

Jezebel

1 Kings 12-16

Solomon's son, Rehoboam rules after Solomon. He rejects the advice of Solomon's advisors, becoming a cruel king and refusing to listen to the people. Therefore, Israel breaks away from Judah and becomes its own kingdom under Jeroboam, former servant to Solomon.

Jeroboam has a theological problem as King of Israel, namely that the Temple is in Jerusalem and not in his kingdom. Therefore, he creates golden calves to be the gods of his kingdom, creating new cultic centers in Dan and Bet El. God gets really mad and promises to end Jeroboam's house and exile those who live in Israel.

This does not happen immediately, rather the kings who are descendants of Jeroboam in Israel and the kings who are descendants of Solomon in Judah are constantly fighting. Israel descends into chaos as army commanders keep killing the kings and becoming kings themselves.

Everyone does evil in the eyes of God.

מלכים א פרק טז

1 Kings 16

29. And Ahab, son of Omri, became King over Israel in the 38th year that Asa was King of Judah. And Ahab, son of Omri, was King over Israel in Samaria for 22 years.

30. And Ahab, son of Omri, did evil in the eyes of YHWH, more than everyone (who had come) before him.

31. And it was a trivial thing for him to go after the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat. And he took a wife, Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, King of Sidon. And he went and he worshipped the Baal, and he bowed low to him.

32. And he raised up an altar to Baal, the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.

33. And Ahab made the Ashtora, and Ahab continued to do what angered YHWH, Elohim of Israel, more than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

כט וְאַחְזָב בֶּן־עֲמֹרִי מֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּשָׁנַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנָה לְאַסָּא מֶלֶךְ
יְהוּדָה וַיִּמְלֹךְ אַחְזָב בֶּן־עֲמֹרִי עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּשָׁמְרוֹן עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁתַּיִם שָׁנָה:
ל וַיַּעַשׂ אַחְזָב בֶּן־עֲמֹרִי הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר לִפְנָיו:
לא וַיְהִי הַנִּקָּל לְכָתּוֹ בַּחֲטָאוֹת יִרְבָּעָם
בֶּן־נִבְט וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה אֶת־אֵיזָבֵל
בַּת־אֶתְבָּעַל מֶלֶךְ צִידוֹנִים וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעֲבֹד
אֶת־הַפֶּעַל וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ:
לב וַיִּקַּם מִזְבֵּחַ לַפֶּעַל בֵּית הַפֶּעַל אֲשֶׁר
בָּנָה בְּשָׁמְרוֹן:
לג וַיַּעַשׂ אַחְזָב אֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרָה וַיּוֹסֶף אַחְזָב
לַעֲשׂוֹת לְהַכְעִיס אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִכָּל מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לִפְנָיו:

1 Kings 17-19

Elijah the prophet bursts onto the scene and declares to Ahab that there will be a severe drought in the land. God provides for Elijah while the land suffers in the drought. Eventually, God sends Elijah to lift the drought. Elijah does this by having a showdown between Ahab and Jezebel's (Ahab's wife) prophets, who are prophets of Baal and Asherah, and himself, as a prophet of God. Things are especially sensitive because Jezebel had previously had prophets of Elijah's God killed. Elijah wins the contest, kills off the prophets of Baal, and rain returns to the land. When Jezebel hears, she threatens Elijah's life and he flees to sulk in the desert.

מלכים א פרק כא

1 Kings 21

1. And it was after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard that is in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab, King of Samaria. 2. And Ahab spoke to Naboth saying, "Please give me your vineyard so that it may be for me a vegetable garden, because it is close to my house. And let me give you in place of it a better vineyard. (Or) if it is good in your eyes, let me give you silver in its price.	א וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כָּרַם הָיָה לְנָבוֹת הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִי אֲשֶׁר בְּיִזְרְעֵאל אֶצְל הַיֶּכֶל אַחְזָב מֶלֶךְ שְׁמָרוֹן: ב וַיִּדְבֹּר אַחְזָב אֶל־נָבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הֲתִנֶּה לִּי אֶת־כַּרְמִי וַיְהִי־לִי לְגֻן־יֶרֶק כִּי הוּא קָרוֹב אֶצְל בֵּיתִי וְאֶתְנָה לְךָ תַּחֲתָיו כָּרַם טוֹב מִמֶּנּוּ אִם טוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶתְנָה־לְךָ כֶּסֶף מִתִּיר זֶה:
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1. Why does Ahab say he wants Naboth's vineyard? What reasons might he have for wanting a vegetable garden?
2. How does Ahab relate to Naboth? What sort of language does he use? He is a king. What sort of activities does he seem to be engaged in ?
3. How does the portrait of the king taking land here compare to the portrait of a king taking land that Samuel paints in 1 Samuel 8:14? Keep that portrait in mind as you continue to read.

3. And Naboth said to Ahab, "YHWH himself forbid that I should give the inheritance of my ancestors to you." 4. And Ahab came to his house, resentful and dejected/vexed about the thing that Naboth the Jezreelite said to him when he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors."	ג וַיֹּאמֶר נָבוֹת אֶל־אַחְזָב חֲלִילָה לִּי מִיְהוָה מִתַּתִּי אֶת־גִּנְחַלְת אֲבוֹתַי לָךְ ד וַיָּבֹא אַחְזָב אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ סָר וְזָעַף עַל־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו נָבוֹת הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִי וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא־אֶתֶּן לְךָ אֶת־גִּנְחַלְת
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And he laid down on his bed and he turned away his face and he did not eat bread/anything.

אָבוֹתַי וַיִּשְׁכַּב עַל־מִטָּתוֹ וַיִּסָּב אֶת־פָּנָיו
וְלֹא־אָכַל לֶחֶם::

1. How does Naboth understand Ahab's request? What is his reason for refusing? What might "inheritance of my ancestors" refer to? Look at Leviticus 25:23-24 and Deuteronomy 19:14 for hints.
2. How does Naboth address Ahab? Does he treat Ahab like a king? How is Ahab referred to by the narrator?
3. How does Ahab understand Naboth's refusal? Which words of his does he repeat and which does he leave out? What might you learn from that?

5. And Jezebel, his wife, came to him and she spoke to him, "What is this that your spirit is turned away and you are not eating bread?"
6. And he spoke to her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, and I said to him, 'Please give me your vineyard for money or if you want let me give a vineyard instead of it.' And he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

ה וַתָּבֹא אֵלָיו אִיזָבֵל אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלָיו
מִה־זֶּה רִוּחַךְ סָרָה וְאַיִנְךָ אֹכֵל לֶחֶם:
ו וַיַּדְבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ כִּי־אָדַבַּר אֶל־נָבוֹת
הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִי וָאָמַר לוֹ תִּנֶּה־לִּי אֶת־כַּרְמִי
בְּכֶסֶף אֹו אִם־חֶפֶץ אַתָּה אֶתְּנֶה־לִּי כָרֶם
תַּחֲתָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא־אֶתֶּן לְךָ אֶת־כַּרְמִי:

1. How might you describe Jezebel and Ahab's relationship here? How does it compare to other royal couples you have seen? How is Jezebel characterized in these verses?
2. What changes in Ahab's report of what happened? How is the meaning different from the original speech? Why might he change the report? Think of a few possible reasons.

7. And Jezebel, his wife, said to him, "You, yourself, now will do kingship over Israel. Get up, eat bread, and your heart will be better. I, myself, will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.
8. And she wrote letters in the name of Ahab, and she sealed them with his seal, and she sent letters to the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, the ones dwelling with Naboth.

ז וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִיזָבֵל אִשְׁתּוֹ אַתָּה עַתָּה
תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלוּכָה עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל קוּם אֲכַל־לֶחֶם
וַיֵּטֵב לִבָּךְ אֲנִי אֶתֶּן לְךָ אֶת־כַּרְם נָבוֹת
הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִי:
ח וַתִּכְתֹּב סְפָרִים בְּשֵׁם אַחָאָב וַתְּחַתֶּם
בְּחַתְמֹו וַתִּשְׁלַח הַסְּפָרִים (סְפָרִים)
אֶל־הַזִּקְנִים וְאֶל־הַחֹרִים אֲשֶׁר בְּעִירוֹ
הַיֹּשְׁבִים אֶת־נָבוֹת:

1. What is kingship here? What does Jezebel demand of Ahab? What might “do kingship” mean? What does she do herself? How might you describe the roles of each of them here?

9. And she wrote letters, saying, “Proclaim a fast and sit Naboth at the head of the nation. And sit two men, sons of worthlessness, across from him and let them bear witness against him, saying, ‘You have blessed (cursed!) Elohim and King.’ And take him out and stone him so that he dies.”	ט וּתְכַתֵּב בְּסִפְרִים לְאֶמֶר קְרְאוּ-צוֹם וְהָשִׁיבוּ אֶת-נָבוֹת בְּרֹאשׁ הָעָם: י וְהוֹשִׁיבוּ שְׁנֵי אָנָשִׁים בְּנֵי-בְלִיעַל נֶגְדוֹ וַיַּעֲדוּהוּ לְאֶמֶר בִּרְכָה אֱלֹהִים וּמֶלֶךְ וְהוֹצִיָּאֵהוּ וְסָקְלֵהוּ וַיָּמָת:
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1. Stage the described ceremony. What’s the mood? Where are people? What might the ceremony resemble?
2. What sort of solution to the problem is this? Why might Jezebel involve the elders and the nobles? Why might she have Naboth accused of this particular thing? What might she be trying to achieve beyond the acquisition of the vineyard?

11. And the men of the city, the elders and the nobles that were dwelling in his city, did according to what Jezebel has sent to them, according to what was written in the letters that she sent to them. 12. They proclaimed a fast and they sat Naboth at the head of the nation. 13. And two men, sons of worthlessness, came, and they sat across from him, and they bore witness against him: the men of worthlessness against Naboth in front of the nation, saying, “Naboth has blessed (cursed) Elohim and King.” And they took him out, outside of the city, and they stoned him with stones, and he died. 14. And they sent to Jezebel saying, “Naboth has been stoned and he is dead.”	יא וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אָנָשִׁי עִירֹו הַזְּקֵנִים וְהַחֲרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיְשָׁבִים בְּעִירֹו כְּאֲשֶׁר שְׁלָחָה אֲלֵיהֶם אִיזָבֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר כָּתוּב בְּסִפְרִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלָחָה אֲלֵיהֶם: יב קְרְאוּ צוֹם וְהָשִׁיבוּ אֶת-נָבוֹת בְּרֹאשׁ הָעָם: יג וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הָאָנָשִׁים בְּנֵי-בְלִיעַל וַיֵּשְׁבוּ נֶגְדוֹ וַיַּעֲדוּהוּ אָנָשִׁי הַבְּלִיעַל אֶת-נָבוֹת נֶגְדַּ הָעָם לְאֶמֶר בִּרְךָ נָבוֹת אֱלֹהִים וּמֶלֶךְ וַיִּצְאֵהוּ מִחוּץ לָעִיר וַיִּסָּקְלֵהוּ בָאֲבָנִים וַיָּמָת: יד וַיִּשְׁלָחוּ אֶל-אִיזָבֵל לְאֶמֶר סָקַל נָבוֹת וַיָּמָת:
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1. How does this description of their actions compare with what Jezebel had told them to do? Which words change? How might you explain the differences?

2. The people of the city send their report to Jezebel and not to Ahab, even though Jezebel had used Ahab's seal on the letter. How might they know to report to Jezebel? What might that say about her role in ruling? What sort of ruler is she?
3. What sort of thing has happened here? How is the role of a king perverted here? What is the role of justice in this story? Where else have you seen sons of worthlessness and what was their role? Why might they reappear here?

15. And when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and he was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of (inherit) the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he had refused to give to you for money, because Naboth is not living, because he is dead." 16. And when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab got up to go down the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it.	וַיְהִי כַשְׁמֶעַ אֵיזָבֵל כִּי־סָקַל נָבוֹת וַיָּמָת וְתֹאמַר אֵיזָבֵל אֶל־אֲחָאָב קוּם רִשׁ אֶת־כַּרְם ׀ נָבוֹת הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִי אֲשֶׁר מָאֵן לְהַתִּי־לֹךְ בְּכֶסֶף כִּי אֵין נָבוֹת הֵי כַּי־מָת: וַיְהִי כַשְׁמֶעַ אֲחָאָב כִּי מָת נָבוֹת וַיָּקָם אֲחָאָב לָרֶדֶת אֶל־כַּרְם נָבוֹת הַיִּזְרְעֵאלִי לְרִשְׁתּוֹ:
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1. How does Jezebel address Ahab? What might her tone be? In what order does she choose to present information? How do her words convey or obscure reality?
2. At what point does Ahab take action? Why might this be the point? What might it say about his complicity in this affair? How is he characterized here?

17. And the word of YHWH was upon Elijah the Tishabite saying, 18. "Get up and go down to Ahab, King of Israel, in Samaria. Behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, to which he went down there to take possession of it. 19. And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus said YHWH, "Have you murdered and also taken possession?" And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus said YHWH, "In the place in which the dogs are lapping up the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lap up your blood, yes yours.'"	יְיָ וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אֵלִיהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי לֵאמֹר: יֵה קוּם רֵד לְקִרְיַת אֲחָאָב מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׂמְרוֹן הִנֵּה בְּכַרְם נָבוֹת אֲשֶׁר־יָרַד שָׁם לְרִשְׁתּוֹ: יִשְׁ וּדְבַרְתָּ אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַרְצַחְתָּ וְגַם־יִגְרַשְׁתָּ וּדְבַרְתָּ אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר לָקְחוּ הַכְּלָבִים אֶת־דַּם נָבוֹת יִלְקֻהוּ הַכְּלָבִים אֶת־דָּמְךָ גַּם־אָתָּה:
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1. What language here have you seen elsewhere in this chapter? What parallels might you draw between this passage and other places in this chapter?
2. Why might this be the punishment?

20. And Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, my enemy?” And he said, “I found (you) because you sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of YHWH, 21. Behold I am bringing upon you evil and I will utterly remove (that which comes) after you. I will cut off to Ahab those who pee upon the wall (males), both bondsman and freeman in Israel. 22. And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam, son of Nabat, and like the house of Basa, son of Ahiah, on account of the anger which you caused me when you Israel sin.”	כ וַיֹּאמֶר אַחָאֵב אֶל-אֵלִיָּהוּ הֲמָצְאתָנִי אִיָּבִי וַיֹּאמֶר מָצָאתִי יַעֲזֹ הִתְמַכְּרָךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה: כא הִנְנִי מְבִי אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה וּבְעֵרְתִּי אַחֲרֶיהָ וְהִכְרַתִּי לְאַחָאֵב מִשְׁתֵּינִן בְּלִיר וְעֶצְוֹר וְעֶזְזֹב בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: כב וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-בֵּיתְךָ כְּבֵית יִרְבֹּעָם בֶּן-נֹכַחַט וּכְבֵּית בַּעַשָּׂא בֶן-אַחִיָּה אֶל-הַפֶּעַס אֲשֶׁר הִכְעִסְתָּ וַתַּחֲטֹא אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל:
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1. How do Elijah’s words compare to the words which we heard God tell him to say? What sort of punishment will Ahab receive here? Look back at the punishment for Jeroboam in 1 Kings 14:10.
2. What might Elijah mean that Ahab has sold himself?

23. And also to/about Jezebel YHWH spoke, saying, “The dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24. Those of Ahab’s people who die in the city, dogs will eat, and those who die in the field, the birds of the sky will eat.” 25. But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of HaShem, and whom Jezebel, his wife, instigated. 26. And he behaved very badly, going after idols just like all that the Amorites did, whom YHWH had dispossessed on account of the children on Israel.	כג וְגַם-לְאִיזָבֵל דִּבֶּר יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הַכְּלָבִים יֹאכְלוּ אֶת-אִיזָבֵל בְּתֵל יִזְרְעֵאל: כד הִמַּת לְאַחָאֵב בָּעִיר יֹאכְלוּ הַכְּלָבִים וְהִמַּת בַּשָּׂדֶה יֹאכְלוּ עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם: כה רַק לֹא-הָיָה כְּאַחָאֵב אֲשֶׁר הִתְמַכָּר לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-הִסְתָּה אֹתוֹ אִיזָבֵל אִשְׁתּוֹ: כו וַיִּתְּעַב מְאֹד לָלֶכֶת אַחֲרֵי הַגִּלְגָּלִים כָּכֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
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1. How do God/Elijah seem to understand Jezebel’s role in this story? How is she punished? Do they tell her? Why might Ahab bear the majority of the guilt?

27. And when Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, and he put sackcloth on his flesh, and he fasted. And he lay in sackcloth and he went slowly.

28. And the word of YHWH was upon Elijah the Tishabite saying,

29. “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days. In the days of his son, I will bring the evil to his house.”

כִּי וַיִּהְיֶה כְּשָׁמַע אַחָאב אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וַיִּקְרַע בְּגָדָיו וַיִּשְׁמֶשֶׁק עַל־בָּשָׂרוֹ וַיֵּצֵא
וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּשָּׂק וַיִּהְלֶךְ אֶט:

כֹּה וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אֵלִיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי
לֵאמֹר:

כֹּט הִרְאִיתָ כִּי־נִכְנַע אַחָאב מִלִּפְנֵי יָעֵן
כִּי־נִכְנַע מִפְּנֵי לֹא־אָבִי הָרָעָה בְּיָמָיו בְּיָמִי
בְּנֹו אָבִיא הָרָעָה עַל־בֵּיתוֹ:

1. Why might Ahab be reprieved but not his house? Is this a fitting punishment? How might it be connected to Naboth? How might it be connected to Jezebel?

מלכים ב פרק ט

2 Kings 9

Jehu, an army commander, is told by a prophet that he needs to kill the remainder of the House of Ahab and become king himself. So he kills the descendants of Ahab and throws their bodies in the field of Naboth.

30. And Jehu the Jezreelite came, and Jezebel heard and she put color on her eyes, and she made better her head, and she looked out of the window. 31. And Jehu came through the gate, and she said, "Is it peace, oh Zimri, killer of his master?" 32. And he lifted his face towards the window and he said, "Who is with me, who?" And two or three officers looked out at him. 33. And he said, "Let her drop!" And they let her drop. And it splattered from her blood on the wall, and on the horses, and they trampled her.	ל וַיָּבֹא יְהוּא יִזְרְעֵאלִי וְאִיזָבֵל שָׁמְעָה וַתַּשֵּׂם בְּפָנֶיהָ עֵינֶיהָ וַתִּיטֵב אֶת־רֹאשָׁהּ וַתִּשְׁקֹף בַּעַד הַחֲלוֹן: לֹא וַיְהִי כִּי בָּא בַשָּׁעַר וַתֹּאמֶר הַשָּׁלוֹם זִמְרִי הִרְגָּ אֲדֹנָיו: לֵב וַיֵּשֶׂא פָנָיו אֶל־הַחֲלוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר מִי אִתִּי מִי וַיִּשְׁקִיפוּ אֵלָיו שְׁנַיִם שְׁלֵשָׁה סָרִיסִים: לֵב וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַטְהוּ (שְׁמַטְוֶה) וַיִּשְׁמְטוּהָ וַיִּז מִדְמָה אֶל־הַקִּיר וְאֶל־הַסּוּסִים וַיִּרְמְסֶנָּה:
34. And he came and he ate and he drank. Ad he said, "Attend to that cursed one and bury her because she is the daughter of a king." 35. And they went to bury her and they didn't find her except for her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands. 36. And they returned and they said to him. And he said, "It is the word of YHWH that he spoke by means of his servant, Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "On the plot of Jezreel the dogs will eat the flesh of Jezebel. 37. And the corpse of Jezebel will be like dung on the top of the field in the plot of Jezreel, such that they will not (be able to) say, 'That is Jezebel.'"	לז וַיָּבֹא וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר פִּקְדוֹ־אָא אֶת־הָאֲרוּרָה הַזֹּאת וְקִבְרוּהָ כִּי בַת־מֶלֶךְ הִיא: לח וַיֵּלְכוּ לְקַבְּרָהּ וְלֹא־מָצְאוּ כָּהָּ כִּי אִם־הִגְלָגְלָת וְהִרְגָּלִים וְכַפּוֹת הַיָּדַיִם: לח וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיִּגִּידוּ לוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר דְּבַר־יְהוָה הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד־עֲבָדוֹ אֱלִיָּהוּ הַתִּישְׁבִּי לֵאמֹר בְּחֹלֶק יִזְרְעֵאל יֹאכְלוּ הַכְּלָבִים אֶת־בָּשָׂר אִיזָבֵל: לח וְהִיא (וְהִי־תָהּ) נִבְלָת אִיזָבֵל כְּדָמָן עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּחֹלֶק יִזְרְעֵאל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יֹאמְרוּ זֹאת אִיזָבֵל:

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