

Women of Tanach 3: Jezebel: The Iron Lady
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The players - Generation 1:

Ahab	Husband of Jezebel; King of Israel
Jezebel	Wife of Ahab; born to King Et-baal of Tzidon
Yehoshaphat	King of Judea; married off his son Yoram to Ataliah
Nabot	Relative of Ahab; Jezebel murdered him via plot so that Ahab could acquire his vineyard

The players - Generation 2:

Yehoram	Son of Ahab and Jezebel; King of Israel
Yoram	Son of Yehoshaphat; King of Judea; married Ahab/Jezebel's daughter Ataliah
Yehu	Massacred the household of Ahab and Jezebel, at the behest of the prophet Elisha

Was Jezebel Jewish?

1. Kings I 16:31

He emulated the sins of Yeravam ben Nevat without qualms, and he married Jezebel, daughter of Et-baal, king of the Tzidonim, and he went and worshipped the baal and bowed to it.

2. Jerusalem Talmud, Horiyyot 3:2

The king of Israel and the king of Judea are of equal status, neither greater than the other... Rabbi Yosi b"Rabbi Bun said: Only until Yehu ben Nimshi... From then on, they took it by force.

3. Ralbag to Kings I 16:31

The concept here is that she did not convert.

Jezebel's National Role

4. Kings I 18:4

When Jezebel destroyed the prophets of Gd, Ovadia hid 100 prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them bread and water.

5. Kings I 19:1-2

And Ahab told Jezebel what Eliyahu had done, and how he had killed the [idolatrous] prophets by the sword. Jezebel sent a messenger to Eliyahu, saying, "So may Gd do, and so may He increase, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like theirs."

6. Kings I 21:5-6

And his wife Jezebel came to him and spoke to him: Why is your spirit spoiled, and why don't you eat bread? He told her: I spoke with Nabot of Jizre'el and told him, "Sell me your vineyard for silver, or I could give you a vineyard in its place if you wish," and he said, "I won't give you my vineyard."

7. Kings I 18:19

And now, gather all of Israel to me, to Mount Carmel, and 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asheirah, who dine at Jezebel's table.

8. Malbim to Kings I 16:31

Worship of Baal was worse than that of the Asheirah, for in worshipping the Baal they slaughtered their sons and performed great revulsions, but the Asheirah were planted next to the altars with which they offered to Gd, too... Thus it says that he served the Baal because he married Jezebel, daughter of Et-baal, whose father worshipped the Baal, and she seduced him to it, but he practiced Asheirah himself. "And Ahab created the Asheirah" (Kings I 16:33) on his own.

9. Kings I 19:18

I will leave 7000 in Israel, the knees which did not kneel to Baal and the mouth which did not kiss it.

10. Talmud, Sanhedrin 102b

Rav Nachman said: Ahab was 'in between'. Rabbi Yosef challenged: Regarding one for whom it says, "There was none like Ahab who was sold to perform evil in Gd's eyes, as seduced by Jezebel his wife," and we learned, "Each day she would give gold coins to idols," you say he was 'in between'? Rather, Ahab was free with his money, and because he benefited scholars with his assets he achieved partial atonement.

11. Kings II 10:13

They replied, "We are brothers of Achaziah, and we have descended to greet the sons of the king and of the matron."

12. Malbim to Kings I 19:1

And she saw that the heart of Ahab was inclined to Eliyahu, finding him righteous, and so she did not wish to kill him immediately. She thought that during the night Ahab's heart would turn, and he would return to his wickedness.

The Lesson of Ahab and Jezebel

13. Tosefta, Sanhedrin 4:5

'He shall not have many wives' – like Jezebel, but he could have many like Abigail, per Rabbi Yehudah.

14. Talmud Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 10:2

Rabbi Levi taught this passage for ignominy for six months, "There was none like Ahab who was sold to perform evil in Gd's eyes." Ahab came to him at night and said, "How have I sinned to you or committed wrong before you? Do you only have the start of the sentence and not its end, 'as seduced by Jezebel his wife'?" He then taught it positively for six months.

15. Kings II 6:32

And Elisha was sitting at home with the elders, and he sent out a man before the messenger could arrive, and he said to the elders, "Have you seen that this son of the murderer has sent to remove my head!"

16. Kings II 9:10, 30-35

[And Elisha said...] "And Jezebel will be eaten by the dogs in the portion of Jezre'el, without burial!" And he opened the door and fled...

And Yehu came to Jezre'el and Jezebel heard and made up her eyes and beautified her head and looked out the window. And Yehu came to the gate and she said, "Greetings, [one who is like] Zimri, who killed his master!" And he looked up at the window and said, "Who is with me? Who?" And two or three officers looked out at him. And he said, "Throw her down!" And they threw her down, and some of her blood sprayed on the wall and the horses, and she was trampled. And he came and ate and drank, and he said, "Take care of this accursed one and bury her, for she is a king's daughter." And they went to bury her and found only her skull, feet and the palms of her hands.

17. Midrash, Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer 17

How do we learn to perform kindness for mourners? From Jezebel, whose home was near the market. When a body was brought through the market, she exited her home and struck the palms of her hands together and wailed with her mouth and walked ten steps. When a groom came through the market she exited her home and made music with the palms of her hands and praised with her mouth and walked ten steps. Eliyahu prophesied for her, "The dogs will eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezre'el," but the dogs could not affect the parts which practiced kindness.