

## 1 Kings 21:1-29

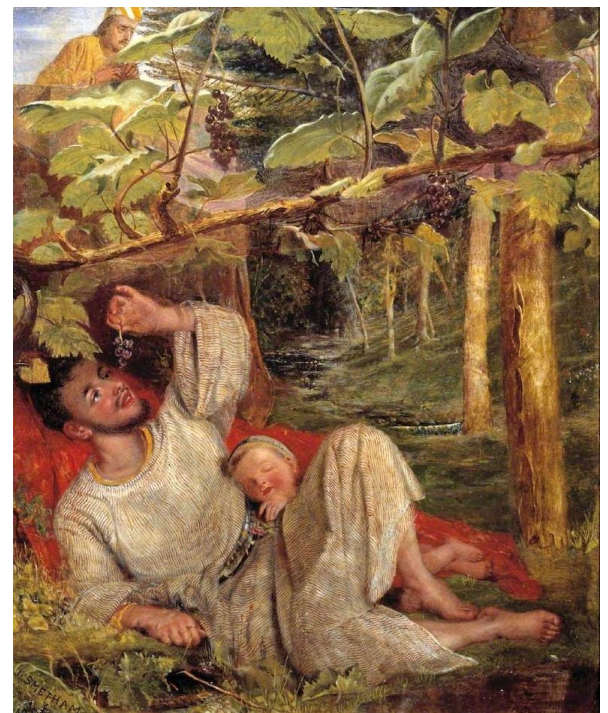
After hearing the LORD's judgment (20:42), Ahab went home to pout. Driven by anger and rebellion against God, he had a fit of rage when Naboth refused to sell his vineyard. The same feelings that led him to a life of power grabbing drove him to resent Naboth. Rage turned to hatred and led to murder.

And, don't look now, but he's baaaack! An apparently reinvigorated Elijah appeared in Jezreel to denounce this new heinous crime and to foretell the destruction of Ahab's Dynasty.

1. What was the ugliest, oldest, weirdest piece of clothing you or someone you know wears or wore? When was it worn and why?
2. Why are we in Jezreel? **Excavations at Tel Jezreel have unearthed a fortified acropolis from the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.. The construction at the site is large and elaborate, with the dressed masonry typical of royal palaces of that era. The archeologist at this site concluded that it was built by either Omri or Ahab, and that it was the auxiliary residence for the king of Israel.**

Why did Ahab want the vineyard (21:1-3)? **Ahab wanted the land next to his second home for a large vegetable garden. "Vegetable garden," *gan yawrack*, only occurs besides here in Dt 11:10 where a contrast is made between Egypt (a vegetable garden requiring human care) and the Promised Land (which the LORD cares for). Israel is also sometimes portrayed as a vine under God's special care (Isa 3:13-15). With this in mind, Ahab's desire to replace a vineyard with a vegetable garden may express (unconsciously or symbolically) a desire to make Israel similar to "Egypt" — to blur Israel's identity as God's special people.**

As king, why didn't he just confiscate it? **Because unlike the kings of the pagan nations, Israel is governed not by the will of the king but by the will of the LORD as revealed in His Law. "When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this Law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this Law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the Law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel. (Dt 17:18-20)**



*Naboth in his Vineyard* — James Smetham, 1821

Why did Naboth refuse his king this request (Lev 25:23-28; Num 36:7)? **The land wasn't Naboth's to give. The land in the Promised Land belonged *not* to the families who owned it, but to the LORD. God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt and slavery into fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant promise. Through Joshua, God had allocated its various parts to the tribes as their inheritance. Individual families could not sell land permanently. Rather a complex of laws returned "sold" lands back to the family of origin and prevented accumulation of the land into the hands of a wealthy few. Ahab's desire for permanent ownership of the land is another evidence of his disregard for God and His Law.**

Would you have refused this king?

3. What did Ahab's reaction reveal about him (21:4)? **Ahab is a pouter. He gets angry and depressed when his desires don't match up with God's will and Word.**  
 What other examples of "pouting" have you seen in Ahab? **(20:43)**  
 What tends to cheer Ahab up? **Ahab likes comfort food (18:41; 21:7).**
4. What did Jezebel's solution reveal about her and her relationship with Ahab (21:8-10)? **Jezebel wrongly assumed that kings should use government power for personal gain. As this narrative has shown, *she* is the driving force behind Ahab's house (19:1-2), not passive Ahab. She was also contemptuous of her husband's unwillingness be a king like her father — one who "kicks butt and takes names."**  
 Is she an effective king's wife? A woman to be respected? Feared? To marry?  
 Why does she include the "proclaiming of a fast and making Naboth in a prominent place before the people" in her plan? **Jezebel's plan to have Naboth executed on false charges required a public setting.**
5. What kind of governors are the elders? **They are figure heads, with essentially no authority apart from the king (and queen). They have almost no regard for God's Law or for enforcing His justice.**  
 Who were the "worthless men?" **Unnamed godless paid thugs who are ever so willing to do whatever the boss says to do.**  
 How seriously do they view capital punishment (21:11-13)?  
 Is it fair to try a capital crime on the testimony of two witnesses (Dt 17:6; Lev 24:13-16)?  
 Without cross-examination? Without representing attorneys?
6. What does Jezebel's scheme reveal about the courts and justice in Israel? **They are the press office and the enforcement arm for the royal family, announcing whatever decision the queen (acting for the king) makes, and carrying out the decreed sentence.**  
 Was Naboth naive — should he have suspected? If the courts are known to be corrupt, was it wise for Naboth to think he could keep the vineyard? **Naboth was not naive, stupid or stubborn. He was faithful to the LORD, refusing to break God's laws and illegally sell/ give up the property that the LORD had given his ancestors.**
7. How could Ahab simply take a dead man's land? **The implication is that the king may confiscate the property of an executed criminal (Ahab made sure to have Naboth's sons murdered also, thus eliminating heirs, 2 Kgs 9:26), a custom that was known from non-Israelite writings, but for which there is NO provision in Israelite Law. Again, this serves to emphasize the lengths to which Ahab and Jezebel will go away from God's Law to introduce pagan ideas to Israel and to accomplish their own goals.**

What was he thinking? **“Since the LORD was with me against Ben-Hadad, He must not be bothered by my little indiscretions.”**

8. Who cut short Ahab’s sense of conquest again (21:17-22)? **Someone else familiar with self-pity, Elijah. Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!"**

What do Ahab and Elijah mean by “found you?” **To “find,” *mawtsaw*, means to catch, to befall, among other definitions. Ahab’s sin has finally caught up with him and he will soon pay for it with his life.**

What is the point of comparing Ahab’s fate to that of Jeroboam (14:10; 16:28-30) or Baasha (16:3-4,11-13)? **Both of these houses were completely wiped out, removed from future reign over Israel.**

What is the point of the prediction of (21:19), “In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood — yes, yours!” **Stark punishment and judgment because Ahab has “sold [himself] to do evil in the eyes of the LORD.” To have animals, especially unclean dogs and birds, devour one’s body instead of a proper burial was considered to be signs of God’s worst judgment and dishonor.**

How do you explain the apparent inconsistency in the story of Ahab’s death — he *doesn’t* die in Jezreel? **Ahab died in battle and was buried in Samaria (22:34-37), not outside Jezreel “in the place” where Naboth was stoned. When the dogs in Samaria licked up his blood washed from his chariot, the authors declared that to be according to God’s Word. The answer to this seeming inconsistency is that the prophecy was fulfilled in stages, first by Ahab’s death and then by the death of his son Joram, whose body *was* thrown into Naboth’s vineyard — which was also said to be according to the Word of the LORD (2 Kgs 9:25-26).**

9. What’s the surprise ending to this episode (21:27)? **Ahab was more wicked than any other king in Israel (21:25), but when he repented in deep humility, God took notice and reduced His punishment. The same LORD Who was merciful to Ahab wants to be merciful to you. This is His way!**

What impressions are you gathering of Ahab’s mental state: manic depressive; paranoid schizophrenic; chameleon; torn between loyalties; easily manipulated and pushed around; weak faith?

10. How is Ahab’s fate like and unlike David’s (21:28-29; 2 Sam 12:1-4)? **The calamities of both houses fell on the children, not the men. Ahab’s house was, however wiped out completely, while David’s was spared.**
11. Have you ever known someone(s) whose life resembled either Ahab’s or Jezebel’s? Did they love things and use people? Throw their weight around? Defame someone’s character? Exploit or oppress others? Do you know the rest of their story?
12. Does God postpone judgment for generations?
13. Do you trust the judicial system today? Ever felt abused like Naboth? Does it help to know God is aware of *all* the injustices of this life and some form of redress will take place, whether for the perps or if it is taken by Jesus?