
1KINGS 21: 1 After these things, Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

Ahab covets the vineyard of Naboth, and wishes to have it either by purchase or exchange, 1Kgs 21:1, 1Kgs 21:2. Naboth refuses to alienate it on any account, because it was his inheritance from his fathers, 1Kgs 21:3. Ahab becomes disconsolate, takes to his bed, and refuses to eat, 1Kgs 21:4. Jezebel, finding out the cause, promises to give him the vineyard, 1Kgs 21:5-7. She writes to the nobles of Jezreel to proclaim a fast, to accuse Naboth of blasphemy, carry him out, and stone him to death; which is accordingly done, 1Kgs 21:8-14. She then tells Ahab to go and take possession of the vineyard; he goes, and is met by Elijah, who denounces on him the heaviest judgments, 1Kgs 21:15-24. Ahab's abominable character, 1Kgs 21:25, 1Kgs 21:26. He humbles himself; and God promises not to bring the threatened public calamities in his days, but in the days of his son, 1Kgs 21:27-29.

Verse 1

After these things - This and the twentieth chapter are transposed in the Septuagint; this preceding the account of the Syrian war with Ben-hadad. Josephus gives the history in the same order.

1KINGS 21: 2 Ahab spoke to Naboth, 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."

Verse 2

Give me thy vineyard - The request of Ahab seems at first view fair and honorable. Naboth's vineyard was nigh to the palace of Ahab, and he wished to add it to his own for a kitchen garden, or perhaps a grass-plot, גן ירק gan yarak; and he offers to give him either a better vineyard for it, or to give him its worth in money. Naboth rejects the proposal with horror: The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to thee. No man could finally alienate any part of the parental inheritance; it might be sold or mortgaged till the jubilee, but at that time it must revert to its original owner, if not redeemed before; for this God had particularly enjoined Lev 25:14-17, Lev 25:25-28 : therefore Naboth properly said, 1Kgs 21:3, The Lord forbid it me, to give the inheritance of my fathers. Ahab most evidently wished him to alienate it finally, and this is what God's law had expressly forbidden; therefore he could not, consistently with his duty to God, indulge Ahab; and it was high iniquity in Ahab to tempt him to do it; and to covet it showed the depravity of Ahab's soul. But we see farther that, despotic as those kings were, they dared not seize on the inheritance of any man. This would have been a flagrant breach of the law and constitution of the country; and this indeed would have been inconsistent with the character which they sustained, viz., the Lord's vicegerents. The Jewish kings had no authority either to alter the old laws, or to make new ones. "The Hindoos," says Mr. Ward, "are as strongly attached to their homesteads as the Jews were. Though the heads of the family be employed in a distant part of the country, and though the homesteads may be almost in ruins, they cling still to the family inheritance with a fondness bordering on superstition."

1KINGS 21: 3 Naboth said to Ahab, "May the LORD forbid me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!"

1KINGS 21: 4 Ahab came into his house sullen and angry because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He laid himself down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

Verse 4

He laid him down upon his bed - Poor soul! he was lord over ten-twelfths of the land, and became miserable because he could not get a poor man's vineyard added to all that he possessed! It is a true saying, "That soul in which God dwells not, has no happiness: and he who has God has a satisfying portion." Every privation and cross makes an unholy soul unhappy; and privations and crosses it must ever meet with, therefore: - "Where'er it goes is hell; itself is hell!"

1KINGS 21: 5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sad, that you eat no bread?"

1KINGS 21: 6 He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' He answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

1KINGS 21: 7 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 Naboth the Jezreelite."

Verse 7

Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? - Naboth, not Ahab, is king. If he have authority to refuse, and thou have no power to take, he is the greater man of the two. This is the vital language of despotism and tyranny.

1KINGS 21: 8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles who were in his city, who lived with Naboth.

Verse 8

She wrote letters in Ahab's name - She counterfeited his authority by his own consent; and he lent his signet to stamp that authority.

1KINGS 21: 9 She wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

Verse 9

Proclaim a fast - Intimate that there is some great calamity coming upon the nation, because of some evil tolerated in it.

Set Naboth on high - Bring him to a public trial.

1KINGS 21: 10 Set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king!' Then carry him out, and stone him to death."

Verse 10

Set two men - For life could not be attained but on the evidence of two witnesses at least.

Sons of Belial - Men who will not scruple to tell lies and take a false oath.

Thou didst blaspheme God and the king - Thou art an atheist and a rebel. Thou hast spoken words injurious to the perfections and nature of God; and thou hast spoken words against the crown and dignity of the king. The words literally are, Naboth hath Blessed Clod and the king; or, as Parkhurst contends, "Thou hast blessed the false gods and Molech," ברכת אלהים ומלך And though Jezebel was herself an abominable idolatress; yet, as the law of Moses still continued in force, she seems to have been wicked enough to have destroyed Naboth, upon the false accusation of blessing the heathen Aleim and Molech, which subjected him to death by Deu 12:6; Deu 17:2-7. The first meaning appears the most simple.

Many think that the word בָּרַךְ barach signifies both to bless and curse; and so it is interpreted in most Lexicons: it is passing strange that out of the same word proceedeth blessing and cursing; and to give such opposite and self-destructive meanings to any word is very dangerous. Parkhurst denies that it ever has the meaning of cursing, and examines all the texts where it is said to occur with this meaning; and shows that blessing, not cursing, is to be understood in all those places: see him under בָּרַךְ, sec. vi.

1KINGS 21: 11 The men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them.

1KINGS 21: 12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

1KINGS 21: 13 The two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him. The base fellows testified against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king!" Then they carried him out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones.

Verse 13

And stoned him with stones - As they pretended to find him guilty of treason against God and the king, it is likely they destroyed the whole of his family; and then the king seized on his grounds as confiscated, or as escheated to the king, without any heir at law. That his family was destroyed appears strongly intimated, 2Kgs 9:26; Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, And the Blood of His Sons, saith the Lord.

1KINGS 21: 14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned, and is dead."

1KINGS 21: 15 When Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

Verse 15

Arise, take possession - By what rites or in what forms this was done, we do not know.

1KINGS 21: 16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

1KINGS 21: 17 the LORD's word came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

1KINGS 21: 18 "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwells in Samaria. Behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it.

Verse 18

Go down to meet Ahab - This was the next day after the murder, as we learn from the above quotation, 2Kgs 9:26.

1KINGS 21: 19 You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you killed and also taken possession?"' You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs will lick your blood, even yours.'"

Verse 19

In the place where dogs licked, etc. - It is in vain to look for a literal fulfillment of this prediction. Thus it would have been fulfilled, but the humiliation of Ahab induced the merciful God to say, I will not bring the evil in his days, but in the days of his son, 1Kgs 21:29. Now dogs did lick the blood of Ahab; but it was at the pool of Samaria, where his chariot and his armor were washed, after he had received his death wound at Ramoth-gilead; but some think this was the place where Naboth was stoned: see 1Kgs 22:38. And how literally the prediction concerning his son was fulfilled, see 2Kgs 9:25, where we find that the body of Jehoram his son, just then slain by an arrow that had passed through his heart, was thrown into the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; and there, doubtless, the dogs licked his blood, if they did not even devour his body. There is a similar idea of the propriety of punishment overtaking the culprit in the place where he had committed the crime, expressed by Orestes to Aegisthus, Soph. Elect. 1495. - Χωρει δ' ενθαπερ κατεκτανες Πατερα τον αμον, ως εν ταυτω θανης. - Go where thou slew'st my father,

That in the self-same place thou too may'st die.

1KINGS 21: 20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD."

Verse 20

Thou hast sold thyself to work evil - See a similar form of speech, Rom 7:14 (note). Thou hast totally abandoned thyself to the service of sin. Satan is become thy absolute master, and thou his undivided slave.

1KINGS 21: 21 Behold, I will bring evil on you, and will utterly sweep you away and will cut off from Ahab everyone who urinates against a wall, and him who is shut up and him who is left at large in Israel.

1KINGS 21: 22 I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah for the provocation with which you have provoked me to anger, and have made Israel to sin."

1KINGS 21: 23 The LORD also spoke of Jezebel, saying, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel."

Verse 23

The dogs shall eat Jezebel - This was most literally fulfilled; see 2Kgs 9:36. The carcasses of poor Hindoos, and of persons who have received public punishment, are thrown into the rivers, and floating to the side, are devoured by dogs, vultures, and crows.

1KINGS 21: 24 The dogs will eat he who dies of Ahab in the city; and the birds of the sky will eat he who dies in the field."

1KINGS 21: 25 But there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

Verse 25

Did sell himself to work wickedness - He hired himself to the devil for this very purpose, that he might work wickedness. This was to be his employment, and at this he labored.

In the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up - A good wife is from the Lord; a bad wife is from the devil: Jezebel was of this kind; and she has had many successors.

1KINGS 21: 26 He did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

1KINGS 21: 27 When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

Verse 27

He rent his clothes - He was penetrated with sorrow, and that evidently unfeigned.

Put sackcloth upon his flesh - He humbled himself before God and man.

And fasted - He afflicted his body for his soul's benefit.

Lay in sackcloth - Gave the fullest proof that his repentance was real.

And went softly - Walked barefooted; so the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic. The Vulgate has demisso capite, "with his head hanging down." Houbigant translates went groaning. Jarchi says that the word וַיֵּלֶךְ at, used here, signifies to be unshod. This is its most likely sense. All these things prove that Ahab's repentance was genuine; and God's approbation of it puts it out of doubt. The slow and measured pace which always accompanies deep and reflective sorrow is also alluded to by Aeschylus, where the Chorus are thus shortly addressed on the defeat of Xerxes. - Aesch. Pers. 1073. Γοασθ' ἀβροβαταί "With light and noiseless step lament."

1KINGS 21: 28 the LORD's word came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

1KINGS 21: 29 "See how Ahab humbles himself before me? Because he humbles himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil on his house."

Verse 29

Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself - He did abase himself; he did truly repent him of his sins, and it was such a repentance as was genuine in the sight of God: He humbleth himself Before Me.

The penitent heart ever meets the merciful eye of God; repentance is highly esteemed by the Father of compassion, even where it is comparatively shallow and short-lived. Any measure of godly sorrow has a proportionate measure of God's regard; where it is deep and lasting, the heart of God is set upon it. He that mourns shall be comforted; thus hath God spoken, and though repentance for our past sins can purchase no favor, yet without it God will not grant us his salvation.