

# FIRST KINGS

## Chapter 16

Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha: <sup>2</sup> “I lifted you up from the dust and made you leader of my people Israel, but you walked in the ways of Jeroboam and caused my people Israel to sin and to provoke me to anger by their sins. <sup>3</sup> So I am about to consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat. <sup>4</sup> Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country.” <sup>5</sup> As for the other events of Baasha’s reign, what he did and his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? <sup>6</sup> Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah. And Elah his son succeeded him as king. <sup>7</sup> Moreover, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Jehu son of Hanani to Baasha and his house, because of all the evil he had done in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger by the things he did, and becoming like the house of Jeroboam—and also because he destroyed it.

**16:1** *Jehu*. Like his father before him (see 2Ch 16:7–10), Jehu brought God’s word of condemnation to a king. Much as the man of God from Judah (see note on 13:1) and later the prophet Amos, he was sent from the south to a northern king. His ministry continued for about 50 years until the reign of Jehoshaphat of Judah (2Ch 19:2; 20:34). (CSB)

A prophet, not to be confused with the later Israelite king by the same name (2Ki 10:28–36). The prophet’s denunciation of Baasha was not motivated by political prejudice; he also rebuked a king of Judah (2Ch 19:2). Cf 2Ch 20:34 for his literary activity. (TLSB)

**16:2** *I lifted you up from the dust*. Cf. 14:7. (CSB)

*walked in the ways of Jeroboam*. See note on 14:16. (CSB)

**16:3** *consume Baasha and his house*. Cf. 14:10 (the house of Jeroboam); 21:21 (the house of Omri and Ahab). (CSB)

**16:4** Identical to the prophecy against Jeroboam’s dynasty in 14:11.

**16:5** *his achievements*. For the purposes of the writer of Kings (see Introduction: Theme), it was not necessary to list any of Baasha’s achievements. He may have been a very successful ruler from a military-political point of view. (CSB)

*annals of the kings of Israel*. See note on 14:19. (CSB)

**16:6** *rested with his fathers*. See note on 1:21. (CSB)

**16:7** *evil he had done ... like the house of Jeroboam.* See v. 2; 15:34. (CSB)

*he destroyed it.* Although Baasha fulfilled God's purpose (14:10, 14) in destroying the house of Jeroboam, he remained responsible for this violent and unlawful act (cf. Ge 50:20; Isa 10:5–7, 12). (CSB)

Jeroboam's dynasty. Baasha serves God's judgment but also is condemned. (TLSB)

**15:33–16:7** Because of the evil of Israel's King Baasha, the Lord predicts that his house, like that of Jeroboam, will be cut off (16:3). But God's grace to families and households persists, even for us. The great King of heaven confirms us as members of His household. • Lord, bless this house, whatever befall; may Jesus Christ be all in all. Amen. (TLSB)

### ***Elah King of Israel***

<sup>8</sup> In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah son of Baasha became king of Israel, and he reigned in Tirzah two years. <sup>9</sup> Zimri, one of his officials, who had command of half his chariots, plotted against him. Elah was in Tirzah at the time, getting drunk in the home of Arza, the man in charge of the palace at Tirzah. <sup>10</sup> Zimri came in, struck him down and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah. Then he succeeded him as king. <sup>11</sup> As soon as he began to reign and was seated on the throne, he killed off Baasha's whole family. He did not spare a single male, whether relative or friend. <sup>12</sup> So Zimri destroyed the whole family of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken against Baasha through the prophet Jehu— <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> As for the other events of Elah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?

**16:8** *twenty-sixth year of Asa.* 886 B.C. (see note on 15:10; see also Introduction: Chronology). (CSB)

*Elah.* Baasha, like Jeroboam, had only one successor. After Elah reigned for only two years, Zimri struck him down. (TLSB)

*two years.* 886–885 B.C. (CSB)

**16:9** *commander.* In the power struggle for Israel's throne, military leaders played a prominent role. (TLSB)

*getting drunk.* The fact that Elah was carousing at Tirzah while the army was laying siege to Gibbethon (v. 15) indicates he had little perception of his responsibilities as king. (CSB)

*Arza.* An official who may have helped plan Elah's assassination. (TLSB)

**16:10–22** *Zimri*. The cavalry commander Zimri had barely proclaimed himself king when the troops “encamped against Gibbethon” (v 15) made Omri “the commander of the army, king over Israel” (v 16). He, in turn, had to eliminate Tibni, another contender. Zimri became a proverbial example of an assassin (cf 2Ki 9:31). (TLSB)

**16:10** *twenty-seventh year of Asa*. 885 B.C. (CSB)

**16:11** *killed off Baasha’s whole family*. See 15:29; 2Ki 10:1–7; 11:1. (CSB)

Prophecy fulfilled (cf v 3). (TLSB)

*friend*. Probably the chief adviser to the king (see note on 2Sa 15:37). (CSB)

**16:12** *word of the LORD... through the prophet Jehu*. See vv. 1–4. Zimri did not consciously decide to fulfill Jehu’s prophecy, but unwittingly he became the instrument by which Jehu’s prediction was fulfilled (see note on v. 7) when he conspired against Elah and destroyed the dynasty of Baasha. (CSB)

**16:13** *sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed*. See 15:34. (CSB)

*worthless idols*. A reference to all the paganism in Israel’s religious observances, including the use of the golden calves in worship (see 12:28; 14:9). (CSB)

Lit, “vanities.” (TLSB)

**16:14** *annals of the kings of Israel*. See note on 14:19. (CSB)

**16:8–14** After only two years as king, Baasha’s son Elah is assassinated (while “drinking himself drunk”). One of his military leaders, Zimri, seizes the throne. How easily sinful human beings slip into gross wickedness and debauchery! Instead of indulging our sinful nature, the Lord cultivates in us “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22–23). Such fruit grows within a heart made right through faith in Jesus. • Holy Spirit, keep me from falling into the sins that destroy, and guide me in what is good and right. Amen. (TLSB)

### ***Zimri King of Israel***

<sup>15</sup> In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirzah seven days. The army was encamped near Gibbethon, a Philistine town. <sup>16</sup> When the Israelites in the camp heard that Zimri had plotted against the king and murdered him, they proclaimed Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that very day there in the camp. <sup>17</sup> Then Omri and all the Israelites with him withdrew from Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. <sup>18</sup> When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him. So he died, <sup>19</sup> because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD and walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in the sin he had committed and

had caused Israel to commit. <sup>20</sup> As for the other events of Zimri's reign, and the rebellion he carried out, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?

**16:15** *twenty-seventh year of Asa*. 885 B.C. (see notes on 15:1, 10). (CSB)

*Zimri reigned seven days*. He did not control the entire military (v 9) and could not maintain his coup. (TLSB)

*Gibbethon*. See notes on v. 9; 15:27. (CSB)

**16:16** *all Israel*. The unanimity did not last (v 21). (TLSB)

*plotted against the king and murdered him*. See vv. 9–12. (CSB)

*Omri, the commander of the army*. He held a higher rank than Zimri did under Elah (v. 9). (CSB)

**16:17** *Tirzah*. The royal residence (see vv. 8–10; see also note on 14:17). (CSB)

**16:18** *burned ... over him*. Suicide. Archaeologists found the tenth/early ninth-century phase of Tirzah's development destroyed.

**16:19** *ways of Jeroboam*. See note on 14:16. (CSB)

**16:20** *annals of the kings of Israel*. See note on 14:19. (CSB)

**16:15–20** Zimri lasts only seven days as king before the troops conspire against him and make Omri the king. Zimri dies when he burns down the king's house. When we despise the preaching of God's Word, disaster can come quickly. That is why repentance and the drowning of our sinful nature—the old Adam—is a daily activity, as we receive renewal in the Holy Spirit through the life-giving Word of Scripture. • Heavenly Father, forgive us the sins of this day, and renew us by the Holy Spirit to live for Him who died and rose again for our salvation. Amen. (TLSB)

### ***Omri King of Israel***

<sup>21</sup> Then the people of Israel were split into two factions; half supported Tibni son of Ginath for king, and the other half supported Omri. <sup>22</sup> But Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri became king. <sup>23</sup> In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. <sup>24</sup> He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill. <sup>25</sup> But Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD and sinned more than all those before him. <sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> As for the other events of Omri's reign, what he did and the things he achieved, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?<sup>28</sup> Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king.

**16:21** *Tibni*. Supported by "half of the people," Omri's rival maintained his claim to the throne for about five years. Then he died, presumably a casualty of the civil war. (TLSB)

**16:22** *Tibni died*. It is not clear whether Tibni's death was due to natural causes or the result of the military struggle for control of the land. (CSB)

*Omri*. Founder of one of the more stable dynasties, Omri restored order in the Northern Kingdom. During the reign of his successors (Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram), the relationship between Israel and Judah changed from one of hostility to one of peace and cooperation. The former army commander acted wisely when he moved the capital to "the hill of Samaria" (v 24). Virtually inaccessible on three sides it was able to hold off the Assyrian army for three years (2Ki 17:5). Ahab completed construction of the city. It thrived for c 150 years. (TLSB)

*overcame*. Militarily, which likely caused Tibni's death. (TLSB)

**16:23** *thirty-first year of Asa*. 880 B.C. (see note on 15:10; see also Introduction: Chronology). (CSB)

*became king*. Became sole king. The struggle for control of the northern kingdom between Omri and Tibni lasted four years (compare this verse with v. 15). (CSB)

*twelve years*. 885–874. The 12 years of Omri's reign include the four years of struggle between Omri and Tibni (cf. vv. 15, 29). (CSB)

*Tirzah*. See note on 14:17. Omri had been able to capture Tirzah in a matter of days (vv. 15–19). (CSB)

**16:24** *Samaria*. Seven miles northwest of Shechem, Samaria rose about 300 feet above the surrounding fertile valleys (referred to as a "wreath" in Isa 28:1). The original owner may have been persuaded to sell his property (see 21:3) on the condition that the city be named after him (cf. Ru 4:5). The site provided an ideal location for a nearly impregnable capital city for the northern kingdom (see 20:1–21; 2Ki 6:25; 18:9–10). With the establishment of this royal city, the kings of the north came to possess a royal citadel-city like that of the Davidic dynasty (see 2Sa 5:6–12). Archaeologists have discovered that Omri and Ahab 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 (see, e.g., 21:1; Isa 10:10; Am 6:1). (CSB)

Hbr *shomron*. From verb meaning “watch” or “guard.” 7 mi NW of Shechem. The city was enclosed by a casemate wall in Phoenician style masonry. (TLSB)

**16:25** *sinned more than all*. Omri’s alliance with Ethbaal of Tyre and Sidon (Omri’s son Ahab married Ethbaal’s daughter Jezebel to seal the alliance) led to widespread Baal worship in the northern kingdom (vv. 31–33) and eventually to the near extinction of the Davidic line in the southern kingdom (see 2Ki 11; see also note on 2Ki 8:18). This marriage alliance must have been established in the early years of Omri’s reign (see note on v. 23), perhaps to strengthen his hand against Tibni (see vv. 21–22). (CSB)

Omri had a much longer reign than most other kings, thus greater opportunity for evil. We do not know for certain why the Lord tolerated Omri whereas other kings were overthrown. Although he was evil, Omri established peaceful relations with more faithful Judah. (TLSB)

**16:26** *sin, which he had caused Israel to commit*. See 12:26–33; see also note on 14:16. *worthless idols*. See note on v. 13. (CSB)

**16:27** *things he achieved*. Omri’s military and political accomplishments were not of importance for the purposes of the writer of Kings (see Introduction: Theme). Apart from establishing Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom, about all that is known of him is that he organized a governmental structure in the northern kingdom that was in place during the rule of his son, Ahab (see 20:14–15). Omri’s dynasty, however, endured for over 40 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. (CSB)

According to extrabiblical sources, Omri achieved international fame. Assyrian records referred to Israel as “the land of Omri” even after his dynasty had vanished. However, considerations other than military and political interest guided the writer of 1Ki in the selection of what he recorded in his prophetic history (see pp 526–27). Hence, he devoted only eight verses (vv 21–28) to this king, who appears to have been one of Israel’s more illustrious rulers. By contrast, the story of Omri’s son Ahab takes up six chapters (16:29–22:40), more space than is accorded any other king since Solomon. This is likely because of Ahab’s repentance and his interaction with Elijah (21:25–29). (TLSB)

*annals of the kings of Israel*. See note on 14:19. (CSB)

**16:28** *rested with his fathers*. See note on 1:21. (CSB)

**16:21–28** During Omri’s reign in Israel, civil war breaks out, with half the people following him and half following Tibni. Omri’s forces are victorious, and Tibni dies. Amid all the conflict of our age, true peace resides in Jesus Christ, through whom our sins are forgiven so that we are reconciled to our heavenly Father and may be reconciled to one another. • “Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word; Curb those who by deceit or sword Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son And bring to naught all He has done.” Amen. (*LSB* 655:1) (TLSB)

### ***Ahab Becomes King of Israel***

<sup>29</sup> In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup> Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. <sup>31</sup> He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. <sup>32</sup> He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him. <sup>34</sup> In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

**16:29** Conciliatory attitude toward the southern king, no doubt fostered by his father, later led to full cooperation of the two kingdoms against a foreign aggressor (cf 22:1–4). (TLSB)

*thirty-eighth year of Asa.* 874 B.C. (see notes on 15:9–10). (CSB)

*Ahab.* Mentioned in the annals of Shalmaneser III of Assyria (858–824 BC). (TLSB)

*twenty-two years.* 874–853 B.C. (CSB)

**16:30** *more evil ... than any.* Omri sinned more than those before him (see v. 25), and Ahab sinned more than his father had. Evil became progressively worse in the royal house of the northern kingdom. Nearly a third of the narrative material in 1,2 Kings concerns the 34-year period of the reigns of Ahab and his two sons, Ahaziah and Joram. In this period the struggle between the kingdom of God (championed especially by Elijah and Elisha) and the kingdom of Satan was especially intense. (CSB)

Under Ahab's reign, apostasy—the cause of Israel's fall a century later—reached a new high. Without necessarily observing a chronological sequence, the author presents a series of events as evidence of this “evil in the sight of the LORD.” Ahab's marriage to a Phoenician princess and worship of her national idol, known as Melkart, deserves early mention to show how far he went to “provoke the LORD ... to anger” (v 33). Capable of violating this basic requirement of the covenant, he could be expected to defy other laws of the Lord. Yet, the Lord ended the reigns of other evil rulers but allowed Ahab to continue, in view of his repentance (cf 21:25–29). (TLSB)

**16:31** *married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal.* The Jewish historian Josephus refers to Ethbaal as a king-priest who ruled over Tyre and Sidon for 32 years. Ahab had already married Jezebel during the reign of his father (see note on v. 25). (CSB)

*Sidonians.* From the ancient city-state Sidon on the eastern coast of the Great Sea. (TLSB)

*Baal.* Perhaps Melqart, the local manifestation of Baal in Tyre, whose worship was brought to Israel by Jezebel. It is probable that Ahab participated in the worship of this deity at the time of his marriage. The names of Ahab's sons (Ahaziah, "The LORD grasps"; Joram, "The LORD is exalted") suggest that Ahab did not intend to replace the worship of the Lord with the worship of Baal but to worship both deities in a syncretistic way. (CSB)

**16:32** *temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.* Ahab imported the Phoenician Baal worship of his wife Jezebel into the northern kingdom by constructing a temple of Baal in Samaria, just as Solomon had erected the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. This pagan temple and its sacred stone (see note on 14:23) were later destroyed by Jehu (2Ki 10:21–27). (CSB)

Through his wife, Jezebel, Ahab introduced Phoenician Baal worship to Israel. (TLSB)

**16:33** *Asherah pole.* See note on 14:15. (CSB)

*than did all the kings of Israel.* See note on v. 30. Ahab elevated the worship of Baal to an official status in the northern kingdom at the beginning of his reign. (CSB)

**16:34** As the king's marriage showed his evil heart, so the rebuilding of Jericho showed the people's disregard of the Lord's will. Hiel's loss of his sons from his firstborn to his youngest showed that God fulfilled His threat regarding Jericho. Subsequent history would show the fulfillment of His threat regarding Israel. (TLSB)

*rebuilt Jericho.* Does not mean that Jericho had remained uninhabited since its destruction by Joshua (see Jos 18:21; Jdg 1:16; 3:13; 2Sa 10:5), but that it had remained an unwallled town or village. During the rule of Ahab, Hiel fortified the city by reconstructing its walls and gates (see 9:17 for a similar use of "rebuild"). This violated God's intention that the ruins of Jericho (Jos 6:26) be a perpetual reminder that Israel had received the land of Canaan from God's hand as a gift of grace. Accordingly, Hiel suffered the curse Joshua had pronounced. (CSB)

**16:29–34** Ahab, who marries Jezebel the Sidonian, becomes the most notorious of the long line of wicked kings (v 30). Once people reject God's Word, anything goes, as the lives of Ahab and Jezebel attest. Yet by His grace, God can call people from the deepest shadow of darkness to repentance and salvation. In Christ, we have the light of life; in Him, we receive the grace and love of our heavenly Father. • "Renew me, O eternal Light, And let my heart and soul be bright, Illumined with the light of grace That issues from Your holy face." Amen. (LSB 704:1). (TLSB)