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## Israel and Judah: 23. King Ahab's Decline

by David Sielaff, April 2017

Read first the accompanying [Newsletter for April 2017](#)

Israel and Judah: 23

King  
Ahab's  
Decline

**THE SITUATION:** Last episode, the prophet Elijah challenged hundreds of false prophets to prove whether Baal and Asherah, or YHWH, was the true God. The false gods Baal and Asherah did not respond. YHWH responded, honoring Elijah's challenge. Fire came down from heaven to consume the sacrifice on the altar. Elijah ordered the people to kill the false prophets. They obeyed because YHWH showed Himself to be the true God of Israel (1 Kings 18:20–40). Elijah prayed for the drought to end, YHWH answered Elijah's prayers with rain (1 Kings 17:1–7 and 18:41–460).

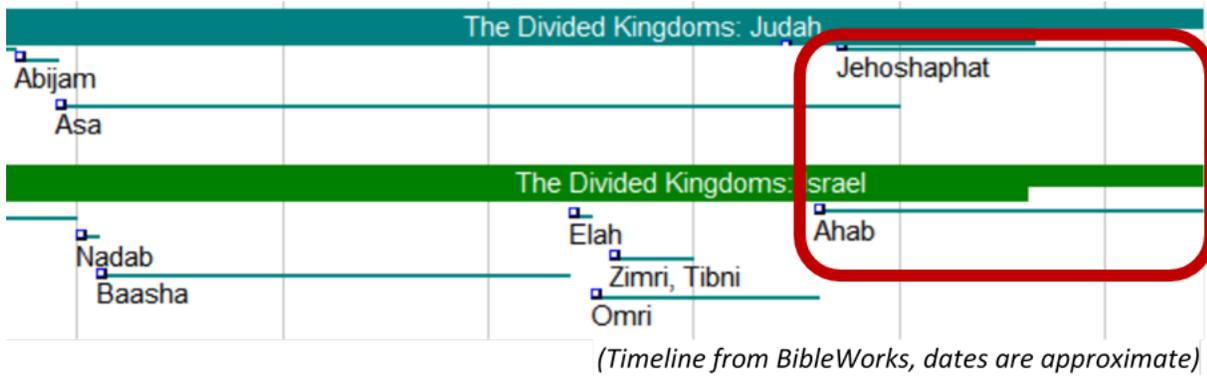
King Ahab of Israel and Elijah both returned to the city of Jezreel (1 Kings 18:45–46). Jezebel of Sidon (1 Kings 16:31), Ahab's chief queen (her name means "chaste"), was also at Jezreel. Certainly God's triumph over the pagan gods and the deaths of the pagan prophets would set an example to idolatrous people of Israel and to Ahab. Perhaps Elijah hoped for a revival in the worship of YHWH, similar to what was happening in the Kingdom of Judah to the south under Kings Asa and Jehoshaphat. Along with a revival, perhaps the worship of pagan gods would be eliminated. If Elijah thought that, he was wrong. Now Ahab's chief wife, Queen Jezebel will seek to avenge the death of her priests and the insult to her gods.

**TEXT: Jezebel Plots Revenge on Elijah**

### 1 Kings 19:1–18

<sup>1</sup> Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and all about how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "**Thus shall the elohim do, and thus they may add: At this time tomorrow I shall make your soul like the soul of one of them.**"

<sup>3</sup> Then Elijah feared, arose and ran for his soul. When he came to Beer-sheba in Judah he left his lad there. <sup>4</sup> Yet he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came to sit under a certain broom [juniper] bush. He begged for his soul to die and said, "**It is enough now! O Yahweh, take my soul from me, for I am no better than my fathers.**"



<sup>5</sup> Then he lay down and slept under the same broom [juniper] bush. And behold this, a messenger was touching him and said to him, **“Arise and eat.”** <sup>6</sup> When he looked, behold, beside his headrest was an ember cake, baked on glowing stones, and a cruse of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again.

<sup>7</sup> The messenger of Yahweh returned a second time; he touched him and said, **“Arise and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”** <sup>8</sup> So he arose and ate and drank; and in the vigor of that food he walked forty days and forty nights as far as the mount of Elohim at Horeb.

<sup>9</sup> There he came to a cave that he might lodge there for the night. And behold, the word of Yahweh came to him and said to him, **“What have you to do here, Elijah?”**

<sup>10</sup> He [Elijah] replied,

**“I have been zealous, yea zealous for Yahweh Elohim of hosts;**

[1] **for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant;**

[2] **they have demolished Your altars, and**

[3] **they have killed Your prophets with the sword,**

**so that I am left, I by myself alone. And they are seeking for my soul to take it.”**

<sup>11</sup> The voice said, **“Go forth, and you will stand on the mount before Yahweh.”** And behold, Yahweh was passing by, and

- a great and steadfast wind was ripping apart the mountains and was breaking up the crags before Yahweh; yet Yahweh was not in the wind.
- After the wind was an earthquake; yet Yahweh was not in the earthquake.
- <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake was a fire; yet Yahweh was not in the fire.
- After the fire was the sound of a gentle stillness.

<sup>13</sup> It came to pass as Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went forth and stood at the opening of the cave.

And behold, a voice came to him and said, **“What have you to do here, Elijah?”**

<sup>14</sup> He replied,

**“I have been zealous, yea zealous for Yahweh Elohim of hosts;**

[1] **for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant;**

[2] **they have demolished Your altars, and**

[3] **they have killed Your prophets with the sword,**

**so that I am left, I by myself alone. And they are seeking for my soul to take it.”**

<sup>15</sup> Now Yahweh said to him,

**“Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. When you enter there, then**

- you will anoint Hazael as king over Syria.<sup>16</sup> And
- Jehu son of Nimshi shall you anoint as king over Israel. And
- Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah shall you anoint as prophet in your stead.

<sup>17</sup> It will occur to the one escaping from Hazael's sword that Jehu shall put him to death, and to the one escaping from Jehu's sword that Elisha shall put him to death.<sup>18</sup> Yet I will let remain in Israel 7,000, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

[end text]

**Verse 1.** Imagine the shock Jezebel suffered while Ahab tells her what happened on Mount Carmel, and 950 of her priests of Baal and Asherah were dead, killed by God's command through Elijah. The idolatrous prophets were killed by the very Israelites who recently committed regular idolatry by worshipping Baal and Asherah and sacrificing human beings, even children, to those gods. It was all led by Elijah, whose name means "My God is Yah," a contraction of "My God is YHWH." Elijah's name alone is a direct and hateful challenge to Jezebel.

Certainly the Israelites suddenly feared YHWH — at least for a little while, and word certainly was spread abroad about this miraculous event, not just in Israel, but in Judah, Phoenicia, Philistia, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt. This would have been tremendous news to all who had minimized the might of YHWH.

Well, at least Jezebel was saved from having to pay the priests' salaries in the future (until new priests were hired, but who would take the chance?). Yet with all this, Jezebel gives no hint that she had any fear of YHWH.

**Verse 2.** Jezebel puts out a public notice that a search is being made for Elijah with the intent to murder him, just as Elijah caused the death of the prophets of Baal and Asherah. She does not know that her threat is impotent because YHWH is in control.<sup>a</sup>

In the phrase, "**Thus shall the elohim do,**" the verb "do" is plural which indicates that "**the elohim**" was Jezebel's reference to plural pagan gods.

**Verse 3.** Elijah took Jezebel's threat seriously. He ran "**for his soul,**" meaning that he ran for his life as we would phrase it today. Can you imagine receiving such a note from a mass murderer of God's prophets, the chief queen of the kingdom of Israel, who you personally insulted and caused the death of hundreds of her pagan religious lackeys? After all, Elijah showed her religious power to be nothing before YHWH.

**Verses 4–5.** Even though he was in the YHWH-worshipping, southern Kingdom of Judah, Elijah did not feel safe from the bloodthirsty Jezebel. Elijah — one of the greatest of the Old Testament prophets — greatly feared that Jezebel might be allowed to kill him. There is also likely much background information not in the text of the Book of Kings. We know that Elijah was emotionally exhausted and wanted YHWH to take his life, his soul,<sup>b</sup> so Jezebel would not be the one to kill him. His fright and flight caused him to be exhausted and go into a deep sleep.

Arabs made brooms from juniper bushes, hence "broom bush" or tree. It was noted for its shade in the desert and in some cases the root of the tree was used for food (Job 30:4, Psalm 120:4).

**Verses 5–7.** Elijah slept. "**The messenger,**" an angel, roused and fed him. Elijah slept again and the angel repeated the process. The Hebrew term "messenger" is the same as in verse 2 where a human being was the "messenger" that Jezebel sent to publicly threaten Elijah. In verse 5 it is termed a messenger, and in verse 7 the same individual is the "**messenger of YHWH.**" Later in 1 Kings 20:2, 5, and 9 human messengers are

<sup>a</sup> This incident is similar to a later situation when forty Jews bound themselves with a curse to assassinate the apostle Paul after he was arrested at the Temple in Jerusalem. Their curse or oath was thwarted by God using Roman troops to protect Paul (Acts 23:12–15). I wonder what those Jews did when they realized they could not reach Paul to kill him?

<sup>b</sup> Later, the prophet Jonah also wanted God to kill him so he would not witness God using the Assyrians to destroy the Kingdom of Israel. Jonah 4:3: "**Therefore now, O YHWH, take, I beseech you, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.**" YHWH quickly grew a large gourd plant to shade Jonah, then killed the plant at night as an object lesson to him as Jonah pitied the death of the gourd plant (and his own suffering in the heat) but not the potential deaths of the Assyrians (Jonah 4:6–11).

indicated. Throughout the Old Testament the context determines whether a human messenger or a supernatural being are meant. **Verse 6.** “**an ember cake**” is cooked directly on the hot coals.

**Verse 8.** The two meals invigorated Elijah so he was mobile. He traveled 100 miles south to Mt. Horeb in the wilderness, where Moses encountered YHWH who spoke to him at the burning bush described in Exodus chapter 3. Mount Sinai is another of the summits in the area. Originally thought to be in the Sinai Peninsula, many today think it is better located in Arabia. Arabia was where the apostle Paul stayed for three years after his conversion (Galatians 1:17–18).

Moses and Elijah both encountered YHWH at Mt. Horeb. Likewise, both appeared with Jesus at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36; 2 Peter 1:16–18) probably at Mount Hermon, near the northern border of modern Israel. Jesus said the transfiguration was a vision (Matthew 17:8–9). Moses and Elijah were not alive at the time, and are still dead until resurrected to immortality.<sup>c</sup>

**Verse 9.** As a prophet, Elijah was used to receiving “**the word of YHWH.**” While the angel is no longer mentioned, it is possible that “**the messenger of YHWH**” represented and spoke for YHWH through verse 18. An agent representing a superior can speak with full authority, just as if the superior was speaking face to face with the person receiving the message. This is the principle behind all forms of legal representation. In other words, the focus of the text was on “**the word of YHWH**” and not on the messenger of YHWH, even though the angel was speaking the words.<sup>d</sup>

Elijah felt compelled to come to Mount Horeb, the place Moses was introduced to YHWH. Elijah was asked why he was there.

**Verses 11–12.** “**The voice**” expressed the word of YHWH, we are told that YHWH “**was passing by,**” an action that had great physical effects. Then we are given a description of four extraordinary things happening. **First** a wind so strong that it cracked rocks from the mountains round about, perhaps tearing out plants and trees from the mountainsides, likely causing avalanches. **Second** came an earthquake and **third**, a fire. For the last part of verse 12, the Concordant version may be more accurate (although I wonder how a “stillness” can be “gentle,” but the King James Version has greater poetic impact: “**And after the earthquake a fire; but YHWH was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.**”

**Verse 13.** Curious, Elijah “**wrapped his face in his mantle.**” A mantle is a large outer garment with holes for the head and arms, probably similar to the Mexican serape.<sup>e</sup> This mantle will become a trademark of Elijah’s prophetic office (see verse 19 below). The text says “**Elijah heard it,**” meaning the “**gentle stillness,**” or the “**still small voice.**” Then again, Elijah hears a voice speaking to him. The question YHWH asked was a repetition of verse 9, in effect asking: Elijah, why are you here seeking me? Why are you not doing what you should be doing, back in Israel?

**Verse 14.** Elijah’s words of his answer are identical with those of verse 10 above.<sup>f</sup> Yet things have changed. Elijah has learned how God operates, with either great impressive displays, but also with “**gentle stillness**” or, “**a still small voice.**” The repetition means that Elijah’s words are heartfelt and due to the extreme stress he is undergoing, in spite of God’s personal attention and gentle handling of his emotional state.

**Verses 15–16.** Elijah no longer worried about Jezebel’s threat, God has tasks for Elijah to perform. He must do them before he could rest and be at peace. Being a prophet of God is not only traumatic but it can be deadly. Again YHWH speaks to Elijah, commissioning him to anoint three persons: [1] the pagan Hazeal to be King of Syria, [2] Jehu to be King of Israel (to replace Ahab), and [3] Elisha as a prophet and YHWH’s select successor to Elijah. The words of James Smith are insightful:

<sup>c</sup> “[A Question about the Transfiguration ... Moses and Elijah Are Not Alive.](#)” a June 2009 Commentary.

<sup>d</sup> Christ represents us to God the Father (YHWH) at our judgment. He speaks for us, His blood cleanses us of sin, His righteous life and acts make us righteous and worthy to be in God’s presence.

After our resurrection to immortality, YHWH will speak to each one of us face to face — individually — and not through an angelic representative. At that time we will interact with God our Father directly with our mediator Christ Jesus at our side (1 Timothy 2:5).

<sup>e</sup> Jacob’s brother Esau wore a hairy mantle (Genesis 25:25). It later became a symbol of all prophets (Zechariah 13:4).

<sup>f</sup> Elijah, like Abraham, is not afraid to “engage” God in dialogue (Genesis 18:23–33). We should not be afraid to do so either.

“Elijah was commissioned to ‘anoint,’ i.e., appoint or call, Hazael, Jehu and Elisha. Elijah was to see to it that these three individuals were made aware of their divinely appointed destiny. Hazael would be king of Damascus, Jehu would be king of Israel, and Elisha would be Elijah’s successor. The three would be God’s agents of judgment upon apostate Israel. Jehu would slay those who escaped the sword of Hazael; Elisha, by the sword of the spirit, would ‘slay’ those who escaped the physical judgment of Jehu. The two kings [Hazael and Jehu] would create in Israel tumultuous upheavals just like the wind, earthquake and fire did at Horeb. The word of God spoken by Elisha, however, would be that which constrained men to humble themselves before the Lord. Rightly understood, the commission to Elijah is a concrete application of the great spiritual lesson which he learned through the theophany at Horeb (19:15–17).”

• James Smith, *The Books of History, 1 Kings 19:13–18, underlines mine*<sup>g</sup>

**Verse 17.** “... the one escaping from Hazael’s sword ... the one escaping from Jehu’s sword” refers to two different people, someone other than the three anointed by Elijah. A mystery begins, with the answer revealed as the readers/listeners go through the narrative.

**Verse 18.** God switches from significant but cryptic prophesies to talk about faithful worshippers in the northern Kingdom of Israel. By doing so YHWH makes it clear he always has people who are faithful to Him. However, when you think of the total population of the Kingdom of Israel, 7,000 faithful out of the total population is a very small number and does not bode well for a mass conversion back to the God of Moses who made His covenant with the people of Israel. The unfaithful will infect the people of the southern Kingdom of Judah, who were all too willing to follow false gods and idols, even though at the moment they were having a restoration of worship of YHWH alone.

Understanding that Jezebel will not kill him before he completes his commission to perform his anointings, Elijah begins to find Elisha. He now knows he is not alone as the only person in Israel faithful to YHWH.

### ***TEXT: YHWH Has Elijah Recruit Elisha***

#### **1 Kings 19:19–21**

<sup>19</sup> So he went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat while he was plowing; there were twelve teams of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah came over to him and flung his mantle around him.

<sup>20</sup> Elisha forsook the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, ‘**I pray, let me kiss my father and my mother good-bye, and then let me go after you.**’ Elijah replied to him, ‘**Go, return; but realize what I have done to you.**’

<sup>21</sup> Then he returned from going after him and took the team of oxen and sacrificed them. With the gear of the oxen he cooked the flesh of them and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose, went after Elijah and ministered to him. [end text]

**Verse 19.** Elijah moved to follow God’s instructions. He had all the information he needed to find Elisha. God gave him three identifiers: his name, his father’s name, and where he lived — “**Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah**” (1 Kings 19:16, above). This shows the value of genealogy in ancient times, was all Elijah needed to know. Someone in that town must know where Elisha lived ... and they did.

Elisha’s family was wealthy, indicated by the large number of oxen. In fact, Elisha felt free to kill two of them for a feast (verse 21). Elijah was known for his mantle, a symbol of his prophetic office. It was a unique rough clothing item, perhaps copied by John the Baptist who wore a rough garment made of camel hair (Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6). John preached in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). Jesus said about John:

“**But what have you come out to perceive? A prophet? Yes, I am saying to you, and exceedingly more than a prophet. This is he concerning whom it is written, ‘Lo! I am dispatching My messenger before your face, who shall be constructing Thy road in front of Thee’** [quoting Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3].”

<sup>g</sup> James E. Smith, *The Books of History*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 1 Kings 19:13–18.

For verily I am saying to you, **A greater prophet**, among those born of women, than John the baptist, **there is not one**. Yet the smaller, in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

• **Luke 7:26-28**

**Verse 20.** Elisha accepts the commission immediately and requests permission to briefly express his love to his parents before following Elijah.

**Verse 21.** Elisha celebrated his departure with his parents and fed **“the people”** with meat of the two oxen he sacrificed. From then on he served Elijah faithfully. **“With the gear of the oxen he cooked,”** meant that the plowing equipment was cut and lit on fire to cook the meat. Perhaps metal parts of the plow were used to cut the meat into portions.

But trouble was brewing with the Kingdom of Israel’s neighbors. The Kingdom of Syria with its capital at Damascus seeks to expand its territory at Israel’s expense. An invasion is imminent.

### ***TEXT: International Relations, Ben-hadad of Syria Attacks Ahab of Israel***

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#### **1 Kings 20:1–14**

<sup>1</sup> Ben-hadad king of Syria convened his whole army; thirty and two kings were with him, also horses and chariots. Then he went up, besieged Samaria and fought against it. <sup>2</sup> He sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel inside the city <sup>3</sup> to say to him, **“Thus speaks Ben-hadad: Your silver and your gold, they are mine; your wives and your sons, those who are well favored, they are mine.”**

<sup>4</sup> The king of Israel answered and said, **“According to your word, my lord the king, I and all I have are yours.”**

<sup>5</sup> Then the messengers returned and said,

**“Thus speaks Ben-hadad, saying: Indeed I sent to you to demand that you give to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your sons. <sup>6</sup> But I shall rather send my officials to you at this time tomorrow. They will search your house and the houses of your officials. And it will come to be if they should lay their hand on anything coveted in their eyes, then they will take it away.”**

<sup>7</sup> Now Israel’s king called all the elders of his land and said, **“Realize now and see that this fellow is seeking evil, for he sent to me for my wives and my sons, for my silver and my gold; and I withheld nothing from him.”**

<sup>8</sup> All the elders and all the people said to him, **“Do not hearken, and you should not comply.”**

<sup>9</sup> So he replied to the messengers of Ben-hadad, **“Say to my lord the king: All for which you sent to your servant first, I shall do. But this matter I am not able to do. So the messengers went off and brought word back to him.”**

<sup>10</sup> Now Ben-hadad sent to him and said: **“Thus shall the elohim do to me and thus they may add, if the soil of Samaria shall be adequate for handfuls to all the people who are in my footsteps.”**

<sup>11</sup> Israel’s king answered and said, **“Tell him: The one girding on his armor must not boast himself like the one unloosing it.”**

<sup>12</sup> It came to be when he heard this word while he himself and the kings were drinking in the booths, that he said to his officials, **“Take your positions.”** So they established their positions against the city.

<sup>13</sup> And behold, a certain prophet came close to Ahab king of Israel and said, **“Thus speaks Yahweh: Do you see all this great throng? Behold, I am giving it into your hand today; then you will know that I am Yahweh.”**

<sup>14</sup> Ahab asked, **“By whom?”**

And he replied, **“Thus speaks Yahweh: By the lads of the chief officials of the provinces.”**

Ahab asked, **“Who shall open the battle engagement?”**

And he replied, **“You.”**

[end text]

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**Verse 1.** A large army is gathered by Ben-hadad, king of the Aramean (Syrian) kingdom with its capital at Damascus.<sup>h</sup> We see in this verse a glimpse of the social and government structure of ancient times. There were many principalities or cities in the land of the Arameans, each of which had an independent monarchy comprised of at least one city (sometimes more than one city) and surrounding territory. Ben-hadad was the greatest among the kings. He was able to convince 32 of the minor kings to cooperate with him to raid the rich Kingdom of Israel south of Damascus. They collected their forces and equipment swarmed over the borders of Israel.

Ben-hadad involved himself with the Kingdom of Israel years before (“[Israel and Judah: 21: Good Kings, Bad Kings](#)”) in the aftermath of war between Baasha, King of Israel, and Asa, king of Judah. Baasha invaded Judah, but he withdrew and returned to Israel when the Syrians threatened to invade from the north. Asa had bribed Ben-hadad to threaten the Kingdom of Israel with invasion. The ploy worked, but God was disappointed with the otherwise good King Asa (1 Kings 15:17–24 and 2 Chronicles 16:1–17:1).

That is background to the current account. Ben-hadad sought the conquest and destruction of the Kingdom of Israel. With clever logistics and military maneuvers, the Syrians managed to “lock up” all the major cities and fortresses of the Kingdom of Israel. This effectively cut off all trade within Israel, as well as the lucrative trade between Egypt to Mesopotamia through Israel. Israel’s capital city of Samaria was besieged and even assaulted, but apparently the attack was fought off. Ahab was cooped up in his capital, surrounded and threatened with further attacks and destruction.

**Verses 2–4.** Ben-hadad sends messengers to negotiate terms. Ben-hadad did not demand Ahab give up his throne, but he wanted plunder of gold, silver, and hostages of Ahab’s favorite sons and wives. (There is no mention of Jezebel. Perhaps she was not with Ahab at the capital.) Comply and the Syrian armies would return to their homes — hopefully. Ahab would have been relegated to the status of a vassal ruler to Ben-hadad, required to pay regular tribute, and liable to be dethroned at any time. Ahab agreed to those terms.

**Verses 5–6.** Encouraged by Ahab’s submission to his demands, Ben-hadad changed the terms of the agreement. He wanted more. He demanded the right to have his officials come into the capital and into houses of Ahab’s officials, and search for valuables. It was to be done immediately. This would have quickly led to pillaging the entire city.

This was a way for Ben-hadad to “pay” his own officials and the 32 kings who helped him execute the *coup de main* against the Israelite kingdom. However, the capital was not yet captured by the Syrians.

**Verses 7–9.** Ahab reconsiders the agreement with Ben-hadad, and the elders and the people agree that they should refuse Ben-hadad’s demand. Ahab said he was willing to give the gold, the silver, and the hostages, but nothing more. This surely meant further war and mass death. But the king, the elders and the people agreed to their life and death decision.

**Verse 10.** Ben-hadad vowed to turn the city of Samaria to dust, and even the dust would be swept away down to the rock base of the city. That was communicated to Ahab.

**Verse 11.** Almost too late, Ahab replied with a dramatic statement to the effect: he who puts on armor before the fighting boast like he who is alive at the end of fighting.

**Verse 12.** Enraged, Ben-hadad commands his troops to take their predetermined attack positions.

**Verse 13.** For all his brave words, Ahab needs God’s intervention. A prophet of YHWH comes to him saying YHWH will help Ahab be victorious. **“This vast throng”** means the great Syrian army.

**Verse 14.** Ahab asks God (through the prophet), who will fight for the victory? The prophet replied **“the lads of the chief officials of the provinces.”** These **“lads”** were at the capital city for their education. Now they are fighting for their capital, their king, their kingdom, and for their own lives.

These were least likely fighters to be victorious. The “lads” are barely men and likely have the least training to be effective warriors. Not much was expected of them until they survived and gained experience. In ancient battles such troops were often used to “soak up” the arrows of enemy archers, who would run out of arrows. In other words, they were expendable in spite of their aristocratic pedigree. Yet God can give victory

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<sup>h</sup> Elijah’s anointing of a man named Hazael as King of Syria has not yet occurred. Hazael is not yet king. That takes place later.

from certain defeat. James Smith summarizes God's purpose:

**“The prophet promised that Ben-hadad and his host would be delivered into the hand of Ahab that very day. Whatever other reasons God may have had for intervention on behalf of Israel, the supreme purpose of this divine help was that Ahab might know assuredly that Yahweh was God. On Carmel Yahweh had appeared as a God of fire, wrath and judgment; now he was about to reveal himself as [the] God of redemption. On Carmel he had shown himself to be superior to the idols of Phoenicia; now he would demonstrate his power over the gods of Aram (20:13).”**

• James Smith, *The Books of History, 1 Kings 19:13–18*

## ***TEXT: Two Battles with the Syrians***

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### **1 Kings 20:15–34**

<sup>15</sup> So Ahab mustered the lads of the chief officials of the provinces; they came to be two hundred thirty-two. After them he mustered all the people, all the sons of Israel, 7,000. <sup>16</sup> They went forth at noon while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, he with the kings, the thirty-two kings who were helping him.

<sup>17</sup> When the lads of the chief officials of the provinces came forth first, Ben-hadad sent out scouts; they told him, saying, **“Men have come forth from Samaria.”**

<sup>18</sup> He replied, **“If they come forth for peace, apprehend them alive; and if they come forth for battle, apprehend them alive.”**

<sup>19</sup> Those had come forth from the city, the lads of the chief officials of the provinces, and the army that was behind them. <sup>20</sup> Each of them smote his man; then the Syrians fled while Israel pursued them. But Ben-hadad king of Syria escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen. <sup>21</sup> Now Israel's king went forth and took all the horses and the chariots. Thus he smote Syria with a great blow.

<sup>22</sup> Then the prophet came close to Israel's king and said to him, **“Go, reinforce yourself; realize and see what you should do; for at the return of the year the king of Syria will be coming up against you.”**

<sup>23</sup> As for the officials of Syria's king, they said to him [Ben-hadad],

**“An Elohim of mountains is Israel's Elohim and not an Elohim of vales. Therefore they were more courageous than we. Nevertheless, if we should fight against them on level ground, we shall assuredly be more courageous than they.**

<sup>24</sup> **Now execute this program: Cause the kings to withdraw, each man from his place, and appoint viceroys in their stead. <sup>25</sup> You should assign for yourself another army like the army that fell from your side, with horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then let us fight against them on level ground, and we shall assuredly be more courageous than they.”**

Now he hearkened to their voice and did so. <sup>26</sup> It came to pass at the return of the year that Ben-hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek for the battle against Israel.

<sup>27</sup>As for the sons of Israel, they presented themselves to be mustered. They were supplied and went out to meet them. Then the sons of Israel encamped in front of them like two small flocks of goats; the Syrians however filled the countryside.

<sup>28</sup> Then the man of Elohim came close and spoke to the king of Israel; he said, **“Thus speaks Yahweh:**

**‘Because the Syrians have said, “An Elohim of mountains is Yahweh, and He is not an Elohim of vales,” I will give all this great throng into your hand so that you will acknowledge that I am Yahweh.’”**

<sup>29</sup> So they encamped, these over against those, for seven days. Now it came to pass on the seventh day that the battle was waged; and the sons of Israel smote the Syrians, 100,000 men on foot, in one day. <sup>30</sup> The rest of them fled toward Aphek, into the city; yet the wall fell on 27,000 men of the rest.

As for Ben-hadad, he fled and came into the city and hid in the chamber inside a chamber. <sup>31</sup> His officials

said to him,

**“Behold now, we have heard about the kings of the house of Israel that they are kings of kindness. Now let us put sackcloth around our waists and lines of rope around our heads and go forth to the king of Israel. Perhaps he shall keep your soul alive.”**

<sup>32</sup> So they girded sackcloth around their waists, and with lines of rope around their heads they came to the king of Israel and said, **“Your servant Ben-hadad says: ‘I pray, let my soul live.’”**

He [Ahab] replied, **“Is he still alive? He is my brother.”**

<sup>33</sup> The men, they augured and quickly took it as decided by him and said, **“Ben-hadad is your brother.”** He [Ahab] replied, **“Go, take him.”** When Ben-hadad came forth to him, he had him get up into the chariot.

<sup>34</sup> The Syrian promised him, **“The cities that my father took from your father, I shall return. And you may establish street markets for yourself in Damascus, just as my father established them in Samaria.”**

Ahab replied, **“As for me, under a covenant I shall let you go.”** Then he contracted a covenant with him **and let him go.** [end text]

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**Verse 15.** Ahab assembled the small force of 232 young “lads.” The 7,000 troops of Israel are presumably the remaining fighting men in the city. The city was surrounded with little hope of any escape.

**Verse 16.** Ben-hadad was drunk along with the 32 kings, showing how confident of victory they were.

**Verse 17.** The lads came out of the city. The scouts were not sure of their purpose, but it seems that the Syrian troops were alert.

**Verse 18.** Ben-hadad, although drunk, made a decision to take the Israelites alive, whether they were peaceful or tried to fight. He did not think they could be a threat. Ben-hadad’s decision allowed the lads to get closer to the Syrian lines.

**Verse 19.** The Israelite army came behind the lads.

**Verse 20.** They attacked suddenly and with an interesting phrasing **“each of them smote his man”** which would be 7,232 Syrians suddenly struck down. The Syrian troops suddenly panicked and the rout of the entire army began. Ben-hadad escaped.

**Verse 21.** This battle is ended with Israel receiving plunder, including valuable chariots and horses, not the Syrians.

**Verse 22.** A second battle will occur. Ahab is told by a prophet that the Syrians will muster their army again and attack Israel the next spring. He must prepare his army and fortify his cities for the onslaught.

**Verse 23.** Here is where Ben-hadad’s officials make their mistake, and Ben-hadad agrees with them. They felt that YHWH was “just another god” like all the pagan gods. They forgot about the Exodus and the history of King David wars.

**Verse 24.** They are saying in effect, send the kings home, and have professionals lead the military units.

**Verse 25.** **“... like the army that fell from your side”** means, like the army defeated badly last year.

**Verse 26.** **“The return of the year”** means the beginning of the civil year, in the spring. *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, “Aphik,” says that Aphik (or Aphek) was a small city on the road from Damascus to Palestine in a plain east of Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. This was a battlefield several times with Syria (2 Kings 13:17).

**Verse 27.** The army of Israel led by Ahab was well supplied and ready for combat, but their numbers were few compared to the Syrian army.

**Verse 28.** The one speaking for YHWH is here termed **“the man of Elohim”** rather than a prophet. He was able to approach Ahab and speak directly to him to give him a positive prophecy of victory.

**Verses 29–30.** Large lop-sided victories with huge casualties were not unusual in ancient times. Slaughter is great once the soldiers of one army panic, throw down their weapons and armor, and run for their lives.

Ben-hadad and the army remnants fled to the “city” (actually a town) of Aphek. **“The chamber inside a chamber,”** where Ben-hadad went, was the most secure room in the city/town. They were trapped, just as King Ahab and his small army were trapped in the capital Samaria the previous year (1 Kings 20:1).

**Verse 31.** Ben-hadad’s officials had no hope of victory and they advised their king to beg Ahab for mercy, appealing to him as a descendant of the **“kings of kindness”** of the house of Israel.

**Verse 32.** Ben-hadad’s officials went to Ahab in submissive clothes and posture, begging for mercy on Ben-hadad’s behalf. The words they speak only refers to his life, not the lives of either his officials or army. Ahab’s positive response surprised them, considering that three times Ben-hadad invaded the Kingdom of Israel: once when Baasha was king and two times in the last two years while Ahab was king. Leading up to the battles, there likely was constant strife along the borderland of the two kingdoms.

**Verse 33.** **“The men ... augured”** meant that they understood Ahab’s response of brotherhood with Ben-hadad to be a positive sign of possible mercy. **“Go take him”** meant, go bring him to me. The two kings meet face to face. It was a good sign when Ben-hadad was invited into Ahab’s chariot.<sup>1</sup>

**Verse 34.** Ben-hadad took advantage of Ahab’s expression of brotherly generosity. He responded with concessions. Ben-hadad knew that the promises of kings are easily and quickly changed.

**“The fury of a king is like many messengers of death, Yet a wise man shall appease it. In the light of a king’s countenance is life, And his benevolence is like a thick cloud of latter rain.”**

• *Proverbs 16:14–15*

The covenant details are not given to us. However, the covenant does not seem to have been a vassal treaty with Syria the inferior power and Israel as sovereign. The treaty seems to have been between two equal “brother” kings. Destruction of Ben-Hadad and Syria would have left a power vacuum to the north of Israel.

**“Ahab had good reason for being lenient with Ben-hadad. A new power was rising in the east. Assyrian texts state that both Ahab and Ben-hadad contributed troops to a coalition army which successfully withstood the Assyrian advances in the famous battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C. In the face of the rising power of Assyria, Ahab probably thought it would be better to have a friend and ally to the north than a belligerent. Others, however, think Ahab was motivated by purely commercial considerations.”**

• *James Smith, The Books of History, 1 Kings 20:30–34*

I think both motivations were true: the threat of a rising Assyria and commercial benefit to Israel.

However, YHWH soon expressed His opinion about the Syria/Israel covenant.

### ***TEXT: An Unknown Prophet Confronts King Ahab***

#### **1 Kings 20:35–43**

<sup>35</sup> There was a certain man of the sons of the prophets; he said to his associate by the word of Yahweh, **“Smite me, I pray.”** Yet the man refused to smite him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>36</sup> So he said to him, **“Because you did not hearken to the voice of Yahweh, behold, when you are going away from me, a lion will smite you.”** Then he went away from beside him; and a lion found him and smote him.

<sup>37</sup> Now he found another man and said, **“Smite me, I pray.”** So this man smote him, and in smiting injured him. <sup>38</sup> Then the prophet went off and stood by the road waiting for the king; he had disguised himself with a head-bandage over his eyes.

<sup>39</sup> Now it came to be as the king was passing by that he cried out to the king and said,

**“Your servant himself went forth right within the battle, and behold, a man withdrew and brought a man to me and said, ‘Guard this man.’ If he should be missing, yea missing, then your soul will come to be for his soul; or you shall weigh out a talent of silver for him. <sup>40</sup> Now it came to pass**

<sup>1</sup> A chariot later will play an important part in Ahab’s death. This may have been one of the chariots captured the previous year (verse 21). Remember that in the first battle Ben-hadad fled on horseback, not in a chariot (verse 20).

<sup>1</sup> I think few people today would have hit the prophet. There is likely much more background to the story that we are not told. Nor do we understand fully the ways and motivations of the prophets. Not all prophets of God were nice people.

**as your servant was busy going hither and thither, that he was not there.”**

The king of Israel replied to him, **“So be your judgment; you yourself have decided.”**

<sup>41</sup> Quickly he took away the head-bandage from over his eyes; now the king of Israel recognized him that he was one of the prophets. <sup>42</sup> Then the prophet said to him,

**“Thus speaks Yahweh:**

**‘Because you let go out of your hand the man under My doom, your soul will be for his soul, and your people for his people.’”**

<sup>43</sup> Then the king of Israel went to his house, sullen and turbulent, and came to Samaria. **[end text]**

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**Verses 35–36.** Why are the prophets not named in this narrative about Ahab? Well, not all prophets were as steadfast or moral as Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and several others. This would be one reason why they are not named, even though they did their duty as prophets. Finally, not all prophets were of YHWH, yet after the Carmel incident, they did what YHWH told them to do in fear for their lives. Hence, no names.

Whatever the case, after the second victory over Syria, this strange confrontation took place (1 Kings 20:35–43). I do not understand how God is glorified by this story. One of the prophets essentially cursed a second prophet (“**an associate**”) for disobeying his order **“Smite me, I pray,”** to visibly injure his face. God wanted it done. God honored what the first prophet said and a lion killed the second prophet as the first prophet prophesied.

**Verses 37.** He repeated the request to a third man. We don’t know if he was a prophet, but it is likely. The third man complied and hit the first prophet in the face, giving him an injury requiring a bandage. The first prophet was now ready to confront King Ahab.

**Verse 38.** This disguise was necessary, it seems, because Ahab knew the first prophet (verse 41 above), or perhaps prophets had certain identifying marks or clothing (similar to Elijah’s rough coat).

**Verses 39–40.** The first prophet told Ahab a story that was a lie, but he said it to make a point. Claiming he was under orders to guard a prisoner taken in the battle, the prophet was supposedly threatened with death or heavy fine if the prisoner escaped. This was apparently against the law of the land. Ahab is not sympathetic. He said the judgment would be appropriate, the prophet should die or be fined. Ahab said the disguised prophet pronounced his own doom. The reality was that Ahab was deciding HIS own doom.

**Verses 41–42.** The man removed his bandage; Ahab recognized him as a prophet. Ahab’s doom is pronounced. God intended for Ahab to kill Ben-hadad but he foolishly let him live. How would Ahab have known? We have no hints from the prophecy of 1 Kings 20:28 above.

One possible solution: in the covenant between Ahab and Ben-Hadad, perhaps YHWH was included as a party to the covenant (either as a witness or a supernatural judge, a frequent aspect of ancient covenants). Was YHWH bound to that covenant? Not really, of course, but He might choose to be. And certainly the covenant lasted only so long as both Ahab or Ben-hadad lived. In fact, each lived several more years, although we cannot yet know how many.

Next comes another incident that shows Ahab’s weakness and allowance for murder by his wife, Jezebel.

### ***TEXT: Naboth’s Vineyard, Ahab, and Jezebel***

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#### **1 Kings 21:1–29**

<sup>1</sup> It occurred after these incidents: Naboth the Jezreelite came to have a vineyard that was in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying,

**“Do give me your vineyard, so that it may become a garden of greens for me, since it is near, beside my house. Let me give you in its stead another vineyard, better than it. Or if it is good in your eyes, let me give you silver as the price of this one.”**

<sup>3</sup> Yet Naboth replied to Ahab, **“Far be it from me, by Yahweh, that I should give up the allotment of my fathers to you.”**

<sup>4</sup> So Ahab went to his house, sullen and turbulent over the word that Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him when he said, **“I shall not give you the allotment of my fathers.”** Then he lay down on his couch, turned his face about and would not eat bread.

<sup>5</sup> Now Jezebel his wife came to him and spoke to him, **“Why is this that your spirit is sullen and you are not eating bread?”** <sup>6</sup> He told her,

**“Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Do give me your vineyard for silver, or if it is your desire, let me give you another vineyard in its stead.’**

**Yet he replied, ‘I shall not give you my vineyard.’”**

<sup>7</sup> Then Jezebel his wife said to him, **“You should now exercise the kingship over Israel. Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be well pleased. I myself shall give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”**

<sup>8</sup> So she wrote scrolls in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal. She sent the scrolls to the elders and the notables who were dwelling with Naboth in his city. <sup>9</sup> She had written in the scrolls, saying,

**“Proclaim a fast, and have Naboth sit at the head of the people. <sup>10</sup> Yet seat two men, sons of decadence, opposite him. They should testify against him, saying, ‘You have scorned Elohim and the king.’ Then take him forth and stone him that he may die.”**

<sup>11</sup> So the men of his city, the elders and the notables dwelling in his city, did just as Jezebel had sent to them, just as it was written in the scrolls that she had sent to them. <sup>12</sup> They proclaimed a fast and had Naboth sit at the head of the people.

<sup>13</sup> Then the two men, sons of decadence, came and sat down opposite him. The men of decadence testified against him, Naboth, in front of the people, saying, **“Naboth has scorned Elohim and the king.”** Then they brought him forth outside the city and stoned him with stones so that he died.

<sup>14</sup> Now they sent to Jezebel, saying, **“Naboth was stoned and is dead.”**

<sup>15</sup> It occurred as soon as Jezebel heard Naboth was stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, **“Arise, take over the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to give you for silver; for Naboth is no longer alive; he is dead.”**

<sup>16</sup> So it came to pass, when Ahab heard Naboth was dead, that Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take it over.

<sup>17</sup> A word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

<sup>18</sup> **“Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel in Samaria. Behold, he is in Naboth’s vineyard where he went down to take it over. <sup>19</sup> You will speak to him, saying, ‘Thus speaks Yahweh: Have you murdered and also taken over?’**

**Then you will speak to him, saying, ‘Thus speaks Yahweh: In the place where the dogs lapped Naboth’s blood, the dogs shall lap your blood, yea, yours too.’”**

<sup>20</sup> Ahab said to Elijah, **“Have you found me, my enemy?”**

He [Elijah] replied,

**“I have found you, because you sold yourself to do what is evil in the eyes of Yahweh to provoke Him to vexation. Thus speaks Yahweh:**

<sup>21</sup> **‘Behold, I am bringing evil on you. I will wipe out those after you; I will cut off from Ahab any man-child, restrained or forsaken, in Israel. <sup>22</sup> I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, for the vexation with which you provoked Me to vexation and caused Israel to sin.’**

<sup>23</sup> **Also regarding Jezebel Yahweh has spoken, saying:**

**‘The dogs, they shall devour Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. <sup>24</sup> The one of Ahab dying in the city shall the dogs eat; and the one dying in the field shall the flyers of the heavens eat.’”**

<sup>25</sup> But none came to be like Ahab, who sold himself to do what is evil in the eyes of Yahweh, whom Jezebel his wife incited. <sup>26</sup> He committed very abhorrent acts by going after the idol clods, the same as all the Amorites had done, whom Yahweh had evicted from before the sons of Israel.

<sup>27</sup> It occurred as soon as Ahab heard these words, that he tore his garments and put sackcloth on his flesh. He fasted, lay down in sackcloth and walked about gently.

<sup>28</sup> Then a word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, <sup>29</sup> **“Have you seen that Ahab is submissive before Me? Inasmuch as he is submissive before Me, I shall not bring the evil in his days. I shall bring the evil on his house in the days of his son.”** [end text]

We are told in 1 Kings 20:43 that Ahab returned to Samaria from the battle which was east of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. Then Ahab apparently went north to the city of Jezreel with Jezebel.

Ahab returned to the loving arms of his enticing wife Jezebel. I am sure that is how Ahab felt. The fact that she had a propensity for murder (she murdered YHWH’s prophets and was still searching for Elijah to kill him), did not seem to bother Ahab. She was probably lovable to him. We will learn the fate of both Ahab and Jezebel in future chapters of Kings and Chronicles. I am sure the full details of their evil history together are much worse and horror-filled than we are told in the biblical texts.

**Verse 1:** This chapter begins soon after the second victory over Ben-hadad’s army. Naboth owned a vineyard in the city of Jezreel, about 23 miles north of the capital city of Samaria. Ahab had a residence nearby the vineyard. He wanted Naboth’s vineyard. Vineyards can take years of care before they are productive.

**Verse 2.** Ahab thought he made Naboth an offer he couldn’t refuse.

**Verse 3.** Naboth’s vineyard was an inheritance of his family. He refused the offer and it cost him his life.

**Verse 4.** Ahab had a bad day. In 1 Kings 20:43 above Ahab was also **“sullen and turbulent”** when he was told YHWH pronounced doom upon Ahab. Now again he is **“sullen and turbulent”** because Naboth disrespected him, Ahab his King, and would not sell him his vineyard. He lost his appetite, poor fellow.

**Verses 5–7.** Jezebel enters the narrative, listens to Ahab’s story, and she acts immediately. Ahab is king. He has authority. She will **“exercise the kingship”** authority on Ahab’s behalf, writing in his name and using Ahab’s seal to secure the letter.

**Verses 8–11.** Jezebel wrote a letter to the elders and notables of the city of Jezreel, asking them to commit perjury against Naboth, and set him on a capital crime meriting death. She wants the charge to be that Naboth has **“scorned Elohim and the king.”** She likely meant pagan *elohim*, plural, and not YHWH, a God she hated. The elders and notables were happy to do so, for it was the king’s desire, so far as they knew. The elders and leaders respected the king in preference to the law. Naboth respected the law’s protection in preference to the king. It got Naboth killed.

**Verse 12.** Naboth was given the chief seat at the fast event. Apparently Ahab and Jezebel did not attend, otherwise they would have had the chief seat.

**Verse 13.** Just as Jezebel wanted, two **“men of decadence testified against him”** meaning Naboth.<sup>k</sup> They said he **“scorned Elohim and the king.”** This was blasphemy which could cause Elohim (God) to be disrespected and it disobeyed the king’s command. This merited the death penalty.

**Verses 14–16.** We read three times that Naboth was dead. By some right of inheritance the King took of the vineyard. Everyone is happy, but Naboth is dead. One can speculate this public act of murder must have greatly offended the Israelites of Ahab’s realm. They did not later support Ahab’s heir when, after Ahab’s

<sup>k</sup> The words, **“men of decadence”** in Hebrew is “sons of belial,” or sons of wickedness or worthlessness. It means the same in Greek in 2 Corinthians 6:15 where “Belial” in that verse is transliterated from Hebrew to Greek and means “decadence.” Deuteronomy 13:13 is the first use of “sons of Belial” or sons of decadence. The phrase also occurs in Judges 19:22, 20:13; 1 Samuel 1:16, 2:12, 10:27, 25:17, 25, 30:22; 2 Samuel 16:7, 20:1, 23:6; 1 Kings 21:10, 13; and 2 Chronicles 13:7.

death, rebellion breaks out. That rebellion ends the dynasty begun by Omri, Ahab's idolatrous father.

When David's sin of having Bathsheba's husband killed was made public by Nathan the prophet, David acknowledged his sin and repented. Not only did Ahab not give God the glory for his victories over the Syrian army, but he did not repent of his evil ways of idolatry, or being involved in Naboth's death. He accepted Jezebel's actions and her gift of the vineyard.

**Verse 17.** Whoa! Elijah enters the story.

**Verses 18–19.** YHWH gives Elijah precise instructions where to find Ahab. Elijah delivers God's message to the King in Naboth's vineyard.

**Verse 20.** Ahab's words to Elijah are wonderful, **"Have you found me, my enemy?"** Ahab has not seen Elijah since the events at Mount Carmel. Elijah immediately delivers his message.

**Verses 21–22.** God's judgments are harsh, worse than anything else pronounced upon Ahab. But Ahab's sins were serious and not only offended YHWH, but Ahab also **"caused Israel to sin."**

**Verses 23–24.** A specific doom is also pronounced against Jezebel.<sup>1</sup> Remember, she persecuted and killed the prophets of YHWH with the sword (except 100 saved by Obadiah), and tried to destroy the religion of YHWH and replace it with worship of Baal. Ahab took no action in opposition to her, so far as we read, but he agreed with Jezebel's policy. A **"rampart"** is a tall portion of a city's protective wall. God's judgment for Jezebel will happen just outside the city walls.

**Verses 25–26.** These two verses analyze Ahab's life up to that time, and particularly the moral character of his rule as King of Israel. Ahab **"sold himself to do what is evil ..."** What a terrible legacy for anyone. Ahab allowed Jezebel to incite him to evil.

**Verse 27.** Ahab's reaction was immediate and heartfelt, showing his remorse for the things he had done in his life. Was his reaction legitimate? Apparently so. God accepted his actions. The text does not say Ahab repented in the manner we might think appropriate, but this may have been appropriate in those days. God heard Ahab and we can rest assured He knows the heart of every person:

**"The sacrifices to Elohim are a broken spirit; A broken and crushed heart, O Elohim, You shall not despise."**

• *Psalm 51:17*

**"Yahweh is King for the eon and further. The nations will perish from His land. You hear the yearning of the humble, O Yahweh; You shall establish their heart; Your ear shall attend."**

• *Psalm 10:16–17*

**Verses 28–29.** Ahab, a supporter and worshipper of Baal, was **"submissive"** before YHWH. He humbled himself before YHWH his God. Was Ahab sincere? Was he merely remorseful that he was being punished? After all, whenever God had acted in the past, someone else was always punished, even though God frequently threatened Ahab. This now was real and it struck Ahab deeply.

How did God react? He told Elijah (who was likely suspect of Ahab's motives) that He would give Ahab a reprieve and His judgment to wipe out his sons and male family line would not occur while Ahab was alive. There is no indication Ahab knew about God's decision.

Yet, so far as we know, in spite of his remorse, Ahab made no public profession of faith in YHWH. He took no action against the idols to destroy worship places and temples of foreign gods. Nor did he take action against Jezebel, but allowed her to freely worship evil and persecute truth. Ahab's saga continues.

David Sielaff, April 2017

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<sup>1</sup> Jezebel was used as a type of evil in Revelation 2:20. We do not know if Jezebel in the Thyatira *ekklesia* is a woman by that name or is representative of Jezebel's teaching:

**"But I have much against you, seeing that you pardon that woman of yours, Jezebel, who says that she is a prophetess, and is teaching and deceiving My slaves so as to commit prostitution and to be eating idol sacrifices."**

The next four verses (Revelation 2:21–24) are also very interesting.