristic of the religion that Yahweh was a jealous God, one who tolerated neither rival nor companion.

The action of Ahab and Jezebel was, if this view is correct, a direct challenge to a fundamental principle of the Hebrew religion.
For it placed by the side of Yahweh a companion to share the allegiance of His people.

What then was the attitude of the people to the religious policy and practice of the Court? Elijah complains at Horeb that the apostasy has been universal. “I have been very jealous for Yahweh, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away” (1 Kings xix. 14). This is plainly far too sweeping; yet it points to a widespread apostasy due presumably less to the enthusiasm of the people for the national deity of their allies than to tolerant acquiescence in a fashionable cult or a desire to stand well with the rulers of the State. The later history seems to suggest that though the foreign cult was widely spread in Israel it was not deeply rooted. And there were not a few who were neither sycophants nor Laodiceans. Some may simply have stood aloof; but others seem to have made a definite protest. For we have a reference to an attempt of Jezebel to exterminate the prophets of Yahweh when Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water. And while some actively opposed, others quietly abstained. In the deep despondency occasioned by his sense of isolation Elijah is assured (1 Kings xix. 15-18) that when the drastic triple judgment he is to set in motion falls on Israel, Yahweh will preserve alive a remnant of seven thousand, “all the knees which have not bowed unto the Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” Thus he learns that in his refusal to share in the national apostasy he is far less lonely than he had thought. But that he needed this assurance suggests that they had quietly stood aloof rather than actively opposed. It may be added that it is a quite illegitimate inference from the fact that a single temple accommodated all the worshippers of the Tyrian Baal in the time of Jehu (2 Kings x. 21), that the numbers were very small in the time of Ahab. For we are explicitly told that Jehoram, the son of Ahab, did not follow Ahab and Jezebel in their apostasy and in fact took measures against the foreign worship (2 Kings iii. 2). And it would be a very precarious inference from the narrative of Jehu’s massacre of the devotees of Baal that the whole of them put their necks in the noose, trusting in Jehu’s good faith.
We are now ready to turn to the work of Elijah in which the authentic Hebrew feeling, whether dumb or articulate, found its supreme expression. And it will serve our purpose best to sketch the story of his conflict first and then to touch on points of interest in it or the problems which it raises. It is indeed probable that the original opening of the story has been omitted. Presumably it told how the worship of Melkart was set up and how Elijah protested against it. But as the story now stands Elijah, of Tishbe in Gilead, is introduced to us with highly effective abruptness. He announces to Ahab “As Yahweh the God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word (1 Kings xvii. 1).” It is not indicated at this point why the judgment is announced; but it is clear from the preceding context and from the sequel that the drought is a penalty for the worship of Melkart. Fed by ravens at the brook Cherith and by the widow of Zarephath in Phœnicia after the brook had dried up, his career is marked by further wonders—the unwasting barrel of meal, the unfailing cruse of oil, and the raising to life of the widow’s son. Then in the third year of the drought the prophet is bidden to present himself before Ahab, who meanwhile had been seeking for him in all the neighbouring kingdoms. The drought had driven matters to extremities, and the king and Obadiah his minister were searching the country to find pasture for the horses and mules. The prophet meets Obadiah and bids him announce his return to the king. Obadiah fears the risk involved to himself in the errand since he has a foreboding that Yahweh will spirit His messenger away and that Ahab will slay his minister when he cannot find the prophet. Reassured by Elijah’s promise that he will confront the king that day, he carries the message to Ahab who goes to meet the “troubler of Israel.” Elijah retorting this ill-omened designation upon the king, challenges him to arrange a contest before all Israel on Mount Carmel between the four hundred and fifty prophets of Melkart and the lonely prophet of Yahweh. The test is to be made by sacrifice. Each party is to dress its bullock and lay it on the wood upon the altar; but the wood is not to be kindled by human hands. The God who answers by fire is to be recognised as the true God. Ahab accepts the challenge and the meeting takes place. Through the whole morning the priests of Melkart vainly plead with their god to answer them. Stung by the pitiless mockery
of Elijah, they utter more piercing cries and gash their bodies till they stream with blood. At the time of the evening oblation Elijah repairs the ruined altar of Yahweh, constructing it of twelve stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of the undivided Israel. Then he makes a trench about the altar, places the wood upon the altar, and the pieces of the bullock upon the wood. Three times the wood and the offering are drenched with water and then in answer to the prophet's prayer the fire of Yahweh falls on the sacrifice, consumes the burnt offering, the wood and the stones, and licks up the water with which the trench had been filled. All the people prostrate themselves with the cry that Yahweh is God; and the prophet takes advantage of the revulsion of feeling occasioned by his victory to have the prophets of Melkart executed to a man.

The God who answered by fire was the God who controlled the

1 Hitzig in his Geschichte Israels suggested naphtha as the means employed for the kindling of the sacrifice, and I believe that he was anticipated in this by Lord Herbert of Cherbury. The suggestion has been revived in recent times. See especially Saintyves, Essais de Folklore Biblique (1922). In the first chapter "Le Feu qui descend du Ciel et le Renouvellement du Feu Sacré" the author deals with the scene on Carmel, p. 21. "Or il ne semble pas douteux qu'il s'agit là d'un feu allumé par l'action d'un liquide sur une préparation pyrophorique préalablement disposée sur l'autel. . . . Ces eaux qui semblent rendre le miracle tout à fait impossible en sont précisément l'agent efficace." But even if Elijah could have descended to such a trick, which I do not for a moment believe, how could he have successfully carried it through under the vigilant eyes of the king and so many spectators, and above all under the eyes of the bitterly hostile priests of Melkart, already unsuccessful and in imminent peril of being discredited? How could he have made the previous preparation of the inflammable material on the altar, seeing that the altar was in ruins and was built up by Elijah in the sight of all the spectators? And who were his accomplices who drenched the sacrifice with the inflammable liquid, mistaken by everyone else for water? And are we to suppose that Elijah knew a trick which the priests of Melkart did not know? Saintyves himself says (p. 23) that the secret was known to priests of foreign deities and quotes many examples. However a credulous populace may have been imposed on by the impostures of an unscrupulous priesthood, we may rest assured that one so unsophisticated as Elijah would have been no match for the priests of Melkart, heirs of a long tradition and well versed in the wiles of their craft. We must remember that Tyre was not only itself highly civilised, but its vast naval and commercial enterprise brought Phoenicia into contact with a far wider range of cultures than any other people. We need not go outside the Old Testament for ancient evidence. Ezekiel gives us a most impressive picture (chs. xxvii., xxviii).
elements. So it was Yahweh and not Melkart in whose hands the power rested to slay man and beast by famine or to bring the drought to an end. The lightning had fallen on the sacrifice from a clear sky and gave no promise of the longed-for rain. So while Ahab goes up to eat and drink, the prophet goes to the top of Carmel to agonise in prayer with God. Already he had heard in spirit the sound of the approaching tempest; but his physical sensitiveness finds no confirmation in the atmospheric conditions. Six times he sends his servant to look out over the sea and each time he sees a cloudless sky. And only from the seventh journey does he return with the tidings of the tiny cloud, no larger than a man’s hand, which is rising out of the sea. Then Elijah knows that the rain is coming and he sends an urgent message to the king bidding him ride swiftly homeward lest the roads should become impassable through the floods. And he himself in a prophetic ecstasy, gifted with unnatural strength and speed, runs before the royal chariot from Carmel to Jezreel, while the long drought is ended by the torrential rain.

Cowed by a message from the infuriated Jezebel that he should pay with his life for the execution of her prophets, he escaped into Judah, left his servant at Beersheba and went a day’s journey into the wilderness. There under a juniper tree he prayed that he might die, conscious that he has only human strength to achieve his superhuman task. He sleeps and an angel rouses him that he may eat; but apparently he has no heart for food in his weariness and despair and sleeps again. He is wakened a second time and now he obeys the command to eat, assured by the angel that the journey to his destination will otherwise be too much for him. In the strength of that meat he goes forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the Mount of God, where he lodges in the cave. Then a strong wind rent the mountains and shattered the rocks and after the wind came the earthquake and

1 There is no need to see in Elijah’s strange posture any rain-making magic. It indicates his intense concentration on the prayer he is offering.

2 Gunkel (Elia, Jahve uud Baal p. 22) has made the very attractive suggestion that the original text represented Elijah as refusing the first invitation to eat. In that case we should omit ‘he did eat and drink’ in xix. 6. So also Gressmann, though in his first edition he secured the same sense by inserting the negative ‘And he did not eat and drink.’

3 Translate ‘the cave’ rather than ‘a cave,’ i.e. the cleft in the rock where Moses had stood (Ex. xxxiii. 22).
then a fire. But Yahweh was in none of these, they were but the heralds of His approach. After the deafening crash of these mighty elemental forces there followed a dead silence which was broken by the gentlest whisper. Now the prophet knows that Yahweh Himself has come; and a deeper awe fills him than has been inspired by the dread harbingers of His coming. Muffling his face in his mantle that he may not see the terrible God of Horeb, he goes out to stand in His presence at the entrance of the cave. Then the Divine voice challenges him to explain his presence at Horeb: “What doest thou here, Elijah?” In reply he asserts his zeal for Yahweh in face of a complete national apostasy in which he alone of the prophets has escaped the sword—and his life also is threatened. Then he receives his orders to return to his post and is entrusted with the threefold commission—to anoint Hazael king over Syria and Jehu king over Israel and Elisha to be his own successor.¹ “Him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.” Yet this judgment of extermination will not be visited on the whole people. Seven thousand will be left as a remnant, consisting of those who have not done homage to the Baal. The narrative closes with an account of the call of Elisha to be the attendant of the prophet.

The next narrative is that of Naboth’s vineyard. Ahab wished to have it for a garden of herbs because it was near his house, and offered Naboth a better vineyard in exchange, or payment in money. Naboth felt that there would be a certain impiety in parting with the inheritance of his father, so he refused. Ahab was deeply mortified—but regarded Naboth’s refusal as settling the question. The sequel brings to further expression the difference between Israel and Phœnicia. For Jezebel, brought up in the atmosphere of the Tyrian Court, feels only amazement and contempt for the poltroonery and the scruples of

¹It is questionable if Cunkel is right in thinking (I.c. p. 25) that xix. 15-17 looks back to ver. 4. Elijah, he says, has prayed for death; he is told to anoint Elisha in his stead; therefore his prayer is answered, he may die; but he will die comforted, for judgment will come and it is his task to anoint its instruments. But Elijah’s prayer was only the expression of a deep despondency, which the theophany removes. He would not now wish the prayer to be answered. That the story, if a unity, belongs to his final period is by no means clear; and it is not at all certain that originally vv. 15-18 formed the sequel to vv. 1-14.
her husband who permits himself to be thwarted by Naboth's obstinate refusal to part with his ancestral holding. The only monarchy she understands is one which recognises no law save the despotic will of the sovereign and holds at its own disposal the property and life of the subject. Yet Jezebel herself does not venture in Israel to put her Phoenician principles in practice. She recognises that the confiscation of Naboth's estate cannot be effected by high-handed violence, but only by a legal process in which the life of her victim is sworn away by perjurers. She lays her plans accordingly and Naboth, accused by false witnesses of blasphemy against God and the king, is stoned to death. His property falls to the crown, Jezebel informs her husband that Naboth is dead and bids him take possession of the vineyard. It is true that Ahab played no active part in this legal robbery and murder; but he took no steps to prevent it, though he must have known that his wife's promise to secure the vineyard for him could be carried out only by some such scheme as this. Elijah accordingly denounced the king as guilty of the crime which he had allowed to take its course and the fruits of which he was content to enjoy.

After the death of Ahab, his son Ahaziah, having met with an accident, sent messengers to Ekron to enquire from Baalzebub its deity whether he would recover from his illness. Elijah met them and sent them back to the king with a message rebuking him for consulting a pagan oracle, as if there were no God in Israel, and assuring him that his sickness would be fatal. When the king hears the explanation of their return and learns the reason, he enquires as to his appearance and recognises from the description that the message has been sent by Elijah. The narrative proceeds to relate that the king sent a captain with fifty men to apprehend the prophet, who called down fire from heaven which consumed the captain and his company. This happened to a second company of soldiers; but when a third was sent the captain entreated the prophet to be merciful. He granted his petition and went down with him and confronted the king, repeating the prediction of death which he had previously announced to the king's messengers. This, we are told, was duly fulfilled.

This narrative is so offensive to our moral sense and so unworthy

1 Klostermann and Gunkel think that xxi. 10 is an insertion. There was no need that so many should be cognisant of the plot; everything could be achieved by the false witnesses.
of Elijah that it would be a relief to regard it as a legendary embellishment. It reminds us of the unpleasant tale of Elisha and the children who, in response to his curse upon them, are torn by the she-bears. This story also gives a very different impression of Elisha from the stories of the deeds of mercy which are recorded in subsequent chapters, especially the magnanimity with which he bids the king of Israel feast the Syrian soldiers who had been sent to capture the prophet when the king himself was minded to slay them in cold blood, even though they were not prisoners of war. It is possible, as Benzinger suggests in his commentary, that the original narrative told simply that Elijah announced to the messengers that Ahaziah would die and that the king's death followed. This suggestion is approved by Gunkel. There is no serious reason for doubting that Elijah sent the message to Ahaziah. The fact that Ahab on the eve of his expedition to Ramoth-gilead had reluctantly to consult Micaiah gives no warrant for the inference that Elijah had already been removed from the scene. Elijah went and came as he willed, he did not dance attendance on the king or deign to make one of a long retinue of prophets.

The closing scene is that of Elijah's translation, told with great literary power. Elijah is accompanied by his faithful attendant. Again and again the prophet, aware of his approaching departure, begs his servant to leave him. But he too is aware that the bond between them is that day to be broken and is resolute to see the end. The bands of prophets resident at Bethel and Jericho have also divined that this is Elijah's last day on earth. Rolling his mantle Elijah strikes the Jordan with it and they pass over to the other side. Realising that the crisis is at hand, Elijah asks his servant what he may do for him as his parting gift. Elisha requests that he may inherit the share of the firstborn in his master's spirit. This would carry with it not only a share of that Divine energy and illumination by which the prophet had been qualified for his mighty work, but it would place Elisha also at the head of the prophetic guilds. The request is not an easy one to grant; it is not really Elijah's to bestow. But he knows the conditions on which God will grant it. If Elisha is gifted with the faculty of vision and can see the rapture of his master to heaven, then the boon he has asked will be granted to him. Elisha worthily passes the test and as he sees his master caught up by the whirlwind into heaven he cries "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen
thereof.”

Rending his garments in mourning for his master, he takes up the magical mantle of Elijah and smiting the Jordan again cleaves the waters and returns to the other side dryshod. Fifty of the prophets of Jericho who had watched the scene afar off recognise in the repetition of the miracle a proof that the spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha and prostrate themselves in homage before him. But like the servant of Elisha at Dothan their eyes are sealed to the wonders of the invisible world; and although they have seen the separation of Elijah from Elisha they have not seen the chariots and horses of fire. They fear that the incalculable Spirit of Yahweh has caught the prophet up and cast him away on some mountain or in some valley where he lies abandoned. Elisha whose eyes had been unsealed so that he knows the truth is unwilling to yield to their request that they may be permitted to seek for their master. At last yielding to their persistence he grants his permission, though he knows that the search will be futile—as indeed it proved.

I have thought it best to complete the narrative without lingering over the problems which it presents. To these I must now return. There is in the first place the question of chronological arrangement. It is clear, since the drought, the contest on Carmel, the journey to Horeb and the murder of Naboth are all assigned to the reign of Ahab, that the rebuke of Ahaziah as well as the closing scene are placed in their right position at the end. But the right arrangement of the earlier stories is not at all simple. In the present arrangement the first three of them hang closely together. The first opens with the announcement of the drought and illustrations of its severity drawn from the prophet's own experience. The end of the drought comes after the contest on Carmel. There can therefore be no question that

In 2 Kings xiii. 14, the words are used by Joash to Elisha on his death-bed, implying that the prophet had been a protection to Israel like battle chariots and war-horses. Some scholars think that it was used in the first instance of Elisha, and was subsequently introduced into the story of Elijah. If the phrase originally suggested the idea of protection, it would suit Elisha better than Elijah. But in itself the exclamation might refer to the heavenly chariot and horses which appeared to take up Elijah; and in that case the application to Elisha would be secondary. We should compare the very striking scene at Dothan, where there is a fine contrast between the horses and chariots of the Syrians round about the city and the unseen horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha (2 Kings vi. 17).
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these narratives form a unity. And in the present form of the story the journey to Horeb is linked to the scene on Carmel by Jezebel’s threat of vengeance on Elijah for his slaughter of the prophets of Melkart. There is nevertheless very real difficulty in this sequence. For that Elijah who had presented himself undismayed to Ahab and treated with him on equal terms, who had stood alone against four hundred and fifty priests of Melkart and taunted them with the impotence of their god, who had swung the people over to his side and had sealed his triumph by the massacre of the heathen priests, should now quail before the threat of Jezebel is very hard to understand. For the fact that the queen threatened was itself a confession of impotence. Had she dared to strike she would have struck without warning. But even the resolute, vindictive, and unscrupulous Jezebel would not have dared to touch the hero of Carmel—she who could not even put Naboth out of the way save by foul means. That there should be reaction after a tremendous strain one could well believe. Yet Elijah shows no sense of strain in his conflict with the priests but rather an easy mastery of the situation. And it is indeed surprising that, if he was the victim of reaction, his reaction should take this form. He looks back on his work as a failure. Utterly exhausted he prays that he may die. He is no better than his fathers, he is a weak mortal like them. And at Horeb he explains that he has left his post because of the universal apostasy of the people, the slaughter of Yahweh’s prophets and the menace to his own life. “I have been very jealous for Yahweh, the God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away.” After the successful issue of a test which he had himself imposed, such utter despair does not suit the actual situation. If, however, we detach the narrative from its present connexion where are we to place it? The easiest suggestion would perhaps be that it belongs to an earlier period in Elijah’s career. It presupposes a widespread persecution of the prophets such as is mentioned by Obadiah and this may well have preceded the announcement of the drought. The sequence of events might then have been as follows: Jezebel not only secures the erection of a sanctuary for Melkart, at which she and her suite and other Phœnicians may carry on their worship, but uses her position to gain for her own god a prominent place in the worship of the people.
This, while not actively opposed by the people generally, arouses violent antagonism among the prophets, which Jezebel counters by active measures against them, the luxurious Ahab, presumably, not wholly approving, but dominated by the demonic energy of his wife. Then Elijah leaves his home on the East of Jordan and goes to Horeb that there he may renew his strength and courage at the scene of the original revelation of Yahweh to Moses. He has himself laboured in the cause but is utterly despondent as he contemplates the havoc wrought by Jezebel, the acquiescence of the people, the widespread persecution of the prophets, from which he alone has escaped. Then reassured he confronts Ahab and announces the drought.

Against this reconstruction, however, it may be urged that the triple commission which the prophet receives at Horeb carries us much further down in his career. It is thought by some scholars that the command to anoint Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha is explicable only if Elijah’s work is nearly done. But this is not necessarily implied. The appointment of Elisha as his successor might have been made some time before his end and the narrative suggests that Elisha was for some time in attendance upon him. But the references to Jehu and Hazael do suggest a late point in Elijah’s life. The narrative in its present form is fragmentary and the original may have told how the prophet himself executed the commission. But, as the Biblical story stands, it is difficult to believe that Elijah anointed either Hazael or Jehu. For Hazael is taken quite by surprise when Elisha portrays the atrocities he is to perpetrate. How can he, contemptible dog that he is, be reserved for a destiny so great? And Jehu betrays no knowledge that his anointing by Elisha’s messenger was but the repetition of a consecration he had previously received from Elijah. The combination of the commission with the vision at Horeb may perhaps be only editorial.

Nor have we any definite evidence as to the period in Ahab’s reign to which the murder of Naboth should be assigned. That it was earlier than the drought is possible, but scarcely probable. For Elijah is already recognised by Ahab as his enemy which points to earlier collisions between them. If we look at the narratives in themselves, apart from the order in which they come, the impression we get is that the announcement of the drought belongs to the early stages of Elijah’s relations with Ahab. The description of him as the
"troubler of Israel" would be amply accounted for by the distressing situation to which the nation had been reduced by the prolonged failure of rain. Ahab's description of the prophet as "mine enemy" points to a later stage still.

From the problems of chronology we must now turn to those of historicity. It is admitted by practically all scholars that Elijah was a historical character. Hölscher goes to the extreme of scepticism in this, as in so many other Old Testament questions. We must accordingly be thankful for small mercies. But while he believes that the tradition about him is almost entirely legendary and that the narratives are throughout unhistorical, he allows that he must be recognised as a historical figure. He considers that the stories told about him were originally attached to Elisha and were only subsequently transferred to Elijah. The ideals which prevailed in prophetic circles after the revolution of Jehu found their representative in the figure of Elijah.

Other scholars take a more favourable view. Wellhausen's brilliant critical investigations and historical sketches have exercised great influence and are typical of the somewhat advanced, though not extreme, standpoint occupied by many contemporary critics. He insists upon the legendary character of the narrative, but finds in this a proof of the prophet's greatness. "In lonely splendour this prophet towered above his time, a majestic figure of heroic stature, as no other in the Bible; legend could preserve a firm impression of him as history could not." Critics of a more conservative tendency, such as Kittel and Sellin, admit the legendary character of the narratives and allow that some are without historical value. But they maintain the historicity of his conflict with Jezebel and the priests of Melkart, culminating in the contest on Carmel which ended in the prophet's victory, his journey to Horeb, and his denunciation of Ahab for the judicial murder of Naboth.

Difficulties confront us at the outset when we consider the miraculous element in the narrative. Our decision here will depend partly on the general attitude we take towards miracle, partly on the question whether the crisis was of sufficient magnitude in the history of the religion to justify abnormal action, partly on the question how far

1 Die Propheten, p. 177; Geschichte der israelitischen und jüdischen Religion, p. 95.
2 Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte (7th ed.), p. 73.
what was originally intended as poetry may have been interpreted as prosaic fact, or what was capable of natural explanation has been exaggerated into a miracle. But it would be unwarranted to argue that if the miraculous element is unhistorical there can be no kernel of historical fact. The narratives about Elisha abound in miracle, though miracle far more homely and commonplace; but they have not been found useless in reconstructing the later prophet's career.

It is further urged that the parallelism between the stories told of the two prophets is suspicious. Each prophet restores to a mother her only son. In each case there is a miraculous multiplication of the widow's oil, and also a miraculous multiplication of food. The New Testament student will remember how Schneckenburger drew up a much more impressive list of parallels between the stories about Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles; and what a place this filled as part of the foundation for the imposing structure erected by the Tübingen critics. The memory may inspire a salutary caution. We have to deal with the argument from parallelism much as we deal with testimonials, which are often even more important for what they omit than for what they say. When we apply this principle we are much more struck by the fact that so many stories which are told of Elisha have no parallel at all in the history of Elijah. Instinctively we feel that several of them would be quite out of keeping with the gigantic figure of the earlier prophet. Moreover, Holscher himself allows that the story of the cruse of oil and that of the restoration of the dead to life are widely current stories, so that any derivation from the Elisha narratives is unnecessary. And even if direct dependence had to be admitted it would by no means follow that the Elijah cycle must be indebted to the Elisha cycle. The relationship might be reversed.

But to this it would be not unnatural to retort that other considerations point to the greater originality and the more trustworthy historical character of the stories told about Elisha. There is in fact real ground for supposing that actions are attributed to Elijah which are elsewhere correctly attributed to Elisha. In the first place we have the commission attached to the theophany at Horeb. Here Elijah is instructed to anoint Hazael king over Syria and Jehu king over Judah, while Elisha is to be anointed as Elijah's own successor. We need lay no stress on the fact that, so far as we know, prophets
were not anointed and that the ceremony does not seem to have taken place in the case of Elisha. The word must be used loosely here; but the commission is sufficiently satisfied by the story of Elisha's call. We have already seen, however, that no anointing of Hazael or Jehu by Elijah actually took place. The only historical justification for the representation in 1 Kings xix. 15-18 would be that Elijah, unable to fulfil the commission himself, passed it on to his successor.

Even more serious is the problem raised with reference to the conflict with Melkart. The real triumph over the foreign worship is won by Jehu under the inspiration of Elisha, and the story of Carmel, whatever the kernel of actual history, gives, it is urged, a greatly exaggerated version of Elijah's actual achievement. So spectacular a demonstration of the Divinity of Yahweh ought to have left nothing for his successors to accomplish.

Undoubtedly there is force in this argument. But there may be exaggeration on the other side. Is it correct to attribute so much to Elisha and Jehu? The history suggests that the worship of Melkart had actually lost much of its prestige and its vogue before the revolution of Jehu. Critics have been too indiscriminate in this respect. From the fact that a single temple accommodates all the worshippers of the Baal in Israel in response to Jehu's summons they have drawn the conclusion that the worship of Melkart had never secured a large body of Hebrew adherents. They have quoted the consultation of the four hundred prophets of Yahweh, just before Ahab's fatal expedition to Ramoth-gilead, as proof that there could have been no such persecution of the prophets as is attributed to Jezebel. But it is obviously illegitimate to assume that we can argue from the situation at one period to the situation several years previously. It is very significant that Ahab's own son Jehoram, while his mother Jezebel, with all the queen-mother's prestige, was still alive yet "put away the pillar of Baal that his father had made" (2 Kings iii. 2). It would be much easier to understand the facts mentioned if the Tyrian cult had received a great set-back in the reign of Ahab.

Nor may we ever forget that no criticism of the narratives can be finally satisfactory which fails to account for the impression that Elijah made on his countrymen. If legend has been busy with the figure, this testifies to its magnitude; and to argue that around some slender historical nucleus imagination constructed a colossal personality, which
embodied a later ideal and was tricked out with features borrowed from the tales told about Elisha, is to do no kind of justice to the grandeur of a man who left an impression on his countrymen so deep that the history of Israel furnishes extremely few parallels. The dramatic scene on Carmel, where the solitary prophet confronts and vanquishes the four hundred and fifty prophets of Melkart, at least has this advantage that it worthily explains the unique position he filled in the imagination and hopes of the people. And it also accounts for the set-back to the worship of the Tyrian Baal which indisputable facts in the later history seem to require. And if, as we shall see reason to believe, the narrative was committed to writing about half a century after the prophet's time, the memory of the events would be too fresh to permit of the story of Carmel being related unless it contained a substantial nucleus of fact.

Nor is there any reason for doubting that he visited Horeb. The parallelism with Moses, which appears not only here but to some extent in the story of his end, justifies no scepticism; indeed it may be retorted that such a parallelism, if invented, requires a historical figure comparable with Moses to make it appropriate. But that Elijah, conscious that he stood for Yahweh's claim to the sole allegiance of Israel, should go back to the wilderness, to the spot where the original revelation had been given, is entirely in harmony with what we might expect. The close of the story does, however, present difficulties. The judgment on Israel is to be inflicted first by Hazael, king of Syria, then by Jehu, and finally by Elisha. The result is to be that only seven thousand will survive. It is true that Hazael was actually at war with Israel while the dynasty of Ahab still held the throne; but his attacks on Israel were continued through the reign of Jehu and subsequently. Moreover the work of Jehu was in no sense a continuation of the work of Hazael. It was, limited to the extirpation of the family and associates of Ahab and such worshippers of the Tyrian Baal as attended the festival to which the usurper summoned them. The reference to Elisha's completion of the task fits nothing recorded in the later history. It may be inferred, either that the author is writing long after the event, when the true sequence and the actual facts were no longer clearly remembered; or that the narrative is early just because it has not been adjusted to the events. The former alternative is exposed to the difficulty that no writer in the later period
is likely to have constructed a forecast so inconsistent with notorious historical facts.

It is, in fact, generally allowed, even by advanced critics, that no long interval separates the prophet from the record of his activity. Duhm, for example, says that the Books of Elijah and Elisha cannot have originated very long after the activity of these men. A similar view is expressed by Steuernagel, Sellin, and Gunkel. The general critical opinion is that the narratives were fixed in writing by the close of the ninth century. For they do not reflect the ideas of the great eighth century prophets. There is no attack on the worship of the calves, no insistence on the necessity for the centralisation of worship at a single sanctuary, no attack on astral worship. Gunkel says that the figure of Elijah is on the whole faithfully preserved and not sketched from the standpoint of the later literary prophets. The saga could not have invented so mighty a figure apart from a historical background; and how in the few decades which lie between the events and the narratives could any complete distortion have taken place? He points out that we gain a good deal of confirmation from the narrative of Jehu’s revolution, from the story of Athaliah and her downfall, and from the quotations made by Josephus from Menander of Ephesus.

It remains to speak of the significance to be attached to the incidents in the prophet’s career and to his work as a whole. The prediction of the drought established the prestige of the prophet and corroborated his claim to speak in the name of Israel’s God. For it was made good through a long period of ever-increasing dearth. The Second Isaiah gives great prominence to the argument from prophecy in Yahweh’s controversy with the heathen gods. The fact that Yahweh can with unerring certainty predict the future is, he means, a proof that He is the supreme Lord of Nature and of History. Only He who can control the future is able with absolute confidence to predict it, for otherwise His predictions may always be thwarted by a higher power. This argument belongs to a later stage in the

1 Israels Propheten (2nd ed.), p. 84.
2 Einleihng in das Alte Testament, p. 370.
3 Der alttestamentliche Prophetismus, p. 18; Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 124.
4 Elias, Jahve und Baal, p. 44.
5 Pp. 43 f.
development of the religion; but even in the time of Ahab the successful prediction of a catastrophe on this scale must have been very impressive. Yet it might be argued that it was Melkart and not Yahweh who had sent the drought, especially as we learn from Josephus that Phoenicia also suffered under it—a fact illustrated by the story of the widow of Zarepath—and that when the king of Tyre “made supplication there came great thunders.”

On Carmel, accordingly, the issue is decided. It is Yahweh and not Melkart who answers by fire, and it is Yahweh who sends the longed-for rain. The narrative raises the question whether Elijah anticipated the great prophets from the eighth century onwards in the belief that Yahweh was the only God. It suggests rather strongly that he regarded Melkart as possessing no real existence and that, like the later prophets, he could have described the heathen deities as ‘nonentities. Such contemptuous mockery of their god as Elijah addressed to his prophets would scarcely, we may feel, have been uttered if he had believed that Melkart really existed. Yet we have to reckon with the possibility that the actual language is that of the narrator rather than of the prophet. And even if the language was the prophet’s own, it is not inconceivable that Yahweh’s protagonist, who owned allegiance to the God of Israel alone, may have mocked the god of a foreign state whose worship on Hebrew soil he hotly resented, even though he may not have denied his existence. But the question whether he had formulated the belief that Yahweh was the only God is of minor importance. For what the crisis demanded was that, whether other gods existed or no, Israel was Yahweh’s people and should serve Him alone.

But this service was not completely rendered in acts of worship. The religion of Israel had from the first been an ethical religion. It included as essential elements the fulfilment of the common duties of man to man, especially justice, mercy, and the avoidance of oppression. It was these ethical requirements which Jezebel had contumaciously flouted in the murder of Naboth. Without hesitation or delay Elijah denounced the king who, though not cognisant of Jezebel’s plot, was aware that she meant to secure the vineyard for him; and since his own fair means had failed, he must have known that foul means were likely to be employed. In this denunciation of the king Elijah no

\[^1\text{Antiq.}, \text{VIII. xiii. 2.}\]
doubt had the people on his side. They would feel that their own rights were in peril, and it was their habit to resent any tampering with them; moreover their conscience approved the stand Elijah had taken as true to the ideals of Israel's religion.

The story of Elijah's pilgrimage to Horeb is one of amazing power. The grandeur of the theophany is scarcely to be surpassed. Utterly discouraged, the prophet leaves his native land that he may visit the mountain where Yahweh had appeared to Moses. There, in a cleft of the rock, Moses, the creator of the nation and the founder of the religion, had stood. Passing by in all His majesty and shielding with His hand His servant from the fatal vision of His unveiled face Yahweh withdraws the hand when He has passed and the peril is over and permits him to see His back (Ex. xxxiii. 18-23). Probably it is in the same cleft of the rock that Elijah desires to stand where Moses once had stood and to recapture the experience of his mighty predecessor. It was the manner of Yahweh to appear in awe-inspiring elemental phenomena. He had come to His people in thunder and lightning, in fire which set the crest of the mountain on smoke so that it "burned with fire unto the heart of heaven, with darkness, cloud and thick darkness" (Deut. iv. 11). So terrified were the people that they implored Moses to act as their representative and let God not speak with them lest they die. So "the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was" (Ex. xx. 21). And later poets describe how again and again Yahweh comes forth attended by tempest and earthquake, by thunder and lightning. Here then where Yahweh had disclosed Himself to Moses Elijah seeks Him, assured that if he can but meet Him at the mountain where He had first made Himself known and where communion with Him could be realised in its intensest form he might regain the power and the courage he needed for his superhuman task. The elemental forces are unleashed—hurricane, earthquake, and fire. But the prophet feels that not one of them has brought the experience which he craves. God Himself is not to be found in any of them. Was then this display of Nature's stupendous forces a mockery, eviscerated of the Divine presence with which in earlier days they had been charged? No, for while God Himself is not in them they are the harbingers of His coming. Suddenly the appalling uproar ceases and the utter stillness of the desert returns. There steals to his ear a soft whisper and he
knows that now at last Yahweh Himself is here. But what is meant by this impressive contrast between the wild havoc of natural forces in which God is not present and the gentle murmur in which His voice is heard? The lesson which it is often thought Elijah should learn from it is that the slaughter of the prophets of Melkart was a deed of violence utterly out of harmony with the nature and the will of God. For the most congenial medium in which the Divine nature expressed itself was not the furious hurricane, the disastrous earthquake or the raging flame. Not through such forces, loud yet inarticulate, but in the human voice, gentle yet distinct, was He most truly to be heard. Therefore His Servant must learn to abandon for the future all methods of violence. But this can scarcely be the lesson intended. If the commission of triple anointing was given as the immediate sequel, it is clear that a judgment was contemplated far more terrible than Elijah himself had executed, so devastating that all the worshippers of Melkart will be exterminated and only the seven thousand who have stood firm in their loyalty to Yahweh will survive. It is true that a rebuke is implied; but it is conveyed in the question "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He had been wrong in leaving his post, wrong in thinking that Yahweh was more truly to be found at Horeb than in Palestine. His attempt to experience for himself what Moses had experienced was an error. If Horeb was the Mecca of Hebrew religion, yet a pilgrimage to Horeb was no part of Elijah's duty. The ancient forms of the theophany are revived but their ancient virtue has gone out of them. They belong to a more primitive stage of revelation and they have now become obsolete. It is useless to dwell on the dead past or seek to reanimate it. His task is in the present, his mission is to create the future, his place is in his own country, his mission to his own contemporaries. He must not seek the living among the dead or imagine that a return to Moses is other than a retrograde step. The God of Moses is indeed the God of Elijah, but through the centuries which stretch between them His purposes have been unfolded and His nature more clearly revealed. He is rebuked in the question "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He receives his marching orders in the command "Go, return."

The work which Elijah did was of incalculable value for the religion of Israel. It was the lofty privilege of that people to be the trustee for monotheism. Even if at that time monotheism was not
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the prophet's explicit and formulated creed, yet the monolatry which he undoubtedly championed took him a long way on the road. If the policy of the Court had been accepted, the religion would have lapsed into polytheism and the cause for which Israel stood would have been grievously compromised, if not irretrievably ruined. He did not indeed stand alone, but he towered far above all his fellow-workers in his vindication of Yahweh's right to the sole allegiance of His people. And his monolatry was an ethical monolatry. This found striking expression in his fearless denunciation of Ahab for the crime of Jezreel; but also in his protest against the worship of Melkart. For that worship was stained by dark and revolting impurity and its establishment in Israel would have inevitably led to a disastrous corruption of morals. Not without reason did later generations find in him the fittest companion to couple with the great founder of the religion.

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