

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 20 March 2023

Greetings.

Today we continue with our Elijah studies. Part 6 of those studies is set out below.

Separately, here are two wholly unconnected quotations which I have come across over the past few days:

1. 'Come down from the cross, and we will believe' (Matt 27. 42).

'The crowds shouted: "Come down from the cross and we will believe on you". General Booth commented: "It is precisely because He did not come down that we believe on Him"'.
(William Barclay, 'Jesus as *They Saw Him*', page 244.)

2. 'We must all appear before the judgment seat' (2 Cor. 5. 10.)

'Keith Green said one day in my office, as we were talking about the roads, "All roads lead to the judgment seat". It's true. They do'.

(Leonard Ravenhill, '*Christ Magnified in My Body: Part 1*'; accessed at <http://articles.ochristian.com/article6920.shtml>.)

Now, there is a sobering thought.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

Elijah. Part 6: 1 Kings 18. 27-32.

INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth in our series of studies in the life of Elijah, as recorded in 1 Kings 17 and 18, where you and I sit in as spectators to observe how the Lord sets about discrediting the claims made for Ba'al by his followers by demonstrating that He ('Jehovah') – and only He – is the true and 'living' God.

In the first three parts of our series, we traced how the events of chapter 17 exhibit successfully that Jehovah is the one and only true God. We noted how:

- (i) The *dry brook at Cherith* declares, '**Round 1** to Jehovah!'¹
- (ii) The *well-fed family at Zarephath* proclaims, '**Round 2** to Jehovah!'²
- (iii) The *raising to life of the widow's son* positively thunders, '**And Round 3** to Jehovah!'³

In parts 4 and 5, we set the stage for the spectacular knockout in 'Round 4', the account of which occupies the main section of chapter 18.

At the close of part 5, we left the prophets of Ba'al leaping and dancing around their altar.

SCRIPTURE

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in

the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

1 Kings 18. 27-32 (King James Version)

HIGH NOON

Verse 27a. 'And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them'.

This is the first of two interruptions by Elijah in the activities of Ba'al's prophets. And it is clear that Elijah chose the timing of both these interventions most carefully, the first coming now, 'at noon', and the second coming at 'the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice'.⁴

First, then, 'at noon' (when the sun was at its hottest, and when the prophets of Ba'al should have expected fire to fall from heaven if it were ever going to come⁵) Elijah begins to deride the prophets, mingling his scoffing taunts with their frantic cries.

I note that, although his scathing words refer throughout to Ba'al, the text says explicitly that 'Elijah mocked *them*'—mocked Ba'al's prophets, that is—and not that he mocked Ba'al. Nor is this surprising because Elijah cannot deride someone who doesn't exist!

'YOU'LL NEED TO SHOUT!'

Verse 27b. 'And said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking ...'.

Elijah opens by suggesting that the prophets could try turning the volume up: 'Cry aloud: for he is a god'.

Elijah's biting sarcasm ('for *he is a god*') reminds me of the words of Joash, the father of Gideon, addressed to the men of his city who sought to slay Gideon because (i) he had broken down Ba'al's altar and (ii) he had hewn down its associated Asherah pole: '*Will you plead for Ba'al?*'

'If *he is a god*', Joash challenges the men, 'let him plead for himself, because his altar has been broken down'.⁶ A 'god' indeed!

Perhaps, Elijah suggests, this supposed 'god' of the prophets 'is **talking**', which should, more likely, be translated 'is meditating' or 'is musing'. Perhaps, Elijah proposes, Ba'al is daydreaming or is so preoccupied⁷ with his own affairs that he hasn't noticed the predicament of his unhappy prophets.

Verse 27c. '... or he is pursuing'.

Alternatively, maybe he 'is **pursuing**', better 'is gone aside'—in all likelihood, a euphemism for 'relieving himself'.⁸

Perhaps, Elijah rags the prophets, Ba'al is using the facilities ... is answering the call of nature. This may sound a little crude to you and me—but it is certainly pointed and effective!

Verse 27d. '... or he is in a journey'.

In all likelihood, the suggestion that Ba'al might be '**in a journey**' would have really hit home.⁹ For, according to one ancient pagan text,¹⁰ on one occasion, Ba'al's sister,¹¹ the goddess Anat¹² came to Ba'al's house looking for him, only to be told that he had gone off on a hunting trip.¹³

Elijah taunts the prophets that it looks as if Ba'al might 'be away on one of his travels' and (I add) has clearly left no forwarding address!

Verse 27e. '... or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked'.

Or, finally, Elijah suggests, Ba'al may be '**asleep**' and needs to be roused. Talk about a late sleeper—their god might still be slumbering at noon!

But, again, there may well be a pertinent background to Elijah's final suggestion.

According to the pagan myths, Ba'al was thought to die in the autumn, when the dry season began, then to lie dead all through the winter, before rising again in the spring when the rain returned.¹⁴ Indeed, one ancient historian¹⁵ reports that Hiram (a previous king of Tyre, who had enjoyed friendly

relations with both David and Solomon¹⁶), had introduced a ritual ceremony specifically for ‘*the awakening*’ of Ba’al.¹⁷

Perhaps, Elijah submits, Ba’al is still enjoying his *dry-season* nap (and, after forty-two months without rain, everything is certainly pretty *dry!*) and needs a loud wake-up call.

It isn’t difficult to sense the scathing sarcasm in Elijah’s voice. ‘Speak up’, he scoffs, ‘perhaps this supposed god of yours (i) is deep *in thought*, (ii) is *in the lavatory*, (iii) is *in a journey*, or (iv) is simply still *in bed*’.

And perhaps one of the saddest things is that, although Elijah’s ‘suggestions’ are meant as caustic sarcasm, they are not, in fact, unfair descriptions of pagan beliefs. I suspect that the prophets of Ba’al do not regard them as in any way ridiculous or unworthy of their supposed god. Poor, blind men.

We learnt earlier that, despite the prophets’ pathetic pleas until noon, there was ‘*no voice, nor any that answered*’.¹⁸ I note that the same words¹⁹ are used later in the Books of Kings to describe the dead child at Shunem: ‘Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the lad; but there was *no voice, nor any that answered*’,²⁰

The entreaties of the prophets evoke no more response, that is, from non-existent Ba’al than they would from one who was dead. To the onlooker at the time, ‘If Ba’al isn’t dead, he might as well be!’

PLEADING AND BLEEDING

Verse 28. ‘And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them’.

Elijah’s withering scorn only serves to goad Ba’al’s prophets to acts of greater frenzy. Previously, they had confined their efforts to leaping and dancing around their altar. Now they not only, as Elijah mockingly suggests, cry louder²¹ but they also resort to self-laceration.

‘With knives and lancets’: literally, ‘with swords and spears’, both words describing weapons of heavily-armed troops.²²

‘Till the blood gushed out on them’. The word translated ‘gushed out’ is the same as is used to describe the ashes of Jeroboam’s altar, which were ‘poured out’ when the Lord tore the altar open.²³ These, then, are no small scratches which the prophets inflict on themselves. These men are in earnest.

It has been said that ‘they cut their flesh, and *mingled their own blood with that of their sacrifice*’.²⁴ Presumably, the prophets hope that, if the sight of *a bullock’s blood* fails to move Ba’al to pity and stir him to *action*, the sight of *his own prophets’ blood* might do the trick.

But, again, I think there may be more to it. For, in the prophets’ pagan literature, other divine beings are portrayed as practising self-mutilation when they hear of the death of Ba’al.

For example, according to the so-called ‘Ba’al Epic’, much the same words are used of both the god El and the goddess Anat, when (between Ba’al’s supposed death and resurrection) they mourn for Ba’al. Concerning El, the ‘Epic’ says, ‘He cuts cheek and chin. He lacerates his forearms. He ploughs his chest like a garden. Like a vale he lacerates his back’, with more-or-less identical words used of Anat.²⁵

It is at least possible, therefore, that the cries and violent actions of the prophets mimic the mourning of these two supposed deities over Ba’al, whose ‘death’ is evident, to the prophets’ way of thinking, from the prolonged lack of rain.²⁶

And, for my part, I interpret the expression, ‘after their manner’, as meaning ‘in accordance with their pagan ritual’.

A DEAFENING SILENCE

Verse 29. ‘And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded’.

Their feverish activities and frenzied cries (spoken of here as 'prophesying'²⁷) continue from mid-day until mid-afternoon.

But their ranting and raving²⁸ produce no more than a deafening silence from heaven, which the Holy Spirit emphasises by His powerful three-fold declaration, 'No sound, no one answering, no one paying any attention' (literal translation).²⁹

THE DEVIL RESTRAINED

And, *in one sense*, we are not in the least surprised that there isn't even a flicker of response to all the prophets' frantic efforts. For you and I know what Elijah knows ... that there is no 'Ba'al' to tune in to their cries ... that 'Ba'al' is no more than a figment of man's imagination.

And yet, *in another sense*, it is strange that no fire fell in response to the impassioned cries of Ba'al's prophets. For we know only too well that the sinister foe spoken of by Paul as 'the ruler of the authority of the air'³⁰ is anything but a figment of human imagination!

And, what is more, we know that, under God, he (the devil) possesses *enormous* power. Directly relevant to the contest on Carmel, we find that:

(i) *in the past*, with the Lord's express permission, Satan caused 'fire' to come down 'from heaven' to burn up Job's sheep, together with all but one of Job's shepherds,³¹ and

(ii) *in the future*, the 'beast coming up out of the earth' ('the false prophet'³²) will perform 'great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven', by means of which he will deceive 'them that dwell on the earth'.³³

And this ('make fire come down out of heaven') he will do, we read, by means of 'power' and 'authority' delegated to him, through the first beast, from 'the dragon'³⁴ himself.³⁵

Doubtless, the dragon-devil (who, through 'the false prophet', will one day 'make fire to come down out of heaven') would gladly now:

(i) cause fire to fall from heaven for the *prophets* of Ba'al and,

(ii) thereby (with just one 'bolt out of the blue',³⁶ for there was cloudless sky over the land at the time³⁷), *discredit God's prophet, deceive God's people and defeat God's purpose*.

Oh yes, most certainly, fire falling on to Ba'al's altar would suit Satan (if you will excuse the pun) 'down to the ground'! But 'the ruler of the authority of *the air*' does not bring down fire out of *the sky*.

I can only conclude that the devil *does not* because the devil *cannot*³⁸ ... that, in this case (unlike in that of Job), the sovereign Lord withholds His permission and so restrains the enemy.³⁹

It is a huge encouragement to us that, as far as assailing or meddling with God's people is concerned, no matter how hard he tries, Satan cannot create any space for himself which falls outside the range of God's permissive will and ultimate control.⁴⁰

And so it is that Ba'al (the so-called 'god' who, according to pagan mythology, can 'flash lightnings on the earth' whenever he wills⁴¹) is exposed as the sham he is.

With our eyes on the divinely-inscribed writing on 'the wall of the king's palace' in the days of Belshazzar many years later, we can well write over verse 29:

'Ba'al, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting'.⁴²

With the words, 'there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded', we have reached the midpoint of Round 4 in the bout between (i) the prophets of Ba'al and (ii) Jehovah and Elijah.

At this point, the prophets of Ba'al have let fly with all they have—they have no punches left. Everything is now down to Jehovah and his servant.

'THE ALTAR OF THE LORD' REPAIRED

Verse 30a. 'And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him'.

We read earlier that ‘Elijah came near to all the people’ when he first arrived at Carmel. I assume that he invites them to ‘come near’ to him for a second time because he is now standing at a distance from Ba'al’s altar and prophets—near, it seems, the place where ‘the altar of the Lord’ had once stood.

And so, gladly leaving behind us the antics and hysterical cries of Ba'al’s prophets, we enter an atmosphere of spiritual calm as Elijah takes centre stage. The Lord’s prophet knows well that his God needs no ritual dancing, no gory self-flagellation, no noisy wake-up call!

NOTHING UP HIS SLEEVE

Elijah’s summons, ‘come near unto me’, is evidence that he wants there to be no suspicion of any trickery or sleight of hand on his part. Earlier, he had told the people, ‘I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and *put no fire under*’.⁴³ Now. He calls on the people to ‘come near and observe what he does, lest he should privately hide fire among the pieces of wood’.⁴⁴

The people do as Elijah says; they all ‘came near to him’. Not that this is in any way remarkable. After all, it is now obvious to everyone present that nothing of great interest is ever going to happen at Ba'al’s altar!

I do wonder, however, whether the people would have been quite so ready to ‘come near’ to Elijah if they suspected that which would shortly happen at the altar he is about to repair! And yet, they are safe enough. For, in God’s amazing grace, ‘the fire of the Lord’, when it does fall, will strike the *sacrificial altar* and not the *sinful people*.

BUILT ... BROKEN ... REPAIRED

Verse 30b. ‘And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down’.

Elijah’s first action,⁴⁵ we are told, is to ‘repair’ (literally, to ‘heal’) the altar which had been ‘*broken down*’.

Not that the altar on Carmel has fared any worse than other altars of the Lord, for we read twice in the following chapter that Elijah later draws the Lord’s attention to the fact that ‘the children of Israel ... have *broken down*⁴⁶ your *altars*, and slain your prophets with the sword’.⁴⁷

Given that it was Jezebel who had ‘slain’ God’s prophets,⁴⁸ it is highly likely that Jezebel was responsible for ‘breaking down’ God’s altars also—in all likelihood, replacing each of them with an altar of Ba'al, as was probably the case here on the heights of Carmel.⁴⁹

We are not told anything about the origin of the Lord’s altar on Carmel. I suspect, however, that it may have been built by some pious members of the northern, ten-tribe kingdom following the rift with the southern two-tribe kingdom of Judah back in the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam⁵⁰ If this is so, it adds significance to the manner in which Elijah sets about rebuilding the altar.

‘TWELVE STONES’

Verses 31-32. ‘And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed’.

The ‘stones’ which Elijah takes are either (i) stones from the original altar which had stood there or (ii) stones simply lying on the mountain. In either case, Elijah clearly constructs his altar according to the directions given by God to Moses at Sinai long before: ‘if you make me an altar of stone, you shall *not build it of hewn stones*; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have profaned it’.⁵¹

Scholars tell us that the Canaanites made *their* altars of finished stones⁵² and it may well be that the worshippers of Ba'al did so, too. But as far as Elijah is concerned, if he is going to build ‘an altar in the name of the Lord’, he will build it according to God’s own specifications. The same should hold true, of course, of anything which we attempt to build or do for Him.⁵³

The point has been well made that Elijah makes no attempt to obtain ‘stones that had been quarried and polished by human art’, but chooses rather to use the ‘rough and unhewn stones which lay’ to hand, taking ‘what God had provided and not what man had made’.⁵⁴

But the text itself draws particular attention, not to the *origin* or the *nature* of the stones but to the *number* of the stones: ‘Elijah took twelve stones’.

And to ensure that we register the significance of the number 'twelve', the scripture adds, 'according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob'.

Not that Elijah is the first – nor is he the last – to make use of twelve objects to symbolise the unity of the nation.

We read that:

(i) when Moses built an altar at Sinai, he set up alongside it 'twelve pillars (or 'standing-stones') according to the twelve tribes of Israel';⁵⁵

(ii) 'when all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan', Joshua commanded *twelve* men, one from each of the tribes: 'take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel',⁵⁶ which stones he then set up in Gilgal as a memorial for coming generations;⁵⁷

and, looking on to days much later than those of Elijah:

(iii) when the remnant of returned exiles dedicated the second Temple, they offered 'as a sin offering for all Israel *twelve* male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel'.⁵⁸

It would be difficult indeed to miss that, in all these cases, the Holy Spirit uses the same expression, 'according to the number of the tribes of Israel', or equivalent.

And Elijah's choice of twelve stones now (as would the remnant's choice of twelve goats later) draws deliberate attention to the unity of the nation ... to the fact that (in spite of their present political and religious division), when viewed from *God's* standpoint, Israel still comprises twelve tribes. As the Lord regards them, the twelve tribes still form only one people—His!⁵⁹

I think it true to say, therefore, that, although *physically* Elijah is standing on *ten*-tribe ground (Carmel falling within the tribal inheritance of Asher⁶⁰), *spiritually* he is standing on *twelve*-tribe ground.

'WHAT'S IN A NAME?'

For this reason, I regard the description of 'the tribes' as highly significant: '*the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name*'.⁶¹

As I understand it, by alluding to the fact that '*Israel*' was the name given *by the Lord* to Jacob (*the father of all twelve sons* and not just of the ten from whom the tribes of the northern kingdom had descended), the Holy Spirit is censuring the ten tribes, not only for originally breaking away from the two tribes in the south but also for appropriating the name 'Israel' exclusively for themselves.⁶²

'CALLED IN ONE BODY' (COL. 3. 15)

And what, we may ask, does this say to *us*?

At least this, that, whatever scriptural convictions we may hold and practise relevant to the local assembly, we must ever remember that, in God's sight, 'there is', as the apostle Paul says, 'one body'.⁶³ There is only one body and that body comprises every true believer in our Lord Jesus, whatever his or her local church association.

Our understanding of God's truth may prevent us from joining in public fellowship with some but we must love and respect all, ever remembering that God sees us as 'one in Christ'.⁶⁴

Mr J. G. Deck says it well:

'Oft we forget that *we are one*
With every saint that loves His name;
To Him united on the throne,
Our life, our hope, our Lord the same'.⁶⁵

From this point in the narrative, our attention is focused on what happens at 'the altar of the Lord'. And it is at that altar that you and I shall witness the dramatic 'Round 4 knockout' in our next, and final, instalment.

To be concluded.

Notes

¹ 1 Kings 17. 1, 7.

² 1 Kings 17. 16.

³ 1 Kings 17. 22.

⁴ 1 Kings 18. 29, 36.

⁵ 'No wonder that Elijah's scorn broke forth vehemently at such a sight. Noon was the hour of the sun's greatest power, and, since Baal was probably a solar deity, it was the hour when, if ever, he would spare one of his abundant fiery beams to light the pyre', Alexander Maclaren, '*The Trial by Fire*', Sermons on 1 & 2 Kings; accessed at https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/1Kings_am.html#ttbf.

⁶ Judges 6. 31.

⁷ 'Preoccupied' is the rendering given and defended by R. de Vaux, '*The Bible and the Ancient Near East*', pages 243-244.

⁸ 'The word is a verb meaning literally 'to withdraw', and Elijah was probably using it to mean that Baal was relieving himself', H. L. Ellison, '*I and II Kings: The New Bible Commentary*', IVP, page 359. 'Sitting on the toilet' is the paraphrase in The Living Bible. Compare the euphemistic expression, 'to cover one's feet', Judg. 3. 24; 1 Sam. 24. 3.

⁹ This particular taunt was certainly not far-fetched!

¹⁰ Known to scholars as 'Anat and the Buffalo'.

¹¹ And/or 'spouse'; the exact relationship between Ba'al and the goddess Anat is uncertain.

¹² Spelled 'Anath' by some.

¹³ 'The Ugaritic Tablet IV AB enables us to understand its significance. It is narrated there, at the beginning of column ii, that one fine day the goddess Anath came to the house of her brother Baal and enquired of his servants if Baal was at home, and the servants answered (4–9): "Ba'al is not in his house ... his bow he took in his hand, his arrows in his right hand, and then he set his face towards the marshes of Simku", U. Cassuto, '*The Goddess Anath*', page 62.

'Anath and the Buffalo ... The myth represents Anath as inquiring where Baal is to be found, and being told by his servants that he is away hunting', S. H. Hooke, '*Middle Eastern Mythology*', page 87. It seems that Ba'al's followers believed that their god accompanied and protected their sailors when they were away at sea: 'An early cylinder seal from the site of Tell el-Dab'a depicts Ba'al ... protecting a ship at sail', Aaron J. Brody, '*Each Man Cried Out to His God*', Brill, page 96. (See also 'Ba'al may have been the patron of seafarers at Ugarit. Votive anchors were found in the Baal temple, which stood atop Ugarit's acropolis so that sailors could see the temple from a great distance', James Anderson, '*Monotheism and Yahweh's Appropriation of Ba'al*', page 56.)

Thinking of that expression 'away at sea' (and as a humorous aside), I recall reading of one near-sighted minister, who, just minutes before the beginning of the prayer meeting, was passed a note from a Mrs Johnson. The note read: 'Bill Johnson, having gone away to sea, his wife asks the prayers of the congregation for his safety'. Not being the sharpest when it came to spelling and punctuation, the minister startled the company by announcing: 'Bill Johnson, having gone away to see his wife, asks the prayers of the congregation for his safety'. (Ahem!)

¹⁴ 'Ba'al was thought to die in the fall as the dry season began and to lie dead in the winter before rising again in the spring when the rains returned', Roger Hahn, '*1 and 2 Kings: CRI*', comment on 1 Kings 18. 27.

'Baal is the god of life and fertility and the Canaanites saw in the cycle of the seasons the reflection of his personal experience. In the Near East there are only two main seasons: the rainy fertile winter and the dry sterile summer. The ending of the rains in late April signified the annual slaying of Ba'al by his arch-enemy Môt. The return of the rains in late September indicated Ba'al's yearly resurrection', Cyrus H. Gordon, '*The Loves and Wars of Ba'al and Anat*', page 5.

¹⁵ Menander of Ephesus, the historian of the second century B.C., whom we have had occasion to quote in another context—see Part 2, page 8, together with note 99.

¹⁶ 1 Kings 5. 1.

¹⁷ 'A number of individuals in the ancient Mediterranean identified Tyrian Heracles with Melqart [alias, Ba'al]. An illuminating passage from Josephus refers to Menander's account of Hiram of Tyre's reign: "He ... was the first to celebrate the awakening of Heracles in the month of Peritius" (Flavius Josephus, *'Antiquities of the Jews'*, Book 8, Chapter 5, Paragraph 3; there is a parallel text in *'Against Apion'*), J. G. Cook, *'Resurrection in Paganism and the Question of an Empty Tomb in 1 Corinthians 15'*, pages 69-70.

¹⁸ 1 Kings 18. 26.

¹⁹ The exact Hebrew expression is, 'ואין קול ואין קשב'.

²⁰ 2 Kings 4. 31. Interestingly, Elijah's successor, Elisha, was then at mount Carmel, 2 Kings 4. 25.

²¹ And it is hard to imagine the deafening noise which hundreds of so-called prophets all crying out together would have made!

²² From the Hebrew words used, the instruments they used were soldiers' weapons. 'Swords' is the normal word so translated; it occurs 372 times in the Old Testament, for example, in 1 Kings 19. 1, 10, 14 and 17. The word 'spears' is used fifteen times, often in the expression 'shields and spears'. 'The instruments they used were weapons of heavy-armed troops', J. Hammond, *'1 Kings: The Pulpit Commentary'*, Volume 5, page 423.

²³ 1 Kings 13. 3, 5.

²⁴ Thomas Scott, *'The Holy Bible: with Explanatory Notes and Practical Observations'*, 1824, Volume II, page 268.

²⁵ Source: 'The Ba'al Epic', accessed at ... <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ba'al>. The full text there reads:

*He cuts cheek and chin,
He lacerates His forearms.
He ploughs His chest like a garden;
Like a vale He lacerates His back.
He lifts His voice
And shouts:
"Baal is dead!"*

*She cuts cheek and chin.
She lacerates Her forearms.
She ploughs like a garden her chest,
Like a vale she lacerates the back.
"Baal is dead!"*

²⁶ This pagan background may explain (in part at least) why, on more than one occasion, the Law of Moses forbids any form of self-mutilation, Lev. 19. 28; Deut. 14. 1 (and, for the priests, Lev. 21. 5); cf. Jer. 16. 6; 41. 5; Zech. 13. 6. The Lord's prohibition of such deliberate disfigurement may also be partly due to the respect which should be shown to the human body as part of His creation.

²⁷ The expression seems to be used where there was an utterance of words or sounds by someone under some influence which he couldn't control. 'The verb denotes the externals of "prophetic" experience, the dervish rites and the ecstatic behaviour, often indistinguishable from the conduct of a madman', John Gray, *'I and II Kings'*, 1980, page 399.

²⁸ 'They kept on ranting and raving', Good News Bible; cf. 'they raved and ranted', New English Bible.

²⁹ 'On the one hand, we hear the wild chorus echoing among the rocks; on the other, we feel the dead silence in the heavens'. Alexander Maclaren, *ibid*. The words, 'no sound, no one answering' echo the words of verse 26; cf. 'neither voice ('sound'), nor hearing', 2 Kings 4. 31.

³⁰ Eph. 2. 2 (JND, LEB, LITV and YLT).

³¹ Job 1. 12, 16.

³² Rev. 19. 20. The 'Minister for Propaganda' for the first beast of Rev. 13. 1-10.

³³ Rev. 13. 13-14 RV.

³⁴ 'That old serpent, called the devil, and Satan', Rev. 12. 9.

³⁵ Rev. 13. 2, 12.

³⁶ 'Lightning strokes have been observed on what appeared to, be a clear day (giving rise to the expression "a bolt from the blue")', Encyclopaedia Britannica (1963) in its opening paragraph on the article '*Lightning*'.

³⁷ 1 Kings 18. 43-44.

³⁸ 'We read of the second beast of Revelation 13 that "he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men", verse 13. But on this occasion the Lord would not suffer the devil to use his power', A. W. Pink, '*Elijah*', page 135.

³⁹ 'No doubt Satan could have sent fire, and would if he might have done it; but he could do nothing except what is permitted to him', Thomas Scott, *ibid.*, page 268.

⁴⁰ Compare Luke 22. 31.

⁴¹ 'The Baal-myth of Ras Shamra, UH 51, V, 68 ff:

"Moreover Baal will send abundance of his rain,
Abundance of moisture with snow;
He will utter his voice in the clouds,
(He will send) his flashing to the earth with lightning",

John Gray, *ibid.*, page 402.

⁴² Dan. 5. 5, 27.

⁴³ 1 Kings 18. 23.

⁴⁴ Flavius Josephus, *ibid.*, Paragraph 5.

'Their proximity allowed them to see all that he would do and not suspect him of deception', M. Cogan, '*1 Kings: The Anchor Bible*', page 442.

⁴⁵ 'Time indicators show that Elijah prepares his sacrifice while the Baal prophets are still carrying on: they "raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation" (verse 29), and Elijah will have completed his preparations and will be ready to offer his prayer when that moment arrives (verse 36)'. J. T. Walsh, '*1 Kings: Berit Olam*', page 250.

⁴⁶ The same word (ההרוס) occurs in both 1 Kings 18. 30 and 1 Kings 19. 10, 14.

⁴⁷ 1 Kings 19. 10, 14.

1 Kings 18. 13. 'cut off'⁴⁸ and

⁴⁹ 'The fact that he repairs a destroyed altar informs us of two things: Carmel was previously a site for the worship of Yahweh, and royal persecution of Yahwism was systematic, involving worship sites as well as cultic personnel', J. T. Walsh, *ibid.*, page 250.

It is also possible, however, that, because this particular 'altar of the Lord' was located in the border region between Israel and Tyre (the land of Ba'al), it had been destroyed and replaced by an idolatrous altar at an earlier time.

⁵⁰ 1 Kings 11. 31; 12. 20.

Some have questioned whether any altar, other than that at the Temple in Jerusalem, could be used legitimately for the worship of God. (See Deut. 12. 1-18; 14. 23.) Personally, I see no biblical reason why not. In reaching this view, I have been swayed by the following considerations:

(i) The Lord Himself commanded the construction of an altar at Shechem (Mount Ebal) even though the altar at the central sanctuary (in those days, the tabernacle) was then in existence (Deut. 27. 2, 7);
(ii) Gideon, Manoah, Samuel and David successfully called on the name of the Lord at their respective 'private' altars (Judg. 6. 26; 13. 19-20; 1 Sam. 7. 17; 2 Sam. 24. 25; 1 Chron. 21. 26. I recognise that these examples are all taken from pre-Jerusalem and pre-Temple days; nevertheless, the altar at 'the tabernacle of the Lord' then existed. It seems that at such local altars, it was not necessary for an Aaronic priest to officiate—hence, the priestly role filled by Gideon, Manoah, Samuel and David);

(iii) The division between the northern and southern kingdoms had long since created a political situation where any godly souls in the northern kingdom no longer had access to the altar in Jerusalem and yet would have spurned the idolatrous golden calves at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12. 26-29);

(iv) The acceptance of Elijah's sacrifice, together with his later lament over the destruction of the altars of the Lord in general—which lament earned him no correction by the Lord, as opposed to his claim that he 'only' was 'left' of God's worshippers (1 Kings 18. 38; 19. 10, 14, 18).

I highly recommend Richard E. Averbeck's articles in '*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*', Volume 2, pages 888-908 (especially pages 892, 894 and 897) and Volume 4, pages 1006-1007.

⁵¹ Exod. 20. 25.

⁵² 'The Canaanites made altars of finished stones', Richard E. Averbeck, 'New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis', Volume 2, page 890.

'The reason of this law, as given by Maimonides is this, "because the idolaters of that time built their altars of hewn stones, therefore God forbid it"', John Gill, '*Exposition of the Bible*', comment on Exod. 20. 25.

'When the Canaanites worshiped idols, they did it on altars of finished stone, built high for show', Philip G. Ryken, '*Exodus: Preaching the Word*', page 692.

Interestingly, 'Many centuries later, when Judah Maccabee built a new altar following the liberation of Jerusalem, he was careful to use only uncut stones', Nahum M. Sarna, '*Exodus: The JPS Torah Commentary*', page 87.

⁵³ 'The Israelites were not allowed to build any old altar; they had to build it according to God's instructions. We are under a similar obligation to worship God the way He wants, not the way we want ... Far too much of our thinking about worship and evangelism begins with the opposite assumption, namely, that we should try to fit in with our culture as well as we can. But in the same way that God told the Israelites not to worship like Canaanites, He tells us not to pattern our worship after the values of the surrounding culture', Philip G. Ryken, *ibid.*, page 692.

⁵⁴ 'In strict accordance with that Divine statute, Elijah did not send for stones that had been quarried and polished by human art, but used rough and unhewn stones which lay upon the mountain side. He took what God had provided and not what man had made', A. W. Pink, *ibid.*, page 146.

⁵⁵ Exod. 24. 4.

⁵⁶ Josh. 4. 2-5.

⁵⁷ Joshua 4. 20-24.

⁵⁸ Ezra 6. 17; cf. 'the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, *twelve bullocks for all Israel*', Ezra 8. 35. I note also that Hezekiah, King of Judah, commanded that atonement should be made '*for all Israel*', 2 Chron. 29. 24.

⁵⁹ 'Elijah viewed Israel from the Divine standpoint', A. W. Pink, *ibid.*, page 145. Cf. 'James ... *to the twelve tribes* which are scattered abroad', James 1. 1; 'he regarded Israel in its unity and completeness as consisting of twelve tribes', Thomas Constable, '*Expository Notes on the Bible*', comments on James 1. 1.

⁶⁰ Josh. 19. 24-26.

⁶¹ 1 Kings 18. 31.

⁶² By designating themselves 'Israel', the ten tribes distinguished themselves from the two tribes in the south, 1 Kings 12. 16, 20; note the use of the designation 'Israel' in the earlier verses of our chapter (1 Kings 18. 17-20). Following the rift, the two southern tribes were known by the name, 'Judah'; see 1 Kings 12. 23.

⁶³ Eph. 4. 4.

⁶⁴ Gal. 3. 28.

⁶⁵ The quotation in the main text is verse four of the hymn which begins, 'Oft we, alas, forget the love of Him who bought us with His blood'. The last verse of the hymn reads, 'Lord, we are Thine, we praise Thy love; *one with Thy saints, all one in Thee*: we would, until we meet above, in all our ways remember Thee'.