



## Jehu Dispenses Divine Justice: The Executions of Jehoram, Ahaziah, Jezebel, & the House of Ahab, 2 Kings 9:14-10:6

### The Execution of Jehoram, King of Israel (2 Kings 9:14-26):

Jehoram, injured in the Battle of Ramoth-gilead, was convalescing at his palace in Jezreel and was being visited by his nephew, Ahaziah. Jehu rode in his chariot to Jezreel and a sentry reported his arrival to the two kings. They both rode out in their own chariots to meet Jehu:

**2 Kings 9:22** - And it came about when Jehoram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu [ **Did we win the battle at Ramoth-gilead** ]?" And he answered, "What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts [ **קַשָּׁפִּי kashaph** ] are so many?"

**v. 23** - So Jehoram reined about and fled and said to Ahaziah, "Treachery, O Ahaziah!"

**v. 24** - And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and shot Jehoram between his arms; and the arrow went through his heart and he sank in his chariot.

### The Execution of Ahaziah, King of Judah (2 Kings 9:27-28):

Ahaziah saw Jehoram go down and safely made it back to headquarters at Jezreel, but seeing Jehu in hot pursuit he decided to try and make it back to Judah. The road through Samaria, the capital city of Israel, was the most direct route down to Jerusalem. He almost made it to Ibleam \ib' le-am\ but while ascending Mount Gur north of the city he was overtaken by Jehu and his men:

**2 Kings 9:27** - When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this [ **Jehoram killed** ], he fled by the way of the garden house [ **an outbuilding where equipment for tending the royal gardens were stored** ]. Jehu pursued him and said, "Shoot him too, in the chariot." So they shot him at the ascent of Gur, which is at Ibleam. But Ahaziah fled to Megiddo and died there.

The parallel account in 2 Chronicles presents a textual problem but it is easily resolved:

**2 Chronicles 22:9** - Jehu also sought Ahaziah, and they caught him while he was hiding in Samaria; they brought him to Jehu, put him to death, and buried him. For they said, "He is the son of Jehoshaphat [ **grandson** ], who sought the Lord with all his heart." So there was no one of the house of Ahaziah to retain the power of the kingdom [ **of Judah: all of Ahaziah's sons were small children** ].

The textual problem that is suggested is the comment that Jehu's men caught Ahaziah in Samaria rather than in Megiddo. It was obvious that the city of Samaria was his destination in route back to Jerusalem.

But when injured outside Ibleam, Ahaziah altered his course and fled to Megiddo where he was captured and killed. There is no contradiction between the two accounts. Although Samaria is the capital of the Northern Kingdom the name is also applied to the country as well:

**Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 958:**



**SAMARIA.** This term includes all the tribes over which Jeroboam made himself king, whether east or west of Jordan. The expression "cities of Samaria" in 1 Kings 13:32 is used for the kingdom of the ten tribes. Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria are equivalent terms (for the Northern Kingdom).

### **The Execution of the Queen Mother Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30-37):**

Jezebel was an aristocrat being the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and wife of Ahab the king of Israel. She was steeped in the worship of Baal and Asherah and brought this cult to the palaces at Samaria and Jezreel. She tirelessly promoted its practice and moved toward open opposition to the worship of *YHWH Elohim* to the point of executing the priests of the Lord.

Probably the most striking illustration of how depraved Jezebel's soul really was is the account of how she secured Naboth's vineyard located near the royal palace at Jezreel. Ahab lusted for the vineyard but Naboth refused to sell it to him since it was an inheritance from his fathers. Denied, Ahab returned to the palace, whined to his wife, and then retired to his room to sulk.

Jezebel considered herself a genius, which she probably was. As an aristocrat and a member of two royal lines she had never developed a taste for being denied her wishes. As the daughter of one king and wife of another, she was used to getting her way. Further she fancied herself a problem-solver. And problem-solvers often believe that rules, regulations, laws, and policies do not apply to them. They just do what they have to do, believing the end justifies the means. Consequently, Jezebel devised a plan and took it to Ahab:

**1 Kings 21:7** - And Jezebel, Ahab's wife, said to him, "Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

**v. 8** - So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in the city.

**v. 9** - Now she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast [ **call an special assembly to deal with a serious crime in the city** ], and seat Naboth at the head of the people;

**v. 10** - and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death [ **Leviticus 24:16** ]."

**v. 11** - So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them.

This is complete misuse of power. It is a miscarriage of justice. It is murder carried out by a trumped-up charge. It is an abuse of the legal system of Israel and violated the laws of God:

**Numbers 36:9** - No inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another tribe, for the tribes of the sons of Israel shall each hold to his own inheritance.



It is obvious that Naboth and Ahab were not of the same tribe and thus Naboth was forbidden by the Mosaic Law to sell his property to Ahab even if he had wanted to. But after his murder, Jezebel informed Ahab that Naboth was dead and that he could go claim the property. Ahab immediately cheered up and went and took the vineyard.

Jezebel is an example of the principle we have been emphasizing: When the restraints of divine prohibitions are ignored or rejected by a client nation, the souls of its leaders quickly turn to evil. For Jezebel there never had been any restraint. She was an alien, an interloper, and pagan and knew not the culture, the ethics, or the faith of her adopted country. As a result she committed immoral acts. And justice is about to come down upon this vixen at Jezreel.

**2 Kings 9:30** - When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head, and looked out the window.

**v. 31** - And as Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Did Zimri have peace, who murdered his master?"

This is raw sarcasm. Jezebel's approach to Jehu was to assume the disposition that had always defined her personality: arrogance. She put on queenly attire, fixed her hair and painted her eyes and perched haughtily in the window to denounce the unwelcome guest.

Next she associated Jehu's execution of Jehoram as being equal to that of Zimri's ill-fated murder of Elah. This general's reign on Israel's throne lasted but a week.

In her arrogance she also assumed that her body guards would protect her. They did not. At Jehu's bidding they threw her out of the window onto the courtyard below where Jehu ran over her corpse with his chariot.

Jehu dismounted and went inside to eat at the king's table which now belonged to him, leaving Jezebel's remains still lying on the ground. After his meal he ordered his staff to go and bury Jezebel but when they went to do so they discovered that her body was gone in fulfillment of a prophecy given by Elijah in:

**1 Kings 21:23** - "And of Jezebel also has the Lord spoken, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.'"

And this was not all that Elijah had to say. The rest of his prophecy is quoted by Jehu in:

**2 Kings 9:37** - "... and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the district of Jezreel, so they cannot say, 'This is Jezebel.'"

This was the demise of Jezebel who had brought the cult of Baal to prominence in Israel along with the immoral acts and pagan rituals associated with the worship of its idols ... and all that jazz.

#### **Execution of the House of Ahab (2 Kings 10:1-11):**

The termination of the entire line of Ahab involved the execution of 70 royal sons who were his direct descendants. This group was obviously made up of Jehoram's sons plus grandsons from his sons and possibly some daughters. Nevertheless, it was a prolific bunch and these boys of various ages numbered seventy.



The divine mandate, “Strike the house of Ahab your master ... for the whole house of Ahab shall perish ... and I will cut off from Ahab every male person,” delegated to Jehu the power to execute the entire lot of these young men and boys. However, the manner in which Jehu accomplished this mission showed he wanted to do this in such a way that he would appear to the people as not being directly involved in the slaughter.

First of all Jehu set them up. He wrote letters to the heirs’ elders and guardians offering them a proposal:

**2 Kings 10:1** - Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria [**Jehoram’s sons, their sons, and possibly the sons of some of Jehoram’s unnamed daughters**]. And Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, the elders, and to the guardians of the children of Ahab, saying,

**v. 2** - “And now, when this letter comes to you, since your master’s sons are with you, as well as the chariots and horses and a fortified city and the weapons,

**v. 3** - select the best and fittest of your master’s sons, and set him on his father’s throne, and fight for your master’s house.”

Here is the implication: You guys pick a king whom you believe is the best qualified among Ahab’s heirs to lead Israel and then prepare to defend him against me. The further implication is that the contest will only be between Jehu and the son the elders select and all other sons will be spared. But Jehu never intended to do such a thing knowing that the elders and guardians would be forced to capitulate which they promptly did:

**2 Kings 10:4** - But they feared greatly and said, “Behold, the two kings [**Jehoram and Ahaziah**] did not stand before him; how then can we stand?”

**v. 5** - And the one who was over the household, and the one who was over the city, the elders, and the guardians of the children, sent word to Jehu, saying, “We are your servants, all that you say to us we will do, we will not make any man king; do what is good in your sight.”

If these leaders of Israel and protectors of the children had made a choice of one of Ahab’s line to become king then this act would have aligned them all with the selected son. They knew that Jehu would easily defeat him and they, having selected him, would also be terminated. They decided to back off and let Jehu have his way with them:

**2 Kings 10:6** - Then Jehu wrote a letter to them a second time saying, “If you are on my side, and you will listen to my voice, take the heads of the men, your master’s sons, and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow about this time.” Now the king’s sons, seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, who were rearing them.

Imagine the shock these men felt on the arrival of this missive. They were the protectors, guardians, and, in essence, foster parents of these men and boys. They had been instrumental in their education and training and were their mentors. Now they were placed in a position of executing them all and then delivering their heads to Jezreel by the next day.



The resultant bloodbath was not what the Lord commanded. Jehu was assigned the duty of taking out the descendants of Ahab, not the elders and guardians. Jehu delegated the task to others who felt forced to comply. These men were cowards. They should have refused and thus forced Jehu to do the dastardly deed. Instead they murdered these seventy men and boys, sent their heads to Jehu, and in doing so hopefully preserved their own.