

4. Heavy and displeased.—Sullen and angry. Ahab had built a new palace in Jezreel and desired to have Naboth's vineyard, which lay quite near it, in order to lay it out as a part of the grounds. "A garden of herbs" might be rendered "a park of shrubbery." It was not to raise vegetables for the kitchen that the king wanted it, but to enlarge his pleasure grounds, and complete the idea of the palace and its surroundings which he had laid out in his mind.—hence his deep disappointment at his failure. He had come personally to see Naboth in reference to the matter, and the offer which he made to him seems perfectly fair. But if he made this offer knowing that Naboth would deem it a sin to sell, then his conduct was wrong.

The Jezreelite.—Although Naboth is thus named from the city where he dwelt, he was no doubt an Israelite, and from his speech he was a worshipper of Jehovah. **I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers.** He was not holding the land for a higher price; he had conscientious reasons for refusing to sell.

(1) The sale of land, except as the last resort of extreme poverty, was forbidden by the law. Lev. 25: 23-28; Num. 36: 7-9. Jehovah was the original possessor of the whole land, and he had made a free gift of it to Israel on certain conditions, one of which was that it should always remain in the families to which it had been assigned. When it was sold under compulsion, it must return at the year of jubilee, which would not have been practicable in this case. Perhaps by this time the land had largely fallen into disuse, and was thought of only by a man specially loyal to Jehovah.

(2) Naboth had a patriotic desire to hand down in his own line what had come to him from his fathers. Even in this country it is hard to sell the old homestead, but in an older land many more memories gather around a home and its gardens and fields.

Turned away his face.—Ahab, although an enterprising man in some things, had a vein of pitiable weakness in him, which appears in this pouting like a spoiled child. Perhaps his sorrow was in part assumed, to awaken the sympathy of his stronger wife.

5.—Jezebel apparently missed Ahab from the dining hall, and went in search of him. She

shows a commendable wifely concern for him.

6.—Ahab does not tell her the reason which Naboth gave for his refusal to sell. They do not seem to have made much impression on his mind, or else he thought that Jezebel being a foreigner would not understand them.

7. Dost thou now govern.—You are only playing at being king of Israel if you allow a little thing like this to stand in your way. **I will give thee.**—These words ring with her usual energy and force of character which we cannot help admiring even although we abhor the means which she employed.

8. Seal.—The seal was used for purposes of identification from a very early period. This one probably contained the name of the king. In any case, it was equivalent to his signature, and made these letters a royal mandate. This suggests that Ahab was aware of what she was doing, but it is not absolutely certain.

9. Proclaim a fast.—The object of this ordinance was to give the impression that the city was under a curse, or was at least threatened with one because of some undiscovered sin, which must be removed or averted by public humiliation. 2 Sam. 21: 1. Josh. 9: 11-15. The prophets often call a fast for such a cause. Joel 1: 14; 2: 12; I Sam. 7: 5-6; 2 Chron. 20: 3. Of such a fast a public assembly was a part. Joel, 2: 15. The feelings of the people of Jezreel would thus be excited by the thought that something of far more than ordinary importance had occurred, and the wicked deed which the queen proposed would be clothed with all the solemnity of a religious act.—Milligan.) **Set Naboth on high.**

Either (1) place him at the bar of the public tribunal as an accused person to be tried; or (2) give him a position of honour as an elder of ancient lineage. (Josephus.) If the latter interpretation be the true one it would give a color of impartiality to the proceedings. A deeper horror would be awakened by a charge of impiety brought against one who occupied so exalted a position, and it would accord also with the idea of retributive justice that Naboth should be denounced at the very hour of his special honour.—(Hammond.)

10. Two men.—This was required by the Mosaic law. (Deut. 17: 6; 19: 15; Num. 35: 30.) Even Jezebel bears witness to the Pentateuch. (Wordsworth.) **Sons of Belial**—Belial is