

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER: THREE MONTHS' STUDIES IN THE KINGS.

B. C. 907.]

LESSON V. ELIJAH MEETING AHAH.

[Aug. 2.]

1 Kings 18, 1-18.

[Commit to memory verses 15-18.]

1 And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to E-l-i'jah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto A'h'ab, and I will send rain upon the earth.

2 And E-l-i'jah went to show himself unto A'h'ab. And there was a sore famine in Sa-ma'ri'a.

3 And A'h'ab called O'ba-d'i'ah, which was the governor of his house.

(Now O'ba-d'i'ah feared the Lord greatly.)

4 For it was so, when Je-z'e-b'el cut off the prophets of the Lord, that O'ba-d'i'ah took a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

5 And A'h'ab said unto O'ba-d'i'ah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks; peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and manes alive, that we may feed the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them, to pass throughout it: A'h'ab went one way by himself, and O'ba-d'i'ah went another way by himself.

7 And as O'ba-d'i'ah was in the way, behold, E-l-i'jah met him: and he knew him, and felt on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord E-l-i'jah?

8 And he answered him, I am: yea, go, tell thy lord, Behold, E-l-i'jah is here.

9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou

wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of A'h'ab, to slay me?

10 As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, E-l-i'jah is here.

12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell A'h'ab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Je-z'e-b'el slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, E-l-i'jah is here; and he shall slay me.

15 And E-l-i'jah said, As lie Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him to-day.

16 So O'ba-d'i'ah went to meet A'h'ab, and told him: and A'h'ab went to meet E-l-i'jah.

17 And it came to pass, when A'h'ab saw E-l-i'jah, that A'h'ab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Is'ra-el?

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Is'ra-el; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Ba'al-im.

General Statement.

While Elijah was awaiting God's summons in the quiet of the widow's cottage at Zarephath, the land of Israel was desolated at once by drought, by famine, and by persecution. For three years the heavens were unspotted by cloud, and the earth unmoistened by rain. The harvests failed, and the people, hungry and thirsty, clamored for bread and water. Ahab sent far and wide searching for the prophet who had said the ban upon the land, that he might compel him to lift it. Queen Jezebel vented her rage upon the worshippers of God, and not only destroyed the altars, but slew the prophets. One heart in the palace beat true to God. Obadiah, the prime minister, next to the king himself in power, held in secret to the old faith, and used his influence to pro-

tect the hunted prophets. Hidden in caves, they were fed by his bounty, and preserved to keep alive God's truth until brighter days. One day as Obadiah is searching for water among the foot-hills of Mount Carmel, he sees a strange form approaching, which at once he recognizes as the prophet Elijah. Reverently he bows before the messenger of the Most High, and hears his command to announce his coming to King Ahab. But his faith is weak, and he fears the wrath of the king, not perceiving that God's servant has a mighty protector. Re-assured by Elijah's promise, he bears the message. Ahab meets the prophet with a taunt, which is flung back in his face by the fearless Tishbite.

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

Verse 1. The word of the Lord. Probably by a certain impression on the mind of Elijah, which he recognized as divine. **In the third year.** In Jas. 5, 17, the drought is said to have lasted "three years and six months." Hence "the third year" may refer to the prophet's stay in Zarephath. **Show thyself unto Ahab.** He was sent to remove the curse from the land, and to give Ahab another opportunity of repentance. **I will send rain.** The rain would thus come as God's gift, not Baal's.

2. Elijah went. Again we note the promptness of his obedience when God called to a dangerous mission. (1) *May we be as ready to hear God's voice and to respond to his call? To show himself.* A perilous meeting for the king was enraged by his failure to obtain him and by his powerlessness to lift the ban from the land. **Ahab.** The wickedest of all the kings, not from taste for evil, but because of his weakness under the dominion of his queen. (2) *A weak nature may do more harm than a wicked one. A sore famine.* No rain for three years would cause great dearth of food, and there were no railroads to transport provisions from other lands, and no friendship between states leading to mutual assistance. Even in our time thirty-five million people died from starvation in one famine in China, **Samarita.** The capital of the ten tribes, situated thirty miles north of Jerusalem. It is now a small village, called *Sebasteiyah*.

3. Ahab called Obadiah. Strange that such a king should have such a prime-minister; but even wicked rulers like to have conscientious subordinates. Obadiah's name states his character. It means "servant of Jehovah." **The governor of his house.** Mayor of the palace; in position next to the king, and his chief

executive officer. **Feared the Lord greatly.** In the most depraved period of Israel's history; in the very center of corruption, the court; under all the cares of the kingdom, amid all the distractions of society and public life, we find this man a worshiper of God and loyal to his religion. (3) *He who wills can serve God in any sphere and station of life.*

4. When Jezebel cut off. This was the first persecution in the history of God's people, and we have but a hint of its horrors. Its martyrs are unknown, but every one of their names is written in heaven. **The prophets of the Lord.** Not all these were inspired. They were mostly "prophet seers," men receiving instruction in spiritual religion, and devoted to God's service, from whom God raised up a few inspired prophets. **Obadiah took a hundred.** He might have lived secure in the palace, and held himself aloof from the unpopular cause, but he chose to make the burden of God's people his own, and to risk his own safety by providing for the endangered prophets. (4) *The true servant of God will feed for his fellow-men, and seek to relieve them.* **Fifty in a cave.** The vast caverns in the mountains of Palestine have in every age furnished retreats for robbers and political offenders, and sometimes for persecuted saints. **Bread and water.** Words used of food in general. Though Orientals can live on far less food than Anglo-Saxons, yet the support of a hundred men must have been of considerable expense to Obadiah.

5. Ahab said unto Obadiah. He knew that among his courtiers there was no one on whose fidelity he could depend so safely as the worshippers of God. **Unto all fountains of water.** The places where fountains and brooks had been before the drought. Often by digging