

Lesson 7: Ahab and the Northern Kingdom



PROFILE-EASTON ILLUSTRATED DICTIONARY

Ahab -The son of Omri, whom he succeeded as the seventh king of Israel. Ahab became king of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned for twenty-two years, according to 1 Kings. E. R. Thiele offered the dates 874–853 BC. Ahab lived in Samaria, the royal capital established by Omri, and built a temple and altar to Baal. His history is recorded in [1Ki 16-22](#). His wife was Jezebel who exercised a very evil influence over him. To the calf-worship introduced by Jeroboam he added the worship of Baal. He was severely admonished by Elijah for his wickedness. His anger was on this account kindled against the prophet, and he sought to kill him. He undertook 3 campaigns against Ben-hadad II., king of Damascus. In the first two, which were defensive, he gained a complete victory over Ben-hadad, who fell into his hands, and was afterwards released on the condition of his restoring all the cities of Israel he then held and granting certain other concessions to Ahab. After three years of peace, for some cause Ahab renewed war ([1Ki 22:3](#)) with Ben-hadad by assaulting the city of Ramoth-gilead, although the prophet Micaiah warned him that he would not succeed, and that the 400 false prophets who encouraged him were only leading him to his ruin. Micaiah was imprisoned for thus venturing to dissuade Ahab from his purpose. Ahab went into the battle disguised, that he might if possible, escape the notice of his enemies; but an arrow from a bow "drawn at a venture" pierced him, and though stayed up in his chariot for a time he died towards evening, and Elijah's prophecy ([1Ki 21:19](#)) was fulfilled. He reigned twenty-three years. Because of his idolatry, lust, and covetousness, Ahab is referred to as pre-eminently the type of a wicked king ([2Ki 8:18](#); [2Ch 22:3](#); [Mic 6:16](#)).

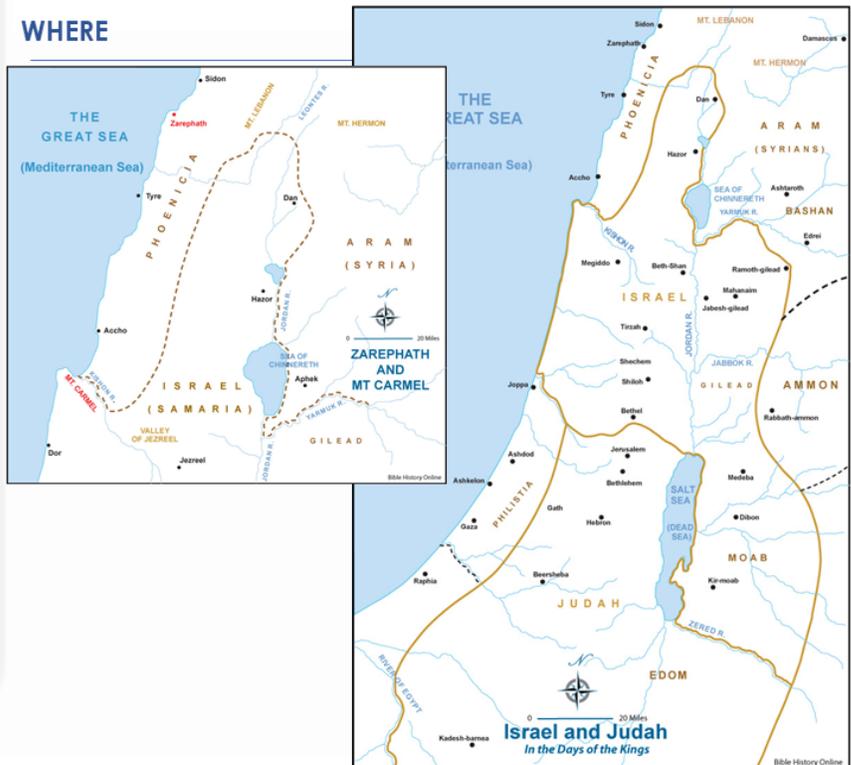
AHAB AND THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

WHEN IN TIME

Mark Location on Timeline discussed in the lesson

Archaeological Periods Levant	Chronological Date	Historical Events	Biblical Historical Event	Bible Periods
Late Bronze Age III	1300-1200 BC			Judges
Iron Age IA	1200-1150 BC	Philistine Invasion of Egypt 1177 BC		Judges
Iron Age IB	1150-1000 BC			Judges/United Kingdom
Iron Age IIA	1000-925 BC	Syrian Threat	Shishak Invasion ~925 BC	United Kingdom
Iron Age IIB	925-722 BC	Assyrian Empire		Divided Kingdom
Iron Age IIC	722-586 BC	Assyrian Empire	Fall of Northern Israel 722 BC	Judah Alone
Babylonian Period	586-538 BC	Babylonian Empire	Fall of Jerusalem 586 BC 1 st Return to Judah 538 BC	Exile/Captivity

WHERE



Jeroboam and the Golden Calves: I Kings 12:25-33

The Lord brought about the division of the United Kingdom at Shechem. Jeroboam was the first king of the Northern Kingdom or Israel. Because he feared the people would return to Rehoboam due to worshipping in Jerusalem, he established his own worship centers and practices. From the bible passage what archaeology remains might give us further insight into the passage?

Mark what you expected to be added to Bible by archaeology?

Archaeology can add to Bible Event:	
Build confidence in general trustworthiness, historical nature and reliability of Bible	
Confirm events described in Bible	
Clarify/Correct/Provide Understanding about our assumptions and conclusions about the past	
Complement or Enhance our knowledge of events, customs and people	
Prove a given event or people mentioned in the Bible	

The Omri Dynasty: 1 Kings 16:21-33

Omri, the commander of the army under Zimri founded a dynasty in which the nations around about Israel think of all future kings as coming from him. His son married Jezebel of Sidon and he did more to provoke the Lord than any king before him. From the bible passage what archaeology remains might give us further insight into the passage?

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Ahab and Naboth's Vineyard and the False Prophets: 1 Kings 21:1-27 & 1 King 22:1-47

In the recounting of Ahab and Naboth's vineyard we have a glimpse into the mind of Ahab and how Jezebel added to his evil ways. Also we see his interaction with the prophets. From the bible passage what archaeology remains might give us further insight into the passage?

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Mesha the King Moab and Jehu's Rebellion: 2 Kings 3:1-27 & 2 Kgs 9:14-37

Besides building the Temple and his own house he is described as building whatever he desired. From the bible passage what archaeology remains might give us further insight into the passage?

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Digging Deeper into Bible and Archaeology – The following material is provided as reference material or as a deeper discussion and is optional for preparation for the class.

The Old Testament devotes approximately four chapters to **Ahab's** exploits (1 Kgs 18, 20-22), more than any other king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Ahab is perhaps the most famous of the kings of the separate kingdom of Israel. The son and successor of the evil King Omri, Ahab became a pioneer and champion of evil. The Bible does not have much good to say about Ahab because he married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethba'al, king of the Sidonians. Recently the seal of this Phoenician queen, who had such an effect on Ahab, may have been found; carved in strikingly Phoenician style, it is inscribed with the name Jezebel. According to 1Kgs 16:31-33, Ahab erected a temple in Samaria to Baal with a Baal altar and an image of the female goddess Asherah. Not content with Jeroboam's golden calf cult, Ahab sponsored Baal and Asherah worship, introduced by his evil wife, Jezebel. Rituals of the Baal and Asherah cults involved detestable practices, including prostitution, homosexual prostitution, and human sacrifice of children. As a result of these actions, the Bible states that Ahab did more evil in the sight of the LORD "than all who were before him" (1Kgs 16:30).

Ahab was a real person who reigned over the northern kingdom of Israel from 871-852 B.C.E. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser III indicates that he defeated Ahab and eleven other kings in the Battle of Qarqar. Ahab joined a coalition of states that halted a major Assyrian advance into Syria in 853 B.C. at the famous battle at Qarqar on the Orontes River. According to an inscription of Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.), who led the Assyrian troops, the allied coalition of 12 kings was headed by the king of Damascus (Ahab's old enemy) and the king of Hamath. Other units were furnished by various kings of Syria and Phoenicia. Supporting troops even came from Egypt and Arabia. Ahab was right there as one of the leaders with the kings of Damascus and Hamath. Ahab supplied 2,000 chariots, more than any other member of the coalition (Damascus supplied 1,200, and Hamath, 700). Ahab also contributed 10,000 infantry troops to the coalition (the same number as Hamath; Damascus contributed 20,000). Shalmaneser III records admit that he faced the same coalition on three subsequent occasions. Much good Ahab's alliance with Damascus did him, because it was Ben Hadad of Aram (Syria) who later killed Ahab in battle. In 1 Kings 22:29–38

Shalmaneser finally subjugated the northern kingdom of Israel. Jehu the usurper who is immortalized on the Black Obelisk. Jehu, "son of Omri" becomes a symbol of Shalmaneser's dominance and the ultimate fall of his long-time enemy, Israel. From the cuneiform caption, which reads "Jehu, son of Humri [Omri]," the prostrated figure in the second register is generally regarded as Jehu of Israel, who brought or sent tribute to Shalmaneser in 841 B.C. Ever since Edward Hincks identified this person with biblical Jehu (2Kgs 9:1-10:27) in 1851, scholars have been discussing the enigmatic affiliation of this Israelite king. According to the Bible (2Kgs 9:2-20), Jehu was not related to Omri, who established a new dynasty after a period of political turmoil in Israel. Rather, Jehu usurped the throne from Omri's grandson, Joram, and expunged Omri's other descendants, founding his own dynasty.



According to the Bible, Ahab's rule was prosperous and he was a great builder. The findings of archaeology bear this out. We are told that he built a palace at Samaria and decorated it with ivory (1 Kgs 22:39). Excavations at Samaria have laid bare Ahab's palace. An earlier palace was built on the acropolis by Ahab's father Omri (1 Kgs 16:24). It was surrounded by a wall 5 ft thick. The royal quarter was later expanded by building a casemate (hollow) wall 32 ft wide outside the earlier wall. This is believed to be the work of Ahab. Within the compound was a building dubbed 'the ivory house' where many fragments of carved ivory plaques were found. This represents the most important collection of miniature art from the kingdom period found in Israel. The ivories appear to be remains of inlay originally placed on furniture in the palace of Ahab and later Israelite kings. Another interesting feature found in the royal compound was a pool in the northwest corner which could possibly be the pool referred to in Scripture where Ahab's chariot was washed. Ahab is credited with fortifying a number of cities in his kingdom (1 Kgs 22:39). At Megiddo, Stratum IVA has been attributed to this king. Prominent structures associated with Stratum IVA, include an offset-inset fortification wall 12 ft wide, large pillared buildings, a palace, and a water system which included a 260 ft long tunnel. At Hazor, Stratum VIII is dated to the time of Ahab. As at Megiddo, the city was totally rebuilt at this time. A solid fortification wall 10 ft wide was constructed, along with a citadel, a large pillared building, and an underground water system. At Tel Dan, a well-preserved city gate was constructed in the days of Ahab in Stratum III. The high place, originally constructed by Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 12:28-30) and destroyed by Ben-Hadad king of Aram (1 Kgs 15:20), was reconstructed at this time.

Ahab's father Omri is referenced in the Moabite Mesha Stele. The Mesha Stela, erected by Mesha, king of Moab, refers to Omri and his son, who oppressed Moab in the ninth century B.C. These references to Omri in extrabiblical sources seem to indicate that the northern kingdom of Israel emerged as a major regional power in Syria-Palestine under Omri, perpetuating his name in Assyria, and eventually *house of Omri* became synonymous with the northern kingdom of Israel in Assyrian royal inscriptions, even when Israel's kings no longer came from his lineage.

Jeroboam II.

God granted the Israelites relief is not explained in 2 Kings 14:27. Only a few particulars are revealed in these verses. Jeroboam II took Damascus, the Aramean capital, and Hamath. These cities (and their surrounding territory) had belonged to Yaudi (Judah) in the days of David and Solomon but not since that time. By controlling this area Jeroboam II undoubtedly also recovered all of Israel's Transjordanian territory which Hazael had seized (cf. 10:32–33), thus making Israel the largest country on the eastern Mediterranean coast. Jeroboam II's victories were accomplished because Damascus had been weakened by attacks from the Assyrians to their northeast under *Adad-nirāri* III (cf. 13:5). Also Assyria was weak at this time, suffering from the threat of attack from the Urartu people on their northern frontier, internal dissension, and a series of weak rulers. Jehoash had been a successful military strategist (cf. 14:11–14), and his son Jeroboam II evidently inherited his father's abilities and even surpassed him. During Jeroboam II's reign the Prophets Amos and Hosea ministered in Israel (Amos 1:1; Hosea 1:1). Their prophecies give additional insights into life in Israel during Jeroboam's reign. Jeroboam II died in 753 B.C. and his son Zechariah ... succeeded him (cf. 2 Kings 15:8–12).