



## Second Kings - Chapter Nine

### II 2 Kings 2:1-10:36 - Elisha and Israel (continues)

#### Summary of Chapter Nine

Elisha commanded another prophet to go to Jehu and anoint him king of Israel. Jehu was instructed that the Lord wanted him to purge the entire house of Ahab. After the prophet had left, Jehu told his men what was said and they declared him to be the new king.

Jehu set off for Jezreel where King Joram was convalescing, having been wounded by the Aramæans. King Ahaziah was visiting him there. As Jehu approached messengers were sent to find out if he came in peace but the messengers joined Jehu instead of returning. Therefore, Joram and Ahaziah both went out to meet Joram, who made it clear he had come to kill Joram. Joram turned his chariot around to flee but Jehu shot him through the heart with an arrow and his body was dumped on Naboth's land as was prophesied.

King Ahaziah fled the scene but was pursued on the orders of Jehu and was shot. He escaped as far as Megiddo but died there and was buried in Jerusalem.

Jehu then travelled to Jezreel where Jezebel waited in an upper room. Jehu ordered that she should be thrown down from the window and she died in the street. After eating and drinking, Jehu gave the order for the queen to be buried but the men found that most of her had been eaten by dogs thus fulfilling the word of the Lord given through Elijah.

#### II.k 2 Kings 9:1-10:17 - The End of Ahab's House

Of the players in the last act of Ahab's drama who were mentioned in 1 Kings 19:15-18, only Jehu has remained out of the picture. His story is now told. He is anointed king of Israel, kills King Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, before turning his attention on the wicked Queen Jezebel. Jehu then killed all the

remaining descendants of Ahab and those who served him. In addition, he killed forty relatives of King Ahaziah who travelled to Israel to visit Joram, Ahaziah and Jezebel. Thus the prophecy the Lord had given through Elijah was fulfilled.



Jehu Executes Judgement 841 BC

Elisha fulfilled the Lord's prophecy to Elijah by sending someone to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, one of Joram's commanders, as king of Israel. Jehu promptly headed for Jezreel, where King Joram or Jehoram of Israel was recovering from his battle wounds. When Joram and King Ahaziah of Judah went out in their chariots to meet Jehu, Jehu mortally wounded Joram with an arrow and chased Ahaziah to Beth-haggan, where he wounded him as well. It appears that Ahaziah then fled to Megiddo, where he died; refer also to 2 Chronicles 22:9 for a slightly different account of Ahaziah's death.

#### II.k.i 2 Kings 9:1-13 - Anointing of Jehu

A prophet is sent by Elisha to anoint Jehu as the new king of Israel. He gives the message in private and instructs him that he is to eliminate all the members of Ahab's family as well as the king. After the prophet leaves, Jehu's colleagues quiz him over what was said and on hearing the news they declare him to be king.

<sup>1</sup> Then the prophet Elisha called a member of the company of prophets and said to him, 'Gird up your loins; take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. <sup>2</sup> When you arrive, look there for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi; go in and get him to leave his companions, and take him into an inner chamber. <sup>3</sup> Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and say, "Thus says the Lord: I anoint you king over Israel." Then open the door and flee; do not linger.'

#### 2 Kings 9:1-3

Gird up your loins. This phrase, also used in 1 Kings 18:46 and 2 Kings 4:29, means to hitch up the outer garments to free up the legs, allowing the prophet to run faster. Speed will be important for this messenger from among the company of prophets, i.e. the prophetic communities over which Elisha presides; refer to the comment made on 2 Kings 2:3. The army is still at Ramoth-gilead, even though the king has withdrawn to Jezreel as detailed in 2 Kings 8:29.

Jewish tradition names this young prophet as Jonah, the son of Amittai. However, there is no scriptural or historical evidence to support this claim. In addition, Jonah lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) according to 2 Kings 14:25 and obediently prophesied to the people of Nineveh while Ashurbanipal III (746-722 BC) sat on the throne of Assyria. Therefore, it seems highly unlikely that he was the young prophet here.

Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. Jehu was described in 1 Kings 19:16 only as 'son of Nimshi', but Nimshi now turns out in fact to have been his grandfather rather than his father, who shares his name with a Judæan king, Jehoshaphat. This use of Hebrew *ben* to mean 'grandson' rather than 'son' certainly occurs elsewhere in the OT, e.g. Genesis 29:5 and 31:28, but it is unusual for the

grandfather to be referred to in citations of this particular kind; perhaps Nimshi was a particularly well-known person.

**Take this flask of oil.** Elijah had been commanded to **anoint** Jehu **king over Israel** in 1 Kings 19:16, but had apparently failed to do so. It is left to Elisha now to fulfil his mission. Anointing with oil was a common practice in the ancient Near East to mark various rites of passage, and in Israel it was closely associated with the enthronement of kings; refer to 1 Samuel 16:13. It appears to be bound up with the king's legitimacy and right to rule; to be the 'anointed of the Lord' is to be a person inviolable and sacrosanct, as indicated in: <<*He said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is the Lord's anointed.'* So David scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way>> (1 Samuel 24:6-7), and: <<*Abishai son of Zeruiah answered, 'Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?' But David said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should today become an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?'*>> (2 Samuel 19:21-22). The secret anointing that takes place here in an **inner chamber** is particularly reminiscent of Samuel's anointing of Saul in 1 Samuel 9:27-10:1.

Although God had instructed Elijah to anoint Jehu as king, the text does allow for an interpretation that he was instructed to ensure that Jehu would become king at the appropriate point in history and this he did by passing on the instruction to Elisha who, in turn, instructed another to undertake the task. Delegation is acceptable as long as the one who was first instructed does not absolve themselves of the responsibility for ensuring the task is appropriately carried out.

**I anoint you king over Israel.** Although the prophet states this he was only fulfilling the word given initially by the Lord to be implemented by his prophets. At this time, Joram the son of Ahab was the king of Israel; he is also called Jehoram in 2 Kings Chapter 3. This was the dynasty of Omri, but this dynasty was about to come to an end. The next king would be Jehu, who would begin a new albeit brief dynasty of his own.

Although Israel had abandoned God, God had not abandoned Israel. He still had the right to interfere among them. He would appoint and allow kings as he chose, either to bless an obedient Israel or to curse a disobedient nation, according to the terms of his covenant with them at Mount Sinai.

Jehu is mentioned twice in the cuneiform inscriptions on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. The Shalmaneser inscriptions also provide an objective date for this period in Hebrew chronology, i.e. 841 BC.

The reasons for Elisha's advice to the messenger to open the door and flee are not provided, but the reference to Jehu's reckless chariot driving in v.20 perhaps suggests that he has a reputation for rash behaviour and could be dangerous to the messenger, even though he brought him apparent good news. Had Jehu been a loyal servant of his king he should have at least had the prophet arrested and put on trial for treason.

<sup>4</sup> So the young man, the young prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. <sup>5</sup> He arrived while the commanders of the army were in council, and he announced, 'I have a message for you, commander.' 'For which one of us?' asked Jehu. 'For you, commander.' <sup>6</sup> So Jehu got up and went inside; the young man poured the oil on his head, saying to him, 'Thus says the Lord the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. <sup>7</sup> You shall strike down the house of your master Ahab, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord. <sup>8</sup> For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. <sup>9</sup> I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah. <sup>10</sup> The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury her.' Then he opened the door and fled.

### 2 Kings 9:4-10

He arrived while the commanders of the army were in council. Jehu was a commander in the army of Israel under King Ahab and his son King Joram. The term describing the others could have them as either his contemporaries or subordinate commanders. Jehu was previously announced as a future king of Israel, who would overthrow the dynasty of Omri and Ahab in 1 Kings 19:16-18. Yet that was a long time previous to this, and now he is officially anointed to show that the time of fulfilment of the previous prophecy was now at hand.

The young man poured the oil on his head. He was anointed, but was not to take the throne immediately. Both Saul and David were anointed as king over Israel before they actually possessed the throne. Elisha's insistence that the anointing ceremony be secret would allow the new king to choose the right time to raise the standard of his revolt without alerting Jehoram. The surprise would prevent the king from making preparations to oppose Jehu.

The anointing of the king over Israel was not an established custom or rule. It was done when the circumstances were out of the ordinary, or when there might be some question as to his title to the crown. In fact, Jehu is the only king of the northern kingdom of Israel to have been anointed perhaps to

indicate that he should follow in the Davidic tradition. Because Saul had been anointed by Samuel then David too was also anointed by Samuel in order to mark the Spirit of God endowing him for the task. There was probably the same intent here. As the account will go on to show, Jehu did some good work in removing Baal worship but he did not return to serving the Lord as he should have done but continued in the ways of Jeroboam.

You shall strike down the house of your master Ahab. The oracle actually delivered by the messenger is much longer than the one pronounced by Elisha in v.3. The essence of the message is given there, with its fuller form being delayed until later, presumably so that repetition should not unnecessarily hold up the narrative. For the same reason, only the essence of the message is later communicated by Jehu to his fellow officers, the details being subsumed under <<*This is just what he said to me: "Thus says the Lord, I anoint you king over Israel"*>> (v.12). Another possibility is that the young prophet came under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this moment and spoke this in spontaneous prophecy over Jehu.

The blood of my servants the prophets. Elijah did not explicitly state to Ahab in 1 Kings 21:21-24 that the Lord's action against Ahab's house would be partly a matter of vengeance for the blood of the prophets. This is implicit in 1 Kings 19:14-18, however, where God's response to Elijah's complaint about the murder of the prophets is precisely to send him to anoint Jehu among others.

For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. Clearly, God intended to use Jehu as a tool of judgement against the royal house of Ahab. The KJV translates this line as: <<*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*>> (v.8). The graphic and explicit language used by the KJV is the literal translation of the Hebrew word for male.

No one shall bury her. Similarly, this is not explicitly stated in 1 Kings 21:23, nor indeed is it said that <<*the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel*>> (v.37); but these things are implicit in the statement that dogs shall eat Jezebel in 1 Kings 21:23. It was considered a terrible thing in Israel not to be afforded a proper burial: <<*The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out against them one way and flee before them seven ways. You shall become an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your corpses shall be food for every bird of the air and animal of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away*>> (Deuteronomy 28:25-26), and: <<*They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall become like dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by*

*the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth*>> (Jeremiah 16:4).

<sup>11</sup> When Jehu came back to his master's officers, they said to him, 'Is everything all right? Why did that madman come to you?' He answered them, 'You know the sort and how they babble.'<sup>12</sup> They said, 'Liar! Come on, tell us!' So he said, 'This is just what he said to me: "Thus says the Lord, I anoint you king over Israel."' <sup>13</sup> Then hurriedly they all took their cloaks and spread them for him on the bare steps; and they blew the trumpet, and proclaimed, 'Jehu is king.'

### 2 Kings 9:11-13

Why did that madman come to you? You know the sort and how they babble. It was easy to dismiss this prophet as a crazed, babbling madman. It was easy for both Jehu and his associates to think of any God-honouring man as demented. Yet Jehu knew and the others soon did also that the man was a true prophet of God.

Then hurriedly they all took their cloaks and spread them for him on the bare steps. The act of spreading out the garment was one of recognition, loyalty and promise of support. This was also the reaction of the crowd to Jesus during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem: <<*As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road*>> (Luke 19:36). However, within a week a similar crowd were crying: <<*Crucify him!*>> (Mark 15:13b).

They blew the trumpet, and proclaimed, 'Jehu is king.' A moment before these men regarded the prophet as a madman; now they took his word seriously and proclaimed the reluctant Jehu as the king of Israel. This shows the sense of dissatisfaction they had with Joram. The people's eagerness to do this suggests that there was already unrest in the army because of Jehoram's lack of success in his military ventures.

### II.k.ii 2 Kings 9:14-26 - Joram of Israel Killed

Jehu immediately set out for Jezreel where Joram was convalescing. King Ahaziah of Judah was visiting him there. The pair of kings rode out to meet Jehu as he approached the city and when he realised that Jehu meant him harm, Joram turned his chariot around to flee but Jehu shot him in the back with an arrow and had his body dumped on the land that had been taken from Naboth by Ahab.

<sup>14</sup> Thus Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. Joram with all Israel had been on guard at Ramoth-gilead against King Hazael of Aram; <sup>15</sup> but King Joram had returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that the Arameans had inflicted on him, when he fought

against King Hazael of Aram. So Jehu said, 'If this is your wish, then let no one slip out of the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel.'<sup>16</sup> Then Jehu mounted his chariot and went to Jezreel, where Joram was lying ill. King Ahaziah of Judah had come down to visit Joram.

### 2 Kings 9:14-16

King Joram had returned to be healed in Jezreel. Chapter 8 told the account of how the king had been wounded in battle against the Aramæans and had withdrawn to Jezreel for convalescence.

If this is your wish, then let no one slip out of the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel. Jehu accepts the accolades of his other commanders that he is now the king but he does not want the news to reach King Joram or else he would have time to prepare for the attack that Jehu will make on his life.

King Ahaziah of Judah had come down to visit Joram. Again, this reminds the readers of the state of affairs in Jezreel following the battle at Ramoth-gilead. Both kings are linked to the house of Ahab. Having them both together in one place makes the task of removing them easier for Jehu.

<sup>17</sup> In Jezreel, the sentinel standing on the tower spied the company of Jehu arriving, and said, 'I see a company.' Joram said, 'Take a horseman; send him to meet them, and let him say, "Is it peace?"'<sup>18</sup> So the horseman went to meet him; he said, 'Thus says the king, "Is it peace?"' Jehu responded, 'What have you to do with peace? Fall in behind me.' The sentinel reported, saying, 'The messenger reached them, but he is not coming back.'<sup>19</sup> Then he sent out a second horseman, who came to them and said, 'Thus says the king, "Is it peace?"' Jehu answered, 'What have you to do with peace? Fall in behind me.'<sup>20</sup> Again the sentinel reported, 'He reached them, but he is not coming back. It looks like the driving of Jehu son of Nimshi; for he drives like a maniac.'

### 2 Kings 9:17-20

I see a company. As Jehu approaches with his army, it is not at first clear to those within the city what is happening. The sentinel initially sees only a company, literally 'a multitude'. Later, after the two messengers sent out to elicit information have failed to return, he deduces from the manner in which the lead chariot is being driven that Jehu is involved, for he drives like a maniac.

Christians should not drive in this manner or break speed limits, or indeed transgress any laws that do not prohibit them from serving God: <<Let every

*person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement>> (Romans 13:1-2). Those who choose to drive aggressively and transgress road traffic laws should at least remove the fish symbol from their cars so as not to advertise the fact that they claim to be followers of Christ: <<You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name>> (Exodus 20:7). The penalties can be more severe than points on a driving licence!*

Is it peace? Upon seeing the company of Jehu approaching, King Joram wanted to know if this mysterious group came in peace. As he waited to recover full strength in Jezreel, Joram was fundamentally insecure in his hold on the throne and easily suspected threats.

What have you to do with peace? Jehu meant that the soldier should not regard this as a time of peace but a time of conflict, a time to violently overthrow the throne of Joram and the dynasty he came from. When two messengers did not return but instead joined the company of Jehu, it showed that he enjoyed popular support among the troops of Israel, whereas King Joram did not.

<sup>21</sup> Joram said, 'Get ready.' And they got his chariot ready. Then King Joram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah set out, each in his chariot, and went to meet Jehu; they met him at the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. <sup>22</sup> When Joram saw Jehu, he said, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' He answered, 'What peace can there be, so long as the many whoredoms and sorceries of your mother Jezebel continue?' <sup>23</sup> Then Joram reined about and fled, saying to Ahaziah, 'Treason, Ahaziah!' <sup>24</sup> Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart; and he sank in his chariot.

## 2 Kings 9:21-24

They met him at the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. This was the land that Ahab and Jezebel had so wickedly obtained by murdering Naboth, the innocent owner of the land. On this very land which, as far as God was concerned, still belonged to Naboth, the dynasty of Omri would meet its judgement.

Is it peace, Jehu? The wicked, compromising Joram wanted peace with Jehu. None of the dynasty of Omri wanted peace with God; nor did Ahab and Jezebel want peace with Naboth. It seems improbable that Jehoram and Ahaziah would have left the safety of Jezreel to meet Jehu if there had been any doubt in their minds about his intentions but they wanted to find out immediately why he came in such haste. Jehoram has sent messengers, and has now gone out himself, to

discover what brings Jehu to Jezreel: has disaster overtaken Ramoth-gilead, and is this company all that remains of his army? The Hebrew *hashalom* has the sense, 'Is all well?' as in 2 Kings 4:26, 5:21 and 9:11.

Jehu's response is to ask how things can be well in a kingdom dominated by the Baal religion and the whoredoms of Joram's mother Jezebel. Whoredoms (Hebrew *zenunim*), also linked with sorceries (Hebrew *keshapim*) in Nahum 3:4, is a term associated with fertility religion in Hosea; refer to Hosea 1:2, 2:2, 2:4, 4:12 and 5:4. It is derived from the Hebrew verb *zanah* meaning prostitutes as in 1 Kings 3:16 and 22:38.

Clearly, Jehu took his recent anointing by one from the school of the prophets seriously. At this point, Jehu's mind was not filled with thoughts of political gain and royal glory. He did this for the honour of God, as a conscious executor of divine judgement against the house of Ahab. Although he did some good in his reign he was overall a wicked king who failed to restore the worship of God as the main focus of his people.

Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart. Despite the confusing variation of the names Jehoram and Joram, it is clear that Jehu killed the king of Israel with a powerful shot through his back while he fled in his chariot.

The Hebrew here is a technical archery term is used meaning literally 'filled his hand with the bow', that is, stretched the bow with his full strength. Jehu was an excellent marksman; but it was God that guided his hand and strengthened his arm: <<*I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand; but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him with the groans of one mortally wounded*>> (Ezekiel 30:24).

<sup>25</sup> Jehu said to his aide Bidkar, 'Lift him out, and throw him on the plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I rode side by side behind his father Ahab, how the Lord uttered this oracle against him: <sup>26</sup> "For the blood of Naboth and for the blood of his children that I saw yesterday, says the Lord, I swear I will repay you on this very plot of ground." Now therefore lift him out and throw him on the plot of ground, in accordance with the word of the Lord.'

### 2 Kings 9:25-26

The plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. This confirms that Jehu saw himself as a fulfiller of God's will in bringing judgement on the house of Ahab. Refer to the prophecy of Elijah to Ahab in 1 Kings 21:17-24, which precipitated that king's death, 1 Kings Chapter 22, especially v.38, and also the comment made

on 1 Kings 21:19 in circumstances similar to those of his son Jehoram, whose death was also by an arrow directed by the Lord (1 Kings 22:34).

### II.k.iii 2 Kings 9:27-29 - Ahaziah of Judah Killed

King Ahaziah of Judah had formed an alliance with Joram. More importantly, he was the son of <<*Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel*>> (2 Kings 8:26b), and therefore a direct descendant of Ahab. He, too, was destined to die on the orders of Jehu.

<sup>27</sup> When King Ahaziah of Judah saw this, he fled in the direction of Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him, saying, 'Shoot him also!' And they shot him in the chariot at the ascent to Gur, which is by Ibleam. Then he fled to Megiddo, and died there. <sup>28</sup> His officers carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his tomb with his ancestors in the city of David.

### 2 Kings 9:27-28

Jehu pursued him, saying, 'Shoot him also!' Jehu had no direct command or commission from God to bring judgement upon the king of Judah, but he did so anyway. Consciously or unconsciously, he was guided by God and he killed Ahaziah. After all, he was of the house of Ahab through his mother Athaliah.

Then he fled to Megiddo, and died there. Linked with Ahab in marriage and at one with him in religion, Ahaziah also shares in his fate. He is shot in the chariot, later to be transported dead to his capital city for burial. The shooting takes place near Ibleam, one of the cities that guarded access to and from the southern end of the Jezreel Valley, as Ahaziah flees south from Jezreel back towards Samaria; but after the attack he abruptly changes direction and heads northwest for Megiddo in the western part of the Jezreel Valley.

Megiddo was an important and strategic city in ancient times, controlling the main international highway running from Egypt to Damascus as it entered the valley. Israelite remains at Megiddo from the period of the divided monarchy are numerous. An imposing water tunnel, probably cut during Ahab's reign in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC, was discovered here. A large vertical shaft of 115 feet or 35m was cut into bedrock, and then a 200-foot or 61m horizontal shaft was dug to reach a spring outside the city. A series of buildings was discovered that probably served as either storehouses or stables in the time of Ahab.

Second Chronicles 22:1-9 also records the reign of Ahaziah and his inglorious end at the hands of Jehu. The reconciliation of the details of the death of Ahaziah between 2 Chronicles Chapter 22 and 2 Kings Chapter 9 is

complicated, but definitely possible. Adam Clarke among other commentators carefully works out the details.

His officers carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his tomb with his ancestors in the city of David. When Ahaziah was killed in battle, they gave him a dignified burial not for his own sake, but only because his ancestor Jehoshaphat was a godly man: <<*He searched for Ahaziah, who was captured while hiding in Samaria and was brought to Jehu, and put to death. They buried him, for they said, 'He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart.'* And the house of Ahaziah had no one able to rule the kingdom>> (2 Chronicles 22:9).

<sup>29</sup> In the eleventh year of Joram son of Ahab, Ahaziah began to reign over Judah.

### 2 Kings 9:29

In the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab. Second Kings 8:25 states it was the twelfth year. Accession dates could be reckoned in different ways, particularly in terms of the way that part-years were handled, resulting in such apparent discrepancies. The new information is given here to clarify how it could be that both men died at the same time if Jehoram reigned for 12 years according to 2 Kings 3:1, yet Ahaziah, who came to the throne in Jehoram's twelfth year, reigned for one year. The fragmentary 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC Tell Dan inscription probably alludes to the deaths of these same kings, although the Aramæan king responsible for the inscription there claims responsibility for the deaths of the Judæan and Israelite kings mentioned – a good example of the oversimplification and hyperbole that is typical of victory monuments in the ancient Near East. Perhaps Hazael regarded Jehu as a vassal, and felt justified in claiming Jehu's feats as his own.

### II.k.iv 2 Kings 9:30-37 - Jezebel's Violent Death

Jehu now turned his attention on Ahab's wicked widow Jezebel. On his arrival in Jezreel, Jehu saw Jezebel in an upstairs widow and called to the men serving her to cast her down if they supported him. They threw her from the window and she died. Following a meal, Jehu ordered that Jezebel should be buried but the men returned to say that Jezebel had been almost completely consumed by dogs as was prophesied by Elijah.

<sup>30</sup> When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; she painted her eyes, and adorned her head, and looked out of the window.

## 2 Kings 9:30

She painted her eyes and adorned her head. This could mean only that Jezebel met her end proudly, dressed up as a queen should be. Her posture, however, echoes the ‘woman in the window’ motif found on carved ivory plaques from various ancient Near Eastern sites (refer to the comment made on 2 Samuel 6:16-19), which may represent the goddess Astarte, one of the wives of Baal; so perhaps Jezebel is being represented as the very incarnation of the religion that she brought into Israel from Sidon.

**Doubtless, Jezebel’s adornment was intended to create a queenly appearance in the face of impending death and served as a royal burial preparation.**

<sup>31</sup> As Jehu entered the gate, she said, ‘Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?’

## 2 Kings 9:31

Is it peace is a question intricately tied to the demise of Ahab and his dynasty; refer to the comments made on vv.18-19 and v.22, and earlier on 1 Kings 22:28. Jezebel asks, sarcastically, whether ‘all is well’, knowing that all is far from well, and she taunts Jehu as one who is unlikely to survive his own revolution. Zimri’s reign was a ‘seven-day wonder’; refer to 1 Kings 16:8-20.

Jezebel called Jehu Zimri after the man who assassinated King Baasha of Israel as recorded in 1 Kings 16:9-12, when Zimri was also the servant of Baasha, i.e. a commander in his army. It was her way of calling Jehu a despicable rebel. It was also an implied threat, because the brief reign of Zimri was ended by Omri, who was the father of Ahab and the father-in-law of this same Jezebel. By implication, Jezebel said, “The dynasty of Omri will defeat you just like it defeated Zimri.”

<sup>32</sup> He looked up to the window and said, ‘Who is on my side? Who?’ Two or three eunuchs looked out at him.

## 2 Kings 9:32

Who is on my side? Who? The eunuchs at the window probably worked for Jezebel but they quickly responded to Jehu’s request for support. They probably had long despised this wicked, pagan queen.

It was common practice in the ancient world for the king to have a harem, such as Solomon: <<**Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart**>> (1 Kings 11:3), and for the harem to be provided with guards. These guards were typically eunuchs, i.e. castrated males, so that the king could be sure that the males close to his women were not capable of sexual relations with them, for example: <<**In the evening**

*she went in; then in the morning she came back to the second harem in the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines; she did not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name*>> (Esther 2:14). Eunuchs also performed an important role in the official hierarchy of the ancient Near East more generally. In neo-Assyrian sources, for example, they are attested at the royal court, in the army, in the bureaucracy, and in the provincial administration. They functioned, among many other roles, as the king's personal attendants, cooks, palace guards, scribes, and ambassadors.

<sup>33</sup> He said, 'Throw her down.' So they threw her down; some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses, which trampled on her.

<sup>34</sup> Then he went in and ate and drank; he said, 'See to that cursed woman and bury her; for she is a king's daughter.' <sup>35</sup> But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. <sup>36</sup> When they came back and told him, he said, 'This is the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, "In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; <sup>37</sup> the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel.'"

### 2 Kings 9:33-37

So they threw her down; some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses, which trampled on her. In ancient near eastern cultures, this desecration of the dead body was a fate worse than death. Yet Jehu was completely untroubled at the ugly end of Jezebel; he ate and drank after trampling over her dead body and passing over the pavement splattered with her blood.

The word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Elijah. Using the language of covenant curses, Elijah earlier prophesied the 'cutting off' of all the males of Ahab's house (1 Kings 21:21-22) as well as the gruesome death of Jezebel in 1 Kings 21:23.

The dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel. The exposure of Jezebel's corpse to devouring dogs meant disgrace since burial was now impossible. Now that Jezebel is dead, Jehu turns his attention to Ahab's sons; refer to the comment made on 2 Kings 10:1. The dogs here are not domesticated pets but wild scavengers.

So that no one can say, This is Jezebel. During her lifetime many people had taken note of Jezebel and had followed her lead. Her death, with no remains as such to be buried, would ensure there would be no shrine for her followers to flock to as is so often the case following the death of such a person.

God's promise against Jezebel and the house of Ahab was exactly and righteously fulfilled. Yet as the house of Jehu became corrupt, it also would face judgement. The prophet speaks of judgement to come upon the house of Jehu: <<*And the Lord said to him, 'Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel'*>> (Hosea 1:4).