

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION TO 1 KINGS 16

This chapter contains a prophecy of the ruin of the family of Baasha, and an account of his death, (^{<1161>}1 Kings 16:1-7), and of his son's reigning in his stead two years, who was slain by Zimri one of his captains, (^{<1168>}1 Kings 16:8-14), and who reigned but seven days, (^{<1165>}1 Kings 16:15-20), and the people being divided between Tibni and Omri, the party for the latter prevailed, and he was made king, and reigned twelve years, (^{<1162>}1 Kings 16:21-28), and was succeeded by his son Ahab, a very wicked prince, (^{<1169>}1 Kings 16:29-33), and the chapter is concluded with the rebuilding of Jericho, (^{<1164>}1 Kings 16:34).

Ver. 1. *Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu the son of Hanani, etc.*] The seer that reprov'd Asa, (^{<4467>}2 Chronicles 16:7), so that this man was the son of a prophet then living, and was a young man; for we hear of him several years after reprov'g Jehoshaphat, (^{<4462>}2 Chronicles 19:2), and as a writer of history, (^{<4484>}2 Chronicles 20:34), the prophecy that came to him from the Lord was

against Baasha; king of Israel:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 2. *Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, etc.*] From a very low estate, and mean family:

and made thee prince over my people Israel; as they were of right, and ought to have been; and though Baasha got the kingdom by treachery and murder, yet the translation of the kingdom to him was according to the appointment of God, and by his overruling providence; and even his act of killing Nadab was a fulfilment of a prophecy of his; and had he done it in obedience to the will of God, and in vengeance for his sin, would not have been blameworthy, since then he would have been an executioner of the, justice of God:

and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; committing and encouraging the same idolatrous practices, so very provoking to God.

Ver. 3. *Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house,* etc.] By death, there shall be none of his family remaining in any branch of it:

and I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat; execute the same judgment on it, and in the same manner, their sins being alike.

Ver. 4. *Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat, and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat.*] They should not have burial, which is just the same that was threatened to and executed on Jeroboam's family, (^{<1144b>}1 Kings 14:11).

Ver. 5. *Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*] As those of Jeroboam and Nadab were, (^{<1144b>}1 Kings 14:19 15:31).

Ver. 6. *So Baasha slept with his fathers,* etc.] Or died, not a violent, but natural, death:

and was buried in Tirzah; where was the royal palace of the kings of Israel:

and Elah his son reigned in his stead; yet but a short time.

Ver. 7. *And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, came the word of the Lord against Baasha, and against his house,* etc.] Which is here repeated, as Abarbinel thinks, because in the former prophecy the threatening was on account not of his own sin, but because he made Israel to sin; but here it is because of his own evil works, as it follows:

even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam: worshipping the golden calves as they did:

and because he killed him; either Jeroboam; for, according to Dr. Lightfoot^{f350}, he was alive this year; rather Nadab the son of Jeroboam, who it is certain was slain by Baasha; though it may refer, as Abarbinel

thinks, to the whole house of Jeroboam; though it was agreeable to the will of God, yet was not done by Baasha with any regard to it, but to gratify his malice and ambition, and therefore punishable for it.

Ver. 8. *In the twenty sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years.*] Not complete, for he died in the twenty seventh of Asa, (^{<1160>}1 Kings 16:10) he reigned just the time that Nadab the son of Jeroboam did, (^{<1155>}1 Kings 15:25).

Ver. 9. *And his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots,* etc.] His military chariots; there were two captains of them, and this was one of them; so the Targum,

“one of the two masters or captains of the chariots:”

conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of his house in Tirzah; who had the charge of his wine and other liquors, to which he was addicted beyond measure; and this was a fit opportunity for Zimri to fall upon him, and slay him, when he was drunk, and off his guard, and his army at the same time was besieging Gibbethon, (^{<1165>}1 Kings 16:15) so that there was a very great likeness in what befell the family of Baasha, to that of the family of Jeroboam; for as the son of the one, and of the other, reigned but two years, so they were both slain by their servants, and both at a time when Gibbethon was besieged; the Targum takes this Arza to be the temple of an idol so called, near the royal palace.

Ver. 10. *And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him,* etc.] When in his drunken fit: and this was

in the twenty seventh year of Asa; when Elah had not reigned two full years:

and reigned in his stead; that is, Zimri; his reign was short indeed, but seven days, (^{<1165>}1 Kings 16:15).

Ver. 11. *And it came to pass when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne,* etc.] Perhaps the very first day,

that he slew all the house of Baasha; his whole family, all the children that he had, that there might be none to make pretensions to the throne:

he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks nor of his friends; not any that might avenge the blood of his family, that might have a right or inclination to do it.

Ver. 12. *Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet.*]

That not only his posterity, but all any way related to him, should be cut off; yea, it seems to have been carried further, even to all that were in any connection with him in point of friendship, (see ^{<116B>}1 Kings 16:3).

Ver. 13. *For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son,* etc.] By which it appears that the son trod in the steps of his father, and was therefore cut off:

by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities; their idols, which had nothing in them, and cannot be of any service to their worshippers; and to serve such, and neglect the worship of the true God, and draw others into the same iniquity, must be very provoking to the most High.

Ver. 14. *Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*] (see ^{<116B>}1 Kings 16:5).

Ver. 15. *In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah,* etc] Until the army under Omri came and took the palace, and destroyed him:

and the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belongeth to the Philistines; it was besieged in Nadab's time, but upon his death, by Baasha, the siege was raised; or however, if then taken, it was recovered by the Philistines, and now besieged again by the Israelites, (see ^{<115Z>}1 Kings 15:27).

Ver. 16. *And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king,* etc.] Tidings came to the army of what he had done, which was displeasing to them:

wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp; that is, all Israel that were in the army proclaimed Omri, their general, king; just as the Roman army declared Vespasian, their general, emperor of Rome, and as several of the emperors were chosen.

Ver. 17. *And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him,* etc.] He, and the army under him, broke up the siege of that place, and marched to Tirzah; which, according, to Bunting^{f351} were thirty six miles distant from each other: and they besieged Tirzah; the royal city, in which Zimri was.

Ver. 18. *And it came to pass, that when Zimri saw that the city was taken,* etc.] That Omri, and the army with him, had got into it, being a place not much fortified, and Zimri not having force enough to defend it against such an army:

that he went into the palace of the king's house; into the innermost and most splendid, as well as the strongest part of it:

and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and he died; that he might not fall into the hands of his rival, who he might fear would use him ill, and that he might not enjoy the royal palace; though Kimchi thinks that Omri set fire to the palace, and burnt it over the head of Zimri, in which he perished; and this sense the text will bear.

Ver. 19. *For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord,* etc.] In the former part of his life, as well as now:

in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did to make Israel sin; worshipping the golden calves, which he might do while a captain of the chariots, and also since he usurped the crown, sacrificing to them by way of thanksgiving, for being in possession of the kingdom; and though his reign was so short, he might give plain and strong intimations that he should continue the worship of idols.

Ver. 20. *Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the kings of Israel?*] What he did both before and after his usurpation, during the seven days he was king, and the manner of his conspiracy, and success in it.

Ver. 21. *Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts,* etc.] About the succession in the kingdom:

half the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king: these were the friends of Zimri, or however such who did not like that the army should impose a king upon them; who this Tibni was is not said:

and half followed Omri; the general of the army, perhaps the whole of that.

Ver. 22. *But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath, etc.*] Very probably they had a battle, in which the latter were worsted:

so Tibni died; in the battle:

and Omri reigned; took possession of the throne, his rival being slain.

Ver. 23. *In the thirty first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel twelve years, etc.*] Which are to be reckoned not from the thirty first of Asa; for Ahab the son of Omri began to reign in his thirty eighth year, and so his reign would be but seven or eight years; but they are reckoned from the twenty seventh of Asa, the beginning of it, when Elah was slain by Zimri, and he died, which to the end of the thirty eight of Asa make twelve years; for the division, according to the Jewish chronology ^{f352}, lasted four years; Jarchi says five ^{f353}; and from the beginning of that his reign is reckoned, though he did not reign over all Israel, or completely, until the thirty first of Asa, when Tibni died:

six years reigned he in Tirzah; the royal city of the kings of Israel, from Jeroboam to this time, and the other six he reigned in Samaria, built by him, as in the next verse.

Ver. 24. *And he bought the hill of Samaria of Shemer, for two talents of silver, etc.*] A talent of silver, according to Brerewood ^{f354}, was of our money three hundred and seventy five pounds, so that this hill was purchased at seven hundred and fifty pounds:

and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria; its name from him was Shomeron, which is the Hebrew name for Samaria; which, according to Bunting ^{f355} was six miles from Tirzah, and ever after the royal seat of the kings of Israel.

Ver. 25. *But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, etc.*] Openly and publicly, as if it were in defiance of him:

and did worse than all that were before him; taking no warning by the judgments inflicted on them, which aggravated his sins; and besides, he not only worshipped the calves, as the rest, and drew Israel by his example into the same, as they did, but he published edicts and decrees, obliging them to

worship them, and forbidding them to go to Jerusalem, called “the statutes of Omri”, (^{<3166>}Micah 6:16).

Ver. 26. *For he walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, etc.]* Worshipping the calves;

to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities; these, and whatsoever idols else were worshipped by him, (see ^{<1163>}1 Kings 16:13).

Ver. 27. *Now the rest of the acts of Omri, which he did, and his might which he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?]* Where those of the preceding kings were written, (see ^{<1149>}1 Kings 14:19 15:31 16:5,14,20).

Ver. 28. *So Omri slept with his fathers, etc.]* Died a natural death:

and was buried in Samaria; the city he had built, and now the royal seat and metropolis of the kingdom:

and Ahab his son reigned in his stead; of whom much is said in the following history.

Ver. 29. *And in the thirty fifth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel, etc.]* At the latter end of it, the same year his father died, (see ^{<1163>}1 Kings 16:23)

and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty two years; the same number of years Jeroboam did, (^{<1149>}1 Kings 14:20).

Ver. 30. *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, above all that were before him.]* Adding other idols to the calves, and those more abominable than they; since the other kings pretended to worship God in them, but he worshipped other gods besides him, as the following verses show.

Ver. 31. *And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, etc.]* To worship the golden calves he set up:

that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians; who is called Ithobalus and Itobalus king of the Tyrians, by Heathen historians ^{f356}; and, by Theophilus of Antioch ^{f357}, Juthobalus, priest of Astarte; for Tyre and Zidon were under one king. This woman was not

only of another nation, and an idolater, but a very filthy woman, and is made the emblem of the whore of Rome, (⁽⁶¹²⁾ Revelation 2:20)

and went and served Baal, and worshipped him that is, went to Zidon and Tyre, and worshipped his wife's gods, which were either Jupiter Thalassius, the god of the Zidoaians, or Hercules, whom the Tyrians worshipped.

Ver. 32. *And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.*] That he might not go so far as Tyre or Zidon; and for his wife's convenience also he built a temple in Samaria for Baal, and erected an altar there to offer sacrifices upon it unto him; so open and daring was he in his idolatrous practices.

Ver. 33. *And Ahab made a grove,* etc.] About the temple of Baal, or elsewhere, in which he placed an idol, and where all manner of filthiness was secretly committed; or rather "Asherah", rendered "grove", is Astarte, the goddess of the Zidonians, an image of which Ahab made:

and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him: his idolatries being more open and barefaced, and without any excuse, presence, or colour, as well as more numerous.

Ver. 34. *And in his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho,* etc.] Which was forbidden by Joshua under an anathema; but this man, either ignorant of that adjuration of Joshua, or in contempt and defiance of it, and knowing it might please the king and queen, set about the rebuilding of it; and it being done by the leave and under the authority of Ahab, is mentioned together with his wicked actions:

he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn: that is, his firstborn died as soon as he laid the foundation of the city, but this did not deter him from going on with it:

and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub; all the rest of his children died as he was rebuilding the city, until only his youngest son was left, and he was taken off by death just as he had finished it, signified by setting up the gates of it: all which was

according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun: between four hundred and five hundred years ago. It was after this a

place of great note, and so continued many hundreds of years; (see Gill on “~~Joshua 6:26~~”^{f358}) but is now, as Mr. Maundrell says^{f358}, a poor nasty village of the Arabs.