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JEZEBEL: A RE-READ OF THE NARRATIVES FROM THE QUEEN'S VANTAGE POINT

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Abstract

Jezebel, a princess and priestess of the Phoenicians who worshiped Baal, marries the Israelite king. The name Jezebel has been associated with various forms of wickedness, including prostitution, wickedness, murder, and the new term the Jezebel Spirit, which has come to mean everything unfavourable about marriage. Jezebel is also the name of a biblical queen who was wicked and cunning, wild, ruthless, and self-centered. Jezebel was undoubtedly a formidable force to reckon with. This paper utilized the historical and descriptive approaches in its research and explains Jezebel's legacy as that of a remarkable lady who lived in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and under the wrong circumstances. The study posits that Jezebel, evaluated from an unbiased perspective, can be appreciated for the greatness that she was. For good or for evil, Jezebel was one of the most n influential women of the Bible. The paper suggests that knowledge of biblical hermeneutics and criticism would help in better understanding Jezebel's character as one of the most powerful women in the Bible at a time when women had few rights or opportunities. Jezebel was a formidable woman who should be remembered as one of the greatest women of her day and not as a depraved figure who attempted to overthrow a nation.

Keywords: Jezebel, Ahab, Naboth, Strong-willed, Powerful Queen.

Introduction

According to Stark and Van Deventer (2009) in Cultural representations of Jezebel, Southern women in the United States of America define Jezebel as a cheap-harlot, scheming, promiscuous, a female gigolo, a biblical queen, evil and treacherous, wicked, wild, uninhibited, cute, happy, slinky, powerful, calculating, ambitious, ruthless, and self-centered. Is this all that there is to Jezebel? Just a sneaky manipulator? How did she perhaps fool the King of Israel? These are a few of the concerns that must be resolved before the biblical heroine Jezebel is burned at the stake. Her only offence was that she obeyed what she was taught and brought up into. Jezebel was a Phoenician princess and priestess who worshiped Baal. Her only crime was that she followed what she had been taught and born into. Jezebel was a Phoenician princess and priestess who worshiped Baal. Her father, Ethbaal, was not only a King but also a Priest of Baal, so Jezebel was raised in both the palace and the temple.

According to the biblical portrayal of Jezebel, she was also a good daughter who was devoted to her religion, culture, and faith. She was a religious zealot who could legitimately claim to be a "born again" Christian. If the tables had been turned and she had been born into Judaism, Jezebel would have been worshiped and adorned as the best woman in biblical times simply for promoting her religion. Aside from religion, Jezebel's power and roles as a mother, wife, and even daughter should be emulated and given a positive position in modern times. Gaines in Joshua (2020) claims that there is more to this complex ruler than the standard interpretation allows. To gain a more positive view of Jezebel's troubled reign and a better understanding of her role, we must consider the motivations of the biblical authors who condemn the Queen. Furthermore, we must read the story from the Queen's point of view. As we piece together Jezebel's world, a more complete picture of this fascinating woman emerges. The story is not pretty, and many, if not most, readers will be disturbed by Jezebel's actions. However, her character may not be as dark as we believe. Her evil is not always as obvious, undisputed, and unrivalled as the biblical author would have us believe.

Jezebel: The Phoenician Princess, Priestess and The Queen of Israel

The name Jezebel has been attributed with all manner of evilness, including prostitution, wickedness, murderer, and the new term the Jezebel Spirit, which has come to mean everything negative in marriages. According to Howe (2022), Jezebel has had a notoriety for more than two thousand years as the bad girl of the bible, the wickedest of women. The ancient queen has been termed a murderer, a prostitute, and an enemy of God, and though she is more than that. Even though Jezebel has been branded as a wicked, nasty, prostitute killer, Michael (2008) admits that Jezebel is one of the most fascinating women in the Scripture, a blood-stained but powerful, politically clever, and fearless woman. King Ahab of the northern Kingdom of Israel marries the Phoenician princess who worshiped Baal, the heathen deity of fertility. After convincing him to accept her strange religion, she becomes caught up in a bloody religious war that ultimately results in her death. But there is plenty about this old queen to adore.

There is no scriptural proof that Jezebel was a prostitute or an unfaithful wife despite the harlot allusions, yet the stigma of immorality has been attached to her for more than 2,000 years. Biblical allegory is one theory. The writers of the Old Testament frequently compared wanton sexuality to the worship of false gods and alien deities (Michael, 2008). Babylon was a magnificent metropolis, according to Claude (2022), who also observes that "the foundations of most of Western civilisation lay in Babylonia, the Ancient Civilization of South Iraq. Because of its rich history, Alexander the Great intended to establish Babylon as his global capital. The biblical authors, however, have legitimately downplayed Babylon's splendour. Babylon is portrayed by Jeremiah as a city of transgressions, "Each of you, flee from the midst of Babylon and preserve your lives! Do not perish because of her sin (Jeremiah 51:6). "Babylon the mighty, the mother of prostitutes and of the evil things of the world," is how the New Testament describes Babylon (Revelation 17:5). Jezebel, the Phoenician princess who wed Israel's King Ahab, experienced the same thing. The writers of the Bible bothered to downplay Jezebel's importance and that of Babylon.

Because the authors of 1-2 Kings were devoted followers of Yahweh who disagreed with her philosophical and political stances, their portrayal of Jezebel is centred on the horrible acts she committed. Because Jezebel was shown in the biblical text from the viewpoint of those who

disagreed with her and her foreign religious beliefs, the material concerning Jezebel is entirely negative. Jezebel was not a native. From this perspective, Claude (2022) adds that Jezebel was assessed from the outside due to her faith, and the result was unpleasant and undesirable. However, recent study has attempted to break this relationship, and Jezebel is now more often regarded as a powerful woman who refused to submit to what she perceived as the repressive character of her husband's religious society and actively sought to alter it.

Jezebel had another side that most readers of her narrative miss: she was a vivacious lady who stood out from many other women of her period. Jezebel's narrative would read entirely differently if it were told from the viewpoint of a Phoenician or a Baal worshipper. When Omri forged a partnership with Phoenicia, Jezebel arrived in Israel. When his son Ahab wed Jezebel, the connection was finalized (Claude, 2022).

A Re-Read of the Narrative from the Queen's Vantage Point

Although Jezebel is not a Persian name because the Persian Empire did not exist until many years after Jezebel, it is historically conceivable that she did worship Baal, the deity of tyres, as indicated by both her and her father's names. The term, which you may find in a contemporary Hebrew lexicon, זְבֶל means "dung." The names of Baal were frequently distorted by biblical authors. For instance, consider Saul's son's name. He used to go by the name Ishbaal, but it was changed to Ishbosheth. Jezebel experienced the same thing. According to Howe (2022), "the term Jezebel is probably a two-layered parody," as it is stated in the Bible. The phrase "Where is the Prince?" was originally pronounced *ʾî-zĕbūl*," which means "No nobility." Baal's name Zebul was later changed to Zebel, which means "dung." The name Jezebel was "modified to demonstrate the disrespect of the biblical writers" Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal King of Tyre, according to Claude (2022). She wed King Ahab of Israel in order to cement a relationship between the two countries. Baal cult initiation was brought to Israel by Jezebel. By marrying Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, in 874 BC, Ahab had already solidified his father's connection with Phoenicia, following Solomon's example of interfaith unions (Bradshaw, 1999). Jezebel sent 500 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah to Israel to spread her religion (1 Kings 18:19). She was undoubtedly brought up to revere the gods of her home country.

Ethbaal participated in the worship of the goddess Astarte as both a King and a Priest. Therefore, it seems likely that Jezebel served as a high priestess at the Baal temple. Jezebel was a princess by birth, and she enjoyed the comforts of the palace while wielding significant power over Tyre's politics, economy, and religious life. Jezebel thought that the reason for her abundant life came from Baal. Jezebel was eager to establish herself as Israel's deity when she arrived in Israel. Though it is impossible to confirm her conduct outside of the biblical scriptures and to the extent to which she resisted Yahwehism. Jezebel, however, is portrayed in the Bible as the model of royal female authority and as a threat to Israel and Judah's ability to form an alliance as well as a threat to the historical Kings.

She should be viewed as a strong, independent lady who, in the face of opposition from her people, adhered tenaciously to her convictions. She remained steadfast in her convictions despite what the mob shouted and did. This is also agreed upon by Howe (2022), who stated, citing the first-century writer Josephus, that Ethbaal was a Priest of Astarte, the main Phoenician goddess Jezebel, and that she may have been a Priestess as a child since she was

the King's daughter. She was undoubtedly brought up to revere the gods of her home country. Jezebel's fervour for her deity Baal may have been influenced by the fact that her father was a priest before he rose to power. Randy (2013) contrasts in this way Her main goal was to convert the Israelites to the faith of her gods and the Phoenician way of life. She was the pagan equivalent of a preacher's kid. She was more zealous for her religion than Ahab ever imagined becoming, and she was also more dedicated. If anyone in the family was an evangelist, it was Jezebel and not Ahab.

Despite being a prime example of a wicked woman who embodies cruelty, greed, and vanity, Jezebel deliberately agreed to marry a man for political purposes that would benefit both Israel and her clan. a union in which she forwent her happiness in favour of Israel's greater benefit. Hyde (2013) responds to this by stating that this marriage was for the benefit of both countries' economies rather than out of love. "Ahab and Jezebel may not have been married for love but for political reasons; yet, neither her impact nor Ahab's character flaws should be disregarded. Cat (2022) acknowledges it as a recognition of the alliance's historical advantages to both nations.

The fundamental aspect of Jezebel's personality is that she acted more like a Phoenician princess than an Israelite lady. She ignored the limitations that the old Hebrew Law imposed on her since she thought the monarch had ultimate power. She shared the belief of other rulers of the Middle East at the time that a Kingdom's ruler set its laws. Jezebel, on the other hand, sprang from Sidon, where her royal parents enjoyed unrestricted authority, claims Sweeney (2022). Let's use the Jezreelite Naboth as an example. In 1 Kings 21, Naboth was asked to sell his vineyard, but he declined since it belonged to his family's heritage. Naboth would not sell him the vineyard, Ahab informed Jezebel. I'll give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, Jezebel promised Ahab (1 Kings 21:7).

If inherited land has been continually occupied by the same family since Canaan's settlement, it is forbidden to sell it to someone outside the family Elizabeth Fletcher (2006). According to Numbers 36:7, the inheritance of the Children of Israel shall not be transferred from tribe to tribe; rather, each of the Children of Israel shall maintain himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. This is evidently the basis for Naboth's refusal as well as his natural dislike of alienating "the inheritance of his fathers" (KJV). Naboth resisted the king and insisted on upholding this custom. Naboth's behaviour is lawful and right, but Ahab refuses to acknowledge it, and he also shows no sign of resenting the straightforward defiance of his response. As Ahab returns home, he refuses to eat, acting like a petulant child: "He (Ahab) laid down on his bed, cast his face away, and did not eat."

When his wife Jezebel saw him, she questioned, "Why are you so upset that you won't even eat?" Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and demanded his vineyard in exchange for money, or else, if you choose, I will give you another vineyard in exchange, but he said, "I will not give you my vineyard," he explained to her. Then, Jezebel, his wife, asked him, "Do you now rule Israel? Get up, eat something, and smile. I'll give you Naboth the Jezreelite's vineyard. (1 Kings 21:7). Being an Israelite, Ahab comprehended Naboth's justification. Additionally, he was aware that unlike the Kings of other nations, Israelite Kings did not possess unrestricted authority. When the small plot of land is rejected, all he has is useless to him, just as Mordecai the Jew was worthless to Haman while he was sitting at the King's gate

(Esther 5:13). As a result, under the direction of more deliberate evil, Ahab's mood of sullen, childlike dissatisfaction is the natural seed design of crime.

He was only being greedy when he expressed a desire for Naboth's vineyard. He was in control of all the blessings of Canaan that lovely country, as well as the wealth of the Kingdom and the throne, but none of it was of any use to him without Naboth's vineyard. He did not believe that a subject had any rights and expected everything to bend to his will. It was thought that Yahweh used the Kings of Israel and Judah to control the country. They were required to uphold his covenant and laws protect the country, wage war on the nation's behalf when necessary, and control the populace justly (mishpat) and righteously (tsedaqah). Unlike the Phoenicians, according to Sweeney (2022), Israelite Kings did not have unrestricted power. Jezebel, on the other hand, was from Sidon, the unrestricted domain of her royal parents. She disapproved of the way Ahab allowed his own subjects to wrong him (Elizabeth Fletcher, 2006). The faint anger and infantile whining of Ahab are particularly indicative of a weak and selfish disposition, used to being amused rather than resisted. He appears to experience these outbursts frequently.

Jezebel is a formidable lady who is sometimes referred to as evil. His wife Jezebel asked him bluntly, "Do you now control Israel?" with a hint of derision. Take notice of how Ahab responds, lamenting himself, putting out his reasonable plan, and making Naboth's rejection appear more abrasive than it actually was by obfuscating its justification. Then the imperious will of this clever Princess emerges, coming from a place where monarchy was supreme and had no moral constraints. She asks Ahab a semi-sarcastic question to get a response from him since the dread of being perceived as weak is what motivates a weak person the most.

Ahab, on the other hand, is depraved, crafty, self-centered, and very frail. Ahab joined forces militarily with King Jehoshaphat of Judah. To acquire land they claimed as their own, they fought together against the King of Aram. Ahab disguised himself throughout the conflict between the two armies so that the other army would not focus their attention on him. He suggested that the King of Judah put on his regal garments so that the onslaught would be directed away from him (Ahab). Ahab's precaution is almost absurdly indicative of his temperament of half-belief and half-unbelief. He basically wanted to expose Jehoshaphat to risk so he could protect himself after hearing Ben-instructions hadad's to his captains in 1 Kings 22:31. Claud (2022) notes that depending on your perspective; Ahab's actions might be viewed as either shrewd or cowardly. Whatever honour or safety Ahab might promise Jehoshaphat in this situation, there appears to be a good deal of dishonesty and treachery in his actions. His goal appears to be to save himself at Jehoshaphat's expense, especially if the Septuagint version is proven to be accurate. "And put on my clothes," which is natural enough, but would have been too barefaced "and the King of Israel disguised himself, and went into battle; a king disguised himself In any case, he suffered a fatal injury during the conflict. But the King of Israel was accidentally struck by a warrior who had drawn his bow between the scale armour and the breastplate. As a result, the King of Israel signalled to the driver of his chariot, "Turn back, and transport me out of the combat, for I am injured." (1 Kings 22:29-40).

Randy (2013) asks whether Jezebel had to assume the role of strength because Ahab was so weak or whether his weakness was a result of Jezebel's powerful, domineering nature. In response to the query, he points out that after the prophet sentences the King to judgement,

we are informed that Ahab returned home angry and enraged (1 Kings 20:43). He returned home feeling angry and burdened but not sincerely repentant or trying to right his wrongs. This is not the first, last, or only time that Ahab's disposition has been described as "sullen"; He always sulks. As soon as the prophet informed Ahab of God's wrath against him and the punishment that would follow, Ahab acted "dejectedly". After Elijah's warning in 1 Kings 21:27, he was just sullen and furious, not contrite. Instead, he was full of repressed rage and sullenness rather than acknowledging the righteousness of his judgement. Ahab's main issue was that he had a cold heart and thin skin, which are undesirable qualities in a potential king.

In 1 Kings 21:3, Naboth sold his vineyard to Ahab, which was against the Torah. The Lord prevents me from giving you my fathers' inheritance, Naboth is heard saying. He literally means, "The Lord prohibits," which indicates that it was a transgression against Yahweh. Naboth believes it would be improper and against the law for him to comply with the King's request since he worships Yahweh rather than Baal. It wasn't just a simple rejection motivated by stubborn independence or by the kinship that links individuals to their ancestral lands. In 1 Kings 21:3, Naboth sold his vineyard to Ahab, which was against the Torah. The Lord prevents me from giving you my fathers' inheritance, Naboth is heard saying. He literally means, "The Lord prohibits," which indicates that it was a transgression against Yahweh. Naboth believes it would be improper and against the law for him to comply with the King's request since he worships Yahweh rather than Baal. It wasn't just a simple rejection motivated by stubborn independence or by the kinship that links individuals to their ancestral lands. He was motivated simply by a conscientious concern for divine law, which for significant reasons had forbade the selling of a paternal inheritance as specified in Leviticus 25:23 and Numbers 36:7). He was not motivated by any thoughts of disloyalty or disdain for the King. Even though Ahab is already a king and is aware of these rules from Yahweh, he nevertheless pouts in front of his obstinate Phoenician bride, who is not yet entirely adjusted to Israel's laws. On the other hand, Jezebel has no knowledge of the Torah, doesn't follow it, and has no intention of doing so because her husband didn't teach her about Yahweh's rules. Ahab makes no objections when she promises to give him the vineyard. After hearing his wife remark, "I'll bring you the vineyard," he immediately felt much better and began to eat. Claude (2022) observes that Jezebel was not constrained by the law; rather, she is the law insofar as the law is concerned (this mindset is not her fault as she grew up in this mindset). Coming from a culture where there were no such laws, it was her opinion that Ahab should have whatever his heart desired. He is the King, after all, and nobody can tell him what he can or cannot do or have. Therefore, Ahab's heaviness and displeasure were not the result of rudeness or disrespect; rather, his moody and petty behaviour revealed a spirit of selfishness that could not bear to have a favourite object disappointed and that would have driven him to tyranny and lawlessness if he had any inherent moral strength. Alexander (2018) claims that Ahab maintained his back to the wall and let her to carry out her sinister activities. In the modern world, a woman's willingness to take up her husband's role in managing the household will cause him to lose his natural desire to shoulder responsibilities. In support of this, Heather (2007) asserts that Jezebel have a strong personality and effective leadership skills.

When Elijah murdered the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 19:1-2, Ahab told Jezebel about it. Jezebel didn't sob, scream, or flee. Elijah was threatened by Jezebel, who was prepared to fight. "So may the gods do to me, and more besides, if I do not make your life like the life of one of my prophets by this time tomorrow," Jezebel said in a message she delivered to Elijah (1 Kings

19:2–3). Elijah "fled for his life" because he was so terrified of Jezebel. Jezebel was apparently unimpressed at the execution of the Baal prophets, according to Claude (2022). This reflects on her personality. Only a magnificent woman could have handled such a dire circumstance while maintaining her will to achieve her objectives. She threatens the prophet with an audacious generosity and frankness. She will treat her victim fairly, which is why I believe Jezebel to be superior to Jehu, who plotted, deceived, and assassinated King Joram and Ahaziah, two of Jezebel's sons (2 Kings 9:1-28). Her oath's qualifiers, "as definitely as thou art Elijah and Jezebel," give further weight to the assertion that she is both. Elijah was terrified because he perceived what may be correct, which clarified the reason for his escape. Sweeney (2022) indicates that the three and a half year famine was actually caused by Ahab's advocacy of idolatry (1 Kings 18:18). The Lord specifically commanded King Ahab to slay Ben-Hadad, the ruler of Aram, but he refused (1 Kings 20:42). The Kings of Israel and Judah were thought to rule the country as Yahweh's representatives. They were required to uphold his covenant and laws, protect the country, wage war on the nation's behalf when necessary, and control the populace justly (mishpat) and righteously (tsedaqah).

Christianity has suffered through the anguish of attributing negativity to Jezebel's character, leading to the phenomena of the Jezebel spirit, which is now used to describe all forms of evilness. It would be ludicrous for a woman to hold significant political authority or even be more powerful than a male King in a patriarchal society like the modern world or biblical times. According to Bolinger (2020), the Bible never makes reference to a "Jezebel spirit." The name Jezebel carries bad associations and meaning. According to Bolinger, the Jezebel Spirit is a demonic disposition or influence that induces marriages through deceitful seduction and clever trickery. A good wife is someone that her husband can depend on and put his confidence in, according to the duties that are prescribed for wives in the Bible. Because she never sets out to hurt her spouse and always acts with his best interests in mind. According to the Bible, women were made to assist men. And this isn't meant to be disparaging in any way. However, it actually means "helper." Therefore, a good woman works to support her husband, whether it is at work or by lifting his spirits when he's down. Instead of trying to undermine him, she tries to build their life together with him. Because she is aware that, as stated in Genesis 2:18: "And the Lord God said, It is not right that the man should be alone; I will make him an assist meet for him," they are now one and no longer two distinct beings. Yosef (2022) mentioned that she holds him in high regard because of this. "All women will respect and honour their husbands, regardless of how wealthy or powerful they are. And if he isn't successful, she should think about how excellent he is in his position as "the image and glory of God." How could Jezebel's behaviours not be considered those of a decent Jewish woman who simply cherishes her husband's excellence—not just any husband, but one who also happens to be a King—in everything that he does? She was accustomed to this way of life since she had grown up a princess and had witnessed her father, the King, dominate her whole life. A monarch is revered both as a king and as a husband. Jezebel have a very high regard for monarchy. Jezebel, according to Alexander (2018), was a more devout person than her husband. She had a strong spiritual life.

Joshua (2020) notes that Jezebel's name has come to represent the idea of the devilish seductress due to how some have interpreted her actions, such as donning makeup to allegedly seduce her rival Jehu, who Elisha's successor Elijah has appointed to destroy her. Joshua (2020) went on to characterize Jezebel as being sexually promiscuous and morally

bankrupt. This is not accurate to her character because the Bible never relates Jezebel's personality to prostitution or seduction. Instead of disguising herself as someone who feared retaliation, Jezebel made fun of fear. She didn't dress in a regal manner to enchant Jehu, but rather to overwhelm him and make him vow to die bravely. If she were going to die, she would like to go out looking like a queen up until the very last by donning a decorative diadem or other regal symbol. If she were going to die, she would like to go out looking like a queen up until the very last by donning a decorative diadem or other regal symbol.

According to Claude (2022), the religious and local leaders of Israel would not respect the authority and leadership of a female Priest who was advocating the worship of a foreign deity. This is because the Northern Kingdom was a patriarchal culture. Jezebel believed that Israel's religious system lacked a female deity. Jezebel didn't have any ill will or animosity toward the Israelites as the reason for her missionary activity. Jezebel, on the other hand, thought she was making life better for the people of Israel. The legacy of Jezebel reveals itself to be that of a remarkable lady who lived in the wrong location at the wrong time with the wrong set of circumstances. Despite the fact that Jezebel committed sins in Yahweh's view, Jezebel demonstrated that she was a brave, tenacious, and outstanding lady. Jezebel was unquestionably a power to be feared. One may recognize the magnificence that was Jezebel when she is viewed objectively. By introducing them to Baal, the deity who had given her a rich existence in Tyre, Jezebel was attempting to improve the quality of life for the people of Israel. Jezebel was a formidable lady who made an effort to convince the Israelites that Baal was a powerful deity. To assist her husband, the King, in getting what he desired, Jezebel pretended to be a queen. To get Naboth's land, she exploited political shrewdness. Jezebel was one of the most powerful women in the Bible, whether for good or for evil. Jezebel was a powerful lady who should be recognized as one of the finest women of her time and not as a bad woman who attempted to overthrow a nation at a period when women had few rights or powers.

Conclusion

Every biblical passage condemns Jezebel, according to Michael (2008). Howe (2022) adds that Jezebel is a traitor in a country where there is no ruler above the law, a whore in the region where the Ten Commandments originated, and a loudmouthed woman in a time when women have little status and few rights. Jezebel also worships idols and engages in murder and meddling in political affairs. The tale of Jezebel tells about a lady who was resolved to rule her new country as queen. Jezebel was a queen with enormous authority in Israel. It is clear that Jezebel was aware of her position of authority and was not hesitant to make advantage of it to further her objectives. Jezebel was adamant about standing up for her convictions because she was aware of them. Because Naboth refused to sell his vineyard, Ahab came to Jezebel furious. Jezebel was ready to stand up for her husband and give him what he wanted. Jezebel used her political influence to provide Ahab the vineyard he wanted. Her behaviour is a product of Phoenician politics. Jezebel has a very high opinion of kingship and utilized the palace's influence to win the King Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel was not unfamiliar with exercising influence over individuals, according to Claude (2022). Jezebel was educated in both the political and religious customs of her country as a princess and high priestess of Baal. Jezebel was brought up from the moment of her birth to be a wise, strong, tenacious, and crafty lady. It's possible that these qualities, especially education and power, are what first influenced Ahab to wed Jezebel. It is usually a good idea for a king to have a wife who can

assist run and maintain the empire. Jezebel had magnificence despite attempts to denigrate her, and that cannot be refuted.

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