

## Jezebel's Ambition

*But Ahab son of Omri did what was evil in the LORD's sight more than all who were before him. Then, as if following the sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat were a trivial matter, he married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and then proceeded to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he had built in Samaria. - 1 Kings 16:30-32 HCSB*



There are three main reasons that many people have come to associate Jezebel with lewd sensuality. Jehu associated her with prostitution as well as witchcraft,<sup>1</sup> the Bible describes Jezebel as painting her eyes and adorning her head,<sup>2</sup> and another woman who was metaphorically addressed as “Jezebel” incited sexual immorality among God’s children.<sup>3</sup>

However, there is neither any indication that she was ever unfaithful to her husband, nor does the Bible explicitly say that she expected to seduce Jehu with her makeup. In fact, the opposite would seem to be true because as he rode up she challenged him calling out, “*Do you come in peace, Zimri, killer of your master?*”<sup>4</sup> She was referring to a chariot captain who had killed a king and usurped his throne but ended up having the shortest reign of all the kings – seven days. She clearly was not out to seduce Jehu!

So if Jezebel’s principal sin was not sexual in nature, what was it? I believe it was her naked, unadulterated ambition. She was the daughter of King Ethbaal of Tyre and Sidon. She likely grew up a pampered Phoenician princess in the city of Tyre which had been established around 2750 BC.<sup>5</sup> As such, she was used to the king wielding absolute control.

She ended up in a political marriage with Ahab who, as an Israeli king, did not have nearly as much power over his people as her father did over his. When Naboth refused Ahab, she was likely disgusted by his childish behavior and moved to increase the throne’s authority and power by having Naboth killed.<sup>6</sup> She clearly enunciated her goal when she told Ahab, “Now, exercise your royal power over Israel.”<sup>7</sup>

Phoenician royalty was based on its control of the national religion of Baal worship. This worship was centered on the need for rain and entailed ritual prostitution. It doesn’t take a lot of imagination to see the connection between the sexual act and the rain bringing life to the earth. However, Baal worship’s principal goal was to keep the king on the throne.

Jezebel’s ambition led her to slaughter the Lord’s prophets,<sup>8</sup> lie, cheat, steal, instigate perjury and lead an entire nation into systematic prostitution. The result was that her husband did not keep the throne, her oldest son Ahaziah only reigned two years<sup>9</sup> and died under God’s judgment<sup>10</sup>. Her second son, Joram, was shot in the back running away and his body dumped on the plot Ahab had stolen<sup>11</sup>, and Jezebel herself died horribly.<sup>12</sup>

Ill-gotten gains do not profit anyone, but righteousness rescues from death.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 9:22  
<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 9:30  
<sup>3</sup> Revelation 2:20  
<sup>4</sup> 2 Kings 9:31  
<sup>5</sup> According to Herodotus  
<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 21:1-15  
<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings 21:7  
<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings 18:4  
<sup>9</sup> 1 Kings 22:40  
<sup>10</sup> 2 Kings 1:2-17  
<sup>11</sup> 2 Kings 9:22-29  
<sup>12</sup> 2 Kings 9:32-37  
<sup>13</sup> Proverbs 10:2

