



**KERs: Kings of the Northern Kingdom: Jeroboam I, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab;
Decadence & Decline: Influence of the Baal Cult**

- (58) What we will discover from the chart listing the kings of the divided monarchies is that with the exception of only Asa and Jehoshaphat, they all received negative KERs. Over a period of 90 years the national decline of both kingdoms was slowed only by these two Judean kings. To understand the bloody end to this period requires us to first remember that client nation responsibilities were preeminent upon these kings and, with the exception of only Asa and Jehoshaphat, they were derelict in the performance of their duties.
- (59) We will first note the KERs of the kings of Israel:

Jeroboam I. Son of Nebat \nē' bat\, an Ephraimite. He established national sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan as the chief centers of worship for Israel. He made two calves of gold as symbols of the strength and creative power of Jehovah and set them up in these two sanctuaries. Since the priesthood was opposed to this image-worship he instituted a new, non-Levitical priesthood. His policies appealed to the lower instincts of the masses that led them into the immoralities of heathenism and hastened the destruction of the nation. [ISBE: 3:1593-94]

King Evaluation Report:

1 Kings 13:33 -Jeroboam did not return from his evil way, but again he made priests of the high places from among all the people; any who would, he ordained, to be priests of the high places.

1 Kings 13:34 -And this event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blow it out and destroy it from the face of the earth.

Nadab: Reigned only two years before being assassinated by Baasha during the Battle of Gibberthon \gib' e-thon\.

KER:

1 Kings 15:26 -Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years.

v. 27 - And he did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin.

Baasha \bā' a-sha\: Son of Ahijah of the tribe of Issachar. He conspired against Nadab and assassinated him and then murdered the members of Jeroboam's entire household. He reigned 24 years.

KER:

1 Kings 15:34 - Baasha did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin.

Elah \ē' lah\: There was absolutely no stability in Israel during his brief reign. His administration started with wholesale murder and it ended with his own assassination by Zimri, the general of his armored forces.

KER:



1 Kings 16:12 -Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet,

v. 13 - for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols [**demons who violated the rules of engagement**].

Zimri \zim' rī: The commander of half of Israel's chariot corps under Elah and who used his position to plot the king's murder. Zimri chose the occasion when the Israeli army was involved in the siege of Gibbethon and Elah was in the depths of one of his habitual drunken debaucheries in the capital city of Tirzah and at the home of his steward, Arza, who managed his household and properties. It is assumed that Arza was in on the plot. Zimri murdered not only Elah but his entire family. This regicide won for Zimri the throne of Israel for a total of one week. As soon as the army heard of the coup d'état they proclaimed Omri king and marched to Tirzah and took the city. Zimri, not willing to be taken, committed suicide by setting fire to his palace. [ISBE: 4:3150]

KER:

1 Kings 16:18 -And it came about, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire, and died,

v. 19 - because of his sins which he sinned, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin.

Omri \om' rī: As a military strategist he saw the danger of keeping the capital of Israel in Tirzah which he proved was a military liability. He built a new capital city on the hill of Samaria, שֶׁמְרֹן shōm' rōn, which became the city of Samaria. Its superior strategic importance is evidenced by the sieges it endured repeatedly by the Syrians and Assyrians. Although Omri built a strong political kingdom he failed to revitalize the spiritual life of Israel. He is linked with the sins of his predecessor Ahab in Micah 6:16 and thus he is identified with promoting the worship of Baal.

Micah 6:15 - "You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; and the grapes, but you will not drink wine.

v. 16 - "The statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab are observed; and in their devices you walk.

v. 17 - "Therefore, I will give you up for destruction and your inhabitants for derision, and you will bear the reproach of My people."

[ISBE: 3:2192-93]

A synopsis of the Lord's punishment upon both Israel and Judah is provided by:

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1951), 176-77:

Micah chapter 6 is set up as a controversy between the Lord and His erring people. The chapter gives a contrast between the fitness and justice of God's requirements and the ingratitude and superstition of Israel which were the cause of her ruin and judgment.



God asks the people of Israel to accuse Him if they have any complaint. Had He wearied them by unusual requirements and excessive demands or by unfulfilled promises?

On the contrary, instead of wearying them the Lord has heaped blessings and tokens of His favor upon them. He has repeatedly wrought wonderful acts of deliverance on their behalf. The unforgettable act of God's goodness to them was His redemption of them from unbearable bondage in Egypt.

He sent Moses and Aaron before them. God provided them with the great law-giver; He placed over them a high priest.

These expressions of divine love toward the Israelites are a testimony to God's continuous benevolent grace which the citizens of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms had exchanged for the worship of Baal and had engaged in its horrific practice of child sacrifice. This practice is evident in the arrogant reply of the people to the divine appeal for repentance in:

Micah 6:6 - With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to him with burnt offerings with yearling calves?

v. 7 - Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 178-79:

The last question is the most desperate of all; it reveals to what lengths men are willing to go to gain the favor of God. Shall the penitent one offer up his firstborn of his transgression, thus delivering up the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul? The Law stated that the firstborn of both man and beast belonged to the Lord. (Exodus 13:2, 12) The sacrifice of children was forbidden under penalty of death (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; Deuteronomy 12:31; and 18:10). Furthermore, there is an indication here of the manner in which the heathen people began their practice of human sacrifice. (pp. 178-79)

Those who departed from the worship of the Lord did commit this outrage, as in the cases of ungodly Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and the godless Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6). Moabites and Phoenicians especially used such methods and efforts to appease their gods, as their literature clearly attests.

Though this practice was not common in Israel, it was nevertheless practiced by those who went into idolatry. (p. 179)

In Micah 6:9-16 the prophet moves to the subject of divine punishment for the flagrant blasphemy, apostasy, and idolatry practiced by both kingdoms. We resume our summary of the chapter by Dr. Feinberg:

Ibid, 180-81:

The rich man of the day practiced fraud and violence; lying was the constant companion of their cheating. They filled their homes with the proceeds of their wicked dealings. What a catalog: sins of covetousness, false balances, violence, lying, deceit, and other unrighteous business dealings. No wonder it is that the wrath of God was ready to fall upon them. (pp. 180-81)



For these sins the hand of the Lord has been heavily upon them. But the future holds more chastisement. They will have no satisfaction from the labor of their hands. Emptiness and famine will be in their midst. Attempts to save goods by removing them from the path of the enemy will be unavailing. Famine will stalk the land. There will be no oil with which to anoint themselves. The warm climate of Palestine necessitates the application of oil to the skin for comfort and pleasure.

Thus far it is clear they have not followed the explicit commands and statutes of the Lord. Whose statutes, then, have they kept? They have perversely followed the wicked ways of Omri and Ahab. Omri is singled out because he was the founder of Samaria and the idolatrous house of Ahab, as well as a sponsor of the wicked deeds of Jeroboam.

The godless rule of Omri was climaxed in Ahab who was in the Northern Kingdom the standing example of a government hateful to God. The works and counsels of Ahab were the introduction of the Baal and Asherah cults; the persecution of the prophets of God; and robbery and murder. From Israel idolatry entered the Southern Kingdom, so that both Jerusalem and Samaria are now guilty and will be made an astonishment, a hissing, and a reproach among their enemies. There is no bright side to the picture of sin. God sees it as it is and has prepared its punishment beforehand. (p. 181)

The evil of the Baal cult and its idolatrous rituals spread like a cancer throughout both kingdoms. They were in defiance of every divine mandate and strewn in their paths were the bodies of murdered prophets, the families of former kings, and any citizen who got in their way. It is no wonder that Omri received a negative KER.

KER:

1 Kings 16:25 -And Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, and acted more wickedly than all who were before him.

v. 26 - For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebar and in his sins which he made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel with their idols.

Ahab: The son of Omri who reigned 22 years. He was a shrewd politician who sought financial gain through foreign policy. The Phoenicians had a booming economy and he was determined to gain the advantage with its leaders. He solidified his alliance with his marriage to Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre. Through this union he not only established commerce in goods and services but also imported their religion as well. Jeroboam's golden calves were reduced to insignificance. Ahab established Baal as an equal to Jehovah, the God of Israel.

The extent to which Ahab and Jezebel accommodated the Baal cult is the subject of an article in:

Orr, James (ed.). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 1:79:



Ahab built in Samaria a temple to Baal and in it erected an altar to that god, and at the side of the altar a pole to Asherah. On the other hand he tried to serve Jehovah by naming his children in his honor—Ahaziah (“held by Jehovah”), Jehoram (“Jehovah is high”), and Athaliah (“Jehovah is strong”). However, Ahab failed to realize that while a coalition of nations might be advantageous, a syncretism of their religions would be disastrous. He failed to apprehend the full meaning of the principle, “Jehovah alone is the God of Israel.” In Jezebel, his Phoenician wife, Ahab found a champion of the foreign culture. She was a patron of the prophets of Baal and of the devotees of Asherah. At her instigation the altars of Jehovah were torn down. She inaugurated the first great religious persecution of the church, killing off the prophets of Jehovah with the sword. In all this she aimed at more than a syncretism of the two religions; she planned to destroy the religion of Jehovah root and branch and put that of Baal in its place. In this Ahab did not oppose her. Wrong religious principles have their counterpart in false ethical ideals and immoral civil acts.