

Diamonds in the Dust 5

The Lay of the Land: Mount Carmel/Mount Horeb/Elijah and Prophets of Baal

1 Kings 18: 17-40

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, 'Is it you, you troubler of Israel?' 18 He answered, 'I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.' 20 So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel.

- "Israel" vs "Judah" – [Map of Divided Kingdom](#)



- Where is Mount Carmel?



- Height: 1791'
- Hawkwatch, Waggoners Gap PA : 2850'

Mount Carmel Today



Ba'hai Temple -- The Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel



one of the holiest places in the world for Bahá'í people.

Who is Baal?





Who is Asherah?



Who is Ahab?

- Relation to Solomon...

Who is Jezebel?

- Daughter of...
- Worshipper of ...
 - She and Ahab built altars to Baal and Asherah
 - She and Ahab allowed the Mount Carmel altar to YHWH to be torn down (this is before only one central altar in Jerusalem (Judah))
 - Killed prophets of YHWH
 - (1 Kings 18:4) Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the Lord....
- Who is Elijah?
 - What Prophets did
 - Moses style prophet -- leads
 - Samuel style prophet – announces God's will
 - Elijah/Elisha – speaks against the king/speaks truth to the people
 - Isaiah – Comforting prophet

'21Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, 'How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If YHWH is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' The people did not answer him a word.

- What is Elijah trying to do? [Get the people to trust YHWH and YHWY alone.]
- Who is Elijah trying to convince? [Not Jezebel or Ahab]
- What is the people's response? Silence. [We're going to hear silence again later]

This is the era in Israel/Judah's life when they are trying to figure out if they believe YHWH is the only true god or are there others with any power at all.

- Or are there many gods or only one?
- Will they combine ideas from many faiths to "hedge their bets" or stick with YHWH alone?

22Then Elijah said to the people, 'I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets number four hundred and fifty.

- Odds: 850 Prophets of Baal/Asherah vs. 1 Prophet of YHWH

23Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. 24Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord; the god who answers by fire is indeed God.' All the people answered, 'Well spoken!'

- What was the symbol of Baal? A Bull. That's what's on the fire. Can you think of another time God's people were confused about the power of Calf? (Sinai desert; 10 Cs)

*25Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it.' 26So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and **called on the name of Baal** from morning until noon, crying, 'O Baal, answer us!' **But there was no voice, and no answer.** They **limped** about the altar that they had made. (Me: who else limped?—the People) 27At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, 'Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is **meditating**, or he has **wandered** away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is **asleep** and must be awakened.' 28Then they **cried aloud** and, as was their custom, they **cut themselves** with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. 29As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was **no voice, no answer, and no response.***

- What was Baal known for?
- Why did Baal's prophets cut themselves?

*30 Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come closer to me'; and all the people came closer to him. First he **repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down**; 31Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, 'Israel shall be your name'; 32with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. 33Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, 'Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt-offering and on the wood.' 34Then he said, 'Do it a second time'; and they did it a second time. Again he said, 'Do it a third time'; and they did it a third time, 35so that the water ran all round the altar, and filled the trench also with water.*

- Ancient altars:
 - *Horned Altar*



- *Canaanite Altar*



- *Arad*



36 At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. 37Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.' 38Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt-offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. 39When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, 'The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.'

40Elijah said to them, 'Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape.' Then they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon, and killed them there.

Wadi Kishon today

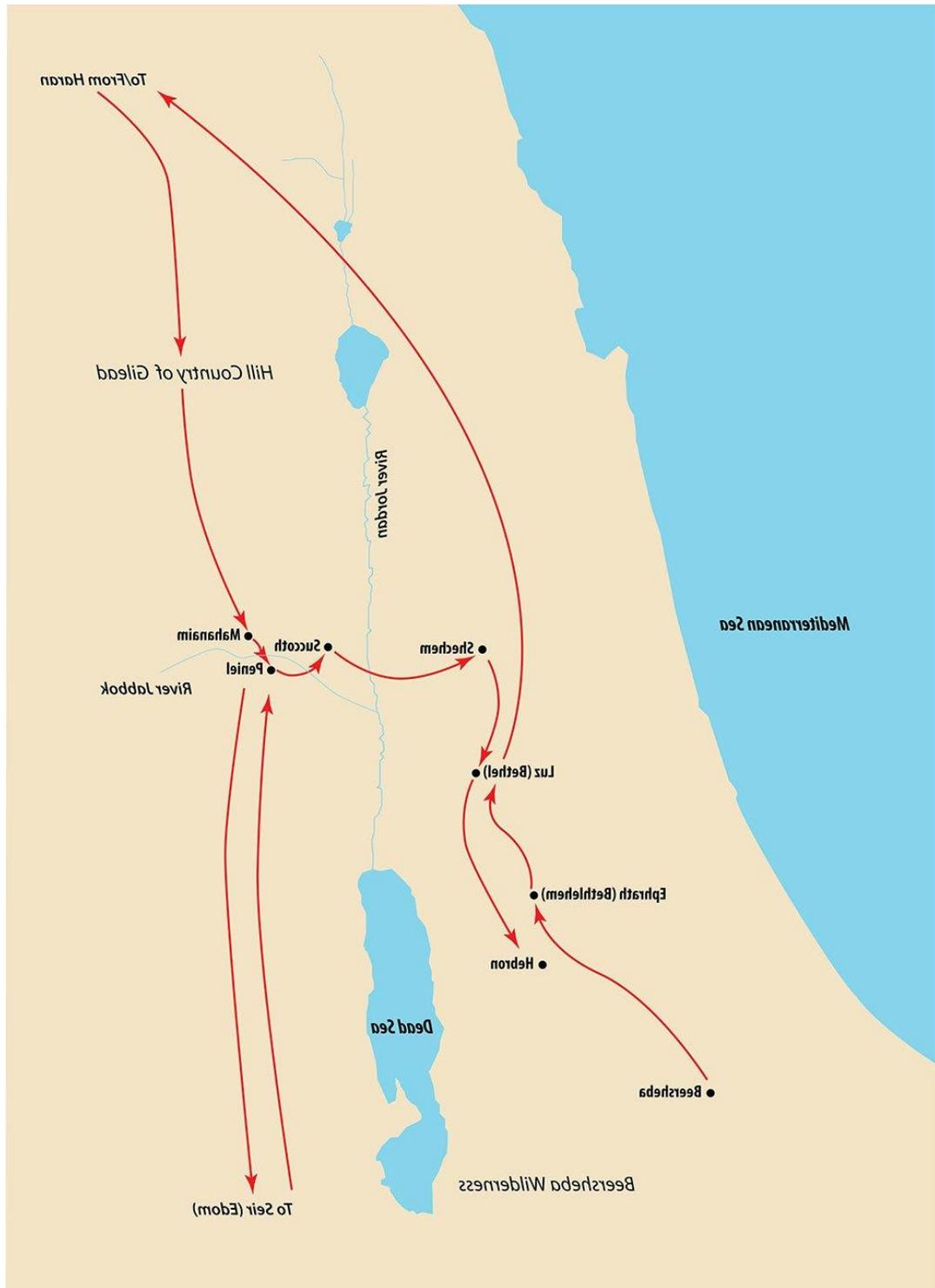


Prior to this (1 Kings 18:4) Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the Lord...

1 Kings 19:1-13 – Still small voice

*19Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.' 3Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to **Beer-sheba**, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.*

[Map – Beer-Sheba and Sinai](#)



4 But he himself went **a day's journey into the wilderness**, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.' 5 Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, 'Get up and eat.' 6 He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and

a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. 7The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.' 8**He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.** 9At that place he **came to a cave**, and spent the night there.

- Horeb = Sinai = Unknown
 - [Map Beer Sheba and Sinai/Horeb](#)

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' 10He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

11 He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.'

Now there was a great **wind**, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind;

and after the wind an **earthquake**, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;

12and after the earthquake a **fire**, but the Lord was not in the fire; [When was YHWH recently "in the fire" in Elijah's life?]

and after the fire **a sound of sheer silence**.

13When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

- Wrapping face in mantle: humility, modesty, respect (like burka)

Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' 14He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.' 15Then the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. 16Also you shall **anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel**; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. 17Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. 18Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.'

Questions:

- What do these stories tell us about YHWH's power? Infinite/impressive.
- What do these stories tell us about how YHWH "shows up" or speaks? However God wants to – from fire to silence.

- What do these stories tell us about Elijah's power over YHWH? He has none. Prophets can't summon God.
- What do these stories tell us about the concept of "holy places"? Mountains, caves, or even buildings. What makes any place holy? How do we define a Holy Place? Is God in the place? Christians don't believe that places contain God. God can choose to show up or not show up anywhere.