

Comment.

Here we have the account of the reappearance of Elijah, after his long period of hiding. The drought which he had predicted has been very severe. All available sources of water are necessary for satisfaction of human needs. It appears as if even the king will be unable much longer to keep his domestic animals alive. True to the character which the other portions of the book ascribe to Ahab, we find him directing his efforts to the preservation of his own animals, rather than to the succor of his stricken people. He calls his chief steward, Obadiah, to search for grass, so that the horses and mules may be kept alive a little longer.

It is interesting to note that a similar name to that of Obadiah has been found on an ancient Hebrew seal, the writing of which would seem to place it at approximately this time. (ZDPV 37, p.173). The Obad-jāhū there named is designated as a "servant of the king".

The king joins actively in the search himself. He and Obadiah divide the land between them, and each takes a section, so as to cover it more quickly. Then each goes by himself. Of course the יְהוָה would not mean that each did not have his retinue of attendants and assistants who joined with him in the search. It simply means that each of these two was separated from the other.

As soon as Obadiah sees Elijah, who comes to meet him, he recognizes him, and falls on his face, asking if it is really Elijah who is before him. We are given no hint as to whether Obadiah knew of Elijah only by hearsay and recognized him from his description, or whether he had actually been present at Elijah's previous appearance before Ahab. Astonishment and consternation account fully for his present question.