

## Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-38—I Kings 16-18

In our last lesson, Asa, king of Judah, had died after reigning 41 years. The last king of Israel that we looked at was Baasha who died probably in the 26<sup>th</sup> year of Asa's reign, so we need to back up and bring ourselves up to date with the Israel kings.

Elah, son of Baasha took his father's throne when Baasha died. He reigned 2 years in Israel. His servant, Zimri, captain of half of the king's chariots, conspired against him, and killed him and reigned in his stead. Zimri then killed all of the male descendants of Baasha. This fulfilled a prophecy by Jehu the prophet that God said he would destroy all the house of Baasha because he followed after the ways of Jeroboam.

The army, which was pretty representative of the people, was encamped against Gibbethon which belonged to the Philistines and Zimri was at Tirzah. When the people at Gibbethon heard what Zimri had done, they then went up against Tirzah and besieged it. When Zimri realized that the city was going to fall to Omri, captain of the host, he went into the king's house and set it on fire around him and perished in the fire after being king for only 7 days.

This left the people of Israel divided with half of the people following Omri and the other half following a man named Tibni. This went on for about four years without a clear leader as king. However, the people who supported Omri prevailed against the people supporting Tibni and when Tibni died, Omri became the king and he reigned 6 to 7 years over all Israel. While king he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer and built on the hill and called the name of the city he built Samaria which then became the capital of Israel. We're told that Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD worse than any of the kings before him. Then we're told that he slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria and that his son Ahab reigned in his stead.

Something that is not said in our account here in I Kings is referred to in the prophet Micah 6:16, **"For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people."** The prophet Micah is telling Israel what God is going to do to them because of their sin. But the point here is that Omri apparently established his own law system. This appears to be confirmed by secular history, but it had the effect among the Assyrians to name these Israelites after Omri.

There are a couple of stones with writing on them that have been found that confirm this, the Black Obelisk of Shalmanezar and the Moabite Stone. These were both found at different locations in the late 1800's. On the Black Obelisk of Shalmanezar, King Shalmanezar of Assyria lists the various conquests that he made. Instead of calling Israel Israel, he calls them beth Ghomri, or the house of Omri. There are several variations of this name which have been applied to these people during and after their captivity such as Gomer, Kumri and Gimirra. The "civil war", or the 4 years that Israel was divided with Omri ruling half and Tibni ruling half is the time when the Obelisk was erected. When Omri won out and was named king over all of Israel, the Assyrians started calling the people "beth Ghomri."

The Moabite Stone is also a stone in which the king of Moab lists the history of Moab and discusses Omri overcoming Moab and putting that kingdom to tribute and then the king indicates that he rebelled against Israel after Ahab's death and tells that he cast off the tribute.

This information is important as it helps us understand the true identity of a people in different groups by different names who migrated from the area of the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains area that have since been known as the Caucasian race that ultimately occupied western Europe and the British Isles from where they then launched out to new lands in North America, Australia, South Africa and other places around the globe.

Also, I might point out that when we get to the book of Hosea, God instructed Hosea to marry a harlot by the name of Gomer and then prophesy through the names of their children. It is no accident that the harlot's name was Gomer and in Hosea's prophecies, she represents Israel. I never cease to be amazed at how God works things out.

(Read I Kings 16:29-33) Ahab played a very important part in the history of both Israel and Judah. It is during his reign that we have a prophet enter the picture that we need to study carefully. But before we do, let's get a little better acquainted with Ahab and his wife Jezebel

Before we do this, (Read I Kings 16:34 and then read Joshua 6:26.) The phrase in I Kings 16:34, **"he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn"** means he laid the foundation at the cost of the life of Abiram his firstborn. The same applies to **"he set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub."** We see the curse that Joshua put on anyone rebuilding the city of Jericho come to pass.

Now to Ahab and Jezebel, my "New Bible Dictionary" says in part the following about Jezebel. *"The daughter of Ethbaal, priest-king of Tyre and Sidon. She was married to Ahab, to ratify an alliance between Tyre and Israel, to which Omri, Ahab's father, sought to offset the hostility of Damascus toward Israel (c.880 BC). Provision was made for her to continue to worship her native god Baal in Samaria, her new home.*

*"She had a strong, domineering character, and was self-willed and forceful. A fanatical devotee of Melqart, the Tyrian Baal, her staff numbered four hundred and fifty of his prophets, and four hundred prophets of the goddess Asherah, by the time Ahab was king. She clamoured for her god to have at least equal rights with Yahweh, God of Israel. This brought her into conflict with the prophet Elijah."*

In chapter 5 of his book, "The Seven Churches" Dr. Stephen Jones had the following to say about Jezebel and her father Ethbaal: *"According to historians, Ethbaal was the high priest of Baal who had overthrown king Pheles of Tyre and replaced him as king-priest. Thus, Ethbaal was more than a mere follower of Baal. As high priest of the religion, he represented Baal on earth. As king, he ruled with temporal power as well. Hence, his name was actually a title: Eth-baal, one who rules with Baal, or by his authority, or in place of Baal. The name Ethbaal means "with, near, or together with Baal."*

*"In Roman terminology, he would be the Vicar of Baal. The kingdom of Tyre in the days of Jezebel was a religious kingdom of Baal on earth, and its high priest ruled supreme as king. This sheds much light on Ezekiel 28, which compares the beautiful city of Tyre to the Garden of Eden and compares the prince of Tyre (Ethbaal) to the tempter in Eden. In effect, in those days Tyre manifested the anti-kingdom of God, ruled by Ethbaal, an antichrist type.*

*"The prefix "anti-" means "in place of." For example, Matt. 2:22 tells us that Archelaus reigned in Judea anti, or in place of, his father Herod. In like manner, Ethbaal ruled Tyre in place of Baal himself. Likewise, because Ahab had married Jezebel, Ethbaal's laws governed Israel in place of the laws of God. Even as the serpent in Eden successfully tempted Adam to sin, so also did Ethbaal tempt Ahab to sin in marrying Jezebel.....*

*“This set the stage for an era in which Ethbaal—through his daughter Jezebel—was the real power behind Israel's monarchy. Ahab was a mere king; Ethbaal was a king of kings to all who worshipped Baal. In Israel, the laws of Baal replaced the laws of God as given by Moses, and it became unlawful to think differently. Jezebel then persecuted the true prophets of God and the Remnant of Grace during the days of Elijah (1 Kings 18:13).”*

Hopefully this will help us understand a little better some of what happens as we continue in the story of this king of Israel and his wife. (Read I Kings 17:1-7) It appears that God and Elijah both expected Ahab to believe Elijah. Therefore, Elijah had to flee for his life and stay hidden from Ahab during the duration of this famine. Obviously God took an active part in hiding Elijah and taking care of him while he is in hiding.

(Read I Kings 17:8-16) Keep in mind that Zidon is the kingdom of Ethbaal and it also is being affected by the drought that Elijah, through God, has brought on Israel. Tyre is a city and Zidon is a country. So Elijah is actually hiding in the camp of the enemy so to speak. Note that the widow to whom God sent Elijah apparently recognized him as an Israelite and refers to God as his God, not her God.

(Read I Kings 17:17-24) Even though the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil had not failed, though both were virtually empty when Elijah arrived, when the woman's son died, she apparently forgot this when she confronted Elijah. However, when Elijah returned her son to her alive, she acknowledged that he truly was a man of God.

The drought lasted for 3 years before God told Elijah to go to Ahab to tell him that God would send rain again. (Read I Kings 18:1-6) This gives us a little bit of information as to how bad the drought was both from the standpoint of Obadiah being sent to try to find grass and water to save the lives of the horses and mules and from the standpoint that the prophets of the LORD had to be hidden and fed by Obadiah in secret.

(Read I Kings 18:7-16) I can imagine what Obadiah was thinking when Elijah told him to go tell Ahab that Elijah was here. His first thoughts were “Are you crazy?” Then he explained that Ahab had searched for Elijah not only in Israel but in the surrounding countries as well requiring an oath from everyone that they had not seen Elijah. If Obadiah was to go tell Ahab that Elijah was here and the Spirit of the LORD were to carry Elijah away so that he wasn't where Obadiah said he would be, he knew that his life was over. Elijah assures him that he would be there when Ahab came, so Obadiah did as Elijah asked.

(Read I Kings 18:17-20) Elijah makes it clear to Ahab that Ahab and his father, Omri, are responsible for the drought that God has brought on the land because of their forsaking the laws of God and have instead been following Baal. Then Elijah sets the stage for the challenge between the true God of Israel and Jezebel and her priests of Baal and Asherah.

(Read I Kings 18:21-40) This doesn't need much commentary. This was a very forceful demonstration of the power of God. I find it interesting that God manifested Himself as fire as He accepted Elijah's sacrifice. It had to be quite a fire to devour not only the sacrifice but the altar of twelve stones as well. Elijah probably did not slay the prophets of Baal himself. Dr. Bullinger says of the word “slew”, “Hebrew idiom, caused them to be slain.”

As a side note, it is important that we understand that God is the God that is often manifested as fire, not some imaginary spiritual being that is often referred to as Satan or the devil. To me this is a

very powerful demonstration of God in fire. When we read of the Lake of Fire in the book of Revelation, if we understand that God manifests Himself as fire, this should then give us some clue as to what the Lake of Fire symbolizes. Then when we read of the fiery law in Deut. 33:2, this should also give us a clue if we but want to understand.

(Read I Kings 18:41-46) Up to this point, there apparently was no sign of rain. However, Elijah knew it was coming and had his servant tell him when he saw the first sign of a cloud. Mt. Carmel is near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, so he was expecting the storm to come from the Sea. When he saw the first sign of a cloud, he told Elijah and Elijah told Ahab to harness his chariot and get down from the mountain before the rain came. Then we're told that Ahab rode in his chariot to Jezereel and that Elijah girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab. Dr. Bullinger offers this explanation for the word "ran" in verse 46: "For over twenty miles Elijah acted as the royal "runner" across the great plain of Esdraelon. Possibly none at hand in the king's hasty departure."

In chapter 19 Ahab tells Jezebel what happened. We then see what she was really like. We'll take up our next lesson with chapter 19. JRL