

Ahab:

Jeroboam was the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, also known as the Kingdom of Samaria. He worshipped idols. Jeroboam's successor was his son, Nabab who was known only for leading our people into idolatry. Nabab was killed and succeeded by Baasha.

Baasha was known for killing all of the relatives of Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom. Unfortunately, Baasha ended up in the same detestable, idolatrous practices of Jeroboam.

Am I going too fast? I'm only getting started.

Where was I? Oh, Baasha. Baasha's son, Elah, succeeded him as king. He was killed while drunk by his successor Zimri. Zimri destroyed all of the male relatives of Baasha because they, too, were idolators.

Zimri was king for only seven days before the army rebelled against him. Zimri set the palace on fire and committed suicide. He also was an idolator.

The sixth king of the Northern Kingdom was Omri. He is known for buying the hill of Samaria and building a city, also named Samaria, on it. He also led the people into idolatry.

Those are the first six kings of the Northern Kingdom, and all of them were evil in the Lord's sight because of their idolatrous ways. The seventh king was worse than any of them, and I should know. I am Ahab, that seventh king.

About a half-century after the death of Solomon, I took what you call "evil" to a new level in the Northern Kingdom. I not only committed the same sins as the first six kings, but I married the evil Jezebel, I began to serve and worship Baal, and I built a temple to Baal. I also built an Asherah pole.

My reign was close to a century after David had completely dominated the countries surrounding Israel, including Aram. During the weakness of Israel since then, Aram had recovered in strength. Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram allied himself with thirty-two other kings and attacked the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Although I was ready to partially surrender, he wanted total surrender. God and the people urged me not to do so. Eventually, God led my country to defeat Aram twice. However, when I made peace with Aram against God's direction, my destruction was assured.

Elijah:

Three things: a maniacal King Ahab had been searching furiously for me in all the nations and kingdoms. His psychopath queen was killing the prophets of the Lord as fast as she could find them. And, a servant of the Lord, who had been hiding a hundred prophets in caves, giving them food and water, was stressed. Hanging on a thread of his last nerve! Good times.

I may be the person most people think of when they think of the *first* prophet in the era of the kings. Samuel and Nathan were prophets. Great prophets. But I am usually the classic, “prophet zero” guy for people today. Maybe, because I was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Cool.¹ Perhaps it is because the Lord endowed me with such power. Again, cool. Or because I am one of the few people who never died. Very cool, when you really think about it.

The first time I am referred to in the Bible was in the time of the aforementioned King Ahab, when I announced a multi-year drought. This made me so unpopular that the Lord told me to go and hide in the Kerith Ravine east of the Jordan River a few miles. It was in the region of my hometown of Tishbe, I knew exactly where to hide. Every morning and every evening, I drank from the brook, and ravens brought me bread and meat to eat. It was awesome.

The brook eventually dried up due to the drought, so the Lord sent me north of the Northern Kingdom to Sidon. I met a widow and her son there. So very poor. They took their very last bit of flour and oil, and fed me. Such a sacrifice! What an honor to God. Because of their kindness, the Lord moved. Miraculously moved; their jar of flour and their jug of oil remained full until the drought was over. Never ran out! What a miracle for her, and for her neighbors to see! Then, one day, her son died. The Lord was gracious. Both to her, and to me. I brought the boy back to life. The Lord allowed me to bring the boy back to life. This gave me a good reputation, and it helped me understand the power of God. The words of the widow, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from you is true.” I couldn’t help it. Everything I said from the Lord was true.

Moving on. More than two years of drought went by, Ahab and his chief administrator, Obadiah, were scouring the land looking for grass to keep their animals alive. God told me to go to King Ahab to inform him that God would break the drought and send rain. I came upon Obadiah, and he bowed down to me... he recognized me. This is where I learned those three things about the maniacal king, his psycho wife, and Obadiah’s prophets.

Crazy King Ahab combing the entire region for me. I suppose he thought he could coerce me into breaking the drought. Queen Jezebel murdering prophets. And, Obadiah, Ahab’s man, who happened to be a servant of the Lord. You could see why he was stressed out. His God and his boss didn’t really see eye to eye. Probably some of you know what that’s like. And the stress was getting to him, it was obvious, but when I told him to go to King Ahab and tell him that I would appear in person, I didn’t expect him to snap. No, didn’t expect it. At all.

¹ Mat. 17:1-4

Obadiah went ballistic. He worried that as soon as he told Ahab that I would appear, I would disappear again. If that happened, Obadiah knew he would 100% be put to death. In fact, he might even be put to death just for telling Ahab that I would appear. Ahab, erratic is an understatement. However, Obadiah did tell Ahab, and Ahab did come to meet me.

We met. Ahab accused me of causing trouble for Israel. I accused him of the same thing. I told him that he had deeply troubled Israel by abandoning the Lord and leading the people into worshiping false gods. I commanded him to bring the people of Israel to Mount Carmel, along with Jezebel's 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. So, Ahab assembled the people and prophets, and met me on Mount Carmel. He was desperate for the drought to be broken, if I do say so myself.

I challenged the people to make a choice. "If the Lord is God, follow him." I said, "If Baal is God, follow him." I threw down a challenge. The one who met the challenge by fire is the true God. The people agreed to the challenge and outcome. The future of Israel hung in the balance, but I knew which way the balance would tip.

I had the people bring two bulls, of which I let the prophets of Baal choose one. The prophets of Baal cut up their bull and put it on a pile of wood. They didn't set fire to the wood — that was the job of their god.

The prophets of Baal shouted to Baal from morning until noon. Shouted and shouted and danced around the altar. No answer. I taunted them, "Shout louder in case your god is asleep or traveling." They shouted louder, danced harder, slashed themselves with swords, bleeding. They went on like this until evening but silence. That was all they got. My turn.

The people came to me, and I repaired the altar of the Lord that had twelve stones, one for each tribe. I dug a large trench around the altar, arranged the wood on the altar, and placed the pieces of the bull on it. I had the people fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and wood. I had them do it again. And a third time. The wood was soaked. The trench was filled with water.

At this point you might not think the people were too engaged, but if so, you have forgotten that we were on top of a mountain, and there had been a drought for more than two years. Three times they had to carry the four massive stone jars down the mountain, travel to any water they could find, travel back, and climb up the mountain carrying those four massive stone jars.

All is in place. Challenge set. Here we go. I pray to the God of Israel, loud enough that all the people hear. I'm a prophet. I'm loud. I ask him to send fire so that everyone knows he is the one true God, and that I am his servant. Fire falls from heaven and totally burns up the sacrifice, wood, stones, soil... and water in the trench. God responds immediately When the people see this, they cry, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!"

I command the people to seize the false prophets, and they take them to the Kishon valley and slaughter them. I tell Ahab to eat and drink because "I hear the sound of rain." The sky? Still dry and clear as it has been for over two years. I pray to God. A small cloud appears in the west toward the Mediterranean Sea. I tell my servant to warn Ahab to start riding in his chariot to Jezreel before the rain stops him.

Ahab is skeptical. The sky is clear! But, he is still in awe of my power, so he does as I command. The sky turns dark. A heavy rain begins to fall. The power of the Lord comes over me, and I tuck my cloak in my belt and run ahead of Ahab the fifteen miles to Jezreel. 15 miles. That was a long way then, too. Awaiting us in Jezreel is the nefarious Queen Jezebel, who is sure to be furious that her false prophets are dead, And her gods have lost all stature. It happens.

The minute Ahab told Jezebel what had happened, she sent a messenger to me saying that she would kill me within twenty-four hours. Hah! After what had happened at Carmel you can bet that I reacted with righteous anger and full of trust in God. But if you made that bet, you would be sorely disappointed. Your psychologists today might even diagnose me as schizophrenic. I freaked out. Scared witless, I ran for my life. I went over one hundred miles to Beersheba, and another day past there into the bleak wilderness. I laid down under a juniper bush and prayed to die. Afraid, exhausted, and frustrated.

God answered me by sending an angel to feed me and give me water. The angel did this again, and I was refreshed enough to begin a forty-day journey to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. When I arrived there, I entered a cave, spent the night, and the word of God came to me. I told God all about how zealous I had been for him, that the Israelites were killing the prophets and I was the only one left. I was a real whiner. God told me to get out of the cave and be ready to be in his presence.

A violent wind came. No Lord. An earthquake came. No Lord. A fire came. Still, no Lord. Then, a whisper. A gentle whisper came, and the Lord was in it. The Lord informed me that he had reserved seven thousand in Israel for himself, and I was to anoint Jehu as the next king of Israel, and Elisha as my successor. So, my life ended with three things.

I anointed King Jehu, I trained Elisha and continued to be the most powerful prophet in Israel. And the third, at the end of my days, I didn't die a normal death, and maybe, instead the Lord was gracious and in truly unforgettable prophet style. He took me, Elijah, to heaven in a whirlwind.

Ahab:

Elijah declared that because Queen Jezebel and I continued to do evil deeds and lead the people into idolatry, we would both be destroyed. That dogs would lick up her blood.

I was killed in war. Jezebel wasn't so lucky. Some of her eunuchs betrayed her and hurled her to her death from the palace window. While they waited to decide what to do next, dogs

devoured her body, except for her skull, hands and feet. Grisly. There was no possibility to bury her in such a way as to honor her. Once again, Elijah's prophecies came true.

I was the seventh king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and all seven of us were evil because we continued to lead the people of Israel further and further into the worship of other gods, and away from the worship of the true God. The great prophet of God, Elijah, his time was over. Was there anyone who could take his place and lead the people back to God?