

69 Jezreel

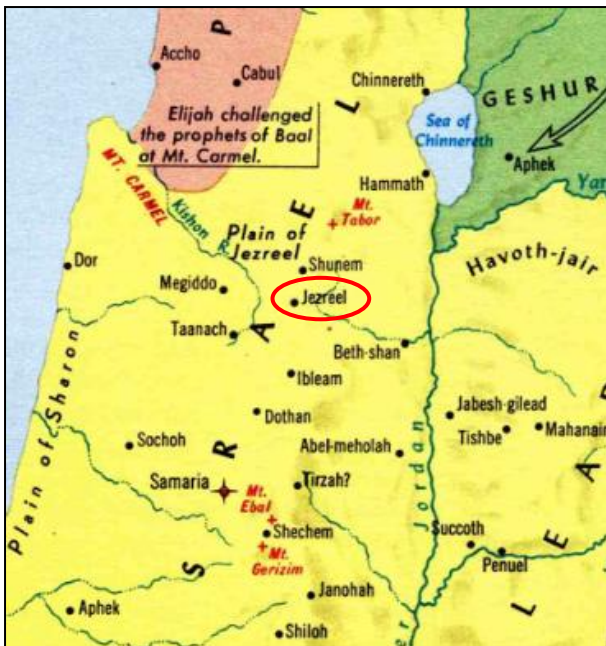
Names (also known as)

Arabic - Zir'in, Ze'rin

Etymology

Strong's H3157 - Hebrew: יזרעאל *Yizre'el* - "God soweth".

Location/Description



Jezreel was an Israelite city and fortress originally within the boundaries of the Tribe of Issachar, and later within the northern Kingdom of Israel. According to 1 Kings 21, the royal palace of King Ahab in Jezreel was adjacent to the vineyard of Naboth. Prior to the division of the united Kingdom of Israel, the city was also the hometown of Ahinoam, first wife of King David.

The modern archaeological site is located on a low hill on the southern edge of the Jezreel Valley's eastern edge in northern Israel.

Jezreel probably served as Ahab's and Jezebel's summer palace (Amos 3:15) because the temperatures were cooler than in Samaria.

Scriptural references

Old Testament

Josh. 15:56; 19:18; 1 Sam. 25:43; 29:11; 2 Sam. 4:4; 1 Kings 4:12; 18:45,46; 21:1,23; 2 Kings 8:29; 9:10,15,16,17,30,36,37; 10:1,6,7, 11; 2 Chron. 22:6.

Famous characters

Ahinoam, Ahab, Jezebel, Naboth, Elijah, Jehu, Bidkar



Looking east towards Mt Gilboa from Jezreel

Brief History

Jezreel was a 9th-century BC fortress possibly built during the reign of King Omri but certainly active in the reigns of King Ahab and his consort Queen Jezebel and their son King Jehoram. It was destroyed soon afterward, possibly by the Syrians in the late 9th-century. The pottery found in the fortress during the dig all dates to this brief period.

As recounted in 2 Kings 9:1-37, after Jehu killed King Jehoram, he confronted Jezebel in Jezreel and urged her eunuchs to kill Jezebel by throwing her out of a window. They complied, tossing her out the window and leaving her in the street to be trampled by Jehu's chariot horses and eaten by dogs. Only Jezebel's skull (thinking), feet (walk), and hands (works) remained, proving too much even for scavenging dogs.

In 2 Kings 10:8 Jehu ordered the murder of 70 descendants of Ahab, and had their heads sent to the new king in Jezreel and piled up "in two heaps at the gate entrance."



The "breathtaking views" that the site commands to the north and east are considered to have been of strategic importance in Israelite times because the commercial and military highway from Egypt to Syria and Mesopotamia passed through Megiddo, Bethshan and along the Jezreel Valley. Water was supplied by cisterns inside the walls and by the spring of 'En Jezreel northeast of the fortress. Because of the strategic location, ample water supply, and excellent grazing in the Jezreel Valley, archaeologists believe that Jezreel was the base for King Ahab's chariot corps and cavalry.

The murder of Naboth

Jezreel will always be tarnished with the murderous plot of Jezebel against Naboth the Jezreelite (1 Kings 21). Naboth refused to sell his vineyard next door to Ahab's summer palace because he believed in the principle of Lev. 25:23 – “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.”

Naboth would not sell the inheritance of his fathers to anyone, not even a king. The principle was that of Prov. 22:28 – “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” It applies equally today to those who have a heritage in the truth.

Ahab was crushed by a degree of conscience and became surly and angry. Jezebel had no such scruples. She rebuked Ahab for weakness and took the law into her own hands. She wrote to the elders of Jezreel from Samaria ordering the fake exaltation, and then sudden public humiliation of Naboth among the townspeople. This was achieved by false accusation. Naboth and his sons (who would have inherited his land if alive) were murdered (2 Kings 9:26), leaving Naboth's widow bereft and homeless. Ahab seized the vineyard he desired, but was met there by Elijah the prophet with a message of condemnation from Yahweh.

Though Ahab humbled himself before Yahweh in the wake of Elijah's prophecy, the judgements fell severely on his house. Jehu, one of his captains was anointed by Elisha to perform the work of annihilating the house of Ahab, a work he performed with great relish, beginning at Jezreel.

It was from here that he wrote letters to the departed elders of Jezreel who were now ensconced in Samaria caring for Ahab's 70

descendants, demanding their heads be brought to the gate of Jezreel and deposited adjacent to the vineyard of Naboth.

So was played out one of the most graphic examples of Divine poetic justice in the history of Israel. The men of Jezreel who had connived with Jezebel to destroy the heritage of Naboth were required to destroy the entire family of Ahab and Jezebel. “God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7). Men reap what they sow. Jezreel means “God will sow”, and He had sown there – in the family of Naboth. His heritage had been destroyed for the time being, but will flourish again in the Kingdom when Naboth returns to an inheritance in the Land which will never be taken from him again.

Jezreel in more recent times

Jezreel was the site of a Byzantine-era village, a Crusader-period village belonging to the Knights Templar, and an Arab period village named Zir'in (derived from the ancient name Jezreel). A "beautiful Crusader church still stands largely intact. Benjamin of Tudela visited Jezreel in 1165 AD and reports that a Jewish man "a dyer by profession" lived there. It was the site of a large Ottoman-era fortified tower. During the Israeli War of Independence the village of Ze'rin "became a central base for Arab forces" and was therefore conquered and the site cleared.

Sources:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jezreel_\(city\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jezreel_(city))

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)