

12. Elijah decided to call out the priests who had for years concocted the lie that the people of the Northern Kingdom had chosen to follow. His decision is one that often occurs when a person wins a critical victory and celebrates it with arrogance:

**1 Kings 18:40** Then Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape.” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kíshōn and slew them there.

1. The events that transpired over the course of 1 Kings 18:37–39 may have been less than a couple of minutes. Elijah’s prayer has petitioned the Father in verse 36, “Today let it be known that You are the God of Israel.” Then he places himself in the appeal, “Answer me, O Lord ... that this people may know that You ... have turned their heart back again.”
2. Immediately, “the fire of the Lord fell and consumed” all the elements of the altar and its surroundings to which the people responded by falling on their faces and said, “The Lord He is God.”
3. What was required here but did not, was a Bible class. God got the whole crowd’s attention and they were at least for that moment in time ready to here what Elijah had to say about what just happened.
4. Instead of delivering a dynamic sermon to the riveted congregation, he decided not to seize the advantage and teach the Word but to erroneously assume the office of law enforcement and round up Ahab’s clergy.
5. The priests of Baal have used violence to enforce their heathen religion. Now Elijah does the very same thing. Did any one of these priests respond positively to the divine display at the altar? Would he have been able to give a clear testimony about the power of Elijah’s God? How many among the mass there gathered would have been willing to do so?
6. Had James been on the scene, he would have recommended the Royal Law. Since his appearance on the scene was about a millennium away, Elijah could have cited Moses one more time from:

**Leviticus 19:18** ‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear a grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.’

7. Instead, the first thing Elijah said was:

**1 Kings 18:40a** “Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape.”

(End RECK-20.11. See RECK-20.12 for continuation of study at p. 111.)



8. This reaction temporarily damaged Elijah's ministry. The verb "seize" is the Qal imperative of **תָּפַחַ (taphas)**: "to seize, take hold of, to capture." This command is followed by four imperfect verbs.
9. They occur in this sequence: **(1)** "do not let one of them escape," **(2)** the people did exactly that, **(3)** Elijah "brought them down to the brook Kíshōn," and **(4)** Elijah "slew them there."
10. This sequence indicates that Elijah allowed his emotions to override his doctrine. The divine miracle was accomplished for all to see. He should have allowed those events to speak for themselves.
11. Elijah did not consider that some of the priests may have responded to the sacrifice and believed in Jehovah. Such a person was previously guilty of crimes against the people, but his personal faith in Jehovah would have amplified the spiritual impact of the sacrifice in his life.
12. The demonstration that Elijah organized and God confirmed meant that there were untold numbers of people in that 1.35 million assembled on Cármel who had placed their faith in the God of Israel.
13. The issue was not rounding up the bad guys but using the opportunity to explain what just happened, confirming the fact that God Himself had demonstrated that He was the God of Israel, not Baal.
14. Violence was not the issue here. Instead, it was the opportunity for Elijah to deliver a sermon. He could have explained the importance of the ox sacrifice and how that was prophetic of the ultimate sacrifice by Messiah.
15. Instead, he became judge, jury, and executioner. His job was to perform the sacrifice to clearly reveal the fallacy of Baal worship and the truth of who the God of Israel really was.
16. Following the sacrifice, the majority of the people are said to have fallen "on their faces and they said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord He is God."
17. At this point, Elijah should have started a sermon. After having been humiliated, some, if not all, of the priests of Baal may well have had a moment of objectivity and been receptive to what Elijah said.
18. All 450 of these priests had just been discredited. Elijah's arrogant response had no impact on the popularity of the Baal cult in the Northern Kingdom.
19. What these priests had just seen demonstrated at the altar surely may have resulted in some of them placing their faith in the God of Israel.
20. Therefore, what Elijah did was not to show grace orientation or consideration of the fact that some of those priests may have believed in Messiah.



21. Instead, Elijah may have given an evangelistic sermon and provided the opportunity of some to be saved including the priests of Baal.
22. Failure to do this resulted in some being recognized as martyrs which their followers would have continued to aggrandize.
23. Further, Elijah failed to consider that there were potential replacements from what might be called the farm team made up of Jezebel's 400 priests of Asherah.
24. Therefore, Elijah has opened to door for more intimidation from Lucifer's forces under the control of Jezebel. Her response to Elijah was not long in coming. However, before Jezebel's appearance on the scene, Elijah still had some work to do for Israel.
25. His duty was to not only perform the ritual inaugurated on Sinai; he also was responsible for appealing to the Lord for the drought to be broken. That event is described in 1 Kings 18:41 all of which occurs on Mount Carmel.

### Elijah's Prayer for Rain

**1 Kings 18:41** Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat, drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower."

1. Elijah now gets King Ahab back involved. The next effort is to pray for rain and he wants Ahab to witness the fulfillment of the promise given in this passage.
2. In 1 Kings 17:1, Elijah had told Ahab:

**1 Kings 17:1b** "As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

3. Turns out that the period of time was three and one-half years according to Luke 4:25 and James 5:17. Elijah is now prepared to petition the Lord for the desperately needed rain.

**1 Kings 18:42** So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.

4. For three and one-half years, Elijah has been focused on the duty the Lord assigned him to execute. His job was to tell King Ahab that a divinely imposed drought would be imposed on Israel until he personally called it off: "except by my word" (1 Kings 17:1b).
5. While Ahab enjoyed the opportunity to eat and drink on a nearby hill, Elijah climbed up to the 1789-foot summit of Mount Carmel to pray.



- Elijah had done his duty during the period of the drought. He did drop the ball with regard to the priests of Baal, but regarding his mission during the drought, he accomplished its objective.
- Now his job is to engage in prevailing prayer. He was accompanied by his servant whose task was to serve as a lookout:

**1 Kings 17:43** He said to his servant [ נַעַר (*na'ar*): a young man who is a servant and personal friend ], “Go up now, look [ Hiph‘el imperative, causative, active voice of נָבַט (*navat*): to look intently ] toward the sea [ Mediterranean ].” So he went up and looked and said, “Nothing!” And he [ **Elijah** ] said, “Go back” [ Qal imperative of שׁוּב (*shuv*) ] seven times.

- Notice what Elijah is doing. He is in prayer to the Lord. The servant returns to him six times with a negative report. On each cycle back to the seaward side of the mountain, Elijah continues in prayer.
- This shows confidence in the Lord’s integrity to do what He promised and the steadfast belief that his prayers, no matter how long the process takes, will result in the prophesied rainfall.
- On the young servant’s seventh trip back to Elijah, he finally gets a new situation report:

**1 Kings 18:44** It came about at the seventh time, that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up [ עָלָה (*‘alah*) ] from the sea.” And he [ **Elijah** ] said, “Go up [ עָלָה (*‘alah*) ], say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down [ יָרַד (*yarath*) ], so that the heavy shower will not stop you.’” (NASB)

**NOTE:** The King James Version and the New American Standard Bibles include the words “go up” in their translations of 1 Kings 18:44. This translation is, in context, correct. In the Hebrew text, it is one word, the verb, עָלָה (*‘alah*).

Elijah and his servant are at the apex of Mount Cárnel whereas Ahab is enjoying his feast down below. The New International Version and the New English Translation do not use the word “up.” However, it is correct for it to be included but the context determines its use.

The verb, *‘alah*, has a multiplicity of meanings, some literal and some figurative and both uses are found in verse 44.

The first use is literal, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up [ עָלָה (‘alah) ] from the sea.” Common sense realizes that a cloud must literally go up if it is said to be “coming up from the sea.”

The second use occurs when Elijah commands his servant to, “Go up [ an imperative mood of the verb, עָלָה (‘alah) ], say to Ahab.” The servant is at the summit of Mount Cármel so for him to “Go up” to speak to Ahab is logically impossible to do, therefore its use here has to be figurative:

*Figurative Usage.* The verb ‘ala is often used figuratively. One goes up to a person of high rank. Contrary to general usage (one usually “goes down” to Egypt), Joseph “goes up” to Pharaoh in Egypt (Genesis 46:31).<sup>1</sup>

The three words in the context of verse 44 must be interpreted in three ways: (1) coming up [ עָלָה (‘alah) ] from the sea,” is literal, (2) “Go up [ עָלָה (‘alah) ], say to Ahab” is figurative because of the servant’s lower status before the king, and (3) go down [ יָרַד (yarath) ], refers to a geographical movement since Ahab’s palace is south of Mount Cármel at Jezreel.

These examples are minor in their overall impact on the subject, but do provide insight into the importance of exegesis. Without proper analysis of the various applications of these three words makes the translation confusing but with proper analysis the action of these three verbs become crystal.

The cloud literally moves upward, the servant’s appearance before the king is figurative, and the king’s movement to Samaria is geographical since one’s travel southward is described as being down from one’s present location.

**1 Kings 18:44** It came about at the seventh time, that he [ **the servant** ] said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is literally coming up [ עָלָה (‘alah) ] from the sea.” And he [ **Elijah** ] said, “Figuratively go up [ עָלָה (‘alah) ], say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and geographically go down [ יָרַד (yarath): to Jezreel ], so that the heavy shower will not stop you.”

What precipitated all of these movements was the result of Elijah’s prevailing prayer. He had followed the Lord directives to the letter, organized the assembly of the residents of the Northern Kingdom, and performed the sacrifice on the altar that discredited that of the priests of Baal. His next duty was to go atop Mount Cármel and pray for rain.

<sup>1</sup> H. S. Fuhs, “עָלָה,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 11:83.

