

1 Kings 15:33-16:7

Fulfillment of the prophecy against the House of Jeroboam has been delayed until it has been made clear how differently the LORD treats the House of David, whose wicked kings do not bring the end of the dynasty, “because for David’s sake the LORD His God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem” (15:4). Now, however, everything turns out as Ahijah had prophesied (14) for the House of Jeroboam.

1. For what culinary “feat” (delight or disaster) will you be remembered?

2. Are you surprised to hear that Baasha lasted 24 years in power (15:27-30)? **Yes. Generally, that was not the norm for evil kings.**

Was he an improvement over the king he replaced? How so? **Not at all. “He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit” (15:34).**

Once more, just so we remember because we’re going to hear this refrain over and over ... what were “the ways of Jeroboam?” **The establishment of national religious centers designed to compete with and ultimately replace the True Worship Center, the Temple of YAHWEH, in Jerusalem is repeatedly referred to in *Kings* as the sin of Jeroboam (13:34, 14:16, 15:26,30, 16:2; 2 Kgs 3:3, 10:29, 13:2, 17:22). Tragically, every Northern king followed the path first blazed by Jeroboam. None of them tried to institute a real and thorough reform. Without determined opposition, the sin of Jeroboam brought about the deterioration and demise of Israel (2 Kgs 17:22-23).**



Baasha from "Guillaume Rouillé's *Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum*

3. Was it fair to punish Baasha, and punish him similarly, for destroying the house of Jeroboam (16:2-4; see 14:10-16; 15:29)? How so? **The fact that God had ordained the fall of Jeroboam’s house did not free Baasha of the moral responsibility for his actions, nor the spiritual responsibility for his unbelief. He committed murder when he killed Nadab and all of Jeroboam’s family.**

4. Any idea who Jehu was? **This is cool: he was the son of Hanani, the “seer” who had confronted Asa about his alliance with Ben-Hadad of Aram ... Asa threw Hanani into prison because he didn’t like what he had to say. Jehu would also bring God’s Word of condemnation to a king. His ministry continued for 50 years until the reign of Jehoshaphat of Judah (2 Chr 19:2, 20:34).**

5. “As for the other events of Baasha's reign, what he did and his *achievements* ...” (16:5). Is it possible for someone as wicked as Baasha to have “achievements”? **He may have been a successful military/ political leader, but for the purposes of the writer of *Kings*, these were not noteworthy. They had no *eternal* significance.**

6. In what ways has God “lifted you up from the dust”?
What responsibilities come with the new life?

7. Why do you suppose people are SO committed to “insanity” — trying the same thing that fails miserably over and over again (i.e. “Walk in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin”)?
8. Ever felt like Jehu, the bearer of bad news?
How can Good News shine through bad news?

1 Kings 16:8-14

9. What might Zimri have against Elah? **The fact that he was carousing at Tirzah while the army was laying siege to Gibbethon indicates he had little perception of his responsibilities as king. That would have been especially offensive to Zimri, the “commander of half the chariots.”**
Is power hazardous to your health? **The *worship* of power is hazardous to your health.**
10. How was Zimri’s rise to power like Baasha’s? **He too, “plotted” against and murdered a sitting king and all of his descendants. Like the fall of Jeroboam’s house, this fall of Baasha’s house was ordained by God: “In accordance with the word of the LORD spoken against Baasha through the prophet Jehu because of all the sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed and had caused Israel to commit, so that they provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols.” (16:12-13)**
Was Zimri part of Jehu’s prophecy (16:3)?
Why didn’t Elah suspect Zimri (9)? **Because Zimri was one of Elah’s trusted commanders.**
11. Why did Zimri execute the friends, as well as the family of Baasha (11)? **He executed everyone who was loyal to the former house, including friends, advisors, associates, family pets, plants, and ornamentals.**
12. Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? Are you a good judge of character? How so?
13. Can you succeed by being nice in a “dog-eat-dog” world?
Do you have to be violent to be safe in a violent world?

1 Kings 16:15-20

14. With what badge of notoriety would you like your name to be associated 3000 years in the future?
15. What positions did Zimri and Omri hold in the army (15-16; see 16:9)? **Omri, commander of the army, probably held a higher rank than Zimri, who was commander of “half of the chariots.”**
What did Zimri do during his week as king (16:11)? **He spent his time wiping out Baasha’s family and friends.**
16. Does Zimri overestimate his popularity with the military, or did he launch a coup knowing the military wouldn’t back him? **He probably overestimated his power and popularity. His action was referred to as “murder,” and the army immediately “proclaimed Omri king.”**
What did his response to Omri’s seige tell you (16:17-18)? **He knew he messed up.**

17. Is the writer fair with Zimri or sounding like broken record (16:19)? **Sometimes sin plays/ repeats generation after generation like a broken record.**

18. What opposition does Omri face (16:21)? **Tibni son of Ginath.**

How long is the power struggle (16:15,23)? **Four years. Tibni was killed.**

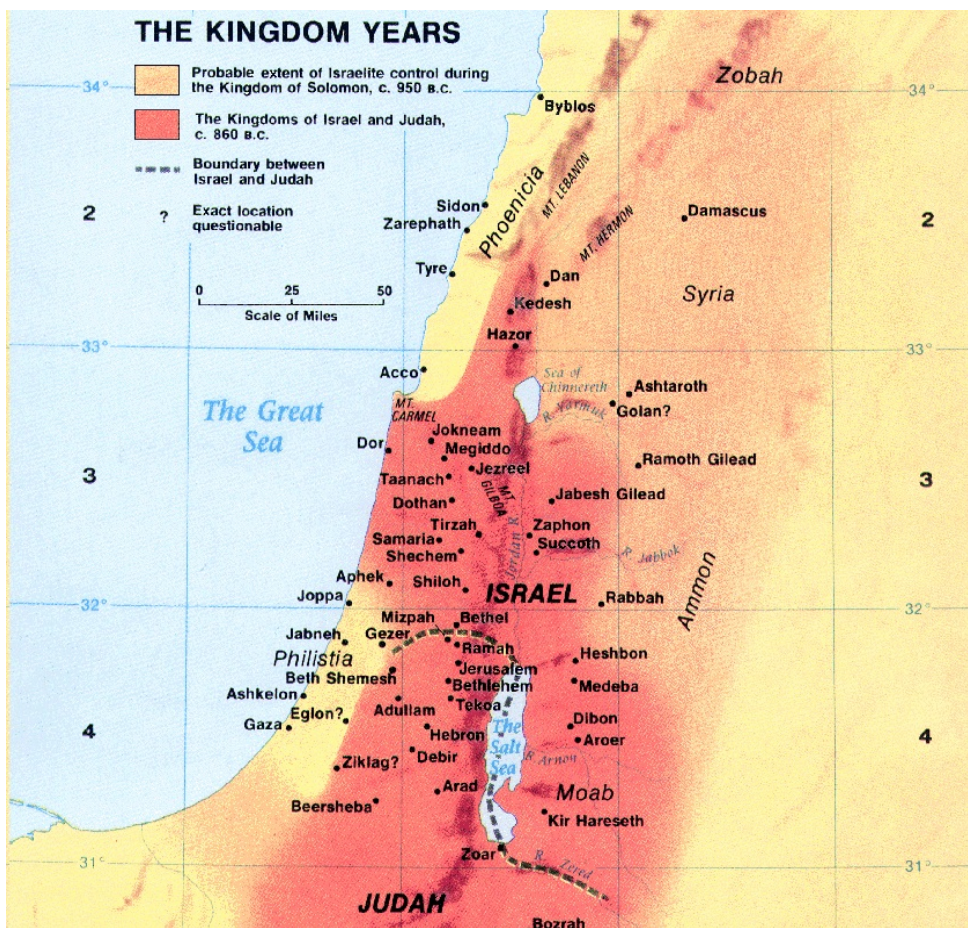
In what kind of shape is Tirzah? **Not too good. Omri had laid siege to it to remove Zimri, and Zimri had burned the royal palace down around him.**



Zimri's Revolt – Philips Galle, 1566

19. What would Omri look for in relocating the capital from Tirzah, building and naming a new one? What were some of his reasons for choosing the “hill owned by Shemer?”

Samaria was 7 miles northwest of Shechem and rose about 300 ft above the surrounding fertile valleys (referred to as a “wreath” in Isa 28:1). Because Omri bought it himself, he retained total control over the entire property and future city. The sight provided an ideal location for a nearly impregnable capital city for the northern kingdom (20:1-21), and because it was strategically located, Omri was able to control the north-south trade routes in the region. With the establishment of this royal city, the kings of Israel came to possess a royal citadel city like that of the Dravidic dynasty. Archeologists have discovered that Omri and Ahab (Omri’s son) also adorned it with magnificent structures to rival those Solomon had erected in Jerusalem. From this time on, the Northern Kingdom could be designated by the name of the royal city, just as the Southern Kingdom could be designated by its capital, Jerusalem.



20. Why do you think a narcissist like Omri would name his capital city after it’s original owner, Shemer? **It was likely part of the purchase agreement.**

21. “As for the other events of Omri's reign, what he did and the things he *achieved* ...” (16:27). Omri's military and political accomplishments were again *not* important to the writer of *Kings*, apart from his purchase and establishment of Samaria as capital. His house lasted over 100 years. A century and a half later (732 B.C.), Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria referred to Israel as the “House of Omri” in his *Annals*. Why is the writer of *Kings* so disinterested? **Because, “Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD and sinned more than all those before him. He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit, so that they provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols” (16:25-26).** Again, *Kings* was written for the Jewish people living in Canaan and in the diaspora after the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the independent nation, to explain why the LORD would allow such turmoil and tragedy to happen to His people: they rejected a faith relationship and “did evil in the eyes of the LORD.”



The people of Israel divided between Omri and Tibni
– Philips Galle, 1569

22. In addition to archeological discoveries at Samaria, there is another significant archeological find that documents the times of Omri's house. Have you heard of it, what is it, and what is its significance? **The Moabite Stone is a black basalt memorial stone discovered in Moab by a German missionary in 1868.** (Moab, founder of the Moabites, was a son of Lot by incest – Gen 19:30-38.) Nearly four feet high, it contained about 34 lines in an alphabet similar to Hebrew. The stone was probably erected about 850 B.C. by the Moabite King Mesha. It tells of Omri's success against Mesha, alluded to later in 2 *Kings* (2 Kings 3:4). King Mesha's story written on the stone celebrated his overthrow of the nation of Israel. This event apparently is recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27, although the *Biblical* account makes it clear that Israel was victorious in the battle. The passage shows clearly that Mesha honors his god Chemosh in terms similar to the *Old Testament* reverence for YAHWEH. The inhabitants of entire cities were apparently slaughtered to appease this deity, recalling the similar practices of the Israelites, especially as described in the *Book of Joshua*. Besides telling of his violent conquests, Mesha boasted on the stone of the building of cities (with Israelite forced labor) and the construction of cisterns, walls, gates, towers, a king's palace, and even a highway.



The brown fragments are pieces of the original; the smoother black material is from the 1870's reconstruction. On display at the Louvre.

The Moabite Stone has profound *Biblical* relevance. Historically, it confirms *Old Testament* accounts. It has a theological parallel to Israel's worship of one god. It is also valuable geographically because it mentions no less than 15 sites listed in the *Old Testament*. The writing on the stone also resembles Hebrew.

23. Is popularity important to you? How so?

24. Are you facing formidable opposition in any area of your life right now?
25. What do you think of the Christians who tried to kill Hitler?
How should Christians handle power struggles?

1 Kings 16:29-34

26. What was Ahab's biggest sin (Dt 7:1-4)? **He married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king/ priest over the Sidonians for 32 years, and began to worship their pagan god Baal, going so far as to "set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria." Baal is not strictly a name but a title (meaning "Lord") for the ancient Semitic god Hadad — Lord Hadad, Baal Hadad. He is depicted as a storm go; the fertility of the land was believed dependant upon him sending rain. He is the son of the high god El and husband of the goddess Anat. His enemies are Yam ("Sea") and Mot ("Death"). His weapons are thunder and lightning, and he is symbolically represented by the bull. The worship of Baal presented an attractive alternative or supplement to the worship of YAHWEH for many Israelites because their land was so dependant upon rain for crop production and survival.**



Jezebel and Ahab – Frederic Leighton, 1863

27. Was it Ahab's intention to replace the worship of YAHWEH with the worship of Baal? **Probably not, since he named his sons Ahaziah "the LORD grasps" and Joram "the LORD is exalted." He intended to worship both deities syncretistically.**
What is the significance of building Baal a temple and making an Asherah? **To elevate Baal worship to official status. Baal had his temple in Samaria as YAHWEH had His temple in Jerusalem.**
28. Why not rebuild Jericho (16:34; Jos 6:17-19,28)? **Because the LORD had declared the ruins of Jericho to be a perpetual reminder that Israel had received the land of Canaan from His hand as a gift of grace.**
29. What does Hiel do to his sons? **He gave them over to Joshua's curse: Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: "Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: "At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates" (Jos 6:26). It isn't known if Hiel's sons died of natural causes, accidents or were sacrificed — child sacrifice was a prominent feature among the polytheistic Canaanite religions of the day. If child sacrifice was involved, it would be a tragic horrific ironic turn on the victory of Israel over paganism.**
30. Is your competitive edge high, low, or medium? How do you channel it?
31. Would Jesus ask us to annihilate unbelievers (Mt 5:44-45)? Why the change?