

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL¹

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THE prophet Elijah is one of the great figures of the Old Testament. In Jewish expectation it was believed that he would return to herald the messianic age,² and we know that in New Testament times there were some who asked whether Jesus was *Elias redivivus*.³ In the story of the Transfiguration of our

¹ A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures. The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes below: *A.f.O.* = *Archiv für Orientalforschung*; *A.N.E.T.* = *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*; *B.A.S.O.R.* = *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*; *B.J.R.L.* = *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*; *B.O.T.* = *De Boeken van het Oude Testament*; *B.Z.A.W.* = *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*; *C.I.S.* = *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*; *D.B.* = *Dictionary of the Bible*; *E.B.* = *Encyclopaedia Biblica*; *E.R.E.* = *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*; *E.T.* = *Expository Times*; *F.H.G.* = *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*; *H.K.* = *Handkommentar zum Alten Testament*; *H.S.A.T.* = *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments* (ed. by E. Kautzsch); *H.S.A.Tes* = *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testamentes* (Bonner Bibel); *H.U.C.A.* = *Hebrew Union College Annual*; *I.B.* = *Interpreter's Bible*; *I.C.C.* = *International Critical Commentary*; *I.E.J.* = *Israel Exploration Journal*; *J.A.O.S.* = *Journal of the American Oriental Society*; *J.N.E.S.* = *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*; *J.R.S.* = *Journal of Roman Studies*; *J.S.S.* = *Journal of Semitic Studies*; *K.H.C.* = *Kurzer Hand Commentar zum Alten Testament*; *K.K.* = *Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testamentes*; *M.F.O.* = *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale de l'Université de Beyrouth*; *Ned.T.T.* = *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*; *N.S.E.* = *Handbuch der nordsemitischen Epigraphik*; *N.S.I.* = *Text-Book of North Semitic Inscriptions*; *P.E.Q.* = *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*; *P.G.* = *Patrologia Graeca*; *R.Arch.* = *Revue Archéologique*; *R.B.* = *Revue Biblique*; *R.E.* = *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*; *S.A.T.* = *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*; *S.B.U.* = *Svenskt Bibliskt Uppslagsverk*; *Th.L.Z.* = *Theologische Literaturzeitung*; *T.S.K.* = *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*; *W.O.* = *Die Welt des Orients*; *Z.A.S.* = *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*; *Z.A.W.* = *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft*; *Z.D.M.G.* = *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.

² Mal. iv. 5; cf. Sir. xlvi. 1 ff., Matt. xi. 14, xvii. 10 ff., Mark vi. 15, ix. 11 ff., Luke ix. 8, John i. 21. ³ Matt. xvi. 14; Mark viii. 28; Luke ix. 19.

Lord, Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain with Jesus.¹ Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and was the mediator of the Sinai Covenant. Elijah was the prophet who saved the Israelite faith in the greatest peril it had to face between the days of Moses and the Exile.²

For religion every age is an age of peril. Sometimes it lies in the tendency to decay from within and sometimes in attack from without. In the years that followed the Israelite settlement in Canaan, the peril lay in the infiltration of ideas and practices from the religion of the Canaanites amongst whom the newcomers were settled. In the days of Elijah it lay in a determined attempt to promote the worship of the Tyrian god in Israel. The nature of this peril is to some extent disguised from readers of the Bible because the name Baal is given to the Canaanite gods and also to the Tyrian god. The word Baal means "lord". In the pantheon that is revealed to us in the Ras Shamra texts Baal is the name of a particular god,³ but the term came to be used more widely as other gods were hailed as "lord". In the same way in Babylonia the cognate term, Bel, which was once used especially of Enlil, came to be used of Marduk, and where it stands in the Bible it denotes Marduk.⁴ In the Ras Shamra texts Baal is equated with Hadad,⁵ the storm god, but in the Old Testament the name frequently stands for the deities worshipped at the Canaanite shrines, which were taken over by the Israelites.

It is of interest to observe that in the Ras Shamra pantheon El is also the name of a particular deity.⁶ In the Old Testament we find no opposition to the use of this name, and indeed the God of Israel is called El in a number of passages.⁷ What ultimately matters is not the name that is given to God, but the associations of the name and the ideas it evokes. In China the

¹ Matt. xvii. 3 ; Mark ix. 4 ; Luke ix. 30.

² Cf. J. Skinner, *Kings* (Century Bible), p. 222 : " He is to be ranked as the greatest religious personality that had been raised up in Israel since Moses."

³ Cf. A. S. Kapelrud, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*, 1952 ; C. H. Gordon, *The Loves and Wars of Baal*, 1943.

⁴ Isa. xlvi. 1 ; Jer. l. 2, li. 44.

⁵ Cf. Kapelrud, *op. cit.* pp. 50 ff.

⁶ Cf. O. Eissfeldt, *El im ugaritischen Pantheon*, 1951.

⁷ Cf. Eissfeldt, " El and Yahweh ", in *J.S.S.* i (1956), 25 ff.

name of the God Shang Ti is freely used for the Christian God, and in Israel the name El could be used without danger. But Baal was a name which aroused strong opposition, and which was ultimately rejected as a name for the God of Israel. It is curious that in the Ras Shamra mythology there was a long struggle between El and Baal, as the final issue of which El receded into the background and yielded his position to Baal.¹ In Israel the struggle was between Yahweh and Baal. The name Baal was harmless in itself, and it figures in some proper names, including the name of Saul's son, Ishbaal,² though Saul was clearly a devotee of the national God of Israel. The clearest rejection of the very name comes from Hosea, who declares that God will not have this title.³ Yet another term which means "lord", Adon, which is philologically connected with the divine name Adonis, aroused no opposition and provided the name Adonai, which the Jews substitute for Yahweh in reading the text of the Old Testament, and which in turn gave rise to the *Kyrios* of the Greek version, the *Dominus* of the Latin, and the LORD in our English version. The term Baal was rejected not because of its inherently evil meaning, but because of all the practices that went with it in the Canaanite shrines.

From the time of the Israelite settlement in Canaan Yahweh had lived side by side with the Baals in the religion of the land, and often Yahweh had been identified with the local Baals. It is true that in times of national peril God was invoked under the name Yahweh, and the first thing that Gideon did when he heard the call of Yahweh to lead his people against the Midianites was to break down the Baal altar.⁴ But through long periods there

¹ Cf. Eissfeldt, *El im ugaritischen Pantheon*, pp. 60 ff.; W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 3rd edn., 1953, pp. 72 f. A. S. Kapelrud (op. cit. p. 86) recognizes that El receded into the background, but thinks he continued to be the nominal head of the pantheon; cf. Albright, loc. cit. El appears to correspond to Kronos in the Greek pantheon; cf. Eissfeldt, op. cit. p. 6, and M.-J. Lagrange, *Études sur les religions sémitiques*, 1903, p. 386.

² 1 Chron. viii. 33, ix. 39. In 2 Sam. ii. 8 ff., iii. 7 ff., iv. 1 ff., the name appears as Ishbosheth, where *bōsheth* (= *shame*) is probably deliberately substituted for *baal*. In 1 Chron. xii. 5 we find the name Bealiah amongst David's companions. This name means "Yahweh is Baal", and it is the clearest indication that at this period no exception was taken to the word Baal.

³ Hos. ii. 16 f.

⁴ Judges vi. 25 ff.

was little open conflict, but rather the fusing of the two faiths, and inevitably there was the steady corruption of the religion that Moses had established by the infiltration of Baalistic practice and idea.

The menace of the Tyrian Baal was of a different kind. Omri's son Ahab had married Jezebel, a Tyrian princess.¹ Her father Ethbaal, or Ittobaal, as the name is more accurately transmitted by Josephus,² was the king and priest of Tyre.³ Jezebel was clearly a great devotee of her own national religion, and she not only continued to worship her own god, but sought by every means to promote his worship in Israel. The god of Tyre was Melkart,⁴ "king of the city",⁵ who in the Greek period was identified with Herakles,⁶ and he was the Baal whose worship Jezebel so actively promoted.⁷ Eissfeldt dissents from the view

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 31.

² Josephus, *Contra Ap.* i. 18 (123). Josephus is here citing Menander of Ephesus.

³ In 1 Kings xvi. 31 he is called "king of the Sidonians". Cf. J. A. Montgomery, *The Books of Kings* (I.C.C.), ed. by H. S. Gehman, 1951, p. 286: "When the Tyrians gained ascendancy over Sidon, they assumed the larger title and its dignity." Cf. also *C.I.S.* i. 5, where Hiram II of Tyre is called "king of the Sidonians" (this inscription is also given in M. Lidzbarski, *N.S.E.*, 1898, p. 419, and G. A. Cooke, *N.S.I.*, 1903, pp. 52 ff.). According to Menander, cited by Josephus (*loc. cit.*), Ittobaal was a usurper.

⁴ Cf. F. C. Movers, *Die Phönizier*, i (1841), 175 ff., 385 ff.; R. Rochette, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, xvii, 2 (1848), 9 ff.; K. Preisendanz, in Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *R.E.*, Supplement vi (1935), 293 ff. R. Dussaud (*Syria*, xxv (1946-8), 208 f.) says that in the temple at Tyre, which was originally the temple of Baal-Hadad, Melkart replaced Hadad, probably when Tyre secured the hegemony, and perhaps owing to its maritime interests.

⁵ W. F. Albright (*B.A.S.O.R.* 87 (Oct. 1942), 29) maintains that this means "king of the Underworld", and not "king of Tyre", as is commonly supposed. But Levi della Vida (*ibid.* 90 (April 1943), 30 ff.) disagrees. Cf. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 81, where Melkart is equated with Haurôn. On this R. de Vaux (*Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, v (1941), 8 n.) has reserves. Cf. further Levi della Vida, *loc. cit.* and Albright, *ibid.* pp. 32 ff.

⁶ Cf. *C.I.S.* i. 122 (this inscription is also given in Lidzbarski, *N.S.E.* pp. 425 f., and Cooke, *N.S.I.* p. 103); also Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* i. x. 27. See also Movers, *op. cit.* pp. 176 f.; S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology* (Schweich Lectures, 1925), 1930, pp. 135 ff.

⁷ Levi della Vida (*loc. cit.*) and Albright (*B.A.S.O.R.* 90 (April 1943), 32 ff.) think the evidence of the stele of Benhadad from Aleppo suggests that another daughter of Ittobaal probably married into the royal house of Damascus, and that

that Jezebel's Baal was Melkart,¹ and thinks he is rather to be identified with Baal Shamem, "lord of heaven".² Some centuries later Judaism had to face a new challenge from Baal Shamem, when, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, it was Zeus who was the "lord of heaven" and whose worship was promoted with such vigour and violence by the king and his minions and accepted by so many Jews.³

this led to the setting up of a stele in honour of the god of Tyre. On the inscription discussed by Albright and Levi della Vida, cf. M. Dunand, *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, iii (1939), 65 ff.; and on its date cf. A. Herdner, *Syria*, xxv (1946-8), 329 f., and A. Jepsen, *A.f.O.* xvi (1952-3), 315 ff.

¹ This identification is accepted by B. Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments*, i (1905), 70 f.; L. B. Paton, *E.R.E.* ii (1909), 292a; W. W. von Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun*, 1911, p. 26; J. Meinhold, *Einführung in das Alte Testament*, 3rd. edn., 1932, p. 135; A. Lods, *Israel*, Eng. Trans., 1932, p. 422; W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, 2nd edn., 1937, pp. 209, 212 ff.; R. de Vaux, loc. cit. pp. 8 f.; F. James, *Personalities of the Old Testament*, 1947, pp. 171 ff.; I. Engnell, *S.B.U.* i (1948), 455; G. Ricciotti, *The History of Israel*, Eng. Trans., i (1955), 332; J. Steinmann, *Élie (Études Carmélitaines)* 1956, p. 95; J. Bright, *History of Israel*, 1959, p. 227 n.; and the commentaries on Kings by R. Kittel (*H. K.*, 1900, p. 136), F. J. Foakes Jackson (Peake's Commentary, 1920, p. 302a), S. Landersdorfer (*H. S. A. Tes.*, 1927, p. 107), A. Guillaume (Gore's Commentary, 1928, p. 261), A. Médebielle (Pirrot-Clamer, *La Sainte Bible*, iii (1949), 668), I. W. Slotki (Soncino Books of the Bible, 1950, p. 121), S. Garofalo (*La Sacra Bibbia*, 1951, p. 131), and N. H. Snaith (*I.B.* iii (1954), 144).

² Cf. *Z.A.W.* lvii (1939), 20 ff. (Eissfeldt had earlier accepted the identification with Melkart in *H.S.A.T.*, 4th edn., i (1922), 531.) Cf. also *Taautos und San-chunjaton*, 1952, p. 9, where Eissfeldt equates Baal Shamem with Zeus and Melkart with Herakles. Montgomery (*Kings*, p. 308) and M. Avi-Yonah (*I.E.J.* ii (1952), 123 f.) follow Eissfeldt's view, while Albright (*Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 156) says there is nothing concrete to justify his identification of the Baal against whom Elijah contended with Baal Shamem. W. K. Lowther Clarke (*Concise Bible Commentary*, 1952) identifies Baal with Melkart (p. 434), but says Baal may have been Baal Shamem (p. 435). Cf. Movers, op. cit. i, pp. 176 f. On the equation of Baal, Baal Shamem and Zeus, cf. H. Seyrig, *Syria*, xiv (1933), 238 ff., and on the equation of Melkart, Herakles and Nergal, cf. *ibid.*, *Syria*, xxiv (1944-5), 69 ff. Cf. also Paton, *E.R.E.* ii (1909), 293a. J. N. Schofield (*Historical Background of the Bible*, 1938, p. 97) identifies the Baal of Tyre with Baal-zebul, with whose name he connects the name of Jezebel. A. Alt (*Kleine Schriften*, ii (1953), 135 ff.) identifies Baal with the local deity of Mt. Carmel, and is followed by K. Galling in *Geschichte und Altes Testament* (Alt Festschrift), 1953, pp. 105 ff. Cf. Eissfeldt, *Der Gott Karmel*, 1953. G. Fohrer (*Elia*, 1957, p. 60) rejects the view of Alt and Galling.

³ The expression "abomination of desolation" (Dan. ix. 27; cf. also viii. 13, xi. 31, xii. 11, and I Macc. i. 54) is almost certainly a contemptuous variation

On either of these views it was the Tyrian god whose worship Jezebel sought to press on Israel. We read that she maintained 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah.¹ Many commentators have thought that the reference to the prophets of Asherah is an intrusion into the text,² since they are not mentioned in the sequel and Asherah is elsewhere used in the Bible of a religious symbol, rather than of a deity. But it is now securely known from the Ras Shamra texts that there was a goddess, Athirat,³ and it may be noted that Josephus tells us that Ittobaal was the priest of Astarte,⁴ who must therefore have been the consort of Melkart. It is probable that these prophets whom Jezebel maintained were brought into Israel from Phoenicia.⁵ Manifestly there were far more than sufficient for any private cult of the queen's, and there can be little doubt that they were employed in the active propagation of the Tyrian cult in Israel. The queen was determined to uproot Israel's faith and to substitute Melkart for Yahweh. That the prophets of Yahweh should resist this was but natural. Jezebel was not prepared to brook opposition, however, and set herself to persecute the prophets of Yahweh and to eliminate their influence.⁶ We read

of Baal Shamem, as was perceived first by E. Nestle (*Z.A.W.* iv (1884), 248); cf. J. A. Montgomery, *Daniel* (I.C.C.), 1927, p. 388.

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 19.

² So W. E. Addis (*E.B.* ii (1901), 1271); H. Gunkel (*Elias, Jahve und Baal*, 1906, p. 69); J. Skinner (*Kings*, Century Bible, p. 230); A. Guillaume (loc. cit. p. 262).

³ The name is frequently found in the Ras Shamra texts in the form *ʾttr*, which corresponds to the Heb. *ʾasherah*. It is of particular interest to note that there are references to "Athirat of the Tyrians" (cf. C. H. Gordon, *Manual of Ugaritic*, 1955, p. 245, no. 299, and G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 1956, p. 134b).

⁴ *Contra Ap.*, loc. cit., where Menander of Ephesus is cited. According to Menander, Hiram built new temples in Tyre for Herakles and Astarte (*apud* Josephus, *Contra Ap.* i. 17 (118)). It is not to be surprised at that Greek writers confused Asherah with the more familiar Astarte, who is also represented in the Ras Shamra texts in the form *ʾttr*, i.e. *ʾAthtar*. The features and functions of these goddesses were interchanged, and both were associated with fertility; cf. S. Moscati, *The Face of the Ancient Orient*, 1960, p. 210.

⁵ Cf. R. de Vaux, loc. cit. p. 8: "Ils sont vraisemblablement phéniciens comme elle, car le personnel sacré d'un dieu se recrute parmi ses sujets d'origine."

⁶ 1 Kings xviii. 4, 13. Many writers deny this (for references see below, p. 196, n. 3, 4), and it is pointed out that Elijah could not have been the only Yahweh

of 100 of these prophets being hidden from her in caves by one of the court officials, named Obadiah¹—whose name appropriately means “servant of Yahweh”.

Ahab himself seems to have offered little opposition to his wife’s activities.² It is often pointed out that we have the clear indication that he had not himself abandoned the worship of Yahweh, since the names of three of his children are compounded with Yahweh.³ It may well be that Ahab did not break with the Israelite religion, even though he did not oppose his powerful and headstrong wife.⁴ It might seem more surprising, however, that Jezebel’s children should bear names compounded with

prophet left, since at the end of Ahab’s reign we find 400 prophets at the court. It is true that in his depression Elijah feels that he is the only prophet left, but he is assured that there are 7,000 faithful left in Israel, and since Obadiah is said to have hidden 100 prophets from Jezebel these would be amongst them. Others could have escaped, or gone into hiding, as Elijah himself did.

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 4.

² J. Strachan (in Hastings’s *D.B.* i (1898), 687b) observes that Ahab’s religious instincts were as dull as his political instincts were keen. Cf. F. James, who says Jezebel was just the sort of woman to carry even a strong man off his feet (*Personalities of the Old Testament*, 1947, p. 172).

³ Cf. J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, Eng. Trans., 1885, p. 461; W. E. Addis, *E.B.* ii (1901), 1272 f. (who says we must not charge Ahab with conscious apostasy from Yahweh); R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, ii, 7th edn. (1925), 243; A. Lods, *Israel*, Eng. Trans., 1932, p. 421; M. Noth, *History of Israel*, Eng. Trans., 1958, p. 241.

⁴ A. S. Peake (*The Servant of Yahweh*, 1931, p. 113) says that Ahab felt no incompatibility between the worship of Yahweh and the worship of Melkart. It is hard to think that this is so, if Jezebel was breaking down Yahweh altars and forcing the prophets of Yahweh to go into hiding. Wellhausen (*loc. cit.*) denies that Yahweh altars were broken down or prophets of Yahweh persecuted, or that there was ever anything more than the erection of a single shrine in Samaria for Jezebel. Cf. also R. Smend, *Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte*, 1899, p. 175; W. E. Addis, *E.B.* ii. 1272 f.; H. Gunkel, *op. cit.* p. 37; A. Lods, *op. cit.* p. 422. This involves the dismissal from the Biblical accounts of far too much on purely *a priori* grounds. The acceptance of the fact of the persecution makes it impossible to exculpate Ahab. When Ahab entered into possession of Naboth’s vineyard, he knew full well that he had obtained it through his wife’s unscrupulousness, and the fact that he would not himself have gone to such lengths does not exonerate him from any responsibility. And if he suffered his wife to take action against Yahweh prophets and shrines, he must have recognized the incompatibility of the worship of Baal and Yahweh. For this was quite other than the syncretism that had followed the settlement in Canaan.

Yahweh.¹ Here, however, it should be noted that we do not know at what point in Ahab's reign Jezebel developed her full-scale attack on Yahwism. It is hardly likely that it broke in full force as soon as she came to Samaria, and it may well have been after she had borne children to Ahab that her violent intolerance of the devotees of Yahweh became apparent.

That Jezebel's campaign against Yahwism went far towards success is clear from the Biblical account. That success is sometimes discounted by directing attention to the fact that at the end of Ahab's reign we find 400 prophets of Yahweh at the court²—though most of them were false prophets who only misled the king. But this was after Elijah's triumph on Mount Carmel, when the menace of the Tyrian Baal was successfully met, and when the prophets of Yahweh who had gone into hiding could emerge once more and their numbers be recruited in the revival of Yahwism that took place. Elijah himself had been forced to hide from the queen for a long time, and when he emerged he felt that he stood alone against the enemies of his faith.³ It is true that he received the consoling message that there were 7,000 in the land who had not bowed the knee to Baal,⁴ but it is clear that he had little active support, and Jezebel regarded him as the one opponent remaining who really mattered. From her side as from his the issue was Yahweh or Baal, and it was a fight to the finish.

At some unspecified point in Ahab's reign, but clearly at a time after Jezebel's open attack on Yahwism had been launched, Elijah appeared before the king and prophesied an indefinite period of drought.⁵ The prophecy was uttered in the name of Yahweh and was coupled with the declaration that no rain would

¹ It is implied in 1 Kings xxii. 52 and 2 Kings iii. 2 that Ahaziah and Jehoram were the sons of Ahab and Jezebel, while the conduct of Athaliah has led to the general assumption that her mother was Jezebel, though this is not explicitly indicated.

² 1 Kings xxii. 5. Similarly the fact that at Jehu's revolution a single temple sufficed to hold the worshippers of Baal (2 Kings x. 21) might suggest that Jezebel had won but few converts to her faith (so Gunkel, *loc. cit.*). This, however, is an unjustified assumption (cf. Peake, *op. cit.* p. 122). For the triumph of Elijah must have discredited the Tyrian cult and checked its progress long before the revolution of Jehu.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 22.

⁴ 1 Kings xix. 18.

⁵ 1 Kings xvii. 1.

fall until Elijah had first announced it. Here was the opening of Elijah's challenge to Baal. It was Yahweh's prophet and not Baal's that brought the intimation of the extended period of drought, and by Yahweh's prophet should its end be announced. Thus should it be seen who was indeed Lord.

From Menander of Ephesus we learn that there was drought also in Phoenicia, but that after it had lasted a year it was broken by a heavy thunderstorm in response to the prayer of Ittobaal.¹ In the Bible we read that in the third year of the drought Elijah came to realize, before there were any visible indications of any break in it, that its end was near.² There is no great discrepancy in the length of the period of drought,³ but what happened in Phoenicia was immaterial to Elijah's conflict. It is sometimes said that on Elijah's side and on Jezebel's the issue was whether Yahweh or Baal was the sole God, and that monotheistic belief was implicit on both sides.⁴ While I believe, and have often said,

¹ *Apud* Josephus, *Antiq.* VIII. xiii. 2 (324).

² 1 Kings xviii. 1.

³ According to Menander it lasted for precisely one year, whereas in the Biblical account it covered the whole of one year and parts of the preceding and following years.

⁴ R. Kittel (*op. cit.* pp. 248f.) says certainty cannot be attained, but inclines to think that the issue was in terms of monotheism. Similarly, J. Strachan (*loc. cit.* p. 688b) inclines to the view that Elijah was a monotheist, but adds that it is, at any rate, but a short step from Elijah's "henotheism" to absolute monotheism. Similarly, Skinner (*op. cit.* p. 232) says it is unreasonable to doubt that Elijah's thought was in the spirit of monotheism, and Montgomery (*Kings*, p. 308) says this was a fanatical contest in the name of monotheism. On the other hand, W. E. Addis (*loc. cit.* col. 1273) denies that Elijah was a monotheist, and so J. Meinhold (*op. cit.* p. 136). Cf. A. Lods, *Israel*, p. 422: "It is not a question of proving who is God in the absolute sense, but who is God in Israel"; Oesterley and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, p. 213: "Elijah did not deny the existence of Melkart, or challenge his claims to adoration in Phoenicia, but he did insist, and prove, that his power did not extend to Israel." Similarly B. Balscheit (*Alter und Aufkommen des Monotheismus in der israelitischen Religion*, B.Z.A.W. 69 (1938), p. 106) denies that there was any question as to whether Baal existed or not, but that the issue was simply whether Israel should worship him or Yahweh. It is hard to suppose that the issue was one of monotheism on Elijah's side any more than on the other side, since we have no evidence that Elijah sought to spread his faith in Phoenicia, while there is evidence that there was an effort to spread the Baal cult in Israel. Yet there is no reason to suppose that the devotees of Melkart ever claimed that he was the sole god. J. N. Schofield (*Religious Background of the Bible*, 1944, p. 97) limits the issue to the question whether Yahweh or Baal was the rain giver.

that the seeds of monotheism were in Yahwism from the time of Moses,¹ I am not persuaded that the real issue here was in terms of monotheism. Jezebel's claim was that Baal was God in Israel, and not Yahweh. But there is no evidence that Elijah was in any comparable way concerned to spread Yahwism in Phoenicia. All that he was concerned to establish was that Baal's writ did not run in Israel, and that Yahweh alone was to be worshipped there.

When Elijah knew that the end of the period of drought was near, he sought an interview with the already mentioned Obadiah, and through him obtained an opportunity to see the king.² Then he challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel³—a contest not between him and them, but between his God and theirs. It was to decide who was God in Israel, and it was to take place on Mount Carmel, where probably altars of both Yahweh and Baal had stood, though Yahweh's now lay in ruins.⁴

It has been maintained that the contest was primarily concerned with the question whether an existing sanctuary on Mt. Carmel should be a Yahweh sanctuary or a Baal shrine,⁵ but this would involve a considerable rewriting of the Biblical story, which is our only source for any knowledge of the conflict. The story is so intimately linked with the account of the drought which affected the whole land, and with Jezebel's attack on the devotees of Yahweh in Israel, that it is improbable that the real issue can have been one so trivial and so local as the possession of a single shrine.

Of the Yahweh altar on Mt. Carmel we learn nothing in the Bible save from this incident, and we have no knowledge when it was built. That Carmel was already a sacred site before the Israelites entered Canaan is known, since it is referred to in the

¹ Cf. *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament*, 1944, pp. 21 f., 27; *The Rediscovery of the Old Testament*, 1946, pp. 87 f.; *E.T.* lxi (1949-50), 333 ff.; *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 1950, pp. 60 f.; *B.J.R.L.* xxxiv (1951-2), 106n.; *The Unity of the Bible*, 1953, pp. 22 ff.; *The Faith of Israel*, 1956, pp. 71 f.; *Z.A.W.* lxi (1957), 18.

² 1 Kings xviii. 7 ff.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 19.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 30.

⁵ So Alt, *Kleine Schriften*, ii (1953), 135 ff.; M. Noth, *History of Israel*, 1958, p. 241 n.

reign of Thothmes III as the " Sacred Headland ".¹ Whether the Israelites after their entry into the land appropriated an already existing sanctuary, or whether they built a new one, we have no means of knowing.² What is clear is that the Yahweh altar had been at some time deliberately broken down, and that Elijah had to rebuild it. It is conceivable that this altar had been one of the casualties of Jezebel's campaign, though there is no direct evidence to connect its condition with her.³ It is further to be noted that the altar which was used by the prophets of Baal was built by them for this occasion.⁴ Hence while it is probable that this mountain which had for so long been held to be sacred had had both Phoenician and Israelite sanctuaries on it, it is conceivable that both had fallen into disuse. If there had been Phoenician and Israelite sanctuaries here, this would be a fitting site for the contest. It should be added that this mountain long continued to be a sacred site, since we learn that there was an oracle in Roman times,⁵ and Tacitus records that Vespasian offered a sacrifice there on an altar which stood without a temple or statues.⁶

When the contestants gathered on the sacred mountain Elijah proposed the terms of the contest. On the one side stood the great host of prophets of Baal ; on the other the lone figure of Elijah. He asked that to each side a sacrificial bull should be given, to be cut in pieces and laid on the altar, with wood beneath

¹ Cf. G. Maspero, *Z.Ä.S.* xvii (1879), 55 ; H. Gauthier, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*, iii (1926), 131 f.; F. M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, i (1933), 350 f.; M. Avi-Yonah, *I.E.J.* ii (1952), 121. G. A. Smith (*E.B.* i (1899), 706), however, thinks this is uncertain, and so Albright (*apud* Montgomery, *Kings*, p. 300 n.). K. Galling (in *Geschichte und Altes Testament*, *Alt Festschrift*, 1953, p. 106 n.) rejects the identification.

² Alt (*loc. cit.* pp. 141 ff.) thinks David may have erected a Yahweh altar on Carmel. This, as H. Junker observes (*Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, lxi (1960), 67), is pure conjecture.

³ It is, of course, possible that this was one of the Yahweh altars which had recently been thrown down (cf. 1 Kings xix. 14). A. Šanda (*Elias und die religiösen Verhältnisse seiner Zeit*, 1914, p. 70) roundly states that Jezebel had destroyed the old Yahweh altar on Carmel.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 26.

⁵ Cf. Suetonius, *Vita Vesp.* 5.

⁶ Cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* ii. 78. On Vespasian at Carmel, cf. K. Scott, *J.R.S.* xxiv (1934), 138 ff.

the pieces but without the lighting of the fire. Each side should appeal to its God to supply the fire, and the God that answered by fire should be recognized by all to be God indeed.¹ It was essential that the test should be something beyond the manipulation of men if it were to be recognized as the act of God, and equally that it should be one in which the superior numbers of the Baal prophets could make no difference to the result. Elijah offered his opponents the choice of the sacrificial bull, and also the first appeal to their god.² He was ready to accept every handicap, because he was supremely confident of the result. Had he chosen the animal, it could have been represented that their failure was due to the inacceptability of the animal left to them. Had their appeal to Baal been successful, it is likely that the enthusiasm for Baal would have swept the solitary figure of Elijah away before he had had the opportunity to make his appeal to Yahweh.

It is curious to note that there is no mention of any priests on either side, but that the sacrifices were offered by prophets. There is evidence in the Bible that the patriarchs offered sacrifices without the help of priests,³ and in the period of the Judges we read of the Ephraimite Micah installing his son as his priest.⁴ But already there was a preference for a Levite to serve in the priestly office, as we learn when Micah's son is replaced by a Levite.⁵ There is no indication that Elijah was a Levite, since all we are told is that he was a man of Tishbe in Gilead.⁶ We are told that the prophet Samuel offered sacrifice,⁷ however, and though the Chronicler represents him as a Levite,⁸ the older account in Samuel says he was the son of an Ephraimite.⁹ There is therefore enough evidence in the Bible to show that Elijah's action in offering sacrifice is not so surprising as it might seem if judged merely by the provision of Deuteronomy that sacrifice was only to be offered by a Levite,¹⁰ or that of the Priestly Code that it could only be offered by the descendants of Aaron.¹¹

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 23 f.

² 1 Kings xviii. 25.

³ Gen. xii. 7, xiii. 4, 18, xxii, xxvi. 25, xxxiii. 20, xxxv. 7.

⁴ Judges xvii. 5.

⁵ Judges xvii. 12.

⁶ 1 Kings xvii. 1.

⁷ 1 Sam. vii. 9, 17.

⁸ 1 Chron. vi. 28, 33-8.

⁹ 1 Sam. i. 1, 20.

¹⁰ Deut. xviii. 1 ff.

¹¹ Num. xviii.

To return to the scene on Mt. Carmel, we learn that the prophets of Baal accepted the challenge of Elijah and prepared their altar and sacrifice, and then for some hours made their vain appeal to their god.¹ Before we proceed to examine the conduct of these prophets, we may note the fact that there were prophets of Baal as well as of Yahweh. It has long been recognized that the institution of prophecy was not something that was confined to Israel. The Bible tells us of Balaam, a non-Israelite of the period of the wandering in the desert, who is comparable with the Israelite prophets, though the term "prophet" is never used of him,² as well as of these prophets of the Tyrian Baal. The Egyptian story of Wen Amon brings before us the activity of a prophet at Byblos, in Syria, in the eleventh century B.C.³ In recent years we have learned of prophets at a much earlier age from the texts that have been found at Mari.⁴ Evidence has been brought from Babylonia,⁵ from Greece,⁶ and from Arabia,⁷ of prophets who share much in common with the prophets of Israel, as spokesmen of the gods or as men who exhibit the marks of what has come to be known as ecstasy.⁸ It would take us too far afield to discuss this here, and it is unnecessary since it has frequently been done. That Hebrew prophecy came out of a background of ancient near eastern prophecy is clear beyond a peradventure. That Hebrew prophecy had a

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 26.

² Num. xxii ff.

³ Cf. A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, Eng. Trans., 1927, pp. 174 ff., or J. B. Pritchard, *A.N.E.T.*, 1950, pp. 25 ff.

⁴ Cf. A. Lods, in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (T. H. Robinson Festschrift), 1950, pp. 103 ff.; M. Noth, *B.J.R.L.* xxxii (1949-50), 194 ff., and *Geschichte und Gotteswort im Alten Testament*, 1950; F.M.Th. de Liagre Böhl, *Ned.T.T.* iv (1949-50), 82 ff.; W. von Soden, *W.O.*, 1950, pp. 397 ff.; H. Schmökel, *Th.L.Z.* lxxvi (1951), 54 ff.

⁵ Cf. A. Haldar, *Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites*, 1945.

⁶ Cf. T. H. Robinson, *Classical Quarterly*, xi (1917), 201 ff., and *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel*, 1923, pp. 33 f.

⁷ Cf. A. Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination*, 1938. For further evidence from ancient and modern times cf. F. Vigouroux, *R.B.* v (1896), 227 ff.

⁸ H. Wheeler Robinson (*Redemption and Revelation*, 1942, p. 135) notes the improper use of the term, and prefers to speak of "abnormal experiences" (p. 140).

unique quality is no less clear. Its uniqueness consists not in its form, but in the content of the message the Hebrew prophets delivered—though again it must be recognized that not all the Hebrew prophets attained the same heights, and the Bible itself tells us of prophets who stand condemned though they spoke in the name of Yahweh.¹

In the story of Wen Amon the behaviour which is called ecstatic is clearly described. A youth became possessed and continued in this state all night and declared he was charged with a message from his god.² The Egyptologist J. A. Wilson says that “the determinative of the word ‘(prophetically) possessed’ shows a human figure in violent motion or epileptic convulsion”.³ The prophets of Baal in the story that is now before us danced about and gashed themselves with knives.⁴ Theodore Robinson has maintained that every Hebrew prophet exhibited some of the marks of ecstasy every time he uttered a prophecy.⁵ While I think this goes far beyond the evidence, we must recognize that it is clearly indicated in the Bible that some prophets of Yahweh acted in somewhat comparable ways. When Saul left Samuel after being privately anointed in Ramah, he met a company of prophets coming down from Gibeah, inducing the prophetic state with music, and he was caught up into the same spirit.⁶ Again, when Saul sent men to take David at Naioth,⁷ where Samuel was at the head of a company of prophets, the messengers were infected with the prophetic spirit, and when finally Saul came himself he was caught up into the same spirit and stripped off his clothes and rolled on the ground all day and night, so that men asked “Is Saul also among the prophets?”⁸ It was behaviour, rather than the content of a message, which was recognized to be prophetic.

¹ Cf. especially Jer. xxiii. 9 ff.

² Cf. Erman, *op. cit.* pp. 177 ff.; *A.N.E.T.* pp. 26 f.

³ Cf. *A.N.E.T.* p. 26 n.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 28.

⁵ Cf. *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel*, p. 50; also *E.T.* xlvi (1934-5), 43: “An objective criterion is necessarily demanded both by the speaker and by the hearers, both by the prophet and by his audience. Failure to recognize this essential feature of prophecy is to misunderstand the mind of ancient Israel.”

⁶ 1 Sam. x. 5, 10.

⁷ 1 Sam. xix. 20 ff.

⁸ 1 Sam. xix. 24.

In a similar way, in the story of the contest on Mt. Carmel the prophets of Baal showed their prophetic character in their behaviour. They cried to their god to respond to their appeal, but there is no indication that they delivered any message from their god. We read that "they limped about the altar".¹ The verb which is here rendered "limp" is used to describe the gait of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, who was dropped by his nurse when he was five years old, so that thereafter he became lame.² In the present passage the verb clearly refers to some ritual action, and it is generally held to indicate some form of limping dance.³ Heliodorus writes of a dance by some Tyrian sailors in honour of Herakles—who, as has been said, was identified with Melkart—and he says that sometimes they bent their knees and behaved like men possessed to the accompaniment of music.⁴ De Vaux notes that the Greek word here used by Heliodorus is ἐποκλάζοντες, and it is curious that in 1 Kings xix. 18 the Septuagint uses the verb ὀκλάζω to render the passage about those who had not "bent the knee" to Baal.⁵ It would therefore seem that the reference here is to some special ritual motion that was characteristic of the worship of Melkart, and there may be some allusion to this in Elijah's word "How long halt ye between two opinions?",⁶ where the same verb "to limp" is used.

De Vaux has further called attention⁷ to a relief now in Rome, which was published more than thirty years ago by Cumont,⁸

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 26.

² 2 Sam. iv. 4.

³ Cf. Skinner, *Kings*, p. 232: "It seems to denote a religious dance round the altar, accompanied with contortions of the body." See also Burney, *Kings*, p. 223, and G. R. Driver, *J.T.S.* xxvii (1925-6), 159.

⁴ *Aethiopica*, iv. xvii. 1. Cf. also Herodian V. v. 9. R. Patai (*H.U.C.A.* xiv (1939), 255) says that in modern Palestine among the Arabs there is a similar custom of dancing and leaping with bent knees, in order to produce rain.

⁵ Loc. cit., p. 10. The same verb is used in Xenophon, *Anab.* vi. i. 10, in his description of a Persian dance, in which the dancer clashed his shields together and crouched down and then rose again. Cf. *Scholia Graeca in Aristophanem, ad Thesmoph.* 1175, where the noun ὀκλασμα is used in the description of a Persian dance; also Pollux, *Onomasticon* iv. 100.

⁶ 1 Kings xviii. 21.

⁷ Loc. cit. p. 11.

⁸ Cf. F. Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, 4th edn., 1929, Plate VIII, 2 (facing p. 90). Cf. also H. Gressmann, *Der Alte Orient*, xxiii, 3, 1923, p. 27.

in which there is a representation of dancers before the images of the gods, where the dancers are making various contortions of their bodies and have bent legs, while the spectators clap their hands. Attention has also been called by a number of writers to a Phoenician "Baal of the Dance",¹ to whom there are references in Greek as well as in oriental sources, and to whom a shrine at Beirut was dedicated. In this connection there is reference to music accompanying the dance,² and it may well have been that the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel were so accompanied, as Hebrew prophets are known to have been sometimes,³ though in our passage here there is no reference to music on Carmel.

When all this had gone on till noon, Elijah taunted the prophets of Baal: "Cry louder, for he is a god! Perhaps he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."⁴ Here again I am indebted to de Vaux for some interesting comments on this passage.⁵ Montgomery thinks the ascription to the deity of musing is rather absurd,⁶ but de Vaux notes that the *Chronicon Paschale* calls the Tyrian Herakles "the philosopher".⁷ He adds that his philosophy is of a practical nature, for to him is attributed the invention of the purple dye which was especially associated with Phoenicia,⁸ and also the invention of shipping.⁹ Natural science and astronomy are also elsewhere attributed to him.¹⁰

¹ Cf. C. Clermont Ganneau, *Recueil d'archéologie orientale*, i (1888), 101 f., and *R. Arch.*, 4th ser. ii (1903), 225 ff.; R. Pietschmann, *Geschichte der Phönizier*, 1889, p. 220; F. Cumont, in Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.* 11 ii, (1896), 2834 f.; S. Ronzevalle, *R. Arch.*, 4th ser., ii (1903), 29 f.; du Mesnil du Buisson and R. Mouterde, *M.F.O.* vii (1914-21), 387; R. Ganszyniec, in Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *R.E.* xiv. ii (1930), 1852 f.

² Cf. de Vaux, loc. cit. p. 11.

³ 1 Sam. x. 5; 1 Kings iii. 15.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 27.

⁵ Loc. cit. pp. 13 ff.

⁶ Op. cit. p. 302.

⁷ *Chronicon Paschale*, 43 (*P.G.* xcii (1865), 161). Cf. also Malalas, 32 (*P.G.* xcvi (1865), 100), Cedrenus, 34 (*P.G.* cxxi (1894), 61), John of Antioch (in C. Müller, *F.H.G.* iv (1851), 544b).

⁸ Cf. Suidas, *Lexicon*, s.v. 'Hρακλῆς; Pollux, *Onomasticon* i. 46.

⁹ Cf. Nonnos, *Dionys.* xl. 443 ff. Cf. also O. Eissfeldt, *Ras Shamra und Sanchunjaton*, 1939, pp. 137 f.

¹⁰ Clemens Alex., *Strom.* i. xv. 73 (ed. O. Stählin, ii (1906), 47; ed. M. Caster, i (1951), 103).

De Vaux goes on to draw attention ¹ to Ezekiel xxviii, where the king of Tyre is rebuked for thinking of himself as being as wise as a god and amassing wealth by his own wisdom, and thinks there may here be some allusion to the inventive wisdom of Melkart.

Many editors have followed the Targum ² in holding that the word which is rendered "he has gone aside" is a euphemism, meaning "he has gone to the privy",³ while some delete the word as a dittograph of the word that precedes,⁴ which is closely similar. There seems little reason to delete the word, since, though it is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament spelt as it is here, it stands in the Hebrew text of Ben Sira,⁵ where it occurs alongside the word that precedes it here, but in the reverse order. The Septuagint here renders "he is busy",⁶ and de Vaux thinks this sufficiently well suits the context in both passages. Baal is too immersed in his thoughts or occupied with affairs to attend to his distraught prophets.

¹ Loc. cit. pp. 14 f. ² Cf. A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, ii (1959), 259.

³ So K. C. W. F. Bähr (Lange's Commentary, vi), Eng. trans., 1872, p. 205; Skinner, *Kings*, p. 232; I. W. Slotki, *Kings*, 1950, p. 132; Montgomery, *Kings*, pp. 302, 310 f.; N. H. Snaith, *I.B.* iii (1954), 155; M. Rehm, *Echter Bibel, Altes Testament* ii (1956), 192.

⁴ So *B.D.B.*, Appendix, p. 1125 b; also A. Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige* (K.K.), 1887, p. 368, and C. F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*, 1903, p. 224. G. R. Driver (in *Mélanges Bibliques*, Robert Festschrift, 1957, pp. 67 f.) holds that in LXX ἀδολεσχία represents both *śyh* and *śyg* of M.T., and deletes the second from the text. For the first he then reads *śyh* or *śwh* = "digging a hole", and treats this as a euphemism. L. Hayman (*J.N.E.S.* x (1951), 57 f.) proposes the view that the whole verse refers to the supposed activity of Baal as a fertility god, and renders *śyh* "the growth of vegetation," and *śyg* "the florescence of the vine". Neither Driver nor Hayman take any account of the occurrence of the two words *śyh* and *śyg* together in Ben Sira (see next note). The meanings proposed by Hayman are quite inappropriate in the Ben Sira passage, as is also the euphemistic meaning proposed by Driver, while the elimination of the word which is found only here in the Old Testament is scarcely justified in view of the Ben Sira passage.

⁵ Sir. xiii. 26. Cf. R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach, Hebräisch und Deutsch*, 1906, p. 16. Klostermann (loc. cit.) denied that the word *śyg* ever existed in Hebrew. This is now disproved by the Ben Sira passage. G. H. Box and W. O. E. Oesterley (in Charles's *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, i (1913), 366) render the word by "solitude".

⁶ μή ποτε χρηματίζει αὐτός. Those who delete *śyg* from the text (see above n. 4) find that this corresponds to the following expression in the Hebrew.

The idea of Baal being absent on a journey¹ was, perhaps, less ludicrous to Elijah's hearers than it is to us. The Greek Herakles is represented as having made many journeys to carry out the tasks assigned to him, but though Melkart was identified with Herakles we cannot assume that all that is told of Herakles in Greek mythology was transferred to Melkart, and still less that it had been transferred by the time of Elijah. De Vaux notes, however,² that Greek sources tell of a journey of the Tyrian Herakles to Libya.³ This story would therefore seem to be of Tyrian origin. De Vaux further refers⁴ to the Tyrian colonies established at various places in the Mediterranean, and suggests that Melkart might well have been thought of as journeying with the merchants and colonists to these distant places.⁵ He recalls that the Tyrian colonists went to the confines of the Mediterranean, where were the "pillars of Hercules", and notes that at Tartessus there was a shrine of the Tyrian Herakles from the foundation of the city, and that it continued to be famous down to the Roman era.⁶

Finally, the idea of the god being asleep⁷ and needing to be aroused would be less surprising to Elijah's hearers than we find it. We are familiar with the thought of the God of Israel as one who neither slumbers nor sleeps,⁸ but in ancient times gods were not so thought of. In one of the Ras Shamra texts Montgomery finds the repeated "he has awakened" after

¹ The Hebrew expression means, literally, "for he has a way", and it is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament. Hayman (loc. cit. p. 58) supposes that it means "the treading of the vine is his", but this brings to the expression what it seeks to find in it.

² Loc. cit. p. 15.

³ Cf. Athenaeus ix. 392D; Zenobius, *Cent.* v. 56.

⁴ Loc. cit. p. 15.

⁵ Cf. S. Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, iv (1920), 303 ff., on the worship of Melkart in the Phoenician colonies; also E. Hübner, in Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.* vii, i (1910), 446 f.

⁶ Loc. cit. pp. 15 f. Albright (*B.A.S.O.R.* 83, October 1941, 14 f.) places the beginnings of Phoenician colonization in Spain in the tenth century B.C.

⁷ Hayman (loc. cit. p. 58) again imports into the expression a meaning it cannot naturally have, and renders "he is in a drunken stupor". In the parallels he adduces there is a clear reference to wine or drunkenness in the context, but this is lacking here. "Sleep" by itself does not imply "drunken stupor".

⁸ Ps. cxxi. 4.

references to a succession of gods.¹ In Egyptian ritual texts of the Pharaonic period there is reference to the awakening of the gods every morning.² More germane to the context of our passage is the evidence for the festival of the awakening of Herakles which the Tyrians kept in the spring.³ Nor should we forget that even in the Old Testament the idea is not wholly wanting. In Psalms xlv. 23 (Heb. 24) we read: "Rouse thyself! Why sleepest thou, O Lord? Awake! Do not cast us off for ever."

Thus taunted, the prophets of Baal roused themselves to greater frenzy. They gashed themselves with swords and lances till the blood gushed out.⁴ Such self-mutilation is not elsewhere attested specifically of the Tyrian worshippers of Melkart, though we are told that this was "according to their custom", but it is widely attested elsewhere,⁵ and Lucian records that the Galli and devotees of the Syrian goddess at Mabbog made gashes in their arms at the feast in her honour, or offered their backs to one another to lash.⁶ Robertson Smith observes that the current view about such rites has been that the effusion of blood was regarded as a substitute for human sacrifice, but is doubtful

¹ Cf. *J.A.O.S.* lv (1935), 92 f. But C. H. Gordon renders "lo the ass!" (*Ugaritic Literature*, 1949, pp. 110 f., and *Ugaritic Handbook*, 1947, p. 258, no. 1529, or *Ugaritic Manual*, 1955, p. 307, no. 1442).

² Cf. A. Erman, *The Literature of the Egyptians*, 1927, p. 12; A. Moret, *Le rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte*, 1902, pp. 121 ff.

³ Cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* viii. v. 3 (146). Cf. A. von Gutschmid, *Kleine Schriften*, ii (1890), 39, Ch. Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d'archéologie orientale*, viii (1924), 149 ff., and also Gsell, *op. cit.* iv. 312 f. A fourth century inscription from Cyprus, dedicated to Melkart, refers to persons described as *mḫm 'lm*, which A. M. Honeyman (*Muséon*, li (1938), 288) renders "establisher of the gods", but which should more probably be rendered "awakeners of the god" (for the rendering of *'lm* as a singular, cf. Z. S. Harris, *Grammar of the Phoenician Language*, 1936, p. 80). The same expression is found in inscriptions from other localities (cf. de Vaux, *loc. cit.*, pp. 17 f.).

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 28.

⁵ Cf. Apuleius, *Metam.* viii. xxvii f.; Lucian, *Lucius sive Asin.* xxxvii. Cf. also J. A. MacCulloch, *E.R.E.* ii (1909), 232 ff., and L. H. Gray, *E.R.E.* v (1912), 581; S. Reinach, in *Cultes, mythes et religions*, i (3rd edn., 1922), 173 ff.; H. Graillot, *Le culte de Cybèle*, 1912, pp. 305 f.; E. S. Stevens (Lady Drower), *By Tigris and Euphrates*, 1923, pp. 161 ff.

⁶ Cf. Lucian, *De Dea Syra*, 50 (Strong and Garstang, *The Syrian Goddess*, 1913, p. 84). On the insensibility of ecstatics cf. Jamblichus, *De mysteriis*, iii. iv.

if this is the explanation in all cases.¹ He thinks it was perhaps rather a means of recommending oneself to the deity.² In any case the shedding of one's own blood would seem to be essential to the rite.

The passage continues that the followers of Baal "prophesied" until the time of the oblation.³ Here the reference is probably to this frenzied behaviour, rather than to anything that we think of as prophesying, and the Revised Standard Version preserves the true meaning when it says they "raved". The Hebrew verb denotes not merely prophesying, but such behaviour as Saul's when he hurled his spear at David,⁴ where again the R.S.V. has "raved". Throughout the present passage there is no indication of the prophets of Baal delivering any message from their god to men, but only of their complete failure to secure any response from their god to their appeals.

By now the time of the evening oblation had arrived, and the discomfiture of the Baal prophets was complete. But the vindication of Elijah's confidence in Yahweh had yet to come. The assurance with which he had taunted the prophets of Baal could not guarantee that he would not find himself exposed to similar taunts. He therefore now repaired the altar of Yahweh,⁵ and to demonstrate his confidence he dug a trench round the

¹ Cf. *The Religion of the Semites*, 3rd edn., edited by S. A. Cook, 1927, pp. 321 f.

² Cf. M.-J. Lagrange, *Études sur les religions sémitiques*, 1903, p. 259; also E. Dhorme, *La religion des Hébreux nomades*, 1937, p. 260.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 29. According to Exod. xxix. 39 the evening oblation was offered "between the two evenings" (see RV marg.). It is uncertain whether the time was the same in the present story. Montgomery (*Kings*, p. 303) contents himself with saying it was after 3 o'clock. It could not have been very much later, in view of what had to follow before dark.

⁴ 1 Sam. xviii. 10.

⁵ 1 Kings xviii. 30. Many editors think that verses 31, 32a are an addition to the text, since they read more like the account of the building of a new altar than the repair of an old one. So Kamphausen, in *H.S.A.T.*, 3rd edn., i (1909), 496; I. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige* (K.H.C.), 1899, 110; R. Kittel, *Die Bücher der Könige* (H.K.), 1900, p. 148; Skinner, *Kings*, p. 233; Eissfeldt, *H.S.A.T.*, 4th edn., i (1922), 533; Montgomery, *Kings*, p. 304; de Vaux, in *Élie* (*Études Carmélitaines*), 1956, p. 62, and *Les Livres des Rois* (Bible de Jérusalem), 2nd edn., 1958, p. 107; G. Fohrer, *Elia*, 1957, p. 15 n. Burney (op. cit. p. 225) rejects this view, observing that "v. 30^a states summarily what is stated in detail in vv. 31, 32, according to the diffuse but picturesque style of the writer".

altar, and when he had put the wood and the pieces of the sacrificial bull on the altar, he had the whole drenched with water until the trench was also filled.¹ It has been suggested that this abundance of water on the top of Carmel is remarkable in a story of long continued drought.² We are not told where the water was brought from, and there is no reason to suppose that it was conveniently handy on the top of Carmel, or at the particular point on the mountain where the altar was erected.³ But it would be far more remarkable if twelve jars of water could not be found after this period of drought, since in that case the survival of those who took part in the scene would be beyond explanation. The pouring out of this water has been associated with rain-making magic,⁴ but there is little reason to accept this suggestion. At the moment it was not rain that was wanted, but fire, and all that Elijah was doing was loading the dice against himself even more, to demonstrate his confidence and to make his triumph the more spectacular.⁵ Having done this, he cried unto Yahweh to answer by fire, and the fire of the Lord fell.

Many years ago it was suggested by Hitzig⁶ that the triumph of Elijah was due to a trick which he played on his opponents.

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 32 ff.

² Cf. J. M. Powis Smith, *The Prophets and their Times*, 1925, p. 38 (2nd edn., revised by W. A. Irwin, 1941, p. 48); B. D. Eerdmans, *The Religion of Israel*, 1947, p. 79.

³ The traditional spot where the contest took place is at *el-Muhrâkâ*, above *Tell el-Kasîs*, near which is a spring. It is nearly four miles south of the highest point of Carmel, but is itself nearly 1600 feet above sea level (see Skinner, *op. cit.* p. 231).

⁴ So P. Volz, *Das Neujahrsfest Jahwes*, 1912, p. 31; Foakes Jackson, in *Peake's Commentary*, p. 303a; R. Dussaud, *Les origines cananéennes du sacrifice israélite*, 1921, pp. 205 f. (where the ritual is said to have been of Canaanite origin); S. Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien*, ii (1922), 102, and *Religion und Kultus*, 1953, p. 99; E. Dhorme, *La religion des Hébreux nomades*, 1937, p. 176, and *La Bible, Ancien Testament*, i (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1956, pp. 1112 f.; R. Patai, *H.U.C.A.* xiv (1939), 256 f.; A. Lods, *Histoire de la littérature hébraïque et juive*, 1950, p. 192; Lowther Clarke, *op. cit.* p. 435; N. H. Snaith, *I.B.* iii. 157. This view is rejected by S. Garofalo, *op. cit.* p. 141; R. de Vaux, *Élie*, p. 63, and *Le livre des Rois*, p. 108; A. van den Born, *Koningen* (B.O.T.), 1958, p. 111.

⁵ So K. Smyth, *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 1953, p. 337; G. Fohrer, *Elia*, p. 15. Bähr (*op. cit.* pp. 205 f.) thought it was to remove suspicion, and so M. Rehm (*op. cit.* p. 193), but Fohrer (*op. cit.* p. 15 n.) rejects this view. H. Junker (*loc. cit.* pp. 73 f.) thinks it was simply to cleanse the altar.

⁶ Cf. *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 1869, p. 176.

According to this theory, what was poured over the altar and into the trench was not water, but highly inflammable naphtha. This suggestion has recently been taken up by some other scholars, and the story that is told in 2 Maccabees i. 29 ff., of the kindling of the altar fire by Nehemiah with the aid of "thick water" which was called Nephthai and which was ignited by the sun's rays, has been brought into association with the story of Mt. Carmel.¹ As the time must have been in the later afternoon, it is not very probable that the naphtha was ignited by the direct rays of the sun,² and R. H. Kennett proposed the view that Elijah may have concentrated the rays by a curved metal mirror, which acted as a burning glass.³ This theory will convince whom it may.⁴ The story of Bel and the Dragon makes play of the tricks of the priests of Bel, wherewith they deceived the ignorant, until the clever Daniel exposed them. It is conceivable that Elijah might have imposed on the common people who were watching the contest, but it is not likely that he could have imposed on the prophets of Baal. Kennett observes that Elijah would not have been very scrupulous about the means he employed,⁵ but something more than lack of scruple is at issue here. It would be necessary to assume that the men who carried the jars of naphtha were accomplices of Elijah, or else that they were singularly gullible. But more than this! The prophets of Baal, of whom, be it remembered, there were 450, might be expected to watch what Elijah was doing with some care. Kennett observes that "among a people utterly devoid of scientific knowledge, a fire thus kindled (i.e. with a curved mirror) would be regarded as fire from heaven".⁶ It is doubtful whether we should think of these Tyrian prophets as completely devoid of scientific knowledge. With their wide trading contacts the

¹ So R. H. Kennett, *Old Testament Essays*, 1928, pp. 91 ff.; A. Lucas, *P.E.Q.* 1945, pp. 49 f. Hitzig had already noted the passage in 2 Maccabees.

² Lucas notes this difficulty, which is also noted by A. Parrot (*Samarie*, 1955, p. 19 n.) as fatal to the theory.

³ Loc. cit. pp. 103 f.

⁴ Lowther Clarke (op. cit. p. 435) dismisses this theory as out of keeping with the story. So also de Vaux, in *Élie*, p. 63, and Fohrer, op. cit. p. 15 n.

⁵ Loc. cit. p. 103.

⁶ Ibid. p. 100.

Tyrians were likely to be as advanced in scientific knowledge as Elijah.¹ Moreover, if there were natural deposits of naphtha in the neighbourhood, as Hitzig supposed,² they might be expected to be as well known to the priests of the shrine on Carmel and to the prophets of Melkart as they were to Elijah, and it is not likely that Elijah would have been allowed to draw his supposed "water" from these deposits without protest or interference.

Moreover, if Elijah's confidence were really in his trick and not in God, he would need to make careful plans for the igniting of the naphtha. He would scarcely leave that to God or to chance. Yet unless we accept the theory of a curved mirror, it must have been so left. If he was confident that a miracle would be performed and the fire kindled without human agency, all his supposed trouble with the naphtha was unnecessary. If, on the other hand, he was not relying on miraculous help, but on his own cleverness, then all his plans had missed the crux of the situation. This was not where could inflammable material be found, but how could fire be produced without visible human agency.

It cannot be supposed that Elijah had somehow concealed some contraption for making fire without being seen.³ If he had possessed a piece of sodium and had known something of its properties he might have hidden it amongst the sticks, but he could not have ensured that it should not begin to operate before all the buckets had been emptied over the altar and the men had withdrawn. If, on the other hand, he had relied on the direct rays of the sun to ignite his supposed "water", even supposing he had been confident that his trick would thus far escape detection, he could not be certain that the heat of the sun would suffice. Palestine does not enjoy rainfall during the summer months,⁴ when the sun would be hottest, and since this scene is the prelude to the coming rain, it can hardly be thought to have taken place in the summer.

¹ Cf. Peake, *The Servant of Yahweh*, p. 125 n.

² Loc. cit.

³ Cf. P. Saintyves, *Essais de Folklore biblique*, 1923, p. 21 : " 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."

⁴ Cf. L. H. Grollenberg, *Shorter Atlas of the Bible*, 1959, p. 26.

A more common suggestion is that the response to Elijah's faith came by lightning.¹ We are told that when the fire came it consumed the flesh that was upon the altar, and the wood and the water and also the very stones of the altar.² A flash of lightning that struck the altar might prove completely destructive, and would certainly be regarded as an act of God, since no human agency could control it. The difficulty here, however, is that the sky was cloudless. The drought had not yet broken, and it was only after the triumph over the prophets of Baal that Elijah's servant saw the first fragment of cloud on the far horizon. Had the sky been full of thunderclouds, it would still have been a remarkable vindication of Elijah's faith that the flash of lightning fell just at this moment, and that it struck his altar and not the altar of Baal. But a flash from a cloudless sky must have seemed even more remarkable. Indeed, it would still seem remarkable to us, and it is not to be supposed that we have rationalized the story and explained the miracle away when we think in terms of a flash of lightning.³ No man can produce lightning at will from a cloudless sky or from any sky; no man can direct the fall of the lightning to any object he wishes. The response to Elijah's faith may have come through some natural phenomenon, even though we cannot with certainty say how it came. To Elijah and to all who beheld it, it was supernatural in that it was uncontrolled by man and appeared at the desired place and at the desired time.⁴

¹ So J. Strachan, loc. cit. p. 688b; R. Kittel, op. cit. p. 148; Skinner, op. cit. p. 234; H. Gressmann, *S.A.T.* II, i (1910), 262; S. Landersdorfer, *Die Bücher der Könige* (H.S.A.Tes), 1927, p. 116; A. Šanda, op. cit. p. 71; A. Guillaume, in Gore's Commentary, p. 263; Montgomery, op. cit. p. 308; N. H. Snaith, *I.B.* iii. 158; M. Rehm, op. cit. p. 193; de Vaux, in *Élie*, p. 63; Dhorme, *Bible de la Pléiade*, pp. 1111, 1113; Fohrer, op. cit. p. 16. The passage in the Bible says "the fire of the Lord fell". A similar expression is used in Gen. xix. 24 of the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and in Exod. xix. 18 of the fire at Sinai. Again, in Job i. 16 it was the "fire of God" that destroyed the flocks and shepherds of Job, and in 2 Kings i. 10 fire from heaven that destroyed the men sent to take Elijah.

² 1 Kings xviii. 38.

³ Cf. Snaith, *I.B.* iii. 158.

⁴ N. K. Gottwald (*A Light to the Nations*, 1959, pp. 259 f.) observes that it is mistaken "to dismiss the incident as an *accident* . . . or as *collusion*. . . . Dishonesty of motive is a poor match for the evident sincerity of Elijah; the

What precisely happened it is impossible for us now to say; but that something remarkable happened is overwhelmingly sure. Some have sought to dissolve the story into pure fabrication.¹ In the Elijah and Elisha stories we have some accounts of trivial miracles, where the order of nature is reversed for the glorification of the prophet. A man is cutting wood when the axe-head flies off and falls into water where it seems impossible to recover it. Elisha cuts a stick and throws it into the water, whereupon the iron axe-head imitates the stick and floats to the top of the water and is recovered.² This is a miracle story in a totally different category from the one we are examining today. Almost all writers acknowledge that there are legendary elements in the stories told about Elijah and Elisha,³ and especially about Elisha. Peake observes that in the Elisha stories miracle is far more homely and commonplace.⁴ But if the story we are examining today is dismissed as a fabrication, then either the whole story of the reign of Ahab as well as the story of Elijah must be dismissed, or the defeat of the prophets of Baal is left without explanation. If it is true that Jezebel persecuted the prophets of Yahweh and actively promoted the cult of Melkart and maintained large numbers of prophets of Baal at the court, then something drastic must have happened to check this movement before the death of Ahab, and we are left to ask why the real reason should have been suppressed in favour of this fabrication.

dismissal of religious claims by charging deception is generally a feeble last resort. As to the possibility of coincidence, let us concede that if we knew all the circumstances some 'natural' instrumentality could be constructed to 'explain' the fire. Yet that would still leave untouched the fact that what gives the fire its meaning is *the context of religious ordeal*."

¹ Cf. G. Hölscher, *Die Profeten*, 1914, p. 177, and *Geschichte der israelitischen und jüdischen Religion*, 1922, pp. 95 f. Hölscher supposes that Elijah is a reflection back of traditions about Elisha. So H. Gunkel, *op. cit.* pp. 38 f. Cf. also B. Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments*, i (1905), 71. Wellhausen (*Prolegomena*, Eng. Trans., p. 462) finds much of the story to be legendary, but recognizes more historical substratum than Hölscher, and observes: "In solitary grandeur did this prophet tower over his time"; but cf. pp. 290 ff., where little historical reality is allowed to the story of Elijah. Similarly J. M. Powis Smith (*loc. cit.*) allows little substance of history in the narrative. E. Sellin (*Geschichte des israelitischen-jüdischen Volkes*, i (2nd edn., 1935), p. 220) holds that the kernel of the Elijah story is historical.

² 2 Kings vi. 4 ff.

³ Cf. G. Fohrer, *Elia*, pp. 52 ff.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 138.

It might be supposed that the real explanation is to be found in the revolution of Jehu.¹ Then large numbers of Baal worshippers were put to death, though in fact they were apparently much fewer than the 7,000 worshippers of Yahweh of whom Elijah learned. Moreover, these seem to have been Israelites who worshipped Baal. What is clear is that at the end of Ahab's reign the king is found consulting 400 prophets of Yahweh,² and not prophets of Baal speaking in the name of Melkart. Though Jezebel is still beside the king, her power is broken and her bid to replace Yahweh by Melkart is definitely countered. Hence it seems impossible to escape the certainty that something remarkable happened on Mount Carmel, something which not alone in Elijah's eyes vindicated his faith, but which vindicated it in the eyes of the people also, something so remarkable that the prophets of Baal were discredited and slain.

Nor is this the end of the story. Elijah goes to the top of Carmel³ after assuring the king that now there will be rain.⁴ He takes with him his servant, and bowing himself to the earth he sends his servant to the topmost point of the mountain to look to the west. It is sometimes said that Elijah's bowing himself to the ground with his face between his knees was a piece of sympathetic magic,⁵ and that he was trying to make himself look like a cloud so as to induce clouds in the sky, much as in the story of Elisha and the axe-head we find sympathetic magic. There is

¹ So Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, Eng. trans., pp. 291 f. Against this Peake (op. cit. p. 140) observes that the history suggests that the worship of Melkart had lost much of its prestige before the revolution of Jehu, and notes that Jehoram put away the pillar of Baal that Ahab had made (2 Kings iii. 2) while Jezebel was still alive and had the prestige of queen mother. Cf. also A. Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, Eng. trans., i (1882), 360 f.

² 1 Kings xxii. 6.

³ As W. E. Barnes (*The First Book of Kings*, Cambridge Bible, 1908, p. 154) observes, the "top" of Carmel probably means the seaward end.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 42.

⁵ So T. H. Robinson, *History of Israel*, i (1932), 306. G. Rösch (*T.S.K.* lxxv (1892), 551 ff.) also found rain-making magic in the actions of Elijah. R. Patai (*H.U.C.A.* xiv (1939), 255 ff.) says the prophet's gesture was designed to produce rain, but adds that as the prophet prayed to God at the same time it was not simple magic in this case, but that the medium of God was interposed between the act and its final aim. On rain-making by the imitation of clouds, cf. J. G. Frazer, *The Magic Art*, i (1936), 261 f.

not a little in the story of the prophets which has been somewhat similarly interpreted. It is possible so to regard much of the prophetic symbolism with which we are familiar. Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah makes horns of iron and says to the king "With these shalt thou gore the Syrians".¹ He is not merely foretelling—though falsely—the victory of Ahab. He is prophesying by his act, and he believes that the act will work to bring about its own fulfilment no less than the prophetic word. Similarly, when Jeremiah wears a wooden yoke in the Temple,² he and those who saw him believed that the act released power that tended towards its own fulfilment. That was why Hananiah felt that when he had broken the yoke he had broken the power of Jeremiah's prophetic act.³ There is nothing difficult in finding a symbolic act in a prophet,⁴ or in thinking it was believed to have power to affect the course of events.

Nevertheless, I find no reason to see any such symbolic act in Elijah's position here. Wheeler Robinson has distinguished prophetic symbolism from magic by observing that whereas magic is an attempt to control events by a technique, and thus to impose man's will on events that are normally beyond human control, prophetic symbolism claims to have its origin in the will of God and not to be directed to coerce God.⁵ By his prophetic act no less than by his word the prophet is saying "Thus saith the Lord". Often the prophet's own heart was wrung by the message he felt constrained to deliver. He was not trying to conform events to his will, but delivering the message which he believed God had given him and releasing a power which had its source in God. This leaves us, of course, with the problem of false prophecy and of misleading prophetic symbolism. It was always possible for a prophet to find his real inspiration no deeper than in his own heart and his own wishes, and to be self-deceived as well as to deceive others. But prophetic symbolism by its very nature was carried out before the eyes of men. It was a prophecy to them, whether a true one or a false.

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 11.

² Jer. xxvii. 1, xxviii. 10.

³ Jer. xxviii. 11.

⁴ Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *Old Testament Essays*, 1927, pp. 1 ff., and *J.T.S.* xliii (1942), 129 ff.; G. Fohrer, *Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten*, 1953.

⁵ Cf. *Old Testament Essays*, p. 14; *J.T.S.*, loc. cit. pp. 132 f.; *Redemption and Revelation*, 1942, p. 250.

Elijah's act here cannot be viewed in such a light. There is no one with him but his servant, and Elijah could scarcely be supposed to be prophesying to the servant. He had already uttered to the king the prophetic word that rain was coming, even though no vestige of cloud could be seen in the sky. If he was trying to resemble a cloud in order to bring rain, it was surely a simple case of magic, with no prophetic quality or element. After the vindication of his faith in the sending of fire by means that neither Elijah nor the people could explain, it would be very surprising for him to suppose that the assurance of the coming of rain which he had known before the contest on the mountain and had now expressed to the king, needed rain-making magic to bring it about. I find it much more reasonable to suppose with Professor Peake that Elijah's attitude was simply one of humble prayer.¹

The prayer was not immediately answered, and it was not until the servant had gone to the top of the mountain seven times that he saw a tiny cloud on the distant horizon.² It is therefore quite clear that at the time of the sacrifice the sky had been completely cloudless, and this makes any ordinary flash of lightning an improbable explanation of the triumph over the Baal prophets. It is to be noted that the prophet still had to exercise patience. He had seen Jezebel apparently succeeding and his fellow prophets being eliminated, and he had fled from Jezebel and for nigh three years kept out of her way, without his faith failing; and now that he had demonstrated to all Israel that Yahweh was God and not Melkart, and had countered the threat of the Phoenician faith, though the sky was still cloudless and the promised rain did not fall, he could have patience in prayer until God

¹ Op. cit. p. 126 n. Cf. A. Médebielle, op. cit. p. 677: "c'est l'attitude de la prière la plus humble, la plus recueillie, la plus ardente et persévérante, en même temps qu'elle est, d'après le contexte, la plus confiante." Cf. also K. Smyth, op. cit. p. 337; A. van den Born, op. cit. p. 112. Skinner (op. cit. p. 235) says: "the attitude . . . seems to express intense concentration of thought on an invisible object." Similarly Montgomery (op. cit. p. 306): "the attitude implies ecstatic absorption." So Slotki, op. cit. p. 135. Dhorme (*La Bible de la Pléiade*, p. 1114) describes the attitude as "geste de l'homme qui n'ose regarder en face ce qui va s'accomplir". A. Jirku (*Z.D.M.G.* ciii (1953), 372) adduces Ras Shamra evidence of the use of a similar phrase, and holds that it is a sign of grief.

² 1 Kings xviii. 44.

answered with the cloud. With the appearance of the cloud came the demonstration that Yahweh could send rain no less than fire. Elijah at once sent his servants to warn the king that he should hasten in his chariot back to Jezreel before the rain should make the roads impassable.¹ And as the king drove back to Jezreel, Elijah ran before his chariot, while the clouds began to fill the sky and the rain began to fall.² The beginning of the drought after the announcement of Elijah, the challenge on Mount Carmel, and the ending of the drought form a single story.

That Jezebel did not take her defeat easily is not surprising, and the chapter that immediately follows tells of her threat to Elijah and of his flight to Horeb.³ Psychologically there is nothing difficult in the reaction after the triumph. Professor Peake observes that Elijah had shown no sign of strain in the scene on Mt. Carmel.⁴ This does not mean that there was no inner strain, though he bore himself in the crisis without showing it. Despite his confidence in God, Elijah must have been aware of the magnitude of the issues that hung on the crisis, and it is in no way surprising that a mood of depression should follow the exaltation of triumph. Nor is it surprising that Jezebel should plan to take revenge on Elijah.⁵ Her plan for the conversion of Israel to the worship of Melkart had miscarried, but revenge on the man who had thwarted her was still open to her. She could not strike openly, but she was a woman who knew how to get her way. The story of Naboth's vineyard sufficiently indicates that she was accustomed to stick at nothing when she wanted a thing.⁶ She could not force Naboth openly to give up his vineyard to the king, but she could intrigue to get her way, so that it might appear that Naboth was being justly punished for blasphemy and *lèse majesté*. Hence though Elijah was safe against any public stroke against him, when the threat of Jezebel came to his ears he knew it was a serious one. I therefore feel there is no need to transfer the story of Elijah's visit to Horeb to an earlier period in his ministry.⁷

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 44.

² 1 Kings xviii. 46.

³ 1 Kings xix.

⁴ Op. cit. p. 134.

⁵ 1 Kings xix. 2.

⁶ 1 Kings xx.

⁷ This is done by Peake, op. cit. p. 135.

It is said that the assurance that there were 7000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal reads strangely after the victory on Mt. Carmel.¹ But is that really so? There was a wave of enthusiasm for Yahweh, and the Baal prophets were slain, but there was no evidence of any real or enduring return to Yahweh. The threat of Melkart was gone; but that did not of itself mean that Yahwism immediately regained the strength that Elijah would see. Other and more insidious perils would continue. For religion every age is an age of peril, and it is the tribute to Elijah's realism that he was aware that success in one crisis brought a new and different challenge, and that while Jezebel and her relentless purpose continued, the battle for Yahweh must go on.

Yet to Elijah had been given a triumph such as is given to few. Often in the history of the world great issues have depended on lone individuals, without whom events would have taken a wholly different turn. Yet few crises have been more significant for history than that in which Elijah figured, and in the story of the Transfiguration he rightly stands beside Moses. Without Moses the religion of Yahwism as it figured in the Old Testament would never have been born. Without Elijah it would have died. The religion from which Judaism, Christianity and Islam all in varying ways stemmed would have succumbed to the religion of Tyre. How different the political history of the world might have been it is vain to speculate. But it is safe to say that from the religion of Melkart mankind would never have derived that spiritual influence which came from Moses and Elijah and others who followed in their train.

¹ So Peake, *ibid.* pp. 134 f.