

2ND KINGS

Week 14, chapters 10 and 11

The Book of 2nd Kings spends quite a lot of time recording the deeds of **Yehu** (Jehu), and then the 3 kings who come after him that forms his 4 generation dynasty. And the reason for this is that Jehu's reign (and, I think, his divine destiny) was to lead the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel into national judgment. All of the Lord's efforts to turn Israel away from their unfaithfulness and wickedness were rebuffed or ignored by the people and the leadership and so as YHWH eventually does, He stops trying and turns the page from warning to wrath. But Jehu's anointing as King of Israel was also to help set into motion the serious decline of the southern kingdom of Judah, who because of intermarriage between Jezebel's daughter Athaliah to Y'horam King of Judah so thoroughly infected Judah with the wickedness of idolatry that they could never recover.

Not unlike some cancer patients who become ill, and then have cyclical remissions that give welcome relief from the specter of the disease, the cancer often returns and in time again takes up its insidiousness with a vengeance; such would be the case for Judah. The cancer of Ba'al worship and other idolatries had become so deeply implanted, right down to the cellular level, within the minds and culture of the people and the leadership of Judah, that despite often heroic efforts by a few of Judah's kings and High Priests it was a losing battle and thus only a matter of time before the people relapsed and God's patience ended.

Thus although the outcomes would be the same Israel and Judah (exile from the land), the time tables would be different. Israel would depart first, and then Judah would follow around 130 years later.

As we concluded our previous lesson we found King **Yehu** enthusiastically (if not merrily) dashing about all over Israel to carry out his divinely ordained commission to destroy the House of **Achav** that had been ruling the northern kingdom since **Omri** took over. Since the Books of Kings and Chronicles are primarily historical in nature (and it is a critically important history for God's followers to know and understand) let me note for you that the Bible can be a bit confusing when referring to this particular dynasty because it is alternately called the House of **Achav** and the House of **Omri**. The reason for this dual designation is that **Omri** is **Achav's** father and although Omri was a wicked king, it was nothing compared to the depths of evil perpetrated by his son **Achav** (Ahab in most English Bibles). And the reason for this amazing fall off the slope of somewhat-evil (personified in Omri) into the valley of horribly-evil (personified by Ahab) was that Ahab married Jezebel.

And the thing to grasp is that Jezebel was a fervent Ba'al worshipper who was NOT a Hebrew. She was the daughter of the King of Sidon and determined to establish Ba'al as Israel's national god. And although most of Israel's earlier kings had also married foreigners, these foreign wives usually just formed a large harem that had no visible role and almost no influence in the governing of the Hebrew people. Rather these women were but the customary signs of a peace treaty having been instituted between the government of Israel and whatever kingdom these women were from (they were always the daughters of that kingdom's king).

But Jezebel was different. She was powerful and at least as visible as her husband, **Achav**. And from the several stories we've read about the royal couple, it is obvious that she was the real energy and force behind the throne. She could outmaneuver her childish husband with ease, override his decrees, and fix whatever he either botched or couldn't face. Her daughter, Athaliah, was a chip off the old block, but without the regal manner and cunning of the Queen Mother. Athaliah married the then-king of Judah, **Y'horam**, and with her mother as a role model Athaliah also played a powerful and visible role in the governing of Judah. There went the neighborhood; Judah was now looking an awful lot like the northern kingdom. And this is where we pick up our story in 2nd Kings 10.

RE-READ 2ND KINGS 10: 12 – end

Jehu was on his way to the capital city of Samaria when by serendipity he stumbled upon some hapless nephews of **Achazyah**, the recently killed King of Judah. However these 42 nephews didn't know that **Achazyah** was dead, and they particularly had no idea that it was Jehu who had killed their uncle the king. The bottom line is that King **Yehu**, being a military man, was not about to let this opportunity go to waste, so he captured them and had them all executed. Why, if **Yehu's** divine commission was to destroy the dynasty of King **Achav**, King of Israel, did he find it necessary to kill a bunch of nephews of the King of Judah? Because the King of Judah and the King of Israel were related by blood; the King of Judah was Athaliah's son. So indeed the House of **Achav** (remember, it is also at times referred to as the house or dynasty of Omri) extended into Judah's monarchy and killing these nephews of **Achazyah** was thus completely warranted and well within God's intent. Jehu had committed no sin in doing this.

As King **Yehu** resumed his journey to Samaria after his encounter with the 42 men, we read in verse 15 that he had another serendipitous meeting, this time with a fellow named **Y'honadav** (Jehonadab in most English Bibles). **Y'honadav** is further identified as being the son of **Rekhav**. The king is thrilled to have run into him and obviously knows this man well; he immediately offers him great respect for the purpose of wanting to ensure Jehonadab's allegiance and good will. The king goes so far as to ask Jehonadab to accompany him the

remainder of the journey to **Shomron** (Samaria) so that the king can prove to Jehonadab his loyalty to Yehoveh God of Israel, and his zealous desire to rid the land of Ba'al worship and reinstitute the rituals and worship of YHWH as the northern kingdom's national religion. In a rare show of brotherhood, demonstrating the great political need that Jehu saw in having **Y'honadav** firmly in his camp, he offers this man to ride next to him on the royal chariot. Such a demonstration was readily understood by all who saw the procession pass by: the king was putting **Y'honadav** on the level of a close and valuable friend and ally.

We're going to pause here awhile and take one of our occasional Torah Class detours to search out this mysterious fellow **Y'honadav** because who he is and what his heritage is, is not only fascinating, it will help to explain some later Biblical mentions of him and his tribal affiliations.

Let's begin by turning to the Book of Jeremiah.

READ JEREMIAH 35 all

First, who is Jeremiah? Jeremiah is a prophet that God raised up during the time of King Josiah of Judah, so that is about 200 years after the time we are studying in 2nd Kings chapter 10. **Yirmeyahu** (his Hebrew name) was born in 650 B.C. This is significant because it means that almost 3/4ths of a century has passed since God exiled the northern kingdom of Ephraim-Israel and scattered them throughout the vast Asian continent. By the time he matures and begins to prophesy around 100 years has passed since the Kingdom of Israel has become dispersed. So whatever he speaks, it is either about what happened to Israel (past tense) and what will happen to these 10 northern tribes (in the future) or it is about what is going to happen to Judah in just a few decades.

The punch line regarding this same **Y'honadav** that Jehu encounters is in Jeremiah verses 18 and 19, and Jeremiah speaks about the Lord God giving great merit to the **Rekhavim** (or in English, Rechabites), and this is because of what **Y'honadav** did. This of course begs the question: so just what did Jehonadab do? But a second question is who are the Rechabites, who he is said to belong to?

We find a partial answer to that question in 1st Chronicles 2, which is essentially a long and detailed genealogy of Israel. In the final verse of that chapter we read this:

CJB 1Ch 2:55-1

⁵⁵ *the families of scribes that lived in Ya'betz, the Tir'atim, the Shim'atim and the Sukhatim. These are the Kinim, who came from Hamat, father of the house of Rekhav.*

So; from 2nd Kings 10 we know that **Y'honadav's** father was **Rekhav**. In 1st Chronicles we now find out that a fellow named **Hamat** was **Rekhav's** father (Jehonadab's grandfather) and that his tribe or clan is called the **Kinim**. The English for the **Kinim** is the Kennites. But, who are the Kennites? The Kennites are the descendants of Moses' father in law, **Yitro** (Jethro). The great Bible heroine Jael, who drove a tent peg through the head of Sisra, an enemy military general during the era of the Judges, was also a Kennite (which explains why she did such a thing).

As to what **Y'honadav** did that was considered so righteous by God, we mainly get this statement from Jeremiah 35:14:

¹⁴ *The words of Yonadav the son of Rekhav which he ordered his offspring, not to drink wine, are obeyed; so to this day they don't drink any; because they heed their ancestor's order. But I have spoken to you, spoken frequently, and you have not listened to me. (Jer 35:14 CJB)*

What is so righteous about not drinking wine, since drinking wine was a completely permitted thing by Yehoveh and even required as part of many Levitical rituals? Essentially the Jehonadab led the Rechabites into taking on a vow that was part of the Nazarite vows of purity, but there was more. We find out in historical documents and scattered Bible passages that the Rechabites gave up the typical ways of settled life and became nomad-like. And the reasons for this are that **Y'honadav** and his clan the Rechabites were trying to emulate the ways of the ancient Israelites as led by Moses out in the wilderness. They were trying to go back in time and recapture the purer and simpler ways of Torah life. They saw how the Hebrews became polluted by the ways of the Canaanites in no time after entering the Promised Land, and they wanted to separate themselves from it so that they didn't become infected. And they felt the first step was to not live in the cities and villages with the Hebrews, but rather to live in tents (emulating Moses), nearby the Israelites but separately.

All that said, because of their ancient relationship to Moses (through his father in law Jethro), they had firmly embraced Yehoveh worship, followed the Torah, were intensely attached to the nation and people of Israel, and remained staunch allies even though they decided to live apart. And once again, the Lord thought to regularly commend them for it and used them as good examples of behavior and faithfulness.

I brought you here not just for the historical realities of the Rechabites who play a role in numerous places throughout Israel's history (in fact, even after Judah's return from Babylon, we find in the Book of Nehemiah that the Rechabites helped to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem), but also because they ought to be a first-class example for Christians to follow especially in regards to a relationship with Israel.

We ought to recognize that for (at least) gentile followers of Yeshua we are not called to be part of national Israel, but yet in a deeper level of a spiritual heritage connection we are intensely attached to Israel (the nation and the people). And we are not called to take on the Traditional Judaism of Israel, but yet we are called to take on the purer Torah principles of Israel. Like the Rechabites, we can rightly choose to live apart from national Israel, but yet stand with, and next to, Israel. We can recognize that those Hebrews who still reject Messiah Yeshua are not living as God wants them to, and so we live a different (and hopefully better) way. Nonetheless we are obliged to love Israel, comfort Israel, honor Israel, and be devoted to Israel's well being, and consider Israel in the same manner as did the Rechabites. And when we do, we receive the same sort of merit from God as did **Y'honadav** and his people.

Back to 2nd Kings 10; verse 17 explains that upon arriving in Samaria Jehu killed all the remaining descendants of the House of **Achav** that he could find and the Scriptures remind us that this was all in accord with the Lord's demand upon Jehu as a condition of his becoming a king. Once it seemed that he had completed that assignment, he turned his attention back to the matter of the Ba'al cult. And he did this in his usual clever manner by setting a trap for the Ba'al worshippers. Like King David, since **Yehu** was a military leader at heart, and had himself served in that capacity for many years, he had no interest in callously wasting the lives of his own troops to accomplish his goals, unlike many of Israel's kings before him. So he lied and deceived the Ba'al worshippers into thinking that he was an enthusiastic supporter; in fact, as much as Ahab had worshipped Ba'al, Jehu said he would love Ba'al even more.

So **Yehu** told the Ba'al leadership that there was to be a glorious gathering of all the Ba'al followers, from the laymen to the priests; and that this convocation was so import to Jehu that any Ba'al worshipper who didn't come would be killed. These would not merely be the Ba'al worshippers who resided in Samaria, but rather all of them who lived anywhere within his kingdom. The ruse worked and every known Ba'al worshipper obeyed their new king and came.

Verse 22 says that a special robe was given to each worshipper. It was rather standard among the Babylon Mystery Religions for the worshippers to wear special robes that were owned by the Ba'al Temple authority. The robes were stored there and when followers came to the Temple to worship and sacrifice they were handed out. However Jehu took no chances; he made it a royal decree that every Ba'al worshipper who came was to receive a robe to wear. No doubt the Ba'al priests were greatly excited at the opportunity to see so many robed

adherents gathered in a great gala in one place; but Jehu had different ideas. Because no follower of the God of Israel would ever don a Hebrew ritual robe (that was reserved for the priesthood), let alone wear a Ba'al robe, then it would be easy to separate the Ba'al followers from the Yehoveh followers.

Verse 23 once again brings **Y'honadav** into the picture, as he was still being shuttled around as a VIP so that he would be impressed by Yehu's dedication to wiping out the heathen rivals of Yehoveh. As the worshippers of Ba'al began to jam into the Ba'al shrine, Yehu ordered that no followers of the Lord were allowed to enter. Again, to the Ba'al people this felt like they were being given special preference, but it was actually for a much more deadly purpose.

Once all the Ba'al followers were inside and the burnt offerings began, the trap was sprung. 80 of Yehu's soldiers were stationed at the entrance to the Temple, and they were given the orders to go inside and kill every last Ba'al worshipper, prophet, and priest. To ensure that this was the end of Ba'al worship in Samaria and it would not be revived, the Temple and all its furnishing, idols, symbols and implements were destroyed. But even demolishing the place was not enough for the new king; he turned the place into a public toilet. Such an action would surely please all followers of Yehoveh and prove once and for all that Jehu worshipped only the God of Israel.

Unfortunately, even though King Jehu had indeed scrupulously followed through with his assignment to rid the land of Ba'al worship, this did not result in repentance towards God. Thus the proper service of Yehoveh didn't return to Israel. Rather we're told that essentially all King **Yehu** did was to return Israel to the Golden Calf cult instituted by Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom after the civil war that had split Israel into 2 separate kingdoms. Recall that Jeroboam was jealous and didn't want his subjects journeying from his kingdom up to Jerusalem to worship at Solomon's Temple under the authority of the Levitical priesthood there (since this was in the Kingdom of Judah). He was afraid that if that practice continued his own authority would be undermined. So essentially his purpose in building the Golden Calf shrines was not religious, but rather political. Once the Calves were built he forbade the people of the 10 northern tribes to travel to Jerusalem, and instead had the two Golden Calf idols installed with one of them in Beit El (towards the southern end of his kingdom) and the other at Dan (the northernmost end of his kingdom) with the explanation that this would make things so much more convenient for his Israelite people to go and worship and sacrifice. Interestingly, the Bible does not paint this activity as nearly as wicked as Ba'al worship. And this is because the Golden Calves were meant to be seen as representations of Yehoveh, not as different gods. So in other words, the sin of Jeroboam technically wasn't idolatry (as defined in that era); rather the sin was that he had a graven image of the God of Israel manufactured, which violated the 2nd Commandment.

Yet King **Yehu** was well aware that all of the recent prophets, Elijah and Elisha included, had denounced those Golden Calves as an affront to God, and that Jeroboam had also been

condemned because of it. But Jehu did it anyway and so he fell into serious sin almost immediately after being so stringently obedient.

Ironically, immediately after we're told of Jehu's serious sin concerning the reinstatement of Jeroboam's Calf worship, verse 30 has the Lord commending him for wiping out the family of **Achav** per divine instruction. The Rabbis have an interesting take on this; it is that this is an illustration of the principle that God does not withhold rewards because of sin. A person is rewarded for good deeds and punished for his bad deeds; but one doesn't cancel out the other. While I might add some caveats and nuances to that doctrine, in general I think that principle is correct and backed up by Old and New Testament writings. Good behavior is certainly not the means to salvation; but it is expected afterward. And after salvation, bad behavior may cause us to be disciplined or punished, but we don't have our salvation revoked as a result. Further, whether it is here on this earth and in this life, or later on in eternity, there are definitely rewards for God's followers for our good deeds, provided one defines "good deeds" as meaning doing the Lord's will according to His laws, principles and commandments.

Thus the Lord tangibly rewards Jehu with a promise of a dynasty for his faithfulness in destroying the House of Achav, and Ba'al worship. However due to his sin, that dynasty will be limited to but 4 generations. There is an underlying reason why 4 is the number of generations God chose to give **Yehu**. Why not 3, or 5, or 6? The reason is exposed in a God-pattern; the dynasty of **Achav** that Jehu had obediently destroyed had itself consisted of 4 generations; it started with **Omri**, passed to **Achav**, then to **Y'horam** and **Achazyah**. Thus we see a vivid illustration of God's character to give rewards measure for measure, and to give curses measure for measure. And that is why God gave Moses the commandment and principle of Lex Talionis: an eye for eye. Proportional justice, meted out measure for measure. This is how God operates, and so mankind should mimic that.

I'm not sure I can find the words to properly characterize the devastating statement that is opening statement of verse 32. The CJB says that it was during "those days" (meaning beginning with the reign of **Yehu** and then of the 3 generations of his family that follow him) that the Lord began to **dismember** Israel (referring only to the northern kingdom). The Hebrew word is **qatsah** and most literally it means to cut off or cut away; so the CJB translation give us the best sense of the meaning, I think, by saying dismembered. Two things were going to happen: first, Israel itself would be dismembered. Several of the 10 tribes would, over a 2 decade period, be taken out of the land and sent to populate other areas of the vast Assyrian Empire. The last of them would be exiled about 722 B.C. Second, the northern kingdom would be dismembered in the sense of being removed from the inheritance of the Promised Land; only Judah would remain. The northern kingdom ceased to exist in any form, and instead the land became a national province of Assyria who repopulated the place with many races of foreign people from various other conquered kingdoms and nations. It would essentially remain in that condition until the end of WW II.

Thus we're told that Haza'el began to attack Israel all along its borders; and the king of Aram especially focused on the Trans-Jordan Israelite territories that belonged to Reuben, Gad, and Manassah. Recall that just as God had ordered the anointing of Jehu as King of Israel, He also had ordered the anointing of Haza'el as King of Aram. In the last couple of chapters we now find out the Lord's purpose for these appointments was a negative one: these two men were to help lead Israel into destruction. One internally by further destroying Israel's national character, and one externally by attacking Israel's national territory.

This chapter ends with the death of Jehu (presumably after a full life span), when after ruling for 28 years his son **Y'ho'achaz** took over the throne, as God promised would happen.

Let's get started on chapter 11.

READ 2ND KINGS CHAPTER 11 all

The first words of this chapter sets us back on our heels a bit. Here we're told that when King **Achazyah** of Judah was killed, his mother Athaliah (Jezebel's daughter) set about killing the remainder of the royal family, of which she herself was part! The reason was simple; she was merely emulating what her deceased husband, **Y'horam**, had done immediately upon his coronation: he ruthlessly had all of his full and half-brothers executed. Athaliah had her eyes squarely on the throne of Judah and so rather than allow one of her son **Achazyah's** children to ascend as the new king she killed every last member of her own family, including her flesh and blood grandchildren, so that she would have no rival or opposition.

Although her bloodthirsty methods were evil and cold beyond the pale, she was actually but a tool in God's hands to further annihilate the dynasty of **Achav**; especially that part of it that had managed to metastasize into Judah.

The reality however is that she had no right to the throne of the southern kingdom; she was a woman and she was not of the tribe of Judah. Recall also that for Judah the only family that God gave the right to rule to was David's line. Athaliah was quite aware of this and so her goal was to wipe out whatever remained of David's descendants to clear a path for herself. Let us remember that even though **Achazyah's** biological mother was Athaliah, his father was **Y'horam** who was a descendant of David. In this era, especially as concerned royalty, one's lineage was generally determined by one's father, not one's mother as it is among the Jews today.

However, in her murder spree, she missed one. The Lord used a woman named Y'hosheva, a

sister of the deceased King Achazyah, to hide and care for an infant son of Achazyah in hopes that he could one day take the throne of Judah. The infant's name was Joash. We'll continue with how he managed to survive and become king in the next lesson.