

2 Kings 9:1-37

Jehu the Avenger

King Jehoram - the son of Ahab - ruled over Israel for 12 years. Remember that he did some good things, but was mostly evil.

- **2 Kings 3:2** - "And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made."

He didn't stop Baal worship completely, but "put away" out of sight a provocative statue of Baal. Jezebel, after the death of Ahab, continued as a powerful queen mother, retaining her group of priests of Baal and Asherah. And Jehoram continued the worship of Yahweh through the abomination of the golden calves.

All the things we've read about since chapter 3 have involved Jehoram as king. God had stepped in to miraculously break the Syrian siege. Elisha tipped off Jehoram about the attack plans of Ben-Hadad. Jehoram both feared and was annoyed by Elisha the prophet, but was on good enough terms to have an audience with Gehazi to ask about his master's great accomplishments.

But as a son of Ahab he was under a curse first pronounced by Elijah after the murder of Naboth and stealing his vineyard:

- **1 Kings 21:19-24** - "And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat."

Three years after this, Ahab was killed in battle against the Syrians, and the dogs licked his blood, as prophesied.

But the rest of the prophecy was delayed. Why? Because Ahab had humbled himself after hearing of his doom. God tells Elijah:

- **1 Kings 21:27-29** - "when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days:

but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

This is why the "anointing" of Hazael as king of Syria and the anointing of Jehu as king of Israel - which God had instructed Elijah to do - take place now, under Elisha rather than through Elijah. They were both meant to inflict judgment on Israel:

- **1 Kings 19:17** - "And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay."

Retribution

2 Kings 9:1 - "And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead: And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber; Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not."

(NOTE: This Jehoshaphat mentioned is not the same as the earlier king of Judah)

Jewish tradition says this young disciple was the future prophet Jonah, who is mentioned briefly in **2 Kings 14:25**. (Seems like Jonah was good at fleeing).

This disciple of Elisha find Jehu in conference with other officers, and announces he has a message. Jehu asks who the message is for, and the disciple says "for you."

They retire to an adjoining room, where the disciple pours the oil on Jehu's head and repeats the instructions from Elisha:

2 Kings 9:6-10 - "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel: And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah: And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled."

When Jehu returns his fellow officers ask, why did this madman come to you? At first Jehu tries to dismiss it: "You know this man and his babbling" (the word in Hebrew for speech can also mean babbling).

They no doubt noticed his head was dripping with oil.

2 Kings 9:12 - "And they said, It is false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake

he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel."

Instead of scoffing at this, they hailed him as king, taking off their robes and laying them down in front of him as a display of submission and respect. This also shows that King Jehoram had already lost the support of many of his own troops.

So Jehu drives his chariot quickly with a contingent of his men to Jezreel, where King Jehoram is recuperating from his wounds, and King Ahaziah of Judah is visiting him.

As they approach, a watchman sees them and informs Jehoram. He says to send out a messenger and find out their intentions. They might be bringing news that the Syrians were attacking. He asks "*Ha Shalom?*" meaning is it peace, or "is everything all right?" And Jehu answered, "What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me."

This happens twice. Finally the watchman recognizes the furious charioteering as a hallmark of Jehu.

So both Jehoram and Ahaziah ride out to meet Jehu in their own chariots. They meet up on the land of "the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite" - the very vineyard stolen by Ahab.

2 Kings 9:22-23 - "And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah."

We find no mention of whoredoms by Jezebel. But sexual immorality is baked into worship of Baal and Asherah, and that is no doubt the basis of Jehu's accusation.

Jehu draws his bow and sends an arrow straight into the back of Jehoram and out through his heart, killing him.

2 Kings 9:25-26 - "Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him; Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD."

This is new information - Jehu and Bidkar had actually been part of Ahab's retinue years before and were present when Elijah delivered the prophecy of doom on Ahab standing in Naboth's vineyard.

The fact that this judgment should take place on the exact spot of Naboth's vineyard is not in the other records of Elijah's prophecy. In fact each time it is repeated there are small differences.

Ahaziah Assassinated

2 Kings 9:27 - "But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there."

Ahaziah was also a blood relative of Ahab (Ahab was his grandfather), therefore making him liable under the judgment that came upon Ahab and his descendants.

2 Chronicles gives a slightly different account, in which Ahaziah is first captured and then killed. The rabbis explain his wickedness, that he would "cut out the Divine Names [from the Scriptures] and write [the names of] pagan deities in their place."

Jezebel is Slain

2 Kings 9:30-31 - "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?"

She calls him Zimri referring to the chariot commander who assassinated his master, Elah son of Baasha (**1 Kings 16:9-12**). His reign lasted only seven days, and he set fire to his own palace when it came under siege by Omri, Ahab's father, killing himself. Basically Jezebel is saying, it didn't turn out so well for Zimri, did it?

Jehu is not phased by this. He sees her attendants also in window and says, "Throw her down."

2 Kings 9:33-34 - "And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter."

The original prophecy had said, "The dogs shall devour Jezebel in the field of Jezreel." So why were her hands and feet spared? The midrash explains that these parts remained because of the few acts of kindness that Jezebel performed with them.

Whenever a funeral procession passed by, she would come forth from her house, strike with her hands, lament with her mouth, and walk ten paces. When a bridegroom passed through the marketplace, she would come out, clap her hands, call out with her mouth, and walk ten steps after him. The dogs had no power over those limbs that displayed kindness (Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer).

So perhaps Jezebel was a more complicated person than it appears.

The Spiritual Meaning of Jezebel

One way of interpreting the name Jezebel is "Baal is my husband"

Jehu paired Jezebel's "whoredoms" and "witchcraft" together along with her cruelty and murder of the prophets. She brought false accusations against Naboth and had him and his family killed. She becomes a sort of template for a general description of the corrupting influence toward idolatry and opposition to God in the Bible.

The prophets often use harlotry and adultery as imagery for idol worship. Israel is said to "bow down" before idols - using a sexual term that basically means she "spreads her legs" for the false gods. Jeremiah likens our desire for idols to a donkey in heat:

- **Jeremiah 2:24** - "A wild donkey used to the wilderness, That sniffs at the wind in her desire; In her time of mating, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves; In her month they will find her."

Just as the **Song of Solomon** portrays sexual intimacy as a picture of the relationship between Christ and his Bride, so whoredom and adultery picture backsliding Israel going after idols and false gods.

Jezebel installed pornographic carvings in the royal carriage of her husband, King Ahab, perhaps to get him primed for sex when he returned home. But the Talmud has a further explanation:

According to the Talmud (Sanhedrin, 39b), the presence of carnal imagery in his chariot would trigger wasteful emissions of seed. According to classical sources (See Ohr Yekaros, Mishpatim p. 38) immoral sexual activity allows the Divine energy vested within the substances associated with the act to be siphoned off and exploited by the forces of impurity and destruction. Jezebel too sought to perversely harness the powerful life-giving force within the human seed for the purposes of engaging in the occult (Benayahu ben Yehoyada ad loc.).

A midrash says that Jezebel's father Ethbaal had been a priest of Ashtoreth for 32 years before usurping the throne of Sidon by slaying his predecessor. The "deep things of Satan" (**Revelation 2:24**) were part of her lineage.

Idolatry is Harlotry

This Jezebel-like pattern is discussed by the prophets.

"Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD." (**Hosea 1:2**)

Against Babylon - **Isaiah 47:7-9** - "And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their

perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments."

Nineveh is condemned "because of the many harlotries of the harlot, the seductive mistress of sorcery, who betrays nations by her prostitution and clans by her witchcraft." (**Nahum 3:4**)

Jezebel is depicted as the opposite of Ruth the Moabitess, who was also a foreigner.

Scheming

Jezebel is seen as a scheming, brash woman because her husband, Ahab, was vacillating and indecisive. He was afraid of Elijah but also hated him. He tolerates Jezebel's introduction of Baal and Asherah worship.

When Naboth refuses to sell his vineyard, it is Jezebel who convinces the self-pitying Ahab to snap out of it, and tells him, "I will get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite for you" (1 Kings 21:7).

Murderous and 'Drunk with the Blood of the Saints'

Jezebel was no advocate of religious freedom and diversity. She had been hunting down and murdering any true prophet of God, including Elijah's disciples (**1 Kings 18:4**).

Ahab is depicted as one who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord, "at the instigation of his wife Jezebel" (**1 Kings 21:25**).

Even after the slaughter of the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, Jezebel seems unfazed.

[NOTE: According to a midrash, when the prophets of Baal realized they would fail, a man named Hiel agreed to hide within the altar to ignite the heifer from below. God foiled their plan by sending a snake to bite Hiel, who subsequently died.]

After Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal, she says "If you are Elijah, so I am Jezebel. Thus and more may the gods do if by this time tomorrow I have not made you like one of them" (**1 Kings 19:2**) - the first phrase is only in the Septuagint version.

Jezebel's threat must have packed a punch because it caused Elijah to flee to Mount Horeb/Sinai.

Now Elijah and his disciples are pitted against Jezebel and her remaining 400 prophets of Asherah in a spiritual war with real word consequences.

Hungry for Power

Jezebel in effect "ruled over kings" by usurping power from her husband, Ahab.

Jesus was tempted with "all the kingdoms of the world" by Satan. But He tells Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (**John 18:36**). Believers do not seek worldly power. But Jezebel does.

Unrepentant

Ahab had humbled himself after hearing of his doom (**1 Kings 21:27-29**). Jezebel never did. The scripture says of the Jezebel in **Revelation 2** - "I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality."

Jezebel's name YZBL appears in a seal dating from the early eighth or ninth century B.C. which she could have used to seal documents. Jezebel's name may have meant "Where is the Prince?" which was the cry of Baal's subjects. But the spelling of the Phoenician name has been altered in the Hebrew Bible, perhaps in order to read as "Where is the excrement (*zebel*, manure)?"—a reference to Elijah's prediction that "her carcass shall be like dung on the ground" (**2 Kings 9:36**).

Seductive

Applying eye makeup (kohl) and brushing one's hair are often connected to flirting and seduction in Hebraic thinking: **Isaiah 3:16**, **Jeremiah 4:30**, **Ezekiel 23:40** and **Proverbs 6:24–26**. As a young queen she made herself attractive for sexual adventures. Although in this instance it was more likely the aging Jezebel's preparation trying to look regal and most majestic when confronting Jehu.

Painting one's face also recalls the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who displayed an outward piety while inside they were like ravening wolves.

Prideful

The story of Jezebel seems to have influenced the depiction of The Great Whore: the "mother of whores and of abominations" who "rules over the kings of the earth" and who has committed fornication with them (**Revelation 17:2, 5, 18**).

In her defiance and bravado, Jezebel reminds us of the attitude of the Great Whore/ Babylon: "In her heart she says, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow and will never see grief.' Therefore her plagues will come in one day — death and grief and famine — and she will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her" (**Revelation 18:7-8**).

Compare **Jeremiah 47:7** - "You said, 'I will be queen forever.'" referring to Babylon.

Jezebel looking out her window conjures up images of Sisera's mother waiting for her son, killed by another woman, Jael (**Judges 5:28**); and of Michal looking out disapprovingly at David dancing before the Lord (**2 Samuel 6:16-20**). Also, a popular

motif in Phoenicia other places in the Near East depicted Astarte the fertility goddess as looking out of a window.

The Great Whore of Babylon in Revelation:

- **Revelation 17:5-6** - "And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

Jezebel in the church at Thyratira

Jesus praises the church at Thyratira for growing in deeds and works.

"But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds." (**Revelation 2:20-23**)

What was going on?

The Jerusalem Council had instructed Gentile converts to abstain from eating meat sacrificed to idols (**Acts 15:29**).

In **1 Corinthians 8:4-13**, Paul clarifies the teaching on this subject. First, he says that eating meat offered to an idol is not immoral, because "an idol is nothing at all." But doing something "permitted" should never hinder the spiritual health of someone else.

To the pure, all things are pure (**Titus 1:15**). God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" (**1 Timothy 6:17**).

But the church at Thyratira was going further. A woman Jesus labelled as "Jezebel" had dubbed herself a prophetess and was corrupting some of the believers.

In the letter to the church of Thyatira, Jesus rebukes them for tolerating a prophetess who "misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols" (**Revelation 2:20**). This is a different situation from what Paul was dealing with in Corinth. It seems that members of the church of Thyatira were fully partaking of the pagan "love feasts," celebrated with gross immorality and feasting, and rituals actually worshipping idols.

And Jezebel was saying it was OK, just like the historical Jezebel was fine with worshipping Yahweh through the golden calves and bowing down to Baal and Asherah,

too.

There are still many places in the world where idols and false gods are literally still worshipped. I saw temples with thousands of idols when I went to India. But we are not generally tempted in the same way.

But we *are* tempted to mix our faith in Jesus with the value systems of the world.

Sexual immorality is always a temptation, of course. But the imagery of illicit sex and ingesting illegal food takes in a broader spiritual meaning based on the Jezebel picture.

What does it mean spiritually? Idolatry

We can "breathe life" into anything and make it an idol. i.e. it becomes something we depend on instead of God. We are susceptible to exalting anything that puffs us up, gives us pleasure, or promises us success, and then giving it prominence above Jesus. Then we start to worship it. We get nourishment from self and pride and status and acquisitions and accomplishments. If we are of a religious bent, we depend on works and good deeds, being right - not being like "those sinners."

Doing so is figuratively "eating" a false nourishment - the opposite of taking the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist/*afikomen*. We are really ingesting dust, like the serpent (**Genesis 3:14**).

Anyone whose teaching is encouraging this is a "Jezebel," whether male or female.

Followers of Jezebel usually consider themselves to be quite clever. They're covering all the bases, being smart, hedging their bets.

The "Jezebel spirit" that many churches warn against is often just referring to "uppity" or opinionated women members. But that takes you on a false tangent. The real Jezebel spirit is trying to pull us out of our exclusive loyalty to Christ into compromise with the world's values, which the scriptures describe as "whoredoms" and eating food offered to idols.

This "Jezebel" teacher would be judged, Jesus says:

"I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds." (**Revelation 2:21-23**)

The 'Deep Things of Satan'

Jezebel was teaching the "deep things of Satan." (**Revelation 2:24**). This is how John interpreted the phrase that this Jezebel was probably using - the "deep things of God."

Believers don't need to know hidden "mysteries" and gnostic secrets, because there aren't any. There isn't a hierarchy of secret knowledge in the church. There's only the cross. The Spirit will lead us into all truth, Jesus says:

- **1 Corinthians 2:9-10** - "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

So the historical Jezebel served as a pattern for John to describe an ongoing outside-of-time picture of everything opposed to God, tempting us away from the truth, sowing deception.

Jehu in our story is a type of Jesus coming at the end of time, who will judge the figurative Jezebel, the great whore of Babylon:

- **Revelation 19:2** - "For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

- He is purging out the old leaven (**1 Corinthians 5:7-8**)

- He is revenging the disobedience within us (**2 Corinthians 10:6**)

But we have to agree and say "amen"

In the same way that Jesus could say to Peter "Get thee behind me, Satan," so the spirit of Jezebel can inhabit church members or leaders who try to seduce believers away from the truth of the cross.

Instead of receiving that teaching, we must say, Get thee behind me!