

# What is the significance of Mount Carmel in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/mount-Carmel.html>

Rather than being a single mountain, Mount Carmel is actually a high, wooded mountain ridge. In the Bible, Mount Carmel is best known as the site of the prophet Elijah's dramatic showdown with 850 pagan prophets.

Carmel means "vineyard," "orchard," or "garden" and reflects the fertile beauty of Mount Carmel's picturesque slopes. The mountainous ridge starts on the Mediterranean coast in the northwest part of Israel at the south shore of the Bay of Acre. From there, the range runs southeast down to the plain of Dothan. Running along the northeast side of the ridge is the Valley of Jezreel. At its highest point, Mount Carmel reaches over 1,700 feet above sea level.

Most notably, Mount Carmel is the scene of a spectacular head-to-head confrontation between the false prophets of Baal and Asherah and the One True God of Israel. The episode takes place during one of Israel's worst times of crisis under King Ahab. To please his wife, Jezebel, Ahab set up an altar to Baal at the top of Mount Carmel. Baal, the favorite deity of Jezebel, was reputed to be the god of rain and vegetation.

In 1 Kings 17:1-24, Elijah the Tishbite enters the story as an emissary of the Lord. The prophet confronts Ahab and predicts a drought in response to Ahab and Jezebel's unholy devotion to Baal. When the end of the drought neared, to prove that the Lord God was the only true God, Elijah proposes a contest. All of Israel was summoned to Mount Carmel to witness the confrontation between Elijah and the false prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). The match would show whose god was able to send fire from heaven to

consume their offerings. The prophets of Baal prayed all day and cut themselves violently to get Baal's attention, but no one answered (verses 28-29).

By evening it was Elijah's turn. He rebuilt the ruined altar of God that existed on Mount Carmel. He set the offering on top of the wood and then drenched the whole thing with water and prayed aloud: "LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again" (1 Kings 18:36-37). God answered with a spectacular display of fire from heaven, consuming the offering, licking up the sodden wood as well as every drop of water that had been poured over the altar. Even the rocks of the altar were consumed. The people fell on their faces, proclaiming, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God" (1 Kings 18:39). Elijah then ordered the people to execute the 850 false prophets according to the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 13).

It seems that the prophet Elisha later used Mount Carmel as a home base (2 Kings 4:25). From ancient times, Mount Carmel has been regarded as a holy place and a symbol of beauty and fertility. In the tribal divisions, Mount Carmel was part of the territory of (western) Manasseh. Like the region of upper Galilee, Mount Carmel received plentiful rainfall in biblical times, producing lush, beautiful forests and rich grasslands on the lower slopes suitable for grazing. Isaiah associates God's glorious restoration of redeemed humanity with the "splendor of Carmel" (Isaiah 35:2). Solomon compares the head of his beloved with the beauty and nobility of Mount Carmel (Song of Solomon 7:5).