CHAPTER NINE

1) It is explicitly and clearly stated in the Torah that it [the Torah] is an everlasting mitzvah, and cannot be changed, subtracted from or added to, as it is written, "Every matter which I command you to do it; you shall not add to it, or subtract from it", and it is also written, "...but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the Torah". From here we see that we have been commanded to keep all the commandments of the Torah for always. In connection with this it is written, "...a statute for ever throughout your generations", and it is also written, "It is not in heaven". From here we see that a prophet may not make any changes [at all] in the Torah. Therefore, if a man, whether a gentile or a Jew, arises and performs signs and wonders, and says that God sent him to add to, or take away from, a mitzvah, or to institute a new mitzvah which we have not heard from Moses, or says that the commandments with which we have been commanded are not for eternity but are meant only for a temporary period, then he is a false prophet, for he has come to undermine the prophecy of Moses. His punishment is death by strangulation, which is the punishment for deliberately speaking in the name of God without having been commanded to do so. God told Moses that all the commandments are for eternity, and no man can accuse God of being deceitful.

2) If so, why is it written in the Torah, "I will raise up for them a prophet from amongst their brethren, like you, and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall say to them all that I shall command him"? The prophet in question does not come to start a new religion, but to tell us the words of the Torah which we already know from Moses. Therefore, it is written, "Remember the Torah of Moses My servant". Similarly, if he gave us commandment in optional matters, such as by saying, 'Go (or don't go) to such-and-such a place', or, 'Start (or don't start) a war today', or, 'Build (or don't build) a wall here', etcetera, we are commanded to listen to him, and anyone who doesn't is liable to death at the hands of God, for it is written, "And it shall come to pass, that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My Name, I will require it of him".

3) Similarly, a prophet who himself transgresses his own words, and a prophet who ignores his prophecy [and does not deliver it], are also liable to death at the hands of God, for it is written, "I will require it of him". Similarly, if a prophet who is known to be a true prophet tells us to transgress one or many, or of the commandments of the Torah, whether of the stringent or of the more lenient ones, but only as a temporary practice, then we are commanded to listen to him. So we learnt from the first Sages, that we should listen to a prophet whatever the commandments he tells us to transgress are, as with Elijah at Mount Carmel, except if the commandment he tells us to transgress is that of not practising idolatry, and provided that he tells us to transgress only as a temporary practice, like Elijah did at Mount Carmel, when he offered a sacrifice to God.

The Ninth Foundation (נושת המופת ובש"ע)
Elijah was a prophet, it was a mitzvah to listen to his words. If he told us to do so only as a temporary measure, we must not listen to him. Even if he performed great signs and wonders, we must not listen to him. The verse, "...to him you shall listen" applies also in situations like the one with Elijah. Had the people asked Elijah how he could violate the Torah verse of, "Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in any place that you see", he could have told them that anyone offering sacrifices outside the Temple is liable to karet, in accordance with what Moses commanded, but he was offering sacrifices outside the Temple in accordance with what God had said to him, and in order to discredit the prophets of Ba'al. In this manner we are commanded to listen to any prophet who tells us to transgress as a temporary measure. If he tells us that a commandment of the Torah is to be abolished for ever, then his punishment is death by strangulation, for he is trying to disprove the prophecy of Moses. Therefore, we know for sure that he is a false prophet, and that all his signs are the result of spells and witchcraft, and he must be put to death by strangulation.

If he said that we should do what he says only as a temporary measure, we must not listen to him. Even so, since he said that we should do what he says only as a temporary measure, we may not listen to him. Even so, if he told us to do so only as a temporary measure, we must not listen to him. Even if he performed great signs and wonders and says that God has commanded that we serve idols on a particular day, or at a particular hour, he is trying to disprove the prophecy of Moses, which he said that we should do what he says only as a temporary measure, we must not listen to him. Even if he performed great signs and wonders, we must not listen to him. The verse, "...to him you shall listen" applies also in situations like the one with Elijah. Had the people asked Elijah how he could violate the Torah verse of, "Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in any place that you see", he could have told them that anyone offering sacrifices outside the Temple is liable to karet, in accordance with what Moses commanded, but he was offering sacrifices outside the Temple in accordance with what God had said to him, and in order to discredit the prophets of Ba'al. In this manner we are commanded to listen to any prophet who tells us to transgress as a temporary measure. If he tells us that a commandment of the Torah is to be abolished for ever, then his punishment is death by strangulation, for he is trying to disprove the prophecy of Moses. Therefore, we know for sure that he is a false prophet, and that all his signs are the result of spells and witchcraft, and he must be put to death by strangulation.