

Eliyahu: a Prophet of Fire and Water

The Vineyard of Navot the Yizraeli

Kings 1,21:

(1) And it came to pass after these things, that Navot the Yizraeli had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, by the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria.

(2) And Ahab spoke to Navot, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs because it is near to my house. And I will give you for it a better vineyard than it, or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money."

(3) And Navot said to Ahab, "Far be it from me, from Hashem, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you."

(4) And Ahab came into his house sullen and enraged because of the word which Navot the Yizraeli had spoken to him, that he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down upon his bed, and turned his face away and would not eat bread.

(5) But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sullen, that you eat no bread?"

(6) And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Navot the Yizraeli and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it' and he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

(7) And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise and eat bread, and let your heart be merry; I will give you the vineyard of Navot the Yizraeli."

(8) So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, who dwelled with Navot.

(9) And she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and set Navot at the head of the people.

(10) And set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' And then carry him out and stone him, that he die."

(11) And the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who dwelled in his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them.

(12) They proclaimed a fast and set Navot at the head of the people.

(13) And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him; and the base fellows bore witness against him, against Navot, in the presence of the people, saying, "Navot cursed God and the king." Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

(14) Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Navot has been stoned and is dead."

(15) And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Navot was stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Navot the Yizraeli, which he refused to give you for money, for Navot is not alive, but dead."

(16) And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Navot was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Navot the Yizraeli, to take possession of it.

(17) And the word of Hashem came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

(18) "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwells in Samaria; behold, he is at the vineyard of Navot, where he has gone down to take possession of it.

(19) And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says Hashem, '**Have you killed and also taken possessions?**' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says Hashem, 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Navot, dogs shall lick your blood, also yours.'"

(20) And Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, my enemy?" And he answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do that which is evil in the sight of Hashem.

(21) Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and I will utterly sweep you away, and I will cut off from Ahab every male, both he who is shut up and he who is left at large in Israel.

(22) And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and like the house of Baasa the son of Ahijah, for the provocation with which you have provoked Me and have caused Israel to sin."

(23) And Hashem also spoke of Jezebel, saying, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel at the ramparts of Jezreel.

(24) The dogs shall eat he that dies of Ahab in the city; and the fowls of the air shall eat he that dies in the field."

(25) Indeed, there was none like Ahab who sold himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Hashem, whom Jezebel his wife incited.

(26) And he acted abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom Hashem cast out before the Children of Israel.

(27) And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went slowly.

(28) And the word of Hashem came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

(29) "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the evil upon his house."

Kings 1, 22, 30-40:

(30) And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into the battle; but you, put on your robes." And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle.

(31) Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the king of Israel."

(32) And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel"; and they turned aside to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out.

(33) And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

(34) And a certain man drew his bow innocently, and smote the king of Israel between the lower armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn your hand, and carry me out of the camp; for I am severely wounded."

(35) And the battle raged that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot against the Arameans and died at evening, and the blood ran out of the wound into the bottom of the chariot.

(36) And there went a cry throughout the army when the sun went down, saying, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country."

(37) So the king died, and he was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

(38) And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; the harlots also washed themselves there, according to the word of Hashem which He spoke.

(39) Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

(40) So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

Kings 2, 9, 21-37:

(21) And Joram said, "Make ready." And they made his chariot ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu and found him in the portion of Navot the Yizraeli.

(22) And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" And he answered, "What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?"

(23) And Joram turned his hands and fled, and he said to Ahaziah, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah."

(24) And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength, and he smote Joram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

(25) Then he said to Bidkar his captain, "Take him up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Navot the Yizraeli; for remember how, when you and I rode together after Ahab his father, Hashem pronounced this burden against him,

(26) 'Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Navot, and the blood of his sons,' says Hashem; 'and I will repay you in this plot,' says Hashem. Now therefore take and cast him into the plot of ground, according to the word of Hashem."

(27) But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, "Smite him also in the chariot"; and they smote him at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo and died there.

(28) And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his grave with his fathers in the city of David.

(29) And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab, Ahaziah began to reign over Judah.

(30) And when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and fixed up her hair, and looked out at the window.

(31) And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, "Is it peace, Zimri, your master's murderer?"

(32) And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two or three officers looked out to him.

(33) And he said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses; and they trod upon her.

(34) And when he had come in, he ate and drank; and he said, "Look now after this cursed woman and bury her; for she is a king's daughter."

(35) And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

(36) They came back and told him. And he said, "This is according to the word of Hashem which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'In the portion of Jezreel shall the dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel;

(37) and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they cannot say, 'This is Jezebel.'"

1. Radak on verse 2:

לגן ירק. הוא העשב שהוא מאכל האדם או עשבים שיש להם ריח טוב ומנהג לעשות מהם גן בחצר הבית או אחורי הבית:

A garden of herbs: this can be for two reasons: or for growing food, or for a leisure garden.

2. Rambam the Halachot of Kings, 4,6:

לוקח השדות והדייתים והכרמים לעבדיו כשילכו למלחמה ויפשוטו על מקומות אלו אם אין להם מה יאכלו אלא משם. ונותן דמיהן. שנאמר (שמואל א ח יד) "ואת שדותיכם ואת כרמיכם וזיתיכם הטובים יקח ונתן לעבדיו":

He may take fields, olive groves, and vineyards for his servants when they go to war and allow them to commandeer these places if they have no source of nurture other than them. He must pay for what is taken. This is stated in ibid.:14: 'He shall take your good fields, vineyards, and olive groves and give them to his servants.

3. Tosfot on Sanhedrin 20b, "Melech":

Question: Why was Achav punished for killing Navos, seeing as the latter refused to sell him his field?

Answer #1: The Pasuk in Shmuel writes that the king "will take ... and give it to his servants", implying, but not for himself.

Answer #2: Had Achav so wished, he could have indeed taken the vineyard without asking, but now that he asked, Navos thought that the king was giving him the choice to refuse.

Answer #3: Achav was punished, because he wanted the vineyard for idolatrous purposes, as he is recorded as saying "And I shall turn it into a vegetable garden", which has connotations of

idolatry, just like the Pasuk in Yeshayah (in connection with idol-worship) "Those who prepare and purify themselves to go to the gardens".

Answer #4: 'The Nakdan' answers that the concession for a king to take a subject's field is restricted to one that is far from the town, which are not so valuable; whereas the field of Navos was situated beside Achav's palace, in the town of Shomron.

Answer #5: Alternatively, the concession is restricted to a field that the current owner purchased, but not to one that he inherited from his father, as is inherent in Navos' reply to Achav "Far be it from me from giving you the inheritance of my fathers.

Answer #6: And finally, the Parshah of the king (in Shmuel) applies exclusively to a king who rules over the whole of Yisrael and Yehudah, and to one who was Divinely appointed; whereas Achav fulfilled neither of these condition.

4. Metzudat David on verse 19:

היתכן שרצחת את נבות כאויב, וגם ירשת אותו כקרוב אהוב?

How could you kill Navot as an enemy, but inherit him as a loving relative?

5. Malbim on verse 19:

הרצחת וכי בדין הרגתו שתורישנו מצד נכסי הרוגי מלך למלך, הלא רצחת ברצח, ואיך עוד תורישנו?:

Did you kill him according to the law so you will be able to take possessions?

6. Mishnah Sanhedrin 90a:

שלשה מלכים וארבעה הדיוטות אין להן חלק לעולם הבא. שלשה מלכים: ירבעם, אחאב, ומנשה.

Three kings and four commoners have NO portion in the World to Come: The three kings are Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh.

7. Talmud Sanhedrin 104b:

דורשי רשומות היו אומרים: כולן באין לעולם הבא, שנאמר (תהילים ס:): לי גלעד ולי מנשה ואפרים מעוד ראשי...לי גלעד ולי מנשה- זה אחאב שנפל ברמות גלעד...

All of them will enter the world to come, as it is written (Ps. 60:9), "Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head..." 'Gilead is mine' this refers to Ahab, who fell at Ramoth-gilead...

8. Sanhedrin 102b:

אמר רב נחמן: אחאב שקול היה שנאמר (מלכים א' כ"ב) ויאמר ה' מי יפתה את אחאב ויעל ויפל ברמת גלעד ויאמר זה בכה וזה אמר בכה. מתקיף לה רבי יוסף: מאן דכתב ביה (מלכים א' כ"א) רק לא היה כאחאב אשר התמכר לעשות הרע בעיני ה' אשר הסתה אתו איזבל אשתו!

R. Nahman said: Ahab was equally balanced, since it is written, "The Lord asked, 'Who will entice Ahab so that he will march and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' Then one said thus and another

said thus" (22:20). R. Joseph objected: He of whom it is written, "Indeed, there never was anyone like Ahab, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord, at the instigation of his wife Jezebel" (21:25)!

9. Jerusalem Talmud Sanhedrin 28b:

For six months, R. Levi explained the verse: "Indeed, there never was anyone like Ahab, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord" (21:25), in a manner critical of Ahab. Ahab came to R. Levi in a dream, and protested: "How have I wronged you? Is there only a first half to this verse? [The second half reads] "at the instigation of his wife Jezebel!" R. Levi responded by teaching this verse for six months with a favorable slant toward Ahab.

10. Midrash Psikta Rabbati, 25:

נבות היה קולו נאה והיה עולה לירושלים והיו כל ישראל מתכנסים לשמוע קולו. פעם אחת לא עלה, והעידו עליו אותם העדים בני בליעל (אבד) [ונאבד] מן העולם... כבר אמרה תורה "לא יחמוד איש את ארצו" ([שמות ל"ד](#)) אימתו? בעלותך ליראות את פני ה' א-לקיך. (שם) ואילו עלה לא היה אובד נפשו בשביל חמדת כרמו.

Navot had a very nice voice, and he used to go up to Jerusalem on the festivals to sing to the public. One time, Navot stayed at home and didn't go up to Jerusalem on the festival. That year was the year he was killed. The Torah said (Exodus 32, 24): "no one will covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times a year", and if Navot would go up to Jerusalem he wouldn't have died.

11. Midrash Tanchuma Buber Vayetze 5, 1:

בשעה שאתה רואה השעה חצופה לא תעמוד כנגדה אלא תן לה מקום, שנאמר לך עמי בא בחדריך, הסתכלו בי כביכול שראיתי השעה חצופה בעונותיכם לא עשיתי אלא נתתי לה מקום, שנאמר השיב אחור ימינו וגו' ([איכה ב](#)), ואף אתם לך עמי, שכל מי שעומד כנגד השעה נופל בידה, וכל מי שנותן מקום לשעה, השעה נופלת בידו, נבות עמד כנגד השעה (ועמד בה) [ונפל בידה] שאמר לו אחאב תנה לי [את] כרמך ויהי לי לגן ירק (מ"א כא ב), מה עשה אמר חלילה לי מה' וגו' (שם שם ג), מה נעשה לו, נפל ביד השעה, שנאמר ויעידוהו אנשי בליעל.

When you face a *Sha'ah Chatzufah*, you should not fight it, rather give it express itself... As anyone who tries to fight this *Sha'ah Chatzufah*, will eventually lose to it, just like Navot tried to fight his *Sha'ah Chatzufah* instead of letting it be.

For further study: Hayyim Angel, "Hopping Between Two Opinions: Understanding the Biblical Portrait of Ahab," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35:1 (2007), pp. 3-10. Reprinted with minor modifications in Hayyim Angel, *Revealed Texts, Hidden Meanings: Finding the Religious Significance in Tanakh* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV-Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2009), pp. 107-116.

Elhanan Samet, *Pirkei Eliyahu* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Ma'aliyot Press, 2003).

Rabbi Amnon Bazak, *Pirkei Eliyahu* (Hebrew) https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYW43ncrfYv-YkT0RiKZ6BHX0uCU7iI_1

