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Omri King of Isra'el
First Kings 16: 21-28

Omri king of Isra'el DIG: What opposition did Omri face? How long was the power struggle? What kind of a leader was Omri? What kind of a spiritual leader was he? What were the major accomplishments of Omri's reign as king? What does his twelve year reign say about him? How was he more evil than Jeroboam?

REFLECT: Are you facing formidable opposition in any area of your life right now? What do you think of the believers who tried to kill Hitler? What is the difference between killing and murder? How should believers handle power struggles? How do you handle power struggles? What is the direction of your heart?

Omri was the epitome of evil.



The background of the king: **The death** of **Zimri** did not automatically place the kingdom in **Omri's** hand. **At this point the people of Isra'el divided into two factions. Half of the people went after Tibni the son of Ginath to make him king, while the other half,** which included the army, **followed Omri. Tibni's** strength can be seen in that **he** was able to oppose **Omri** successfully for six years **(885-880 BC)**. **But** eventually **the faction supporting Omri won out over that of Tibni and he became king (880-874 BC). Omri's** army support apparently proved decisive, and the author gives us a short summary of events . . .

so Tibni died. It was in the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah that Omri began his reign over Isra'el, and he ruled for twelve years, but the first **six years of his** reign, **Omri** ruled in the old capital of **Tirzah (First Kings 16:21-23).**

The significance of the king: There is another **king** to consider, and he was the worst **king** of all. If **Elah** was a drunkard (**to see link click Dq – Elah King of Isra'el**), and **Zimri** was a murderer (see **Dr – Zimri King of Isra'el**), then **Omri** was the epitome of evil. The fact that **he** followed **Zimri** in such rapid succession is an obvious sign that things were falling apart. Down in Judah, everything was peaceful, as wise **King Asa** continued to reign, decade after decade (see **Dk – Asa's Reforms**). But up in **Isra'el** there was a rapid succession of rulers.

After defeating **Tibni** and securing the crown, **Omri** constructed a new capital city, **Samaria**. This was probably **Omri's** most impressive achievement. **He bought Mount Samaria from Shemer for 132 pounds of silver. On the mountain he built a city, which he named Samaria after Shemer, who had owned the mountain.** This **city** was placed on a strategic and centrally located site overlooking the major commercial routes of the Esdraelon Plain and proved to be almost impregnable as a stronghold against foreign attacks because of its elevated position of 330 feet **(First Kings 20:1-21; Second Kings 6:24-25** and **18:9-10)**. **It** was therefore easily defended and quite accessible to merchants and traders. **Samaria** remained **Isra'el's** capital until Assyria plundered the city in 722 BC.[397] While none of the northern **kings** are righteous (see **Dn – The Kings of Isra'el**), **Omri** was significant. **He** built a new capitol, made an alliance with Tyre, and placed **his son, Ahab**, on the throne. **He** thereby provides a stable dynasty for **Isra'el**. **Ahab** will become one of the major characters in the rest of **First Kings**.

Humanly speaking, **Omri** was a great man. **He** was such a strong leader that **he** was anointed the next **king** by popular demand. After a time of political and military instability, **he** was able to unify **his** kingdom and establish relative peace with the southern kingdom of Judah. As a result, was a political success and a famous man who made **his** mark on history. This is confirmed by documents from ancient Assyria, which refer to **Isra'el** as "the land of **Omri**." **His** dynasty lasted for three generations.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise for **Your** eternal steadfast love and that **You** are a **God** who never changes. **The Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow (James 1:17c). You** are always loving and seek to*

*reward those who love **You** for their deeds done out of love **(First Corinthians 3:11-15)**. Thank you that everyone alike is judged and rewarded by heart attitude, and not by earthly wealth.*

***Yeshua** tells the story of a "rich man" who had much earthly money but no one can bring money to heaven, so he died a "poor fool" for he had thought of how long eternity is and how important it is to save in the bank of heaven. **And Yeshua told them a parable, saying: The land of a certain rich man produced good crops.And he began thinking to himself, saying, 'What shall I do? I don't have a place to store my harvest!' And he said, 'Here's what I'll do! I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I'll store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'O my soul, you have plenty of goods saved up for many years! So take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry."' But God said to him, 'You fool! Tonight, your soul is being demanded back from you! And what you have prepared, whose will that be?' So it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich in God" (Luke 12:16-21** and **16:19-31)**. **You** are worthy O great **Lord** and **Savior** for us to give **You** our best time, talents and money. The interest **You** pay for heavenly deposits is "out of this world"! In **Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

The summary of his reign: Although **he** reigned for **twelve years** and was a capable administrator, the author's spiritual evaluation of **Omri** is even worse than that of **his** predecessors. Not only did **he** perpetuate the spiritual **sins** of **Jeroboam** (see **Dd – Golden Calves at Dan and Bethel**), but also **his** ties with Phoenicia subjected **Isra'el** to its pagan social and religious practices.[398] **Omri did what was evil from ADONAI's perspective, outdoing all his predecessors in wickedness; for he lived entirely in the manner of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, committing the sins with which he made Isra'el sin, thereby angering ADONAI the God of Isra'el with their worthless idols. Other activities of Omri and the power he demonstrated are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Isra'el (1 Kgs 16:24-27).** The summary of **his** reign could be simply be put under the heading of "idolater." **He** took the throne, **he sinned**, **he died**. Almost everything else is unimportant.[399]

The death of the king: Though **Omri** is passed over quickly in **First Kings, he** was a powerful and politically effective **king**. Although spiritually bankrupt, **his** strong government and administration earned recognition by the Assyrians, who for the next one-and-a-half centuries still referred to **Isra'el** as "the house of **Omri**." **Then Omri slept with his ancestors** in sh'ol**,** but **he was** the first one **buried in**

Samaria, and Ahab his son became king in his place and **Isra’el** will go from the pan to the fire **(First Kings 16:28).**

This is the way things often go in a fallen world, both personally and internationally. The kings in the northern kingdom of **Isra’el** followed **Omri’s** evil pattern for generations. Choices have consequences, and when it comes to **sin** and righteousness, things do not always stay as they are. Apart from the grace of **God**, they generally go from bad to worse. We see this in the moral degeneration of our own times. The human race is incapable of its own moral improvement, as the twentieth century demonstrated so convincingly.

What shoud concern us more than the trends of history, though, is our own spiritual condition. What will our own lives or our families look like a genertation from now if **YHVH** doesn’t intervene? Whatever else we may accomplish, **God** will look to see whether we have a heart for **Him**. Earthly accomplishments have their place in life, and even the Bible acknowledges that **Omri** was a great builder. But **ADONAI** is most concerned with character and the direction of a person’s heart. The biblical author isn’t saying he’s unaware of **Omri’s** achievements; he’s saying they don’t matter. Do the passions that drive you only elicit a yawn from heaven?