Benedikt Josef Collinet

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A Narratological and Intertextual Reading of 2 Kings 23:30–25:30

Universitätsverlag Osnabrück

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With a foreword by Keith Bodner

With 3 figures

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Contents

ISBN Print: 9783847113447 – ISBN E-Lib: 9783737013444

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Foreword

Among the most doleful events in biblical history is the execution of Zedekiah at the conclusion of 2 Kings, at the end of Israel's story of the institutional monarchy. Under Zedekiah's ineffective leadership the people of Judah are *thrust from the divine presence* (24:20), and endure a lengthy siege by the Babylonian military. When the invaders pierce the city wall and enter the city, Zedekiah makes an ill-fated attempt to escape, only to be arrested in the Arabah after apparently fleeing for Ammonite territory in yet another hope to find security in an unreliable ally. Marched north to Riblah to face trial before Nebuchadrezzar, the grim nadir of Zedekiah's career is recounted in 25:7 as the king of Babylon pronounces his sentence. With shades of Samson in Judges 16, the blinded king is handcuffed and marched into captivity in a foreign land: "They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah; they bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon."

The final demise of Zedekiah is part of a section of text beginning with the death of Josiah that swiftly narrates the final decades of Judah's tenure in the land. In the secondary literature, these chapters tend to be treated just as swiftly by many commentators. But in recent days a number of scholars have been inquiring if more is going on in the story of Jerusalem's last days in the book of the Kings, and new ways of exploring this material are being explored. Of course, readers coming from Jeremiah will remember the vacillations and complexities of Zedekiah's character, as he is swayed by different political factions and occasionally seems sympathetic to the prophet. But the account in 2 Kings is artfully reticent in its own way, and interpreters who are curious about this more laconic characterization will find some excellent analysis in *Whom to Blame for Judah's Doom? A Narratological and Intertextual Reading of 2 Kings 23:30–25:30.* Perhaps we might wonder with Benedikt Collinet if there is a deliberate narrative style that is deployed for these closing scenes of the story.

English-language scholars will appreciate having access to this work, and the fresh appraisal of this section of the Deuteronomistic History from a narrative-critical approach. Such readers can find a wealth of interesting discussion in the

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volume ranging from spatial settings (e. g., Riblah as the foreign locale where kings meet their judgment, as well as the very precincts of the Most Holy Place of the Jerusalem temple) to minor characters that populate the narrative (e. g., the generic band of robbers in 24:2, and the incremental diminution of references to women of the court or the queen mother). One also finds reflections on topics such as the metaphorical implications of blindness, the speech of Gedaliah that stands out as an isolated portion of direct speech, Jehoiakim as a kind of new Manasseh, a theology of prophecy within the wider narrative, and the role of the nations (preeminent of which is Babylon, always on the move, with its very name containing the root term for chaos and confusion). As a typical example of what readers will find in the book, consider this extended example from near the halfway mark of this study:

> Jerusalem's siege begins on the tenth day of the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth regnal year (2 Kgs 25:1). The siege continues for the next two years, until a famine breaks out in the ninth month of the eleventh year (vv.2f.). Reports of the conquest of Jerusalem follow, then the capture of Zedekiah etc. (vv.4–7) and the transport into exile, without precise dating. We then have a break in the chronology, for in 2 Kgs 25:8 there is a switch to the chronology of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (first indicated in 24:10). Jerusalem is conquered on the seventh day of the fifth month of the nineteenth year of his reign; everything is burned down (25:9) and the population is exiled (vv.12.20f.). At this point we come across an anachronism, for the temple that had already been burned down is now plundered, an event described in detail (vv.13–17). In v.16 we also find a flashback to King Solomon who had organized the creation of the temple utensils.

Several intriguing issues are raised here, and two will be noted very briefly. First, Collinet observes the shift in time, that is, the slight change in chronological reckoning that quite literally imposes the imperial calendar on to the text after the invasion. For those citizens of Jerusalem who are now facing exile, the shift in time designations subtly reflects their new reality as deportation looms, and underscores their subservient status in the Babylonian regime. Second, Collinet draws attention to the mention of Solomon in 2 Kings 25:16. On the one hand, this reference might be a reminder of the halcyon days of the Solomonic kingdom, when silver was practically worthless (due to the surplus of gold) and the royal palace was named after the forest of the cedars of Lebanon. Solomon's architectural enterprises—the palace and the temple—take decades to build are described in considerable earlier in the narrative, but now are dismantled in just a handful of verses. On the other hand, Solomon's corruption is one of the reasons why divine judgment in the form of the Babylon invasion occurs, and so it might be suggested that referring to Solomon here is an implicit reminder of his political and spiritual compromises, and that he is partially responsible for the temple now being looted by the superpower.

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Regardless of how these issues are finally resolved, the larger point here is that the subtle switch in time reckoning and the flashback to Solomon are important details in the unfolding storyline, and Collinet routinely draws attention to such matters. Because of the nuanced presentation of these details and the larger interpretive implications that emerge, this volume ought to be commended to a wider audience of researchers. More examples could easily be furnished, but readers interested in the ending of Kings should be invited to use this study that is replete with literary awareness and theological sensitivity.

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Preface

The final chapters of the book of Kings testify to one of the most important religious events experienced in the history of the Jewish and Christian faiths. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 587 BCE may well have spelled the end of Israel's faith in YHWH. As with every other defeated nation in the Ancient Near East they could have simply capitulated to the god of the victors and assimilated to their religion and culture. 587 BCE would then have marked the end of the history of Israel, and the histories of Judaism and Christianity would have never got off the ground. Yet Israel took a different turn. The exiles assumed responsibility for their horrific fate, laying the blame for it upon themselves rather than their God. They concluded that their God had not lost a battle against more superior powers, rather he himself had removed his protection from his people, thereby surrendering them into the hands of their enemies. Does this prove that the God of the Old Testament is wrathful and violent after all? Or is it not rather the case that 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 is primarily concerned with his faithfulness to his people, his willingness to do anything possible to save them without, at the same time, allowing his mercy to be compromised by blind favouritism? A key issue in this respect is how this experience was passed on and (re)interpreted by later generations, particularly within the narrative portrayal of the Old Testament itself. And connected with this, we must ask what this story has to say to contemporary readers.

This is the translation of my dissertation thesis "Die letzten Könige von Juda" (2018, publ. in BBB 188 [2019]). I give very special thanks to Dr. Phil Sumpter, the translator and to Dr. Kätsch for the highly professional collaboration.

I thank Prof. Georg Steins for agreeing to publish this work in his series and Prof. Keith Bodner, who is not only an interlocutor but also agreed to write a foreword.

I thank the Austrian Science Funds (FWF) for their generous grant, which made this translation possible.

May God bless you all. A.M.D.G.

Innsbruck, the 9th of Av, 2022 Benedikt Josef Collinet

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A. Introduction

1. Research Question and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

Over the last few decades, scholars have been primarily interested in the historical aspect of the book of Kings. Almost every commentary since Klostermann (1887) has treated Kings as a primarily historical document. The primary focus has been source criticism, for which we now seem to have achieved a broad consensus. In addition to this, literary criticism has sought to identify possible layers within the text, assessing the plausibility of various theories of existence and scope. Redaction critics continue to be undecided as to whether one should speak of two or three redactors.[1] There has also been a broad discussion of the (overall) composition and sub-divisions of the text.

The search for the oldest reconstructable textual witness to Kings has been taken up anew. This is because notable text critics such as A. Schenker, S. Kreuzer, N. Fernandez-Marcos etc. have identified a pre-Masoretic version (i. e. one that is not a *Vorlage* of the MT) behind the Antiochene or Lucian text of the Septuagint, one that pre-dates the oldest proto-Masoretic text (i. e. the *Vorlage* of the MT). This version is even older than the sources found in Qumran.[2]

One popular research topic in Kings scholarship that seems to have no end in sight is the debate concerning the existence of the so-called Deuteronomisitic History (DtrH),[3] said to comprise the books Deuteronomy—2 Kings. Defenders of this view have always had to face critical push back. One prominent example of an alternative hypothesis is that of the Enneateuch, currently advocated by, for example, R. G. Kratz[4] of the Göttingen school, as well as well as E. Aurelius.[5]

1 H.Weippert, *Beurteilungen* 301–339; W.Thiele, *Rückschau* 69–79.
2 A.Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte*; S.Kreuzer/ M.Sigismund (eds.), *Der Antiochenische Text*, especially 23–86.
3 A.Alt, G.Braulik, N.Lohfink, M.Noth, and many more advocate this thesis.
4 R.G.Kratz, *Komposition* 219–225.

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F. Blanco Wißmann (2008)[6] provides us with a comprehensive overview and critique of the debate that takes into account various English, French, and German redaction-critical theories.

This brief overview may give the impression that there is nothing left to be studied in the book of Kings. The various proposals usually serve to reconstruct historical data in order to better elucidate the history of Israel during the monarchical period. The theological implications of critically reconstructed literary entities serve as the determinative framework for engaging in theological interpretation.

As E. Ballhorn[7] has convincingly demonstrated, however, it is not the case that Israel's historical books are historiography in the classic sense of the word. What they do is mediate history (*Historie*) through the form of narrative prose, i. e. a story (*Geschichte*). This distinction is significant, for it means that these books do not consist in a mere collection of raw data that may or may not be true but rather in the poetic "condensation" (*Ver-Dichtung*) of an experience. Their interest is not in "what actually happened" (L. von Ranke[8]) but in what Aleida and Jan Assmann call "remembered history,"[9] a particular kind of history in which an experience has been traditioned and interpreted. This form of memory of the past is distinguished from more objectively oriented historical research "not in terms of its referentiality but in terms of the stance the narrator adopts in relation to the subject matter."[10]

To date, there have been very few scholars who have drawn the right hermeneutical implications from this fact, engaging with the historical books as narrative and even embedding them into their broader canonical-intertextual contexts (in a manner similar to treatments of the Wisdom literature and many

5 E.Aurelius, *Zukunft*, especially 207–216. Peter Weimar and Erich Zenger are also advocates of this model.

6 F.Blanco Wissmann, *"Er tat das Rechte…"*.

7 E.Ballhorn, *Israel*.

8 L.Von Ranke, SW 33 7. The anthology by C.Landmesser/ R.Zimmermann, (eds.), *Text* provides a good overview of how this paradigm has been surmounted and how contemporary scholars deal with it.

9 A.Assmann, *Geschichte* 175–184; J.Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis; Gedächtnis* 63–85.

10 I.Müllner, *Zeit* 21. This view accords with other historical research. Gerdien Jonker has clearly demonstrated the way in which Mesopotamia, throughout its history, construed its memory, namely by *turning it into* a written form of history. He also shows how the topographical knowledge and political realities of this period influenced world view and how important interacting with the dead was for constituting and interpreting the past (see his *Topography*). Contemporary historiography is also increasingly becoming aware of the necessity of communicating history in narrative form (cf. E.-M.Becker, *Ereignis*).

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individual narratives in the Old and New Testaments).[11] My dissertation seeks to make a contribution to this field of research. It does so by providing a depth analysis of the final chapters of the book of Kings, which comprise the narrative stretching from the succession of Josiah to the release of Jehoiachin from prison (2 Kgs 23:30–25:30). I will adopt an approach common among English-speaking scholars, namely that of working through the material in a narrative-interpretive style. This approach will in no way detract from the scholarly nature of my analysis and it will make reading a more enjoyable experience.

The narrative to be analysed has been transmitted to us in several different passages of the Old Testament (2 Kgs 23–25; Jer 52; 2 Chr 36) and constitutes a central theme in the Old Testament's theology of history. For this reason, a few words should be said about its position in the Christian and Jewish canon(s):

The downfall of the kingdom of Judah along with the destruction of the Solomonic temple and the exile of the Israelite nation is more than just a secondary event in the Old Testament; it is one of the most frequently transmitted narratives. These narratives have received a conspicuous locations within the canonical shape of the Jewish Bible (TNK). In the Torah kings barely play a role because the Promised Land has not yet been conquered. In the books of the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings) we see an initial arousal of interest in a king who can powerfully bring about order; this interest continually intensifies until in 1 Sam 8 YHWH finally gives in to Israel's demands and gives Samuel the task of anointing Saul.[12] This marks the beginning of the long, chequered and mostly negative history of the Israelite-Judean monarchy. The Golden Age took place under the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon (1 Sam 1–1 Kgs 11). After them many of the rulers of the divided kingdoms (1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17) were bad, and after the downfall of the Northern Kingdom the only Judean kings to be entirely exempt from a negative judgement were Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Kgs 18–25). The narrative of the last kings of Judah, the successors of the great reformer Josiah, concludes this historical composition and thus the corpus of the Former Prophets as a whole. Among the subsequent "Latter Prophets," Jeremiah in particular shows the greatest interest in the Judean kings who came after Josiah. The book with his name ends in chapter 52 with a text that is almost identical to what we find in the final chapters of 2 Kgs. The book of Chronicles rounds off the third and final division of the TNK, the "Writings". This book recapitulates the entire story from Adam to the downfall of Jerusalem.

11 Exceptions are the analyses of Klara Butting, Uta Schmidt, and Barbara Schmitz, as well as Egbert Ballhorn's work on Joshua and Shimon Bar-Efrat's commentaries (S.BAR-EFRAT, Das Erste [Zweite] Buch Samuel).

12 Critical voices can also be repeatedly found, particularly in the earlier texts. Neither the Bible nor history testify to an unreserved acceptance of a monarchy within the People of God.

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2 Chr 36, the final chapter in the Jewish-Masoretic version of the canon, is an adaptation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30.

In the Christian canon, the book of Chronicles is placed at an earlier juncture. Ezra and Nehemiah, which accords with their chronological sequence, follow it. This arrangement cancels the prominent position enjoyed by Chronicles in the Jewish canon.

1.2 The Research Question

Erich Zenger introduces his 1968 article on the pardon of Jehoiachin with the following words: "The meagre theological denouement to the book of Kings and thus to the Deuteronomisitic History as a whole has always been something of a disappointment to exegetes."[13] Barely a commentary of the last 150 years has dedicated more than 10 to maximum 20 pages to the final chapters of the book of Kings. The introductions to these commentaries only mention these chapters if they are considered secondary or tertiary and when they do, no interpretation follows. The brief contents of these chapters are treated as historical yet incomplete facts derived from the "books of the daily deeds of the kings" and receive no further treatment. The authors follow the interpretation of 2 Kgs 24:3–4, which lays the theological blame for the downfall of Jerusalem on Manasseh; after this they turn to non-Biblical historical sources and compare these with the Biblical text. All theological statements are interpreted as the fulfilment of YHWH's threat of punishment without a deeper treatment of the subject. Greater significance is accorded to solving the chronological debate, associating archaeological sites with the narrated events, and verifying the number of deportees, the amount of tribute paid and the weight of the temple treasures. Other typical topics of scholarly concern are the extent of Jerusalem's destruction, reconstructions of the temple, the ritual procedures followed during accessions to the throne and avowals of vassalage, as well as the legal status of the same within the broader ancient Near East. The few doctoral dissertations in existence primarily focus on literary and redaction-critical questions as well as the relationship of these chapters to the book of Jeremiah.[14] An overview of this research will be provided in the first part of this thesis.[15]

13 E.Zenger, *Begnadigung* 16; H.-W.Wolff even calls the conclusion to the DtrH "thin" ("*spröde*"; GSt 311).

14 Here mention must be made of C.Seitz, *Theology* (1989), E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* (2003); Blanco Wissmann, *Beurteilungen* (2008) and J.Jüb, *Jeremiah's Kings* (2006).

15 A German online appendix provides a reconstruction of the historical context of the narrated events along with a compilation of relevant archaeological material and other points of contact in the world outside of the text.

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There are few articles and even less monographs that deal explicitly with the end of the book of Kings. The most that one usually finds are brief references, documentations of redactional insertions, or brief statements concerning individual verses or groups of verses. In the vast majority of cases, these are all connected with king Josiah and his cultic reform.[16]

To date, no one has inquired into the content and function of these final chapters (an exception is the debate over the significance of Jehoiachin's release from prison). The impression one gets from the scholarly literature is that these chapters primarily consist in the final minutes before the end credits of a dramatic film. The great hero Josiah has fallen, disaster has struck the nation, there is a possible hint of a sequel. These final minutes of a film often compress time, either in order to skip over long time periods (as in 2 Chr 36; "60 years later") or in order to indicate subsequent developments in a condensed manner.

Yet one thing is overlooked: these often rapidly changing images recapitulate a large part of the storyline (often even with allusions to the beginning), bundle open strands together, and in many cases gather together and evaluate the various "good" or "bad" forces. The characters and groups from the narrative are impacted with consequences, awards and punishment. Finally, a concluding "cliffhanger" arouses curiosity about subsequent events.

It is this kind of scenario that we find at the end of Kings. Regardless of where we locate the beginning of this historical composition, whether in creation (Gen 1), in the election of Abraham (Gen 12), in the salvation of the nation (Exodus), in the giving and proclamation of the Torah (Deut 28), or in the narrative of Israel's rulers (either 1 Samuel or 1 Kings), its (provisional) end is here.

The thesis defended in this monograph is that these chapters consist in an intentionally composed revocation of God's salvific acts towards Israel/Judah. These chapters are the reflection of an inner tension between God's unconditional promise and the requirement that Israel fulfil his commands.

This can be seen not only in the brevity of the representations as well as formal criteria but also in the vocabulary used, the semantics of the names, symbolism of numbers, the inversion of formulae and schemata, as well as the manifold intertextual references that will be analysed in section D below.

The primary question that guides the research in this book is as follows: What do the final chapters of the book of Kings *narrate?* The focus will not be on historical dates and facts that have been transmitted within the tradition, i. e. the *what* of history, but rather the *how* of history.[17] How did the author attempt to

16 See, e. g., H.Rösel, *Josua* 27–34; G.Hentschel, *2 Könige* 115–125.

17 See S.Lahn/ C.Meister, *Einführung* 36–43; B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 20. This does not mean that the worldview of the original author is irrelevant or that we can completely ignore "text

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pass on this experience or this "remembered history"? This remembering is like a subtext that expands the "what," even rendering it comprehensible in the first place. In the final analysis, the most decisive question will focus on that which has been communicated through this "how."

1.3 Choice of Methods and Initial Observations

Given that 2 Kgs 23–35 is a narrative it is clear that narratological methods are the most appropriate, at least for the first part of the analysis. However, there has been an overabundance of narratological theories proposed over the past few decades, so we will have to choose those hermeneutical presuppositions and methods that are best suited to our task. We will happily not have to enter into a comprehensive methodological discussion at this point as the job has already been sufficiently well done in a series of publications that also tailor the theory to the needs of Biblical exegesis.[18]

The narrative analysis carried out in this study focuses on the final form of the text and as such is primarily synchronic in nature. We will also engage in textual criticism in part B and at a later stage deepen our interpretation by means of intertextual analysis.[19] It should be clear, then, that historical-critical concerns will not be a priority. Ballhorn describes the approach well in his habilitation:

> Our aim is to focus on the [Biblical book] as a complete literary work. We can regard it as such despite the undeniable fact of its creation in several stages over an extended period of time. It demands such a holistic approach from us not only by virtue of the mere fact that it has the form of a book but also because it has been integrated into its canonical context.[20]

Two methodological works provide the general framework of our analysis: *Silke Lahn* and *Jan Christoph Meister*'s *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse* ([2]2013),[21] which is is a standard textbook for comparative literature, and *Stefan A. Nitsche*

external anchors" (B.Schmitz, *Prophetie*, 14). The interpretation that follows will necessarily interact with the results of historical research in the appropriate places. For the relationship between archaeological-historical research and the interpretation of the narrative worlds contained in the Bible, see B.Collinet, *Verankerungen* 22–35; I.Müllner, *Zeit* 9; 11; 19–23; especially the table on p. 19.

18 Good introductions can be found in I.Müllner, *Zeit* 1–24; W.Schmid, *Elemente.*

19 For the term "canonical-intertextual" see G.Steins, *Bibelauslegung* 37–62; *Amos* 20–28; *Kanonisch lesen* 45–64; *Bibellektüre* 55–68; B.Schmitz, Prophetie 17 f. For the difficulties in defining "intertextuality," see S.Gillmayr-Bucher, *Intertextualität*, 5–20. For the status of diachronic and historical insights, see U.Berges, *Synchronie* 249–252; C.Dohmen, *Schriftsinn* 9–74, 66 B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 107 f.

20 E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 68.

21 S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung.*

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and *Helmut Utzschneider's Arbeitsbuch literaturwissenschaftlicher Bibelauslegung*[22] ([4]2014), which is tailored to the needs of Biblical scholars.

The research question and methodology outlined suggest the following structure:

I will first provide an extensive summary of the history of research, which is overwhelming in its quantity and rich in its interpretive potential.

I follow this by a translation of the Masoretic Text accompanied by text-critical observations.

In a third step I will provide a detailed analysis of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, read on its own terms without any concern for inner-Biblical intertextuality. The primary method is that of narrative analysis. The goal will be to identify the initial "surface" meanings of the narrative.

After this comes an intertextual reading that will take as its interpretive context the broader narrative (Gen 1:1–2 Kgs 25:30).[23] This reading serves to clarify or disclose gaps and to further specify or ultimately relativize observations made thus far, thus expanding our perception of the narrative.

Finally, a series of conclusions will summarize the results of the analyses and present a final interpretation of the text. These will be supplemented by an index and historical reconstruction of Judah in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE that are available in an online appendix to this book.

2. History of Research

2.1 Literary Studies

There is no consensus on how the book of Kings developed as a literary corpus. The numerous literary and redaction-critical studies available differ on central issues. Most studies are not concerned with 1 and 2 Kings on their own but rather with their position in more comprehensive block of material, such as the one proposed by the Enneateuch Hypothesis (EH)[24] or the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH). The following section shall outline the results produced by critical re-

22 S.A.Nitsche/ H.Utzschneider, *Arbeitsbuch*, especially 140–177.

23 The introduction to part D will elucidate the precise meaning of "narrative context," its relationship to canonical interpretation, and the distinction between torah and prophecy.

24 This hypothesis is advocated by important exegetes such as Erich Zenger and Peter Weimar (see, for example, E.Zenger (ed.), *Einleitung*. A recent attempt to undergird this thesis has been made by Erik Aurelius (see his dissertation *Zukunft*).

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search over the last century as these pertain to 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, evaluating them for their relevance to our research question.[25]

2.1.1 Introductory Questions

a) The Question of Sources

Given that besides the regnal formula 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 only consists of the conquest of Jerusalem and two short notes (the Gedaliah pericope and the pardon of Jehoiachin), most authors assume that no oral traditions lie behind the text.[26] This was already the case for *Alfred Jepsen* (1900–1979). In his 1939 study *Quellen des Königsbuches*[27] he proposed no less than six different sources for the pericopes in question.[28] The number of sources is so "modest" because at the date of writing "the sources had become reduced in number. This seems to be because the redactors lived very close to the events reported. Nevertheless, the sequence of the redactions was the same as before."[29]

In addition to the use of Judean sources there are indications that texts were known from Israel's neighbours, in particular Mesopotamia. Jeremiah's 70-year exile is not only numerologically intriguing it also accords with the Neo-Babylonian founding myth, according to which the statue of the primary God Marduk had been deported by the Assyrians to Assur for a period of 70 years (689–628 BCE).[30]

Jepsen's thesis long enjoyed popularity but is currently in a crisis as it attempts to explain too much.[31] Since Jepsen there have been few alternative attempts to identify sources. Those studies that do tend to focus on literary-critical questions and the question of whether later redactions may have added new sources.[32]

25 This shall be done so thoroughly as most research overviews are cursory and selective. Even though these studies will be only marginally relevant to a narratological analysis, it is important to have an orderly overview of research in this area.

26 Seef, Blanco Wissmann, *Er tat das Rechte* 222; 233; R.G.Kratz, *Komposition* 163; G.Hentschel, *Königsbücher* 300–311: 303f.; 307–309.

27 A.Jepsen, *Quellen.* Due to the Second World War the book could not be published until 1953 (see the postscript).

28 See the appendix in ibid.

29 Ibid. 29.

30 See I.Hrusa, *Religion*, 58 (Royal Inscription of Esarhaddon coll. ii 2.9).

31 N.Na'aman, *Temple Library* 129–152, 150f.; S.B.Parker, *Authors* 374–376.

32 Christof Hardmeier, for example, attempts to identify sources from the period of Zedekiah. He suggests that 2 Kgs be subject to a lexeme analysis with the hopes of identifying source fragments by means of word statistics (see his *Umrisse* 148–175, 170). He has further developed this thesis in subsequent publications (see his *König Joschija* 81–146).

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b) The Literary Unity of the Text

Although narratological analyses focus on the text in its final form, we must nevertheless to inquire into the unity of that text. Regardless of how one conceives the macrocontext, most exegetes today believe that the current form represents the final stage of a multilayered process of growth.

The basic concept[33] of the DtrH was first proposed by Martin Noth. *Winfried Thiel* summarizes his view of 2 Kgs as follows:

> Deut–2 Kgs is a coherent historical work that emerged in Judah during the exile and constitutes—*cum grano salis*—an original unity. Over time it did go through various successive expansions at Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic hands, but these did not significantly affect its substance.[34]

Noth's theory has given rise to three distinct theoretical approaches.

1. The *Göttinger School* and the threefold redactional model. Although this model picks up the theological interpretations of Gerhard von Rad and his students, it primarily orients itself towards the work of Martin Noth. The originator of this model is Rudolf Smend Jr.[35] He argues that 2 Kgs was entirely composed during the exile in three redactional layers (DtrH; DtrP; DtrN).[36] According to this theory, the final composition emerged over a period of 20 years during the early exilic period, between 580–560 BCE. Its sole theological purpose was to explain the catastrophe of 587 BCE, which continued to be a source of suffering for the exilic community.[37]
2. The *Cross School*[38] and the block model. Advocates of this model believe the earliest source in 1–2 Kgs emerged during the reign of Josiah. 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 is, along with other passages, the product of exilic literary expansion (*Fortschreibung*) and supplementation. The main arguments[39] are as follows:

33 Noth's work was preceded by other literary-critical and philological analyses, e. g. A.Klostermann, *Sam* 482–498; B.Stade, *Kgs* 56–59; O.Thenius, *Kgs* 440–468.

34 W.Thiel, *Rückschau* 69.

35 Smend's foundational article is *Gesetz* 494–509. It was further developed by W.Dietrich, *Prophetie* especially 41: fn. 76; 142, and T.Veijola, *Dynastie*. The latter scholar was one of the first to critique the position of the Cross School (see N.Lohfink, *Rückblick* 30). For the thesis defended here, his subsequent dissertation (*Königtum*) is of greater interest. In it he argues for the work of two redactors (DtrP and DtrN; see pp. 115–117).

36 See W.Thiel, *Rückschau* 76–78. The abbreviations stand for the "Historian," the "Prophet" and the "Nomist" as the redactors of the Deuteronomistic History.

37 See W.Thiel, *Rückschau* 78 f.; a prominent advocate of the Göttingen theory is R.G.Kratz (see *Komposition* 173; 224; 312; 318; 323–325; the table on p. 193).

38 The theory was first developed by *Frank Moore Cross*. Its most important advocates are E.Eynikel, *Reform* 362 f.; G.N.Knoppers, *None* 411–431; R.D.Nelson, *Double Redaction* 119; M.O'Brien, *hypothesis*; R.F.Person, *School*; I.W.Provan, *Hezekiah*; W.M.Schniedewind, *Society*. There is also a German scholar who believes that the earliest layer should be dated to the reign of Josiah: H.-J.Stipp, *Studien* 488–490; 512.

39 See W.Thiel, *Rückschau* 74 f.

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(1) There are no linguistic differences between *editor* and *historian*; (2) the Northern Kingdom no longer played a decisive role; (3) it is not possible to find an earlier date for the completion of the work; (4) it is possible to identify a Josianic and an exilic theology. The main Biblical theological focus of this model is the restoration of a unified kingdom under Josiah.[40] The usual criticism of this thesis is that it requires there to have been a unique relationship between David and Josiah (2 Kgs 22:2); this relationship, however, was interrupted by Hezekiah.[41]

3. More recent approaches. Over the past few decades a number of literary critics have worked to further develop these existing theses.[42] Special mention should be made of *Thomas Römer*, who believes it is possible to combine both models.[43]

c) Date(s), Place(s), Author(s)

Given that 2 Kgs is the product of a long process of development it is clear that a number of different authors have contributed to it.[44] Their ability to write and their solid knowledge of both Jerusalem and the temple as well as the Babylon of a later period indicate that they were from among the deportees, most likely personnel of the Salomonic temple.[45]

There has been little discussion of dating. A general consensus[46] has arisen that the post-Josianic narratives were composed either in or just before the exile.[47] The most plausible *terminus post quem* is the release of Jehoiachin from prison during the first year of the reign of Amil Marduk (560 BCE). The *terminus ante quem* would then be the invasion of Babylon by the Persians (540 BCE), for otherwise one would expect other themes to be foregrounded.[48]

40 Ibid. 71. For decades the arguments of the Cross School have enjoyed unparalleled approval among English language commentators. See, in chronological order, R.D.Nelson, *I e IIRe* (which has even been translated into Italian); W.E.Rast, *Kgs*; T.R.Hobbs, *2 Kgs* especially 328–369; P.R.House, *1.2 Kgs.* Furthermore, the above-mentioned *Kgs* has been translated into English.

41 See ibid. 71–75; a more detailed critique is provided by D.Janzen, *Sins* 349–370.

42 See the overview provided by C.Levin, *Nach siebzig Jahren* 72–92.

43 See W.Thiel, *Rückschau* 81; T.Römer, *History*. Römer's thesis is critiqued by J.Hutzli, *Relationship* 505–519.

44 W.Thiel provides the documentation and selection of literature in *Rückschau* 67 fn. 8.

45 See N.Lohfink, *Zorn* 37 F.Blanco Wissmann, *Er tat das Rechte* 252.

46 An exception is a thesis developed in the framework of the Richter School that argues for a post-exilic redaction; see D.Volgger, *Tora* especially 149; 365f.; 366 fn. 158; 215 fn. 188.

47 See C.Levin, *Exzerpt* 616–628; N.Lohfink, *Rückblick* 12.

48 Clements believes, for example, that the text can only have been written after the death of Jehoiachin because "all the days of his life" implies that he has already died (see *Privilege* 54; see also F.Blanco Wissmann, *Er tat das Rechte* 249–251); Römer even believes that the work

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d) Genre

2 Kings 23:30–25:30 is written in prose. The reports of the kings from Jehoahaz to Zedekiah (2 Kgs 23,30–25,7) largely comprise the regnal formula[49] along with additional comments and are on the whole faithful to the style of 2 Kgs. This style accords with the genre of "ancient oriental historiography."[50] Suriano makes the important observation that the epilogues at the end functioned as a stylistic device. He argues that the death notices

> shaped the ideological framework for the presentation of the House of David by linking each succeeding king with the past and thus with the divine promises that had been endowed upon the eponym of the ruling house of Judah.[51]

The subsequent report of the destruction of Jerusalem is distinguished by its neutral-objective style, which is odd given the extremely emotional nature of the event.[52] The inspiration for the genre was probably that of an Assyrian campaign report.[53] The Gedaliah pericope, on the other hand, is a different kind of narrative; its precise definition varies depending on whether Jer 40f. or 2 Kgs 25 is taken to be older. The decision concerning the genre of the pardon of Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 25:27–30) depends on which intertexts it is related to. *Felipe Blanco Wißmann* classifies all the texts discussed so far as *prophecy and prophetic interpretation of history*, thereby contradicting the consensus that these texts are authentic examples of ancient oriental historiography.[54] In an almost conciliatory move he proposes the term "historiosophy"[55] in an attempt to harmo-

was completed during the Persian period because of similarities to deuterocanonical writings (see his *History* 11; 163f.).

49 R.G.Kratz, *Komposition* 163, describes the regnal formula as follows: age upon accession to the throne, duration; name of the mother along with her ancestry; verdict; reference to books of daily deeds / chronicles; death; burial; successor. E.Cortese, *schema* 37–52, provides a detailed description of the formula along with its different forms for the northern and southern kingdoms.

50 For this term and its meaning in distinction to Hellenistic and contemporary historiography, see B.Becking, *David* 22; M.Dijkstra, *events* 14–44, especially 25.

51 M.J.Suriano, *Politics* 50; 50 fn. 144; 70.

52 See also R.L.Cohn, *2 Kgs*, 170. Even the first report "lacks all passion and tension" (ibid. 166).

53 See L.S.Fried, *Conquest* 21–55. The conquest of Jerusalem corresponds to the typical formulae used for Assyrian campaigns: Date; disorder (= rebellion); divine intervention; gather of troops; movement of the troops; the Terrifying Presence (= king or god); siege of the enemy city (= night); flight of the enemy; chase; battle; victory; subjugation; exemplary punishments; consequences (= new relationship); ceremony/ celebration; return; concluding statement. It ends with the conquest of the divinity and the newfound relationship between the victorious god / king and the vanquished nation (23–29). After the event of a recapture there is a large ritual by means of which the temple is re-opened (30–49).

54 F.Blanco Wissmann, *"He did what was Right"* 241–260, 241; 244–247. Foundational for his argument is the assumption that 2 Kgs is dependent upon Deuteronomy (see ibid. 256f.). His arguments agree with those of G.Hentschel, *Könige* 310f.

55 See F.Blanco Wissmann, *He did what was right* 24; 30.

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nize the two dimensions of experienced history and theological interpretation. For him, the pericope concerning the pardon of Jehoiachin is typical of *exilic diaspora literature* (Gen 40f.; Esth 1:3 et passim).[56] In his monograph *The Violent Gift* (2012)[57] David Janzen has convincingly interpreted 2 Kgs 25 as a form of *trauma literature*.[58]

2.1.2 Historical Works and Literary Layers as the Interpretive Framework for 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30

Most exegetes develop their theories on the basis of the assumption that the 2 Kings came about as part of a broader redactional process that comprehended a larger composition, one that stretched from Exodus to 2 Kings (EH), Joshua to 2 Kings (DtrH), or at least 1 Samuel to 2 Kings.[59] As already discussed under point 1b), these interpretations can be divided into three schools or groups. The issues raised by this discussion are also relevant for a narratological analysis of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30.

One major issue is the question of the unity of the text. Of fundamental significance for answering this question is whether one takes 2 Kgs 25:27–30 to be the original conclusion of the composition or a later addition. An important contribution in this respect has been made by *Helga Weippert* of the Göttingen School. In an article from 1972 that continues to be cited this day she finds evidence for the existence of multiple authors and redactions.[60] Even if her general approach is not necessarily convincing,[61] she does successfully identify structural anomalies, such as the interruption in the regnal framework. She considers the final redactor "IIIS" (Southern Kingdom Third edition) to be a "doomsayer" ("*Schwarzmaler*").[62]

Richard E. Friedman (1981), an advocate of the block model, also thinks the final redactor had a negative interpretation of the end. Friedman surmises that there was an (additional) exilic redaction after the reign of Josiah that portrays the gradual concealment of the name of God; this in turn created space for the

56 See F.Blanco Wissmann, *Er tat das Rechte* 243–245.

57 D.Janzen, *Gift* especially 186–211.

58 All of these genre proposals have a strong relationship to historical events, which implies that the final interpretation must take these text-external events into account. See the online appendix to this book.

59 The comprehensive edited volume *Geschichtswerk* (ed. H.-J.Stipp) is dedicated to this topic and provides a compilation of all the controversies and problems associated with the DtrH. Latest studies and theories are listed in K.Bodner, *Theology*, 214–226; 229; 232.

60 H.Weippert, *Beurteilungen* 302; 333–335.

61 W.B.Barrick, *removal* 257–259, provides a succinct critique.

62 See H.Weippert, *Beurteilungen* 306–333; 337; 339.

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catastrophe of 586 BCE.[63] *Baruch Halpern* (1991) also supports Weippert's approach, dividing the layers in a manner similar to hers. He, too, has a negative view of the final redactor. For him, however, this redactor is a "fanatic"[64] rather than a pessimist.

André Lemaire (1986), on the other hand, has a more positive evaluation of Weippert's redactor IIIS. He sees in this final pericope a royal pro-Davidic ideology, the creators of which belong to an *"école royale"* of the exiled Jerusalem temple priesthood.[65]

A number of more recent scholars have concluded that there are just as few grounds for postulating a third redactional layer as there are for the layers of the block model. Entirely new approaches are required in order to learn to distinguish between authorial and redactional intentions.[66]

Still others claim that the allocation of guilt to Manasseh (2 Kgs 24:2, 20) that is retracted in the book of Chronicles is an exilic addition that functions to transfer the guilt of the nation onto a single individual.[67]

The Catholic Old Testament and specifically Deuteronomy scholar *Norbert Lohfink* is an outstanding example of those who are critical of theories positing the existence of multiple literary layers. In his opinion, the book discovered during the reign of Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3–20; 23:24) was the original core (*Urform*) of the book of Deuteronomy.[68] In a *Festschrift* for Hans Walter Wolff he picks up Wolff's concept of the Deuteronomic kerygma of repentance (see 2.2c) and asks whether its concern is an improvement of life in exile or the opportunity to return to the land; he does not answer the question himself.[69] A core element in his thesis is the rejection of the existence of a Deuteronomistic school, i. e. the idea that all redactions have passed through the hands of more or less the same group.[70] Lohfink thereby undercuts the concept of a highly stratified text, claiming that the hypothesis amounts to "nothing more than a description of phenomena." As he puts it polemically: "with every appearance of a new phenomenon a new circle

63 R.E.Friedman, *Exile* 136. E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* 117, goes in the same direction.

64 B. Halpern, *Editions* 179–244, 242.

65 See A.Lemaire, *histoire de la Rédaction* 221–236, 234.

66 See N.Na'aman, *Death Formulae* 245–254; R.F.Person, *II Kgs* 24,18–25,30 174–205, 192.

67 See F.Blanco Wissmann, *Er tat das Rechte* 172; N.Lohfink, *Zorn* 37–55, 48–50; S.L.McKenzie, *Trouble* 125f.; 136f.; K.Schmid, *Kollektivschuld?* 193–222; *Manasse* 87–99.

68 N.Lohfink, *Bundesurkunde* 99–165. This hypothesis has recently been reinforced by Lester L. Grabbe (see *Last Days* 19–46, 23; 27).

69 See N.Lohfink, *Kerygmata* 125–142, 137; 140f.

70 See N.Lohfink, *Bewegung* 65–142, 114f.; 121f. So also G.Vanoni, *Beobachtungen* 357–362. In my opinion, although Miguel Alvarez attempts to corroborate the presence of explicitly Deuteronomistic terminology, the evidence he provides for the presence of strong Deuteronomic elements, at least in the book of Kings, provides more support for Lohfink's thesis (*Terminologia* 83–99). A linguistic analysis has yet to be done. R.E.Clements, *Deuteronomistic Law* 5–25, critiques Lohfink and defends the existence of a movement.

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of tradents trots across the scholarly pasture."[71] His conclusion is plausible and should be taken seriously:

> The only true and powerful movement that would again reappear on the stage of Israel's history [after the time of Josiah] was the Maccabean movement. The outcome of that movement was a bloody rebellion. This alone should be sufficient to demonstrate how inappropriate it is to posit the existence of a "Deuteronomistic" movement that supposedly survived for centuries and which is the ultimately responsible for the formation of the entire Old Testament, using nothing more than individual redactional sentences as a basis.[72]

For Lohfink, the conclusion of Kings can be understood in light of 1 Sam 8, which contains a harsh polemic against human kings in Israel. Lohfink writes:

> As such, there appears to be no need for an interpretive concluding text. The historical development simply needs to be depicted for what it was, namely a downward spiral into the abyss. Perhaps there was a need here and there for Dtr II to indicate to what degree Israel and its kings failed to heed the warning of 1 Sam 12:25 and so "did evil." […] However, there was no need for him to insert an additional theoretical key text.[73]

Erik Aurelius confirms Lohfink's thesis in his dissertation *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts* (2003) by arguing that 2 Kgs 25:27–30 represents the original conclusion of the document.[74]

In conclusio: Most hypotheses have been retained in more or less modified form, some complementing each other, others contradicting. Though there is value in continuing this line of research, to do so would go beyond the scope of this study.[75]

71 Ibid. 74f. Hartmut Rösel comes to the opposite conclusion (see *Josua*, especially 12–16; 19; 35; 106; 97 fn. 255; 101–105).

72 Ibid. 133.

73 N.Lohfink, *Rückblick* 90. Lohfink subsequently explicates the close relationship between Dtr I and Dtr II, whereby that latter made use of and developed potentialities contained in the source text (91).

74 See E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* 132; 207. D.F.Murray, *Years* 245-265, goes in a similar direction. Among other things he points out that all semantic units in 2 Kgs 25 begin with the same sentence construction (2 Kgs 25:1: 8, 25, 27); this he takes as an indication of a compositional function (see 248). His theses have been partially contested by M.Pietsch, *Kultreform* 465–470.

75 The focus of this study is synchronic. As such, apart from making thought-provoking observations it is unable to make any explicit contribution to the discussion on diachrony. Relevant points that do come up are too few and far between to be presented in the conclusion (part F). Nevertheless, two points should be highlighted here: 2 Kgs 25:27–30 evinces a clear change of style and subject matter, making it possible that this conclusion is redactional in nature. The narrative itself seems to me to be far more unified than most models allow. Even if I follow the classic model as far as dating is concerned, this thesis is not binding. The *ante quem* dating is solely based on the assumption that the topic of a failed kingdom would no longer be relevant in this form in a post-exilic context.

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2.1.3 Intertextual and Thematic connections within the HB/OT

Interpreters often read the various Biblical accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24f.; Jer 37–39; 52; 2 Chr 36) in an uncritical manner, treating them as a single coherent whole in order to gain as comprehensive a version as possible. The result is the subordination of the distinctive voices of each text to a totalizing symbiosis. This approach is similar to those theories of the historical books which establish an interpretive framework at the outset that then goes on to constrain all potential meanings of the text. To avoid this, it is important to take a look at the various intertexts that have been drawn upon to interpret 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. We need to distinguish the intertextual and thematic cross-references generated by the pericope from its own discrete claims. Doing so will allow us to engage in a narratological reading that is as unbiased as possible. The semantic potential of these cross-references will be drawn upon for our interpretation of the pericope, but only in a second step, after the initial narratological analysis has been completed. In what follows below I will introduce the most important texts that interpreters have associated with our pericope and outline their relation to 2 Kgs. We will then return to these texts in Part D, where they will be integrated into our analysis.

a) Relationship to the Books of the Torah (esp. Gen 40f.; Deut 28)

In a well-received article *Hans-Christoph Schmitt* highlights the close relationship between Kings and the Torah, in particular the book of Genesis.[76] In addition to seeing a connection between creation and temple theology, Schmitt argues that the release of Jehoiachin plays a key role (2 Kgs 25:27–30). He repeatedly connects this event with the Joseph story, in particular his release from prison in Gen 40f.[77] He also agrees with advocates of the DtrH and EH hypotheses in seeing an important though not central role for the theology of the Decalogue, in particular the first commandment, and the book of Deuteronomy as a whole.[78] Other scholars consider the curse formula in Deut 28 to be the key to 2 Kgs 25.[79] *Georg*

76 See H.-C.Schmitt, *Geschichtswerk* 277–294.

77 F.Blanco Wissmann, *Er tat das Rechte* 243–245; K.Bodner, *Theology*, 223f. M.Chan, *Joseph* 570–572; R.G.Kratz, *Komposition* 311; M.Nobile, Marco, *contributo* 207–224, 200; K.Spronk, *Aanhangsel* 162170.

78 See, e.g., E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* 7; *Der Ursprung des Ersten Gebots* 1–21; F.Blanco Wissmann, *He did what was Right* 251–253; R.G.Kratz, *Komposition* 158f.; 222; G.Hentschel, *Könige* 310f.; in *Zorn* 52–54 N.Lohfink hints at the special relationship between 2 Kgs 17–25 and Deut 28f.

79 A good example is provided by J.P.Sonnet, *Siege* 73–86. He takes the Hulda oracle to be an allusion to Deut 28 (see p. 75) and Josiah's reaction "Our fathers have not heard" (2 Kgs 22:13) to be an allusion to Deut 28:15 ("If you do not listen to Yhwh your God"), which occurs at the beginning of the curse formulae (see ibid. 77). Sonnet sees the dry way of narrating 2 Kgs 25 added by Deut 28. This allows him to propose a mutual climax of both texts (ibid. 84f.).

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Braulik makes the follow observation concerning the relation between 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 and Deuteronomy: "The wrath of God, as articulated in the ancient formulae, would have destroyed Israel completely and absolutely"; nevertheless, "there remains one single unfulfilled statement regarding the future that looks forward beyond 2 Kgs, […] Moses's interpretation of history at the beginning of the composition in Deut 4 and 30 (4:23–31; 30:1–10)."[80]

b) Relationship to the Books from Joshua to 2 Kings

At this point there is not much to be said about the relationship between these two blocks of text, for the more global theory of the DtrH along with its theology has already illuminated their relationship in numerous publications. Of interest is the relationship that has been posited between 2 Kgs 17 and 2 Kgs 24f. If such a relationship holds, it would make plausible the thesis that the downfall of the southern kingdom had already been presaged at the verbal level.[81]

c) The Relation to the Book of Isaiah (especially Isa 39/40–50)

There have been hardly any analyses of the relationship between 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 and Isaiah. Despite this, Isa 11 and 40–53 display a particular thematic proximity to our chapters that cries for more detailed study.[82]

Kings is most frequently connected with "Deutero-Isaiah" by way of Ps 72: which concisely portrays the king of peace and his kingdom of peace.[83] Yet the two books also share common motifs. This has been demonstrated by Albertz, who shows how those portions of Isaiah composed in the Persian period evince a transformation of the royal ideology found in Kings into the worldwide rule of Yhwh.[84]

d) Relation to the Book of Jeremiah (especially Jer 39–41; 52)

The most frequent comparison is between the two narratives in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 and Jer 39–41 (Gedaliah) and 52 (the parallel text to 2 Kgs 24f.) respectively. The primary research questions have been as follows: Is one text the source and the

80 G.Braulik, *Theorien* 233–254, 253. Further indications of the relationship can be found in Deut 29:21–27 (see pp. 238; 253).

81 See G.Braulik, *Weisung* 115–140, especially 129–136. In his discussion he repeatedly draws upon the work of N.Lohfink in *Orakel* 11–34. Peter Dubovskỳ also has a similar thesis, providing more decisive evidence for the closeness of the relationship (see his *Similarities* 47–72, especially the table on p. 62).

82 An initial ground for comparison is the mention of Isaiah in 2 Kgs 17–19. To date this issues has primarily been analysed from a source critical perspective (see E.Ruprecht, *Komposition* 33–66); G. von Rad, *Theologie* 2 249–253). An article on the significance of the book of Isaiah as a possible intertext for 2 Kgs 25 is currently in preparation.

83 See R.A.Clements, *Privilege* 62f.; 65f.; B.D.Sommer, *Prophet.*

84 R.Albertz, *Israel* 435–446.

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other the copy (and if so, which is which?), or did both develop in dialogue with each other?[85] Do the theologies and motifs vary or not?[86] Do they have different understandings of historiography and historical theology?[87] All of the major debates and their associated literary-historical questions have been analysed in *Christopher Seitz's* excellent dissertation *Theology in Conflict* (1989) and in *John B. Jobs' Jeremiah's Kings* (2006). To a large degree their insights continue to be convincing.[88]

e) The Relation to the Book of Chronicles (esp. 1 Chr 3; 2 Chr 36)

Much could be said about this relation, but for the current work one point is of particular significance. Chronicles is later than Kings, which it uses as a source in a free and creative manner. As such, the intertextual relationship is one in which Chronicles formulates its theological ideas in relation to 1 Sam to 2 Kgs and not the other way around, at least not primarily.[89] The theological concepts of the two corpora are fundamentally different, for Chronicles has developed its own distinctive theology of the temple.[90]

f) The Relationship to the Poetic Texts (especially Pss 72; 78; Lam 2; Ezek 16)

A major issue the exilic generation had to face was the failure of a Zion theology that had proclaimed the indestructability of Jerusalem.[91] This theological challenge is often processed through the medium of poetry, the distinctive features of which allow for the creation of a diverse number of intertextual references.

The clearest and chronologically closest intertext is Lam 2: a "*threnos*" that sings of the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.[92] A second body of references can be found in the Psalms; their assumed proximity to David has repeatedly led interpreters to associate them with the Former Prophets.[93]

85 See J.Pakkala, *Murder* 401–411; 406f.; 410f.; H.J.Stipp, *Gedaliah* 166.
86 See B.Becking, *David* 188f.; D.Reimer, *Jeremiah* 207–224,200; G. von Rad, *Theologie* 2 201; 204; 212; 226; 425f.; B.Stade, *Kgs* 298–306.
87 See K.Schmid, *L'accession* 211–227; G. von Rad, *Theologie* 2 215; 219–221; 225.
88 C.R.Seitz, *Theology.* J.Jüb, *Jeremiah's Kings* provides us with an important update. E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* 115 provides a critique of Seitz's theory of the DtrH.
89 See A.G.Auld, *Main Source* 91–99. A publication discussing the significance as 1 Chronicles as a possible intertext is currently in preparation.
90 See R.F.Parson, *Deuteronomistic History* 315–336.
91 See H.Spieckermann, *Stadtgott* 28.
92 See J.Jeremias, *Theologie* 404; 413.
93 See ibid. 426f.

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2.2 Biblical Theological Interpretation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30

2.2.1 Key Stages in the History of Interpretation

There is much value in providing a brief review of the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation of Kings in general and our pericope in particular.[94] Such a review shows us how certain contemporary interpretive problems were identified very early on and it reveals the solutions proffered. It also clarifies interpretive tendencies and reveals distinct strands of tradition. In this way we gain an insight into the issues that have concerned different generations of interpreters.

Early Jewish interpretation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 was done in the context of Hellenism. Though the sources are meagre, the scarce information, the titles of works, and reception of these works in later historical works (e. g. Eusebius) enable us to get a sense of how these authors thought and wrote within the context of *Hellenistic historiography*[95]. Theological interpretation was oriented towards the issues of the day. For example, Josephus Flavius glosses over and harmonizes difficulties presented by Biblical dates and facts in his *Antiquitates Judaicae*[96]. In particular his idea that Jehoahaz willingly abdicated in order to clear the way for his brother Eliakim's rule has had an influence on later readers.[97] Jewish interpretation and narratives of this period were less focused on the kings than the temple, the temple treasure, and, especially after 70 C.E., on the reports of the destruction of the two temples and their relation to each other.[98]

Towards the end of antiquity and during the Middle Ages the paradigms received a sharper profile. Jewish interpreters, in an attempt to disassociate themselves from Christianity, strove to simplify and de-metaphorize Biblical language in order to preserve the transcendence of God and the clarity of the text. A good example of this is *Targum Jonathan on the Former Prophets.*[99] On the other hand there was also continuity with the past, as in ongoing attempts to harmonize the chronology that we first identified in Josephus. In this respect the

94 The outline presented here is the result of an analysis that shall be part of an upcoming VTP Commentary. A short version is already published under B.Collinet, *3.–4.Königtümer*, 223–227.

95 Hellenistic historiography has a preference for the genre of "re-narration" (*Nacherzählung*) because direct citation was considered to be plagiarism (see J.Maier, *Studien* 134).

96 The *Antiquitates Judaicae* (AJ) comprise twenty books. The first eleven retell history from creation to Artaxerxes, a period of time calculated by Josephus as lasting exactly 5,000 years. Book X treats the period from the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem (701 BCE) to the exilic narratives of Daniel.

97 See AJ X, 81–83.

98 An outline of the Rabbinic response to this topic can be found in G.Stemberger, *Reaktionen* 207–236.

99 D.Harringtün/ M.McNamara, *Targum Jonatan.*

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Seder Olam constitutes a kind of foundational document that was repeatedly expanded upon for a period of one thousand years.[100] It is also worth noting that the blinding of Zedekiah was understood to be an expression of his—and sometimes all of Israel's—failure, wit the event being closely associated with the destruction of the temple. This interpretation can already be seen in the *Sermon on the Ninth of Av*.[101]

The temple continued to be of central interest in this long phase of Jewish interpretation.[102] The most diverse forms of spiritual exegesis were applied to the topic, conceptualizing the temple as a spiritual thought palace[103] and inquiring as to whether the destruction of both temples was carried out by angels or humans. On the other hand, with the exception of David and Solomon, the deeds and personalities of the kings play only a limited role in both the spiritual and secular literature. The most widely interpreted story is that of the pardon of Jehoiachin. As today so then, scholars debated whether this story functions to provide a glimmer of hope (*Abrabanel*[104]) or just a historical note (*Raschi*[105]). This question was posed anew in the 20th Century by the Christian scholars Martin Noths and Gerhard von Rad and their students have still not managed to achieve a consensus.

In all the works mentioned above Biblical texts are constantly interwoven with each other so that a commentary on the book of Kings also usually analyses 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Jeremiah and Daniel. This approach changes in the modern period. *Baruch de Spinoza* (1632–1677) is the first to publicly question whether Moses and other authors were responsible for the Biblical texts traditionally associated with them; he went to make his own attempt to segment the texts chronologically.[106] Such an approach inevitably raised questions about the infallibility of Scripture, a challenge exacerbated by an increasing awareness of the contradictions and inaccuracies that a more literal approach to the text had brought to light. Traditional attempts at harmonization were gradually eclipsed with the rise of the historical critical method. But this period also saw a crisis of spiritual interpretation. *Moses Mendelssohn's* (1729–1786) "Jerusalem docu-

100 This work was composed between 200 and 400 A.D. and is an annotated chronicle of world history. Of primary relevance is Seder Olam Nr. 24–29, which describes the destruction of Jerusalem. The most important interpretive reception of this document is the *Seder Olam Rabba* (around 900).

101 The two most important sources are the sermons compiled at the end of the first century: *Pesiqta de RabKahana* and *Pesiqta Rabbati.*

102 In *Tempel*, W.J.Hamblin/ D.R.Seely provide a comprehensive analysis of the history of the interpretation of the Solomonic temple in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

103 See G.Stemberger, *Geschichte* 147.

104 See S.Yerushalmi, *Melakhim II* 355.

105 See ibid. 333.

106 See B.Spinoza, *Theol.-pol. Traktat* 181.

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ment" (1783) and the advocates of the *Haskalah* that followed him experimented with a rational approach to the holy scriptures. Yet for these scholars the narratives in Kings primarily tended to function as springboards for their own philosophical concerns.

Finally, interest in historical-critical questions gave birth to the modern disciplines of archaeology, general historiography, source analysis etc., all of which provided the foundation for a rational and scientific approach to Scripture. Around 1900 this approach culminated in historical-critical exegesis and its range of methodological tools.

If we compare this history of Jewish interpretation with that of Christianity, we discover a number of commonalities and differences. Both Christians and Jews of the first centuries A.D. were driven by primarily apologetic concerns; the results were polemical in nature, particularly for Christians *(Epistle of Barnabas, Cyrill of Alexandria, Ambrose of Milan* etc.).[107] Focus was less on the kings of Israel than on Jerusalem,[108] the temple, and its destruction. The reason for the destruction of both the First and Second Temple was held to be the "guilt of Israel." This era also saw the composition of Jewish-Hellenistic histories and the works of *Eusebius.*[109] These works are are usually characterized by subjective concerns such as the whitewashing of facts and harmonisations (especially *Josephus Flavius; Targum Jonatan).*

During the Early and High Middle Ages Jewish and Christian interpreters with a specifically spiritual approach displayed little interest in the book of Kings. On the other hand, those such as the *Antiochene Church Fathers* who read the Bible literally worked continuously on the historical books.[110] In this period two significant differences between the two communities emerged:

1. Only the Jews retained an interest in the temple and its destruction.
2. The Jews were much more interested in the figure of Zedekiah whereas the Christians were more interested in Jehoiachin.

Zedekiah, who effectively plays no role in Christian interpretation, was characterized in the Jewish literature as a perjurer and traitor or as a king who had bad advisors. He was a kind of symbol of the failed kingdom of Israel. This made him

107 See Ambrosius, *de officiis* X, 64; Barn. 16,4; Cyrill of Jerusalem, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 61: 106f.

108 For the significance of Jerusalem from both an Old Testament and Christian perspective, see D.Stoltmann, *Jerusalem* especially 165–280.

109 See Eusebius, *histor. eccl.* II, 6; III, 5.

110 Unfortunately much Antiochene interpretation has only be preserved in fragmentary form. For the reasons, see A.Siquans, *Deuteronomiumkommentar* 33. Fragments on 2 Kgs 24f. can be found in Sévère d'Antioche, *Fragments* 97; 119; 176; N.Fernandez-Marcüs/ J.R.Busto Saiz, *Theodoreti Cyrensis.*

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very amenable for reappropriation during the Haskalah. In this period he came to be presented as a prisoner who eventually found his way back to rationality, which is the Torah, the instruction of God.[111] Jehoiachin, on the other hand, is mostly only used as a reference point for chronological calculations; important scholars such as Rashi see in 2 Kgs 25:27–30 nothing more than a historical note.

Christian interpretation, by contrast, focused on Jehoiachin, effectively turning him into a role model as the king who confessed his sins and so received mercy from God. In the New Testament he is part of Jesus' lineage (Matt 1:1–13); *Origen*[112] considered him to have been purified; *Cyrill of Jerusalem*[113] compares him to Peter. The only negative qualification to his character is one provided by the early Fathers such as *Cassian*,[114] namely that he was not completely justified and so, like Jehoahaz, had to remain in a foreign land. Jehoiakim, who receives substantial treatment in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 and in the book of Jeremiah, is completely absent from the entire history of interpretation.

During the High Middle Ages both Jewish and Christian interpreters tended towards highly spiritual-mystical interpretations of holy Scripture. This means that there are very few commentaries or verse-level interpretations of the book of Kings as a whole, including its final chapters. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that today we barely posses any manuscripts of the commentaries and the more comprehensive works of the Antiochene school. What we have only exists in fragmentary form, which contrasts greatly with the abundance of manuscripts that we posses for sapiential books such as the Song of Songs.[115] The theologians that did approach the historically oriented books primarily did so in terms of their historical sense. These theologians were often also politically active, which means that they worked to derive information from the texts that was of significance for the ruling class (*Abrabanel*; *Claudius of Turin*; *Hrabanus Maurus* etc.).

From the 16th / 17th Centuries onwards interpreters completed the gradual move towards historical and critical analyses of the texts, with 1 Sam–1 Kgs regularly coming under scrutiny. These four books were particularly suited to such analyses because they are united by a single story line, albeit with excurses. Both religious communities initially struggled with this new approach: Spinoza

111 *Zidkija im Gefängnis* is the most well-known poem of the Enlightenment Jewish poet *Jehuda Leib Gordon* and dates to the year 1789. It is an Enlightenment work composed on the eve of the French Revolution.

112 M.Conti, *1–2 Kgs* xix.

113 See ibid. 239f.

114 Cassian, *Coll.* 57, 193.

115 See the overview of the history of research into the interpretation of the Song of Songs up until the Middle Ages in B.Collinet, *Motif* 131–161.

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was excommunicated from his community, *Richard Simon* (1638–1712)[116] had to face the Inquisition and was banned from speaking. In the 19th Century it was primarily the Protestant kingdoms of Prussia and the Netherlands with their openness to the Enlightenment that promoted critical historical [sometimes historicistical], philological, and literary approaches to the Bible. These were the places where both Jews and Christians developed the key insights and formulated key issues that were to be pursued in the following centuries, in the particular the 20th.

Julius Wellhausen's (1844–1918) work *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (1873/1883)[117] marks the beginning of a radically new interpretation of the Bible. He takes Judges to Kings to be an unembellished account of history that describes "the radical distance between ancient praxis and the Law."[118] In contrast[119] to this historical approach the discussion below will concentrate on attempts made over the past 100 years to interpret 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 theologically. Some of these interpretations continue to be passionately debated to this day.

2.2.2 The End of the Book of Kings as a "Historical Note"

Without doubt the first scholar worthy of mention in this respect is *Martin Noth* (1902–1968) and his *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*[120] (1943). For him the conclusion of 2 Kgs is clear and unambiguous:

> The [Deuteronomist] perceived the following meaning within the events of Israel's history: throughout that history God had clearly responded to the steady growth in Israel's apostasy by sending warnings and punishments; finally, once it had become clear that all these measures had borne no fruit, he responded by completely destroying the nation.[121]

As a result of this hypothesis Noth can barely identify any significance in the pardon granted to Jehoiakim:

> It is evident that the Dtr's brief report […] of the release of King Jehoiakim […]only serves to append a conciliatory closing note to the grand depiction of Israel's fall that the

116 Many historians of Biblical scholarship have studied this figure. For a recent contribution, see especially M.Reiser, *Bibelkritik*.

117 J.Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*.

118 Ibid. 292. This development could lead to unusual positions. For example, the important commentary by H.Gressmann/ H.Gunkel [et al.], *Geschichtsschreibung*, has no discussion of the post-Josianic kings, justifying the move by referring to the uncertain reliability of the sources.

119 Today this view is no longer sustainable, as has most recently been demonstrated by C.Frevel (*Geschichte* 274).

120 M.Noth, *ÜSt 1*.

121 M.Noth, *ÜSt 1* 100.

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> Dtr was tasked with portraying. The report does not serve to veil the fact of Israel's *de facto* end […] nor does it leave Israel's history open.[122]

The following much-cited axiom summarizes the outcome of his study: "the dawn of a new future" is precisely what 2 Kgs 25:27–30 does *not* offer to its readers. Rather, the Deuteronomist simply "provides his readers with the last piece of data he was aware of that concerned the royal history; his motivation was his own personal conscientiousness and reverence for historical fact."[123]

In a study completed in 1950 Noth critiques the hypothesis that Judah had divine-human kings, arguing that only YHWH was believed to be the true legitimate ruler. As a consequence of this position Noth was unable to consider the Nathan oracle (2 Sam 7) to be a reference point for 2 Kgs 25:27–30, a text that Gerhard von Rad considered to be the key to the pericope.[124] In his article "*Die Katastrophe von Jerusalem im Jahre 587 v. Chr. und ihre Bedeutung für Israel*"[125] (1953) Noth makes connections with the books of Jeremiah, Lamentations and Ezekiel, all of which proclaim the final and irreversible downfall of Judah. In light of these connections he concludes once again that Jehoiachin could never have become a true ruler because he was "not rehabilitated in any way whatsoever."[126]

In his *Geschichte Israels* (1950) Noth treats his interpretation of the end of Judah and the release of Jehoiachin as if it were a scholarly consensus:

> In the end Jehoiachin, too, died, as is explicitly communicated to us by the Deuteronomist at the end of his work […], without any one of the hopes that had been set on him being fulfilled.[127]

Nevertheless, Noth does affirm that the Jews possessed a great capacity for hope, for a few pages later he summarizes as follows: "All that was required for the glimmering fire of hope to be reignited was the prospect of a substantive transformation of the state of world affairs."[128]

Noth's final interpretation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 cannot be known because he was only able to complete the first volume of his *Kommentars zu den Königsbüchern*[129]. His approach, however, was adopted and further developed by a whole series of succeeding exegetes.

122 Ibid. 12.
123 Ibid. 108; (see also G.Hentschel, *Könige* 310). This thesis is not sustainable, as has been demonstrated by *Jutta Hausmann*'s study, which underscores the distinction between the theological concept of the remnant of Israel and historical reality (see Id., *Rest*).
124 See M.Noth, *Gott* 188–229.
125 M.Noth, *Katastrophe* 346–371: especially 346; 369–371.
126 Ibid. 371.
127 M.Noth, *Geschichte* 262.
128 Ibid. 270.
129 M.Noth, *1 Kgs* 1–16.

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Walter Dietrich adopts the thesis and modifies it. Such a modification was necessary as Noth's thesis of a purely historical notice had become unsustainable in the light of more recent insights.[130] In his dissertation *Prophetie und Geschichte* (1972) Dietrich describes the interplay between an open, original author who had set his hopes on the future and a narrow-minded redactor who destroyed the point he was trying to make:

> Originally the text evinced the broad expanse of an open horizon which transcended the religious sphere as much as it had the boundaries of Israel; later, however, its scope became confined to the Israelite nation along with its godlessness and piety. The powerful language and even its wealth of speech forms have all been flattened into a single scheme.[131]

In the following years Dietrich dedicated himself to the book of Kings. In 2002 a collection of his works were published under the title *Von David zu den Deuteronomisten*[132] in which he repeats his denial that there had ever been a hope in the restoration of the Davidic kingdom under Jehoiachin:

> The kingdom as a whole is made out to be a failed experiment within the history of Israel. The reestablishment of a Jewish state, even one that is under Davidic leadership, is no longer seen as a desirable goal. Instead, Israel must do everything to reconfigure its identity as the people of God by intensely focusing on the Torah. This is its future.[133]

Jörg Jeremiahs accords great significance to the theological interpretation of caesurae in the history of the people of God. In his *Theologie des Alten Testaments*[134] (2015) he writes:

> In my opinion, if we were no longer able to identify these magnificent attempts to theologically demonstrate the continuity of God throughout the ruptures of history, then the Old Testament would be robbed of its wealth of theological concepts.[135]

Jeremias postulates the existence of a distinct theology cultivated at the Jerusalem temple. This theology broke with the broader Ancient Near Eastern idea that there was a trade-off between royal goods and donations, on the one hand, and divine displays of favour, on the other. In contrast to this, 2 Sam 7 locates both elements on the divine side. The result was the king was placed on the same level

130 A recent criticism has been particularly harsh. *Phillippe Guillaume* compares the conquest of Jerusalem, which is a main theme of the Old Testament and which takes up 23 verses in 2 Kgs alone, with the destruction of Nineveh, which is hardly mentioned anywhere (*Jerusalem* 31–32); R.G.Kratz, *Komposition* 160 fn. 58; 219–221.
131 W.Dietrich, *Prophetie* 109.
132 W.Dietrich, *David*.
133 Ibid. 271.
134 J.Jeremias, *Theologie*.
135 Ibid. 10.

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as the nation, for both were completely dependent upon the goodness of God.[136] Jeremias also interprets the Nathan oracle similarly to von Rad, namely in terms of an eternal Davidic dynasty:

> However he [i. e. Yhwh] goes about calling the Davidides to account, what he will not do is reject them as he had Saul. This is what constitutes the "firmness" or "reliability" (v. 16) of the Davidic dynasty.[137]

In another place Jeremias analyses the connection between Saul and the Flood (Gen 6–9). In the process he develops a definition of divine wrath and regret that, in his opinion, is also operative at the end of Kings[138]:

> Neither in the present nor in the future does Israel need to counter the possibility that Yahweh will change his will. Yahweh's promises that are applicable for the present are irrevocable, guaranteed once and for all by Yahweh himself and his faithfulness. Even when human beings fall into guilt and thus provoke Yahweh to anger and regret for his past salvific institutions, it is Yahweh himself who safeguards Israel from his own anger and regret. Israel can live without fear of Yahweh's regret. Yahweh restricts his own ability to punish by binding himself to his word (Gen 6–8; 1 Sam 15): His immutability consists in his faithfulness. He overcomes his wrath out of concern for his people (Hos 11 et passim). Even when he plans destruction, he hopes that he will not have to carry it out (Jer 26; 42; Jl 2; Jon 3 f.). If his wrath causes those who are his to get into difficulty, he is willing to help (Deut 32; 36 et passim). We can identify within claims such as these a summary of Israel's experiences of the changeability of its God. […] Just as humanity remained unchanged after the flood, so did hardly any of the kings after David make a change for the better—for the DtrH Hezekiah and Josiah are the only exceptions. The only one to have changed was God, who had bound himself to David and the Davidides, who punishes them but does not reject them (2 Sam 7,14 f.). For all time they will remain protected from God's regret; the fate of Saul functions only as a dark foil against which the history of God with David shines all the brighter.[139]

Yet despite these claims, Jeremias is unable to abandon Noth's position. His overall conclusion regarding the Former Prophets is that "the prophetic pro-

136 See ibid. 120 f.; 189. Although the argument itself is coherent, it seems to me that as a Protestant exegete Jeremias has allowed himself to be more influenced by the Lutheran concept of grace than the Biblical text.

137 J.Jeremias, *Theologie* 122. Jeremias had already developed this thesis is far more detail in his monograph *Reue* 9–13, 36–39. He reads the destruction of Saul in parallel with the Flood narrative (Gen 6–9) because these are the only two acts of judgement carried out against an entire "house" with YHWH promising afterwards never to something similar, again. This idea has been critiqued by J.Schipper, *Resonances* 521–529.

138 See J.Jeremias, *Zorn* 9–12; 46; 56; 67–75; 186. Jeremias even entertains the possibility of a connection between Saul and Manasseh, the only truly evil king in the DtrH (see *Theologie* 227 f.).

139 J.Jeremias, *Reue* 119 f.; 135. M.Klopfenstein, *Zorn* 199–202 provides a similar definition.

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nouncements of judgement before the fall of Jerusalem ends in uttermost severity, apparently[140] without even a glimmer of hope."[141]

Meik Gerhards, who wrote two articles on the pardon of Jehoiachin before starting his dissertation, also strengthens Noth's position.[142] In contrast to von Rad's theory that Kings ends on a note of hope, Gerhards sees a relationship between the end of the book and the Hulda oracle (2 Kgs 22:18). His conclusion is that these final reports portray the fulfilment of Hulda's proclamation of judgement upon the house of David.[143]

A summary of the arguments of this first group of exegetes yields the following theses: The end of the DtrH provides a relatively authentic description of the history of Judah. The fragments concerning Gedaliah and Jehoiachin that follow the conquest of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:23–30) were not composed in order to awaken hope. Their purpose was simply to provide additional historical information for the sake of completeness. All that remains at the end of Kings is a nation subject to divine judgement whose future is entirely uncertain.[144]

2.2.3 The End of the Book of Kings as a Sign of Hope

The scholar whose name is associated with a more optimistic interpretation of the end of Kings is *Gerhard von Rad* (1901–1971).[145] This great 20th Century Protestant Biblical theologian made repeated reference to the issue of kingship in the Old Testament, even making it a key topic in the first volume of his *Theologie des Alten Testamentes* (10 editions until 1992). Even today this publication is considered a standard reference work for the discipline. Von Rad first formulated his thoughts on the topic in his 1947 article *Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern*[146]. In it he speaks of the Judean kings' lack of obedience[147] towards YHWH. He counts eleven prophecies and their fulfilments, number 10 being the prophecy concerning Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:10–18), which is

140 The word "apparently" marks what appears to be a wariness of the part of Jeremias. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that he ever moves in a similar direction to that of von Rad. Even his talk of a "Deuteronomic theology of repentance" (J.Jeremias, *Theologie* 206) is in the final analysis not the same as Wolff's kerygma of repentance (see below).

141 See J.Jeremias, *Theologie* 190.

142 See M.Gerhards, *Begnadigung* 52–67; *Erzählungen* 5–12.

143 See M.Gerhards, *Erzählungen* 12.

144 This position is adopted by the following commentaries in chronological order: P.Ketter, *Kön*; J.Gray, *1.2 Kgs* 773; G.H.Jones, *1.2 Kgs*, especially 647–649; M.Cogan/ H.Tadmor, *2 Kgs* 302–320. R.Dilday, *1.2 Kgs* is clearly dependent upon Gray.

145 He is the first scholar to systematically treat the question of the hopefulness of these chapters. Reflections in this direction can be identified in earlier interpretations, however; an example is the commentary by W.E.Barnes, *Kgs* 330.

146 G. von Rad, *Geschichtstheologie* 189–204.

147 See ibid. 192.

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fulfilled in 2 Kgs 24:2.[148] He derives the following conclusion from this observation:

> Dtr provides an exemplary paradigm of what salvation history in the Old Testament is: it consists in a historical sequence that is formed and propelled towards fulfilment by the continuous intervention of Yahweh's judging and saving word.[149]

Already at this early stage von Rad senses that Nathan's prophecy in 2 Sam 7 would play a key role in the interpretation of the book of Kings.[150] This thought would never leave him, eventually finding expression in his more developed theology.

Von Rad's short monograph *Der Heilige Krieg* ([2]1952), in contrast, is unconventional. In it he categorises some of the battles fought by Israel / Judah as holy wars and others as not. The last battles of this kind within the prophetic books were Josiah's campaigns of expansion that were foiled by Pharaoh Neco. They reveal that YHWH was willing to let Jerusalem be conquered by others without himself being involved in the event. In other words, YHWH himself does not wage war against his own people.[151]

In the first volume of his *Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels* von Rad amasses a large amount of data related to the book of Kings, such as its literary frame, the nature of the DtrH as a partially exilic composition, and the concept of Israel as the sole bearer of responsibility for the failure of the divine covenant.[152] Based on these details he attempts to reconstruct YHWH's basic approach to judgement, coming to the following conclusion: The harshness of the verdict concerning the kings of Israel and Judah was not due to a rejection of the monarchy per se; rather,

> the overwhelmingly negative view results from the fact that Dtr judges the kings according to an ideal role model. In reality it ascribed the greatest significance to the monarchy in its key position between Yahweh and Israel. The salvation or condemnation of Israel was determined by the hearts of the kings and nowhere else.[153]

The consequence of this was that the execution of divine punishment could be stayed if a king behaved well.[154] Von Rad thus insists that when we read the Former Prophets we should take this element of experience into account rather

148 See ibid. 193–195. To understand the role of Manasseh see E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* 123f.; and the dissertation thesis P.F.S.van Keulen, *Manasseh.*

149 Ibid. 204.

150 See ibid. 199; this view is also shared by G.Hentschel, *Gott* 47; 92, and J.M.Carrasco, *Reyes* 282.

151 See G. von Rad, *Theologie 2* 78f.

152 G. von Rad, *Theologie* 1 347 fn. 2; 350; Vol. 2, 370f.

153 Ibid. 351.

154 See ibid. 353.

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than treat them as a more or less strict representation of historical facts, as done by Wellhausen, Noth, and others.[155]

In the second volume of his theology of the Old Testament, *Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels*, von Rad returns to his thesis concerning 2 Sam 7. To do so he must first establish a number of premisses. For a start, a prophetic vision should not be taken as a statement of universal truth. Rather, it is a "specific word for a specific historical situation."[156] Secondly, prophecy speaks a new word within the context of an older tradition of election, e. g. the tradition of the election of the house of David. In that context it addresses someone who has fallen into sin.[157] Thirdly, on the basis of Josh 24:19, the DtrH works out "with fascinating theological precision how it was only in relation to Yahweh and his commandments that Israel and its kings failed."[158] As such the "salvific power of the ancient ordinances […] has been extinguished; Israel can only find salvation in Yahweh's future salvific institutions,"[159] not by trusting in the protection of Jerusalem and the temple.[160]

All of these premises explain the downfall of Judah. Nevertheless, 2 Sam 7 gives von Rad cause for seeing a Messianic hope for Judah in the figure of Jehoiachin, who is rehabilitated in 2 Kgs 25:27–30. Von Rad never went on to explicitly developed this idea in his theology. Nevertheless, there is hardly any other concept of his that has received such a positive affirmation among his wide circle of students and beyond.[161]

Before we investigate this phenomenon in more detail we should mention a few more statements made by von Rad in relation to 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 in the period after the writing of his theology, for these insights are also implicitly adopted by many of his followers. For example, he claims that the bestowal of a (throne) name is the right of YHWH alone and not of other kings, for he is the true ruler of his people.[162] Von Rad's final article dates to the period just before his death. It is concerned with the tradition of "judgement doxologies" (*Gerichtsdoxologien*).[163] For von Rad, these judgement doxologies played a role in

155 See ibid. 356; 404; Vol. 2, 443.
156 G. von Rad, *Theologie 2* 135.
157 See ibid. 136; 180.
158 Ibid. 276.
159 Ibid. 280.
160 See ibid. 312;366f.
161 See, for example, M.Suriano, *Politics* 96; 126; 176; I.W.Provan, *1.2 Kgs* 274f.; L.A.Schökel, *Reyes.*
162 G. von Rad, *Königsritual* 205–213. This claim is important for it shapes the royal ideology of Judah. It is God rather than a human who is the sovereign of his people. Foreign kings are his instruments. If a foreign king arrogates to himself the right to choose a name he violates divine law.
163 G. von Rad, *Gerichtsdoxologie* 245–254.

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lament ceremonies and consisted of a combination of "a confession of guilt and a statement of the righteousness of God" within a Deuteronomistic theological framework.[164]

In a *Festschrift* on the occasion of von Rad's 60th' birthday, his student *Klaus Baltzer* addresses the question of a Messianic component in the conclusion of the book of Kings.[165] He attempts to combine von Rad's thesis that David's house would continue to exist with the approach of Noth. In the process he argues that a specifically Messianic interpretation of these chapters goes to far as the concept of a coming Messiah was not developed until much later.[166]

Klaus Koch studied the phenomenon of a "silence regarding the prophets" (*Profetenschweigen*) in detail. Standing firmly in the tradition of von Rad and Wolff[167] he makes the following observation:

> It is a remarkable fact that a portrayal of the history of Israel, composed or revised in the 6th Century, makes no reference to the writing prophets (with the exception of 2 Kgs 18–20). This fact demands an explanation. The most plausible interpretation is that exilic circles were convinced that Yahweh always allowed for the possibility that people could repent and return to him. This position led them to have strong reservations regarding the categorical pronouncements of destruction made by the pre-exilic prophets.[168]

In addition to this Koch further develops von Rad's statements concerning divine judgement. He proposes the concept of a "fate-determining sphere of action" ("*schicksalswirkende Tatsphäre*") in order to describe the concept of a causal relation between one's action and one's wellbeing (the "*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*," or "deed-wellbeing-connexion"). This concept constituted a core element in the judgement motif found in the Former Prophets.[169] In contrast to this approach *Claudia Sticher* has developed the concept of "salvific justice" ("*salvifikativen Gerechtigkeit*"),[170] a relational concept of justice that takes its cue from the work of Assmann.[171]

164 Ibid. 252.

165 K.Baltzer, *Ende* 33–43.

166 See 38; 41. Baltzer provides a number of Bible verses to support his position (Jer 40:2; 52; Hag 2:23).

167 K.Koch, *Profetenschweigen* 115–128. Isaac L. Seligmann the silence of the prophets differently, namely as due to ignorance of the texts of Jeremiah. As a consequence he dates large portions of this book to a later period (see his *Auffassung* 254–284, 283f.).

168 Ibid. 128. Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann develops this idea in the Festschrift for Ernst Würthwein. He doesn't identify a negative message here; rather the Golah-community made an arrangement with the Babylonians (see *Erwägungen* 94–109, 108).

169 K.Koch, *Vergeltungsdogma* 130–180.

170 See C.Sticher, *Rettung* 18–25; 30–32; 341–344.

171 In his book about Ma'at Jan Assmann introduces the concept of "connective justice" (*"konnektive Gerechtigkeit"*). Sticher defines it as concerned with solidarity, relationality, and social order (see ibid. 30–36).

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Hans Walter Wolff's paradigmatic article on the kerygma of the DtrH has attracted much interest.[172] His idea, formulated here in 1961: is a further development of a ten-year older article entitled *"Das Thema 'Umkehr' in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie"*[173] (1951; "The Theme of 'Repentance' in Old Testament Prophecy"). In his older article Wolff argued that repentance should be understand as a *return to* YHWH rather than a *turning away from* other deities. Wolf considers this act of "returning" to involve the simultaneous renunciation of "pious custom and […] political power."[174] Like Baltzer before him, Wolff integrates both Noth's and von Rad's theses, particularly criticizing the idea that 2 Sam 7 is Messianic.[175] He asks himself why the DtrH would have needed it when it would have been sufficient to use David as the ideal king and to provide an devastating abridged summary of the other kings.[176] On the other hand, he critiques Noth for overestimating the definitiveness of the end of the state, for "who could say whether there would be an entirely new phase along with entirely new institutions for God's people, just like after earlier events of divine rejection?"[177] For Wolff, Noth is only correct in the sense that Kings remains silent regarding a possible hope; however, in this silence a space is created for the nation to repent and return to God.[178] "Repentance-Return" ("*Umkehr*") is the key word here; it is the "fruit of the judgement"[179], which can lead to both a return home ("*Heimkehr*"; Deut 30:4) as well as "worship directed towards the ruins from a foreign land" (1 Kgs 8:41–43; 9:8f.).[180]

In the final analysis, Wolff considers the history of Judah to be open to the future, an idea that he develops elsewhere.[181] He defended his thesis over twenty years later in a debate with *Marco Nobile,*[182] this time taking the Gedaliah pericope (2 Kgs 25:23–26) as an example. He is convinced that one can identify a weak glimmer of hope in this pericope's pro-Babylonian stance.[183]

In the same directions arguments Keith Bodner (2019).[184]

172 H.W.Wolff, *Kerygma* 171–186.
173 H.W.Wolff, *Umkehr* 130–150.
174 Ibid. 146.
175 H.W.Wolff, *Kerygma*, 172–174.
176 See ibid. 175f.
177 Ibid. 177–179.
178 See ibid. 179; 185.
179 Ibid. 183.
180 See ibid. 183.
181 "In the prophetic message the future of God usually appears as a historical future and not the end of history." (H.W.Wolff, *Geschichtsverständnis* 289–307, 292).
182 M.Nobile, *contributo* 221; 227.
183 H.W.Wolff, *interpretation* 3–11: 11. He defended a similar position once again in the middle of the 90's (*Gedaliah* 21–46). The earliest claim for a "gleam of hope" can be found in F.W.Farrar, *2 Kgs* 476.
184 K.Bodner, *Theology*, 226.

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Another contribution to this debate, this time from the Göttingen School, has been made by *Walter Zimmerli*, one of the most renowned Biblical theologians. Thought not as optimistic as von Rad, he does still feel it is justified to speak of hope in this context:

> Thought not explicitly mentioned, we cannot exclude the possibility that the concluding report of the pardon of a son of David might not subtly raise the question of whether Yahweh, out of faithfulness to his word, might still be willing to grant Israel a future even beyond its death.[185]

This approach has been repeatedly criticized for exaggerating the hopefulness of this passage. A well-known example is *Hartmut Rösel,* who brings up the following objection:

> And yet even those who want to see a glimmer of hope in these concluding verses […] on the fate of the exiled Jehoiachin must surely admit that such a hope is not articulated in this laconic report.[186]

Other interpreters also see in the exhortation to repent an option rather than a vision.[187]

2.2.4 The End of the Book of Kings as Pro-Babylonian Consolation

A third popular interpretive strategy combines the former two.[188] The argument here is that our text functions to offer consolation, taking its inspiration from historical events and containing a call to make arrangements with the occupiers. Its claim: If the king is doing well in exile then we will all do well too. This thesis is particularly widespread among English speaking scholars. In 1984 *Jon D. Levenson* was the first to suggest the presence of a pro-Babylonian tendency that functioned as a pragmatic option for the exiles.[189] In an article from 1986 *Christopher T. Begg* picks up the idea and develops it further.[190] In addition to this

185 W.Zimmerli, *Grundriss* 159.

186 H.Rösel, *Joschija* 34. Whether such a hope is articulated or not is one of the primary topics of this study. However, Wolff himself had already previously made the point that it is the *silence* of God rather than anything spoken that creates space for Israel's repentance.

187 See G.Hentschel, *Könige* 311; N.Lohfink, *Rückblick* 138, extends this motif to include the failed state: "Even though this experiment [of a monarchy for the people of God] had failed, it contained within itself the possibility of not failing because God had agreed to go along with it. […] Dtr II had attempted to define it, in the laws of office and in the well-prepared statements of 1 Sam 12."

188 By way of example, see B.Becking, *David* 187; R.A.Clements, *Privilege* 56,60f.; 64. The oldest suggestion of a pro-Babylonian redaction can be found in the commentary by Sanda, *2 Kgs* 372–374; 395.

189 J.D.Levenson, *Verses* 353–361. In his view it was primarily a reconciliation between royalist traditionalists and pragmatists that brought about this idea (see p. 361).

190 C.T.Begg, *Significance* 49–56.

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he argues that the absence of the divine name in the final verses is a sign that the pardon of Jehoiachin should in no way be taken to be a great theological statement; at best it should be interpreted as a "human gesture"[191]. It is this, however, in a double sense: as a friendly gesture without deeper meaning and as a human in contrast to a divine deed.[192] *Matthew H. Patton* goes in a similar direction in his recently published dissertation *Hope for a Tender Sprig* (2017)[193]. In his *Staatstheorie im Alten Israel* (2009) *Wolfgang Oswald* comes to a similar result, albeit from a different direction. We thus see that the pro-Babylonian interpretive strategy[194] continues to be popular outside of the commentaries.[195]

The primary criticism of this model is that Gedaliah suggested this option (2 Kgs 25:23 f.) and was murdered as a result, i. e. this theory is not convincing. As evidence against the Gedaliah argument Aurelius points to the continuation of the book with 2 Kgs 25:27–30, which he considers to be complementary to the conclusion of the prayer for the consecration of the temple (1 Kgs 8:50):[196]

> If one approaches the rehabilitation of Jehoiachin from the perspective of 1 Kgs 8:46–51 this report does not imply that the dynasty and the state of Judah still have a future; it does imply, however, that the nation still has a future, namely a future with Yhwh, though this future is without an earthly king.[197]

3. Tradition History and Text Critical Observations

A broad scholarly consensus has been achieved regarding the tradition history of the Hebrew text. The same cannot be said for the Septuagint versions, however, which have seen heated debate in recent times.[198] The great Protestant exegete

191 Ibid. 51; for a similar view see D.F.Murray, *Years* 265.

192 See ibid. 50 f. On the basis of these reflections he develops a literary critical theory concerning DtrP, developing the approach of Walter Dietrich and Félix Garcia Lopez (*Construction* 222-232; see C.T.Begg, *DtrP'* 49–55).

193 M.H.Patton, *Hope* 34–36.

194 W.Oswald, *Staatstheorie* 69–71.

195 Begg's approach is followed by, e. g., R.L.Cohn, *2 Kgs* 171–173; B.O.Long, *2 Kgs*; D.R.Davis, *2 Kgs* especially 348. Even before these scholars A.Rolla, *Re*, made similar arguments.

196 See E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* 129.

197 Ibid. 134. He further reinforces his thesis by making recourse to the book of Deuteronomy and the concept of the Tanakh as a whole (see pp. 214–216).

198 The following works should be consulted for introductions to the themes and issues in textual criticism of the Septuagint texts, their origination, and their relation to the Hebrew texts: K.De Troyer, *The Seventy-two* 8–64; G.DOrival/ M.Harl [et al.] (ed.), *La Bible grecque*; R.A.Kraft (ed.), *lexicography*; F.Siegert, *Bibel*, especially 189–217; T.Kauhanen, Lucifer. I. Soisalon-Soininen, *Zurück* 35–51; M.Tilly, *Einführung* especially 1–24; 46–48; 56–99; 121; E.Tov, *Bible* especially 477–517; E.Würthwein, *Text* especially 18–21; 32; 102.

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and initiator of the *Göttinger Septuaginta*[199] (since 1908) *Alfred Rahlfs* (1865–1935)[200] and his "school"[201] had long assumed that the Codex Vaticanus was the oldest accessible textual witness to the Greek text. The last few decades, however, have seen an increase in alternative interpretations.[202] The most prominent Catholic advocate for a different view is the professor emeritus and former head of the Barthélemy Institute in Fribourg *Adrian Schenker.* He argues in his *Älteste Textgeschichte der Königsbücher*[203] (2004) that the essential features of the Antiochene text known as the Lucian recension (in what follows Ant.) is not only older than the Codex Vaticanus, but it is also based on a Hebrew source text that is older than the oldest pre-Masoretic textual witness. Already in the late 1980's the research group associated with the Spanish linguist *Natalio Fernandez Marcos*[204] had come to the same opinion.

On the Protestant side the main impetus for this re-evaluation of Ant. has come from the Septuagint scholar and co-editor of the Lxx.D *Siegfried Kreuzer.*[205] Of particular relevance for Kings is the dissertation of his student *Jong-Hoon Kim*[206] (2009). Kim has identified and analysed the available source material and summarized his results in the following diagram:[207]

199 Unfortunately the volume on Kings has not yet been completed. For the an introduction to the project see R.G.Kratz/ B.Neuschäfer (ed.), *Göttinger Septuaginta.*

200 A.Rahlfs, *Studien.* Until recently the following much-cited statement was paradigmatic: "We must face the possibility that the L text [= Ant] of the OT is not a unified entity in the strict sense of the word. Rather, for different books Lucian worked with different principles or had various co-workers who presumably adopted his principles in general but diverged from his approach when it came to details" (*Septuaginta-Studien* I–III. 295).

201 See, for example, the study by M.Rehms, *Untersuchungen.*

202 It is not possible to identify any criticisms of this position within the literature until the late 1980's. This includes the commentary by J.A.Montgomery/ H.Snyder Gehman, *Kgs*, which is known for its detailed textual criticism. Only N.Schlögl, *Kgs* especially 330–341: argues that Lucian recension contains the preferred reading for the Greek text. I unfortunately had no access to the unpublished dissertation by K.L.Hui (Timothy), *critical analysis*, so that its possible counterargument cannot be voiced here.

203 A.Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte*, especially 172–174; 179; 182f. In this work, too (p. 184 and elsewhere), Schenker argues that there was an institution associated wit the Jerusalem temple that established a normative version of the Hebrew text and that examined the various Greek translations (see *graeca veritas* 57–78, 75).

204 An introduction to his theory can be found in N.Fernandez Marcos, *Antiochene Edition* 57–73; the theory is formulated in relation to Kings in *Text* 177–213, but also somewhat earlier in *Reflections* 219–229.

205 In addition to numerous publications the anthology Kreuzer/M.Sigismund, *Text*, in particular, offers an overview of his plausible reconsideration of the value of this textual witness.

206 J.-H.Kim, *Textformen.* For the relation between the Hebrew and Greek text in 2 Kgs 24f. one should also consider the textual critical analyses of Jer 52 (see G.Fischer, *Jeremia* 52 333–359; *Jeremiah* 52 37–48; E.Tov, *Textual criticism* 174; 242; *text-critical use* 137; 166; 243f.).

207 J.-H.Kim, *Textformen* 414.

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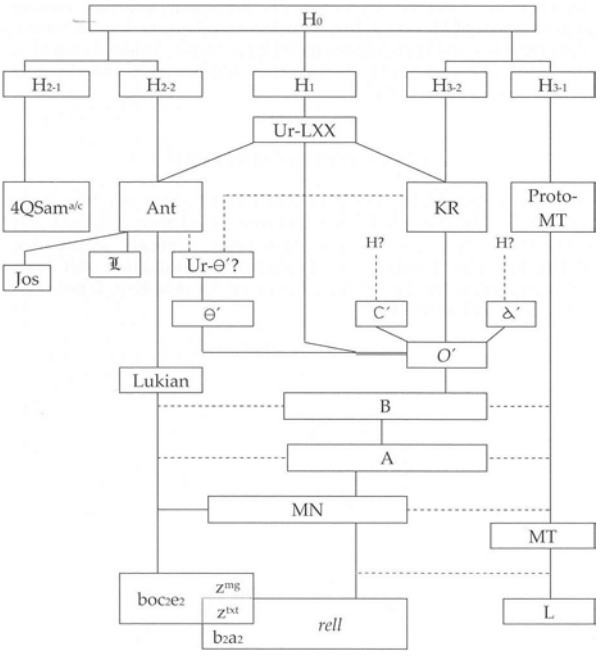

Fig. 1

Within the realm of textual criticism a number of striking observations may be made[208]:

1. The Greek texts consistently translate Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin with the same name: *Joakeim.* This indicates the change was intentional.[209]
2. A number of people's names including those of the mothers vary according to different textual witnesses, e. g. Jehoiakim's mother *Sebuda* (2 Kgs 24:1) is called *Amital* in Ant. and *Jeldaph* in the Rahlfs-Edition *Ieldaph.*[210]
3. A number of Greek texts, e. g. Josephus (see above), harmonize dates and regnal periods with the data found in Chronicles.[211]

208 Individual text-critical notes can be found in the footnotes to the translation (see the next chapter). For an introduction to the text-critical problems, see the introduction by S.Kreuzer, M.Meiser, F.Winter, in Lxx.D Kommentar I 714–737.

209 See M.Karrer/ W.Kraus (eds.), *Septuaginta Deutsch 1:* 1034f.

210 The Greek texts regularly evince a tendency to change names or to turn them into names that communicate a meaning. For more details, see F.Siegert, *Bibel* 196–217.

211 An interesting fact is that up until far into the first half of the 20th Century many Catholic exegetes make their text-critical work dependent upon the Vulgate, e. g. L.-C.Fillion, *sainte bible II.* The reasons for this preference can be found in B.Collinet, *Nicht-Gleichgültigkeit* 17–34, 25–30.

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4. In many Greek variants we find supplements to the Hebrew text, most of which serve to make the text more comprehensible.
5. A number of textual changes indicate an apologetic interest. For example, Ant. tends to place all responsibility for actions upon the shoulders of figures explicitly named in the text, whereas the MT tends to place it upon the group (by using the 3rd person plural).

4. Interim Conclusion

Our detailed overview of the history of the interpretation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 has uncovered a number of issues that will be further developed in the narratological analysis. Among them are the as yet theologically unresolved question concerning the extent of Israel's hope, the question of which other Biblical books are most closely related to 2 Kgs, and which book constitutes the most meaningful canonical sequel to 2 Kgs.[212]

Less significant for this study is the question of sources and oral traditions. The theories developed to identify these diverge greatly from one another and they play no significant role for our understanding of the final form of the text. The literary and redaction-critical hypotheses are only relevant to the degree that they open up the broader dimensions within which 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 might stand. Given that here, too, it is extremely difficult to adjudicate between the various interpretive schools, I have sought to leave these factors out of consideration as much as possible and focus on the (Masoretic) final form.

Our overview of the history of interpretation and our systematization of the various positions has been helpful. We have identified two clear differences in approach to the text: an historical and a Biblical-theological approach, with only very rare attempts to hybridize the two. We can thus better identify the manifold semantic potential of the text that opens up a breadth of interpretive possibilities.

212 The treatment of the last question has been removed from the published version of this dissertation. An article on the subject is under preparation. The following commentaries provide good summaries of positions adopted thus far; due to their historical-critical approach they do not offer anything new and so offer no further inspiration for fresher interpretations: L.-C.Fillion, *bible*, especially 664–674 ; T.E.Fretheim, *1.2 Kgs*; V.Fritz, *2 Kgs* especially 150; S.Garofalo, *Re II* especially 285-295; M.Nobile, *1.2 Re*; S.Quinzio, *commenta*; D.J.Wiseman, *1.2 Kgs*. Just as interesting though irrelevant for this present study are moralising commentaries such as those by W.W.Wiersbe, *2 Kgs* or G.Mayer, *Kön*, even if they come across as fairly amusing in their argumentation: "Blessed are those […] who read the history of Israel and Judah as more than just historians, setting it before themselves as a 'confessional mirror' [*Bußspiegel*] and leaving it with the impression: Lord, do not enter into judgement with your servant, for before you no living person can be counted just. With you forgiveness can be found, so that you may be feared" (p. 369).

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B. Textual Criticism and Translation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30[213]

Jehoahaz (23:30–35)

[30]And his servants carried him [i. e. Josiah] dead in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him (to) Jerusalem and they buried him in his tomb; and the people-of-the-land took Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, and they anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

[31]Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he was king for three months in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother (is) Hamutal[214] the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah[215].

[32]And he did what was evil in the eyes of YHWH[216], just as his fathers/ancestors had done.

[33]And Pharaoh Neco[217] bound him in Riblah[218], in the land of Hamath, when he was king in Jerusalem, and he laid a penitent fee upon the land[219]: a hundred talents of silver and [?] talents[220] of gold.

213 The text-critical notes in this section are only concerned with those readings that are relevant for this study, i. e. longer insertions, name changes, and semantically significant changes in wording. I limit myself to the text-critical editions of the BHS (669–674), Rahlfs-Hanhart (747–752), and the annotated translation of Lxx.D (Lxx.D 484–489; Lxx.D Kommentar I 1034–1037). This explains the greater significance accorded to the BHS version of the MT, Rahlfs version of the LXX (RA), and the Antiochene text (Ant.). From a text-critical perspective these three textual witnesses can be considered the older or most serious. The structure and headings are my own, whereby I primarily oriented myself towards the MT.

214 Another reading is [Ch]Amital (RA; Ant.; Vulg, and often).

215 Other readings are Lobenna (Ant.) and Lemna (RA).

216 The RA shortens the expression "in the eyes of the Lord" to "before the Lord."

217 Ant. adds the explanation, "the king of Egypt."

218 In the Greek versions Riblah becomes Deblatha. Hamath is transcribed as Aimath (Ant.) or Emath (RA).

219 In Ant. "tribute."

220 Whereas the Hebrew versions do not specify the number of talents, the RA speaks of ten, Ant. of one hundred talents.

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[34]And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah[221] king[222] in the place of his father Josiah; and he changed his name (to) Jehoiakim, and he took Jehoahaz and brought him to Egypt, and he died there.

[35]And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; however, he taxed[223] the land in order to give the money according to the command of Pharaoh[224]; he exacted the silver from every man, each according to his assessment,[225] and the gold of the people-of-the-land he gave to Pharaoh Neco.

Jehoiakim (23:36–24:7)

[36]Jehoiakim[226] was twenty-five years old when he became king and he was king for eleven years in Jerusalem, and the name of his mother (is) Zebidah[227] the daughter of Pedaiah[228] of Rumah.

[37]And he did what was evil in the eyes of YHWH, just as his ancestors had done.

[24,1]In his[229] days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up[230], and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him [i. e. Nebuchadnezzar].

[2]And YHWH[231] sent (threw) against him[232] robber bands[233] of the Chaldeans and robber bands from Aram[234] and robber bands from Moab[235] and robber

221 RA supplements "the king of Judah."

222 The Greek versions supplement "he made him king over them [i. e. the Judeans]." This remark probably has an apologetic function. "Over them" denotes a group of "others" who are "non-us," and they are the ones who are guilty. This remark deflects responsibility away from the nation as a whole (on this issue, see the discussion in section D.2).

223 Once again, Ant. uses "tribute" instead of taxes.

224 What is left open in the Hebrew text is clarified in the Greek. Here, Pharaoh only specifies the amount to be paid, not the means by which it should be acquired.

225 Instead of tax assessment Ant. uses the word "property," as if this information was publicly accessible. In my opinion this reveals the more sophisticated administrative infrastructure of the translator's world which he has projected back into the Judah of the text. This may have the apologetic goal of not letting Judah appear backward and undeveloped.

226 In the Greek texts the name is altered to Joakim (RA; in the Vulgate it becomes Joachim) or Joakein (Ant.). The same spelling is used for his son Jehoiachin.

227 In the Ketib-Qere, a number of Targumim, the Peshitta and the Vulgate her name becomes "Zebiddah." For some inexplicable reason the RA text uses "Yeldaph." Ant. gives Jehoiakim the same mother who boar Joahaz and Zedekiah. In my opinion his purpose is to erase the concept of a harem in favour of the monogamy that was (theoretically) practised in the Greek-Hellenistic world.

228 In Ant. the name is assimilated to the Greek name "Phedeias."

229 Ant. speaks of "those days," thereby eliminating the ambiguity of whether the chronology is being calculated in relation to Jehoiakim or Nebuchadnezzar.

230 Ant. supplements "came up against the land."

231 RA replaces YHWH with "he." This reinterprets the action in relation to Nebuchadnezzar.

232 Ant clarifies the meaning by writing "Jehoiakim."

233 The Greek versions use the term "lightly armed" and reduce the assaulting groups to militias.

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bands of the sons of Ammon[236]; and he sent them to Judah[237], in order to destroy[238] it,[239] in accordance with the word of YHWH that he had spoken by the hand of his servants the prophets.

[3]*Precisely* because of the mouth[240] of God against Judah it was removed from before his presence, through the sins[241] of Manasseh, because of all that he had done.

[4]And especially (the) blood of the innocent that he[242] spilt. He filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and YHWH was no(t longer) willing to forgive this.

[5]And the remainder of the things (concerning) Jehoiakim and all that he did,[243] are they not written in the book of the affairs of the days of the kings of Judah?

[6]And Jehoiakim lay with his ancestors[244] and his son Jehoiachin[245] became king in his place.

[7]And the king of the Egypt did not continue to come out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that had belonged to the King of Egypt, from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

Jojachin (24:8–17)

[8]Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king and he was king for three months in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother was Nehushta[246], daughter of Elnathan from Jerusalem.

[9]And he[247] did what was evil in the eyes of YHWH, just as his father/ancestor had done.

234 "Syria" in the Greek versions, for the Aramean nation no longer existed in the Hellenistic period.

235 Ant. uses the ethnic term "Moabites."

236 Ant. supplements "from Samaria." This is an clear example of anti-Samarian attitudes during the Persian-Hellenistic period (see K.Weingart, *Israel* 297–311; 339).

237 RA writes "in the land of Judah." This eliminates a more collective interpretation of guilt accruing to the tribe of Judah, i. e. the entire population of the southern kingdom.

238 RA has "to rule over," thus softening the sense.

239 In Peshitta and Targummim "it" is turned into the plural: "in order to destroy them." This clarifies the potential ambiguity of whether Jehoiakim alone is the object ("in order to destroy him") or whether it is all Judah ("in order to destroy it"); "them" renders the object collective.

240 The Greek versions, Peshitta, and Targums opt for the more explicit word "wrath."

241 Ant. supplements "all the sins."

242 Ant. explicitly mentions here "Jehoiakim," so that the guilt is not Manasseh's alone. A few smaller manuscripts, on the other hand, insert "Manasseh" into the text (see BHQ 670 fn. 24,4 a).

243 The Greek versions add here an intensifying, "Behold!"

244 Ant. supplements here with "and was buried in the garden of Uzzah."

245 In the Greek versions "Joakim" (RA) and "Joakein" (Ant.). In RA father and son have the same name.

246 In Greek: "Nestha, daughter of Elnathan."

247 Ant. mentions "Jojachin" by name.

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[10]At that time the servants[248] of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem and the city was besieged.

[11]And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against *the* city and his servants shut them in.

[12]And Jehoiachin, king of Judah, went out to the king of Babylon personally, and his mother and his servants[249] and his officials and his eunuchs; and the king of Babylon seized him[250] in the eighth year of his reign.

[13]And[251] he brought out from there all the treasures of the house of YHWH[252] and all the treasures of the king's house, and he chopped up all the utensils of gold that Solomon, king of Israel, had put in the palace-temple of YHWH;[253] according to all that YHWH had said.

[14]And he exiled everyone from Jerusalem[254] and all officials and all mighty men of valour, he exposed them by 10,000; and the stonecutters and the smith he did not leave behind, (no one) but the poorest of the people-of-the-land.

[15]And he led into exile to Babylon Jehoiachin and the mother of the king and the wives of the king and his eunuchs and the "pillars of the land" he brought into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

[16]And the king of Babylon took into exile[255] to Babylon all men fit for war, amounting to 7,000, and the stone cutter and the smith, amounting to 1,000; all mighty men of valour.

[17]And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his uncle,[256] king in his place, and he changed his name to Zedekiah.[257]

248 Ant. and RA delete "servants," so that it is Nebuchadnezzar himself who comes to Babylon.
249 RA switches the sequences, which has the effect of stylistically-hierarchically diminishing the position of the mother.
250 Ant. uses the collective phrase "er seized them."
251 Ant. supplements with "he invaded the city."
252 Ant. says, "that were in the house of YHWH," thereby suggesting that these treasures were not necessarily temple property.
253 The Greek versions read, "that Solomon had made in the house of YHWH." This would mean that Solomon had set up a forge in the temple in order make the utensils himself, or at least that he was personally responsible for their manufacture.
254 RA deletes reference to the figures or groups, creating the phrase "he deported Jerusalem"; this creates a collective meaning which echoes the "empty land" that already characterized the first wave of deportation.
255 In Ant. "into exile" is missing.
256 RA says "son" instead of "uncle."
257 In the Greek text "Zedekias."

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Zedekiah (24:18–25:7)

[18]Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king and he was king for eleven years in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah.[258]

[19]And he[259] did what was evil in the eyes of YHWH, just as Jehoiakim had done before him.[260]

[20]And so it came about that because of YHWH's anger with Jerusalem and with Judah that he himself sent them away from his presence; and Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

[25,1]And it came about in year nine of the reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month[261], (that) Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, *he himself*[262] and his entire army came up against Jerusalem and he camped opposite it; and they built a (siege) wall around it.

[2]And *the* city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. [3]But on the ninth of the month the famine became severe in the city; and there was no bread[263] for (the) people-of-the-land.

[4]And the city was opened (violently) and as for all the men of war,[264] during the night (they took) the path through the gate[265] between the two walls[266] that (are) by the garden of the king and the Chaldeans were around the city; and he[267] took the path to the Arabah[268].

[5]And the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and they caught up with him in the steppe[269] of Jericho; and his entire army had scattered away from him.

258 For variants concerning the mother, see the fn. above; "from Libnah" is missing in RA.
259 Ant. mentions "Zedekiah" by name.
260 This expression is missing in the Greek versions.
261 The insertion concerning the day is missing in the Greek versions.
262 The emphatic "self" is missing in the Greek versions. This challenges the idea that Nebuchadnezzar was personally present during the second conquest of Jerusalem.
263 RA has the plural "breads." This does not significantly change the meaning.
264 Ant. supplements, "And *the king and with him* all the men of war." Zedekiah attempts an orderly withdrawal. Once again, this indicates an apologetic concern, for it veils the king's cowardly flight. The MT has the definite article: "the men of *the* war."
265 Ant. calls it the "*rising gate*," in my opinion an explicative expression.
266 RA translates Murals and adds, that the middle of them is the door "that is the door"; Ant on the other hand says there is a place "between the two walls", i. e. Ant translates the dual correctly.
267 In Ant. the "he" becomes plural "they" in order to conform it to the initial supplementation.
268 Ant. changes Arabah/steppe to "westwards." This is semantically significant, for the Arabah lies to the east of Jerusalem and not to the west. This could insinuate an initial attempt to flee to Egypt, a detail that may have been flatteringly helpful for the Egyptian Jewish diaspora.
269 The Hebrew name for this region is "Arabah" (plural Araboth). In a number of Greek versions "Araboth" is used as a proper noun (RA). Ant., on the other hand, opts for "to the west of Jericho," which expression may have had an explicative function (see Lxx.D Kommentar I 103–6). This (mis)translation does not explain how those escaping to the West ended up to the west of Jericho.

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[6]And they seized the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah; and they[270] passed verdict over him[271].

[7]And Zedekiah's offspring were slaughtered before his eyes[272]; and he blinded Zedekiah's eyes and he bound him in (copper) chains/shackles[273] and he brought him (to) Babylon.

The Conquest of Jerusalem (25:8–21)

[8]And in the fifth month, on the seventh[274] of the month—it was the nineteenth year of King[275] Nebuchadnezzar—came Nebuzaradan, (a) captain of the bodyguard[276], the servant of the king of Babylon, (to) Jerusalem.

[9]And he burned down the house of YHWH and the house of the king; and he burned down[277] all the houses of Jerusalem and all the houses of the Great Ones.[278]

[10]And the walls around Jerusalem, they torn them down, the whole army of the Chaldeans, that (belonged to) the captain of the bodyguard.[279]

[11]And the rest of the people, those left behind in *the* city, and the defectors who had fallen upon the king of Babylon, and Nebuzaradan, captain of the body guard, exiled the rest[280] of the multitude.

[12]And (the) captain of the bodyguard left behind some the poorest of the land[281] as as vinedressers and plowmen[282].

270 Both Greek variants ascribe the verdict to Nebuchadnezzar alone (RA "he"; Ant. "the king of Babylon").

271 Ant. supplements "Zedekiah."

272 Ant. shortens this clause to "and he slaughtered his sons before him."

273 Ant. and RA speak explicitly of "shackles for the feet."

274 Ant. has "the ninth day" in order to bring the event closer to the ninth of Ab, the liturgical day commemorating the destruction of the temple.

275 RA abstains from the explanatory "the king"; Ant. speaks of the "royal rule."

276 RA supplements with "who stood before the king of Babylon." In this way this standing before the king becomes a kind of official designation. The "men-before-the-presence-of-the-king" (2 Kgs 25:19) who are arrested thus acquire a pattern that can clearly be understood as a technical term for the civil service.

277 Ant. explicitly mentions the "officials of the bodyguard." He thus acquires primary responsibility for the torching.

278 RA abstains from using "great ones" and so explicitly portrays the fire as consuming all of Jerusalem.

279 The entire verse is *de facto* missing in RA. According to Disse (of the Richter school) *saviv* can also be understood as an appended attribute to the topicalized object, i. e. the walls around Jerusalem were torn down (A.Disse, *Informationsstrukturen* 201).

280 RA adds "rest of the *reliable citizenry*." This creates a sharper contrast with the defectors; this hints at the great rift known to us from the Persian period that existed between the former exiles and those who had remained in the land (see K.Weingart, *Israel* 297–311).

281 Ant. adds "the poorest of the people of the land," a conjecture which brings in the technical term "people-of-the-land."

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[13]And the Chaldeans smashed the copper pillars that were from the house of YHWH, and the pedestals[283] [?], and the copper sea that belonged to the house of YHWH; and they carried their copper to Babylon.

[14]And they took the pots [thorns, hooks] and the shovels[284] and the candle snuffers and the dishes and all the utensils out of copper that were used for its[285] service.

[15]And the captain of the body guard took away the fire pans and the bowls that were of gold and those that were of silver.[286]

[16]Both pillars, the one sea and the socle that Solomon[287] had made for the house of YHWH[288]—it does not happen (that) the weight of the copper of all of these utensils can be determined.

[17]*One* pillar (was) eighteen cubits high and a capital[289] upon it was out of copper and the height of the capital was three cubits and work of latticed tendrils[290] and pomegranates (are) around the capital; their totality was of copper. And the lattice work on the second pillar was (made) likewise.[291]

[18]And the captain of the bodyguard took Seraiah, the first priest, and Zephaniah, the second[292] priest, and three guards of the gates.

[19]And from *the* city he took a eunuch who had been appointed over the fighters and five of the men-before-the-presence-of-the-king who were found in the city

282 The addition of "for the *gifts*" in RA suggests that the poorest became the servants of another group rather than (corvée) farmers.

283 Ant. translates with "frame," which may be an allusion to the cauldron cart; RA uses its own distinct term "mechonoth."

284 It is not clear what this term refers to. Ant. has "meat forks," RA uses "Yamin."

285 The Greek texts speak of "divine service," thereby specifically relating the term to God. In Hebrew the term can also be applied to the temple or the king.

286 The amplifications "golden gold" and "silvern silver" are contracted to "gold" and "silver" in the Greek versions.

287 Ant. expands to "King Solomon."

288 Ant. adds "that Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard took away." This once again places responsibility for the plundering and destruction of the temple and city on his shoulders.

289 Ant. translates "capital" more literally with "top part, socle"; RA uses the Hebrew word as the proper name "Chotar."

290 Ant. translates "net" instead of lattice work; RA once again uses the Hebrew word as a proper noun, "Zabcha." By retaining the original sounds RA creates a kind of "secret language" that cannot be decoded. Only those capable of understanding Hebrew are able to know that these are definitional terms and not specific ornaments.

291 Ant. adds as an explication: "also on the second pillar top part and net and 100 pomegranates." It is actually the case that both pillars together have 100 pomegranates (see 1 Kgs 7:18–20), but this seems to have escaped the notice of the redacting translator of Ant.

292 RA understands the term "second" to indicate rank: "priest of secondary rank." It is not clear whether he imagines this to refer to two hierarchical levels or to a "vice-priest" who functions as representative of the first priest.

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and the scribe of the commander of the army[293] who musters of the people-of-the-land; and sixty man of the people-of-the-land who were found in *the* city.

[20]And Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, took them and led them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

[21]And the king of Babylon struck them (down) and he killed them in Riblah, in the land of Hamath; and he exposed Judah away from its soil.

Gedaliah (25:22–26)

[22]And[294] Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, left behind the people who remained in the land of Judah; and he appointed over them Gedaliah[295], son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan.

[23]And all the army commanders and all (their) men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah and they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah[296]; and Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, and Johanan, son of Kareah, and Seraiah, son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah, son of the Maacathite, they and their men.

[24]And Gedaliah swore to them and their men and said to them: "Do not be afraid! [Do not shoot any arrows] before the servants[297] of the Chaldeans! Remain in the land and serve/be servants of Babylon's king and you are doing / will do well!"[25]And it happened in the seventh month (that) Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of royal[298] seed, and ten men with him, came and struck[299] Gedaliah (down) and he died; and the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him in Mizpah[300].

293 Instead of "scribe of the commander of the army" Ant. translates "Shaphan, the commander-in-chief." This imports Gedaliah's grandfather into the text, who is here held hostage. This reading puts Gedaliah under pressure, for as a Babylonian official he must serve Babylonian interests, whether he wants to or not. In my opinion this addition has an apologetic function.

294 Ant. inserts here "and over … the people he appointed." This emphasizes Gedaliah's function as ruler.

295 In the Greek versions "Godolya."

296 In Ant. "Mazzepha," in RA "Mazzephtah."

297 Ant. leaves out "the servants"; RA replaces it with "the invasion of the Chaldeans."

298 Ant. says "seed of the king," RA "seed of the kings." The first version leaves open whether a specific king is in view and if so, which one.

299 RA makes Ishmael alone responsible: "he struck down." The meaning is ambivalent. Should the deed portray him as a hero who singlehandedly carries out the assassination, or is the function apologetic? Just as it was not all Israel but rather just the house of Judah that had to be exiled, so here we have a one-off deed committed by a few rebels rather than the people of Israel. In my opinion the latter interpretation is more fitting for a diaspora community that constantly had to take care of its reputation. In other words, relativization is more important that hybris.

300 Ant. adds "Ishmael struck down." As in RA so here we find a tendency to completely transfer the final responsibility for this deed to Ishmael.

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[26]And the entire people, from the smallest to the greatest, and the army commanders arose and came to Egypt because they were afraid of the presence of the Chaldeans[301].

Jehoiachin's Release from Prison (25:27–30)

[27]And it happened in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in the twelfth month on the twenty-seventh[302] of the month (that) Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, lifted the head of Jehoiachin the king of Judah away from[303] the house of chains [= prison].

[28]And he spoke good things to him and placed him on the place of honour [= throne] above the thrones of the kings who were with him in Babylon.

[29]And he exchanged his prison clothes; and he ate bread continuously [= daily] in his presence, all the days of his life

[30]And his livelihood, a continuous livelihood, was given to him from the king[304]; according to his daily needs all the days of his life.

301 The Greek versions talk of fear of "the Chaldeans," which is simply a stylistic adjustment to the target language.

302 Jer 52:31 speaks of the twenty-fifth day of the month, which is why some manuscripts probably made emendations here.

303 Ant. and RA both add "and he led him out." This reinforces the impression that the Babylonian ruler personally fetched Jehoiachin from prison, in my opinion a rather unlikely scenario.

304 Ant. and RA read "out of the house of the king." The Peshitta reads "from the king of Babylon," in dependence on Jer 52:34.

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C. Narratological Analysis

0. Methodology

Narrative Voice

Our primary reference work[305] for analysing narrative voice as well as the diverging perspectives among the various characters (*Firgurenkonstellationen*) in the text is B. Schmitz's *Prophetie und Königtum*[306] (2008).

An important initial step is to distinguish between the authorial voice (K I) and the narrative voice[307] (K II), both of which precede direct speech (K III) within a text, both logically and compositionally.[308] In 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 the primary role is played by K II, for direct speech occurs in only one sentence (2 Kgs 25:24).

We must inquire into the role this narrative voice plays within the narrative.[309] For example, in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 it is neither identified with a particular character nor is it the value-neutral voice of an author.[310] What we have instead is an "extradiegetic narrative voice,"[311] i. e. a voice that remains consistently on the level of K II and which grants us no insight into the thought world of the characters. It stylizes its relation to the events as once of distance, only commenting upon and evaluating them occasionally (2 Kgs 23:32: 37; 24:3f.). It is also for responsible for *focalization*, i. e. providing the "eyes through which the fictional

305 For a general introduction, see S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung*, 59–100.

306 B.Schmitz, *Prophetie*, especially 9–108.

307 Schmitz prefers this term to the more familiar "narrator" because the focus is on a textual function rather than a personal agent (see p. 22).

308 See ibid. 10. For the meaning of the concept of author, which plays no significant role in this work, see 58–108. Among other things this has to do with the absence of narrative elements that intend to connect the narrator with the author (see S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung* 170–188), as well as the fact that from a theological perspective the Biblical text does not have a purely human source (see B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 104–107).

309 For the backgrounds to these theories, see S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung* 103–131. The schema used here is based on Genette's concept. J.Schneider provides a succinct and good explanation which portrays the concept in relation to other positions in *Einführung* 76–83.

310 See B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 24.

311 Ibid. 25.

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world is perceived. […] This term avoids reducing that world to specifically visual-optical phenomena as well as any psychological implications."[312] Focalization consciously creates a reader's perspective while also leaving room for the "filling of gaps based on the reader's broader interpretations."[313]. "Zero focalization" (Genette) is a narrative voice that knows more than any other character, taking on the role of a superordinate narrative instance (ontologically and compositionally).[314] This kind of narrative voice can also be found in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30.[315]

However, the primary function of the narrative voice is "to constitute the functional world […]. It constructs the temporal and spatial structure of the narrated world, supplies it with characters, and narrates the plot."[316]

It is necessary to adapt these functions to the Biblical text. The texts of the Former Prophets / Historical Books often consist of reflections upon historical experiences that incorporate the dimension of God, who is a central character in the Biblical text.[317]

This brief outline should suffice for our description of the narrative voice in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, for it lies so much in the background that is hardly noticeable. Its function is description of the plot and occasionally the guidance of the reader. For this reason, over the course of the analysis note will be taken of the function of the narrative voice when necessary. The primary focus, however, will be on the various phenomena that this voice presents to us.

312 Ibid. 43.

313 Ibid. 43. To learn more about knowledge and communication, especially concerning the guidance of the readers ("Lesendenlenkung"), See S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung* 156–164.

314 See ibid. 44. For further ways of interpreting possible focalizations, e. g. what can focalize who how, see pp. 448 f.

315 Scholars debate whether it is possible for zero focalization to exist. In the Bible, where "God" plays a central role, this question takes on a special nuance.

316 Ibid. 35; J.Schneider, *Einführung* 73–76 additional explains the more detailed model developed by Boris Uspenskijs (see his *Poetik*), which differentiates between six categories: temporal, spatial, ontological, psychological, stylistic, and world-view related perspectives. Although this theory is more detailed than Genette's, which is used here, it is not necessarily more appropriate for Biblical texts. This is because not all of his categories are applicable to ancient texts. On the function of the narrative voice within biblical narrative texts, see S.Gillmayr-Bucher, *Erzählte Welten*, 21–24.

317 The particular witness-character of religious interpretations of experience lies on the boundary between illusionary fictionality and subjective perception of everyday reality. The horizon within which it is constituted usually differs to that of a fictional work and so the method required for its analysis needs to be adapted accordingly.

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Concept of Time

Schmitz summarizes the temporal structures using the usual[318] categories of order, duration, and frequency.[319] Following the work of Mieke Bal[320] and Gérard Genette[321] she further differentiates *order* into fabula and story. The *fabula* is the chronological sequence of the events,[322] the *story* embeds this sequence into the narrative. The two together generate a relation that is called *duration*, which can be expressed, for example, in either shortened or extended form and which can be divided into four basic tempos: summary, pause, ellipse, scene.[323] *Frequency* determines whether there are repetitions and relations of frequency within the text and, if so, what their role is.[324]

Concept of Space[325]

Space applies to many things, for example places, settings, landscapes, buildings, paths etc.[326] To analyse a text from this perspective the interpreter asks *where* a narrative takes place and the role that space plays within that narrative. Often the fictive space is enriched with descriptions taken from the world known to the readers in order to create a sense of familiarity with the place.[327] Nevertheless, there is little value in completely identifying the narrated world (*Erzählwelt*) with its equivalent in the external the world (*erzählte Welt*). This is because

> [it] is inadvisable to immediately and without reserve assume an identification between the referent of the spatial narration and that referent's text-external equivalent in the real world. The places mentioned in the narrative do point us to places outside the text, that is clear and inevitable simply by virtue of their sharing the same names. […] At the same time, however, both places are not completely identical and interchangeable.[328]

318 See S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung* 133–155.

319 See B.Schmitz, *Prophetie*, 35; see also I.Müllner, *Zeit* 8f.

320 M.Bal, *Narratology*.

321 G.Genette, *Erzählung*.

322 For chronology once can further distinguish between "natural temporal process" (chronological) and "inverted sequence" (anachronistic) and an achronistic perspective, in which "it is impossible to identify or reconstruct any sequence of events at all" (see J.Schneider, *Einführung* 43).

323 See B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 36. Schneider uses the term *tempo* and describes a text as "rich in tempo" when it creates an almost hectic environment through the quick succession of changing scenes. On the other hand, a text is "poor in tempo" when little happens, little is described, and so an atmosphere dominated by an "non-signified hustle and bustle" (*"leere Betriebsamkeit"*) is generated with little plot (see J.Schneider, *Einführung* 45).

324 See ibid. 37.

325 E.Ballhorn's work on spatial and temporal concepts is seminal (see *Israel* 73–134).

326 See B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 37.

327 See ibid. 38.

328 E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 99. In this context he also speaks of a narrated place as a "memory repository," i. e. a space that is connected with certain emotions and memories. This occurs

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A similarly significant role is played by individual spaces, the relations among them, and the various functions that spaces have or the perspectives from which they are perceived.[329] An example of such spatial conceptualizations are *boarders*, for they are actually non-spaces. They separate spaces from each other and often create an inside and an outside.[330] A further example are group categories such as Egypt or the people of God that render space as a *relational* entity.[331] Martina Löw uses the term *spacing* and says that this category is concerned with "setting up, building or positioning […] in relation to other positionings," in the sense of "primarily symbolic markings with the purpose of distinguishing ensembles of goods and people."[332] She calls the combination of several ensembles into a single space "synthesis achievement" ("*Syntheseleistung*").[333] In other words, what happens is that various elements are brought into a particular arrangement so that their relation can be known and, to a degree, constituted.

From within the field of spatial sociology Michel Foucault has developed the term *heterotopia* in order describe the way in which "several spaces as well as contradictory spatial statements can be superimposed upon each other."[334]

Of interest to our concerns here is also the question of how space is described within a narrative, i. e. the moment in which the space is named, described in more detail etc.[335] This relation—called *chronotopos* by Mikhail M. Bakhtin—binds the spatial dimension to the temporal, thus making it possible for the actions of the narrative's characters to become visible.[336]

in in the form of narratives in oral or written form which are responsible for constructing the space in the first place (see p. 88).

329 See B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 38.

330 See E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 116–118.

331 See ibid. 80–82; 87. H.Lefebvre provides an alternative division of social space into three spheres (spatial praxis, presentation of space, lived space; see H.Lefebvre, *Produktion* 330–342). This division is only of limited value for our study because it "can only be implemented on the theoretical level, in practice these processes are closely linked with each other" (S.Gillmayr-Bucher, *Erzählte Welten* 31 fn. 139).

332 M.Löw, *Raumsoziologie* 158.

333 See ibid. 159f.

334 See E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 127. Ballhorn provides a more detailed analysis of the distinction between crisis and compensation heterotopia in *Gestaltung* 415–429, especially 418–421; M.Foucault, *Heterotopien/ Les hétérotopies* 44; 48f. Of significance for Foucault in these apparently paradoxical superimpositions is the way they challenge spaces. Thy do this by *"en créant une illusion qui dénonce tout le reste de la réalité comme illusion, ou bien, au contraire, en créant réellement un autre espace réel aussi parfait, aussi méticuleux, aussi arrangé que le nôtre est désordonné, mal agencé et brouillon."* (pp. 49f.).

335 See B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 39.

336 M.M.Bachtin, *Chronotopos* 7f., also describes this aspect. It binds time to space as a fourth dimension.

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Characters and Character Constellation

It is the narrative voice that enables the characters to communicate and interact with each other. It does so by construing social groups, collective identities, and societies and by introducing individual characters.[337] It also determines the role and amount of activity and relevance of the character within the story, e. g. through direct speech, description of behaviour, simple mentioning of their name, etc.[338] In this way multiple perspectives can be created; by looking at the interactions among them it is possible to identify both *corresponding* and *contrasting character perspectives*, which in turn makes it it possible to compare, categorize, and (temporally) relate them.[339]

Possible worlds theory[340] postulates five elements that motivate the actions of a literary character: knowledge, intention, wishes, morality, and obligation. In order to interpret a character it is decisive that we know the state of its knowledge. Knowing what it knows or could known reveals the meaningfulness and intentionality of its actions and relativises the extremes of good and bad, meaningful and meaningless action.[341] The values of the collectivity can also be determined on the basis of its actions. Given that the inner world of the characters in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 is entirely inaccessible, the spheres of *intention, wishes* and *morality* will not be considered in our analysis.

A further reason why I do not consider the development of the individual characters to be relevant for our interpretation is the nature of the narrative at hand. Of help here is Aristotle's distinction, picked up and developed by Edwin Muir, between two kinds of novel: a *novel of action* and a *novel of character*.[342] In the latter type the plot and the character develop in relation to each other, in the former it is the actions of the character that are more important than its personal development. Given that the characters in our narrative are judged according to their deeds rather than their individual traits, it is more appropriate to see them as *actants* rather than *characters* per se.[343] The characters of our text are either victorious or they fail and in the end they return to where they started with their victory or failure being the decisive factor in the assessment of their actions rather than the development of their character. It may be possible to apply a less

337 Speech act theory, which is a recurrent topic within the hermeneutical discourse of narratology, is of little methodological value for Biblical interpretation (for the reasons see I.Müllner, *Gewalt* 55 fn. 37).

338 See ibid. 39.

339 See ibid. 53.

340 My explanation follows S.Gillmayr-Bucher, *Erzählte Welten* 10–16.

341 See ibid. 54.

342 See J.Schneider, *Einführung* 25; E.Muir, *structure*, who develops G.Lukács, *Theorie*.

343 For the terms, their definitions, and development, see I.Müllner, *Gewalt* 52f.; 66.

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extreme form of this schema to the people of God, which starts with Abraham leaving Chaldea and ends with exile in the same place.

1. Demarcation and Structure of the Text

1.1 The Overall Structure of 1 Samuel to 2 Kings

According to Hentschel[344] there is a broad consensus concerning the structure of the final form of the text, and this form deviates from the LXX's division of the books into a fourfold collection. The LXX's four books appear to have belonged together from the very outset[345], and scholars have not been able to identify a compositional logic to the LXX's division.[346] In the course of this study we will have occasion to observe whether considerations of content may not have played a compositional role after all. Nevertheless, the following structure may provide us with a general overall orientation:

1 Sam 1–15	Samuel and Saul (*link back to Judges*)
1 Sam 16–2 Sam 5	Rise of David
2 Sam 6–20	Succession narrative (*only concluded in 1 Kgs 1–2*)
2 Sam 21–24	Heroes and atonement
1 Kgs 1–11	History of Solomon
1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17	History of the divided kingdom
2 Kgs 18–25	History of Judah after 722 BCE

1.2 The Overall Structure of 2 Kgs 18–25

2 Kings 18–25 can be divided into relatively clear sections by means of the regnal formula, and this is sufficient for a general overview of the structure of the material. The result is as follows:

2 Kgs 18–20	King Hezekiah of Judah – the first reforms and the deliverance of Jerusalem from Assur
2 Kgs 21:1–18	King Manasseh of Judah – the great sinner
2 Kgs 21:19–26	King Amon of Judah

344 G.Hentschel, *Samuel* 291: *Könige* 302. Knauf (see *1 Kgs 67*) has recently deviated slightly from this division, though in relation to a section that is not of concern to us here.

345 See F.Blanco Wissmann, *"Er tat das Rechte"*, 246; E.A.Knauf, 1 Kgs 1–14 37 in agreement.

346 The division may have been practical in nature; for example, each portion is roughly the same size, so that they could each have fitted onto their own scroll.

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2 Kgs 22:1–23,30a	King Josiah of Judah – the new David
2 Kgs 23:30b–35	King Jehoahaz of Judah
2 Kgs 23:36–24,7	King Jehoiakim/ Eliakim of Judah
2 Kgs 24:8–17	King Jehoiachin and Jerusalem's capitulation to Babylon
2 Kgs 24:18–25,7	King Mattaniah/ Zedekiah of Judah and the surrender of Jerusalem
2 Kgs 25:8–21	Conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple
2 Kgs 25:22–26	The governor Gedaliah and the complete depopulation of the land
2 Kgs 25:27–30	Release of Jehoiachin from prison

The narrative space dedicated to each king (here indicated by the number of verses) varies greatly and is clearly related to either the length of rule or the assessment of the king:

King (years of rule/ assessment)	**Number of verses**
Hezekiah (29/ positive)	95
Manasseh (55/ very negative)	21
Amon (2/ negative)	8
Josiah (31/ very positive)	50
Jehoahaz (>1/ negative)	5
Eliakim/ Jehoiakim (11/ negative)	9
Jehoiachin (>1 or 37/ negative)	10+4
Zedekiah (11/ negative)/ Jerusalem falls/ Gedaliah	10/14/5

Excursus: Beginning – Middle – End as Structural Features (Georg Fischer[347])

If one considers the beginning, middle, and end of our unit, its sum total of 230 verses disclose a distinct structure that could be significant for interpretation.

The first verses of the narrative that follow Hezekiah's regnal formula (2 Kgs 18:4–8) are as follows:

> He removed the cultic high places, broke the cultic pillar, and cut down the copper serpent that Moses had made and to whom the Israelites had offered burnt offerings up until that time—it was called Nehushtan (copper image). He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. Of all the kings of Judah who came after him or who lived before him—none was like him. He held fast to the Lord without departing from him, and he kept the commandments that the Lord had given to Moses. **For that reason the Lord was with**

347 See G.Fischer, *Wege* 7. He provides practical demonstrations of his approach in his commentary on Jeremiah (*Jer* 1–25).

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> **him; in all that he did he prospered.** He rebelled against the king of Assyria and was no longer subservient to him. He also struck the Philistines as far as Gaza and the surroundings of this city, from the watchtower until the fortified city.

In the central verse (2 Kgs 22:19) located in the beginning of the narrative about King Josiah we read:

> You humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke about this place and its inhabitants, that they should become an image of horror and a curse. Your tore your garments and wept before me. **For this reason, I have heard you**—a saying of the Lord.

The concluding verses (2 Kgs 25:27–30) are as follows:

> In the thirty-seventh year after Jehoiachin the king of Judah was led away, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-Merodach the king of Babylon pardoned Jehoiachin the king of Judah in the year that he began to reign and freed him from prison. He reconciled with him assigned him his seat above the seat of the other kings that were with him in Babylon. He was able to put off his prison garments and continuously eat with him as long as he lived. His allowance—a permanent allowance—was delivered to him daily from the king of Babylon according to the determined amount as long as he lived.

If Josiah was taken to mark the end, then the final verses (2 Kgs 23:25–27) would be as follows:

> Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might and who followed the Law of Moses so faithfully, and after him there was none like him. Yet the Lord did not relent from the powerful blaze of his wrath. He wrath had been kindled over Judah because of all the offenses that Manasseh had committed against him. For this reason, the Lord said: "I will also remove Judah from before my presence, just as I have removed Israel. I reject this city Jerusalem which I chose and the house of which I said, 'Here will be my name'."

This conclusion would be a *contradictio in adjecto* to the previous lines, which had stated that whoever is with God would live and experience victory over his enemies. Here God has turned away. In addition to this, the changed middle verse would no longer make any sense. The canonical conclusion found in 2 Kgs 25:30: by contrast, appears far more fitting.[348]

Among the very negative representations of the end of the monarchy three positive statements stand out. The composition of the narrative seems to include a positive dynamic that leads from the act of removing the cultic images and the remorse felt regarding them to a *modus vivendi* in exile—a end that is not ideal but at least is also not hopeless.

348 See the discussion in the chapter A.2.1.2.

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The general structure outlined here demonstrates that there is a meaningful unity to 2 Kgs 18–25, as has already been demonstrated by Blanco-Wißmann and others.[349]

1.3 The Demarcation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30

Hezekiah, Manasseh (with Amon), and Josiah were the kings who ruled during Judah's final years and they are granted a large amount of textual space. They implemented their reforms and counter-reforms and were still alive to hear the messages of the prophets. They also still had the ability to reverse the fate of their land and nation through repentance. A different perspective can be seen in the narrative in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, which is dominated by other structural markers. The composition of this section must be analysed differently.

The boundary between the two sections must be placed before 2 Kgs 23:30b, for this is where Josiah's narrative is concluded and his successor Jehoahaz is mentioned for the first time.

The conclusion of the unit may at first appear straightforward, for 2 Kgs 25:30 is clearly the end of the second book of Kings. If one questions this thesis from a canonical perspective, two aspects appear that require explanation:

1. Of what is 2 Kgs 25:30 the end? Our review of the scholarly literature showed that various beginnings have been suggested: Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Samuel, 1 or 2 Kings. If this question can be answered at all, then only at the end of our analysis.
2. Which Biblical book is the most natural sequel to 2 Kings? The Catholic canon chose Chronicles because these books reflection upon the history from Gen 1:1 to 2 Kgs 25:30 from a different perspective. The Masoretic canon joins Kings to Isaiah, making and makes a distinction between the Former and the Latter Prophets. We will debate the question of which version makes the most sense or whether another book is more appropriate at another juncture.[350]

349 See ibid.

350 I am currently working on an article on this subject. Regarding the development of the canon: Peter Brandt has worked through a number of rare varieties found in, e. g., manuscripts. They are as follows (see *Endgestalten*): there are mixed forms of the Former and Latter prophets in which 1–2 Kings appears between Jeremiah and Ezekiel or before Jeremiah. No reasons for this sequence are given (see p. 143). In the Septuagint traditions the canons Epiphanius I–III constitute an exception to the scheme of Kings—Chronicles. Chronicles comes first, sometimes even occurring before 1–2 Samuel (see p. 201). In the Syriac traditions from the early period (p. 219) until later developments the usual sequence is Kings–Chronicles, sometimes the Psalms or Proverbs are added (p. 222). Here there is a clear break, i. e. a change in the wisdom writings (see ibid.).

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1.4 The Structure of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30

The four kings (2 Kgs 23:30–25:7) and the three subsequent narratives (2 Kgs 25:8–30) need to be distinguished from one another, for the first unit is influenced by the regnal formula with little additional information whereas the latter has its own unique dynamic with numerous shifts in characters and locations.

The kings are connected with each other by means of their parallel structure.[351]

Jehoahaz	3 months, no throne name, deposition & deportation
Jehoiakim	11 years, throne name, siege of Jerusalem
Jehoiachin	3 months, no throne name, deposition & deportation
Zedekiah	11 years, throne name, siege of Jerusalem

The narrative of the conquest of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:8–21) follows on from Zedekiah in terms of temporal development but spatially it shifts the location back to Jerusalem. The style of writing also changes, for now it is far more descriptive in nature. The Gedaliah pericope (2 Kgs 25:22–26) is connected with the previous pericope by means of the figure "Nebuchadnezzar," but its location and protagonists are changed so that this pericope acquires its own distinctiveness. There is a clear temporal and spatial break in the narration of the release of Jehoiachin from prison (2 Kgs 25:27–30: 26 years later; shift from Judah to Babylon). This pericope links up with the previous narrative about Jehoiachin, the third story of the aforementioned kings, and is thereby set within a broader context.

The narrative of the downfall of Jerusalem begins with the deposition of Jehoiachin and the investiture of Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:17) and is structured into three parallel units, the last of which is incomplete.

First deportation (24:11–16)

Babylon's initiative: Appointment of a vassal for Judah by Babylon's king (24:17)

Rebellion against Babylon by a son of David (25:1–3)

Flight from Babylon (25:4–5)

Punishment of all Judah (25:6–21)

Second deportation (25:20)

Babylon's initiative: Appointment of a governor for Judah by Babylon's king (25:22)

Rebellion against Babylon by a son of David (25:25)

Flight from Babylon (25,26a)

Fear of punishment for all Judah (25:26b)

351 Similarly R.L.Cohn, *2 Kgs* 163f.; he is followed by J.P.Leithart, *1.2 Kgs* 273f.

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Third (self-imposed) deportation (25:26)

Babylonian initiative: Reinstalment of the leader of Judah by the king of Babylon (25:27)

On the whole this division coheres with the "depth structure of the text" ("*Texttiefenstruktur*"),[352] presenting us with a "linear thematic progression" that achieves a resolution at the end.[353] This indicates that the structure is closed, which also enables it to serve as the conclusion of a book.

1.5 Structural Markers for the Conclusion of a Narrative (Susan Zeelander)

The conclusion of a narrative involves a process that usually extends over several stages.[354] It constitutes the integrity of the characters by definitively defining them and rendering a final judgement concerning them.[355] In this process the trajectories that commenced within the narrative are brought together so that they acquire a new stability at the end.[356] A significant role is often played by rituals and the conclusion of contracts in particular but also shared meals, e. g. in Gen 21:22–34; 26:12–33; 31:1–32:2. In this concluding position they always have a *transformative* character,[357] which suggests that 2 Kgs 25:27–30 may also have such a character.

In addition to this, *repetitions* frequently occur with a framing function.[358] A good example of this is the regnal formula, which demarcates the boundaries between the treatment of each king within the book of Kings.[359] The "natural end"[360] of a story is often reached when the narrative comes to a halt in a particular location. In 1–2 Kings this usually occurs in the notice concerning the death of the king. For Jehoiachin, however, it is the phrase "all the days of his life" in 2 Kgs 25:29 and 25:30 that describes his irreversible settlement in Babylon. The

352 For this term, see S.A.Nitsche/ H.Utzschneider, *Arbeitsbuch* 75–77.
353 Nitsche/ Utzschneider understand this to refer to a text in which each subsequent theme builds upon the one that precedes it (see their *Arbeitsbuch* 74). This structure is provided by the regnal formula. Only the destruction of the temple (2 Kgs 25:9) is followed by its plundering (vv.13–17), which leads to a temporal sequence requiring explanation (for more, see the discussion of the temporal dimensions below).
354 S.Zeelander, *Closure* 170.
355 See ibid. 174.
356 See ibid. 164.
357 See ibid. 144.
358 Ibid. 63.
359 See ibid. 56f.
360 Ibid. 97f.

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lack of a notice concerning his death simultaneously disrupts the regnal formula's linear sequence by not mentioning a successor.[361]

Places already mentioned in the narrative can also be repeated, as this can help many readers recall specific occurrences.[362] Examples in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 are Egypt (2 Kgs 24:7; 25:26), the steppes of Jericho (2 Kgs 25:5), and Mizpah (2 Kgs 25:23). Another kind of repetition is the use of keywords that can be of significance both for the individual narrative or within an intertextual context.[363]

Anti-closure is a special kind of concluding feature. This occurs when the narrative is open ended, leaving the future open to interpretation. The resolution to this openness is usually construed and constituted in the mind of the reader.[364] Such an open-ended ending can be found in 2 Kgs 25, where neither the wellbeing of the Judeans in Egypt nor the fate of the Northern Kingdom and the other exiles is clear.

The great temporal leap from 2 Kgs 25:26 to 25:27 has an additionally conclusive character. In theories of film and prose such temporal leaps often function as a concluding summary.[365] All the actions that had been initiated such as the unmentioned homecoming of the main characters or the restoration of a land are completed at this point. After this, a concluding statement is made concerning how the solution that has been found will fair in the future.

All of these criteria can be identified in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. This portion of Kings clearly functions as a conclusion, and it does so in several stages: (1) the increasing dependence of and threat to Judah as well as the beginnings of the loss of the population under kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin; (2) the end of the Jerusalemite monarchy as well as Jerusalem itself and thus the final end of Judah under Zedekiah; (3) the final failure to establish a state in the promised land and the final depopulation of the land in the Gedaliah pericope; (4) the release of Jehoiachin from prison as an epilogue and potential turning point.

361 This is not the first disruption. The regnal formula is also not consistently maintained for Kings Jehoahaz and Zedekiah. This could be a stylistic device that signals the growing disorder in Judah by disrupting the text's schemas and frames.

362 See ibid. 113.

363 See ibid. 88f. It would be possible to provide here a list of words that are intertextually significant; I have refrained from doing so at this juncture as their significance will worked out in the course of this study.

364 See ibid. 181–183.

365 See S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung* 263–265.

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Interim Conclusion

In light of the results so far, we can postulate the presence of a tentatively optimistic perspective that frames the catastrophic end of the Judean state. We have demonstrated that 2 Kgs 23:30 until the end of the book in 2 Kgs 25:30 constitute a meaningful unit. The question of the role of the pericope within the book of Kings as a whole as well as within the canon must still be answered. Within the first section we must take two parallel structures into account. The two first kings are paralleled with the two last kings, with the only difference being the identity of the conquerors (Egypt and Babylon).

A parallel structure unfolds between the first wave of deportations under Jehoiachin and his pardon; this structure is unfolded completely twice and only partially a third time. In addition to this it is possible to state with a high degree of certainty that 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 functions as a well-composed conclusion to a larger narrative.

2. Temporal Conceptions, Data, and their Meaning

In the first part of this study (A.1) we introduced our basic methods and hermeneutical approach. The task now is to apply the theory to the material. This is not so difficult for the analysis of temporal conceptions, even though time is a very abstract concept.[366] To grasp the concept of time we need to look at three aspects: 1) Are there *words that signify time*, e. g. dates, time periods, times of the day etc.? 2) Do the events occur according to a *semantically logical sequence* so that they can be brought into relation with time? 3) Is information provided that accelerates the *pace* of the narrative, such as leaps in time, or are there summaries and decelerations, such as repetitions or detailed descriptions? Once one has collated all this data one must ask whether it displays an *order* and, if so, what *understanding of time* that order is operating with, for example whether it is linear, cyclical, or atomistic.

366 See the relevant sections in Lahn/ Meisters and Nitsche/ Utzschneider (see chapter A.1).

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2.1 Temporal Order

2.1.1 Fabula

2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 consist in a *chronological* representation of events. This chronology is only interrupted once, namely during the representation of the plundering of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:9: 13–17). The sequence is as follows:

Jehoahaz (23 years old) succeeds his father to the throne and is proclaimed king. After only three months he is deposed, exiled to Egypt, and replaced by his other brother Eliakim/ Jehoiakim (25 years old); no death notice or any other information is provided. Jehoiakim reigns for eleven years. His period of rule is eventful; after having been a vassal to Babylon for three years he rebels, dies, and is succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (18 years old). Jehoiachin rules for only three months[367] before being replaced by his uncle Mattaniah/ Zedekiah (21 years old). His eleven years of rule and an undated rebellion are followed by the precisely dated siege of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem's siege begins on the tenth day of the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth regnal year (2 Kgs 25:1). The siege continues for the next two years, until a famine breaks out in the ninth month of the eleventh year (vv.2f.). Reports of the conquest of Jerusalem follow, then the capture of Zedekiah etc. (vv.4–7) and the transport into exile, without precise dating.[368]

We then have a break in the chronology, for in 2 Kgs 25:8 there is a switch to the chronology of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (first indicated in 24:10). Jerusalem is conquered on the seventh day of the fifth month of the nineteenth year of his reign; everything is burned down (25:9) and the population is exiled (vv.12.20f.). At this point we come across an *anachronism*, for the temple that had already been burned down is now plundered, an event described in detail (vv.13–17). In v.16 we also find a *flashback* to King Solomon who had organized the creation of the temple utensils.

We then have the appointment of Gedaliah who, like his generals and the assassin Ishmael, is embedded into his own genealogy by means of names and places (vv. 22f, 25). Gedaliah is murdered in the seventh month of an otherwise unspecified year (v. 25). As a result, that part of the nation that had not yet been exiled flees to Egypt (vv. 26).

367 According to 2 Chr 36, which is quoted by Josephus and other sources, he ruled for three months and ten days. This number probably has symbolic significance within the context of the Chronicles, which tends to calculate in tens. 30 x 3 + 10 = 100 days, which is also 10x10 days or 2 Jubilees (2x [49+1]).

368 Jer 52:11 says that Zedekiah's captivity lasted until his death. This information is missing here.

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After a gap in time lasting more than two decades we then read of the release of Jehoiachin, the last king but one, on the twenty-seventh day[369] of the twelfth month in the thirty-seventh year of his exile (v. 27); this date coincides with the accession of Evil-Merodach to the Babylonian throne. Once again there is a change in the way time is calculated, back to Judah and the Davidic dynasty. The death of Nebuchadnezzar is not mentioned and Babylonian chronology is no longer taken into account. Jehoiachin's release is followed by his symbolic acceptance and a continual provision for his daily needs all the days of his life (vv. 28–30). It is unclear if this is a reference to the days of the life of Evil-Merodach or Jehoiachin. The temporal end is left open—a stylistic device known from other Biblical texts (cf. Exod 40:38; 1 Kgs 22:54; 2 Chr 36:23; Acts 28:30).[370]

2.1.2 Story

Within the narrative the age of the kings is integrated into the framing regnal formula and has no independent meaning for itself. Its primary function seems to consist in guaranteeing the unbroken, continuous nature of the history of the kings. References to the genealogical chain also seems to have this function. The length of their rule is not necessarily connected to the space that they take up in the narrative, for although Jehoahaz has the least number of verses, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin are granted roughly the same amount of text and Zedekiah gets the most, if we include the conquest and plundering of Jerusalem. Time specifications mark the accession or deposition of kings and sometimes their deaths. The two changes in chronology symbolize the change of sovereignty in Judah, as does the complete withdrawal of Egypt back into its territory (24:7). Important events are dated, e.g. the rebellions of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. The famine under Zedekiah (25:3) and the murder of Gedaliah (25:25) are dated to the month. The only events to be dated to the day are Babylon's second siege of Jerusalem (25:1), the day of Jerusalem's capture (25:8), and Jehoiachin's release from prison (25:27).

At this point the meaning of the phrase "going up in *his* days" (24:1) is still not clear; it can be connected with either Nebuchadnezzar or Jehoiakim.[371] All the years counted together amount to 22.5 years of Davidic rule up until the destruction of the temple and then a further 26.5 years in which Jehoiachin "rules"

369 Jer 52:31 dates this to the twenty-fifth day of this month. The reason could be related to his seventy-year calculation.

370 Jer 52:34 adds "until the day of his death," which presupposes a reference to the death of Jehoiachin.

371 Ant. changes the text to "in those days." This reading leaves no room for interpretation. As a result, the dynastic dimension is almost completed eliminated.

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as a exilic king. This makes 49 years altogether (7 x 7), which implies that a year of jubilee is just around the corner.

2.2 Narrative Pace

The first part of the narrative (2 Kgs 23:30–25:7) is narrated in succinct form with a quick pace. It provides us with hardly any details; only the beginning, end and a few stations along the way are marked. Long periods of time are briefly summarized with description limited to only the most necessary elements. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern a slowing down of the pace for the period between Jehoahaz and Zedekiah. Whereas we have hardly any information about Jehoahaz, we have more details about Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin's capitulation and deportation are described in detail, and with Zedekiah we transition to the conquest of Jerusalem. In this part of the narrative (25:8–22) the plot slows down considerably; the focus is on the day of the conquest, which is named and described in detail. The precise description of the plundering of the temple (vv. 13–18) contrasts particularly strongly with the previous narrative pace, which is why the action appears to creep along. The deportation is mentioned twice, further reducing the pace (25:11: 22). The Gedaliah pericope comes next (25:22–26), which is once again narrated at a significantly higher pace (roughly like that of Zedekiah). The conclusion is provided by the pardon of Jehoiachin. Here the greatest pace is achieved because no information is provided for the intervening period of several decades (v. 27). Jehoiachin's release is roughly as detailed as the first narrative about him; it ends with a glance towards a future that is almost completely unknown. It ends with a continually open movement.

A summary of the narrative pace reveals the following pattern (see fig. 2).

The variations in pace evince a concentric pattern. The pace is very high for Jehoahaz at the beginning and the concluding future outlook at the end (A-A'); it slows down towards both sides of the Jehoiachin scenes (B-B'), speeds up a little for Zedekiah and Gedaliah (C-C'), and finds its centre and slowest point in the conquest and plundering of Jerusalem (D).[372] When looked at in light of the turbulent and chaotic nature of the events that are structured by this pattern, the image that comes to mind is that of a whirlwind: towards the centre the action gradually slows down until, upon arrival at the eye of the storm, we are confronted with a blunt, merciless rendering of reality, before the pace picks up again and the whirlwind returns to its roaring.

372 Jehoiakim lies exactly on the descending line; apart from his existence the leap in time has no supporting details so that it has been omitted from this graph.

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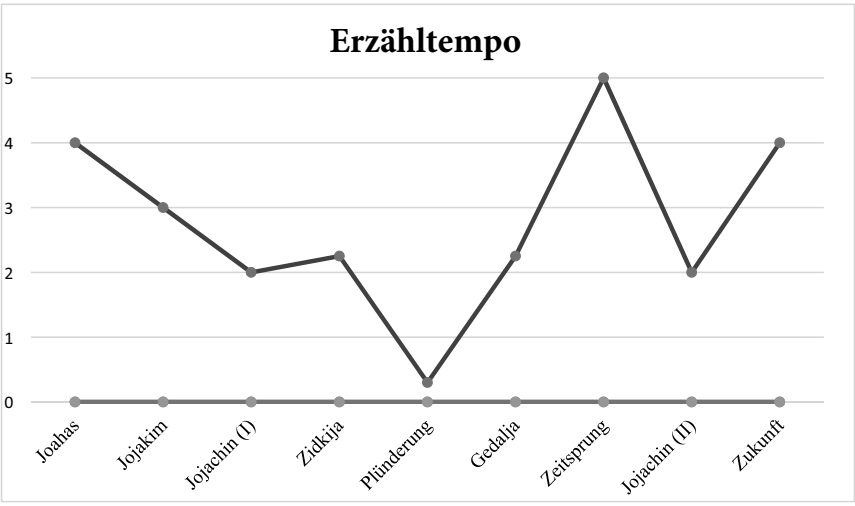

Fig. 2

2.3 Frequency

2.3.1 Twice-Occurring Repetitions

Our narrative contains a series of repeated actions that take place at different points in time. Upon closer analysis these repetitions evince a conspicuous and persistent structure of twofold-repetitions that had already come into view when we outlined the overall structure[373] of the pericope:

1. The regnal formula, including its negative assessments and information about length of rule, appears according to an A-B-A'-B' pattern in 2 Kgs 23:31 f., 36 f.; 24:6: 8 f.; 24: 17–19 (through changes in rulers and significant events).
2. Other twice-occurring structures are the granting of throne names by foreign rulers (23:34; 24:17), the deposition and arrest of the king of Judah in Riblah by another ruler (23:33; 25:6), executions (25:7, 18–21), the detailed description of the plundering of the temple and the simultaneous imposition of exile (24:13–15; 25:11, 13–17)
3. A chiasm can be found in 24:2–4. These verses describe the wrath of God (destroy – because of his words/because of his mouth – remove), for which there is a repetition in 24:20. In 25:29 f. Jehoiachin's continuous source of livelihood is emphasized by means of a parallelism. Both repetitions cause a slight reduction in the pace of the story.

373 See chapter C.1.

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It seems obvious that frequency has a structuring function within the story. It generates connections between various kings from different periods and, as long as the sons of David still rule in Jerusalem (23:30–25:7), gives order to various actions. After this point, frequencing as a stylistic device is largely given up. Given that it is the same subject matter that is repeated, the parallelism functions to indicate key passages, an emphasis further strengthened by the fact that the repetition slows down the pace of reading (see C.2.2). Such repetitions mark significant transformation points in the history of Judah. This dimension will be further analysed below.

2.3.2 Striking Repetitions

In addition to twofold repetitions we find a whole series of persons and place names that either have a regular distribution or are especially focussed. Because the narrative is chronological in nature, their frequency provides insight into the temporal development.

a) YHWH

YHWH plays a role throughout the entire narrative, for the Tetragrammaton occurs twelve times in 23:32–25:16 (mostly in the construct state). The absence of this name from the account of the destruction and plundering of the temple and also afterwards is striking. This character is virtually omnipresent as long as the temple is still standing.

b) Babylon and Egypt

Nebuchadnezzar or the "king of Babylon" is mentioned eighteen times in all, making him the most frequently mentioned character in our pericope. He appears in 2 Kgs 24:1–25:24 where he replaces Pharaoh, who is mentioned precisely seven times in 23:33–35; 24:7. If we include Nebuchadnezzar's successor Evil-Merodach/ king of Babylon dazu, the Babylonian ruler is even mentioned twenty times.[374]

Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean army, and Nebuzaradan appear seven times each in 2 Kgs 25:1–26. Deportation and exile are also mentioned seven times (23:34; 24:15: 16; 25:7: 11: 13: 21). A coming up from Babylon is mentioned three times (24:1: 10 f.; 25:1). Egypt is also mentioned at various points in the narrative (23:34; 24:7; 25:26). The military points of Riblah in the land of Hamath (23:33; 25:6: 20) and Mizpah (25:22: 25) are mentioned four times and twice respectively, with each marking a different violent change in sovereignty over Judah.

374 For the significance of this phenomenon, see "Character Analysis" in C.4.

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c) Judah

Of all the designations for Judah within the narrative, Jerusalem is the most frequent and widely distributed. It occurs twelve times in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:7 and three times in 25:8–30.

The kings appear in strict chronological order, which is why the names always occur concentrated together. Jehoahaz, for example, is only mentioned in 23:30–36, three times in all. The four kings are discussed during their lifetimes and reference is made to three who have already died (Josiah 23:30, 34 [2x]; Solomon in 24:13; 25:16: Manasseh 24:3). If one includes their original names, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah are each mentioned seven times, Jehoiachin three times the first time he appears (24:8–17) and twice the second time he appears (25:27–30). His mother is also mentioned three times (24:8, 12, 15).[375]

Jehoiachin is not the only one to be mentioned five times. Gedaliah is mentioned five times (25:22–26) as well as three groups in 2 Kgs 25: the men before the presence of the king (25:18), the priests and temple guards (25:19), and Gedaliah's military leaders (25:23). The sixty (5x12) men from the people-of-the-land are also arrested and executed (25:19). This use of the number five can only be observed during the phase of the fall of Jerusalem.

The people-of-the-land, on the other hand, appear seven times (23:30, 35 et passim), if we identify the "poorest of the land" (25:12) with the "poorest of the people-of-the-land" (24:14), a reading suggested by Ant., the most ancient textual witness we possess.[376] Just as with "Jerusalem" this term occurs throughout the entire period, and as with 'YHWH' it is no longer mentioned after the destruction of Jerusalem.

2.4 Summary and Interpretation

The narrative 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 is structured according to a chronological sequence of events that can be divided into two parts. The first part describes the period of the rule of the four kings (23:30–25:7) in an orderly, decelerating form with an overall high narrative pace. This is typical for the end of prosaic (Biblical) books.[377]

In the second part, with its description of the conquest of Jerusalem, we reach the slowest point in the narrative pace; only towards the end of this section does

375 For more details, see C.4.

376 In the MT we have מדלת הארץ whereas Ant's. translation corresponds to מדלת עם הארץ.

377 See also F.Blanco Wissmann, *Er tat das Rechte* 240f. This is also the true with the book of Kings, e.g. in 2 Kgs 17 (p. 240).

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the pace pick up again. Here precise dating plays a greater role than periods of time.[378]

This development intimates a rupture in the macrostructure, for the temporal structure collapses in on itself. The clear temporal schema that had been integrated into the beginning and end of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:7 (age, years of rule, dynastic connection) is now abandoned from 2 Kgs 25:8 onwards. The Gedaliah pericope does refer to genealogical relations, but only Ishmael is connected with the house of David. In 25:13–17 we find an anachronism and in 25:27 a leap in time as well as a change in dynastic chronology (25:8, 27) which disrupts the narrative's linearity.[379]

This rupturing of chronological time is further underscored by the déjà vu effect of the twice occurring repetitions within the narrative as well as the constant repetition of characters and places at a frequency of five or seven mentions.

This contrasts with the precise dating that can be as specific as the day one which the event took place (25:27 et passim). This development can be characterized as a move from *time as an extended period to time as individual moments.* This development is reversed at the end of our text. In 25:27–30 we read of the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin. The narrative has returned to the extended period of Davidic chronology, a time understood to be salvific for Judah.[380] We read of the provision of a continual livelihood for an open period of time (25:29f.)—time as an extended period has returned.

The thirty-seventh year has a second function, one that has already been addressed (see C.2.2), namely that of the year of Jubilee. The total amount of years ruled by the kings of Judah since Josiah, the last good king (see 2 Kgs 22:2; 23:25), amount to forty-nine years, which is the number of the seventh Sabbath year (7 x 7) that is followed by a Jubilee year.[381]

Other observations reveal a temporal arc that comprehends the entire narrative. 1) The three appearances of Egypt within the narrative mark the beginning of bad times for Judah. 2) YHWH is mentioned twelve times in connection with the temple, the last time in 25:16. 3) The same configuration is true seven times for the people-of-the-land. This is only the case, however, until Jerusalem is burned down and the population exiled, so that the two-fold division is dis-

378 For the issue of a possible text-external model for the dating see the section on the chronology debate in the online appendix to this book. Recently there is a new study by K.Weingart, Geschichte (2020), especially 5–8; 37; 173; 214; 218.

379 Knauf explains these kinds of breaks, which also occur elsewhere in the DtrH, as a reflection of Israel's lack of temporal-linear thought; he argues that Israel oriented itself towards chronological-dynastic time rather than chronological time (see E.A.Knauf, *1 Kgs* 53).

380 K.Koch, *Zahlen* 433–441, especially 440.

381 Koch also notes that the time from the destruction of the temple amounts to half a Jubilee, which signifies that a change is about to take place for the redemption of the nation (see *Zahlen* 436).

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regarded in favour of an overarching framework. What connects these three examples is the fact that they refer to a negative event, so that their (temporal) appearance appears to be limited as a result.

A few further observations are worthy of note that have not yet been treated in our interpretation:

1. The two "stumbling blocks" in 2 Kgs 24:2–4 and 25:29f. that decelerate the tempo could mark key events (the wrath of God – release). To determine this, however, an analysis of the characters must first be undertaken.
2. How is it that Jehoahaz (23) is set upon the throne before his older brother Jehoiakim (25)? Does this sequence, unique in 1–2 Kgs, intimate the coming downfall of the kingdom, and what is the role of the people-of-the-land in all this?
3. We know of Jehoahaz's death but neither his age nor the date when it occurred. We are not informed at all about the death of Zedekiah so that it is possible that he continued to live in Babylon. Is this significant for our interpretation of the storyline?
4. Jehoiachin is seven (!) years old when his father becomes king, which means he must have been fifty-five years old when he was released from prison. This accords with the length of time that Manasseh reigned (2 Kgs 21:1). Is this meaningful or not, especially given that both stations in life are not typical in the royal history of Judah?[382]

3. Spatial Concepts

Spatial analysis triangulates various concepts. Lahn/ Meisters suggest that we first work through all the places and landscapes that are explicitly mentioned in the text, i. e. the *settings* within which the action takes place, describing them by making use of the information provided by the narrative. As in many other narratives, the Biblical settings are based on real prototypes that the authors have either consciously or unconsciously drawn upon. An overview of these "text-external anchors" ("*textexternen Verankerungen*"; B. Schmitz) is provided in an online appendix; in the context of a narrative analysis they can only have descriptive but not instructive significance.[383]

(1) *Settings* appear to be static entities, for streets, buildings, trees etc. have fixed locations that cannot be easily changed. However, a spatial concept ori-

382 See G.Galil, *Chronology* Appendix C (S. 155): the kings of Judah are aged around 21:5 years on average when they accede to the throne. Their successors are born nine months later (22.3) and they die at the age of forty-six.

383 I reflect upon why these text-external horizons could be important for a correct understanding of the narrative and I describe their hermeneutical significance in *Verankerungen*.

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ented towards *place* is by nature much more dynamic. Change is possible. For example, a house can be painted, a river can be redirected, trees can be felled or planted; fields can be created, etc. (2) In addition to this, 'space' can be filled (narrow – broad), it can be feared (claustrophobia – agoraphobia), both loved (home, parental home etc.) and hated (enemy territory). In this case we have an *emotional* space. However, spaces can also be ambivalent, for the parental home of one person, for example, can simultaneously be the home of somebody else's hated neighbours. A last refuge for one person can be an enemy's lair for someone else. This is what Foucault so aptly described as *heterotopia.*[384]

Spaces are heavily dependent upon the beings that design them, build them, or destroy them. Within a story a space can be seen as real (Jerusalem) and it can be felt (one's home city), but it can also be a place that is yearned for (exiles remembering their own) or a utopia in the sense of a place of promise or hope. Space *per se* can be intended but space can also be representative of *social* space, i. e. a family, kingdom, occupational group, collectivity, nation, and much more. All of these movable, transformatory elements will be described and interpreted in the second part of our analysis.

Information will be collected about the relations between individuals, individuals and groups, and between various groups themselves, relations that can be for or against each other or simply parallel to each other. "Relational spaces" refers to the inner boundaries between I and thou, we and ye, spheres of sovereignty and the world views and ideologies that are derived from them; this dimension will require its own separate analysis (*spacing*), where we will inquire into the nature of these relations and their permeability.

Before a preliminary judgment concerning the narrative's spatial concept can be made it will be necessary to take one final step (3), namely to analyse its relation to the narrative's concept of time. This is because the fourth dimension is also an important part of the concept of space *(chronotopy).* The following questions are constructive in this respect: Do the observations converge or diverge? Do the results of the spatial analysis confirm or contradict the results of the temporal analysis, or are time and space simply parallel to each other? Is the result a unified picture, i. e. are the individual scenes more like fragments, or is a mosaic created, or does everything change so quickly, occur so parallel, that a kaleidoscope is a more appropriate metaphor?

384 See chapter A.1 above on methodology.

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3.1 The Settings of the Narrative

3.1.1 The Southern Kingdom and its Cities

The southern kingdom of Judah is only mentioned very rarely, mostly in connection with individuals (25:27 et passim). It is striking that it is only ever referred to as the sphere of Davidic sovereignty in connection with Jehoiachin in exile (24:12; 25:27). The kings of Judah ceased receiving a comment in this regard (cf. 2 Kgs 21:1.19; 22:1; 23:31.36; 24:8.18)[385] from the time of the downfall of the northern kingdom (2 Kgs 17) and onwards.

Within the narrative Judah is used eight times and "the Judeans" once (25:25). 2 Kings 24:2f. and 20 are concerned with the land and the people of Judah who are the recipients of YHWH's wrath, 25:21f. is about the execution of YHWH's wrath by means of exile. In 24:5 it occurs as part of Jehoiakim's death notice and three times it is said of Jehoiachin that he is the "king of Judah." At this point we can note that land and people of *Judah* appear to be interchangeable terms. Only Jehoiachin is said to be their "king." After the destruction of Jerusalem and the instalment of Gedaliah those who are left behind are indeed called "Judeans," but it is only in relation to Jehoiachin during the exile that the meaning is once again open to include the land. Judah as a territorial entity appears in one way or another to be connected with the monarchy.

In addition to the city of Jerusalem, which will be treated separately in its own section, three further places are mentioned within Judah, insofar as we identify it with a historical map:

Libnah (23:31; 25:18) and *Rumah* (23:36) are cities from which the wives of Josiah and thus the mothers of the queens originate. The narrative does not provide any further comments on these places so that at first glance their significance would appear to be limited. The only striking details is the fact that Jehoiachin's mother, one of the wives of Jehoiakim, is from Jerusalem. Josiah had wives (plural) from Judah whereas Jehoiakim is limited to a much smaller territory.[386]

Jericho, or to be more precise the *steppes before Jericho* (25:4f.), is the region in which Zedekiah is caught while trying to flee. It is also not yet possible to say anything further about this region.[387]

385 In contrast, from the period of the division of the kingdom until the downfall of Israel all the kings of Judah are explicitly titled as such and their capital is located in Jerusalem (see 1 Kgs 15:1f., 9f.; 2 Kgs 14:1f.; 15:1f., 32f.; 16:1f.; 18:1f.).

386 Jehoiakim became a vassal of Egypt. Below (in section C) we will discuss the question of whether this is connected with the narrowing of his horizon.

387 These statements are somewhat unsatisfying. Given that in accordance with the narrative's historical fictitiousness we may and indeed should assume that the real cities along with their geographic locations etc. ought to be taken into account, I have made a chapter on the

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3.1.2 Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the only setting within the entire narrative that is described in detail; after Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar it is also the most frequently used term.[388] Jerusalem is mentioned by name 15x; the phrase *the* city (in Hebrew העיר), which is exclusively reserved for Jerusalem, is used a further five times (24:10 f.; 25:2, 4). The distribution of the name is very regular and ends with the torching of the city in 25:10. It functions as a *nomen rectum* on five occasions in coordination with the king (23:31, 33, 36; 24:8, 18) and once in coordination with Elnathan, the father of the mother of a king (24:8). In seven cases it refers to the city itself (24:4, 10, 14 f., 20; 25:1, 8), once it its connected with the city walls (25:10), and once with the houses (25:9) in the city.

The city serves as the seat of royal Judean power, which indicates that it is located within Judah, though this is not explicitly confirmed by the narrative itself. The city is besieged twice by Babylon (24:10; 25:1 f.) and suffers once from famine during the second siege (25:3). Before its destruction Jerusalem was in possession of city walls (25:4, 10) and gates, one of which may be referred to (25:4). In addition to houses that are not further defined (25:9) there are also "great houses" or "houses of the Great Ones" (25:9; בתים גדולים), a house of God (25:9; בית יהוה), at least one palace (25:9, בית המלך), and a garden (25:4; גן המלך).

The area upon which the temple, royal palace and presumably the "garden of the king" are located are all called היכל (24:13). The royal palace is only mentioned twice (24:13; 25:9) and always in connection with the temple. The temple is mentioned six times, seven if one includes the use of the term *hechal* (24:13; 25:9, 13 [2x]; 25:16). The "house of YHWH" is plundered twice (24:13; 25:13–17); there are three acts of plundering altogether if we include the tribute demanded by Egypt (23:34 f.). In 25:22 all of the above mentioned places in Jerusalem along with the city itself are burned down, plundered, and depopulated.

narrative's text-external anchors available online. The question of what the greater area "Judah" is is particularly unsatisfactory because the text itself does not provide an answer. It will only be possible to analyse this term in the context of our intertextual interpretation (see part C). Important questions are as follows: Is it a place, a social space, a land, a kingdom, all these simultaneously or is it something entirely different?

388 Because the author(s) of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 was/were most likely (a) Jerusalemite(s) who lived near the temple (see A.2.1.1) and so would have known the city and the temple well this subject is treated in an independent section in the online appendix that accompanies this book.

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3.1.3 Egypt, the River of Egypt, and the River Euphrates

Egypt is mentioned three times in the course of the narrative: 1) as the place to which Jehoahaz is exiled (23:34), 2) as the living space of the Egyptians (24:7), and 3) as a place of refuge for those Judeans who remained after the murder of Gedaliah (25:26). It is thus a place to which Judah goes, whether voluntarily or forced, rather than Babylon. The River of Egypt (24:7) seems to serve as a new boarder after all that lies between it and the River Euphrates comes under the control of the king of Babylon (24:7). Regarding Egypt itself, we only have information that is connected with Pharaoh Neco (23:33–35) but not with the setting itself.[389]

3.1.4 Babylon, Riblah in the land of Chamath, and the Bands of Robbers

Just as with Egypt and Judah, Babylon is barely described in spatial terms. The only elements provided are the "house of chains" בית כלא, i.e. the prison in Babylon, and a royal palace only hinted at implicitly by reference to the throne/seats of honour and the act of eating *before* the king (2 Kgs 25:27–30).[390] Nevertheless, with twenty-five mentions Babylon is the most common term in the entire narrative. There are nineteen references to the king of Babylon, four to the exile to Babylon (of which three are related to Jehoiachin and one to Zedekiah), one to a period of stay in Babylon (25:27), and one to the carrying off of the temple treasures to Babylon (25:13),[391] all references being evenly distributed.

Riblah in the land of Chamath is described as a place in which foreign rulers both pronounce and execute judgements upon their vassals. Both Pharaoh Neco (23:33) and Nebuchadnezzar (25:6) dethrone kings there. Nebuchadnezzar also carries out public executions there (25:6, 20f.).[392]

389 There is much that could be said about Egypt from a historical and inner-Biblical perspective; a portion of this can be found in the character analysis below (C.4) and in section D. At this point it should suffice to note that the River of Egypt may be a "boarder stream" located in any number of possible places but it could also refer to the Nile (see D.Jericke, *Ortsangaben* 148f.). Philo of Alexandria (In Fug. 180; Leg I.34) argued that the "River of Egypt" refers to the Nile, so that it is not necessarily the case that a simple boundary river should be assumed.

390 This house is the only building mentioned outside of the Jerusalem.

391 In the sixth Century the historical *Neo-Babylonian Empire* roughly stretched from Carchemish (in present-day Turkey) in the North to the mouth of the Tigris (its eastern boarder). In the South a clear boarder was formed by the desert, and in the West its boarder was constituted by the Red Sea, the Egyptian sphere of sovereignty, and the Mediterranean. The capital city Babylon was located in the South-East, in the very fertile territory at the point where the Euphrates and Tigris are the closest to each other.

392 The city of Riblah is located on the river Orontes north northwest of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (in the territory of modern Syria), just north of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel.

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The *bands of robbers* described in 2 Kgs 24:2 are not described in any more detail within the context of the narrative. In this context, the Chaldeans, which obviously belong to Babylon because they make up its army (25:4f., 10, 13, 25f.), are a "band of robbers". The "sons of Ammon" are similarly introduced as an ethnic group and so are not necessarily limited to a specific territory. In contrast, Moab and Aram are clearly demarcated territories that send out bands of robbers.[393] The text does not permit us to identify the origin or relation of any of these groups to Judah. All that can be said with certainty is that their actions transgress established boundaries and that they constitute an independent entity within the broader group of Judah's enemies. It is interesting to note that the reference to the "sons of Ammon" establishes a relation between nations and the mention of "Moab and Aram" establishes a relation between states. The harassment of Judah is comprehensive and 'personal' in the full sense of the word. At this juncture it is not yet possible to identify the cause of this harassment, for we have too little information about the motivation and origin of the bands of robbers.[394]

3.2 Transformations, Movements, and Relations between Spaces and Groups

3.2.1 Judah: From a Space of Life to a Space of Death

Judah and especially its capital Jerusalem undergo the clearest spatial development. In the beginning (23:30f.) Jerusalem is a city that is able to choose its own king, that is in possession of a degree prosperity, and, given the lack of evidence to the contrary, whose day-to-day operations appear to run smoothly. This argument from silence is appropriate because the first radical change already takes place in 23:33–36. Pharaoh Neco deposes the king of Judah and takes him to Egypt where he remains until his death (23:33f.). The next king is installed by Egypt and must immediately pay a penitence fee, which he in turn extracts from the general population (23:33, 35). Gold and silver leave the country, which may have led to lower standards of living. Just a few verses later Egypt is replaced by Babylon (24:1, 7), i.e. Judah receives a new overlord that did not even conquer it personally in battle. The result is a rebellion (24:1) that leads to a state of war with

393 There is very limited historical information that is of relevance here. The neighbouring states of Ammon, Aram, and Moab are all located to the east of Judah and all have a similar size. At this point in time they were already under the influence of Assyria and were vassals of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. In addition to this, the territory of Aram contained within it the kingdom of the Maacathites, from which one of Gedaliah's companions originated (see Josh 13:11–13; 2 Kgs 25:23).

394 See C.4 and D.

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plundering hordes invading Judah (24:2) and Jerusalem being filled with innocent blood (24:4). Evidently the living space of Jerusalem and Judah is being threatened by chaotic powers that senselessly shed blood, understood to be the seat of life, and extract further goods from Judah.[395]

Siege is laid against Jerusalem (24:10f.) after the death of Jehoiakim (24:6) and it can only be saved by Jehoiachin's unconditional capitulation (24:12). This leads to the first great deportation to Babylon of the king and his court; the latter includes the royal mother, the royal wives, and the palace functionaries along with 10,000 military men who are experienced in battle, 7,000 other soldiers along with their leaders, all stonemasons, the smith, and 1,000 artisans, who are called the "pillars of the land" אילי הארץ (24:12, 13–16). Only the poorest of the elite are left behind, the "poorest of the people-of-the-land" עם הארץ (24:14). Babylon also plunders the temple treasure, the royal treasure, and all the golden utensils of the temple that were made during the time of Solomon (24:13). A new vassal king is installed in order to rule the now heavily reduced nation (24:17). Here, too, we see how the space of Jerusalem is further disassembled so that there is hardly any space left to live. Judah is now completely occupied and plundered and so ceases to be a space that can operate according to its own dynamic. Its is determined by external forces rather than by natural inner development or the intervention of the people who belonged to it.

Zedekiah rules in Jerusalem, yet the moment he rebels—an autonomous action—(24:20) Babylon returns to the scene as besieger (25:1f.). This time the army not only draws near to the city, it builds siegeworks around the walls of Jerusalem, so that the living space of the city is bounded and constricted by two walls. The city, the quality of which has already been restricted, begins to suffer hunger (25:3). Enemies from without and starvation from within threaten its very capacity to survive.

395 Krzysztof Kinowski's dissertation on this subject provides us with new insights. He argues that the phrase "innocent blood" was inserted into the text secondarily in order to place the blame on Manasseh. As such, it functions as the interpretive key in the final form of the text to the downfall of Judah. The expression stands for blood guilt that requires vengeance according to the law of talion in order to bring about "radical purification," a necessity according to Deut 29:19. The vengeance for the guilt of Manasseh that is enacted upon Judah is not caused by him alone but also all the un-atoned for murders committed by the sons of David (see, e.g., 1 Kgs 22:35, 38; 2 Kgs 9f.). This parallels the downfall of the northern kingdom (2 Kgs 17), which had been condemned for Menahem's murderous acts (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 15:16; Hos 14:1) for which there was no other option than the destruction of the entire land (Num 35:33; 2 Kgs 21:13; Ezek 24:6, 11–13) (see *Bloodshed*; Dissertation PBI Rom2017 [as of yet unpublished]). The relationships to Manasseh that have been worked out here receive a more detailed treatment below in part C of this thesis.

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The breaching of the wall (25:4) leads to the flight of the king and his soldiers (25:4–6), robbing the city of its source of protection and even the ability to capitulate in order to save itself.

In rapid succession the city is plundered, with particular attention being paid to the temple as the final location with objects of value (25:13–17). Literally every single object of value that can be transported is taken; two priests and three gate keepers are also taken out of the country and then executed (25:18, 20f.). As a result, cultic worship in Jerusalem ceases to be a possibility. The removal of all the gold, personnel, and the buildings has rendered Jerusalem as a cultic site dead.

In the meantime, the flight of the king takes him through walls (actually a defensive wall [!]), past a garden, a blossoming sphere of life, into the steppes of Jericho.[396] In and of themselves steppes ערבות are a barely inhabitable space and —especially when compared to gardens or fields—they are clearly not a cultivated living space. In addition to this, they are the place of the arrest of the king, whom no one comes out to help, not even from Jericho; even his men, his last source of protection, abandon him. Zedekiah is taken outside his land (25:6), his sons are killed, he himself is blinded and put into prison in Babylon (25:7). The last two living kings of Judah now find themselves in prison outside of Judah and Zedekiah no longer has any eyes; as such he does not even posses a "field" of vision, a "space" that he can see. The protection that should be provided by the monarchy is definitively extinguished in the flames of the royal palace (25:9). The only kings to remain in the land are the dead kings in their graves in Jerusalem (24:6) and Ishmael as a distant relative (25:25). Kingship as a social "sphere" of sovereignty that functions to guarantee security has now ceased to exist.

And now a large part the rest of Jerusalem and Judah is removed from the land in a number of different ways: There are defectors, people who are no longer Judaeans, and the city dwellers who survived (25:11). Both groups are taken into exile in Babylon. The third group consists of city officials, cult personnel, and members of the people-of-the-land who still resided within the city (25:18f.). This group is removed form the land and executed (25:20f.). After the entire population of Jerusalem has been removed, all the houses are burned to the ground and the walls are torn down (25:9f.). Jerusalem is now a place that no longer has houses, inhabitants, infrastructure, and protective walls. It no longer has a temple or a palace, so that it is bereft of every cultic and political function. Jerusalem as a "living space" has become a "non-space," a necropolis.

The walls that had once separated this space from the already desolated landscape of Judah have fallen, which means that there is no longer a boundary

396 For a reconstruction of the route taken and the meaning of the expression "between the walls" בין החמתים, see B.Collinet, *Verankerungen* 25–31.

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between these two spheres. Babylon has devoured everything, razing it all to the ground.

All that remains are a few Judeans left behind as farmers (25:12) and Mizpah, the seat of a Judean governor rather than a king and son of David (25:21). The governor has no real power, for all he has are five army commanders and some soldiers from Babylon. Three of his officials are from Judah, the fourth is a Maacathite (25:23), from one of the neighbouring lands that had invaded Judah (24:2).[397] The fifth is Ishmael, a sons of David who kills Gedaliah and all who are with him (25:25). This event is followed by the flight of Ishmael and all those who had remained in Judah to Egypt (25:26). Although as little is said about Mizpah's destruction as about the destruction of Jericho, Libnah, and Rumah, it is clear they are all abandoned places. There is no longer a single living Judean in Judah. That land that once flowed with milk and honey has now become a wilderness, a non-place, a u-topia.[398]

3.2.2 Egypt: An Ambivalent Space

Egypt signifies a sphere of sovereignty. At the beginning of the narrative its key elements are foreign domination and threat (23:33–35). It is a sphere of power that dominates Judah, is capable of deposing its kings, and possess territory stretching as far as Riblah. It lies both to the west and north of Judah. In 23:34 it is clear that for Judah Egypt is a sphere of captivity and death, for it is the place to which Jehoahaz is exiled and where he dies. However, Egypt's power is demonstrated not only in its appointing of new monarchs but also in Pharaoh's granting them new throne names, which has the effect of establishing a clear boundary and hierarchy. With the imposition of tribute, a large quantity of silver and gold makes its way to Egypt (23:34 f.) so that it not only increases in power but also prosperity.

The second time Egypt appears in the narrative its power has been strongly curtailed. The Judean king is now under the dominion of Babylon and even if he could have given loyalty to Egypt (his throne name is not changed) he eventually dies and so Egyptian influence is irretrievably lost (24:1, 6). Relative to Babylon Egypt loses a significant amount of power for it is driven back to its river, i. e. all of its northern territories are lost, including Riblah (24:7; 25:6). However, there is no talk of a deportation of Egyptians, Pharaoh is neither described as dependent on Babylon nor is he obliged to pay tribute. Egypt's "living space" remains thus

397 See the discussion in the online appendix to this book.

398 For an intertextual discussion of this image, particularly as it occurs, e. g., in Mic 3:12, see the relevant chapter in part D. I use the term "u-topia" in the same sense as Thomas Morus in his work Utopia, for whom it has the dual meaning of a non-place (*ou-topos*) and, simultaneously, a promised or beautiful place (*eu-topos*) (see T.Morus, *Utopia* [1516] intr.s

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intact, even if reduced in size, which means that it continues to enjoy a degree of protection against Babylon within the limits of its own boundaries.

The third time Egypt is mentioned (25:26) there is no longer a reference to Pharaoh as ruler, the Judeans do not go there as prisoners, and their death is not reported. Even though it would not be fully accurate to say that they went to Egypt 'voluntarily', for it was fear of the Chaldeans that drove them to flee (25:26), flight was nevertheless an option that they personally chose. For them, Egypt could be conceived as a "living space." However, Egypt appears to be nothing more than a mere "survival space," for in contrast to Babylon we are provided with no further information about the fate of Judah or Ishmael the son of David. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Egypt has been transformed from a game changing "big player" to a lion licking its own wounds; in the end, it cannot even be considered a social space, for Pharaoh is not present to either receive or reject the Judeans. Egypt has become the place of Judah's self-imposed exile.

3.2.3 Babylon: A Desolation with an Oasis

Babylon is consistently portrayed as powerful and threatening. It is a space that is permanently enlarging itself. This can be seen in its acquisition of territory and objects of value (24:1f., 7, 10–17; 25:1f., 4–6, 9–15), the number of nations it controls (24:1f., 7), and the number of verses in which Babylon appears (see the graph[399] in fig. 3). In this way it becomes an entity that takes up space within the narrative.

Beyond these initial observations we discover that Babylon is also a very dynamic space. It is the point of departure for armies going into battle (24:1, 10; 25:1) and it is the place to which people are brought (24:15f.; 25:13). Its inhabitants do not have the same name as the land (כשדים) and they find themselves in constant movement. This is exemplified by the "king of Babylon" מלך־בבל himself, who moves from Babylon to Judah (24:1), then Egypt (24:7) and Jerusalem (24:11), then Babylon again (24:16), then Jerusalem again (25:1, 8), and finally to Riblah (25:6, 20). This movement evinces an A-B-A'-C-A"-D pattern; if we include the reference to Evil-Merodach as מלך־בבל then this route ends in Babylon (25:27), though the schema would have led us to expect Judah to be the final station.[400]

In parallel to the group 'Egypt' note should be made of the acts of going out (23:33), returning home (24:7), and being in one's own land (25:26). The two also have in common that no mention is made of their own cities, only the places over

399 This graph does not articulate the active-passive relation. In most verses Babylon is an agitator with Judah/Jerusalem and Egyptian being reactors.

400 Only the broader context enables us to interpret Babylon as a "new Judah" (see D.5.3).

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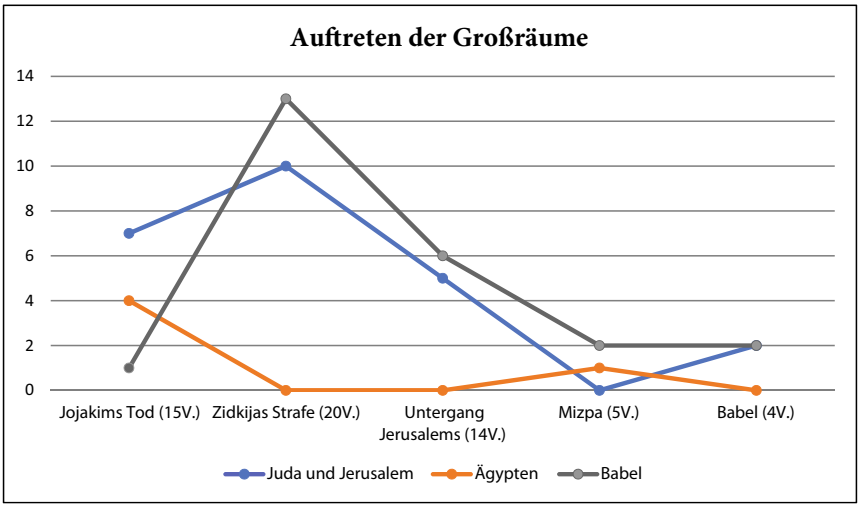

Fig. 3

which they have dominion, such as Riblah. This further accentuates the dynamic. Babylon's need to move infects the occupied nations for, whether intended or not, we read of the movements of bands of robbers (24:2) and Judah's deportations (24:15f.; 25:11 et passim).

One result of Babylon's permanent movement is that it enriches itself while devastating other territories. Whereas Egypt had only demanded tribute from Judah (23:34f.), Babylon takes whatever it wants with no consideration for the well-being of the conquered areas (i. e. it plunders the territories and the deports the elite). Nothing stands in its way, neither military opponents such as Egypt or the kings of Judah, nor stones, such as walls or houses; apparently even YHWH does not stand in his way, for his name is no longer mentioned after the torching and sacking of the temple (25:10, 16). From this we can conclude that Babylon represents the power of chaos that threatens to devour Judah; Judah has no option but to rebel in order to retain its own living space (24:1.20), an action all the more necessary since YHWH apparently refuses to grant his own protective "space" (24:2–4).

In this manner Babylon's (social) space is characterized by a certain ruthlessness, for it takes space at any cost. Whoever does not immediately capitulate when under siege (24:7.10–12) is eliminated (25:1–21). At first glance Babylon appears to be nothing other than the chaotic powers of *tohu wavohu*.

However, it is possible to identify other dimensions; these find their high point in the concluding scene (25:27–30). In his text *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795) Kant states that "the problem of a well organized state […] is solvable even for a nation

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of devils (as long has they are rational)."[401] By this he means that an organized form of government is necessary for the preservations of one's private interests. This is demonstrated by the 'chaotic power' of Babylon in various places.

Babylon accepts a Western boarder with Egypt (24:7) and thus a minimum of self-limitation. Its first makes its subdued nations vassals (24:1 f.) and facilitates their subjugation (24:10–12; 25:1 f.), even if this is primarily for the sake of its own troops. On two occasions they install an administrator in Judah, with Zedekiah even being allowed to retain his royal status with his own court (24:17 f.). Gedaliah is only a governor and is no longer located in Jerusalem (25:22 f.), yet Babylon provides him with troops so that he can organize the land (25:22–25). Enough people are left behind as farmers so that continued existence remains possible (25:12). The financial, cultural, and cultic reserves of the country are only removed in their entirety after a second rebellion (25:8–21). This means that an independent if limited life would have been possible beforehand, even if Babylon's primary interest was taxes rather than the prosperity of the subjected territory. Babylon only demonstrates its power to destroy all life when executing its captives (25:6 f., 18–21) and torching Jerusalem (25:9 f.), and even here these acts are only carried out upon royal instruction. It is interesting that the king chooses Riblah in the land of Chamath to be the setting for such executions, a place that Egypt had already used as a seat of judgement (23:33; 25:6, 20 f.). Continuity is also provided in Babylon's decision to grant new throne names (23:34; 24:17). Babylon is not a legal vacuum; it is willing to maintain legal regularities. It has the power to construct and transform spaces. Egypt becomes smaller, Riblah remains the same. Jerusalem is *utterly annihilated* whereas Mizpah is promoted. Spaces can be depopulated and plundered, but—as is the case with Babylon—they can also be enriched with wealth and culture.

In 2 Kgs 25:27–30 Babylon is transformed. Jehoiachin, the captured king of Judah, is released from prison בית כלא and brought to the king of Babylon where he is promoted in several respects. He can leave his imprisoned space and now eat *before* the king, i. e. he is allocated a new space (25:28–30). He is spoken to in a friendly manner (דבר סבות) and he is allowed to change his clothing (25:28 f. שנה בגד). He receives a seat of honour כסא not only alongside but *over* the thrones of all the other kings in Babylon. Sentences passed can be revised, life in Babylon can be made possible. This becomes particularly clear in the reference to bread (25:29 f.), which contrasts sharply with the famine in Jerusalem (25:3).

Babylon turns out to be a *heterotopos*[402] in several ways. On the one hand it is a threatening and overpowering place, on the other it is an oasis in the middle of a

401 I. Kant, *Frieden*, 222 f.

402 For an explanation of this term according to Foucault, see the section on method in the introductory chapter A.1.

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desert that it itself has created. It is also the place in which Judah's cultural, cultic, and royal potential resides—even as it continues to live in captivity. Judah and Babylon achieve a degree of congruence. In this sense, we can say that it is Judah rather than Babylon that changes its spatiality. A territorial entity in a particular land has become a people in Babylon. This applies to Judah itself[403] (25:27) rather than the ethnic group of the Judeans (25:26), for what is located in Babylon is the king with all the personnel that he requires for his civic duties as well as the temple's cultic objects. From a spatial perspective Judah has become a place of (felt) *belonging*.

3.3 Chronotopicity

From the perspective of the relation between time and space we must note at this point that we are still not able to resolve any of the questions left open at the end of our temporal analysis. The tendencies that we have identified thus far continue to be valid, such as the description of the conquest of Jerusalem as constituting the climactic, slowest point in the temporal development, as well as the presence of a sudden change in 2 Kgs 25:27–30. The slow deceleration of the pace towards this centre along with its gradual acceleration after this point has been passed can also be found in the spatial structure. This is because the nation constantly shrinks in size through deportations, defectors, and executions (for this observation to stand we must establish that the relational entity 'Judah' is the core theme of the interpretation). Our various observations thus reinforce each other in relation to the overall plot.

A similar pattern emerges when we relate the more frequent term 'Babylon' to the phenomenon of a shrinking Judah or Jerusalem. Although Babylon only first appears in 24:1, it narrows the spatial perspective and decelerates the plot. As a result, the transformation of Jerusalem into a space characterized by lifelessness co-occurs with the creeping, almost paralysed pace of the narrative. The appearance of Babylon and—as we will see when we analyse the characters—the actions of Nebuchadnezzar and his servants force Jerusalem into slow motion.

The temporal change from Egyptian to Babylonian hegemony merges with the spatial changes, especially in 2 Kgs 24:7. Nebuchadnezzar's dynastic chronology is parallel to the devastation of Judah's space, just as the return of a Davidic chronology for Jehoiachin parallels the simultaneous emergence of a new "living space" in Babylon. Egypt also corrects the temporal incoherence of a younger brother sitting on the throne before his elder brother by removing the one and

403 It is still not yet clear what kind of a space Judah is; all we know is that it is correlated with Jehoiachin as its king.

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installing the other. We can thus see that already at this point in the story the order that prevailed before Babylon (as postulated in chapter C2) had already been dented by Egypt. As such, there never is a fully intact Judean monarchy within the scope of this narrative.

This impression is further reinforced by a number of observations concerning the royal history of Judah. From a spatial perspective the dynastic references to Solomon, Manasseh, and Josiah are always connected with negative events. Under Jehoiakim the son of Josiah (23:34) the scope of Judah's sovereignty is limited by Egypt. The reference to Manasseh is linked to the spilling of innocent blood that floods Jerusalem (24:3f.). Solomon is mentioned (24:13; 25:16) when the cultic objects are removed from the temple. Every temporal reference to the past royal history of Judah only serves to highlight what has been lost since then; the "space" of tradition thus becomes a symbol of loss. This is closely connected to the kings' brief periods of rule. The "space" of tradition and the "period" of rule shrink in equal measure. The climax of a false understanding of tradition is achieved during the rule of Jehoiakim, who follows Manasseh rather than Josiah; however, missteps also occur during the reign of Zedekiah. Jehoiachin is the son of Jehoiakim, the elder brother, and he ascends the throne after the latter's death. However, Zedekiah is presented as his uncle דוד, a successor from an antecedent dynastic era who succeeds a still living king. Every perspective he may have had for the future is extinguished with the execution of his children and the removal of his eyes. The possibility of a future only becomes conceivable again with Jehoiachin, who is presented as the *king of Judah* (25:27). In Zedekiah the spatial and temporal aspects of the de(con)struction of Judah's history merge, in Jehoiachin they reappear—albeit twenty-six years later and at the other end of the Babylonian empire, i. e. the greatest conceivable distance from Judah.

It is also interesting to see how time and space are combined in Zedekiah's abandonment of Jerusalem. He attempts to flee during the night (25:4 הלילה), which is the only verse that makes reference to specific time in the day, and he does so through the walls, i. e. through a shadowy space, thereby ending his protection of Jerusalem. This marks the beginning of the time in which Jerusalem will be plunged into ash-filled darkness. The next concrete reference to time is the precise dating of the destruction of Jerusalem, in the context of which we find the only anachronism in the narrative (see C.2). The darkness of night is exchanged for the glaring light of an all-devouring fire that is even able to consume the temple of God, thus causing Judah's microcosmic world to collapse definitively. At precisely this point, right after the destruction of 2 Kgs 25:9, time itself is also ruptured, the cosmic equilibrium is disrupted. The image painted by the narrator of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 can hardly be surpassed in its drama and intense emotionality.

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The next event to be dated is the murder of Gedaliah. This triggers the final abandonment of Judean space by the last free scion of the house of David, Ishmael, and thus the final moment in which Judah's history is spatially and temporally demolished.

Jehoiachin's rehabilitation, which leads to a resumption of spatial and temporal categories that are open to the future, only occurs after a leap in time and a change in place. The final scene is detached from the rest of the narrative both spatially and temporally.

In sum, we have been able to identify a convergence in spatial and temporal conceptualisations that are not only coherent but also mutually reinforcing. In what follows we shall ask whether the same dynamic can be identified in an analysis of the narrative's characters.

3.4 Spacing (Martin Löw[404])

This part of the analysis has already been partially discussed above in chapter 3.2, and some of it can only be clarified either during or after the character analysis (C.4.3). For this reason, we will here only reflect up a number of key points and formulate the relevant questions.

1. The relation between overlords and their subjects or vassals reveals the presence of fixed spaces that are capable of being shaped by their inhabitants; the transgressing of their boundaries leads to losses in space. Examples are the loss of the right to grant names in 2 Kgs 23:34; 24:17, limitations on functions that characters may fulfil (24:18; 25:22), and much more. The overlord determines the scope of his subjects' activities. We will still have to analyse the degree to which power relations determine actions; this in turn will reveal the actual extent of the power held over individuals and groups.
2. With the exception of the Egyptian people, who are never mentioned, the narrative organizes the nations into groups that are hierarchically related to the king, for he is the one who gives the orders. Judah's king, for example, can control his mother, various advisors, his officers, craftsmen, and soldiers etc. Babylon's king directs Nebuzaradan and Gedaliah and these in turn lead Chaldean solders etc. Because Judah's king is the vassal of Babylon's king, the latter can give orders to the former. He can determine the movements his subjects at will through space, both geographical (bands of robbers; deportations or the granting the right to remain) and social (promotion of Gedaliah; elevation of Jehoiachin to a seat of honour; demotion of others to a peasant's existence). The relation between Egypt and Babylon is not precisely

404 For M. Löw's understanding of the term and its use in Biblical scholarship, see A.1.

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defined. It may be possible to clarify this relation in the context of a character analysis; the same is true regarding criteria for the actions of the kings.

3. Dynastic spaces play a significant role, for the son succeeds his father who has gone to lie with his fathers (24:6); Evil-Merodach presumably only acceded to the throne after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. The royal mothers who were married to Josiah originated from the Judean cities of Libnah and Rumah, whereas Jehoiachin's mother is from Jerusalem. It seems that as Judah is threatened the option of marrying serval women was also lost. In other words, Judah's diminishing power can also be felt in this sphere. This will have to be demonstrated through an analysis of the actions of the characters.
4. Our spatial analysis has given us no information concerning the relation between YHWH and the other characters. He appears to be bound to his house in Jerusalem. It is still completely unclear how and why this is the case, what the consequences are, and how this effects the scope of YHWH's ability to act. This can only be clarified, if at all, in the context of a character analysis.

3.5 Summary and Interpretation

Our spatial analysis has provided us with a wealth of information. To simply collate it all here would be too reductionistic. Instead, I will only name the most important points and further substantiate them.

In the course of this narrative Judah and Jerusalem in particular develop from a living environment to a *u-topos.* Egypt is more of a fringe figure that is soon pushed to the margins by Babylon. Babylon appears to have all the characteristics of a tyrant and yet it, too, is subject to development. Although it destroys the living space of Jerusalem and Judah, in exile it offers a new living space to the king and people of Judah. Jerusalem, temple, and the entity Babylon are *spaces with which the readers can identify emotionally* (*sympathetische Räume*).[405] The way they are portrayed, including the developments they go through, evoke a variety of emotions in the reader, such as helplessness, mourning, hopelessness, fear, and hope.

These emotions are not arbitrary. They are intentionally evoked by the narrative, as can be demonstrated with a number of examples.

S. Jafet has pointed out that in Chronicles the construction of the walls of Jerusalem are dated, whereas in 1 Kgs 9:15–19 they are simply portrayed as completed.[406] In the context of Kings these walls symbolize Judah's physical

405 See J.Schneider, *Einführung* 42.
406 S.Japhet, *Wall* 205–219, especially 207.

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strength, which is extinguished under Zedekiah.[407] As such, Zedekiah's abandonment of the walls in 25:4 has a symbolic meaning that can be clearly felt.

The shock of this moment is increased if we agree with L.J. Hoppe[408] that from the time of Josiah onwards Jerusalem itself and not just the temple was considered the primary sanctuary. In this case, the breaching of the walls amounts a violation of the gift of YHWH, who does not intervene, just as he had threatened in 2 Kgs 24:2–4. With the fulfilment of this threat he ceases to exercise influence upon the city[409]—or does he? In any case, Jerusalem is no longer a place that can help itself; the fortress of God is threatened.[410]

A second example is the plundering of all the precious metals in Judah and the temple in particular, an act that includes payments of gold and silver as tribute as well as the smashing of the bronze basin and the pillars of Boaz ("in him is strength" and Yachin ("YHWH makes firm"). In his study of metals in the Bible, K.Singer makes the following interesting observations:

Gold is a powerful metal that is used for cultic objects in particular and which cannot be made impure by fire.[411] In the context of the Jerusalem temple only gold can be used for the most important objects. Nevertheless, it is never directly associated with YHWH so that it cannot be mistaken as an idol.[412] In general it is used for "gifts, tribute, as an object of trade, as a means of profit through wisdom," but also as a symbol of "theft, robbery, betrayal, and greed."[413]

Silver is more valuable for financial rather than cultic reasons. The presence of silver in a land displays that land's well-being, for only silver was used as currency.[414] Its absence is a setback for worldy power, just as the loss of gold leads to a loss of cultic power.[415] Because silver can be purified by fire it fulfils the cultic function of repentance; its loss signifies that something is unforgiveable.[416] Singer summarizes as follows:

> When a land loses its silver it is overcome by poverty and desolation. On an individual level the loss of this precious metal leads to distress and social disadvantage […] human trafficking, theft, treacherousness, apostasy […] unbridled craving for silver […] corruptibility, infidelity, lying oracles, greed, and hybris […] In a political context the

407 Ibid. 213.
408 L.J.Hoppe, *Jerusalem* 107–110.
409 See O.H.Steck, *Zion* 265.
410 See ibid. 272; 278.
411 See K.Singer, *Metalle* 32; 39; 58; 79.
412 See ibid. 161f.; 164f.
413 Ibid. 56.
414 See ibid. 41.
415 See ibid. 79; 172f.
416 See ibid. 81; 101 mit Ausnahme von Deut 7,25.

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> unlimited acquisitiveness of silver […] leads to the vulnerability of a militarily weak state to foreign threats.[417]

According to Singer *bronze,* the most frequently mentioned of the valuable metals, symbolizes hardness, malleability, and the potential for creating weapons.[418] It is of little cultic value, though the similarity of its colour to gold led to its cultic use during times of need in the pre-exilic period.[419] Its primary function is military in nature, where it stands for invulnerability.[420] What all valuable metals share in common is that they can lead people astray morally; in this capacity they are considered harmful.[421]

If we take these symbolic meanings into account and assume that the reader would have intuitively understood the negative impact the loss of precious metals would have had for the land, then we can conclude that the Judah's fate was already presaged with its first payment of tribute. First, all economic resources disappear, for after 2 Kgs 23:34f. silver is only mentioned one more time; then large quantities of material suitable for cultic and military purposes are lost; finally, there is the loss of the great symbols of national invulnerability in the form of the temple objects. Gold and bronze had made this place into a fortress; as divine trophies these objects displayed YHWH's victory over chaos; Boaz and Yachin are names signifying strength, the bronze basin displays God's overcoming of the chaotic waters. Conversely, their destruction or plundering implies that God is impotent.[422]

These two example should suffice to demonstrate how the reader is being guided through the construction of space within the narrative. The following character analysis will show whether and, if so, how Judah, Babylon, the Egyptian Pharaoh, and Israel's neighbouring nations interact with each other, how they act and whether these actions correspond to the results of our spatial analyses.

4. Analysis of Characters and Their Actions

As we have already demonstrated in A.1 and C.0, 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 as a narrative is primarily oriented towards the actions of its characters rather than they psyche or their development as individual persons. Our discussion of method (A.1) has

417 Ibid. 76; 78.
418 See ibid. 46–48; 104–106; 113.
419 Cf. ibid. 108f.; 184. K.Singer references 1 Kgs 14:27 and parallels and Isa 60:17.
420 See ibid. 179.
421 See ibid. 133. If copper is meant rather than bronze then sinfulness is symbolized by the verdigris that devours (for Biblical references, see pp. 111f.).
422 For details, see the discussion of the symbolism and iconography of the temple in the online appendix to this book.

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already shown how little we know about the inner life or the physical features of the characters. This effect is further strengthened by the almost total absence of direct speech.[423] Nevertheless, there are still a number of cases of "indirect characterization" ("*indirekter Figurencharakterisierung*")[424] in which we are provided with additional information about a character's status, place of residence, relationships, degree of freedom or confinement, instrumentalization, power relations etc. Given that the author was a Judean in Babylonian exile (see A.2.1), the online appendix to this book will provide an excursus on the relationships between Judah and its neighbouring countries in the sixth Century along with socio-historical observations concerning society, cult, and law in the ancient Near East in general and Judah in particular. This information supports our analysis in that it opens up to us the "sociology of the characters" ("*Figurensoziologie*"; Schneider)[425], the agreement between the characters as literarily construed, and the conceptual horizon of the text's author and potential original addressees. This is the only way in which we can determine the narrative's subtle strategies for generating sympathy with its characters among its original readers, and this in turn helps us as modern readers better identify and interpret unclear feelings and tensions.[426]

These preliminary considerations raise several questions for the following analysis:

1. What, if anything, can be said about the characters and their relationship to each other?
2. What roles (protagonist, antagonist, supporting actor) do the characters adopt in the narrative?
3. How does the plot develop and what is its goal?
4. How does the character analysis relate to the narrative's concept of time and space, as discussed above?
5. What is 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 narrating?
6. Which questions are still open? What gaps are there? Do these gaps need to be filled and, if so, what should or may they be filled with (con-texts)?

423 I.Müllner (*Gewalt* 54) correctly points out how important direct speech is for the reconstruction of a character's inner world. Its absence renders a number of criteria for character analysis unusable (see p. 60).

424 J.Schneider, *Einführung* 24.

425 Ibid. 26.

426 See ibid. 29f. Schneider adds the important qualification that it is difficult to analyse the emotional level or the strategies for engendering a sympathetic response for they are subject to the intuitions of each individual reader and their own distinctive horizons. The key work for grasping the significance of this observation and its intellectual roots is H.G. Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* (1961), which provides the foundation for Schneider's concept of "horizon" as well as all theories of reader response processes, i. e. interpretation.

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4.1 Introduction to and Characterization of the Individual Characters, Groups, and Collectivities

4.1.1 Judah's Kings: Protagonists of the Downfall or Victims of History?[427]

a) Jehoahaz (23:30b–34)

The first king of Judah to be mentioned in this narrative is also the one about whom we know the least, for hardly any information is provided about him beyond what can be found in the regnal formula. This formula tells that Josiah, Jehoahaz's father, is buried and that Jehoahaz succeeds him. We are also told the name of his mother and her background, his age upon acceding to the throne, and the length of his rule. An assessment of his rule is also provided (23:30f.). Nevertheless, there are some divergences from the classic version of the regnal formula, for he is not the natural successor to his father. The people-of-the-land chose him to be king in place of his older brother Eliakim. He is also the first of the kings for whom reference is only made to Jerusalem rather than Judah when they are enthroned. This indicates the highly restricted scope of his sovereignty. The legitimacy of his rule is not guaranteed and it is also not initiated by a significant act such as a prophetic anointing. In 23:33 Jehoahaz suddenly appears in Riblah without ever actually going there; there he is put in chains by Pharaoh Neco and a "penitence fee" (ענש) is required of his land, something that Jehoahaz's successor must provide for (23:34f.). He himself is brought to Egypt by himself, without his court or his mother,[428] where he dies in a manner that is not reported. His body is not brought back to Jerusalem and so the report of his life lacks the concluding element of the regnal formula.[429]

The name 'Jehoahaz' is mentioned exactly three times within these few verses and its meaning is "YHWH initiates / begins to do." This initiative could refer to the fact that the people of Judah have taken upon themselves to choose a king. Jehoahaz himself never acts, he is only the object of the actions of others. He is always completely passive, whether during his enthronement, his deposition, or his exile. As such, the "strangely negative"[430] assessment of his reign is surprising. His failures seem to only consist in his unwillingness to fulfil his obligation of

427 It is necessary at the outset to make a few observations concerning the history of interpretation. Most monographs and commentaries interpret the kings of Judah in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 in light of the much more detailed versions found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In my opinion this compromises these chapters' own distinctive witness. Given the degree to which these works mix the various versions together it is hardly possible to cite this in this chapter. Examples are the dissertations by C.Seitz, E.Aurelius and J.Job.

428 See K.-D.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 342.

429 For the absence of the concluding formulae in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, see M.J.Suriano, *Politics* 89; 126.

430 K.-D.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 340.

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rejecting the throne as the younger brother and to stand up to Egypt as Judah's king.[431]

b) Jehoiakim (23:35–24:7)

The second king of Judah in the narrative is called Eliakim. He was the actual claimant to the throne after Josaiah's death[432] and is enthroned by Pharaoh Neco (23:34). This comes with a price, for he muss subordinate himself to the Pharaoh, which leads to a change in his name to 'Jehoiakim'[433] and his obligation to pay money (23:34f.). He does not pay the gold and silver himself, he does not touch the royal and temple treasures, rather he lets the people-of-the-land pay, those who had chosen his brother Jehoahaz over him. There would seem to be tension between him and this collective entity.[434]

Jehoiakim is the last of the kings of Judah and the only one of the four in our narrative who is granted a complete regnal formula (23:36f.; 24:5f.). His age, the name of his mother and her ancestry provide little information about his actions. In v. 36 he, too, receives a negative assessment. As with Jehoahaz, this assessment is connected with his ancestors in the plural, thus making the entire Davidic dynasty liable for YHWH's judgement. The formula concerning his death in 24:5f. corresponds precisely with the schema and v. 6 also only tells us that Jehoiakim dies and his son Jehoiachin succeeds him.[435] Jehoiakim the lawful successor dies according to the schema and is buried, everything in accordance with usual standards in Judah.[436]

The complete regnal formula and the narration of these acts of state are surprising when we read about the rest of Jehoiakim's life. The narrative portrayal is far more detailed and negative than that of his brother Jehoahaz, who had to die in prison and whose schema only appears in broken form.[437]

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431 In order to avoid making a rash judgement here, notice should be taken of the text-external anchors documented in the online appendix to this book.

432 See K.-D.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 338.

433 The older commentaries see this kind of subordination as sacrilegious and *malum in se* (see E.Reuss, *La Bible 7* 572).

434 This view is shared by Sanda, *2 Kgs* 360; E.Würthwein, *2 Kgs* 467–469; J.Werlitz, *Kgs* 311f.

435 Despite the complete schema a number of exegetes point out Jehoiakim's negative lifestyle which can be found implicitly within the concluding formula, e.g. U.Schulze/ G.Steuernagel, *Aussage* 267–275, especially 268–271.

436 The online appendix to this book explains what is meant by "usual." Würthwein, drawing on Ant and 2 Chr 36, suspects that the burial took place in the garden of Uzzah, as with Manasseh and Amos. This would accord with the king's garden in 2 Kgs 25:4f..This detail would then be missing in the MT due to *Homoioteleuton* (see E.Würthwein, *2 Kgs* 469).

437 Fricke explains this fact in reference to Jeremiah, who predicts a horrible end for Jehoiakim: "Because this prophecy […] does not appear to have been fulfilled, an anxious scribe decided it might be better to ignore Jehoiakim's funeral" (see K.-D.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 344).

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Jehoiakim ascends to his throne with the help of Egypt, Judah's archenemy, and he even pays Egypt to do this (23:33–35). However, he does not benefit too much from this deal. Before long, "in his days" (בימיו), the new superpower Babylon appears on the scene and subjects him to its authority (24:1). He responds by rebelling, which should be understood as the insurrection of a servant rather than the deed of a free ruler. As a result of this action, which is assessed negatively for reasons unknown to us, YHWH[438] "throws" bands of robbers against him and they plunder all of Judah. This demonstrates that Jehoiakim's sphere of influence is limited to Jerusalem (24:2). Yet this is not the end of the bad news. YHWH is so furious that now is the time that the prophetic words that had previously announced Judah's downfall come to fulfilment (see part D). The kingdom of Judah is rejected by YHWH for a) the sins of Manasseh and b) the innocent blood that has been spilt in Jerusalem (24:3 f.). All the other information that we have about Jehoiakim is found in the regnal formula (24:5). Apparently they were not considered worthy of more detailed treatment.

Jehoiakim is alluded to two more times within the narrative, so that he receives seven mentions altogether. These two are extremely negative. 24:9 states that Jehoiachin acted badly before YHWH just like "his father" (אביו). This is the first time in 1–2 Kgs that the plural is not used. Josiah, the ancestor who had been assessed positively, is not in view here; only Jehoiakim as father provides the link of continuity for all the bad things committed in the past; his own bad deeds were connected with Manasseh.

The second reference can be found in 24:19 in connection with Zedekiah, the final king and Jehoiakim's younger brother. Of him, too, it is said that he did what was bad "as Jehoiakim had done before him." His name is even mentioned explicitly; he is thereby referred to as a predecessor, unlike the rest of the ancestors who are not mentioned at all in connection with Zedekiah. At the end of the narrative Jehoiakim thus assumes responsibility for the deeds of the entire dynasty.

In light of these observations we can conclude that Jehoiakim is by far the worst ruler of Judah within the entire narrative, and yet he fares better than all the others. Although this demands an explanation, the narrative is not willing to provide one.[439] This may be partly connected with the fact that the person of

438 In the great LXX documents the reference to YHWH is missing, so that Nebuchadnezzar is the subject who unleashes the bands upon Judah. This may have served to rehabilitate God's image (so also W.Dietrich, *Prophetie* 61 fn. 41).

439 Barnes fills this unsatisfactory gap with the claim that Jehoiakim was assassinated and that this was his punishment (see W.E.Barnes, *2 Kgs* 320). Yet there is nothing in the text to warrant such a reading, which is why it must be rejected.

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Manasseh cannot be understood without the broader context (cf. part D), but that he simultaneously provides a key to God's verdict.[440]

c) Jehoiachin (24:8–17; 25:27–30)

Jehoiachin is the only figure apart from Nebuchadnezzar and YHWH who appears in more than one scene. His two appearances are connected with each other in 25:27 by means of a time specification that transforms the three-months of his rule over Judah (24:8) into a period spanning decades. Jehoiachin thus has the longest term in office of all the kings of the narrative, a circumstance that normally signifies divine benevolence.[441] His capitulation also seems to speak in his favour, despite the fact that it led to the loss of the temple's treasures in 24:13. This is because the narrative's description of the event mentions the name of Solomon, a symbol of comprehensive peace, a peace that guarantees the continuity of Jerusalem but which can only be fully grasped in the context of the narrative of Kings as a whole (see part D). Jehoiachin sacrifices himself for his people. By doing so, he proves himself to be the rightful king of Judah. He is not a usurper like Jehoahaz and no vasal like his father, for he had rebelled and thus made his son into a free successor. Jehoiachin is the rightful successor in the Davidic line and he never swore an oath to Nebuchadnezzar, for otherwise Jerusalem would not have come under siege and he would never have spent decades in prison. Zedekiah, on the other hand, would become a complete vassal, indeed he is not really a king in the proper sense of the word. Jehoiachin goes into exile and his wives, who are not mentioned in 24:11f., are allowed to accompany him (24:15). This, too, is a positive sign, for no potential successor to the eighteen-year-old is mentioned in the text. These women thus embody the possibility that the dynasty may survive.

Despite all this, the regnal formula's assessment of him and his actual period of rule (24:8f.) are negative. This begs the question of why. What are his crimes?

In the first instance it is worth considering the proximity of his pericope to that of his uncle Jehoahaz. As with Jehoahaz, he is mentioned three times in the first part of the narrative, and there are also other parallels between the two in terms of content. Both are deported, both only reign for three months, both are replaced by another ruler, and both never reduce themselves to a state of vassalhood. Yet whereas this behaviour leads to Jehoahaz's death in an Egyptian prison, Jehoiachin continues to play a role (25:27–30). He is mentioned twice and is upgraded to "king of Judah," a title that none of the four kings in the first part of the

440 The only exception is the *Codex Alexandrinus*, which takes Zedekiah rather than Manasseh to be the principle offender (see J.Pakkala, *Zedekiah's Fate* 445).

441 Manasseh is an exception to this rule, for his reign lasted fifty-five years despite his catastrophic religious policies. Hellenistic Judaism responded to this anomaly by adding details to the version found in Chronicles and by the apocrypha. For details, see part D.

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narrative bore; they were all kings "in/of Jerusalem" (בירשלים) rather than "of Judah" (ביהודה). His name means "YHWH makes firm/establishes," which predestines Jehoiachin to become a promise for Judah. After all his years in exile he is released from prison and receives a whole series of benefits that improve the quality of his life. These observations speak against connecting Jehoiachin's guilt with that of Jehoahaz. Instead they raise the question of why and to what degree his situation in exile under Evil-Merodach improves.

The first thing we read about is the fact of a twenty-six-year prison sentence that Jehoiachin has fulfilled. On the one hand, this means that he has had to endure a long detention; on the other had, it means that the Babylonians have allowed him to remain alive.[442] His receipt of daily rations (25:29f.) may indicate that his food has either improved in quality or increased in quantity, but this is not such a significant development.[443] Even the setting up of thrones or seats of honour does not necessarily amount the granting of honour. They could just as easily suggest a legal proceeding in which Jehoiachin is granted improved conditions as an act of clemency on the occasion of Evil-Merodach's accession to the throne.[444] The thrones could also characterize Jehoiachin as Babylon's newest vassal.[445] Similarly, history teaches us that eating "before-the-presence-of-the-king" is also ambivalent.[446]

The final scene portrays an improved situation that, from a purely human perspective, can hardly be considered significant and which requires a broader context in order to become meaningful. How ever it is interpreted, the event is certainly not negative and it also does not explain the nature of Jehoiachin's guilt, which has still not been forgiven. In light of the first scene (24:8–17) it may be that Jehoiachin's guilt consists in his continuation of what his father had done.[447] But it is also possible that he has sinned against God, for example by surrendering to Babylon rather than trusting in YHWH's salvation as his predecessor Hezekiah

442 In Jer 52 this observation is sustained up until the death of Jehoiachin. In 2 Kgs 25:30 Jehoiachin is still alive, he still has a future-oriented function. For this view, see the older commentaries, such as I.Benzinger, *Kgs* 200; O.Thenius, *Kgs* 467f.

443 This moment of a minimal improvement supports a philological observation made by Disse, a student of the Richter school. He identifies the continuity as an "adSyn2," i.e. as an *abnominalis* as an undetermined supplement. This means that it is a syntactically undetermined form that may function to underscore the patronizing nature of the deed (see A.Disse, *Informationsstruktur* 176; 197).

444 See M.Weigl, *Achikar-Sprüche* 304, especially fn. 97. The expression "to raise someone's head" also originates in ancient Near East juridical language, which underscores the ambivalence of the scene (see B.Becking, *David* 175).

445 This thesis is advocated for by M.Gerhards, in *Begnadigung* 62f., where he draws upon a perceived parallelism with the Joseph narrative for support (Gen 41); A.Klostermann, *Sam* XXVIII is more cautious.

446 See the discussion in the online appendix to this book.

447 See K.-D.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 347–349.

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had done. This question will have to remain unresolved, for it is clear that the context in which it must be answered extends far beyond the narrative in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30; indeed, it may well be the case that this context literally begins 'with Adam and Eve' (see part D).

d) Zedekiah (24:18–25:7)

Mattaniah's reign also opens with the regnal formula (age; reference to his mother and her background; length of rule). As with his predecessors he is judged negatively (24:19), whereby his sin is connected with Jehoiakim rather than his father or even his immediate predecessor Jehoiachin. He is taken to Babylon, but because his death is not reported in 2 Kgs he does not receive the concluding element of the regnal formula. As a result, it is also not clear whether he is still alive at the time of the final scene (25:27–30). In any case, it is clear that he is no longer king, for this pericope counts the years of Jehoiachin's exile. Zedekiah's period of reign is simply subsumed within that period and thus effectively delegitimized. At this point the regnal formula is definitively broken. A king that genealogically speaking ought to have reigned before Jehoiachin but dynastically speaking would have only come into question after his death is now the ruler in Jerusalem. He derives his authority entirely from Nebuchadnezzar, for whom he rules vicariously in Jerusalem (24:17).[448] Zedekiah's predecessor is named as Jehoiakim rather than Jehoiachin, and Jehoiakim is connected with Manasseh, so that Zedekiah, too, is take up into the sequence of especially bad kings. Yet this is not the only correlation between these two negative kings. Both rule for the same period of time, namely eleven years, a number that may symbolize the transgression of the decalogue (10 + 1), a dimension articulated in the Hebrew expression for the number אחד עשרה. As such, this number may characterize their reign as a period of transgression of the divine command. Both receive throne names from foreign rulers; rather than being Judean kings installed by the grace of God they are vassals of a human being. Both rebel against this human ruler, an act that in and of itself would surely be positive if it involved the recognition of YHWH as the only legitimate lord of Judah. But instead YHWH responds (24:20) by renewing the threat that he had once uttered during the reign of Jehoiakim (24:2–4). Their crime may be that of perjury, for as vassals their rebellion against their overlord amounts to a breach of oath, an oath that is usually sworn in the

448 The formulaic "[s. o.] תחת [s. o.] מלך" usually occurs in the regnal formula and refers to the transferal of power from father to son. In this context it can either refer to the substitution of Jehoiachin, who is still alive, or to Nebuchadnezzar. This is of interest, for then it would mean that from the very outset Zedekiah's reign was nothing more than a governorship. The effect is that we have a gradual process of relegation from the vassalage of Jehoiakim to the crowned governor Zedekiah to the uncrowned administrator Gedaliah.

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presence of the gods.[449] An offence of this proportion would explain the draconian measures that Nebuchadnezzar personally ordered against Zedekiah.[450]

Yet it is not primarily the Babylonian king who responds to this breach of oath but YHWH himself, whose name is dishonoured and whose uniqueness as Israel's only God is rejected by this oath.[451] Zedekiah's breach of trust has consequences not only for the destruction of Jerusalem and its plundering (25:8–21) but for himself personally. In 25:4–7 the collapse of the walls of Jerusalem signify the collapse of Zedekiah's kingdom. The following night he leaves the city and flees toward the west. It is unclear how this act should be evaluated. A number of interpreters consider this to be a last, desperate military attack on the part of Zedekiah, a final act of desperation.[452] A more realistic interpretation, however, is that he is attempting to flee. This is underscored by the fact that he departs through the walls at night at a time to get away from the Chaldeans, heading in a direction that is more characteristically associated with flight.[453] Zedekiah is not being portrayed here as a king who fights for his people or who is willing to go into exile for its sake; rather, he is a coward on the run, a ruler who leads his people into destruction before abandoning them.

His flight fails miserably for the Chaldeans quickly catch up with him while his own soldiers abandon him (25:4). He is arrested and then brought before a tribunal in Riblah where he is condemned to a gruesome fate: He must watch how his own sons, his successors to the throne, are executed—literally "slaughtered" (שחט). He experiences the end of his own genealogical line and thereby, from his perspective, the end of the dynasty. After the execution of his children he his then subjected to a particularly brutal punishment:[454] He is blinded. The last thing that he sees in his life is their end. He is subsequently bound in bronze chains and deported to Babylon.[455] Zedekiah is punished and humiliated multiple times. Because his death is not reported his claim against Jehoiachin to the throne

449 See K.F.Müller, *Ritual* 51. In the case of Zedekiah, the curse formula is contained within his throne name (see W.E.Barnes, *Kgs* 322f.; R.L.Cohn, *2 Kgs* 167). This interpretation was already followed in antiquity by Philo, Spec. II, 253.

450 See J.Pedersen, *Eid* 108–118; 159. The oath of self-imprecation serves to guarantee the juridical validity of the oath (see p. 128). It is irrelevant in this case whether the offence is intentional or not, all that matters is the fact of the offence itself (see I.Hrusa, *Religion* 33. This tradition is also known from Job 1:5).

451 For the significance of YHWH for Israel/Judah from a history-of-religions perspective and its relationship to the oath, see the details in the online appendix to this book.

452 See A.J.Nevis, *Temple* 22; N.A.Snaith/ R.Calkins, *1-2 Kgs* 333.

453 See 1 Sam 19:10, 18.

454 See J.Pakkala, *Zedekiah's Fate* 443–452, 445; A.Michel, *Gott* 37.

455 This is particularly humiliating, as chains as shackles make it impossible to walk, e. g. Ezek 3:25; Judg 16:21; 2 Sam 3:34, Dan 5:12 (for an analysis of the expression see M.Weigl, *Achikar-Sprüche* 454f.).

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continues to stand throughout the exile in Babylon.[456] His punishments have made clear why he can no longer come into question and how short-sighted Judah would have to be to consider him a viable option for the future. He is a king who was legitimated by a foreign king, who breached his oath in the name of YHWH, who abandoned his people when it counted the most, who has no sons to continue his line, and who has been blinded and so is no longer physically intact in the sense of being without blemish. He is a figure who has been branded for his political short-sightedness, who has been forced into Babylonian exile against his will and not for the sake of his people. All of these points prove that Zedekiah is not the true king of Judah.[457] But if he is not, who is?

4.1.2 Judah: One People or Many Groups?

a) The Civil Service: Loyalists, Defectors, and Shaphanites

The narrative introduces a not insignificant portion of the Judean court, including the aforementioned wives of the king and the king's mother as well as a large number of servants (עבדם), captains, and eunuchs (סריסים; 24:12).

The *captains* appear to have been Judah's military leaders, for they are grouped together with the many war heroes, stonemasons, and the smith (24:14, 16). However, they could also be the leaders of the people-of-the-land (עם הארץ), for only the poorest of them (דלה) are left behind in Jerusalem (24:14).

In this context the eunuchs are grouped together with the women, which suggests that they worked in the harem (24:15). A undefined group is the *pillars-of-the-land* (איל הארץ; 24:15). All of Jehoiachin's functionaries capitulate with him and leave Jerusalem. This leads to their exile (24:14–16) but also expresses their loyalty to the king.

By the time of Zedekiah, the nation and civil service appear to have been reduced in number; with the loss of the elite they will also have been reduced in quality. Mention is made of five "men-before-the-presence-of-the-king" (אנשים מראי פני־המלך). Their function is just as unclear as that of the group of the pillars-of-the-land under Jehoiachin. Beyond this, mention is made of only one eunuch. He is referred to without the definite article which implies the existence of a number of other eunuchs (25:19). This one is responsible for the military and has a scribe underneath him who is responsible for mustering the people-of-the-land (25:19). Both are grouped together in Jerusalem with the 60 men of the people-of-the-land.[458] This means that they do not belong the last group of troops that

456 So also G.Fohrer, *Vertrag* 15.

457 See J.Pakkala, *Zedekiah's Fate* 449; K.-D.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 356.

458 This group has not yet been defined. Does the phrase represent a title, a function, or a people group? We will discuss this more at the end of this sub-section.

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remained loyal to Zedekiah, troops that eventually did abandon him while fleeing the Chaldeans (פיץ מעליו; 25:5)[459]

There is no longer any reference to women at the court or the royal mother. It is probable that only Zedekiah's *sons* were in Jerusalem, though no reference is made to their function (25:7). Due to the temple's location in the *hekhal* the cultic personnel are counted among the civil servants. They consist of at least five people who stand within a clear hierarchical structure: There is a first and a second priest as well as three "gate/basin keepers" (שמרים הסף). It is unclear whether the terms "first" and "second" function as predicates or as an enumeration. It is interesting that the names of both priests have been passed on to us: Seraiah ("YHWH has proven himself to be a ruler"[460]) and Zephanaiah ("YHWH has secured/protected"[461]).

There are also *defectors* (literally "those who have fallen" הנפלים) among the people of Judah; here, too, no faithfulness can be expected (25:11). As such, the qualitative deficit is present throughout the entire population and hierarchy of Judah. With the exception of the deserting soldiers, all of the people who appear in the context of the Zedekiah pericope are executed without having engaged in a single act or uttered a single word (25:21).

A final insight is provided by the Gedaliah pericope, which also mentions civil servants. *Gedaliah* is introduced as the "son of Ahikim, son of Shaphan" (25:22), which indicates that the original readers would have known these names (2 Kgs 22). Within the context of this isolated narrative, however, they occur nowhere else, so that we have a "gap" and must for now keep their identity open. The three names mean "YHWH has done great things" (Gedaliah), "My brother stands upright" (Ahikam), and "rock hyrax" (Shaphan)[462]; the last name at the very least indicates the non-royal origin of its bearer, indeed it is not even theophoric.[463]

Gedaliah articulates the only piece of direct speech in the entire narrative; he uses it to advocate for Babylon and persuade people to remain in the land (25:24). He promises those who submit to Babylon that they will do well, a promise clearly contradicted by the execution of the defectors in 25:20f.

Gedaliah has command over five commanders and their men, the only kind of civil servants that he has been granted (25:23). This indicates that his primary

459 A.Disse, in his *Informationsstruktur* 169, is not sure whether this form should be taken as *dislocative* (i. e. supplements the direction), *locative* (i. e. supplements the location) or *local* (i. e. states the location). I think it is intentionally used as a dislocative, for as with the Arabah it expresses a spatial movement.

460 See H.Haug, *Namen* 345.

461 See ibid. 376.

462 See ibid. 124; 132.

463 This is even more striking for various ostraca from the sixth Century indicate a widespread increase in the use of theophoric names (see O.Keel/ C.Uehlinger, *Göttinen* 414). The avoidance of such a name in a text could indicate a polemical intention.

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function consists more in control than administration. His five commanders are called Johanan ("YHWH was gracious"), son of Kareah[464]; Seraiah ("YHWH has proven himself as ruler"), son of Tanhumeth ("I comfort myself"), an otherwise unknown Netophathite,[465] and Jaazaniah ("YHWH heard"), son of the Maacathite (25:23).[466] The fifth and final person named is Ishmael ("God will hear"), son of Nethaniah ("YHWH has given"), son of Elishama ("My God has heard me"), who is "of royal seed" (מזרע המלוכה) and thus belongs to the Davidic line (25:23, 25).[467]

It is striking that only Ishmael's name has a futuristic meaning while the others almost exclusively refer to past events, specifically the past acts of YHWH. This fact further underscores the passivity of these warriors who allow themselves to get killed. Furthermore, as with the name of his grandfather *Ishmael's* theophoric name refers to El rather than YHWH. The only other example of this is Eliakim's name before it was changed. The rest all have names referring to YHWH. Ishmael is also the only commander who is active, for he kills נכה the others and then flees (בוא; 25:25f.). All the people כל־עם flee with him from Judah to Egypt; the comprehensive scope of this statement is intensified by the additive merism מקטף ועד־גדול (25:26). This is the last time that either the people of Judah or its civil servants are mentioned, and they are portrayed as abandoning their country in their entirety.[468] The pericope set in Babylon only refers to Jehoiachin (25:27–30). The שרים who are with him in Babylon (25:28) cannot be his own people for otherwise he would already be in possession of his seat of honour *qua persona* or office.

In sum, Judah's civil service ends in Mizpah and not in Jerusalem, for only military functionaries are present. However, within the narrative the civil servants are not particularly active.[469]

464 The meaning of this name is unclear. The root consonants קרש correspond to the spelling of "Korach," a fact that will become relevant in the context of our intertextual analysis (see part C).

465 The Hebrew syntax also allows us to see Tanhumeth as a Netophathite. My reading depends upon the last commander, who has been chosen on the basis of his group identity and not that of his father.

466 For the names, see H.Haug, *Namen* 170; 201; 345.

467 For the names, see ibid. 107; 197; 277.

468 I have expressed my view on the historical plausibility of this portrayal elsewhere (see above). I would like here, however, to expressly reject the opinion of Oded Bustenay, who believes that a land empty of people is "not only unproved but also unnecessary" (see his Where, 55–74, 71, making reference to B.U.Schipper, *Israel* 281). Even historically oriented exegetes such as Würthwein admit that what we have here is a conscious narrative (see his *2 Kgs* 478).

469 The stereotype of the corrupt civil servant is even more pronounced when we take U.Rüterswörden's study into account, *Die Beamten der israelischen Königszeit* (1985). He demonstrates that the civil servants could easily be corrupted because they were granted royal

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For this reason it is not surprising that the secondary literature primarily focuses on the figure of Gedaliah when interpreting these groups. An initial question concerns his status: Was he a king or a governor? The latter is more likely, not only because he lacks a royal title but also because he is not of Davidic lineage and Babylon had already experimented with using a king.[470]

According to R.Kessler he ruled for four years[471]. A.Nevis even argues that Gedaliah had been taken to Babylon during the first deportation; there he worked his way up the ladder and this eventually led to his return to Judah.[472] There is no evidence for either position; the specification "in the seventh month" without reference to a year in 2 Kgs 25:25 suggests a relationship with 25:8. This would mean that the Gedaliah pericope represents an intermezzo of seven to eight weeks.

The most pressing question is the reason for his murder. Here, too, there is much speculation, with many drawing upon Jer 39–41 for an answer. It is possible to identify two basic interpretive directions:

1. Gedaliah is murdered for his pro-Babylonian stance and as an act of rebellion against the Babylonian rulers (Cohn)[473]. The problem with this thesis is that the act is immediately followed by a flight to Egypt out of fear of retaliation. In other words, the rebellion would have ended right after this single act.
2. Gedaliah's murder was a personal vendetta or political assassination executed by descendants of David against an ambitious outsider (Fricke; Rehm; Würthwein).[474] If the issue was a feud then we must ask why the entire population fled with Ishmael. An assassination in the sense of a singular act of resistance is a more plausible explanation, for it would have had consequences for the entire population if Babylon decided to respond punitively by making an example of them for other occupied nations.

land and taxes. This was the foundational to the prophetic criticism of, e.g., Amos and Micha. This corruption brought about a form of hereditory civil service, a development that can be clearly seen in relation to the Shaphanites (see the image on p. 116 as well as pp. 125–134; 146).

470 Robinson's suggestion in this respect is very creative. On the basis of a conjecture he sees a connection between the root GDL and the burned-down GDL houses and claims that these were the property of Gedaliah (see *2 Kgs* 243).

471 R.Kessler, *Sozialgeschichte* 128.

472 A.J.Nevis, *Temple* 3–25, 18. I do not consider this thesis to be helpful because, in my opinion, the narrative is oriented towards deconstruction rather than the return of individuals from exile.

473 See R.L.Cohn, *2 Kgs* 171f.

474 See K.-D.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 259–263; M.Rehm, *2 Kgs* 244; E.Würthwein, *2 Kgs* 479.

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b) The King's Mother and Wives

In addition to the queen the king's mother also seems to have enjoyed a special status in the Judean court for she is mentioned in every regnal formula. Within the narrative under investigation there are three mothers who are mentioned six times altogether: Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah is the mother Jehoahaz and Zedekiah (23:31; 24:18). Jehoiakim's mother is called Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah (23:36). Jehoiachin's mother is called Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem, and she receives three mentions (24:8, 12, 15). She is also the only one who is recorded as doing something, for she leaves Jerusalem with Jehoiachin in order to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar (24:12) and go with her son into exile (24:15).

The royal mothers are defined in relation to their fathers and their sons rather than their husbands, which may indicate that they had a purely dynastic function. The narrative, when taken in isolation, provides no information as to whether their status was primarily honorary in nature or whether they could exercise political influence (see D.2). Because the royal mother is referred to as an individual woman in 24:12 but appears before the "women of the king" when the leaders are listed in 24:15 it may be the case that she rather than, say, the main wife, presided over the harem.[475] What is clear is that the royal mothers lived in Jerusalem, presumably at the royal court.[476]

Even less is known about the wives of the king. All that is reported is their deportation in 2 Kgs 24:15. This information along with the fact that Josiah must have had at least two wives (Hamutal and Zebidah) indicate the existence of a harem at the royal court, the structure of which is unknown to us.

Although it is impossible to say anything about the relationship of the three royal mothers to each other, each individual does have her own specific characteristics:

Hamutal is the wife of Josiah and mother of two kings (Jehoahaz and Zedekiah). Neither of her sons are legitimate successors to the throne (23:30; 24:17) but they are enthroned nevertheless. When Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah are deported it is never stated that she goes with them, so it remains unclear whether she stay in Jerusalem or not. Her name means "in the shade of the heat," which may express a resting point or perhaps prudence. She originates in Libnah (Hebrew "the white one"[477]), a city that the narrative otherwise leaves unspecified, and her father, Jeremiah, i. e. "YHWH has established/exalted"[478], is also from this unknown city. These names suggest that he was an upwardly

475 This is also the view of C.Seitz in *Theology* 55.

476 This view is further supported by the text-external anchors in the world of the ancient Near East (see the online appendix to this book).

477 See H.Haug, *Namen* 238.

478 See ibid. 195.

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mobile individual with political aspirations who had prepared his daughter for her political function. This further supports the supposition that the royal mother had a specific role to fulfil within the royal court.

The second mother and thus presumably competitor to Hamutal is *Zebidah*. She is the mother of the legitimate successor to the throne, Jehoiakim, but apparently was unable to establish this position for her son. According to Kittel her name is derived from "to give a gift" סבד (1 Kgs 4) and means "dowry."[479] She comes from Rumah ("the exalted one") and her father is called Pedaiah "YHWH redeems"[480]. Whereas the first two names were more associated with power politics, these two names allude to financial circumstances.[481] It is interesting to note that Jehoiakim, the son of this mother, is the only king who must pay a price in order to protect his land from its attackers.

Nehushta contrasts with these calculated political manoeuvres. She supports her son Jehoiachin by accompanying him everywhere. Unlike the other royal mothers she is originally from Jerusalem (Hebrew: "Shalem's foundation"[482]), which means that an emotional connection to this city and a political concern for its preservation cannot be excluded. She is the wife of Jehoiakim and thus the last mother who brings about "dynastic progress" in the house of David.[483] The meaning of her name is unclear; it could allude to "copper image," the name of the bronze serpent (see Num 21:9; 2 Kgs 18:4). Her father is called Elnathan "God has given"[484] and he is the only father whose theophoric name contains YHWH. If these names should have any significance for the narrative, the narrative itself does not provide sufficient material to identity that significance.

c) The People-of-the-Land and its Position Within Judah

A final group within the people of Judah that must be looked at more closely is the people-of-the-land (עם הארץ). As with the royal mothers, this group occurs throughout the narrative, being mentioned seven times (23:30, 35; 24:14; 25:3, 12, 19 [2x]). It is the most controversial group in the narrative because each of its appearances variously evoke associations with civil servants, specific social

479 R.Kittel, *Kgs* 305; J.Gray, *1–2 Kgs* 754.

480 See H.Haug, *Namen* 285.

481 It goes without saying that not every name in the narrative has an intended symbolic meaning and that some of the names, such as Nebuchadnezzar, are simply derived from historical facts. Nevertheless, it we should still cast the net wide and inquire into the meaning of every name and its potential significance for a deeper interpretation of the events. The question of whether these names are in fact relevant will only be determined in the instructive part at the end of this work.

482 See H.Haug, *Namen* 184–187.

483 The two others were the wives of Josiah, which means that three kings are on the same genealogical branch of the hereditary line.

484 H.Haug, *Namen* 110.

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groups, or the political elite. They install Jehoahaz as king (23:30) and they had to raise the money for Pharaoh's head tax (23:35), which indicates a specific function or a certain amount of wealth. All but the poorest of them are deported (24:14[485]), which indicates that at least some of them had direct connections with the royal court. This connection is further developed in 25:19 with its references to the musterer of the army and the exemplary sixty (5x12) men who are executed in Riblah (25:20f.).[486] In 25:3 the group suffers hunger during the siege of Jerusalem. Besides the king they are the most active group in Judah for they perform their own independent actions. Corresponding to this they are also the group with the most burdens. They have to pay a special head tax, their numbers are massively reduced twice through deportations, and they suffer the largest number of executions as a group. This suggests two possible conclusions that the text confirms indirectly. First, they constitute a relatively large group, a group that represents a specific part or a specific class of the Judean population. Secondly, this group constitutes a political, financial, and military power. It probably exercised power and influence within Judah or at least within Jerusalem.

This group appears to be allied to Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, for they enthrone the first (23:30) and join the latter's capitulation (24:14). On the other hand, there appears to be significant tension between them and Jehoiakim, for they obviously pass him over as candidate to the throne, a fact that can be seen in his age (23:30, 36; see C.2). He exacts his revenge for this by placing the entire burden of Pharaoh's special tax upon their shoulders without offering any help from the royal or temple treasuries (23:35).[487] Their relation to Zedekiah is unclear. The execution of representatives of the group by the Babylonians indicates that they must have been loyal to the king (25:19–21).

The attitude of the people-of-the-land towards foreign powers appears to be consistently hostile. They immediately depose the Egyptian-installed king, Babylon deports and executes them. Regardless of whether the poorest-of-the-land in 2 Kgs 25:12 belonged to this group (Ant.) or not (Codex B; MT), a final indeterminate group must have remained in the land, for there were some who were not seized in the city (2 Kgs 25:19; the addition of בעיר would otherwise make no sense). Given that the people-of-the-land were loyal to the house of David and

485 Taking W. Richter's definitions as his framework Disse identifies here the subject so makes clear that the phrase people-of-the-land is being used attributively (see his *Informationsstruktur* 166).

486 If we count all the persons mentioned in 25:19 we can find another twelve individuals who are executed in an exemplary manner (five senior officials; five members of the cult personnel, the scribe and the eunuch). This amounts to 6x12 = 72 executions, a number that is clearly symbolic (this view is shared by J.Werlitz in *Kgs* 320).

487 If we do not take the broader context into consideration then it is not clear whether these treasures still existed at this point. All that Babylon requisitions are decorative elements and the utensils and symbols necessary for the cult (see 2 Kgs 24:13; 25:13–17).

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possessed military capabilities, some of them may have belonged to the troops who were scattered during Zedekiah's flight (25:5). If this is true in the Gedaliah pericope then we might see in his acclamation the promise of amnesty. Gedaliah himself can hardly have belonged to this group for he was probably from one of the civil-servant dynasties. Ishmael (25:25), however, who was of Davidic lineage yet evidently did not possess a claim to the throne, would fit the picture. Regardless of his affiliation with this group, in 2 Kgs 25:26 the entire people of Judah flee to Egypt. The people-of-the-land thereby disappear from the land in order to continue their existence in foreign territory. What the narrative does not tells us, perhaps intentionally so, is how this group, which had so strenuously distanced itself from foreign influence, conducted itself in exile. This question can only be answered from the perspective of the narrative's broader context.[488]

Current scholarship holds the view that this group functioned to sustain and shape the state and that it was closely bound to the Davidic monarchy. They had a financial independence that would have been badly affected if not ruined by the tribute to Neco that was imposed upon them in 2 Kgs 23:34f. They had a political influence that was extinguished with the deposition of Jehoahaz (23:33). Their decision to enthrone the younger brother before the elder (23:30) was a mistake which, as shall later become clear (cf. D.2), contradicted the laws of Deuteronomy. As is repeatedly mentioned, they pay for this mistake with their silver and gold, i. e. with their influence (see C.3.4). They nevertheless remain loyal to the kings of Judah, even when these kings capitulate or are unable to fulfil their responsibilities as protectors of life (24:14; 25:3). If we take Ishmael to be the leader of the last remnant of this group then this loyalty could even lead them to spill what was presumably innocent blood with the murder of Gedaliah.

On the one hand, it is clear that this group loses a significant amount of influence as a consequence of their mistake. It becomes passive, allowing itself to be deported without objection despite its not insignificant military power (24:14–16). Kingmakers are turned into weak followers and probably even murderers. This harmonizes, on the other hand, with the loss of their gold, which should be understood as cultic property. By breaking the law, they lose their connection to YHWH; this sin marks the beginning of their downfall, which ends in deportation, murder, and their flight to Egypt, the land of foreigners.

488 For a discussion on whether this group existed in reality and if so as what see the online appendix to this book.

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4.1.3 Pharaoh Neco: The Last Egyptian

At no point do the people of Egypt appear within the narrative. The only person mentioned by name is their king "Pharaoh Neco." This only happens at the beginning (2 Kgs 23:33). For the rest of the narrative he is called "Pharaoh" פרעה twice (23:34f.) and "the king of Egypt" (מלך מצרים) twice (24:7).

Neco never communicates with direct speech. That he issues two sets of instructions is known by implication. Eliakim is given a throne name and a financial penalty is imposed "on the land" (23:33f.). Apart from this, the facts that creates facts on the ground are done without speech. Neco fetters Jehoahaz (23:33) and brings him to Egypt where he dies. The new king of Judah who is installed by Neco himself is responsible for raising the money for the penalty fee and for handing it over (23:34f.). In 24:7 it is not clear whether the pharaoh is still Neco. In any case, this king retreats behind his own boarders before the advance of Babylon, thereby indirectly abandoning his claim over Judah (24:1, 7). It is similarly unclear who is present in 25:26, whether Neco, another Egyptian ruler, or the Egyptian nation. All that is reported is the flight to Egypt. Although someone must surely have been present, as far as the narrative is concerned their identity is irrelevant.

The narrative's motivations cannot be clearly identified. It seems as if the clear threat posed by its powerful enemy Babylon in 24:7 led it to secure its heartland. Control over Judah was of use to the state, which had expanded its position beyond its own boarders. Because these two power-political factors are of use to Egypt, they are the most likely concern of the collectivity.

Most interpretations of Neco in the secondary literature read 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 as a historical document and so interpret the text as a representation of historical facts.[489]

On the whole the Egyptians are a nebulous entity for as they are never referred to as a collectivity. This can also be seen in the pharaoh's name, which does not seem to have any clear meaning.[490] The consonants suggest a relationship to the root נכה, which means "unsuitable/unfit." We will have to clarify the content of this polemic later.

The same applies to the precise amount of tribute that Neco demands. The 100 talents of silver are clear, but the Hebrew text does not say whether the indeterminate amount of gold amounts to one or ten talents. In 23:35 it is also unclear whether Pharaoh himself determined the kind of tax or whether this was

489 For a discussion, see the online appendix to this book. The battle at Carchemish could explain Egypt's sudden retreat in 24:7. The narrative describes Babylon as "taking" לקח the territory, which indicates that this occurred without military intervention.

490 This point is important as the older, especially Greek, textual witnesses assume that the names were consciously chosen and so translated them accordingly (see part B).

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the way in which his command (ערך) was executed. What is clear is that the tribute is a form of punishment that is connected with Jehoahaz.[491]

All in all, in this narrative Egypt does not appear to be an entity that can be understood on its own terms. Given the paucity of its appearances it should be considered an auxiliary actor whose function can only be determined in relation to the other protagonists in the drama.

4.1.4 Babylon and the Nations: Enemies of God or Instruments of the Divine Will?

a) Nebuzaradan and the Chaldeans

Apart from the Babylonian kings, Nebuzaradan is the only figure from Babylon (literally: "the gate of God"[492]) who has a name. It is Akkadian and means "Nabu has given me offspring"[493]. Nabu is not the primary deity of the Babylonian pantheon; rather, he is a powerful "announcer" who presents the kings with their sceptre. This meaning can also be found in Hebrew, for if you break the name down into its elements you get the root נבי, "prophet," and a word that sounds like *saris,*[494] which is the term for "court official/eunuch." Nebuzaradan is a *guarantor of royal power.*

In the context of the narrative Nebuzaradan only functions as a conqueror and destroyer of Jerusalem, and this in only one scene (25:8–20). He is mentioned twice, seven times if we include references to his office. His personal identity is clearly subsumed under his official function. It is striking that within this scene Nebuzaradan's actions are framed by the Nebuchadnezzar's name (25:8, 22).[495] In v. 8 he is introduced in terms of his function as the רב־טבחים. This term can be interpreted as "chief cook," "chief slaughterer," or "chief of the bodyguards." How ever we translate it, it clearly refers to a military rank.[496] Nebuzaradan is tasked with plundering and destroying Jerusalem after the walls have already fallen (25:4, 9). However, rather than killing anyone he hands people over to the king of Babylon (25:18–21). Because he is *one*[497] of the leaders of the Chaldeans, an officer's rank is more appropriate to his role than that of a cook. As such, "chief of the bodyguard" appears to be the best translation and the title which

491 For more, see 5.2.

492 See H.Haug, *Namen* 32.

493 See ibid. 275.

494 [The words sound more similar in German than in English].

495 A parallel to this phenomenon can be found in the book of Judith in which Nebuchadnezzar's name frames Holofernes (see part C).

496 Although an allusion to a "slaughter" may seem appropriate given the brutality of what happens in Jerusalem, such a semantic dimension does not correspond to his actions.

497 The definite article is never used in the context of his office.

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corresponds most closely with his actions. He alone has the right to plunder gold and silver (25:16) whereas the others can only bring bronze back to Babylon.[498] Nebuchadnezzar waits in Riblah for Nebuzaradan (25:20). This, too, demonstrates the high degree of responsibility with which he has been entrusted. He is also the one who decides who will stay in the land and who will be exiled (25:11 f.), though he cannot determine who will be executed and who will be spared (25:21). He is extremely active and organized. He first destroys, then plunders, then selects people, leaving some behind and deporting others to the king. There is no evidence of prevarication or conflict. Nebuzaradan is a well-functioning civil servant who contrasts strongly with the failed functionaries of Judah. He is a tool of destruction. And it is precisely in his sobriety that we find his cruelty, a cruelty comparable to H. Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil" that she used in reference to Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi head of deportations.[499] How was it possible for what was presumably a Judean narrator to create a figure who determined the fate of his own people with such emotional detachment? Is this an intentional narrative strategy, and if so, does it function to articulate the unspeakability of the events or perhaps even a state of shock?

The ethnic group of the *Chaldeans* first appear in 2 Kgs 24:2 where they are referred to as "bands of robbers" גדודי that pass through Judah with other marauding groups in order "to destroy" it (אבד), i. e. to plunder it, decimate the population, and intimidate Jehoiakim. In 24:11 only the servants (עבדים) are mentioned; in 25:10 it is the "whole army" (כל־חיל) of Nebuchadnezzar. The latter group, however, is a troop that can only be identified with the Chaldeans on the basis of conclusions drawn from the second siege of Jerusalem. As such the identification is not completely secure.

In the second main part of the narrative (25:1–30) the Chaldeans are mentioned seven times exactly. In 25:4 f. they are first mentioned as part of the army besieging Jerusalem and then as those who pursue Zedekiah and take him captive. Verse 6 portrays the Chaldeans with a new function: They bring the captives to Nebuchadnezzar, though the word עלה can also mean "to bring as an offer-

498 Jones argues that "silvery silver" and "golden gold" stand for material values, i. e. the plunderers looked for objects of value without knowing their actual significance (see 1.2 Kgs 645). This argument cannot be correct for a number of reasons. First of all, in Hebrew this kind of repetition indicates an intensification, in this case it points to the especial value and purity of the cultic objects. Secondly, Jones' interpretation inhibits the transition from the relative neutral representation of the destruction of Jerusalem to the detailed descriptions of the temple objects, which the syntax suggests (25:13–18). Finally, the silver and gold is personally collected/monitored by Nebuzaradan, who is also responsible for selecting the people. This supports a material interpretation of this expression.

499 See H.Arendt, *Eichmann* 59; 83; 371 etc. The neutrality of this passage is an intentional narrative strategy (see B 4.5).

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ing."[500] As the verse progresses, however, we discover that it is they rather than the king who pronounced a verdict (דבר משפט) on Zedekiah, a fact that is ignored in many translations.

The Chaldeans are called an army and explicitly assigned to Nebuzaradan, the chief of the bodyguards (25:10). In 25:10 they tear down the walls of Jerusalem, in 25:13 they participate in the plundering of the temple by breaking up the bronze objects and taking them to Babylon.

They appear again in 25:24, this time in the context of direct speech and as a *nomen rectum*. As a result, the "servants of the Chaldeans" can be understood as both an object as well as a subject genitive. In 25:25 the Chaldeans located in Mizpah are killed by Ishmael and his people. In 25:26 they are referred to as a frightening group from whom the rest of Judah flee out of fear of reprisal, probably blood vengeance. This fear may be based on the experience of 24:2, which would have the effect of closing the narrative circle about this group.

The Chaldeans always appear in the plural and in the context of violent actions. Their actions are always a response to a command and are assigned to a commander: 2 Kgs 24:2 (YHWH); 25:4–6 (Nebuchadnezzar); 25:10.13f. (Nebuzaradan); 25:24–26 (Gedaliah). This seems to be necessarily the case, for the group is extremely destructive. While under control they tear down walls, destroy the treasures of the temple, and devise horrific punishments (25:6, 9, 13). However, as soon as they are out of the sight of their overlords they destroy everything and everyone that crosses their path (24:2; 25:26). Gedaliah attempts to ward of the destructive power of this collectivity (25:24) but his choice of a team causes him to fail (25:25). The group is no longer mentioned in the only scene set in Babylon (25:27–30). As far as the narrative is concerned, their function is limited to the conquest of Judah.

Altogether these observations and interpretive probes generate an image of Babylon as a destructive nation. It is a destructive power that can only be kept under control by its king and functionaries. The Chaldeans are a collectivity that is ready to destroy everything that crosses its path and they are ready to take whatever is of value back to Babylon, whether material (resources, precious metals, manpower) or non-material (artists, wisemen, kings, cultic objects). As instruments of destruction they are some of the most active figures in the narrative. They are, is it were, the hammer that is swung to punish Judah and force its proverbially stiff neck to bow or even break (25:6). In terms of actions and emotions they are the narrative's negative group par excellence.

500 It is also the usual term for "going up into" the land or Jerusalem.

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b) The Other Nations and Ethnic Groups

The Chaldeans are not the only group in the service of the king of Babylon. 2 Kings 24:2 and 25:23 mention other nations from the neighbourhood of Israel, namely Arameans, Moabites, Ammonites, a military leader from the Netophathites, one of the Maacathites, and an indeterminate number of men, presumably soldiers, who are subordinate to them. The Arameans, Moabites, and sons of Ammon pass through Judah and are referred to as bands of robbers who are tasked with destroying the land in a manner similar to the Chaldeans (see above). The military leaders stay in Mizpah where they and their people are killed without engaging in a single action. The fact that they serve Gedaliah as military leaders but in reality are as dependent upon Babylon as he is allows us to make some suggestions concerning their function. Their role may be to control the land and perhaps even Gedaliah in order to prevent further rebellions, and / or they may have received portions of the land as a reward, which in turn would oblige them to fulfil offices in government administration. Both suggestions are only speculations that cannot be proven on the basis of the text itself. It is interesting to note that together with the three Judean military leaders they constitute a group of five that surrounds Gedaliah, similar to the groups of five that repeatedly appeared in the context of the *hekhal* (the pillers-of-the-land; men-of-the-presence-of-the-king; cultic personnel of the temple, etc.). In the end, then, the Judean government's closest group of advisors has become a military junta, and one consisting of foreigners at that. This discrepancy between the inhabitants of Judah who have remained behind, i. e. the "poorest-of-the-land" (25:12), and the foreigners is further intensified when they are compared with the groups from 24:2. The Netophathite is from a city in the former northern kingdom of Israel that first came under the control of Assyria and then Babylon. He is could either be a Chaldean or he may belong to one of the foreign nations that have been settled in Israel. The son of the Maacathite is called Jaazaniah ("YHWH heard"), which might indicate that he was upwardly mobile, similar to Jeremiah of Libnah (23:31). The Maacathites are part of the Aramean nation, a group that had previously invaded Judah (24:2). Even if they are no longer active, the plunderers of Judah stand at the beginning and the end of YHWH's judgement of Judah. They die and so take up no further role in the action of 25:27–30.

They do not have their own overlords and are part of Babylon's territory. An implicit reason for their actions could be that they are acting on Babylonian orders because their own leaders are in Babylonian captivity (25:28).[501] Should

501 Another possibility would be to identify the סרים with the princes, i. e. the children of kings or the Babylonian princes. However, because these have not appeared anywhere else beforehand and Jehoiachin takes up his seat among them as a conquered king, it is more likely that this group should be identified with the subjugated rulers who are now hostages at the court (see W.Brueggemann, *1.2 Kgs* 606.).

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this be the case, then Judah is only apparently lower than them. Though they are allowed to raid it (24:2) and its king is sent to prison (25:27), in the outer frame Judah's position is superior, for in the beginning it is still independent (at least in spirit) from Babylon while the others are not (24:1, 19) and in the end it is elevated over them (25:28). In the final analysis, it is clear that in this narrative all the nations are subject to Babylon's dominion (24:1 f., 7; 25:28). As such, their role is directly dependent upon decision makers who are not necessarily the protagonists of the action. Who are these decision makers and what historical figures are they based on?[502]

c) The Kings of Babylon

In the course of the narrative two Babylonian kings appear on the scene and immediately take on a lead role. It remains to be seen if they are the protagonists or the antagonists of the kings of Judah, who are assumed to be the main characters.

With 18 mentions Nebuchadnezzar is the character who appears most frequently. He only appears in 24:1–25:22. 2 Kings 25:24 is the last time he is referred to as king. In 25:27–30 his successor Evil-Merodach comes into power. He is referred to only once explicitly (v.27) and twice implicitly (v.28 and possibly v. 30). Altogether there are 21 (=3x7) references to the king of Babylon. This truly Biblical numerical structure is divided into 11 mentions in the first part (23:30–25:7) and 7 + 3 in the second (25:8–26 and 25:27–30). The precise meaning of this will be studied below.[503]

Nebuchadnezzar's name is Akkadian and means "Nabu protects my son."[504] Because this name refers to a historical figure it is unlikely that it has a symbolic meaning for the narrative. This impression is reinforced when we take into account the intentional perversion of the name of his successor Amil Marduk ("Son of Marduk") to Ewil-merodach. As with Pharao Neco, this transformation is polemical in nature and either means "Fool of Marduk," "Marduk is a fool," or "cursed fool."[505]

As a character, *Nebuchadnezzar* is characterized by his unrelenting directness (not immediacy [*Unvermitteltheit*]!). Most of his actions are either carried out vicariously or are only implied, even threatened: In 24:1 he only has to come up from (עלה) Babylon and Judah is (temporarily) conquered and Egypt is put in its place (24:7). It is his servants who deal with the rebellion against his rule (24:10; these may be identical with the bands of robbers in 24:2). As soon as he "comes

502 For the latter question, see the online appendix to this book.

503 See the figure of "JHWH" and the discussions in the syntheses of parts C and D.

504 See H.HAUG, *Namen* 275. It has been demonstrated that names were used for political and polemical purposes in sixth Century Judah. See the article by Y.AMIT, *Epoch* 135–152.

505 See ibid. 117 f.

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over the city" בא על־היער, an expression that can also denote the irruption of a catastrophe (see chapter C), Jehoiachin the son of the rebellious vassal along with all Judah capitulates unconditionally (24:11f.). This demonstration of power leads to a change in the calculation of time and the first deportation (24:12). Yet this is not enough. Nebuchadnezzar takes the temple's gold by chopping it off (24:13 קצץ) and secures his rule by installing a new king whose name he chooses. This, too, is an expression of his consciousness of divine power (24:17). These actions are followed by another rebellion against his will. This time the king of Babylon is no longer satisfied with simply manifesting his power (24:20). He comes to Jerusalem personally (25:1), though at the very latest after the fall of its walls he resides in Riblah (24:4, 6, 20f.). This is where the rebel is "brought" עלה, a verb that can also refer to the offering of a sacrifice to a divinity (see 25:6). The Chaldeans take on the responsibility of reaching and executing a verdict before his eyes (לעניו). This language, too, can evoke the image of a divinity looking upon its servants (25:7).[506] After the executions Nebuchadnezzar has Zedekiah blinded, bound, and led away. It is not clear whether these actions are part of the original verdict or an additional set of actions (25:7). Up to this point, Nebuchadnezzar has been mentioned eleven times; we have covered the first half of his appearances.

After punishing the king, Nebuchadnezzar turns his attention to Jerusalem, and he does this in the nineteenth year of his reign, eleven years after Jehoiachin's peaceful capitulation. Yet once again it is a servant whom he sends and who brings (offers) him the prisoners (25:8, 20). He has the prisoners beaten and killed, and he "exposes" גלה the land until just a few are left over (25:21). Gedaliah is appointed to govern the remnant (v. 22). He derives all his power from Nebuchadnezzar (v. 23) and attempts to get the others to swear loyalty to him as well: "Serve Babylon's king and you will do well!" (v. 24). It is unclear how Gedaliah came up with this idea, for up until now Nebuchadnezzar's actions have only demonstrated what happens to those who do not do what he wants. Whoever refuses to submit to his power is forcefully submitted, deported, and killed. Nebuchadnezzar himself does not even need to lift a finger. He goes out, sends out, and lets the people be brought to him. He appears to be a god. However, he is no friendly god, he is a god of violent power. Humans are sacrificed to him; even the land is not safe from him. He exposes it, i. e. he humiliates it like a woman[507] and turns it into a wilderness. Is he a king that returns the living space of הארץ (Gen 1) to a state of תהו ובהו?

On the other hand, *Evil-Merodach's* actions contrast sharply with those of Nebuchadnezzar, for they are all positive. He does not simply release Jehoiachin

506 See, e. g., Num 19:2.

507 For more on this theme, see the discussion in part D.

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from prison, an almost poetic language is used to describe how "his head was raised away from the house of chains" (בית כלא; 25:27). Yet that is not all: he speaks kindly טוב with Jehoiachin, gives him a seat כסא of honour, one that is even higher מעל than all the seats of the other rulers in Babylon (v.28). Verses 29f. conceal the agents of the actions so well that we can only analyse them in the context of our character analysis of YHWH. However, if the king of v. 30 is indeed Evil-Merodach, then his good deeds also continue into the future. In any case, the triad of good deeds 25:27f. is clear. They portray a metaphorical uplifting, thereby continuing the poetic language: Evil-Merodach raises the (humiliated, metaphorically sunken) head of the imprisoned "King of Judah" who has been laid in chains and speaks to him words of goodness.[508] The prisoner is simultaneously led to a place with thrones, a place worthy of a king, and there he is guided to the seat of honour where he will be allowed to eat into a future that the narrative leaves open.

At first glance it would seem that these two kings could not be more different. Nebuchadnezzar is a terrifying overlord who responds to every challenge to his power with violence (24:1–25:20), Ewil-merodach, on the other hand, comes across as almost soft (25:27–30). Nebuchadnezzar puts people in chains and causes Zedekiah to disappear without trace (25:7). Evil-Merodach thinks of Jehoiachin and sets him free (25:27). Nebuchadnezzar exposes the land (25:21), Evil-Merodach gives Jehoiachin clothing (25:28). Nebuchadnezzar robs Zedekiah of his eyesight and locks Jehoiachin away from his presence (24:11; 25:7), Evil-Merodach allows Jehoiachin to eat in his presence and places him on a seat of honour, i. e. by giving him a prominent position he makes him prominent in the eyes of others. Nebuchadnezzar causes hunger and death (25:2), Evil-Merodach nourishes for a lifetime (25:29f.).

These kings of Babylon have starkly contrasting styles of government, yet they have one thing in common: they rule as absolute overlords. Their theophoric names make manifest the legitimacy of their rule. Their decisions go unquestioned. They speak and things happen. They not only have power over the lives of others, they can also determine the time of their death. When compared them to the kings of Judah, they appear to be less the antagonists of these human rulers than YHWH himself.

508 B.Ubach, whose commentary otherwise completely follows that of his predecessor Garfalo, ventures the thesis that Israel's exile would have ended earlier if Amil Marduk had lived longer (see *I.II Reis* 353).

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4.1.5 Where was God in Judah?

A question that every reader of this passage must inevitably ask is: Where was YHWH residing during all of these events? And why did he pass such harsh judgement on Judah and its kings? Three analyses are necessary in order to plumb the compositional depth of YHWH's character in the narrative.[509]

a) A Revealed and Manifest God – Explicit References

Although the Tetragrammaton is mentioned15x, YHWH himself, or more specifically his *eyes*, only occurs four times in all in the regnal formula (each time in the genitive; 23:32.37;24:9.19). The name occurs six times as the *nomina recta* of the temple, which is once called היכל יהוה (24:13) and five times בית יהוה (24:13; 25:9, 13 [2x]; 25:16). The references in 24:13 (as well as 25:13, 16) are to the temple gold, i. e. its preparation by Solomon according to the command of YHWH. YHWH is mentioned three times in one sentence in 24:13, which makes this verse stand out. Clearly the removal of Solomon's temple gold is a key event in the narrative.[510]

The three mentions of the Tetragrammaton in 24:2–4 are even more striking. This is the only place where YHWH is explicitly portrayed as an active subject: he sends (שלח) the bands of robbers against Judah or Jehoiakim and sends (שלח) them in order to destroy (אבד) Judah. The reason given is the words of the prophets. Verse 3 speaks of God's mouth (פה יהוה), which is responsible for casting Judah out from before his face מעל פניו and for revealing the guilt of Manasseh. Verse 4 continues with this interpretation of Manasseh and concludes with YHWH's refusal to forgive (סלח) anymore. This is confirmed once again in 24:20 with reference to YHWH's wrath (אף יהוה) as the cause for Judah's removal from his presence. After the execution of the verdict and the destruction of the temple, YHWH silently disappears from the narrative (25:13).

The narrative portrayal of YHWH implies that he is a deity who is *materially* bound. He has a sanctuary that was built and furnished according to his will. With its destruction in 2 Kgs 25:9 his name disappears from the narrative.[511] His power

509 This is particularly important for the character "God," for its narrative form is always derived from the broader cultural matrix and horizon of the authors (see the corresponding section in the online appendix to this book). The following recently published volume is particularly instructive: U.E.Eisen/ I.Müllner (ed.), *Gott.* M.Sternberg's Poetics, has almost become a classic in the field of narratology and for his discussion of the difficulty of classifying the character of God on the narrative level (see pp. 153–185).

510 There are even ancient Near Eastern parallels for this thesis. Hrusa points out that the grammatical form of the Akkadian designation for God *dingir* refers to the divinity of the referent (*Religion* 23; 25). If Jhwh is connected to the temple gold or its cultic paraphernalia, then his divinity would be extinguished along with their destruction.

511 The last mention in 25:13 is a repetition of 24:13f. and refers to the plundering of the temple before the destruction and is such precedes 25:9 chronologically (see C.2).

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or at least his material presence appears to be bound to the cult, the gold, and the house in Jerusalem in a way that is similar to an earthly ruler:

> In light of [Israel's] experience of God it portrays him as a self-identical entity. This happens (and given post Old Testament history we would have to say: still happens) in terms of ancient Oriental concepts of royalty rather than any philosophical principle. God is a sovereign who may be experienced as gracious or hard, just or arbitrary, but who is always described as an all-determining power.[512]

Yet it is not only his house that renders YHWH in a very *anthropomorphic* manner. The kings of Judah do evil before his *eyes* until he drives them from before his *face*, i. e. condemns them to live outside his field of vision. His *word* is proclaimed by the "hand" of the prophets, which makes them look like the heralds of a king (which would also go well with a היכל). Yet YHWH's "face" is further described with other polysemous Hebrew words. It is his *mouth* פה that is the cause of the exile (24:3) and *the snorting of his nose* that drives Judah into exile (24:20). At this point it is not possible to answer the question of whether this face of God that shows itself in the performative power of the word will continue to be present in Israel's history; for now, it looks as if it will not.[513]

A third aspect of this immanent divine image is *emotion*. YHWH is a God who experiences anger (24:20), shows reluctance (24:4), and is only content when everything goes according to his will (24:13; 25:16 vs. 24:2–4; 25:20). There is a scholarly consensus that God's wrath in 2 Kgs 24 f. is kindled in accordance with the classic principle that a person's well-being corresponds to his deeds (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*). Here it climaxes in an extreme form of the law of talion in which innocent blood is payed for with the life and death of all of Judah. However, this law is effectively undermined, for Manasseh's guilt is passed on to succeeding generations, making it is impossible to talk of any kind of proportionality.[514] Even after his disappearance in 2 Kgs 25:13, YHWH's blood vengeance ensures that the final remnant of Judah is dissolved after the assassination of Gedaliah (25:26). In the end, YHWH himself is affected by his wrath, for with the destruction of the temple he himself disappears—a dramatic anticlimax that further underscores Judah's hopelessness. YHWH seems to have failed as an immanent entity.

512 K.Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte* 219.

513 In any case, the reference to the words of YHWH speak in favour of E. Aurelius' thesis that it is not only the prophets but also YHWH who is speechless after 2 Kgs 23:7, and this despite the fact the narrative contains no direct speech or prophetic revelation (*Zukunft* 117 f.).

514 K.Schmid follows a similar interpretation when he talks of the unparalleled severity with which YHWH judges his people, although the turning away of a god was known in the ancient Near East (*Literaturgeschichte* 111–118). Schmid provides the Erra Epic (TUAT 3,781–801) and the "adad-guppi" inscription (TUAT 2,479–485) as examples of divinities turning away from their people.

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b) A Hidden God – Implicit References

In addition to these explicit references to YHWH, Hebrew syntax also makes a number of implicit references possible. The permeability of these references renders the text transparent to a further level of meaning. This level is not accessed by reading in between the lines; rather, the text opens itself up to a further semantic level. This is observation is not a recent discovery of modern scholarship; awareness of its presence goes back to the earliest periods of Biblical interpretation and there are still scholars today who analyse it.[515]

The first clear reference to YHWH occurs in a declaration of judgement in 2 Kgs 24:2–4. We read that he cast Chaldeans, the inhabitants of Babylon, against Judah. This is followed by the phrase "and he sent" according to the words of YHWH against Judah. At this point the subject could either be YHWH or Nebuchadnezzar. Given that the latter had gone up to Judah in 24:1 and that it is YHWH who is doing the punishing, the most plausible interpretation is that Babylon's return to Jerusalem to lay siege to it is being connected with the will of YHWH. This creates a closeness between YHWH and Nebuchadnezzar, the latter being portrayed either as YHWH's instrument or as a king whose attack as been approved by YHWH. At this point Babylon is nothing more than a band of robbers (24:2 גדודי). Rather than being a permanent tool of punishment it functions more to inflict a stab wound upon Judah in order to bring it to repentance.[516] When this does not have the desired affect Babylon returns to lay siege to Jerusalem once again. This time Jehoiachin has no choice but to capitulate. The next connection of this kind occurs in 24:13, where we read that Nebuchadnezzar "chopped up" all the golden vessels in the temple of YHWH, "according to what YHWH had said." The initial referent of this phrase is YHWH's original instructions to furnish the temple with these vessels. However,

515 By inserting names into the text the Greek versions created more clarity concerning the subjects of various the actions. A few years ago J.Werlitz pointed out the semantic openness of the text, for example that of 2 Kgs 24,2 (see Kgs 314f.), as did W.Brueggeman before him (see *1.2 Kgs* 570).

516 The purpose of such a pedagogy of pain or black pedagogy has been thoroughly researched in the history of the educational sciences (H.Blankertz, *Geschichte*) and is well known from other parts of the Bible (see, e.g., the critique of the God's pedagogy of pain in the book of Job and the analysis of L.Schwienhürst-Schönberger, *Ijob*; *Buch Ijob* 414–427; *Herr* 146–153 et al.). This idea has been further developed in, e.g, mysticism, for example in early Medieval meditational guides, where it underwent a certain blossoming as a reference point for psychological processes (K.Baier, *Lesen* 23–58, 30–32). However, the dangers of such a concept of a punishing God are much greater. In recent times these have found expression in Jan Assmann's critique of monotheism and we dare not underestimate their consequences (for an analysis of the debate in its early phase, see J.Thünhauser, *Unbehagen*; for a summary of the debate up until the presence period, see B.Mühl, *Heilsexklusivismus* 178–211. One of the most important engagements with this topic is the edited volume by J.-H.Tück, *Monotheismus*).

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upon closer analysis it also becomes clear that YHWH has also been commanded their destruction.[517] It is not Babylon and its king who plunder the temple but YHWH. This pattern in continued in 24:14–16. Here, too, the subject is only indicated by the verbal suffix (as 3rd person masculine singular) and it can refer to either YHWH or Nebuchadnezzar. These verses are concerned with the exile and deportation of Jehoiachin and his people. The entire first deportation is not only carried out by Babylon but also YHWH, and this in accordance with his word (24:2.13). He is the true agent operating behind and through Babylon.

This thesis is further supported by a second observation. In his monograph *Gott und Gewalt gegen Kinder* (2004) A.Michel analyses all the verbs that express God's violent actions. He discovers that although very harsh verbal roots are used, there is an avoidance of those that potentially express the most aggressive actions. God always only uses or threatens to use as much violence as is "absolutely necessary."[518] Michel comes to the following conclusion:

> The choice of verbal root is never arbitrary. The general avoidance of those verbs that undermine a humanitarian ethos indicates that the Old Testament authors and redactors were aware of the connection between divine image and ethos or ethics, including from a semantic perspective.[519]

This observation can be confirmed in relation to the narrative in 23:30–25:30 in particular. The passages in which YHWH is a potential subject are harsh but not unnecessarily cruel. This contrasts strongly with the approach of the Chaldeans, who murder Zedekiah's children before his eyes (25:7).

YHWH appears again implicitly in 25:14. This verse describes the plundering of the temple with the removal of the vessels that had been set apart "for his service." These vessels, which are essential for the cultic service, are the only ones that the Chaldeans do not destroy (25:13 f.) or chop up (24:13). It is unlikely that this is simply due to the size of the objects or plans to reuse them in a cult in exile.

At this point we can draw an initial conclusion: The text is only unclear, permeable, ambiguous, even transparent, when it is YHWH who is the potential subject. Behind the external historical events there is another narrative unfolding, one in which it is YHWH himself who is the antagonist of his people rather than Babylon and its kings. Or to put it more precisely: the kings and people of Judah are the antagonists of YHWH, who for this reason punishes them.

517 Knoppers identifies in this passage the presence of the theology of the early exilic community, which believed that through the wrath of God it had lost his presence and was now waiting for him to forgive them and command the renewed construction of a sanctuary (G.N.Knoppers, *Yhwh's Rejection* 221–238).

518 See A.Michel, *Gott und Gewalt* 111 f.

519 See ibid. 114.

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After the conclusion of his act of judgement and destruction of the temple it is not clear whether YHWH continues to be active and, if so, where he is located. Could it be that he is in Babylon, just like the king and the cultic paraphernalia? The text does indeed leave such a possibility open, even if extensive interpretation is required to see this.[520]

2 Kings 25:28 ends with a syntactical ambiguity: is it Jehoiachin or Evil-Merodach who is the subject? This ambiguity continues in v. 29, where it is unclear who changes the clothing for whom, who eats before whose eyes, and whose life if meant by the phrase "all the days of his life." Things do not get any clearer in v. 30, which talks of "his allowance" that has been granted to him "all the days of his life." The only subject is the "the king" המלך, which does not clarify matters because both figures are kings. In addition to this, this is the only instance in the entire narrative in which a king is mentioned without the addition of a locative *nomen rectum*. The logic is not entirely clear on the semantic level either. Because both figures are living in Babylon, the phrase "with him in Babylon" (אתן מבבל) is ambiguous.[521] The only thing that is semantically logical is that it is Jehoiachin's cloths that are changed. The eating of the bread and the receiving of lifelong rations in vv. 29 f. is also very likely connected with Jehoiachin. It remains unclear however, who eats before whose face and who the king is that receives lifelong support, for here there is no explicit reference to "the king of Babylon" (מלך בבל).

Up until now in the narrative this kind of ambiguity has always created space for YHWH to be the subject. This indicates that we may do the same here. The king before whose presence (לפניו)—in this narrative a phrase that otherwise always explicitly refers to YHWH (24:2; 24:20)—Jehoiachin eats, who feeds him and grants him life and who is with Jehoiachin and his people in Babylon may be seen as YHWH himself.[522]

520 Here, too, we can observe a switch similar to the one that has appeared in every analysis up until now. The pericope 2 Kgs 25,27–30 reverses the entire action. For this reason and because there is a change in names, persons, and stylistic devices, it is plausible to assume the presence of a redactional break from the rest of the history. It is beyond the scope of this study, however, to analyse this question any further.

521 Slotki noticed this very yearly on (*Kgs* 324).

522 Chapter D will deal with the question of whether YHWH really can be the king of his people and what this means for the Davidic monarchy. From a Christian perspective—and here Gerhard von Rad was correct—it is interesting that the Nathan prophecy and the kingdom of God can only be connected by means of a Messianic figure, as embodied by Jesus in Mat 1. T.Püla, *Jojachin* 12–18, also engages in a Christological interpretation.

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Excursus: A Copy of God – the Role of Theophoric Names[523]

A final group of references are the theophoric names, for divine action can manifest itself through the actions of their bearers. There are twelve names borne by twelve different people that make reference to YHWH: *Jeho*ahaz; Jerem*iah*; *Jehoi*akim; Peda*iah*; *Jehoi*achin; Mattan*iah*/ Zedek*iah*; Sera*iah*; Zephan*iah*; Gedal*iah*(*hu*); Nethan*iah*; Sera*iah*; Jaazan*iah*.[524] Four names are concerned with the main ancient Near Eastern (enthroned) divinity: *El*iakim; *El*natan; Jischma*el*, Evil-Merodach. On two occasions Babylon's God of the kings is implied: *Nebu*chadnezzar and *Nebu*zaradan.

It is interesting to observe the intrinsic relationship between the names and the relationships that the three groups have with each other.

The names of all four kings of Judah make reference to YHWH. With Jehoahaz, who appears at the beginning of the narrative, "YHWH begins" his work. His grandfather is called Jeremiah "YHWH has heard." From what we know of the story, it is difficult to make any connection between this name and Jehoahaz's actions. However, the name may be connected with Josiah, for the relationship between Eliakim/Jehoiakim and Elnathan is similar (see below). Jehoiakim's grandfather is Pedaiah, which means "YHWH's ransom." This may correspond to Jehoiakim's payment of tribute. This would mean that YHWH's actions that began with Jehoahaz have been postponed, for it is his son Jehoiachin who will have to pay for the rivers of innocent blood. Jehoiachin's name means "YHWH makes firm/establishes." In relations to the plot this name has an ambiguous, two-fold meaning that can be applied to each of Jehoiachin's appearances. At the beginning of Jehoiachin's rule YHWH is firmly committed to bringing about the downfall of Jerusalem and Judah (24:8–17), yet at the same time he uses Jehoiachin to secure the survival of the kingdom of Judah (25:27–30). Jehoiachin's uncle is called Mattaniah "Gift of YHWH" before his coronation and his name is changed by Nebuchadnezzar to Zedekiah "YHWH is My Righteousness." This king is indeed the last king that is *given* to Judah and YHWH will demonstrate his righteousness in relation to him, a righteousness that had been promised to the dynasty for so many generations. It is the righteousness of judgement which is thoroughly executed upon this king, his dynasty, the land, and the city of Jer-

523 Scholars such as J.Heller (*Namengebung* 71–82), P.J.B.Valvekens, *Kon I–IV* 209, and E.Aurelius, *Zukunft* 111–114, who cannot be accused of having allegorical interests, have defended the thesis that names can play an intentional role in narrative and so be significance for its interpretation. The seminal work on this subject is H.Rechenmacher, *Personennamen.* I would like to thank Annemarie Frank for making me aware of this and for providing me access to the database of Biblical names that can be found at the end of this book.

524 For the differentiation between the lang and short forms and how they may have developed as well as their meaning in the sixth Century, see S.I.L.Norin, *Name* especially 117–119; 122f.

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usalem in accordance with the manner in which this nation and its kings had walked before the eyes of God.[525] During the gradual destruction of Judah two temple priests, Seraiah "YHWH has demonstrated that he is ruler" and Zephaniah "YHWH has secured," are executed. Their names could be an allusion to the execution of the true king YHWH's righteousness and the salvation of the Davidic line through the exile of Jehoiachin and the preservation of a remnant. In this way the priestly cult has fulfilled its "mediatorial" role within the narrative; YHWH has kept his promise to the Davidic dynasty (2 Sam 7:15f.; see D.1).

This act of judgement that started under Jehoahaz, was postponed for Jehoiachin, and then initially completed under Zedekiah is followed by a short pericope (25:22–26). In it occur another four theophoric names that contain YHWH. The protagonist of this short piece is Gedaliah(hu), "YHWH has done great things." In light of the literary context this may refer to the previous portion of the narrative, for the judgement has actually been concluded. For this reason, the name Seraiah "YHWH has demonstrated that he is king" occurs for a second time, this time in a military rather than a cultic context, which further underscores the focus on divine judgement. Nethaniah, "YHWH has given," and Jaazaniah "God hears" also belong to the circle of Gedaliah. YHWH, who has done great things and proven that he is king, hears and continues to provide basic necessities to those who have remained in the land.[526] The hope of a new future embodied in this remnant granted by YHWH is then dramatically wiped out by men who do not know him.

El/ Elohim, the enthroned God/deity, the unrestricted creator and ruler of the world, is a word that refers to deity *per se* rather than one particular deity.[527]

The first occurrence of the term in the narrative is the name Eliakim. The reference is then switched to YHWH when Eliakim receives the throne name Jehoiakim.[528] His name means "God absolves of guilt" or "God re-establishes (order)." The guilt accrued by wrongly installing Jehoahaz is corrected by

525 This concept of judgement corresponds to the scholarly category of "connective righteousness" and it appears in the name Zedekiah. See K.Koch, *Sädaq* 37–64, 60f. A large number of Koch's theses are developed from insights found in H.H.Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit.*

526 This is probably the reason why in 25:12 people are left behind who are able to fulfil an agricultural function, i.e. they secure a subsistence existence. This special case of an emergency economy could also explain the strange choice of words, for the expression is a *hapax legomenon* in the OT, which is only cited in the parallel passage in Jer 52.

527 See I.Hrusa, *Religion* 23. Hrusa argues that *"elohim"* or the Babylonian *"dingir"* plays the same role in henotheism that that each main deity will play later on. I image this to be like the rubrics in the *Sacramentales Romani*, in which a symbol for "proper noun" stands in place of a specific name, thus enabling various names to be inserted.

528 It is as if the foreign nations know better than Judah who its true ruler is. This remarkable fact will be demonstrated more precisely in part D.

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someone who is actually "unqualified" (Neco) to do so.[529] This person installs Eliakim, who had been skipped over in the order of succession to the throne, and thereby re-establishes him/the correct order. The correctness of the new ruler on the throne is manifested by his new name, which confesses YHWH the God of Judah (*jeho* instead of *el*). Unfortunately, it was an Egyptian rather than the Judeans who testified to this. At this point in his life Eliakim was already married, for his son had already been born. This means that at the point of his accession to the throne he had Elnathan as his father-in-law. This name means "God has given" and he is the only father-in-law to not have a reference to YHWH in his name. What is given is not clear. It may be Jehoiachin, who still has an important role to play. If this is the case, then the name would be rather contra-productive, for Jehoiachin's government is associated with the fact that God took rather than gave. A third use of the indeterminate divine epithet is in the name Ishmael, which is the second time it is used for a person in the line of David. He is not a claimant to the throne and he murders Gedaliah. His name means "God will hear." As with Eliakim, Ishmael has a positive relationship to Egypt, for that is where he flees to after spilling innocent blood (2 Kgs 25:26).[530] His name is the only one in the narrative that has a future-oriented meaning. He appears right before the great leap in time that will bring Jehoiachin back on to the narrative stage. He provides a transition to Evil-Merodach, whose name contains the Babylonian counterpart to El. If we try to identify a common thread to these four names, then it is the qualities of indeterminacy and misunderstanding. The three names connected with Judah refer to a God that apparently thirsts for human blood and who builds bridges to foreign lands, whether Egypt or Babylon. Compared with the narrative's definition of God thus far, these individuals appear to render the kind of image of God responsible for calling forth the crisis. It is an impersonal image of God, perhaps due to the transgression of the covenant (see D.5.2), for it does have a name (YHWH).

The names referring to *Nebo/ Nabu* only belong to Babylonians who exercise their power through violence and war. When they appear within the narrative it is only to implement their will; within the pantheon they are subject to the main deity. The focus is on future rule with a concern for posterity and royal status. The primary deity reappears in the name of the last king of Bablyon, albeit here with the local title of Marduk (parallel to El, but also Baal). In other words, in this king the Babylon pattern is changed in favour of a god who acts tenderly and kindly.

529 The reasons why the Egyptian Pharaoh is not suitable for supporting Judah's monarchy can be found in part D.

530 According to Fricke, this final murder marks the lowest point of the narrative (*2 Kgs* 363–365).

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Nevertheless, we must not overlook the polemical element in his name. If we take into account our previous observations concerning the revealed God, the polemical point may be that Babylon does not really know who the God and king of the whole world is. We could go a step further and take into account what we have learned about the hidden God. In this case, the polemic is even clearer: God executes his judgement upon Judah by means of Babylon. He instrumentalizes the kings of Babylon and the powers that they have at their disposal without them being aware of it. Thy consider themselves to be the rulers of the world, free to grant and take life as they please. Yet in reality they are only heralds *(Nebo/ Nabi),* lower spirits *(Kasdim)*, and in the eyes of the one God, YHWH *(YHWH elohim)*, they are ultimately fools (*Ewil*) for their hubris, for he is the one who leads and uses them. This, at least, is the view of the text, regardless of how much it may conflict with our Kantian view of freedom.[531]

c) Interim Conclusion

From a modern, contemporary perspective, the attempt to synthesize the figure of "God" in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 results in an unsatisfactory fragment. God reveals himself as an unmerciful judge/avenger and all-powerful ruler who subjugates humans to his will and instrumentalizes them. Almost no reasons are given for his actions. Verses 25:22–30 are particularly depressing. On two occasions and with a large interval of time in between them God displays his peaceful, gracious mercy, characteristics more in accordance with the expectations of our post-Incarnational and post-modern world. In 25:22–26 this mercy is misunderstood and our hopes are shattered. 2 Kings 25:27–30 also call for a healthy does of scepticism towards this renewed attempt to show mercy, for it does not mention YHWH by name and his presence is at most that of a sovereign deity.

In the next stage of our analysis we will situate this fragmentary image of God within the context of the Old Testament as a whole. Our goal will be to better contextualize and understand (though never exhaustively!) our narrative's particular portrayal of God's activity as punishing and judging but then also, in the end, as gracious.

531 For Kant's view of freedom and the Categorical Imperative, see both his *Kritik* A 54, as well as his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, particularly the introduction on pp. IVff, which was developed on the basis of the former. The ancient world did not make this distinction, as can be seen in Homeric anthropology. In the Iliad it is the gods, for example, who take over the individual body parts of the Greek hero and motivate it to engage in contradictory actions that can literally tear the hero apart.

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4.2 The Plot

A character analysis of each individual character and group would require a book of its own and thus would go beyond the scope of this present study. What we can do, however, is bring the narrative's wealth of actions, allusions, and implicit values into to a logical order on the basis of their sequence within the plot. The most important question to be asked in this respect is, "Who is the plot's protagonist?" The answer is clear. Given the narrative's power structures, the number of times his name is mentioned, and those moments which are most determinative for the further unfolding of events, it can only be YHWH, the God of Judah. He is the primary actor in this multi-layered story. His antagonists are the kings of Judah and their people. The remaining actors are simply subsidiary characters.[532]

The narrative begins with the "People-of-the-Land's" illegitimate enthronement of Jehoahaz (23:30). Though a son of David, he was not the next in line and so is a usurper. This failure on the part of the nation and its king serves as the prelude to the beginning of God's acts of judgement. The erroneous appointment brings Egypt on the scene with Pharaoh painfully correcting the mistake. He arrests Jehoahaz, brings his successor to heel, and the Egyptians enrich themselves at the expense of the land (23:33–35). It was not YHWH who sent Pharaoh. Even though he did punish the People-of-the-Land, for reasons that are still unclear he is not suited to be the vehicle of God's wrath.

Even king Jehoiakim, the legitimate successor to Josiah's throne, is no longer able to please YHWH and change the course of events. As a king he is portrayed as catastrophically bad, unjust, blood-thirsty, and disloyal to his overlord.

At this point YHWH intervenes (perhaps for the second time): He sends bands of robbers to Judah in order to put its king in his place. They clearly reveal his inability defend his land and keep it together. But that is not all: Jehoiachin is left humiliated in Jerusalem, a capital without a kingdom and surrounded by enemies, and then he dies. His son ascends the throne as the last legitimate ruler according to the laws of succession. Because of his father's rebellion as the rightful king of Judah, he is able to be enthroned as a free and legitimate ruler. He is young and he, too, is apparently incapable of living correctly before YHWH, for

532 In novels subsidiary or minor characters are usually characterized by their one-dimensional function in relation to the protagonist or the plot, e. g. the clown, witch, teacher, mother, knight etc. (see J.Schneider, *Einführung* 22). In our narrative this one-sidedness is essentially characteristic of all of the characters. Only YHWH is ambivalent and multilayered. Judah fails, becomes guilty and is conquered. Egypt and Pharaoh are of no interest to YHWH. Babylon is an instrument of YHWH that requires various degrees of control and which occasionally develops an (unpleasant) dynamic that needs to be subsequently constrained.

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the siege continues unabated. In order to save Jerusalem Jehoiachin allows himself to be taken hostage and deported, and not just he alone but also his entire court, a large portion his movable goods and all his immaterial assets such as technical knowledge, spiritual elite. For now, the temple is the only place that can retain its personnel. YHWH has not yet completely abandoned Jerusalem, giving Judah into the hands of its enemies.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon and leader of the Chaldeans, functions as a further instrument of divine punishment. He installs another "wrong" ruler, this time Zedekiah, the uncle of Jehoiachin. This "ruler" is effectively nothing more than a marionette, a governor with a crown (24:17f.). This king's name references faithfulness, but as with Jehoiakim he is unable to demonstrate the loyalty he had sworn to his overlord. By breaking his oath of loyalty he simultaneously condemns Jerusalem, himself, and the entire people of Judah (24:20). Whatever had begun under the reign of Manasseh (24:2–4) is now completed by YHWH.[533] Once again he sends the Babylonians. This time they are represented by the "demonic" Chaldean troop and their leader Nebuzaradan. They plunder everything and burn Jerusalem down to its foundations. YHWH himself withdraws. He no longer gives instructions, provides protection, restricts the wrath of the Chaldeans. Zedekiah demonstrates one last time the colossal failure of the kings of Judah: he flees, proves incapable of protecting his successor and thus the continued existence of his dynasty (2 Kgs 25:7), is physically maimed, and loses his freedom. When kings of Judah do not follow YHWH they lose their sovereignty. Babylon, on the other hand, can achieve everything, precisely *because* YHWH is with it. At this point a mirror is held up to Judah: You could have remained free and rich and at home, you could have enjoyed the promised land, if only your kings and you yourselves had remained faithful to me, your God and your true sovereign.

And yet despite all this YHWH still grants the Judeans another opportunity to avoid complete destruction. Once again a segment of the population is exiled yet a small remnant is allowed to remain in the land under an autonomous government. Judah, however, also squanders this final opportunity. A distant relative of the kings (Ishmael) is a military leader under Gedaliah, the new governor. This governor is an advocate for a pro-Babylonian attitude. He appears to be a pragmatist, committed to *realpolitik*. Although YHWH had just punished his people for their last king's breach of loyality, Ishmael apparently has no qualms about murdering his employer to whom he also owed loyalty. He subsequently

533 At this point, it is not yet possible for methodological reasons to know who, precisely, king Manasseh of Judah, king Josiah of Judah, and king Solomon of Israel are, nor who had the vessels made for the temple. This will only become clear once the reader can presuppose the broader context of 1 Samuel–2 Kings.

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flees to Egypt from the Chaldeans and is joined by the entire remnant of Judah, the last seed of hope in the land. Whether they are conscious of this or not, by fleeing to Egypt, a land that had already been conquered by Babylon and thus constrained by YHWH, the remnant of Judah was also fleeing from YHWH, thereby proving one final time that he is their intransigent antagonist.

We now arrive at the final scene in which Jehoiachin re-joins the action. This fallen ruler is the only option left open to Judah, for Jehoahaz is dead, Zedekiah should never have been crowned as long as Jehoiachin was still alive, and Ishmael never made a claim to the throne. With the accession of Nebuchadnezzar's successor to the throne, Jehoiachin and through him Judah is granted a new opportunity. He moves from prison to *a*, even if not to *his*, throne room; he receives a throne, different clothing and food. It is a king that grants him these privileges and thus opens up for him the possibility of a new future. It is irrelevant whether this king is Evil-Merodach or YHWH, for in this narrative it is ultimately YHWH who motivates Babylon's actions.

The narrative's open ending and its various gaps present us with a question: What happens now? Who is this God who can demand such loyalty? Will Judah return to YHWH? Have Jehoiachin and Judah learned from their experience? What kind of future is conceivable for Judah? Is it a future in exile or in the Promised Land? What is the Promised Land when YHWH is evidently capable of being present all over the world (territorially) and of choosing any old nation to be his people (relationally)? Is Judah's failure final, has it squandered its last chance? Is Babylon YHWH's new chosen people? Will there be a new temple or does the name of YHWH no longer require a dwelling?

4.3 The Relationship of the Characters to Time and Space

On the whole, our character analysis has confirmed our previous observations regarding time and space. Trajectories identified thus far have been reinforced, so that time, space, and character/action constitute a consistent narrative thread. As a result, the import of a number of particularly striking scenes and passages can now be better appreciated, while on the other hand other details and connections remain mysterious. This shall now be made clear in the following synopsis.

All the *kings from Jehoahaz to Zedekiah / Jehoiachin* live during the final days of the kingdom of Judah. They are a symbol of disorder and our action analysis has established once and for all that Judah never was an intact entity. From the very outset there have been manifest problems with its kingship: Three of its kings are deported and only one of them dies a natural death. Three of the kings are brothers and thus not genealogical successors. Three kings have to surrender,

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two are besieged in the capital city. For a period of time the nation is plundered by multitudes of robbers, valuables from the state and temple treasuries are repeatedly stolen. Furthermore, parts of the population are deported and regency periods vary massively. Not one of these kings manages to live up to the expectations of his God. The ambiguous relationship can be seen at various points of the narrative, e. g. in God's supporting of Judah's enemies and his abandonment of his people, as well as in the dissolution of the regnal formula, as will become clearer in the following section. Yet it is not only the regnal formula that crumbles, everything else goes with it. The kings' sphere of sovereignty is gradually and visibly reduced, so that in the end Zedekiah can do nothing more than exercise puppet rule within the confines of his capital city. The prelude to this is the loss of the land and the deportation of Judah's intelligentsia, including its legitimate ruler Jehoiachin, as well as the loss of their own system for measuring time. The finale of the first part (23:30–25:7) is heralded by the collapsing walls of Jerusalem. Zedekiah abandons his kingship and everything that is connected with it—cultically, ideologically, economically, etc. He flees through its walls (חֹמָת) and ends up in a place that, by means of a word play, becomes a place of judgement: Riblah in the land of "Hamath" (חֲמָת).

As we have seen in our chronotopic analysis, at the transition from the first to the second part of the narrative (25:8–12) where the plundering of the temple is described there is a rapid deceleration in the narrative's spatial and temporal flow. In terms of action this deceleration is accompanied by the lost of the temple and thus YHWH's dwelling place among his people. It is not entirely clear why YHWH not only allows but even orders the humiliation, plundering, and enslavement of his own people. It has to do with prophetic words from the past that still need to be clarified and which are connected with the shedding of innocent blood. At this point, in any case, YHWH has instructed for his temple to be burned to the ground; he has abandoned the place of his presence among his people, indeed he has perhaps even abandoned the nation itself.

A governor arrives on the scene. He lives in what is actually a nameless "observation point"[534] and belongs to a rather insignificant family.[535] He is an administrator of the small remnant of the nation that YHWH had allowed to remain in the land and engage in a subsistence economy. Now reduced to an absolute minimum, Judah is given its final chance. Yet this remnant also has no future. Ishmael murders Gedaliah along with his protection force and then flees with who those who had remained to Egypt. The gradually expanding chaos has now

534 H.Haug, in *Namen* 264, explains that the name Mizpah means nothing more than watch tower or "fortified observation point."

535 The name of Gedaliah's grandfather "Rock Hyrax" is not theophoric and has no dynastic characteristics (see U.Rüterswörden, *Beamten* 116).

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reach the outer peripheries of the land and the nation, leaving an uninhabited wilderness in its wake.

Within the context of the narrative *Egypt*, the defeated empire, is associated with numerous problems that it has afflicted upon Judah. Yet they nevertheless flee to it, for it appears to be YHWH rather than they who has a problem with this land and its Pharaoh. This can already be seen in Eliakim's pro-Egyptian behaviour, but it also in Ishmael's decision to flee to Egypt as a sanctuary. It is worth noting that neither of these figures have YHWH as a theophoric element in their birth names. Their connection with Egypt clearly has nothing to do with YHWH but rather with a(n un)conscious decision that they have made against him. Furthermore, these two sons of David are both associated with the spilling of innocent blood: for Eliakim it is part of his verdict (2 Kgs 24:2–4) whereas Ishmael murders an apparently innocent Gedaliah (25:26). The narrative itself provides no information about the characters' motivations and the reason why Egypt is ultimately a place with no future (unlike Babylon, it is not mentioned in the epilogue). For this, we will have to review the history of the relationship between Judah, YHWH, and Egypt. The relationship between the old empire of Egypt and the new one of Babylon that replaces it has also not been sufficiently illuminated. The role of the "Brook of Egypt" (2 Kgs 24:7) must also be clarified, for the dynamic of the plot does not seem to require reference to it.[536]

It is not only these places that are unknown. We also lack clarity concerning the *invading hoards* of 2 Kgs 24:1 f., the roles of the Gedaliah's *commanders* (who are, after all, mentioned by name), and the meaning of the places *Rumah*, *Libnah*, *Jericho*, and *Mizpah.* Even more serious is our lack of complete clarity concerning the toponym or ethnonym *Judah*, for which no direct information at all is provided but which appears to be the key to understanding God's wrathful judgement. This dearth of information causes us to doubt whether we have really understood two other entities that, until now, had seemed to be self-evident, namely *Jerusalem* and *Babylon.* In both cases their function within the narrative of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 seems at first glance to be clear. First impressions, however, can be misleading. Without a superordinate perspective, a "dimensional-ontological"[537] view of the events, as v. Frankl puts it in his introduction to logotherapy, the narrative cannot be fully grasped.

536 D.5.2 will show that 2 Kgs 24:7 is a prolepsis for 25:26, which serves as a preparation for the curse of Deut 28:68.

537 V.E.Frankl, *Mensch* 72–80. Despite its simplicity, the term "dimensional ontology" refers to an ingenious idea. It assumes that clients only have their own perspective on life, a perspective that can be divided into several facets. The result is a picture (2D) that is taken to be true although not all of it can be understood and categorized. It appears that the same situation can generate diverging, mutually contradictory interpretations. Frankl compares this with a geometric experiment. In it a cylinder is illuminated from above and from the

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It is not only the fate of Judah, Jerusalem, Jehoiachin, and the exiles that remains unclear, the same applies to our understanding of the overall context and thus ultimately a large portion of the narrative itself. The place of their understanding is eu-topian in the sense of "ingraspable" (i. e. in-comprehensible and in-tangible ; *un[be]greifbar*).

Last but not least, we must also identify the role of the *Chaldeans, Babylon*, and the *Babylonian king* within the story. These three entities belong together and constitute an element of chaos. This group turns fruitful land into wilderness, freedom into slavery, home into exile. They destroy space and disrupt the flow of time. They act against everything and everyone, enrich themselves, and appear to have respect for nothing. The king is nothing more than a controlling power who abets the process of complete entropy. As a result, death and destruction irrupt into the story, but as apocalyptic images and not as the actual end of the world. By means of *spacing* we were able to demonstrate that this is not the kings' idea but rather something that occurs by order of YHWH. He is the active agent working behind the scenes. The Chaldeans are nothing more than a "gate of God" (Bab-El) through which YHWH enters into both the story and history ("*Geschichte*"). If he is the one who controls the rulers of the world then he is also the one who grants them the space in which they can operate, and he is the one who can stem the encroachment of chaos. Why, then, does he allow the temple's symbols of divine triumph (gold, cultic objects, pillars, iron sea, possibly a garden) to be destroyed and plundered? Is this evidence of his loss of power, or did he allow these powers to invade his space, i. e. to cross the boundaries that had confined them?

Finally, why does Jehoiachin re-enter the story in the final scene, thus rendering everything open once again? After a long period of time and in a foreign land of slavery he is re-introduced in 2 Kgs 25:27 by means of time and location specifications as the "king of Judah". He receives once again his own dynastic chronology after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Yet that is not all: All that happens to him takes place in the seventh Sabbath year, i. e. on the eve of a jubilee year. What does this mean and what is the relationship between this year and Judah? Is YHWH waiting for something?

Despite the sophistication with which our story is told, it is unable to tell us the source of all this power from, whether it is intrinsic or experienced. Perhaps the broader context of these chapters, namely the books of Genesis to 2 Kings, will be able to provide us with the key … ?

side. From the horizontal axis the pyramid casts a round shadow, in the vertical axis a rectangular one. Two dimensionality is not capable of explaining the result. The same could be true for narratives that are read without their context.

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D. The Narrative in its Broader Narrative Context (Gen 1–2 Kgs 25)

Our narratological analysis has thus far focused solely on our pericope read in isolation without drawing upon its broader narrative context for interpretive guidance. As a result we have been left with a series of open questions that still need to be addressed. In this final section of our study we will now address these questions in light of that broader context. Given the sheer volume of material that might be drawn upon, it will be necessary at the outset to make a number of preliminary hermeneutical and substantive decisions.

The initial narrative context of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 is the book of Kingdoms (1 Samuel–2 Kings). However, it is also possible to identify a broader coherent and uninterrupted narrative stretching beyond this to the book of Joshua. The insertion of Josh 1:7, which is considered to mark a canonical caesura, renders the texts (canonically) superordinate to the rest of the narrative.[538] Regardless of one's preferred redaction-critical model, there is a consensus that there is a strong connection linking the historical books with the books on the other side of this canonical boundary, in particular Deuteronomy.[539] However, the other books of the Torah are also connected with the Former Prophets, so that it is best to include the Pentateuch as a whole within the narrative context.[540]

Nevertheless, a story can only be fully understood from the perspective of its end.[541] The narrative in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 concludes the entire narrative complex.

538 See N.Lohfink, *Tod* 11–28; Zenger, *Einleitung* 25–27. For the question of the difference between a narrative context read from within a canonical perspective and one read from without, see E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 224f.

539 See Zenger, *Einleitung*; 238. "However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that there are plotlines within the Pentateuch that find their resolution beyond its boundaries (l.c. 70)."

540 See ibid. 103; Schmitt, *Geschichtswerk*. Even if the caesura interrupts the linearity of the narrative, the narrative is sustained by the presence of its network of themes.

541 It am fully aware of the difficulties of dating these texts, difficulties that may be insurmountable (see L.Grabbe, *Last Days* 23; 26–29; a different view is taken by K.Schmid, *Legislation* 129–153). Because this thesis is concerned with a narratological analysis based on the synchronic form of the text of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, the focus here will necessarily be on the synchronic dimension.

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As would be expected for such an ending,[542] it picks up elements from the preceding story, reflects upon them, unites its various strands, and clarifies various open questions and narrative cliff-hangers. As such, the conclusion provides clear indications of how to interpret the entire narrative.

An appropriate methodology consists in identifying the intertextual network, i. e. the *leximatic connections* or motifs that re-occur throughout the narrative.[543] We shall identify these in two steps. The first step is descriptive in nature: we will identify the narrative's core terms and describe their interconnections with each other. We will then assess these occurrences according to specific criteria for a better understanding of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30.

The following criteria are derived from the work of S.Gillmayer-Bucher:[544]

1. Mention must be made of a *characteristic of the text* (reference) that points to a relationship. This can be derived from the description.
2. How is reference made to a text (referential intertextuality; *Einzeltextreferenz*, i. e. it is clear which text is being referred to) or to structural similarities (typological intertextuality; *Systemreferenz*, i. e. the reference is to a structure, idea, or motif rather than a specific text)? In our text the references are mostly typological in nature.
3. How is the *foreign text integrated* into our text? This rarely happens by means of direct citation, as happens for the plundering of the temple (2 Kgs 25:11–14). Sometimes we find an allusion to place names, persons, or core terminology such as "Solomon," "Egypt," or "to bring out." The most frequent type, however, are the thematic connections created by means of typological intertextuality, such as the use of a law from Deuteronomy, the threat of destruction and the remnant, the creation of an expectation that is then left unfulfilled.
4. What *new understanding* results from this intertextual relationship?

These four criteria constitute the basis of the following descriptions. However, for the sake of readability each step will not be treated separately.

The question as to why YHWH turns against his own people, or at least against that part of his people that remains to the end, is clarified within the narrative by means of allusions to a divine act of judgement.

The hardness of the punishments or even their justification in the first place are barely treated in the narrative, providing us with hardly any information for their interpretation. Part three will clarify these questions, and in doing so will

542 See the discussion in chapter C.1.

543 The most recent developments in literary theory speak of "thematology" rather than motif criticism or intertextuality (see Schneider, *Einführung* 33; 37).

544 See her *Intertextualität* 19. The final criterium must be supplemented with the following aspects: Is the reference a matter of intensifying, relativising, or subverting?

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supplement the character analysis (chapter C4) in particular. In that chapter, it had not been possible to identify the motivations for the characters' actions, the value system, or the tasks of the characters and groups within their communities and within the plot. For this reason, it is not possible to grasp their relation to YHWH and their entanglement in a complex of guilt. The judgement appears to be largely unjustified. For example, the figures of Solomon, Josiah, and Manasseh remain unknown; the People-of-the-Land, the mother of the king and most court officials rarely engage in actions, if at all. It is possibile that the whole of Judah is subject to a form of "clan liability" that even condemns the innocent. Apart from this, it is still unclear who or what "Judah" is and what role it plays in the narrative.

In order to interpret all this from within the context of the broader narrative it is of decisive importance to identify relevant links with the narrative books (Joshua–2 Kings) and the legal basis according to which the characters are judged (the Book of the Covenant, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, in particular the laws concerning offices in Deut 17 and the curse formula in Deut 28). This material must also be supplemented with the prophetic traditions (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel).[545]

The pressing question of the legitimacy of the divine judgement[546] and its relation to the great promises that had been given to the people of God (z. B. Gen 12; Exod 3f.; Josh 24; 1 Sam 15; 2 Sam 7) is a further large chapter. Another question that arises in this context is why the surrounding nations and especially the Babylonians/Chaldeans have been chosen to carry out this punishment and why Egypt can offer Judah no viable future.

A third complex of questions concern the relationship between YHWH's punishments and his gracious act in 2 Kgs 25:27–30 as well as his earlier displays of mercy. The last three verses in particular, which have received so much scholarly attention and which seem to be so decisive for understanding the overall message of the narrative, need to be re-read within their narrative context. After we have finished this comprehensive analysis of the narrative of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, seeking to understand it from within its context, we can take one final step and reflect upon its theological message.

545 The Latter Prophets will not be treated here because they have their own understandings of the catastrophe of 586 B.C. and the relationships to Jeremiah in particular have already been treated (see A.2).

546 Here it is we will have not choice but to look at the creative power of God (Gen 1–11) and his salvific acts towards Israel (Exod 1–40) for, as will be demonstrated, these influence the conclusion found in 2 Kings 25.

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1. The Kingdom of Judah

1.1 The Israelite Kingdom in "Law" and "Reality."

It is not only necessary to further analyse Kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, we must also analyse the roles of Kings Josiah, Manasse and Solomon, whose roles in the text have still not be clarified. The kingdom of Judah (and Israel) as a whole must also be taken into consideration in order to understand the divine verdict concerning the kings and the land. The most important questions are as follows: (1) Within the context of the narrative, what was the nature of this kingdom? How does one become king and what tasks does he have? (2) What can we learn about the individual kings who are relevant for 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30? Given the canonical function of the Torah within the narrative, these texts shall serve as a standard against which the following narrative will be judged.

1.1.1 History Prior to Kingship in Israel

We must first seek to understand the nature of royal rule over the nation. In the Torah Israel knows no king. Kingship does not begin with creation, for there all people are representatives of God (Gen 1:26–28). Neither does it begin with the election of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs (Gen 12–50), nor during the time of Moses. Although Abraham was a military leader (Gen 14 f.), Joseph saved his people (Gen 41 f.), and Moses, Aaron and Miriam led the people in the wilderness (Exodus – Deuteronomium), none of these figures were rulers over Israel.

The same is true in the narrative that follows the Torah, for there kings continue[547] to be a phenomenon typical of the nations but not of Israel (see Josh 2:2 f.; 8:1 f.; 10; Judg 3:10–20 et passim). The first mention of a king in Israel occurs in Judges 9.[548] Abimelech ("My Father is King"), the bastard child of a judge, murders a large part of his family and has himself proclaimed as king in Shechem. Shortly afterwards, his half-brother Jotham comes to him with a parable about some trees that wish to choose their own king. They end up choosing the least appropriate person and he is the cause of their downfall.[549] This scene contains two negative portents for the reality kingship in Israel: Firstly, it establishes that it

547 In the Torah it is primarily Pharaoh / the king of Egypt who appears in this role. As YHWH's antagonist, he gives kingship a negative connotation.

548 Immediately beforehand (Judg 8:22 f.) Gideon had just declared that no one could be a king apart from YHWH. This casts an even more negative light upon the events of Judges 9 (see N.Wazana, *Law* 169–195, 175).

549 For the critique of kingship in Judg 9:8–15, see K.Schöpflin, *Jotham's speech* 3–22; S.Tatu, *Jotham's fable* 105–124.

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is illegitimate for Israel to choose its own king. Secondly, it casts a negative light on the cultic centre of Shechem, which will later become the initial capital of the Northern Kingdom (see 1 Kgs 12). By virtue of its connection with a bad king it discredits the entire royal line of that kingdom. It is impossible or a good king to rule there, and indeed, the later historical narrative will conclude that *not a single* king of Israel did what pleased YHWH.

Despite this failed first attempt, the end of the book of Judges also evinces a more positive attitude towards kingship, seeing in it an alternative possibility to the anarchic model provided by Abimelech: "In those days there was not yet a king in Israel. Everyone did what he pleased" (Judg 21:25).[550]

Before the nation goes on to recieve a king, it is granted a new prophet (Samuel). His birth is miraculous and he grows up under the custody of the last of the judges (Eli), where he gets to know YHWH. When the people first demand a king in 1 Sam 8 Samuel is initially furious, for the people should simply trust in the leadership of YHWH in order to receive salvation. Yet YHWH is patient with his people and establishes a kingdom:

> For they have not rejected you, rather they have rejected me: I should no longer be their king. This entirely accords with the deeds that they have (repeatedly) done since I brought them up out of Egypt until this very day. They have forsaken me and served other gods. Thus they are doing with you now. Nevertheless, listen now to their voice, but warn them insistently and make them know what the rights of the king who will rule over you are.
>
> Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. He said, "These will be the rights of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and use them for himself in his chariots and horses and they will run before his chariots. He will make them into commanders of (divisions of) thousands and into leaders of (divisions of) fifties. They have to plough his ground and reap his harvest. They have to manufacture his military equipment and the equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters so that they will prepare ointments for him and cook and bake. He will take away your best fields, vineyards, and olive trees and give them to his officials. He will levy a tithe on your fields and your vineyards and give it to his courtiers and officials. He will get your male and female servants, the best of your young people, and your donkeys and make them work for him. He will levy a tithe on your herds of sheep. You yourselves will be his slaves. On that day you will cry out for help because of the king that you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you on that day" (1 Sam 8:7–18; translation of the German EÜ 2016; emphasis mine).

This statement by YHWH is as clear as it is radical: The appointment of a human sovereign over the nation undermines the direct and exclusive relationship that pertains between God and his people, for they no longer recognize him as their

550 W.Gro(ß)ss, *Ri*; G.Hentschel, *Richter* 267–278, 276f.

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ruler. This attitude is explained by their repeated idolatry (Exod 32; Judges et passim) and it amounts to a declaration of the nation's bankruptcy. The king, on the other hand, is granted so many rights that he is effectively free to rule Israel as he pleases and make it a nation of his personal "slaves" (עבדים).

This expression also occurs in the Torah, which indicates that the people's subordination to a human king is equivalent to the nation's submission to Pharaoh as slaves in in Egypt (Exod 1:13f.; 5:15f.; 6:5 et passim).

It is remarkable this text speaks exclusively of the king's rights rather than his obligations, which are prescribed in Deuteronomy's law of the king (Deut 17:14–20).

1.1.2 The Law of the King (Deut 17:14–20) and the Kings

> When you have moved into the land that the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and then say: "I will set a king over me, like all the nations in my neighbourhood!," then you may set a king over you, but only the one that the LORD your God chooses. You may only set someone as king over you who is from the midst of your brothers. You shall not set a foreigner over you, because he is not your brother. However, the king shall not keep too many horses. He shall not bring the people back to Egypt in order to get more horses, for the LORD said to you, "You shall never return that way again." He also shall not take a large number of women so that his mind does not turn away from the right way. He shall not accumulate too much silver and gold. And when he has ascended his throne he shall have made for himself on a scroll a duplicate of this instruction that the Levitical priests preserve. His whole life long he shall take the instruction with him and read in the scroll so that he learns to fear the LORD his God, to abide by all the words of this instruction and these laws, to keep them, to not exalt his heart over his brothers, and to not depart from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he may live long as king in Israel, he and his offspring. (Deut 17:14–20; EÜ 2016)

The law of the king is such a complex topic that it will not be possible to treat it adequately in this study.[551] Nevertheless, a proper understanding of the narrative requires knowledge of some of its aspects.

The first instruction is as follows: Only YHWH can appoint a king. In this way the king is automatically subordinated to YHWH. Both Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23:35) as Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:17) are appointed by foreigner rulers. It is impossible for them to please YHWH, for their submission to foreign kings automatically means that they also serve their gods.

This is followed by instructions concerning the king's property: He is forbidden from having too may horses, i. e. military, and certainly not from Egypt.

551 An excellent introduction to the subject can be found in the chapter on the law of the king in J.Friedl's dissertation, Volk.

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This is a polemic prolepsis of king Solomon, who will do just this (1 Kgs 10:28). The prohibition against (ever again) taking the people to Egypt is an explanation of Ishmael's failure (2 Kgs 25:26), who violates this commandment. In 2 Kgs 23:32 f. Jehoahaz also returns to Egypt, albeit unwillingly, and is thus disqualified from being a king of Judah.

The next commandment concerns the number of the king's wives and limitations to his wealth. These are critiques of the immeasurable wealth of Solomon (1 Kg 10:14–29), who also had more than 200 wives from all over the world who were ultimately responsible for his apostasy (1 Kgs 1 1:1–13).[552] Yet it is not only Solomon's wealth that became a cause of downfall, Hezekiah's wealth provoked the siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 20:12–18). It is not so easy to identify violations of the prohibition against having a large harem. This can be due to a number of reasons: (1) These harems exist, as can be seen with king Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:15), they are just not mentioned specifically, and / or (2) the king's apostacy has already taken place, so that the issue with the women is less important (see below). In favour of this view is the negative appraisal of most of the kings of Judah who continued the deeds of their fathers, i. e. did not tear down the cultic high places.

These few commandments are followed by another. The king must carry with him a copy of the law, either of Deuteronomy or of the whole Torah, and he must read it daily so that he can keep the commands of YHWH.[553] The original is to be kept by the Levites. This is without doubt the scroll that is given to Josiah in 2 Kgs 22.

It is forbidden to diverge "to the left or to the right" of this law, an ideal that is only fulfilled by Josiah and David as ideal kings (2 Kgs 22:2).[554] On a number of occasions it occurs with a spatial meaning, as in Exod 14:22, 29, where it describes waters that have been pushed back. In general, diverging from the way is considered to be dangerous (Num 20:17; Deut 2:27 et passim). Even more important, however, is the moral category of keeping to the correct path. With the exception of Prov 4:27, this manifests itself as an explicit demand for Torah observance. It appears at the end of the Decalogue (Deut 5:32) and is the highest standard for sacral court proceedings (Deut 17:11) and the king (Deut 17:20; 2 Kgs 22:2). The phrase also appears at the intersection between curse and blessing in Deut 28:14 as well as at the beginning of the granting of the land (Josh 1:7; 23:6), indicating that the nation, too, is sworn to abide by this standard. A consequence of the

552 So also N.Wazana, *Law* 180.

553 See C.Frevel/ E.Zenger, *Einleitung* 155; 159.

554 For the expression, see the table in the appendix. See also G.Braulik, *Gesetzesparänese* 2150, especially 31–34; M.Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*.

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people deviating from the law is that they must walk a path that they do not want to follow (Isa 30:21).

Only those kings who keep this commandment, i. e. listen to the voice of YHWH in the form of the law, will have a long reign and can be certain that their children will inherit their throne.[555]

For this reason, one of the most important royal roles is that of judge, i. e. he must bring about justice and keep the commandments. In the wisdom literature the king is compared, for example, to a lion, for he sees the truth with his sharp eyes and renders just verdicts (Prov 19:12; 20:2, 8, 28). If he does not exercise his office well he is considered one of the wicked:

> The wicked person flees even if no one pursues him, the righteous person feels as secure as a lion […] A roaring lion, a voracious bear—a wicked ruler over a weak people. Some princes are of little understanding but great as oppressors; whoever hates exploitation has a long life. A person who is burdened with blood guilt is fugitive until the grave; let no one support him. (Prov 28:1, 15–17; EÜ 2016).

This blood guilt that according to and through the law (Deut 19:10–13; 21:8f.; 27:25) pursues a person until the grave, clings to Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:16) and Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 24:4). It can be traced back to the bloody fratricide of Gen 4, where Cain is consequently stigmatized with a sign that will remain with him until his death (Gen 4:10.15). Interestingly, it is precisely this sign, which accords with enormity of Cain's guilt, which hinders him from being held to account and getting killed (Gen 4:14–16). Saul, on the other hand, is able to postpone the downfall of his kingdom because he pays attention to his son when he cries, "Why do you want to become guilty and spill innocent blood by killing David?" (1 Sam 19:5). It catches up with him eventually, however, when the last two members of his dynasty are murdered, his cousin Abner (1 Sam 14:50) by Joab (2 Sam 3:29) and his grandson Ishbaal (2 Sam 4).[556] These assassinations displease David the ideal king (2 Sam 3:29; 4:10f.) so that the offenders are judged, either immediately (2 Sam 4:12) or upon David's deathbed (1 Kgs 2:5). Although these murderers have dispatched David's enemies, he does not reward them but judges them according to the Torah, as is proper for a king who is righteous before YHWH.

555 The wisdom texts also think along these lines when they describe the righteous king. The first task of the king is to fulfill YHWH's will. Provberbs 21:1 states: "Like a stream of water is the heart of the king in the hand of YHWH, he turns it wherever he will." Psalm 1:1f. reads, "Blessed is the man [i. e. king David] who does not walk in the council of the wicked […], but rather his delight is in the instruction of the Lord, who meditates on his instruction day and night." Therefore, it is not the king whose grace is to be sought, rather it is YHWH who administers justice and to whose prophets the nation should listen (Prov 29:18, 16). This is the only way in which the king can be just and guarantee his throne forever (Prov 29:14).

556 See J.Pakkala, Zedekiah's Fate 449 fn. 23.

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1.1.3 The Choice of the King, His Descendants, and the Rejection of the Saulides

The law of the king has made clear that it is God and not the people who is to choose the ruler. In the narrative this decision is communicated through his prophets. This is the case with Saul (1 Sam 9) and David (1 Sam 16), and it is even true of the appointment of Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kgs 12). A sign of this election is the anointing of the king. The people-of-the-land undertook to anoint Jehoahaz without prophetic support, which means without a divine order to do so (2 Kgs 23:30f.). He is a ruler who has not been chosen by God and as such he cannot be pleasing to YHWH.

When Saul was anointed as king we read that he was subsequently confirmed in this role at a separate gathering in Mizpah (1 Sam 10:17–19). Immediately after the announcement of his kingship we read that the law of the king was written down and stored (v.25). It is unclear whether this is connected with Deut 17:14–20 or the polemics of 1 Sam 8. This would also have been the correct procedure for Jehoahaz, yet the silence of the prophets already speaks for itself (see D.4).

It is important for dynasties that once they have been elected they retain power within the same lineage.[557] The books of Kings provides this information in the regnal formula. Saul, however, never receives one. The statement "Saul was [?] years old and he ruled for two years in Israel" (1 Sam 13:1) only constitutes the beginning of such a formula. Not only is his age missing but also the conclusion of the formula with its reference to the passing on of power to the king's children. This is because those of his children who could have ruled after him died alongside him (1 Sam 31). The omission of this detail indicates the end of his dynasty and excludes the possibility that the Saulides could have been the forbears of the Davidides.[558] It is fitting that David does not have a regnal formula, for he constitutes the foundation of the dynasty, which endures until the end of 2 Kings (and possibly beyond?).

In addition to the house of Saul and the house of David, which in the beginning was limited to Judah (2 Sam 2:7) and became so in the end once again (1 Kgs 12), there are the northern Israelite dynasties of the house of Jeroboam, the house of Menahem, the house of Jehu, the house of Omri, and the house of Baasha.[559] According to Genesis they are descended from the twelve patriarchs, i.e. the twelve sons of Jacob, as is the rest of Israel. Jacob in turn is the son of

557 In contrast to Chronicles and Genesis, the continuity of the kings of Judah as an identity marker of the people/state that is articulated in 1–2 Kings accords with the "ideology of ancestral identities that is directly related to the political landscape of the Levant during the Iron Age." (see M.Suriano, *Politics* 175).

558 See M.Suriano, *Politics* 172.

559 Ibid. 171.

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Isaac, who is the son of Abraham, so that all the kings are from his house. Just like David, Abraham is a divinely elected founder of a family, for he leaves the house of his father (Gen 12:14). Like David is does not stand in the tradition of his fathers, which proves that the creation of a new dynastic line is not in an of itself objectionable. This is relevant for both the Davidides and the kings of the Northern Kingdom. The latter, however, fail, for they never depart from the cultic errors of their predecessors. As such, the dynasties that precede them remain their "spiritual fathers." They are not only their parents' genealogical but also their spiritual offspring.

Over the course of his rule Saul, the first king to be chosen by YHWH, turns into a capricious despot. For this reason his house is rejected by YHWH. Saul hammers the final nail in his coffin in 1 Sam 28:7–22 when he seeks an oracle from the sorceress of En-Dor instead of asking the prophets of YHWH for help. This act is equivalent to idolatry (see Deut18:9–22) and leads the downfall of both Saul and his house. Yet his fate as king had already been sealed in 1 Sam 15, for "YHWH regretted making Saul king" (1 Sam 15:35). Already at this point it was clear in what manner Saul would fail:

> For disobedience is sin like sorcery and antagonism is like the service and worship of idols. Because you have rejected the word of YHWH, he has also rejected you from being king any longer (15:23; EÜ 2016).

God's regret, which led to the destruction of Saul, is the result of his continually threatening to punish him. There is only one other case in the Bible of such total destruction, namely the story of Noah's Flood (Gen 6–9). It begins with a similar formulation:

> The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was increasing upon the earth. And the Lord regretted having made man upon the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, and with him all cattle, the creeping animals, and the birds of the heavens, for I regret having made them." (Gen 6:5–7; EÜ 2016; emphasis my own)

And just as God promises to creation in Gen 9:11, 15 that he will not threaten it again in the same manner, so he promises to David, "My grace shall not depart from [you] as I let it depart from Saul, whom I have put away from before you" (2 Sam 7:15). Noah receives this promise as the last just man on earth, just like David, who had proven to be a good and gracious king. For David does not seize the opportunity to eliminate any further claims to the throne from the house of Saul by shedding any more blood. Rather, in 1 Sam 24:22 f. he promises not to kill Saul's descendants. He not only keeps this promise, he treats his oath as the standard by which he judges the murderers of Saul's descendants (see above). And in addition to showing respect to Saul and his offspring (1 Sam 31:12 f.; 2 Sam

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1; 3:35; 4:12), he even allows official rites of mourning to be held.[560] In contrast to Saul, David is the ideal king.

David is the criterion for evaluating all the kings that YHWH chooses, with the following serious exception: David spills Uriah's innocent blood after failing to hide the fact that he had slept with his wife (2 Sam 11). The first son born of this union dies (2 Sam 12); Absalom, the successor to the throne, rebels against his father; for the rest of David's life (2 Sam 13–24) one family drama follows another. After David's death Solomon, Bathsheba's surviving son, becomes king after a longer period of internal conflict over accession to the throne (1 Kgs 1). The question of the survival of the dynasty that had received the promise of YHWH's protection (2 Sam 7:15f.) will be decided in relation to him. He becomes the cornerstone of the kingdom of Judah.

1.1.4 Solomon, Manasseh, and Josiah – Idealized Stereotypes

a) King Solomon of (All) Israel – Donator of the Temple Treasure? (2 Kgs 24:13; 25:16)

Solomon, the "Prince of Peace," is the fruit of a liaison of which it is said, "YHWH was not pleased with what David had done" (2 Sam 11:27). He is not David's firstborn and he can only ascend the throne with the help of his mother (1 Kgs 1). On his deathbed David exhorts his son to walk in the ways of God and to keep the commandments of the Torah (1 Kgs 2:3).[561] By doing so he demonstrates once again that he is an ideal king, for he gives his successor the task that is enjoined by the law of the king (Deut 17:19f.). At first this all works excellently. Solomon is a role model of wisdom and the fear of God. He builds God's house (1 Kgs 6–8) according to his instructions and in an act of state after the prayer of consecration of the temple he submits himself, his kingdom, and the nation once again to YHWH:

> Blessed be the Lord who has given peace to his people Israel, as he had promised. Not one of all the glorious promises that he had spoken by the mouth of his servant Moses have failed. The Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us and forsake us. May he incline our hearts to him, so that we walk in his ways and keep the commandments, statues, and rules that he gave to our fathers. May these words with which I have pleaded before the Lord our God remain present to him day and night. May he maintain the cause his servant and his people Israel, as each day requires, so that

560 For the meaning of public weeping as an act of public royal strength rather than private masculine strength, see I.Müllner/ T.Naumann, *Männlichkeit* 303–315.

561 A lot of Deuteronomic terminology is introduced into this passage. See G.Braulik, SBAB 2 11–38; for more detail see N.Lohfink SBAB 2 11–38; SBAB 12 229–256; SBAB 16 206–238; SBAB 20 157–166.

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> all the peoples of the earth may know that no one is God but the LORD. But let your hearts be undivided before the LORD our God so that you keep all his commandments, as is the case today. (1 Kgs 8:56—61; EÜ 2016, emphasis mine).

Solomon's exemplary life which mirrors that of his father is followed by the blessings promised by YHWH. He becomes rich and is able to expand the boarders of Israel to the south as far as Eilat (1 Kgs 9:26). He secures the boarders of his kingdom and enlarges it so that it reaches its greatest extent. He develops and secures Jerusalem and other cites, he maintains peace with the surrounding nations, and he maintains good relations with the temple. At some point, however, he forgets the commandments of the Torah, becomes too rich (1 Kgs 10:14–29), and acquires horses from Egypt (10:28). Finally, his innumerable wives, acquired through political alliances, tempt him to commit idolatry and build cultic high places (1 Kgs 11:1–8), thereby transgressing almost all the instructions of the law of the king. The result is that he must lose the entire kingdom. However, due to God's promise to David (2 Sam 7:15 f.) he is allowed to keep Jerusalem and Judah and pass them on to his children (1 Kgs 11:13). In this way Solomon becomes a type of the fallen king. Despite his ideal start, he eventually abandons his faith in YHWH and loses nearly everything. Just like his father he makes a fatal mistake. However, in contrast to him he does not recognize this fact and so loses his good relationship with YHWH. The first full regnal formula of Judah marks his death (1 Kgs 11:41–43) and he becomes a second patriarch of the dynasty.[562]

The beginning and end of 1 and 2 Kings are connected by Solomon's marital connection with Egypt and the riches that he donates to the temple (2 Kgs 25:12–17, 26). By marrying an Egyptian he brings Egypt into the Promised Land, thereby creating a foundation for the later return of the gold of Egypt (Exod 3:22; 11:2; 12:35) back to the land that it came from (2 Kgs 23:34 f.).[563]

From the perspective of 1 Kings Solomon is not an unambiguously positive character, as is repeatedly claimed by scholars who are too influenced by 1–2 Chronicles.[564] He is ambiguous and presages the downfall of the kingdom just as much as his father David did. No human king is sufficiently ideal to be a king the way that YHWH is.

562 The regnal formula evokes a feudal formula in which competancies are passed on from the father to the heir (B.HALPERN, *Editions* 242 f.).

563 So J.P.LEITHART, *2 Kgs* 272.

564 See G.GAFUS, *Königskritik* 49–58,55 f. The Song of Solomon has a critical view of Solomon, so that even within the broader Old Testament he remains an ambivalent figure (see E.BIRNBAUM, *Salomo* 233–264, especially 237–243). This is seen differently by T.RÖMER, *Salomon* 98–130; L.SCHWIENHÜRST-SCHÖNBERGER, *Salomo*.

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b) King Manasseh of Judah – Shedder of Innocent Blood (2 Kgs 24:3f.)

Only negative things are reported of Manasseh. He not only continues the sins of his predecessors, he also reverts the measures taken by his father Hezekiah to purify the cult (2 Kgs 21:3). He commits all the sins of the nations (21:2, 4–6) and even has a cultic pole set up (v.7), thus explicitly contravening the regulations of Deut 16:21f., 17:2–7, and 18:9–22.[565] His behaviour is particularly wicked because the people of Judah follow him and so profane the temple and desecrate the whole land, thus forcing YHWH to compare them to Samaria and its terrible king Ahab (2 Kgs 21:813). In short, Manasseh turns Judah into a new Israel, and thus the people of Judah into a nation of idolators. YHWH responds by threatening the following:

> I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish and then turns it upside down. I will forsake the remnant of my heritage and surrender them to their enemies. Thus will my people become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, for it has done what displeases and angers me, since the day their fathers departed from Egypt until this very day. (2 Kgs 21:13–15, EÜ 2016, emphasis mine)

Manasseh, however, pays no attention to these words and ignores the clear allusion to the condemnation of Saul. For this reason, 2 Kgs 24:1–4 makes him partially responsible for the invading bands of robbers.

In addition to this, he also follows in the footsteps of Saul and Ahab[566] by shedding innocent blood (21:16).[567] As always, when such blood is shed the ramifications effect not only Manasseh himself, who after all managed to rule for a period of 55 years (21:1), it also affects his descendants: Amon is murdered in his home (21:23), Josiah dies on the battlefield (23:29f.), the sons of Josiah occupy the throne in succession, and at least Zedekiah is brutally punished and dies a lonely death (Jer 52). His grandson Jehoiachin spends most of his life in prison in Babylon and is only released at the age of 55 (2 Kgs 25:27). This turning point in 2 Kgs 25:27–30 simultaneously marks the fulfilment of YHWH's statement that he "keeps steadfast love for thousands and takes away guilt, wickedness, and sin, but he does not leave the sinner unpunished; he visits the guilt of the fathers on the sons and grandsons, on the third and fourth generation" (Exod 34:7; EÜ 2016). Jehoiachin belongs to the fourth generation after Manasseh (Amon – Josiah – Jehoiakim – Jehoiachin) and it is only with him that YHWH eases the punishment.[568]

565 See P.F.S.van Keulen, *Manasseh* 86.
566 See M.A.Sweeney, *King Josiah* 36.
567 For the significance of the shedding of innocent blood, see above (C.3.2).
568 Gegen P.F.S.van Keulen, *Manasseh* 158.

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For all these reasons it is Manasseh who is the catalyst (not the primary cause) of the downfall of Judah (2 Kgs 23:27; 24:4f.).[569] It no longer matters than his grandson Josiah destroys the cultic high places in order to keep his great grandson away from them.[570]

Manasseh is buried in the garden of Uzza that lies adjacent to his house, as is his son Amon (21:21) and possibly Jehoiakim (24:6).[571] This fact is important for several reasons. (1) Even if we never discover source of the name Uzza (e. g. from King Uzziah), this grave is obviously located *next to* or even in the garden of the king that constitutes Zedekiah's flight route from the city (2 Kgs 25:4f.). (2) It is never said that King Josiah is buried there. As such, this garden could be a place for bad kings,[572] which would give it a negative quality. At the very least it is an unclean place because the dead are buried there, thus making it an antithesis to the garden of YHWH, the garden of Eden, which is a place of life (Gen 2f.; 13:10 et passim).[573] This can be seen with particular clarity in the broader narrative context, for only in Genesis and 2 Kgs is mention made of a garden (with the exception of the metaphorical use in Balaam's blessing [Num 24:5–9]). The garden from which the primeval human was banished (Gen 2f.) parallels the self-made garden of Manasseh (2 Kgs 21). Yet instead of being a place of life and peace it is a place of burial (2 Kgs 21:18) and an escape route (2 Kgs 25:4).

c) King Josiah of Judah – the New David (2 Kgs 23:30)

Much has been written about King Josiah, with the focus largely being on his cult reform. This reform is the antithesis of Manasseh's negative cult reform (2 Kgs 21)[574] and a much more thorough implementation of the cultic purification of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18f.). After the implementation of his reforms and the celebration of Passover (2 Kgs 23:23) cultic terminology ceases to play a role in the narrative.[575] Josiah reads the law of the king (2 Kgs 22) and presumably the entire

569 See D.R.Davis, *2 Kgs* 337. He also says that from this point onwards it no longer matters who is sitting upon the throne. Even if David himself were to reascend it, God would no longer forgive. As evidence he points to Ps 103:10 (p. 339).

570 This is the view of H.-D.Hoffmann, *Reform* 33–37; P.F.S.van Keulen, *Manasseh* 206.

571 This, at least, is the view of Ant (see part B).

572 So M.Suriano, *Politics* 109, who ultimately decides against this interpretation because of its highly speculative nature (p. 110).

573 See the term "garden" in the table in the appendix. Here we can see that in the post-exilic period the garden became a picture of the renewed Jerusalem (especially in Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah). In the context of narrative it tends to a more descriptive term.

574 See H.-D.Hoffmann, *Reform* 23f.29; 40.45f.; M.Sweeney, *King Josiah* 4, 36–39, 170. The intertexts can be found in B.Halpern, *Editions* 240: 2 Kgs 21:3 vs. 23:8; 21:3 vs. 23:4; 21:4f. vs. 23:12.

575 See G.Vanoni, *Beobachtungen* 357f. He gives סלה as an example. It occurs seven times in the DtrH, five times in the prayer consecrating the temple (1 Kgs 8), once in Deut 29:19 and 2 Kgs

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law, for he begins to implement its legal provisions within Judah. The centralization of the cult (Deut 12:4–7) and the strict prohibition of Canaanite cultic practices (Deut 12:29–31) are particularly salient. He is shocked when reading what are presumably the curses of Deut 28, which he has interpreted by Huldah, the last prophetic figure to be mentioned in the narrative (2 Kgs 22).

Excursus on Deut 28 as a Threat of Punishment

What was it that Josiah had read that caused him to implement the most significant reform in the history of the monarchy? What does "the book of the law" say about the relationship between God and nation? Deuteronomy 28 is a key passage for understanding the punitive measures taken by God in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 and his choice of sanctions.[576] This chapter contains the conclusion of a contract,[577] which in vv. 1–14 guarantees Israel blessing if it listens to YHWH's voice (תשמע בקול יהוה). The following vv.15–68 then describe in minute detail everything that the people of God will suffer if they do not listen to the word of YHWH and break the covenant with him.[578] A mere cursory reading is sufficient to notice the strong semantic connection[579] of this chapter with the broader narrative.

Deut 28:15–61 (Threat)	**2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 (Execution)**
20: Doing evil leads to punishment.	24:3, 20: Punishment due to doing evil.
25a: YHWH surrenders them to their enemies.	24:1 f.; 25:9–21: inferiority before their enemies.
25b: Israel must flee.	25:4 f.: the flight of Zedekiah and his men

5:18, as a negative allusion in 2 Kgs 24:4 (p. 361). M.Sweeney argues along similar lines in *King Josiah* 39; 51.

576 So also J.P.Sonnet, *Siege* 73–88, 77 f.; D.R.Hillers, *Treaty-Curses* 85; G.E.Mendenhall, *Covenant Forms* 50–76, 73 f.

577 On the role of Deuteronomy as a draft constitution, see E.Otto, *Programmschrift* 93104; C.Schäfer-Lichtenberger, *Verfassungsentwurf* 105–118; H.U.Steymans, *Deuteronomium*.

578 Historical-critical exegesis has clearly demonstrated that this document is to be dated slightly later than 2 Kings and is a later reflection upon the catastrophic experience of the downfall of Jerusalem (J.P.Sonnet, *Siege* 75). For the narrative, however, its current position is indispensable, and its character as a contract with curses is ancient and well known from general ANE practice. As such, we can assume that the breach of oath and crimes of 1 Samuel–2 Kings presuppose a similar kind of contract (see H.U.Steymanns, *Deuteronomium* 28).

579 The parallels are not clear on the lexical level, for there is hardly any shared vocabulary. However, on the semantic level the connections are obvious.

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(Continued)

Deut 28:15–61 (Threat)	**2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 (Execution)**
29: Failures and pillaging	25:6: capture & 23,33.35; 24,13; 25,13–17: plundering of the nation, king, and temple
32, 36, 41, 63: exile of the nation	24:12, 14–16; 25:20f.: exile of the nation
33: sowing but not eating	25:3 (hunger); 25:12 (the poorest as bonded peasants)
43: the foreigner ascends	25,22–26: some of Gedaliah's commanders are foreigners
45: "all this will happen when …"	24:3, 20: "all this happened because …"
47: serving foreigners and starving	25:3; possibly 25:27–30: service in exile
48: being under the iron yoke / lying in chains	25:27: Jehoiachin is in the "house of chains"
49: a foreign nation from the ends of the earth	24:1: Babylon comes (i.e. from the far East)
52: siege until the walls fall	25:4, 9: destruction of the walls; the fall of Jerusalem
53–59: eating one's own children	25:3 great hunger (intentional omission?)
60f.: the plagues and return to Egypt	25:26: return to Egypt
62: only a few will remain	25:12, 26: only a remnant is left
63f.: dispersion among the nations	25:5 (dispersed away from the king); 21 (Babylon); 26 (Egypt); also 2 Kgs 17f. (Assyria)
66f.: Eating bread in fear	25:27–30: 37 years lived in exile without perspective → only then are there actual daily rations of bread to eat
68: return to Egypt on ships (over and not through the sea)	25,26: return to Egypt through the boarder stream (24:7)

Deuteronomy 28 and Listening to YHWH's voice[580]

The standard work on Deut 28 is without question *Hans Ulrich Steyman's dissertation, Deuteronomium 28 und die* âde *zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons* (1995).[581] He has demonstrated that the concept of the treaty found in Deut 28, which is divided into curses and blessings and stipulates specific punishments, is both synchronically and diachronically part of a well-attested ancient Near Eastern tradition. A key element is its formula of self-imprecation: "When the treaty is sealed by oath, considerable significance is ascribed to the use of

580 For the presence of the semantic field "voice of God," see the appropriate table in the appendix.

581 H.U.Steymans, *Deuteronomium* 28; *Vorlage* 119–141. His 2011 article updates his study while retaining his main theses (DtrB 161–191. For further secondary literary, see the suggestions in E.Otto, *Deut* 12–34 1959–1966.

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blessings and curses as sanctions *iuris divini.* The oath that is sworn makes the gods guarantors that the treaty will be kept."[582] The point is not that the worst imaginable punishments should be inflicted upon the nation but that the threat of such punishments functions to keep it within the treaty. They function as a boundary: "The curses only constitute the negative backdrop to that which is the primary goal, namely mutual faithfulness between YHWH and Israel, out of which will flow blessing and life for Israel."[583]

Deuteronomy 28 is located at the end of the law of Moses as its great concluding formula, right before the summary (Deut 29–32) that precedes Moses' farewell addresses.[584] This is why the curses contain a fair amount material that is taken from the preceding chapters. In the course of the subsequent narrative these curses develop a particular dynamic that reaches its dramatic highpoint in 2 Kgs 23:30–25. K. Schmid makes the following observation:

> A confirmation of this [i. e. that the theme of the OT is YHWH's oath of fidelity] is provided by the 'Deuteronomistically' edited books of the Old Testament. They reveal how a normative text such as Deuteronomy can influence narrative traditions. This model is then repeated to a degree at a later date with the influence of the Torah upon the remaining parts of the Old Testament.[585]

This concept of the Torah as the starting and orientation point for all subsequent actions is relevant to the synchronic approach followed here. This can be seen particularly clearly in the formulaic phrase "listen to the voice of YHWH," which occurs three times in Deut 28:15–68 (vv. 15, 45, 62).[586] This act of listening is not just about pure obedience to the commandments, for these commandments have already been preceded by God's prior listening to Israel: "I have heard the misery of my people in Egypt and I have heard their loud complaint about their taskmasters […] Now the loud complaining of the Israelites has gotten through to me" (Exod 3:7.9 EÜ 2016; see also Gen 30:6 et passim). It is God who first listens to Israel and responds to their complaint. His response was their liberation from Egypt, the "house of slavery" (Exod 13:3, 14; 20:2; Deut 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:6, 11;

582 Ibid. 23. See also p. 27 for self-imprecation and notes on the magical understanding of the words of the treaty (p. 209 fn. 4).

583 Ibid. 382. The concept to a "monotheism of faithfulness" that results from such observations has been critically evaluated and further developed by Jan Assmann and his dialogue partners, e. g. in R.Schieder (ed.), *Gewalt*; J.Assmann, *Exodus.*

584 See E.Otto, *Deut* 12–34 20–22 f.

585 Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte* 221.

586 Listening or not-listening to the voice of YHWH is also a core element in the theology of Jeremiah. Elsewhere it always serves to confirm the guilt of the people of God (see, for example, E.Zenger/ C.Frevel, *Einleitung* 577–582; B.Kedar-Klopfenstein, Art. קול Sp. 1250 f.). In addition to this, Aurelius (*Zukunft* 208–210) has point out the significance of this expression in the book of Exodus and its connection with 2 Kgs 25 via Jer 7.

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Josh 24:17 et passim).[587] This is followed by his covenant with Israel (Exod 19–24). This, in turn, is followed by the rules necessary for life in the presence of God (especially in Leviticus and Deuteronomy). In the first instance it its these legal texts that are the "words of God" that Israel must listen to, for as a rule the prophets do not proclaim anything new. Their purpose is to urge Israel to keep what has been established in the Torah.[588]

The failure of either the nation or the king to listen to God usually has catastrophic consequences, namely the realization of the threats of Deut 28:15–68. The problems that then arise can only be solved by YHWH himself, for they imply that Israel has returned to the period before it was saved. The entire book of Judges operates according to this same schema: Israel does what displeases YHWH—they get oppressed by invading nations—a judge sent by YHWH appears.[589] *Saul,* too, the first king of Israel, is introduced as a heroic judge:

> Tomorrow at this time I will send to you a man from the territory of Benjamin. You will anoint him to be a prince [instead of judge] over my people Israel. He will liberate my people from the hand of the Philistines, for I have seen my people Israel and its cry for help has gotten through to me.[590]. (1 Sam 9:16 EÜ 2016, emphasis mine)

As discussed above (D.2), the king granted to Israel has to guarantee the keeping of God's word, for he is to keep the people upon the correct path. Samuel's *farewell speech* (1 Sam 12:1–15) also reminds us of this. Immediately after this speech, however, reference is made to Deut 28:

> Inasmuch as you fear the Lord and serve him and listen to his voice and do not oppose the command of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well. But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the Lord will be against you as it was against your fathers. […] As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord, and therefore I do not cease praying for you; I will show you the good and straight path. Only, fear the Lord and serve him faithfully and with all your heart! […] But if you do evil, then both you as well as your king will be swept away. (Vv. 14f., 23–25 EÜ 2016, emphasis mine)

The threats of Deut 28 also continue to echo in *Solomon's prayer of consecration of the temple*[591] (especially 1 Kgs 8:23–53), where he attempts (prophetically/proleptically) to pre-emptively mitigate God's future punishment of his people.

587 For the formulaic use of the Exodus motif of "Egypt" in the later course of the narrative, see I.Schulmeister, *Befreiung.*

588 For the role of prophecy in the narrative context, see D.4; for the diachronic question of prophecy, see E.Zenger/ C.Frevel, *Einleitung* 513–525.

589 See ibid. 268–270.

590 This is a good example of the continuance of the Exodus motif within the broader narrative context.

591 See E.A.Knauf, *1 Kgs 1–14* 262–270.

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He first alludes to the dynastic promise (2 Sam 7) in v. 25, and then, shortly thereafter, calls upon God to judge his temple according to the principle of correspondence between behaviour and consequence (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*) (vv. 32; 37-40). In vv. 33f. he prays for forgiveness and the reversal of the curse:

> When your people Israel are struck by an enemy because it has sinned against you and then turns again to you, praises your name, and prays to you and implores you in this house, then hear it in heaven! Forgive your people Israel for its sin, let them return to the land that you gave to their fathers.

In the narratives of the divided kingdom this failure continuously unfurls (see D.2) until Josiah finally reads the book (see above) and says,

> Go and inquire of the Lord for me, for the people, and for all Judah because of this book that has been found! The wrath of the Lord must have fiercely flared up against us because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book and because they have not done what is written in it. (2 Kgs 22:13 EÜ 2016)

The Curse of Deut 28 and its Forgiveness in Deut 30:1–10

Jean P. Sonnet has recently provided us with a fresh analysis of the oft-noted connection between Deut 28 and the end of Kings. He argues that the punishment is provided with minimal rationale (2 Kgs 24f) and yet delivered in maximal form (Deut 28:15–68).[592] The scope of Deut 28 is so broad that it not only encompasses 2 Kgs 22 and 1 Kgs as a whole but also Abraham (Deut 28:62) and the Exodus (Deut 28:63, 68).[593] However, Sonnet does not believe that this is the case for 2 Kgs 25, and so draws the following conclusion:

> The dreadful scenes of Deut 28 enable the reader of Kings to dramatize what is left undramatized in 2 Kgs 25: They drive the reader within the walls and within the minds of the starving population. What Josiah did anticipatively—hearing the curses as a prophecy of doom against Jerusalem—the reader of Kings can do retrospectively, reading the curses as a prophecy come true.[594]

Because the full drama of 2 Kgs 25 can only be grasped in light of Deut 28, Sonnet also believes we must take Deut 30:1–10 into account in order to fully understand the passage:

592 J.P.Sonnet, Siege. Sonnet follows the hypotheses of Zenger, Noth etc. and considers the theological content of 2 Kgs 25 to be extremely lean (pp. 73f.; 87; see part A).

593 See ibid. 75;82f.

594 Ibid. 82. Sonnet investigates the significance of the Hulda oracle for the diachronic analysis of Josiah in J.P.Sonnet, Book.

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> If God is able to deconstruct history, he is able to reconstruct it. This is precisely what the Deuteronomic Moses announces in Deut 30:1–10, in the speech that follows the uttering of the curses: There will be a return.[595]

In order to come to these conclusions Sonnet draws upon the works of D. Markl, particularly his article *No future without Moses* (2014).[596] This article is concerned with the fact that 2 Kings was not further developed during the post-exilic period, so that its "end in disaster" now characterizes the final form of the text.[597] This open end, he believes, constitutes 2 Kings' great achievement. The longest story of the Bible stretching from Genesis to 2 Kings ends without offering any ultimate consolation. That this really is the end is confirmed in the MT canon by the connections with Jeremiah and especially Isaiah that become increasingly evident from 2 Kgs 17 onwards. Even 2 Chronicles needs a *happy ending* in chapter 36. 2 Kings, on the other hand, does not.[598]

Markl concludes that on a synchronic level Deuteronomy's later texts prepare the reader for the experience of the exile and are closely connected with the oracle of Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14–20).[599] He demonstrates this with Deut 30:1. Its formulaic phrase "and when all these words have come over you, blessing and curse" amounts to a summary of the oracle.[600] The concluding praise of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:25–27) is also closely connected with Deut 30:2, 10 and even Deut 6:4, the beginning of the *sch^{e}ma Israel*.[601] Markl argues that the connection between Deuteronomy and the exemplary king Josiah functions to show why Judah failed, why it "returned to Egypt," and why salvation cannot be automatically expected:[602]

> There is no happy ending that can be gained cheaply. Whoever wants to be consoled by a message of hope is forced to turn Moses' rhetoric of blessing and curse with heaven and earth as witnesses—when these people make their decision between life and death.[603]

After all the sins that they have committed, there can be no shortcuts in the restitution of the people of God. The nation must endure exile and repentance before it can experience rehabilitation. Markl adds that Deut 29f. is not simply a subsequent editorial insertion, it is the "rhetorical culmination of the entire

595 Ibid. 84.
596 D.Markl, *No Future* 711–728.
597 Ibid. 711f.
598 See ibid. 727f.
599 See ibid. 716f.; 719.
600 See ibid. 720.
601 See ibid. 721. There is no consensus among exegetes concerning the relationship to Deut 13, especially v. 18. E.Otto, in particular, rejects this interpretation (in *Deuteronomium*).
602 See ibid. 724f.
603 Ibid. 725f.

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sequence of speeches in chs. 1–30, which aims at the decision for life, that is, the decision for YHWH, YHWH's torah, and YHWH's covenant in 30:15–20."[604]

Whereas the loss of the land that was threatened in Deut 28 is repeated and intensified in 29:24-28, Deut 30:3–5 talks of a return to the land and the renewed multiplication of the people that had been almost annihilated by the curses of Deut 28. Deuteronomy 30:8–10 emphasizes the necessity of repentance when evil is committed, whereas vv. 11–14 demand a (renewed) commitment to the laws of God. Chapter 30 ends with a further reference to both "listening to the voice of YHWH" and the land:

> Love the Lord, your God, listen to his voice and hold fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land of which you know: The Lord has sworn to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give it to them. (Deut 30:20. EÜ 2016)

Interim Conclusion

Josiah is terrified when he reads what will happen to Judah if it does not list to the voice of YHWH, so he makes a 180° turn in his religious and cultic policies. Deuteronomy 28 reminds him of how the nation had committed itself to maintaining exclusive loyalty to God, and it reminded him of the consequences should they fail to do so. His response made him the greatest king since David, and yet despite all this he is ultimately only able postpone the downfall of the kingdom, not stop it completely (see D.2). Deuteronomy 28 announces blessing and curse to Israel and constitutes the foundation for YHWH's actions towards Judah in 2 Kgs 24f. His punishments are all covenantal. In 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 he implements most but not all of them. The rest can be found in other passages of the Bible. The eating of children (Deut 28:53–59), for example, occurs in Lam 2:20; Jer 9 et passim.[605] Yet in chapter 30 Deuteronomy also holds open the possibility of rehabilitation, one that is presumably—though not necessarily, as Wolff has claimed[606]—accompanied by the nation's complete repentance. Even if not likely, there is still the possibility that God will intervene salvifically on behalf of his people before it admits its failure. YHWH continues to keep the torah, even when his people turn away from him and break the covenant. The nation's only hope is YHWH's unilateral sustaining of the covenant and not its own human capacity to understand and repent. If it were possible for the entire nation to fear God and believe in divine punishment as Josiah had done, then Moses would not have had to pray the following in Deut 32:29f.:

604 Ibid. 722. Markl tested and developed this thesis in detail in his habilitation *Gottes Volk* especially 88–125.

605 Given that these instances are outside the framework of the narrative they are of no relevance for our analysis and so will receive no further treatment here.

606 See die Ausführung von Wolff zum Kerygma des DtrG unter A.1b; A.2.2c.

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> If they were wise, they would grasp everything and understand what will happen to them in the future. How can one individual chase a thousand [Israelites] and two [enemies] put ten thousand [Israelites] to flight, unless their rock [i. e. YHWH] has sold them [Israel], the Lord has given them up? (EÜ 2016).

Josiah is one of the few kings after to David to be judged positively. He is compared with David explicitly (2 Kgs 22:2)[607] and with Moses implicitly (Deut 34:11), which at times has had the effect of granting him a messianic reputation.[608] He reads the law and discovers in it the warnings of YHWH. He listens to the prophets before their prophecies cease, he celebrates the Passover and is in all that he does an exemplary king. Yet despite all this, he can do no more than to delay the punishments that YHWH had announced he would afflict upon the descendants of Manasseh. Why does the narrative require such a positive example when Manasseh had already destroyed Israel's hopes? How is it possible for such an ideal king to exist and why was he unable to experience long-term success on the throne?

The answers to these questions have already been provided in relation to David and especially Solomon. No king, no matter how good he is, can be as absolutely just and good as YHWH. For the sake of Josiah he postpones the destruction of the kingdom, just as for the sake of David he had preserved the kingdom of Solomon from total destruction. Yet too much has happened in Judah for YHWH to offer complete pardon. To forgive now would no longer be just.

Mention must be made of the following: Regardless of how good Josiah was, there are two places where he may well have failed.

1. He loses in battle because YHWH does not fight alongside him. This thesis is grounded in the fact that God did not tell him to enter battle with Egypt (2 Kgs 23:29).[609] It is Josiah's decision and not YHWH's. Furthermore, he enters the battlefield in a chariot, military hardware that Solomon had acquired from Egypt and which is forbidden according to the law of the king (Deut 17:16).[610] His death in a chariot (2 Kgs 23:30) also creates a parallel with Ahaziah of Judah (2 Kgs 9:27 f.) and Ahab of Israel (1 Kgs 22:35), who also die in their chariots. Nevertheless, he remains good.[611]

607 For the importance of this mark of respect, see H.-P.Müller, *Name* 430–446.

608 See M.Sweeney, *King Josiah* 322. This is not the place to judge the plausibility the Cross school's argument (*contra* von Rad's model) that Jehoiachin is a Messianic figure. To do so would require further studies of the dating and redaction of the text.

609 The Cross school believes that Josiah intended to restore the Davidic kingdom. Halpern is also thinking along these lines when he argues that Josiah went into battle with Neco without fulling reconciling with YHWH and asking him for help (see *Editions* 244).

610 See J.P.Leithart, *2 Kgs* 273; H.Niemann, *Herrschaft* 100 f.The latter also describes these chariots as a kind of "super weapon" (p. 101).

611 M.H.Patton offers a slightly different interpretation in *Hope* 33.

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2. Because he died without having handed on his kingdom to a successor he is not completely similar to David. David had promised his throne to his son Solomon, though this was admittedly due to the intrigues Solomon's mother and the prophet Nathan. He had told him that he must live according to the laws of YHWH. This was no longer possible for Josiah due to his sudden death. As a result, a power vacuum followed within which a successor had to be chosen. Once again, the Torah that had played such a decisive role for Josiah, David, and Solomon disappears from the narrative.

The three successors to David discussed here each have their own specific task within the context of the narrative, and this task eclipses to a large degree their individual personalities.[612] Whereas Solomon is an ambivalent figure, standing halfway between ideal king and first colossal failure (he breaks all the prescriptions of the Deuteronomic law of the king), Manasseh and Josiah represent the polar opposites of catastrophic and ideal. It is thus no accident when it is precisely these three kings, kings who mark the beginning and end of Judah, are reintroduced into the narrative in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. It is only here that the true significance of their roles becomes apparent. Solomon and Josiah constitute a merism, representing both the ideal according to which all the kings of Judah were measured up until the downfall but also the sad reality which fell short of that ideal. By means of the metaphor of (innocent) blood, Manasseh connects the end of the kingdom with the beginning of a history filled with the shedding of blood (Gen 4). In this way he justifiably becomes a catalyst for the end of Judah. Whereas all the previous kings were able to delay the coming of the end, for Josiah this is no longer possible. His death creates a power vacuum. This in turn gives the people of Judah, e. g. the people-of-the-land (2 Kgs 23:31), the opportunity to make mistakes that they can no longer correct (cf. D.2). Although the return of his corpse does not end his dynasty the way that Ahab's did, it cleared the way for Pharaoh Neco, who would spell the downfall of Jehoahaz.

1.2 New Aspects Concerning the Last Kings of Judah

In our previous discussion of Kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah we were unable to answer a number of questions. What, exactly, are Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin guilty of? What are the relationships between the four rulers and how are they connected with the other groups? The structure of the Davidic royal house is helpful in this regard. The kings of Judah can be divided

612 See the discussion of the "novel of action" in chapter C.1.

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into three groups of seven: There are six kings and then Athaliah; six kings and then Manasseh; and finally, six kings and then Nebuchadnezzar / the end.

1.2.1 Jehoahaz – The Beginning of the End

As our narrative analysis has demonstrated (C.4.1.4), Jehoahaz is not the legitimate pretender to the throne. This can be demonstrated in reference to the law (Deut 21:15f.). He is enthroned by the people-of-the-land and perhaps also his mother (s. D.2). In addition to 2 Kgs 23:30–34 the name occurs sixteen times in the Bible, eleven of which refer to the northern king (!) Jehoahaz of Israel (2 Kgs 13:1–9), with the other five coming from parallel passages in Chronicles. Apart from their common name and the negative appraisal they receive, there are no further parallels between the two rulers. As such, the narrative context cannot help us any further in this regard.

Jehoahaz' function can only be determined in light of his relation to his father and his brothers. As already mentioned above, he is a "second Solomon" in that his ascends the throne without being his father's eldest son. However, he is anointed for the role by the people-of-the-land rather than a prophet. This means that he has neither been chosen by YHWH nor is he the legal heir according to the law. He is one of four kings who all descend from only two (rather than four!) generations; as the oracle of Huldah had intimated, it was he who was the condemned king who would follow Josiah (2 Kgs 22:19f.). As a result of victorious foreign rulers' policies of deposing kings, he is also one of three potential kings who came to be located in exile (Jehoahaz – Jehoiachin – Zedekiah).[613] He is not a viable candidate, however, as he should never have been king in the first place. The prophets had been silent; it was the people themselves who made him king, though this could only lead to catastrophe (see D.1.1.3). Pharaoh Neco removes him from his throne because YHWH does not want to save him. However, his downfall does not constitute a threat to Jerusalem or Judah, for he is condemned outside their boarders in Riblah in the land of Hamath. He is brought to Egypt in chains, and thus to the only place prohibited by the law of the king (Deut 17:16), a punishment considered by Deut 28:68 to be a maximum penalty. When Ishmael flees to the same place Jehoahaz is not mentioned again, for according to 2 Kgs 23:34 he had already died. As such, Ishmael flees to a land characterized by hopelessness on multiple levels. He, too, becomes a son of David in Egypt and is thus, like Jehoahaz, disqualified from becoming a future king again (see D.1.1; D.5.2). As with the other kinds of characters that one would expect to find in the *plot* of a *novel of action*, the interest here is less whether Jehoahaz himself was completely bad or not and more with a specific aspect of the narrative for which

613 See Suriano, *Politics* 92f.

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he is a symbol. His role is characterized by passivity[614] (see C.4.1.4) and his name stands for the commencement of divine judgement. He is neither actively good, like Josiah, nor bad, like Manasseh and Amon, and nevertheless he leads the people to do what is wrong (election and anointing). His punishment anticipates that of the people, land, and kingdom and constitutes its prelude.

1.2.2 Jehoiakim – The New Manasseh

Jehoiakim is the worst of all the kings in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, as can be seen in his relation to both Manasseh (2 Kgs 24:1–3) and Pharaoh Neco. The latter not only gave him a throne name, an act which was probably the exclusive prerogative of YHWH (e. g. Ps 110)[615], he also speaks to him in the imperative, which amounts to a further intrusion into the verbal sphere of YHWH's authority.[616] Jehoiakim serves Neco the way he should have served YHWH, and so implicitly apostatizes by submitting himself to the gods of Egypt, i. e. he reinstates pagan cultic practices.[617] He also gives the gold of the land to Egypt. Read in light of the book of Exodus, this act amounts to effectively returning the gold to Egypt and so cannot be compared with the tribute paid to Assyria in order to avert the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 15:20; 18:14–16). Rather than taking the gold from the state and temple treasuries in order to save his people, he makes the people themselves cover the cost (2 Kgs 23:35). If we also consider that gold was put to cultic use (see especially Exod 32; 1 Kgs 6–8), then this act is a further indication of cultic misconduct and a violation of the First Commandment.[618]

Jehoiakim's subjugation by Neco is followed by that of Nebuchadnezzar. By rebelling against this Babylonian overlord, he breaches his oath of vassalage, which was an oath sworn in the name of YHWH. Once again, he transgresses one of the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:9–11// Exod 20:5–7). Only his death spares him from Nebuchadnezzar's wrath (2 Kgs 24:6).

Like Manasseh Jehoiakim is responsible for the shedding of innocent blood (2 Kgs 24:3f.), and yet like so many kings before him he nevertheless dies a relatively peaceful death (with his grave possibly being located in the garden of

614 D.Janzen points out that all the kings subsequent to Josiah only appear in the regnal formula. The remaining verses only report the deeds committed by foreigners against Israel. As such, he considers all the kings in the narrative to be passive (see *The Sins of Josiah* 367 fn. 39).

615 For a detailed analysis, see J.Gray, *1 & 2 Kings*, 750f.

616 Van Keulen demonstrates this by analysing the language of 2 Kgs 23,35; 24,3 (in *Manasseh* 151).

617 This is asserted explicitly by Ezekiel and Jeremiah (see W.Fricke, *2 Kgs* 344).

618 I cannot discuss the entire topic of the First Commandment here. For a detailed treatment, see E.Aurelius, *Zukunft*.

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Uzza; see D.1.1.4; this view is consciously challenged in Jer 36).[619] By committing such a crime Jehoiakim actually brings down a familial curse upon his son Jehoiachin, the last legitimate king of Judah. With the exception of a long period of imprisonment and his displacement by his uncle, however, in the end the consequences of this curse are not too serious. This may by due to the prudence with which he sought to save Jerusalem. Jehoiakim's function within the narrative is that of the bad ruler who negates all the previous positive developments. Just as Manasseh reverses Hezekiah's initiatives, so Jehoiakim partially nullifies Josiah's reform. Furthermore, he is also the only king to be subjugated by both Egypt and Babylon, thus making him a serial apostate. In him YHWH has "reached" the last milestone on the road to the final destruction of the nation. This destruction will be completed under his brother Zedekiah.

1.2.3 Jehoiachin – The (Next-to-)Last King of Judah

At first sight we might expect Jehoiachin to receive a positive appraisal within the narrative, particular in light of 2 Kgs 25:27–30 and his struggle to save Jerusalem. However, the (initial) assessment of his character is negative (2 Kgs 24:9). This may be due to the fact that he delivered Jerusalem on his own strength without turning to YHWH in faith, as Hezekiah had done (2 Kgs 19). As a result, he did not surrender the fate of Jerusalem into the hands of God, whether for salvation or destruction. Of primary interest, here, however, is the formula "as his father had done" (24:9). Whenever this phrase occurs within the regnal formula it is connected with an assessment. Its first occurrence is in the book of Judges, which repeatedly states that Israel did what displeased YHWH (Judg 3:1; 4:1; 10:6; 13:1). This claim is then repeated throughout 1 and 2 Kings. It first occurs in connection with Solomon, who did not completely act "like his father David" (1 Kgs 11:6). This is then followed by a series of explicit references to king Ahab, all of which show that those kings who walk in his ways are particularly evil (1 Kgs 21:25; 2 Kgs 3:2; 8:18.27). In 2 Kgs 15:9 and 17:2 the last kings of the Northern Kingdom are dammed for doing "what the kings of Israel" had done, which amounts to a retrospective condemnation of the entire Northern Kingdom.

For Judah it is particularly after the appearance of Manasseh that this schema becomes operative. His son Amon acted "like his father Manasseh" (2 Kgs 21:20) and a similar phrase is used for Zedekiah, who acted "like Jehoiakim before him" (2 Kgs 24:19). In reference to Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, on the other hand, the text speaks of "the fathers" in the plural (2 Kgs 23:32.37). This formulation effectively skips over their father Josiah. They have inherited their reprobate character not from him but rather from all their ancestors, including Manasseh. Josiah, on the

619 For "Jehoiakim's donkey grave," see J.Job, *Jeremiahs Kings* 75–77, 97.

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other hand, does not have Solomon's formula, in which David is shielded from criticism (David behaved differently). As we have seen, he is good, but not completely good. Jehoiachin is given the formula "like his father" (2 Kgs 24:9), which places him within Jehoiakim's line of tradition. This is turn is grounded in the line of Manasseh (2 Kgs 24:3f.). The only indication that Jehoiachin transgressed the law of the king (Deut 17:17) is his acquiring of multiple wives (2 Kgs 24:15), and these may have seduced him to pagan worship (see D.1; D.2). This interpretation is certainly plausible in light of the broader narrative context, in which Solomon acted against his good father David and established illegitimate cultic worship (1 Kgs 11). Josiah had similarly purified the cult, so that it was possible for a subsequent king to "backslide," e.g. under the influence of his foreign wives. However, the textual evidence is too weak to definitively identify the precise nature of Jehoiachin's sin.

Given that Jehoahaz and above all Jehoiakim were condemned before Jehoiachin's reign, it is more likely that the idolatrous practices simply continued under him rather than being reinstated by him. For this reason, it is possible that his guilt is comparable to that of the other previous kings. During his very short reign, which was overshadowed by the siege of Babylon, Jehoiachin an no point ends the city's idolatrous cult. He thereby subjected himself to these rituals rather than to the Torah,[620] a deed that is *intrinsice malum*. If he had trusted in YHWH instead, Jerusalem could have been saved and the exile averted, as was the case with Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19f.).[621]

If we factor out this broader context, Jehoiachin's exile may seem to be unfair, given his young age and the fact that he had to bear the burden of his father's guilt. This is why the concluding scene in 2 Kgs 25:27–30 is so decisively important.

Jehoiachin's promotion to the table of the Babylonian king evinces strong semantic parallels to David's treatment of Merib-Baal, Jonathan's son (2 Sam 9:10–13). It also occurs in his 55th year, which means that he had to sit in prison for as long as Manasseh had ruled the nation (2 Kgs 21:1).[622] His sentence is thus the means by which YHWH's punishment, which remains in force until the fourth generation, is both temporally and genealogically satisfied. Once completed, Jehoiachin is free to accept a more prestigious role in the royal court, as had been prophesied to Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:18). The "prisoner king"[623] thereby becomes a symbol of hope for the nation, as Joash had been during the reign of

620 See W.Brueggeman, *Theology* 12.

621 So D.Janzen, *Sins* 349; 355; 357.

622 Given that the length of rule is 37 years and the 55 years are not explicitly mentioned, this observation can only for now be a speculation in need of further investigation.

623 B.Halpern, *Editions* 244.

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Athaliah (2 Kgs 11).[624] As such, the "friendly" speech of the foreign king can be seen as a sign of the salvation about to dawn (Prov 16:12–15). Even though Jehoiachin had fallen in 2 Kgs 24:8–16, he is able to become good again and save the nation because he has the potential to be an "ideal king: God will save the nation when the king delivers positive (or deuteronomistic) cultic leadership and leads the people in repentance."[625]

Before we can further investigate this final aspect and with it the role of Jehoiachin in the overall narrative context (D.5.3), we must take a look at the remaining characters, in particular king Zedekiah.

1.2.4 Zedekiah – The Seal of the Kingdom

The structure of Zedekiah's reign (11 years, negative assessment) mirrors that of Jehoiakim. He shares a mother with Jehoahaz, which makes him the *uncle* of Jehoiachin. In other words, with his accession the genealogy of the dynasty is taken one step back (third generation after Manasseh). His birth name is Mattaniah. The only other character with a comparable name is a priest of Baal (2 Kgs 11:18). Though this could be taken as a negative portent of things to come, the connection is *de facto* insignificant as the two figures operate in separate social spheres, bear no genealogical relationship to each other, and exhibit no other similarities.

Of greater significance is his throne name, for it generates a link with God's granting of the land to Israel and the beginnings of Jerusalem (see D.5.1).[626] In addition to this, it is divine justice (צדק) that terminates the fate of the kings of Israel, which should have begun with a prince of peace (שלום).

Jehoiachin, the legitimate king, sits in captivity while his uncle reigns in Jerusalem. Zedekiah has no right to this office and so his rule is literally regressive. Just like Jehoiakim he receives his legitimacy from a human king. And like this king, he also breaks his oath of vassalage. Unlike Jehoiakim, however, he does not die and so experiences firsthand the siege of Jerusalem.

As discussed in the plot analysis above (C.4.1.4), *Zedekiah's flight* (2 Kgs 25:4) is important because it signifies his abandonment of the kingdom, Jerusalem, and the temple. The pattern of his flight reflects that of other royal flights in the Bible.[627] The king that had to flee the most was David. Just like Zedekiah he had to

624 See D.Janzen, *Sins* 363.

625 Ibid. 359.

626 I treat the relationship between Zedekiah, on the one hand, and Melkizedek and Adonizedek, on the other, in a contribution to a forthcoming conference volume (AGAT 2018).

627 See J.P.Leithart, *2 Kgs* 277. "Flight" is an ambivalent theme in the Bible and not always easy to interpret. Poulssen, for example, wonders whether the flight reported in Song of Songs 8:14 should be understood in light of Song 1:2f. If so, then the reference to flight has no other

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flee at night to escape Saul's attempts on his life (1 Sam 19:10, 18). In 1 Sam 27:4 he flees again, this time to the land of the Philistines, from whence he prepared his final victory.[628] He then flees for a third and final time to escape his son Absalom's coup. This flight mirrors that of Zedekiah in that he first fled to the steppes (2 Sam 15:22) and from there on to Jordan (2 Sam 17:22). David's flights are always positive in their outcome, for he not only escapes the threats to his life, he also returns to reconquer the territories he had lost.

This experience is not repeated by any of his successors who had to flee. The first is King Ahaziah of Judah who attempted to flee from a battle at Megiddo. Like Josiah he died in his chariot and had to be transported back to the city of David for burial (2 Kgs 9). Like Zedekiah he flees through a garden (towards a house in Naboth's vineyard) but then fails to reach his destination. The result is a caesura in the Davidic dynasty, for he is replaced for a time by Athaliah, who rules Judah in the name of her son (2 Kgs 11). After Zedekiah's flight it is Gedaliah who fills the power vacuum (2 Kgs 22:22), and like Athaliah he must pay for the Davidides' lack of loyalty with his life (2 Kgs 25:25).

A second flight is reported in 2 Kgs 14:19. Here Amaziah of Judah attempts to escape an insurrection by fleeing to Lachish, but the inhabitants kill him.[629] Zedekiah may have had a similar experience had he made it to Jericho, for both cities are city states that had formerly been subjugated by the Israelites/YHWH (see Josh 6; 10:31).

Like these kings before him, Zedekiah also flees from a superior opponent. Unlike them, he is not fleeing due military failure (also 1 Sam 31:1) or an intrigue is abandoning his own capital city. In light of the broader narrative, the route he chooses has a programmatic character: the path leads past a garden and through two walls, an allusion to Gen 2f. and Exod 14f.[630] If we also take into account the historical design of the Assyrian royal gardens that may have served Manasseh as a template,[631] then Zedekiah not only follows the (negative) spiritual path of many of his ancestors but also a physical one. And once again he thereby demonstrates his unfitness for the role of king of Judah.

function than to indicate tempo (see *Vluchtwegen* 72–82). He thereby shows that the term cannot be understood apart from the context of its use, which in our case is 1 Samuel to 2 Kings).

628 Because David had already been anointed king in 1 Sam 16, we can already consider him to be part of Israel's royal dynasty.

629 The king of Israel also dies. The case with Ahab of Israel and his Judean colleague is different. There, Judah survives the defeat whereas Ahab dies. B.Schmitz considers this event to be proleptic of the final downfall of both kingdoms (see his *Prophetie* 375).

630 See B.Collinet, *Verankerungen* 31f.; J.P.Leithart, *2 Kgs* 278.

631 See the discussion of Zion in the online-appendix to this book.

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Zedekiah's flight ultimately fails on the plains of Jericho. Its outcome is the imposition of especially humiliating penalties, namely chains[632], blinding, as well as the removal of any potential successor to the throne from within his dynasty. These punishments are closely related to the failure of Eli, the last judge (1 Sam 4:15–22).[633] Eli worshiped a golden idol and so was warned by YHWH and judged (see 1 Sam 1–3). He went blind in old age and his sons all died (v. 17). His daughter-in-law died while giving birth and called the child "Ichabod," "Gone is the glory of God" (1 Sam 15:19–22), which is a reference to the loss of the ark of the covenant. The loss of the ark signifies the loss of the divine presence, and thus the abandonment of the temple and the nation, a "foreshadowing" (Genette: "*Vorhalt*") of the end?

Though the verses that describe Zedekiah are few in number, they recapitulate the entire history of the nation and presage the destruction of the kingdom: What began with Joshua ends in failure here. The description evokes the failure of the judges; what began with Saul and David has come to an end. It is not as if the nation was never given the opportunity to try out life with a king. Both, however, failed continuously and with ever more drastic consequences for the nation and the land. For this reason, YHWH put an end to Israel's "kingdom-building project," thereby demonstrating that his patience and generosity have their limits where the world/nation can no longer live fairly and evil has reached systematic proportions. In a twist of irony, Zedekiah's name, "my justice/righteousness is YHWH," thus becomes an appropriate summary of and conclusion to the entire history of the kingdom.

2. The Roll of Judah's Minor Characters

The purpose of this chapter is to enquire into the various aspects that make "Judah" what it is so that we can better define it. It is also concerned with the rolls of the characters and groups that occur within the unfolding narrative of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, as well as with the tasks and involvements of the kingdom. The aim is to define these figures as well as clarify the nature of the guilt they bear before YHWH.

632 The expression used for "chains" in 2 Kgs 25:7 is used in Ezek 16:36 for "shame." This underlines the humiliating character of the word.

633 J.P.Leithart, *2 Kgs* 276.

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2.1 The Mother of the King

As we have seen above, the presentation of the royal mothers in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 seems to imply two aspects to their roles: They have an important task to fulfil in the court that is connected with the king's wives, and they have a possible leadership function with the ability to influence questions of royal succession. We must now attempt to verify whether this impression was correct and, as far as possible, seek to understand these rolls as much as possible.

A distinction must be made between the wife (גבירה) or main wife of a king (שגל) and the mother of the king (אם המלך), who is more germane to our concerns here. The question is not the relationship of a wife to her husband but the influences of the king's mother upon the rule of her son as well as her relationship to the other members of the royal household and the country.

A third point must be taken into account, namely that the legal texts of the Torah do not provide for the office of "mother of the king." As such, her role is not regulated by law.

2.1.1 The Mother of the King in Israel and Judah

It is interesting to note that at no point in the books of Kings are the royal mothers referred to with a particular, technical term. Rather, they are simply called *his* mother (אמו). She herself does not rule. As noted above (C.4.1.3) and as is to be expected from a strictly patriarchal system, her power is derived from her lineage and the power of her son.[634] In the Davidic dynasty of the Southern Kingdom the royal mothers must have had a function because they are almost always mentioned in the regnal formula (1 Kgs 14:21; 15:2, 10; 2 Kgs 8:26; 12:2; 14:21; 15:1; 18:2; 21:1, 19; 22:1; 23:31, 36; 24:8, 18).

The royal mothers are not mentioned in the regnal formulae of the Northern Kingdom. One reason may be that the dynasties constantly change. A more likely explanation, however, is that their role is connected with the harem. In Israel, only Ahab had several wives (2 Kgs 20). This is why the report of the accession of his son Ahaziah to the throne makes mention of his mother Jezebel (in the regnal formula; 1 Kgs 22:53). Their ways are judged to be bad, just like those of Ahab and Jeroboam.

Joram's wife is a daughter of Ahab and sister of Ahaziah king of Israel, and she is mentioned as part of the reason for his failure: "He [Joram] walked in the ways

634 In the Northern Kingdom Jezebel is an exception. She is portrayed as Ahab's *wife* and not mother or daughter and she reaches the pinnacle of her power during their co-regency of Israel (1 Kgs 16–2 Kgs 9). Joram's wife is probably her daughter, so that Ahab's disastrous fate also afflicts Judah (see 2 Kgs 8:18f.).

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of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he was married to a daughter of Ahab and he did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD" (2 Kgs 8:18 EÜ 2016). As with his father-in-law Ahab, it is Joram's wife and not his mother who exerts influence upon his rule. The result is that separatist movements within Moab and Libnah gain the upper hand and break away from the Southern Kingdom.

The situation is similar for Ahaz of Judah:

> Unlike his father [i. e. ancestor] David he did not do what pleased the LORD his God, following instead the ways of the kings of Israel. He even let his son pass through the fire and imitated the abominations of the nations that the LORD had drive out from before the Israelites. (2 Kgs 16:2f. EÜ 2016, emphasis mine)

He, too, loses part of his territory when the Arameans take Eilat (2 Kgs 16:6). His only chance of survival is to submit to Assyria and imitate its cult (2 Kgs 16:7–18).

We can draw three tentative conclusions concerning the mother of the king: (1) Reference to her is connected with the polygamous practice of the kings, which was probably political in nature. (2) She is the mother of the successor to the throne, regardless of whether this is legitimate in terms of patriliny or not. This suggests that she could influence royal succession. (3) If the mother is missing then it is another powerful woman who influences the king's decisions. In God's eyes this influence is always negative, with disadvantageous consequences for the land.

2.1.2 David's Harem and the Struggle for the Throne – Bathsheba as the First Mother of the King (2 Sam 11; 1 Kgs 1f., 11)

Although the Old Testament is silent concerning the mothers of David and Saul, it does give us the names of most of their wives. David practiced polygamy, probably for political reasons. He was married to at least seven women, most of them at the same time. He turned down the offer to marry Merab, though this would have enabled him to rise within the ranks of the house of Saul (1 Sam 18:18f.). Later on, however, he did marry her younger sister Michal (1 Sam 18:20–27), who became barren (2 Sam 6:23) and for a while was even married to another man (1 Sam 25:44). After her came Ahinoam of Jezreel (1 Sam 25:43; 30:5), who bore him Amnon, his first son (2 Sam 3:2). His third wife was called Abigail, who was first married to Nabal the Calebite until he rebelled against David and died (1 Sam 25). She bore him the son Chileab (2 Sam 3:3). 2 Samual 3:3–5 the lists further wives and sons: Absalom the son of Maacah,[635] who is the daughter of

635 The question of whether there is a relationship between Maachah and the Maacathites (2 Kgs 25:24) will be discussed below.

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Talmai king of Geshur; Adonijah the son of Haggith; Shephatiah the son of Abital; and Ithream the son of Eglah. 2 Samuel 5:13–16 contains the names of the sons who were born in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, and Eliphelet.

David's final marriage was to Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, who David had killed in order to marry her (2 Sam 11).[636] The narrator provides the most appropriate comment upon the circumstances of the marriage: "That which David did was evil in the eyes of the LORD" (2 Sam 11:27 EÜ 2016). David's violence in destroying Uriah's family redounded upon him in the death of the child (2 Sam 12:18), the sibling conflict over Tamar (2 Sam 13f.), and Absalom's insurrection (2 Sam 15-19). It is God and not David who determines the legitimacy of David's actions: "God's scrutinous gaze on David unmasks the violence that had begun with David's scrutinous gaze of Bathsheba."[637]

A conflict concerning succession to the throne breaks out among David's sons while he is lying on his death bed (1 Kgs 1). At first it is Adonija, the brother of Absalom, who claims the crown, despite the fact that he is not the firstborn. Nathan and Bathsheba, however, manage to get Solomon proclaimed as the new king by securing for him David's blessing. In the following chapters Bathsheba acts as Solomon's advisor, thereby reaching the pinnacle of her power:

> When Bathsheba went to the king in order to talk to him about Adonijah, the king went to meet her and bowed before her. He then sat upon his throne and had a throne set up for the mother of the king [אם המלך]. (1 Kgs 2:19)

Bathsheba is the mother of a king about whom we have the most information and she is also the first woman to be specifically introduced as the mother of the king. It is clear that she functions as a kind of prototype of this role. She succeeds in getting Solomon enthroned by enlisting the help of a number of people. These include the prophet Nathan, who had already announced the promise of a dynasty (2 Sam 7) and rebuked David for his marriage to Bathsheba (2 Sam 12), the people-of-the-land, and the priest Zadok (1 Kgs 1:45). After this event she appears only one more time, namely to advise Solomon on his first marriage (1 Kgs 3:1). After this she is never mentioned again, i. e. she no longer appears publicly.

After the disappearance of Bathsheba it is Solomon's harem that exercises influence upon him. For him, too, the results are negative. 1 Kings 11 reports his marriage to a multitude of wives:

> In addition to the daughter of Pharaoh king Solomon lived many other foreign women: Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites. They were all women from the

636 It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the complexity of this figure. For an narratological analysis, see the forthcoming dissertation on 2 Sam 11 by A.Fischer.

637 I.Müllner, *Dargestellte Gewalt* 286–317; 316.

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> nations of whom the LORD had said to Israel, "You may not go to them and they may not come to you, for they will turn your heart towards others gods. Solomon clung to these in love […] His wives inclined his heart towards other gods, so that his heart was no longer solely dedicated to the LORD his God as had been the heart of his father David […] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. Then Solomon […] built a cultic high place for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Molech, the idol of the Ammonites. He did this for all his foreign wives." (1 Kgs 11:1–8)

As was later to happen to Joram and Ahaz, who also served idols, Solomon is penalized with the penalty appropriate to the magnitude of his guilt. God announces:

> Because this has been your practice, because you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have given you, I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. It is only for the sake of your father David that I will not do this during your lifetime […] I will leave one tribe to your son because of David and because of Jerusalem, which I have chosen. (1 Kgs 11:11–13 EÜ 2016, emphasis mine)

If we take Bathsheba to represent the prototypical royal mother, then their primary sphere of influence concerns the succession of their sons to the throne. If the mother holds back from exercising political influence upon the king then it is his wives who intervene, thereby threatening the stability of the throne. It may be, then, that the royal mother's role within the context of the court consisted in advising the king and in controlling the harem (2 Kgs 24:12). This task is of enormous significance, for kings often married for political reasons with little regard for the law of God, which prohibits marriages to nonbelieving women (Exod 36:16; Deut 7:3). As soon as the mother ceases to exercise a corrective influence upon her son and is replaced in this role by foreign wives, the king's exclusive loyalty to YHWH is threatened. The result is a crisis for the kingdom which costs it its land. The Torah does not stipulate a specific role for the royal mother because it was not necessary to do so. As long as the king does not marry foreign (and multiple) woman, as the Law prescribes, then there is no need for them to be controlled.

2.1.3 Abuse of Power: Athaliah as the Ruling Royal Mother and the People-of-the-Land (2 Kgs 11)

A second mother stands out in the history of the Southern Kingdom: Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah of Judah. The description of this reign and its closeness to the Northern Kingdom, from whence Ahaziah's mother hailed, is found in 2 Kgs 8–11. In the end, Ahaziah dies in battle against Jehu of Israel, who kills him in the symbolic field of Naboth (2 Kgs 9:27–29).

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As soon as Athaliah hears of her son's death she decides to wipe out the entire royal line so that she herself can rule (2 Kgs 11:1). One single son is able to escape (vv.2 ff.). Years later and with the help of the priest Jehoiada and the people-of-the-land he is able to assert his claim to the throne (vv. 3–20). Athaliah is lynched (vv.16, 20).

A comparison of Athaliah with Bathsheba reveals a second kind of failure. Whereas Bathsheba acts with too little confidence in her own power, Athaliah overextends herself. It is not her job to rule Judah, neither does she have the right to do so. In the end it is only she who is hurt and not the kingdom, for no land is lost nor does YHWH denounce the nation.

2.1.4 Interim Conclusion: The Royal Mother as Corrective Cultic and Political Force

Our analysis so far has revealed that the royal mother's role within the palace is connected with her son. The pinnacle of her power is reached when he ascends the throne (1 Kgs 1 f.; 2 Kgs 23:31), an event she can help bring about. From this moment onwards it seems that her task is to lead the king's harem and provide him with advice (1 Kgs 2:19; 2 Kgs 24:12, 15). Her advisory function should not be taken over by other women, for this threatens the unity of the kingdom and the future of the dynasty (1 Kgs 11; 2 Kgs 8; 16). At the same time, her influence should not get out of hand so that she ends up running the kingdom herself (2 Kgs 11).

Her role was is not divinely ordained but was rather created for pragmatic reasons, for when she fails YHWH is angry with the king rather than with her. The legal texts of the Torah doe not prescribe any specific role for her; indeed, she is not mentioned at all.

In order to exercise her political function, the royal mother must collaborate with other parties. These are the priests (1 Kgs 1; 2 Kgs 11:4.9.15), then the prophet (1 Kgs 1), and finally the people-of-the-land (1 Kgs 1:45; 2 Kgs 11:14.18–20; 2 Kgs 23:30). We will only be able to ascertain the precise nature of the relationship after a more detailed analysis of these characters.

2.2 The People-of-the-Land

The broader narrative context makes clear that the עם הארץ are a group of Judeans who are loyal to the crown and that at least some of them have a direct function in the royal court. They are occasionally involved in the coronation of the king and reject foreign political and possibly also cultural influence upon

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Judah.[638] Our analysis so far has not been able to clarify who could become a member of this group, how and why.

The expression עם הארץ occurs 42x in the Old Testament.[639]

The various contexts in which this term occurs give it a range of meanings, some of which overlap.[640]

a) In Gen 23:12; 42:6; Num 14:9, and Ezra 4:4 the term refers to the *population* of the neighbouring regions rather than members of the people of Israel.[641]
b) In Exod 5:5; Lev 20:2, 4 the people of the land are the *people of God* who are departing or have already departed from Egypt.
c) In 2 Kgs 11:14, 18–20 par; 21:24 par; 23:30–25:19 par; Jer 34:19; Ez 22:29; Job 12:24 the people of the land are a *political group* close to the king and distinct from the general population of Judah.
d) The people of the land appear in a *cultic context* in 2 Kgs 16:15; Ez 39:13; 45:22; 46:3.9; Hag 2:4. Their cultic praxis may be the object of criticism in Isa 24:4; Zech 7:5.
e) They are considered worthy of judgement (particularly moral judgment) in 2 Kgs 15:5 par (judged by kings); Jer 34:19 (slavery); Ezek 7:27; 12:19; 22:29 (fear of judgement); Ez 33:2–4; Dan 9:6 (appeal to repent); Zech 7:5.

The evidence clearly indicates that there are at least two distinct groups that are referred to as "people of the land." The less frequently used sense functions to differentiate and even exclude a particular specific group of people (examples a & b).

The examples in c–e are all set during the period of the monarchy and they probably all refer to the same group. Here the term refers to an influential group within the Southern Kingdom that is close to the king and which buttresses both the government as well as the cult. They appear to have had a juridical function concerning debates about succession to the throne, for on several occasions they enthrone a Judean king and on one occasion they depose Athaliah, a royal mother. Leviticus 20:2, 4 speaks of the people of the land (presumably the people of God) as an entity that must not tolerate idolatry in its midst.

From the perspective of the great prophets the people of the land have abused their social power and ignored the call to repent. In this abuse of power it may be

638 See C.4.1.3.

639 For this and the following key terms below, see the table in the appendix.

640 E.Lipinski (ThWAT VI, column 190) concentrates on the group's political aspects in separation from the inhabitants of Jerusalem resp. its officers and rarely refers to the cultic aspect.

641 In the broader context of Ezra 4:(1-)4 the term even has a polemical nuance. It refers either to those who had remained in the land during the exile or the foreigners whom the Assyrians had settled in the territory of the former Northern Kingdom.

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possible to differentiate between personal (2 Kgs 15:5 par; Jer 34:19 et passim) and institutional guilt, for the king is called upon to offer a sacrifice of atonement specifically for the people of the land (2 Kgs 16:15; Ezr 45:22).

Both within and beyond 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 it is the relationship of this group to the cult and the king that is decisive for their assessment. In the words of Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel we can detect the presence of both personal as well as systematic or collective guilt on the part of this influential group. We now turn to analyse this aspect in greater detail.

2.2.1 Anointing of the King and Political Power (2 Kgs 23:30, 33)

In 2 Kgs 23:30 the people-of-the-land (3rd person plural וימשׁחו) anoint Jehoahaz as king. The plural form only occurs during significant royal anointings: in 2 Sam 2:4//1 Chron 11:3 and 5:3, when David is anointed by the people of Judah and the elders of Israel,[642] and for Solomon, when he is anointed by Nathan and Zadok (1 Kgs 1:45//1 Chron 29:22). When the people-of-the-land anoint Jehoahaz they are reassuming a role that they once had during the period of the united monarchy.

T.Ishida argues that this development amounts to act of hybris on the part of the people-of-the-land rather than simply an expansion of their sphere of authority.[643] He believes that during the reigns of David and Solomon the people-of-the-land only possessed a passive right to veto decisions concerning succession, and this was due to the fact that mercenaries were particularly powerful during the time of David.[644] This power differential began to shift during the time of Athaliah (2 Kgs 16), which is when the people-of-the-land began to expand the scope of their power and to increase their influence upon the king.[645] The high point of this development is reached with the election of Jehoahaz (2 Kgs 23:30). They give the younger brother precedence over the elder, thus interrupting the

642 The anointing by the elders of Israel occurs in Hebron at the grave of Abraham. In this context Gen 23:12 also speaks of the people of the land, here in reference to the inhabitants of the land. The elders of Israel could be the counterpart to the people-of-the-land in Judah, which this group constituting a kind of senate made up of familial heads.

643 See T.Ishida, *Succession* 96–106.

644 He thus contradicts Fohrer's thesis (1959) that the people-of-the-land had entered into a kind of contract with David which committed them to be loyal to the Davidic house while granting them the right to determine the successor to the throne (see G.Fohrer, *Vertrag* 1–22, 9; 11). Fohrer's makes the interesting observation that a breach of the dynastic contract would amount to a perjury against YHWH, because the oath would have been sworn in his name (see pp. 13f.).

645 See ibid. 102; 106.

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line of patrilineal succession or primogeniture[646] that was prescribed by law of succession:

> If a man has two wives, one of whom he loves and the other whom he does not love, and if they both bear him sons, both the loved one and the unloved one, and if the firstborn son descends from the unloved one, then, when he distributes his inheritance among his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved one as if he were the first born son and thus violate the right of the true first born son, the son of the unloved woman […]. He is the one that was fathered first, he is the one who as the right of the first born. (Deut 21:15–17; EÜ 2016)

The people-of-the-land make a political mistake that has legal consequences. In 2 Kgs 23:33 these consequences take the form of a financial penalty imposed upon them by the legitimate successor to the throne, Jehoiakim. Later on they are enslaved in exile. If we compare this with related passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we can see that the people-of-the-land suffer the exploitation of the poor that had been criticized by these prophets.[647]

2.2.2 Acceptance by YHWH and the Religious-"Cultic" Function (2 Kgs 23:31)

As a rule, the people-of-the-land support those kings whose way of life is accepted by YHWH, e.g. David, Jehoash (2 Kgs 12:3), and Josiah (2 Kgs 22:2). The only kings supported by the people-of-the-land where this is not the case are Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 11:9–13)[648] and Jehoahaz (2 Kgs 23:30f.). We have yet to clarify YHWH's verdict concerning Jehoahaz. For Solomon, the verdict is negative due to his support of the cultic high places:

> At that time Solomon built a cultic high place for Chemosh, the idol of the Moabites, and for Molech, the idol of the Ammonites, on the mountain to the east of Jerusalem. He did the same for all of his foreign wives, who made offerings of smoke and sacrifices to their idols. The LORD became furious with Solomon because his heart had turned away from him, the God of Israel […] and he had forbidden him to serve foreign idols. (1 Kgs 11:7–10 EÜ 2016).

646 Suriano discusses the centrality to the kingdom of Israel of patrilineal succession from father to eldest male descendent in *Politics* 172.

647 Ezekiel 7:27 even speaks like 2 Kgs 25:3 of the people-of-the-land starving at the beginning of God's judgement.

648 Knauf points out that this passage refers back to 2 Sam 7 and signifies the election of Judah from among the tribes as well the fact that Judah alongside Jerusalem are the responsability of the Davidides (*1 Kgs 1–14* 330).

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In the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26) the people-of-the-land are tasked with preventing idol worship lest they themselves are punished for it (Lev 20:2, 4).[649] Yet this is precisely what they do not prevent Solomon or the nation from doing, for the cultic high places are repeatedly mentioned when the kings of Judah are appraised (1 Kgs 15:14; 22:44; 2 Kgs 12:4; 14:4 et passim). 2 Kings 11 mentions the cooperation of the people-of-the-land in the destruction of the cultic sites dedicated to Baal; they are not specifically mentioned, however, in the reports of Hezekiah's (2 Kgs 18) and Josiah's (2 Kgs 23) acts of cultic purification. The descriptions of their involvement in cultic activities that have been handed down to us are marginal in nature. We read of an offering being made for them (2 Kgs 16:15) and of their participation in a cultic procession of the king (2 Kgs 11:18–20; this is picked up again in the temple vision in Ezek 43:6). The cult of Molech that they are supposed to oppose takes place in the Hinnom Valley near Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35). Given that two spatial references point to Jerusalem, this is the place where the people-of-the-land are usually found.

There is a cultic offence for which the people-of-the-land can be made accountable, one that is is passive rather than active in nature. This is their allowance of idolatry within the land rather than their active participation in it. Leviticus clearly states the punishment: "Then I will set my face against him and his clan and expunge them from the midst of his people, him [i. e. the member of the people-of-the-land] and all those who whore after Molech" (Lev 20:5 EÜ 2016). YHWH will not only punish with idolaters, he will collectively extend this punishment to their family and the people-of-the-land.

In both a political and a cultic context, the task of the people-of-the-land is corrective in nature. They are to correct whatever the nation (Leviticus) or the king (1–2 Kings) do wrong. Unlike the prophets, whose task is simply to admonish the nation, the people-of-the-land are called to actively do something. This action especially takes place in Jerusalem.

2.2.3 The People-of-the-Land and the Mother of the King

Both the king's mother and the people-of-the-land are responsible for proper functioning of royal succession, the maintenance of the political order, and the purity of the cult. Whereas the royal mother's sphere of responsibility is limited to the palace, the people-of-the-land are active within Judah and above all Jerusalem. If both parties fail to act, as is evidently the case in 2 Kgs 16:2, the result is political instability and the vulnerability of the kingdom to outside powers.

649 Child sacrifice, in which nurslings are put through fire for Moloch and which is the particularl concern of Lev 20:2–4, is only forbidden during the reign of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:10). In this context the people-of-the-land are not mentioned.

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One special aspect of the relation between the royal mother and the people-of-the-land has been studied by Ihromi. She argues that it is only when the royal mother is from one of the cities allotted to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15) rather than from Jerusalem or abroad that the people-of-the-land only play a visible role in the election of a new king.[650] In her opinion, the people-of-the-land is a rural entity that is separate from Jerusalem, one that is condemned by Babylon in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 in a separate court proceeding.[651] This then helps Ihromi answer the question of who the people-of-the-land are. Because they support daughters from the list of Judean allotments, they are presumably the heads of Judean clans.

This thesis is very attractive and at first glance seems plausible. However, closer analysis reveals a number of problems. Although it is true that on three occasions the people-of-the-land appear when the mothers hail from locations from the Judean list, they also appear in other contexts, such as the election of Solomon in 1 Kgs 1:45.

Her argument is supported by their appearance under Joash, whose mother comes from Beerscheba (Josh 15:39), Josiah, whose mother comes from Bozkath (Josh 15:28), and Jehoahaz, whose mother comes from Libnah (Josh 15:42). However, two of the three localities mentioned in the list (Libnah and Beerscheba) later become Levitical cities (Josh 19:2; Josh 21:13//1 Chr 6:42). In addition to this, Beerscheba is also the southern boarder city of the promised land (Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 17:11 et passim) and a place where Abraham and Isaac set up altars (Gen 21; 26). Libnah was a fierce opponent of the people of God during the conquest (Josh 10; 12:15). In 2 Kgs 8:22//2 Chr 21:10 Libnah is removed from Judah due to a cultic mistake committed by a Judean king and is sieged by Assyria (2 Kgs 19:8//Jer 37:8).[652] The final references to the city are made in connection with the background of Hamutal, the mother of two of the kings that play a role in the narrative currently under analysis, namely 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 (2 Kgs 23:30; 24:18//Jer 52:1). At this point Libnah does not even belong to the southern kingdom.

Only Bozkath, which is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament, is able to support Ihromi's thesis. As such, we can conclude that there is only limited evidence supporting the argument that the people-of-the-land are from the country and support their own candidates.

At least Beerscheba and Libnah are relatively large and influential cities from the southern kingdom. As such, it is conceivable that their daughters played a

650 Ihromi, *Königsmutter* 426.

651 See ibid. 428f.

652 From the very outset Libnah's rebellion was the product of an inconsistency. When the city was conquered not all of its inhabitants were killed. Rather, a remnant survived that did not belong to the people of God (see E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 229f.).

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significant role in the royal court and the people-of-the-land made exploited this power for their own purposes. In addition to this, the generally xenophobic disposition of the people-of-the-land (Lev 20:2.4; 2 Kgs 11 par; 21:24 par; et passim),[653] along with their responsibility for cultic purity makes it likely that in times of crisis they would supported claimants to the throne that come from Levitical cities or territories conquered by Josiah.

2.3 The Two Priests and the Three Gate Keepers of the Jerusalem Temple

The expression כהן הראש ("priest of the head", or *"first priest"*) only occurs in 2 Kgs 25:17//Jer 52:24 and three times in the later texts of Chronicles (2 Chr 19:11; 24:11; 26:20), where he is a counterpart to the high priest. The *"second priest"* (כהן משנה) is mentioned once again in 2 Kgs 23:4, where the first priest appears as the "great priest" (כהן גדול[ו]), a category that was later developed in the exilic period into that of "high priest."[654] The three guards located at the סף (threshold, basin) can be found in 2 Kgs 25:18//Jer 52:24. Their occurrence as third in the sequence in this passage indicates their hierarchical status. Their function as *keepers of the temple gates* can be deduced from other passages (Jer 35:4; 2 Kgs 12:10; 22:4; 23:4//2 Chr 34:9).[655]

Just as Huldah was an ideal prophet and Josiah an ideal king, so Hilkiah, the discoverer of the book of the law (22:4–8), is an ideal priest.[656] However, the first priest Seraiah (2 Kgs 25:18), is deported and executed (v. 20). M. Rehm has proposed[657] that for this reason כהן הראש is another term for high priest. Others argue that it is a term of rank used in the Solomonic temple that had no cultic significance. Given the paucity of evidence and complete lack of extra-Biblical witnesses it is not possible to decide one way or the other. What is clear, however, is that this figure must have played an important role in the temple, for he is presented in relation to a second priest of lower rank.

Keepers of the threshold are also mentioned on a number of other occasions in 2 Kings. In these passages, too, they are understood to be priests (2 Kgs 12:10) who take money from those who wish to enter the temple (2 Kgs 22:4). During the

653 See the discussion in C.4.1.3.

654 Of the 16 occurrences of this expression, two are used for Nehemiah and Zechariah respectively, five for Haggai and one for 2 Chr 34:9. In Josh 20:6 and on three occasions in the context of the Josiah narrative (2 Kgs 22:4, 8; 23:4) he functions as a leader (the occurrence in Josh 20:6, which has a future perspective, is probably a later insertion).

655 See ThWAT V (סף, C. Meyers), column 898–901, 900. Meyers explains the number three in light of Ezek 40, which mentions three gates in the temple through which traders can pass (column 900f.).

656 See B.Schmitz, *Hulda* 34–40, 37.

657 See M.Rehm, *2 Kgs* 245.

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reform of the cult they are required to help clear the temple, which means they are even allowed to enter it (2 Kgs 23:4).[658]

In light of these observations, we can conclude that the two priests as well as the three gate keepers were responsible for the smooth functioning of the temple. They were allowed to enter YHWH's house and had contact with money. This would have provided occasion for corruption, though the text is silent on the matter.

2.3.1 The Priests as Sons of Levi and their Relation to the Prophets

In Numbers 3:3 we see that the priests are the sons of Aaron and are included among the Levites (Exod 4:14). In another passage the Levitical priesthood is associated with Zadok (see the table in the appendix). Their role within the cult is to make sure that the principles of cultic purity found in the purity laws (Lev 11–15) are correctly implemented in the temple and among the people (Deut 24:8) so that all may remain pure. The "*Ämtergesetz*" prescribes another twofold function for their office. First, they are to adjudicate difficult legal cases such as blood guilt that the normal courts are unable to solve (Deut 17:7f.). Secondly, they must preserve the original version of the book of the law, a copy of which muss be provided for the king for his daily personal study (Deut 17:18).

Taken together, these statements make clear that the priests are responsible for the purity of the people of God, and that they must enforce this purity in the spheres of everyday life and the cult, regardless of the attitude of the king. Within the context of the sanctuary they are also tasked with carrying and protecting the ark of the covenant (Josh 3:3; 8:33), which they are to stand sentinel over in the temple (1 Kgs 8:4).

Two priests by the names of Abiathar and Zadok appear in the list of David's officials (2 Sam 8:15–18). They reappear as the fathers of other priests in Solomon's list of officials (1 Kgs 4:1.4). In contrast to the tradition found in Chronicles (1 Chr 4), in Kings it is not possible to identify a continuous genealogical line. This means that pure hereditary succession seems to have been usual but not necessary. All that is certain is that the priests always hail from the house of Levi.[659]

If we look at the history of Abiathar and Zadok, we see that Abiathar was the only priest to survive Saul's massacre (1 Sam 22). He was also the last priest from the line of the priest Eli, who had the task of administrating the ark of the covenant in Shiloh (1 Sam 3f.). Both Abiathar and Zadok are responsible for the

658 Another occurrence can be found in Jer 35:4. Rehm deduces from this that they must be high ranking priests (see *2 Kgs* 245).

659 See the appendix for an analysis of the connection between priesthood and the Levites.

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ark of the covenant (2 Sam 15:24–35) and subsequently become advisors in David's royal court (2 Sam 15:35; 17:15; 19:12). During the conflict concerning the succession to David's throne, Abiathar took the side of Adoniah, thus opposing the prophet Nathan, the priest Zadok, and the royal mother Bathsheba, amongst many others (1 Kgs 1:8). Under Solomon he is eventually replaced by another priest (1 Kgs 2:27) and Zadok is made the chief of the priests (1 Kgs 2:35). It may be the case that Zadok was the first ancestor of the כהן הראש (this is how 1 Chr 4; 9 understands it).

This brief analysis shows that it is not possible to interpret Seraiah and Zephaniah, the two priests from 2 Kgs 25:18 in terms of their background. It is possible, however, to learn something of their function as preservers of the purity of the people of God, without which YHWH cannot live among his people and the people cannot live in the Promised Land (Lev 10:6–20; 20:22; 25:18; Deut 12:11).

2.3.2 Seraiah and Zephaniah

We learn just as little from the biographies of the two priests. Seraiah is never mentioned beforehand,[660] though he does seem to have a name typical of officials of the day, for David has a scribe (2 Sam 8:17) and Gedaliah an officer (2 Kgs 25:23) with the same name.[661] Zephaniah, on the other hand, is mentioned once in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 21), where he appears as a delegate sent to the prophet during the second Babylonian siege.[662]In Jer 29:29 and 37:3, too, Zephaniah functions as a line of communication between the prophet and the king, as had been the case with other priests before him (2 Kgs 19:2 // Jer 37:7; 2 Kgs 22:14). Jeremiah 29:26 explains that this has to do with the surveillance function of a priest, whose job is to make sure that there is no false prophecy within the land (see Deut 18:9–22).

At this point we need to take another factor into account. After the ideal priest Hilkiah handed over the book of the law to King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:8), both of these became subject to all the provisions of the law of the priest. Yet this is not all. During his cultic reform Josiah gathered together the entire cultic personnel along with all the Levites in the land and concentrated them in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:8; Deut 12:4–12). This means that with the downfall of the Jerusalem temple and the execution of its most important personnel Jerusalem as a cultic site is dead and the *entire land* is devoid of a cult.

660 In the lists in Neh 10:3; 11:11; 12:1, 12 he appears in the line of the Zadokites and is considered the son of the high priest Hilkiah, who was active under Josiah. Ezra 2:2 and 7:1 state he was the father of Ezra, the first high priest. Other individuals with the same name are handworkers (1 Chr 4 [3x]), an unknown official in Jer 36:26, and a quartermaster (Jer 51:59).

661 Other occurrences can be found in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemia.

662 See M.Rehm, *2 Kgs* 245.

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2.3.3 The Cultic Personnel, the Mother of the King, and the People-of-the-Land

It is these three groups along with the prophet who have the task of supporting the government and guiding it according to the stipulations of the divine law. The royal mother's responsibility for order within the palace and especially the harem also means that she has the task of hindering foreign wives from tempting the king and thus the entire nation from engaging in idolatrous worship.

Outside of the palace and probably the capital city the people-of-the-land also make sure that everyday politics functions smoothly. They are supposed to advocate for social justice, as well as make sure that the people's cultic practices accord with the divine law and its demand for the sole worship of YHWH. This group also intervenes during disputes concerning succession to the throne. It ideally does this in unison with the royal mother and the priests.

The priests, on the other hand, have their own inner hierarchy. Their leader is appointed by the king and he is allocated one (or more, cf. 2 Kgs 23:4) secondary priest(s). They have the task of protecting the house of God (בית יהוה), for that is where the ark of the covenant is located. Some of these priests are gate keepers who must also control who or what enters the temple. This serves to clearly demarcate the boundary between the sacred and the profane and serves to preserve the sanctity and purity of the place. As royal officials they fulfil their function as 'delegates of holiness' in two ways. On the one hand, they manage, protect, and maintain the sanctuary with all the means the king has granted them (1 Kgs 6; 16; 2 Kgs 12; 16; 18; 22f.). On the other hand, they must guarantee that the king has continuous access to the book of the law so that he can orient himself by it daily (Deut 17:14–20; 2 Kgs 22:8–12).

Although no explicit reference is made to the guilt of the priests, there are a number of clues concerning the role they played in the downfall of Judah. The idolatry practiced in Judah could also be found in the Jerusalem temple, so that a reform of the cult became necessary (2 Kgs 16; 18; 23). In the course of this reform all the priests came to the temple, including those who had offered sacrifices on the high places. If we assume that the former high priest along with the rest of the upper priestly stratum went into exile with Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:14), then it may be the case that the priests left behind to serve under Zedekiah were no longer ideal candidates for the job. They may well have been priests who were either from the former Northern Kingdom or who had previously served on the high places. As such, they would not have been eligible for a role in the temple. Whether this was the case or not, one thing is clear: With the execution of the five most important cult functionaries and the king himself, the temple becomes exposed, the threshold between holy and profane, pure and impure, can no longer be protected, and the house of God is abandoned to plunderers.

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Excursus: The Plundering of the House of God and the Protection of the Holy of Holia

a) The Plundering in Detail

Our narrative reports the plundering of the house of God in great detail. It is not only the gold implements commissioned by Solomon for the temple that are stolen (2 Kgs 24:13), the plunderers also took the iron sea, lamps, bowels, copper devices etc. (25:13–19). The detailed description of the pillars of "Boaz" and "Jachin" is a shortened verbal citation from 1 Kgs 7:13–22. By means of this citation the beginnings of the temple are evoked, though now in the context of its destruction.[663] The other temple objects are also mentioned in the context of the consecration of the temple, and so we can know what Solomon had commissioned (2 Kgs 24:13; 25:16) and where it was located. The iron sea (1 Kgs 7:23–26), whose bull-shaped pedestal had already been dismantled under Ahaz of Judah (2 Kgs 16:17), stood in the southern end of the temple court (1 Kgs 7:39). The ten stands of bronze with animals set in their panels (1 Kgs 7:27-39) that were removed by Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:17) and then later plundered by the Chaldeans (2 Kgs 25:13.16) were located to the north and the south of the temple, five on each end (1 Kgs 7:39). The metal smith Hiram of Tyre (1 Kgs 7:13f.)[664] also made the pots, shovels, and bowels for the daily operations of the temple (1 Kgs 7:40). According to 1 Kgs 7:47, it was impossible to weigh the enormous amount of bronze (לא נחקר משקל נחשת), which is why the Chaldeans were unable to do so either (2 Kgs 25:16).

1 Kgs 7:48–50 lists further objects made of gold that were kept in the innermost part of the temple, such as the table for the shewbread, the ten lamps, and various inlays and embellishments upon the portal. The decorations had already been removed by Hezekiah to provide tribute to the Assyrians (2 Kgs 18:16). The other golden objects are not specifically mentioned during the plundering of the temple; rather they are gathered together and taken away by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:13) or Nebuzaradan (2 Kgs 25:15). Finally, 1 Kgs 7:51 makes reference to the "votive offerings of David" (קדשי דוד). These were stored in the treasury and were either used to pay tribute (1 Kgs 15:18; 2 Kgs 14:14; 16:8) or were stolen by

663 Fricke offers a different interpretation. He considers the listing of the objects and especially the secondary insertion of the descriptive citation in 1 Kgs 7:13–22 to function as a bridge linking our narrative with late-exilic and early post-exilic texts that all hope for a return of the temple equipment. Examples are Dan 5; Isa 52:11; Ezra 1:7f. (see *2 Kgs* 356).

664 The fact that his skills were considered unique among his generation (1 Kgs 7:13f.) may explain why among the deportees in 2 Kgs 24:14 the smith is mentioned in the singular, unlike the handworkers who occur in the plural. He may have been a royal smith who belonged to the court and who was responsible for producing and maintaining the decor of the palace and temple.

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Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:13). It is more likely that they were plundered by Nebuchadnezzar because Hezekiah was still in the position to proudly show off his treasury (2 Kgs 18:15). This would mean that David's votive offerings were taken to Babylon along with the temple's cultic objects and the bronze works from the forecourt.[665]

b) Protection of the Holy of Holies?

We can now make an interesting observation: The temple is burned to the ground after it has been plundered of all its gold and silver as well as David's votive offerings and all the objects that Solomon had made (2 Kgs 25:9). However, as is well known, the temple contained other objects besides these, such as the ark of the covenant which Solomon had brought into the temple along with its paraphernalia upon their completion (1 Kgs 8:1). There was also the covenant tent with its holy objects (vv. 2–4). The place to which the ark was brought could only be entered by the priests and it was called "the Most Holy Place" (קדש הקדשים; v.6). It is here that the cherubim throne were located (1 Kgs 8:6; Isa 6), in a place that could not be seen from the outside.[666] The procession bringing all these objects into the temple is concluded with a theophanic manifestation (1 Kgs 8:10), which in turn is followed by Solomon's speech and consecratory prayer (1 Kgs 8:14-66).

Within the context of the narrative, not one of the objects belonging to the Most Holy Place are touched by Babylon. There are several possible explanations for this:

1. The Babylonians overlooked the Most Holy Place because it was hidden. This thesis makes no sense, however, for the area is not actually hidden within the temple, it is only set apart (1 Kgs 6:5, 19f., 31). Furthermore, such sanctuaries were well-known in the ancient Near East, so the plunderers would have gone to look for it.[667]
2. These objects only had ideological value for the people of God and so were of little interest to the plunderers. However, the Most Holy Place alone was lined with pure gold (1 Kgs 6:20) and the cherubim were also overlayed with gold (v. 8), and this would have been attractive to the plunderers. Furthermore, the ark of the covenant consisted of acacia word overlayed with gold both inside

665 Leithart correctly observes that it was the cultic objects created by the monarchy that were stolen (*1, 2 Kgs* 272), rather than those made by the nation during the wilderness period. This is the seventh plundering of the Jerusalem temple (p. 274). "A permanent stream of Gold leaves the land" (p. 272).

666 For the structure of the temple and its historical implications, see the online appendix to this book.

667 See ibid.

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and out (Exod 25:11). There were also the golden molding and its golden rings (v. 11) along with gold-plated carrying poles (v. 13). The atonement seat and the two cherubim on the lid are made of pure gold (vv. 17f.). The furnishings of the tent of revelation are also made of gold (Exod 25:23, 26, 28, 31, 38). The tent-sanctuary is made of expensive material and golden hooks (Exod 26:1–6, 11, 19, 21, 25, 29–33, 37). We can thus conclude that the second thesis is untenable.

3. The Most Holy Place was in fact plundered, though the event is not specifically mentioned. This thesis is also unlikely because of the very precise description of all that had been taken away in 2 Kgs 25:10–17. Everything is listed from the candle snuffer to the iron sea, so it is hardly plausible that the author would simply skip over the most important cultic appurtenances. It is also inconceivable that these items had been removed previously, for a temple would hardly use its most symbolically valuable items to pay tribute.

Having excluded the above-mentioned possibilities, we turn to the immediate context for clues. Either Babylon intentionally refrained from entering the Most Holy Place or it failed in its attempt to do so. Neither event is explicitly mentioned in the text. However, because YHWH is the character who ultimately pulls the strings (C.4), it is possible that this, too, is a situation where he is exercising control.

The Most Holy Place is where God's name dwells (1 Kgs 5:17–19; 8:16-20; 9:3, 7; 2 Kgs 21:4, 7; 23:27 et passim). As such, its destruction or plundering would most closely approximate an actual humiliation of God. On the other hand, it is also possible to interpret the Chaldean's refusal to enter the Holy of Holies and instead simply burn down it and all its gold along with the rest of the temple as an act of fear (or awe).

The Most Holy Place, however, is not only a cultic treasury. As a place in which one could see God, it was also extremely dangerous. Leviticus 16:13 says concerning Aaron the high priest: "The cloud of the incense must engulf the cover panel of the ark so that he will not die." Exodus 28:35 states: "Aaron must wear it [i.e. a robe with bells] when he ministers […] so that he does not die." Even Moses himself, who is able to speak directly with God (Num 12:7f.), receives in Exod 33:20 the threat, "You cannot see my face, for no one can see me an remain alive." God's face or even just his presence, as manifested for example in the ark, is deadly to *anyone* (Exod 40:34f.; Judg 13:22; 1 Sam 6:19; 2 Sam 6:6–8 et passim).[668] If we apply this concept to the case at hand then we can see that even if

668 This point of view was still held during the time of Chronicles (see 2 Chr 5,9) and was only reconsidered from a sapiential perspective in Job 19:25f. (see L.Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Ijob* 114f.). The visions in Isa 6 and Ezek 1–3 as well as in the recurring motif

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Babylon had tried to enter the Most Holy Place, it would have died in the presence of God.[669] Regardless of whether Babylon did try and failed or whether it restrained itself out of respect, the result is the same: the sacred space of the sanctuary remains untouched, the gold inside it along with all its appurtenances are consumed by fire.

c) The Removal of YHWH's Permanent Presence from Among the People of God

The cloud is the sign of a spontaneous theophany.[670] This means that from the exodus through the wilderness wanderings and up until the building of the temple, it only appears when YHWH "moves" (Exod 14:20; 16:10; 19:9; Num 9:15–23; 1 Kgs 8:10f. et passim).

The ark, the tent of meeting, and the temple, on the other hand, are all signs of YHWH's permanent presence among his people. When the people of the *"Einheitsreich"* failed, they lost the ark and thus the protective presence of YHWH (1 Sam 14:18; 2 Sam 6:15–18), at least for a period of time (1 Sam 4:15, 19–21). The destruction of these three static entities in 2 Kgs 25:9 mean that Jerusalem and the people of God have definitively lost their divine protection (cf. 1 Kgs 9:7f.), taking the nation back to the state it once had before Sinai, before it was granted the sanctuary (Exod 15–24). God has abandoned his people (for a time).

We read of the first breach of the covenant in Exod 32, at the transition between the Book of the Covenant and the building of the sanctuary. There is a strong consensus among contemporary scholars that the narrative of the golden calf is an allusion to the sin of Jeroboam, i.e. the images of the bulls that he had set up in the Northern Kingdom's boundary sanctuary.[671] The issue is cultic impurity, and it also connects the downfall of Samaria (2 Kgs 17) with our narrative in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. Could it be, then, that the ark, the tent of meeting, and the Most Holy Place as a whole had become so impure that they were burned to ash by fire, just has had been done to the golden calf (Exod 32:20)? In theory, yes, but then the detailed cultic purification carried out under Josiah (2 Kgs 22f.) would have been meaningless from the very outset. The answer is rather to be

of the cloud that hides God's glory are not cases of real seeing, which is why the "seer" does not die. Even Gen 2f. never says that Adam or Eve saw God. As such, the realization of the 'death sentence' of Gen 2:17 and 3:3 in 3:19 only means that the human being could not see/recognize God beforehand. The only exception is the Deuterocanonical 2 Macc 2:5, which draws upon an apocryphal legend when it says that Jeremiah hid the ark in a cave.

669 Ezekiel solves this problem in a different way. He lets the holiness of God depart from the temple, so that that which is plundered is only a profane space (see Ezek 10:18f.).

670 See J.Jeremias, *Theophanie* 119.

671 See, for example, J.Hahn, *Kalb.*

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found in the interior of the ark, namely on the tablets of the Ten Commandments. At the end of the Holiness Code we read that YHWH's permanent presence among his people is contingent upon the fulfilment of a clear rule:

> If you act in accordance with my statutes, keep my commandments, and follow them […] [I] will pitch my dwelling in your midst and will not abhor you. I will walk in your midst; I will be your God and you will be my people […]. But if you do not listen to me, if you disregard my statutes, abhor my rules and regulations, break my covenant by not following any of my commandments, then I will do the following to you […] I will turn my face against you and you will be struck down by your enemies (Lev 26:3, 11 f., 14–17; EÜ 2016, emphasis mine).

YHWH responds to his people breaking his covenant by turning his face against them; his salvific presence among them is turned into a destructive one. This can also be seen in Exod 32. Moses sees the *transgression*, and so as a sign of the broken covenant he destroys the tablets (v. 19). Then, the *place* of the transgression of the covenant, namely, the golden calf, is *burned* to ashes (v. 20). Finally, those who are *guilty must die* (vv. 27 f.).

The act of breaking the covenant is a recurrent theme in the nation's history from Sinai to Zion, intensifying as time goes by so that, in the end, the final consequences become inescapable.[672] The tension between reality and the stipulations of the covenant achieves such an intensity that under Josiah the tablets of the law have only become accessible through the book of the Law. As a result, even the containers of the tablets, namely the ark, the Most Holy Place, and the entire temple, become superfluous. YHWH turns his face against his people (2 Kgs 24:20). Their recurrent transgression (Numbers to 2 Kings) is followed by the burning of the sacred place (2 Kgs 25:9, understood in light of Deut 13:13–19) and the execution of the guilty (2 Kgs 25:18–21).[673] The tablets of the law only continue to exist as a memory.

d) Preliminary Conclusion

A clear interpretation of the plundering of the temple emerges when we set it within the framework of the broader narrative. The great detail with which the plundered items are listed indirectly discloses that which was not plundered, namely the Most Holy Place. This fact may be understood along the same lines as YHWH's generally indirect mode of operating within the story (C.4.1.5). He had

672 These threats are repeatedly limited by YHWH's intervention. However, the increasing extent (e. g. 2 Kgs 14:13 f.) serves as a warning to both the characters in the narrative as well as the readers of 1–2 Kings.

673 One could take the permanent reduction in the size of the people of God in both books to be the framework for this narrative of demise. Already in the book of Numbers we can see what happens to a people that cannot live out the Torah.

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repeatedly threated to remove his salvific presence from among his people, a threat that, up until this point, he had only partially fulfilled at various points in Israel's history (such as the temporary loss of the ark of the covenant). Now YHWH has decided to remove himself from his people entirely because the broken covenant and loss of cultic purity. YHWH can no longer abide among a people such as this without having to destroy it.[674] The main culprits die or are deported and Jerusalem is destroyed or "purified" in a burning fire. Josiah's reforms were not sufficient to protect it; the nation has now lost its symbol of God's permanent presence. It has been taken back to the time of the exodus. It lives in a foreign land, no longer has a valid covenant, and thus has lost its right —though not the possibility[675] —of enduring divine assistance. It has become once again a people in slavery that appears to have lost the God who had once liberated it from Egypt.,

2.4 Gedaliah and other Judean Officials and Functionaries

The officials primarily appear in the context of their being exiled, where they are represented as functionaries of the king (2 Kgs 24:12, 14–16; 25:19). The narrative mentions occupations such as "smith" (מסגר), "mason" (חרש), "eunuchs" or "court officials" (סריס)[676]. Among them emphasis is placed upon two groups of five: the *"pillers-of-the-land"* (אילי הארץ), who only occur elsewhere in Ezek 17:13. As in 2 Kgs 24:15 they are ascribed a powerful position in the court. Something similar can be said about the *"men-before-the-face-of-the-king"* (2 Kgs 25:19//Jer 52:25). However, they only appear here, so it is not possible to define them any more closely. Both groups are located in the sphere of the Judean king, which suggests that they had an advisory function.

In addition to these occupations the text mentions military figures, such as the "men of the war" (החיל גבורי). Apart from in 2 Kgs 24:14, these men are only otherwise mentioned in Josh 1:14, 6:2; 8:3, 10:7, and 2 Kgs 15:20. The group probably consists of reservists/commanders who are available to serve the king of Judah in place of a standing army. These groups are probably listed in such detail in order emphasize power of the king of Judah rather than for the purposes of a census, which is forbidden (cf. 2 Sam 24:10, 16). He goes into exile with a powerful

674 For the meaning of purity in Leviticus, see G.Wilhelm, *Reinheit* 197–217; God must punish that which is not pure.

675 Compared with the total obliteration of the temple of Baal under Jehu (2 Kgs 10:18–29) as the maximal form of punishment, the destruction of Jerusalem demonstrates divine power without necessarily implying complete divine rejection.

676 For the debate over the etymological origin and meaning of the word, see B.Kedar-Kopfstein, סריס, columns 952f.

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army, skilled craftsmen, and a multitude of officials, i. e. with a substantial royal court.

We find a similar case with king David, who draws up a list of his mighty warriors in 2 Sam 23:8–39. Among them are mentioned a Maacathite and two Netophathites. This fact is relevant for our understanding of Gedaliah's commanders, for he also has representatives of these segments of the population. As for Gedaliah himself, the narrative reveals that he is the son of Ahikam and the grandson of Shaphan (2 Kgs 25:22). Both appear in 2 Kgs 22, where they play a crucial role in Josiah's cultic reforms and the questioning of Huldah. In addition to this, Jeremiah 26:24 reports that Ahikam protected the prophet.[677] Shaphan is called a state clerk while Ahikam at least spends time in the royal court. The narrative does not tell us whether they had died by the time of 2 Kgs 25:22–26 or whether they had been exiled in one of the two waves of deportations. What is clear is that Gedaliah very likely descended from an elite class that was considered eligible for administrative roles by both the Judean as well as Babylonian regimes. According to 2 Kgs 22:8 f., Shaphan even read the book of the law that he found in the temple. This means that the law of the king (Deut 17:14–20) was known to him and that his son, too, must have been able to act in accordance with the laws. The reason why the Davidide Ishmael kills Gedaliah in 2 Kgs 25:25 remains nebulous.[678]

An interesting aspect is provided by the *list of Solomon's officials* (1 Kgs 4). In contrast to David, it is princes rather than warriors that advise him in Jerusalem. He also has a whole series of civil servants who are distributed throughout the land. It is possible that these advisors are the men-before-the-face-of-the-king or the pillars-of-the-land, whereas the others are taken from the people-of-the-land. In this way we might be able to more precisely explain the not only these two terms but also the expression "houses of the great ones" (בתים גדולים) in 2 Kgs 25:9. However, there are no clear references and we are dependant upon the accumulation of weak intertextual references to the rule of Solomon. As such, it is not possible to certain.

677 On the whole, Jeremiah paints a positive picture of Shaphan and Ahikam (see Jer 36; 39:14; 43:6 et passim).

678 According to Jer 40 f., which has a clear anti-Davidic bias, Ishmael is a hired murderer of the king of the Ammonites who violates the right to hospitality and causes a massacre.

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2.5 Interim Conclusion

In light of the above analysis of kings and secondary characters it is now possible to clearly answer the question of Judah and its guilt towards YHWH: The issue is not the territorial entity of the "Southern Kingdom" but the social group that stands behind it. The issue is the people of God.[679] Our analysis of the secondary characters revealed a schema according to which they receive a mandate in relation to political and cultic life but then fail to fulfil it. The primary criterion for wicked behaviour is less their involvement in political intrigues than their cultic transgressions, i. e. their idolatry, their violation of the First Commandment (as was also the case for the kings, cf. D.1):

> The sins of the king, then [if the pericope is Deuteronomic and thus stands in the tradition of Moses and Joshua], are the sins of the people, and in animadverting on those the Deuteronomist is but emphasizing his main theme of the tragedy of his people as the supreme example of divine retribution.[680]

From the perspective of the regime the role of the royal mother is to constrain the influence of foreign woman upon the king so that he does not commit idolatry. A failure in this regard is exemplified by Solomon and a number of his successors. The issue here is not misogyny but the preservation of cultic purity. The negative influence began during the time of king Solomon (or with Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11) and continues after the division of the kingdom. From this point on, even women from the Northern Kingdom are considered dangerous because Jeroboam's abandoning of cultic purity and unity.

The people-of-the-land are also required to safeguard the cult and the kingdom. Preservation of the Davidic kingdom also implicitly serves the purpose of cultic purity, for according to Deut 18 (see D.1) it is the task of the king to ensure the correct worship of YHWH. According to Lohfink[681], it is the king who motivates the nation to commit either good or evil deeds. In addition to the people-of-the-land, there are other officials and functionaries who have been entrusted with a similar task, the functions of whom mostly go back to King Solomon's court (1 Kgs 4). Of particular significance for our concerns are the cultic personnel of the temple. The nationwide failure to maintain cultic purity is particularly manifest in their own failure in this regard, and so they are the ones to receive a particularly harsh punishment. The loss of the temple leads to the loss of the ark of the covenant, which is why the nation is catapulted back to the time

679 K.Weingart, *Israel* 255; 362f.

680 J.Gray, *1.2 Kings* 38.

681 N.Lohfink, *Rückblick* 134f. He provides the following proof-texts: Judg 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1; 1 Kgs 11:6; 14:22; 15:26, 34; 16:19, 25, 30; 22:53; 2 Kgs 3:2; 8:18, 27; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:2; 21:2, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19 (p. 89).

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before the Sinai covenant. Having broken the covenant, it is now once again exposed to the perils and threats of the time before its salvation. This is not only true of their return to a state of slavery but also of the attacks they suffer from their enemies, who in this context are far more prominent, as well as the absence of YHWH as Judah's protector and saviour.

3. The Role of the Nations within the Narrative Context

3.1 Babylon and the Chaldeans

In the narrative leading up to 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, *Babylon* only occurs six times, in Gen 10:10; 11:9; 2 Kgs 17:30; 20:12, 17f. Within our narrative block, however, it occurs 21 times.

In Gen 10:10 Babylon is part of the hero-king Nimrod's core territory, appearing within the *toldeot* of Cush the son of Ham the son of Noah, brother of Egypt, Canaan, and Put. Genesis 11:1–10 functions as a hinge[682] connecting the Primeval History/prologue to the Bible and the beginning of the Patriarchal narratives. Genesis 11:9 reports the end of the human attempt to build a tower and names it "Babylon," which means "confusion/chaos."[683] Both of these passages in the Torah say something about the emergence of Babylon as a kingdom and city but are seemingly silent concerning the situation in 2 Kgs 24f. If we take common lexemes as the point of comparison, however, then there are connections between this pericope and the description of the destruction of Jerusalem. We can see a correspondence between the burning (שרף) of bricks for Babylon (Gen 11:3) and the burning down of houses in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:9); the same applies to the fear of being scattered (פוץ) in Gen 11:4 and the scattering of the troops in 2 Kgs 25:5. Both locations are referred to as *the* city (העיר) (Gen 11:5; 2 Kgs 25:4) and in both cases YHWH's actions cause the city to be abandoned by its inhabitants against their will. Chaldea occurs in the context of both narratives and both report a departure from one's own land (הארץ) (Gen 11:31; 2 Kgs 25).

2 Kings 17:30 reports the settlement of foreign nations in the former territories of the Northern Kingdom after its downfall. Among them are people from Babylon who worship a divinity by the name of "Succoth-benoth." In 2 Kgs 20// Jes 39 King Hezekiah of Judah is lying sick on his bed when the king of Babylon sends him gifts due to his illness. In response Hezekiah shows the envoys his

682 See A.Schüle, *Prolog*; N.C.Baumgart, *Umkehr*; *Ende* 27–58; E.Zenger/ C.Frevel, *Einleitung* 73.

683 This appellation is probably an intentional and polemical deviation from the actual meaning of the name as "Gate of God", for the text of Genesis 11:1–9 probably dates to the Persian period (see A.Berlejung, *Living* 89–111; 108).

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treasury (vv. 12f. par). Shortly thereafter the prophet Isaiah appears and announces to Hezekiah that a future generation from Judah will be deported to Babylon and the sons of the king will work as courtiers (v. 17f. par).[684] This announcement is a prophetic prediction of what will happen in 2 Kgs 24f., and so it may contain an allusion to the fate of Jehoiachin in 2 Kgs 25:27–30. The textual evidence, however, is not sufficient to prove this.

The kings *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Evil-Merodach* make no appearance before 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. Only 2 Kgs 20 makes a reference to another Babylonian king. As such, the broader narrative context contains no further information or points of contact that may be relevant for interpretation.

References to the *Chaldeans* primarily occur in the Latter Prophets. Our section of narrative is the only place where the term occurs within the Former Prophets, i.e. the stretch of narrative from Genesis to 2 Kings.[685]

Excursus: Abraham of Chaldea

Although no mention is made of a particular people group called "Chaldeans," the place name "Ur of Chaldeans" appears in Gen 11:28, 31; 15:7. It is the birthplace of Abraham, from whence he followed his father and his entire family to a place called Haran (Gen 11:31f.) before continuing on to Canaan (Gen 12). Interestingly, the genealogy of this family goes back to Shem the son of Noah, which means that they are Semites although they live in the territory of Babylon, which belongs to Hamites (see above; cf. Gen 11:10–32).[686] As such, the movement of these Semites back towards their homeland could be understood to foreshadow the gathering together of the exiles and their return home from exile.

According to Gen 15:7, it is YHWH who "led" Abraham "out" (יצא) of Ur, which is an allusion to both to his calling as a prophet and the future Exodus.[687] Abraham is a chosen individual, and the place of his election lies in Chaldea. An intertextual link to our narrative in Kings can also be found in Gen 15:18, for there we read that the land of the children of Abraham, i.e. the Israelites, stretches from "the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates." According to 1 Kgs 5:1//2 Chr 9:26 this territory came under the rule of Solomon. In 2 Kgs 24:7 we read that this region

684 The prophet Jeremiah makes similar announcements to Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (see Jer 20:1–6; 21:1–10; 22:25; 24:1; 25:1–14; 27 et passim).

685 The military leader Nebuzaradan is not mentioned anywhere. Of interest, however, is the figure of Holofernes from the book of Judith, who has similar characteristics, such as his appearance in the place of his deified lord and his merciless loyalty.

686 See also T.Hieke, *Genealogien.*

687 See chapter D.5.1.2.

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was later subordinated to Egypt before being subjugated in turn to the Chaldeans, which is a reflection of changing power relations within the broader narrative.[688]

In light of these observations, we can draw the following tentative conclusion: Abraham, who listens to the voice of God (cf. the excursus to Deut 28, esp. v. 62) without doubting it, is led out of Babylon. This marks the beginning of the salvation history of the people of God, for this event is immediately followed by the election of Abraham to be the progenitor of Israel. Parallel structures can be identified between this election and the liberation and election of the people of God in the book of Exodus.[689] 2 Kings 25 reports the return to Babylon, which means that the nation is now returning to the place where its faith began (before the covenant was ever made at Sinai!). It is no longer located in the Promised Land but rather in a place from which it must be called out by YHWH. 2 Kings 25, however, when only read on the level of its explicit narrative presentation, provides no indication of what it is that Israel is to do in this place.[690]

3.2 The Arameans

Aram is mentioned with a genealogical function in Deut 26:5. However, it mostly occurs in Genesis (Gen 10:22 f.; 22:21; 25:20 et passim). One significant member of this nation or lineage is the cunning Laban, Isaac's brother-in-law and Jacob's uncle (see also Hos 12:13). Uncle and nephew conclude a dispute by erecting a stone pillar called a *mizpah* to mark their separation. It is located on the boarder between Jacob (= Israel) and Laban (= Aram; Gen 31:49). Aram is first referred to

688 The designation "river of Egypt" also appears in the role of a boundary marker in Num 34:5 (for the Promised Land); Josh 15:4, 47 (for Judah); 1 Kgs 8:65//2 Chr 7:8 (kingdom of Solomon). According to Gen 2:14 the "river Euphrates" is one of the four rivers that flow out of the river of Paradise. It is referred to as the eastern boundary of the Promised Land in Deut 1:7; 11:24; Josh 1:4 and Ps 80:2. According to 2 Sam 8:3//1 Chr 18:3 David secures the boarder at the Euphrates, whereas Josiah fails in his attempt to fight against Assur, which lay beyond this boundary, and dies (2 Kgs 23:29//2 Chr 35:20). Apart from these references, the two rivers only otherwise occur in combination with each other in the context of a prophecy of salvation concerning the ingathering of the people of God (Isa 27:12), i. e. at a future point in time.

689 See, e. g., R.Rendtorff, *Theologie 1* 83 f.

690 The current scholarly consensus is that Gen 15 is a late text, certainly later than 2 Kgs 25. From a diachronic perspective this does not further our understanding. However, the historical fact that Judah's king along with his entourage was located in exile does sufficiently explain the setting. At a later stage in the growth of the text, when the exile had become a matter of memory rather than lived experience, guilt, Torah observance, and purity are reflected upon from a metalevel and the exile becomes stylized as a sapiential place of learning (see A.Siquans, *Exil* 24–40, 32 f.38).

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as a military enemy in Num 23:7. Here, however, the issue is an unintentional border violation on the part of Israel that did not lead to military conflict.

The primary sources depicting their mutual relationship are Judges and 2 Kings. The only verses that group Aram together with Moab and Ammon (2 Kings 24:2) are Judg 10:6 and 2 Kgs 23:13. Here these nations serve as negative role models in terms of their idolatry.

As was already the case in the book of Joshua (cf. D.5.1.2), in Judges, too, the Israelites are incapable of definitively defeating their enemies. Though they manage, for example, to set fire to Jerusalem in Judg 1:8, they are unable to capture or destroy it (Judg 1:21).

Aram and the other nations that remain among Israel are a constant source of danger to it. Israel is only able to overcome this threat with the help of YHWH and the heroic judges that he appoints. Judges 2 introduces a schema that is repeated throughout the book: First, Israel abandons YHWH (Judg 2:11–13), which leads to the invasion of marauding bands (גדודי, v. 14)[691]. This is followed by the appointment of a judge who goes on to deliver the nation (vv. 15–18). The nation lives in freedom until the death of the judge (v. 19). After his or her death the nation apostatizes from YHWH once again, which means that it ceases to listen to his voice (יהוה בקול שמע). The reason why YHWH decided to let the nations survive was precisely so that they can pose a constant threat to Israel (vv. 20f.). This constantly repeated pattern functions as a kind of prolepsis to the conquest of Samaria (2 Kgs 17f.) and Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24f.), and follows a similar logic to that of 2 Kgs 24:2, 20; Deut 28 etc. (cf. D.1.1): Because Israel does not listen to YHWH it runs into difficulties that only YHWH can deliver it from.[692] In contrast to 2 Kgs 24:1–3, however, Judges does not repeatedly say that YHWH himself sends the marauding bands in order to force them to repent. Rather, he simply refuses to help them until they decide to repent (e. g. Judg 10:13–16). The refusal of the kings of Israel and Judah to repent could be of pivotal significance to our interpretation of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, even though no explicit reference is made to it.

Judges 18 implies that the tribe of Dan considered Aram to be enemies, for it sought a place to dwell that was far away from them (vv. 7, 28).

Finally, the Arameans are subjugated by David (2 Sam 8:5–13; Ps 60:2). They rebel against him with the help of the Ammonites and particularly the Maacathites, but their rebellion is quelled (2 Sam 10). There seem to have been trade

691 The word גדודי is only used in relation to the Amalekites in 1 Sam 30. It is otherwise always used for a group that has been sent by YHWH.

692 This is a clear example of the Deuteronomistic understanding of history (for the definition, see A.2).

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relations under Solomon (1 Kgs 10:29), though the peace between these nations was not stable (1 Kgs 11:24f.).

In 1 Kgs 15:18 Aram makes a covenant with the northern kingdom and has to be bribed by Asa of Judah. He receives tribute in order to keep himself out of the internecine conflict within the people of God, which indicates that there has been a shift in power.

In 1 Kgs 19:15 Elijah anoints Hazael to become king of Aram, a privilege that is otherwise only reserved for the kings of Israel. Aram, now convinced that YHWH is on its side, marches against Israel but is repeatedly defeated (1 Kgs 20; 22). Aram loses, but within the narrative it actually has another function: to bring God's judgement upon King Ahab, who has repeatedly refused to abandon the cult of Balaam, despite Elijah's best efforts €(1 Kgs 19–22). As in 2 Kgs 24f., the Arameans function as a divine instrument of punishment.

In 2 Kgs 5–9, too, Aram wages war on the Northern Kingdom, even laying siege to its capital of Samaria (2 Kgs 7) before finally fleeing due to an act of divine deception. On a verbal level the state of the siege is closely connected with 2 Kgs 25:1–8. In 2 Kgs 6:24f. the city is besieged (צור), which leads to a famine (רעב). According to 7:4f. there are deserters ("those who have fallen over," אל נפל) and the king of Israel rises in the night (הלילה) because the enemy managed to break into the city (7:12). In contrast, however, YHWH saves Israel, so that it is not Israel that flees towards the Jordan (as Zedekiah does in 2 Kgs 25:4) but rather the Arameans (2 Kgs 7:15). It is the enemies who are plundered rather than Israel (7:16; cf. 2 Kgs 25:13–17).

In 2 Kgs 10:32f. Aram has once again recovered from its defeat and manages to conquer the land of the half-tribe Manasseh in the Transjordan, land that should actually belong to Moab and Ammon (see below). In 12:18f. Aram takes up arms against Judah. Jerusalem's only means of deliverance is to pay tribute (similar to 1 Kgs 15:18). This attempted plundering echoes 2 Kgs 24:1f. The connection between the two passages is strengthened in the subsequent chapter 13, where YHWH punishes the king of Israel by allowing Aram to plunder it (2 Kgs 13:22; similar to Isa 9:11). YHWH likewise lets Aram attack Judah (2 Kgs 15:37; 16; Isa 7). Aram's function as YHWH's instrument of punishment is particularly clear in 2 Kgs 16. Here we read that it is allowed to take up arms against Judah *because* Ahaz of Judah has committed the sin of Israel, which is idolatry (2 Kgs 16:2f., 10).

Aram is clearly a significant enemy of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. They repeatedly engage in warfare, with Aram only winning when it has been sent by YHWH. This always happens when the king commits idolatry or turns from YHWH in some other way. When allowed to do so, Aram is capable of violating national borders and engaging in various kinds of plundering. As such, its success as part of the bands of robbers in 2 Kgs 24:2 clearly signals both to the readers of the narrative as well as the Judean characters within it that the Judah should

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return to YHWH so that he might shift his salvific gaze away from Aram and towards his people. It is also explains why it is that Judah must fall. The reference to Aram has a hermeneutical function that shapes the way the reader should understand the text.

3.3 The Moabites

In Gen 19:37f. Moab and Ammon are understood to be the offspring of Lot's incestuous relation with his daughters. They belong to the Semitic family line (Gen 11:10-32) but are simultaneously denigrated and even prohibited from becoming members of the people of God up until the tenth generation (Deut 23:4f.). They are implicitly represented as a belligerent nation in Exod 15:15 and explicitly so in the book of Numbers (especially in Num 21–23; there is also an allusion in Mi 6:5). From this point on they are considered the enemies of the Israelites who must be repeatedly conquered (Num 24:17; Josh 24:9; 1 Sam 14:47; 2 Sam 8; 2 Kgs 3). They are also considered idolaters who threaten the cultic purity of Israel and its kings (Num 25:1; Judg 10:6; 1 Kgs 11; 2 Kgs 23:13). Moab is an opponent. Like the other nations, YHWH has commanded that it be neither exterminated nor conquered (Deut 2:8f.; Judg 11:15, 25). This commandment was transgressed by the tribe of Manasseh (Josh 13:32).

YHWH commands Moab to join the Ammonites and Amalekites in fighting Israel until it is conquered and for a period loses Jericho (Judg 3). Commands such as these are repeated (1 Sam 12:9; 2 Kgs 1:1; 13:20), so that when YHWH sends the troops in 2 Kgs 24:2 their significance is clear. They are YHWH's instrument chastening Israel/Judah.

3.4 The Sons of Ammon and the Maacathites

The first time both the Ammonites and Moab are mentioned is in Gen 19:37f. They, too, are comprehensively denigrated by being portrayed as the offspring of incestuous relationships. They are nevertheless granted their own land by YHWH (Deut 2:19, 37). They are described as giants (Deut 3:11). In Num 21:24 they are driven out of some of their land by the people of Israel, though the Jabbok is retained as a boundary marker (Deut 3:16; Josh 12:2). According to Josh 13:25, part of the occupied territory belongs to the territory of the half-tribe of Manasseh that lives in the land. This arrangement transgresses the commandment in Deut 2.

In Judg 10–12 Israel apostatizes from YHWH and so is threatened by Ammon. When Israel repents, the commander Yiftah is chosen (his tragic end in Judg 11

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cannot be recounted here). He mobilizes his troops while based in Mizpah[693] (Judg 10:17; 11:29f.) and conquers the Ammonites.

King Saul responded to a renewed threat posed by the Ammonites (1 Sam 11), though his success is not ascribed to divine intervention (1 Sam 12:12; 14:47). Ammon is later subjected by David (2 Sam 8:12). It's relation to Israel as vassal is fragile (2 Sam 23:37). It repeatedly rebells (2 Sam 10) and its vassal status only be sustained by the use of force (2 Sam 11:1). David uses soldiers from this nation to kill Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, David's later wife (2 Sam 12). As already mentioned above, Solomon marries an Ammonite woman who leads him to commit idolatry (1 Kgs 11:33). Even his heir to the throne, Rehoboam, is the son of an Ammonite (1 Kgs 14:21.31), which is illegal according to the Law (Deut 23:4).

The *Maacathites* as a non-Israelite nation that live in the Promised Land are mentioned in Deut 3:14; Josh 12:5; 13:11–13.[694] According to Josh 13, their territory was determined to be part of the inheritance of the tribe of Manasseh, who received land in the Transjordan. According to 2 Sam 10:6, 8, Maacah is ruled by a king and belongs to the Ammonites. After their subjugation (2 Sam 10), one of their number was considered one of David's heroes (2 Sam 23:34), which indicates that he was a good military functionary. As far as our interpretation of the Gedaliah pericope is concerned (2 Kgs 25:22–26), all that can be concluded on the basis of this meagre information is that the Maacathite was a non-Israelite Judean who came from an ethnic group known for its military strength. This latter fact may have qualified him for the role he had with Gedaliah. If the author of this pericope intended something specific with this name, he may have been thinking of the military association in 2 Sam 23:34, which also mentions two Netophathites. In this case, there would also be a meaningful connection between 2 Sam 2:4 and 2 Kgs 25:23. Whereas David was accompanied by "men of Judah," here it is "men" from the entourage of the military leaders, most of whom did not come from Judah. In this way, the author may have been thinking of the beginning of the monarchy and the strength it had under David, the ideal king. He may also have been thinking of a first yet failed attempt to continue the Davidic tradition in a non-monarchical form.

693 D.Jericke, *Ortsangaben* 191f. also points out the significance of Mizpah as a military gathering point for excursions against Israel's neighbours.

694 Maacah is used as both a male and a female name in the Old Testament (Gen 22:24; 2 Sam 3:3; 1 Kgs 2:39; 2 Kgs 15:2, 10, 15; et passim). It is not possible to identify an ancestral figure.

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3.5 Interim Conclusion

Our initial analysis of our narrative's plot and characterization was unable to establish why YHWH specifically caused *Aram, Moab* and *the Ammonites to invade Judah in* 2 Kgs 24:2, other than because they were kingdom's immediate neighbours. Now regarded within the context of the broader narrative we can see that these nations are among the classic enemies of the people of God, with the roots of the conflict stretching back to the pre-monarchical period. Indeed, there is even an element of inner-familial conflict as the nations are genealogically related to each other. It is particularly interesting that Shem is the common ancestor of all of these nations, that it is only from this line that YHWH chose his instruments of salvation or punishment.[695] According to Deuteronomy, it is also YHWH who grants land to each nation, a fact that is ignored by Israel in Josh 13 and which may have influenced the choice of which nations were to be dispossessed (cf. D.5.1). According to Joshua, the three neighbouring nations are evidence of Israel's failure before YHWH, who for this reason repeatedly confronts them with the threat of extermination. Every time the people of Israel breaks the covenant by serving other gods and not listening to their own God (cf. Deut 28), YHWH instructs one of these peoples to invade either Israel or Judah. Israel is only able to repel the invasion with the help of God. Over the course of the narrative this constant threat from the outside increases in intensity, so that it becomes increasingly more difficult to keep it at bay. It was only the idealized King David who was able to fully subjugate these nations and integrate the best of their fighters into the ranks of his own heroes. Already during the reign of Solomon they manage to develop into an uncontrollable threat, and they even manage to destroy the unity of his empire (cf. 1 Kgs 11).

The *Babylonian* empire, to which all these nations appear to be subjugated, makes almost no appearance before 2 Kgs 23:24f. It is a mysterious empire in the East, one that evokes both proximity to the paradisiacal garden (Gen 2:8) but also the hubris of humanity (Gen 11:1–9) that provokes divine judgement. That Abraham is from Chaldea may symbolize the people of God's dependency upon God, for his departure from Ur is the response to a direct command by YHWH. This would make Babylon a symbol that facilitates Israel's reflection upon its identity. We cannot, however, go into this topic here.[696]

695 From a political-historical perspective one can identify other reasons why it is especially the neighbouring nations who exploit a power vacuum when it arises (see the history of Judah and its neighbours in the appendix).

696 A necessary diachronic comment: The main reason is that all of the above-mentioned verses are almost certainly to be dated late. Hardly any of the pericopes could have been composed before the post-exilic period. This means that they are reflections upon the experiences of the exile. In 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 this process is only just beginning (for the dating, see A.2.2.1c).

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Within the context of our narrative Babylon comes across as a nebulous, entirely unknown entity that suddenly explodes upon the scene with a power that is vastly superior to that of all of Israel's other enemies. The Chaldeans burst into the narrative like Noah's Flood. Unlike Israel's other enemies, which each have their own axe to grind, the Chaldeans simply function as YHWH's "neutral" rod of punishment. It is only when Israel rebels against their dominion without being prompted to do so by YHWH that the king of Babylon develops a personal interest in attacking Judah.

After subjugating the nation the king of Babylon installs a governor (2 Kgs 25:22–26). This governor then draws upon traditions involving the neighbouring nations in order to bolster his position. Gedaliah (2 Kgs 25:22–26) evokes memories of David's heroes, some of whom were Netophites and Maacathites (cf. 2 Sam 23), as well as Mizpah, an important military point and bulwark against Israel's enemies during the period of the Judges (Judg 11 et passim). Gedaliah, Babylon's chosen governor, evokes the military strength of Israel's early days both in his choice of the place from which to govern and in the identity of his commanders, even as he simultaneously verbally subordinates himself to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:24). Here the presence of foreign nations functions to undergird the power of this "new man," who situates himself in the tradition of David. It may be that the Davidide Ishmael took this to be an insult to the Davidic line, and this lead him to wipe out the entire group at Mizpah.

If we try to find a common element undergirding all of these observations, we can conclude that the nations have a highly functional significance within 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. Not only the neighbours (2 Kgs 24:2; 25:23) but also Babylon itself are portrayed in terms of a specific function that they fulfil.

In terms of spatiality, the assassination at Mizpah leads in any case to a crossroads. Neither Babylon nor the Judeans who remained are able to achieve anything in the land. Neither the military leaders' evocation of the conflict between David and Saul over the succession to the throne nor Mizpah's earlier role as military centre during the period of the Judges stretch back far enough to clear Judah's guilt. It is just as impossible to make a peaceful new beginning by connecting with the pre-monarchial period as it is to re-conquer the land (D.5.1) or return to Egypt (D.5.2). This casts a new light on 2 Kgs 25:27–30, for in this final scene Babylon has been transformed. It now no longer functions as just a threat to Judah's existence, as will be demonstrated below.[697]

In terms of literary technique, the nations are not portrayed as complex characters with a particular value system. Their function is primarily hermeneutical, and this is determined by the broader context. Their motivation is fairly

697 This is not the place to decide whether what we have here is the first indication the Babylonian Golah's domination of the other diaspora communities.

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one-dimensional, being focused on plundering though with revenge and power also possibly playing a role. In any case, their primary goal is immediate profit. Their primary significance for the narrative is their relationship both to YHWH, who sends them against Judah, and to Judah itself, which has been given into their hands. The broader narrative context confirms our interpretation that the nations function as the rod of YHWH's punishment whose sole purpose is to send the people of God into exile, which is to bring about their temporary end. After they have fulfilled this function, the nations no longer stand under his protection (2 Kgs 25:25). Understood in terms of the theory of a *novel of action,* they are the ones who enact the plot until the reader has progressed to the core point.

4. YHWH's Intervention and the Role of Prophecy

Our initial interpretation of YHWH as the central figure of the narrative has been further substantiated by the preceding observations. He not only leads the campaigns against Israel, his relationship with his people had already been established beforehand. Every transgression, whether committed by Judah, the nation, the kings, or each sub-group within Judah, can be connected with a legal text, usually from the book of Deuteronomy (Cf. D.1; D.2). Even the choice of punishment has already been predetermined. The deployment of neighbouring nations as a corrective to Israel's behaviour follows prior precedent and divine announcement (cf. D.3). In no way does YHWH act arbitrarily, as at first had seemed to be the case when we limited our context to just pericope itself (cf. C.4). However, we still do get the impression that YHWH is lacking mercy. He fulfils the law down to the smallest detail, regardless of whether it leads to curse or blessing. He acts as keeper, judge, and executioner of the prescribed law. Even the survival of a remnant and the pardoning of Jehoiachin are not spontaneous acts of grace but rather belong to this pattern, for they are among the obligations that he had imposed upon himself (2 Sam 7:15 f. et passim). Is it not precisely here that we can perceive the tension that is necessary to the portrayal of God? YHWH fulfils the Torah, just as he expects his human counterparts to do. He thereby demonstrates that he is just and that the punishments he has inflicted upon his people are legitimate. At the same time, however, he remains faithful to his promises, despite the nation's breach of the covenant, and so he repeatedly offers them another chance. This demonstrates his willingness to back away from the maximal requirements of the Torah and give preference to his love for the nation.

The narrative portrayal of God is so multi-layered and at times so elusive (cf. A.1; C.4.4) that we now offer observations drawn from the broader context in order to further clarify the picture.

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4.1 The Mouths of God: Prophecy and Torah

As a rule, YHWH speaks to his people through mediators, especially prophetesses and prophets. They provide a key for interpreting his behaviour and the behaviour of the nation in its relation towards him and the Torah, for they show that he had warned his people and given them every opportunity to repent. This is only one of the acts of YHWH that can be understood as merciful. On a number of occasions we have mentioned that after Huldah (2 Kgs 22) the prophets disappear from the narrative. After Josiah's reforms there is no one to intercede for Judah, not a Jeremiah, not an Isaiah, not an Ezekiel and not a Huldah. The nation no longer has an advocate like Moses in Exod 32–34. There is no one to warn it or try to bring it back on track. The time for words is now over. All that remains are YHWH's actions, his sending of bands of robbers as a threat from the outside to force the kings to give in. Yet even if 2 Kgs 24:1–3 could have been revoked, with 2 Kgs 24:20 this option is now permanently excluded. YHWH gives free reign to his wrath. Yet what is the cause of this vehemence? Why does he not provide another warning? The answer can be found in the re-discovered scroll of 2 Kgs 22. Once again, the king has the long-forgotten Torah in front of him, the word of God that the prophetesses and prophets had always pointed to. There is no longer a need for mediators to point to the word, for it is now accessible for all to read. It is the task of the king to listen to the word, it is the task of the cultic personnel to remind him of it, and it is the task of the various groups in the land to fulfil its commandments.

Yet before this can come about, Huldah already announces the downfall:

> Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "Say to the man who has sent you to me, 'Thus says the LORD: I am bringing disaster upon this place and its inhabitants, all the threats of this book that the king of Judah has read. For they have forsaken me, sacrificed to other gods, and enraged me through all the works of their hands. For this reason my wrath has been kindled against this place and it will not be extinguished. But say to the king of Judah who has sent you to ask of the Lord: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Your heart has been softened by the words that you have heard. You humbled yourself before the lord when you heard what I said about this place and its inhabitants, that they should become a picture of horror and a curse. You tore your cloths and wept before me. For this reason, I have heard you—saying of the LORD. I will unite you with your fathers and you will be buried in your grave in peace. Your eyes will not see the disaster that I will bring upon this place.'" (2 Kgs 22:15–20 EÜ 2016 emphasis mine)

Huldah prophecies that the judgement of God is already unavoidable because of Manasseh.[698] Josiah is no longer able to turn the tide; all he can do is postpone one final time the coming judgement. Huldah's appearance reveals the seriousness of

698 For the details on the lexical level, see W.Dietrich, *Prophetie* 13f.; 39.

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the situation. There can no longer be any doubt: the book is the word of YHWH, not a "forgery" of the priests, and it will be fulfilled.[699]

It is striking that the final downfall of the nation is not prophesied by one of the "great" prophets such as Jeremiah and Isaiah but rather by a woman. As such it functions as a structural marker marking key moments of divine initiative within the broader narrative framework. Prophecy in the land begins with Deborah (Judg 4f.), where it marks the first national failure in need of correction. In what follows the judges prove to be insufficient and so the prophet Samuel, whose mother plays an important role (1 Sam 1), is born.[700] When David falls Bathsheba appears on the scene (2 Sam 11), and she goes on to play a significant role in the future of the kingdom of Judah by helping her son Solomon attain the throne (1 Kgs 1). Each of these three women mark a transition: nation without leadership – judges – kings – dynasty. Huldah also fits into this trajectory, for she proclaims the end of the nation's (human) monarchy.[701] YHWH chooses women to mark the most important stations and transitions in salvation history.[702] What kind of a beginning Huldah marks must still be clarified.

Not much is known about the prophetess herself. B. Schmitz plausibly argues that she was from the Northern Kingdom, which implies that she follows in the footsteps of the prophets of this kingdom.[703] These are not only Elijah and Elisha but also Micha ben Yimla (1 Kgs 22), who announced the downfall of Ahab and the survival of the Southern Kingdom. This prophecy has striking parallels to 2 Kgs 17; 25, which contains a "surplus of prophetic meaning" ("*Verheißungsüberschus*").[704] This surplus can only be considered salvificly relevant if the other statements are fulfilled, as is taught in the law of the prophets (Deut 18:22). The fulfilment is found in the death of Josiah but especially in 2 Kgs 24:2, which has the form of a fulfilment formula.[705]

If we look at the prophecy itself, it is clear that its surplus is to be found in the book that Josiah discovered and which motivated his change of behaviour. This book has the power to change the entire nation. With its reappearance there was no longer any need for prophecy, except as a guide to its better interpretation.

699 See the detailed analysis of M.Pietsch, *Kultreform* 109–160.

700 See K.Butting, *Prophetinnen* 97–198, especially 167–172.

701 I.Fischer analyses the special role of female prophetesses as framing figures in the history of Israel. See *Gotteskünderinnen* 182–185.

702 See also U.Schmidt, *Randfiguren* 234. The New Testament also gives women an important structural and symbolic role. This is particularly noticeable in the passion and resurrection narratives as well as in the gospel of Luke in general.

703 See B.Schmitz, *Hulda* 35; 38. W.Dietrich makes a similar case but using different arguments in *Prophetie* 33 fn. 45.

704 See B.Schmitz, *Prophetie* 374f. In my opinion, the connection is further strengthened by the fact that the false prophet Zedekiah has the same name as the last king of Judah.

705 See W.Dietrich, *Prophetie* 22.

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With its first reading the book is able to achieve what no prophet within the narrative had been able to, namely long-term repentance from the heart. Yet Josiah's followers stop reading it and so the words of Huldah are fulfilled. The prophets fall silent, for all has been said. The book is never mentioned again. Could it be that the scroll of the law, the Torah, contains the key for the future?

4.2 The Nation's Sovereign – Judgement and Mercy

As is seen again and again, YHWH is the nation's sovereign, the true king of Israel and Judah.[706] In Gen 1 we see the legitimation for this claim: He is the creator and thus *eo ipso* the lord of the entire world. Through Abraham and Moses YHWH elects a nation so that it can serve as a model of faithfulness to him. He liberated it, declared his love to it, bound himself to it, and both partners pledged their love to each other through mutual oaths and contracts (cf. D.1–3). At the same time, as the one who revealed the law to Moses is he also the lawgiver.[707] Yet throughout its history the nation fails continuously. It even turned against him before he could carry it into the home that he had prepared for it. It wants to have a king of its own and it repeatedly serves foreign gods. It does not acknowledge YHWH, despite all that he had done for it, and so therefore fails to fulfil its task.

YHWH does everything to give his people the opportunity to change. But at the same time he is the sovereign lord of the world and as such must take care that the order intrinsic to it is maintained. This means that humanity is required to maintain justice.[708] Despite the preferential status that Israel/Judah has before him, there are limits to what is deemed acceptable behaviour. God repeatedly warns his people urgently, at times even using violence against them, particularly when they start to serve other Gods. This divine intervention and especially God's use of violence ought not to be understood as causing violence but rather *containing* it.[709] YHWH does not wish to destroy life but to preserve and protect it. Apostacy from him leads to chaos, faith in other gods leads to strife and danger to the land. It is not entirely clear whether the powers at work are exclusively controlled by him or whether they also act independently. The latter option is much more likely (cf. Gen 4f.; 9 et passim).

YHWH also sets limits upon himself. After Noah's Flood (Gen 9) and his rejection of Saul (2 Sam 7:15) he decides to give humanity and the monarchy another chance. He remains faithful to his commitment to save, and this restrains

706 Note the contrast generated between the death of Uzziah, Israel's human king, and the reign of YHWH, Israel's true king, in Isa 6:1. See also B.Collinet, *Kult*.

707 For more details, see http://www.dominik-markl.at/docs/Gericht.pdf.

708 See G.Fischer, *Theologien* 62–65.

709 See L.Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Recht* 318–351.

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him from completely destroying humanity and his people respectively. When either the king or the nations fail, there is always the possibility for repentance. Judgement is never an end in itself; it is always a consequence:

> None of the Old Testament texts that refer to a prior tradition of God's salvific purpose for Israel and then turn this purpose around intend to simply invert that purpose into its opposite, and they certainly do not want to deny it. Rather, the intention of these texts is to work out the value and validity of these prior traditions by thinking through what their opposite would mean. The vast majority of cases are concerned with the identity of Yahweh. He does not cease to be Yahweh when he functions as the military leader of Israel's enemies rather than of Israel itself, when he "passes through" Israel (Amos 5:17) rather than Egypt as its destroyer … . Rather, these texts wish to communicate that the unsurpassable power of Yahweh that Israel had first experienced as salvific is the same power at work in his judgement. His judgement is not just a passing attempt to call a nation to account that has become satisfied with its own power and thus no longer needs him. It consists in their being cast out from the sphere of his salvation, i. e. into a state of fundamental forsakenness, abandonment to death.[710]

This abandonment of the nation concurs with the prophetic image of the Day of YHWH, which can be found in the earliest texts of the Old Testament.[711] YHWH devastates the land (2 Kgs 24f.), sends wild animals (2 Kgs 17f.), and unleashes a deluge of nations (2 Kgs 24f.).[712]

When this happens, it is not a spontaneous theophany, it is the reverse side of God's enduring presence among his people. The temple was the means by which the people could experience YHWH's presence and worship him cultically. It protects and symbolizes purity; it guarantees life and justice.[713] This privilege places high demands upon the nation. If it fails to live up to them the consequences are bitter and can include attacks by hostile superpowers.[714] However, these sanctions are ultimately always corrective, they never function to obliterate the nation: "The wrath of God … is a response to human covenant unfaithfulness. … It is not, however, the last word."[715] Instead, YHWH always finds a way to install a saviour figure who is able to turn the situation around: "Moved entirely by the suffering of the nation and without being asked, YHWH sends judges/saviours."[716] His actions are multidimensional and sometimes they appear to be self-contradictory. Yet in this struggle for justice a new path is opened that can

710 J.Jeremias, *Umkehrung* 309–320,318.
711 See J.Jeremias, *Theophanie* 97.
712 See ibid. 96–98.
713 See R.E.Clements, *Theology* 66–72; for a similar view, see W.Brueggeman, *Theology* 150–182.
714 See W.Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* 552–564. For the superpowers and their instrumentalization, see pp. 518–527.
715 A.Deissler, *Grundbotschaft* 149f.
716 G.Fischer, *Theologien* 63.

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lead to a break with the past and a new beginning.[717] As such, although YHWH causes the temple and city to be destroyed, he makes sure that the potential political candidate for rehabilitation is taken into safety (2 Kgs 24:12). The exile became a place of refuge from the wrath of God. Even in that place he retains control over events, a fact clearly articulated by the claim that he himself had "*given* them into the hand of their enemies." God causes others to speak for him and his word is fulfilled, his power is demonstrated through the mediation of others. In 1–2 Kings he operates in the background.[718] He remains faithful to his people even in their defeat and failure, thereby proving that he truly is the "I Am There,"[719] a God whose defining characteristics are "just mercy, endless benevolence, and powerful salvation."[720] When the nation is forced to leave its place of residence, it is also forced to leave the land. The temple is destroyed, nothing is said of the tent-sanctuary that is in the Holy of Holies. YHWH is still "mobile," he can continue to travel with his people.

Taken together, these observations indicate that YHWH is more than just a *do ut des* deity that weighs up the nation's relative sins and merits before deciding to exterminate it. He wrestles with his people, intercedes on its behalf and is highly engaged with it. From a modern perspective the methods he uses do not always seem appropriate, but they do accord with the codex of the time: violence must be contained, life in peace and justice must be possible.[721] He is also a God who even keeps his side of a contract after the other side has violated it. In the process, blessing becomes curse and a state of salvation reverts to promise. His actions are not manifest on the surface level of the text, for this kind of theophany would require that he manifest himself visibly. If this were to happen, i. e. if the entire world were to see him face-to-face, it would be destroyed. Instead, he gives the anti-life powers of chaos permission to do their destructive work, thereby initiating a cosmic catastrophe. The moment the temple is destroyed there is a rupture in time and space that changes God's relation to his people for ever.[722] YHWH establishes righteousness and justice. His mercy can be seen in the fact that he repeatedly leaves a window of opportunity open so that ultimate destruction can always be avoided (cf. Deut 30:1–10). Every king had the opportunity to delay the destruction. Jehoiachin was able to hand himself in and

717 See ibid. 68.
718 See ibid. 70–73.
719 See ibid. 75.
720 Ibid. 294.
721 For law and righteousness in the Old Testament, see L.Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Recht* 318–351; *Recht und Ethik* 60–91. In my opinion, the discussion concerning Jan Assman's "monotheism of faithfulness" and the concept of a "jealous God" belong in this context.
722 This aspect is picked up in Matthew's passion (Mt 27:45–56).

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thereby become a potential bearer of future salvation (cf. D.5.3). A remnant of the nation remains in the land (cf. 2 Kgs 25:12, 22). A number of theological possibilities remain open that we will have to present and evaluate at the end of this study. God grants the nation a possible future. But is it a future with him?

4.3 Judah as the People of God

Before we can establish some theological trajectories for future research in light of this study, we still need to clarify the role of "Judah." This word references far more than just a people and its territory (cf. C.3). The entire nation that descends from Abraham and was led out from Egypt is the *people of God*. It is only in relation to God that its nature can be defined. The nation belongs to YHWH and is supposed to be obedient to him. Its leaders, kings, priests, and prophets are supposed to help it in its walk with and to God. This is the reason why the entire nation traces its lineage back to one single ancestor, Jacob-Israel: from the very beginning the destinies of the various tribes were linked together.[723] It is also clear, however, that this people of God consists of human beings who are incapable of fully living up to YHWH's standards. Their failure was thus to be expected.[724] With the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and thus most of the tribes of Israel (2 Kgs 17), the term "People of God" along with all that it implies is transferred to the southern kingdom of Judah.[725] It is now up to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, from whom the kings are descended, to fulfil the task of being God's chosen people. This task does not seem to be extinguished with the exile, for amnesty is granted to Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 25:27–30).

5. (Theological) Loci for a New Beginning

We have now completed our analysis of all the unresolved questions concerning the significance of the places, roles, and behaviour of our narrative's characters. The time has come to address the meaning of our narrative's final pericope. Why does it include 2 Kgs 25:27–30? Is this final scene a kind of epilogue functioning as an *external prolepsis*[726] (preview), or does it rather function as a *cliff-hanger*[727] (an open question that will be immediately answered)?

723 See K.Weingart, *Israel* 17, who uses the term *"Schicksalsgemeinschaft."* This can be seen particularly clearly in the genealogies (see p. 36).
724 See ibid. 223.
725 See ibid. 20; 255; 362.
726 For the various kinds of prolepses, see B.Müller, *Prolepse* 599.
727 See S.Lahn/ J.C.Meister, *Einführung* 83.

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In order to answer this question we must interpret the situation in Babylon in light of its context and other places that are alternatives to it. The Judah and its leaders can not only be found in Babylon but also in the land (2 Kgs 25:22–25) and in Egypt (2 Kgs 25:26). The broader context will provide the (theological) reasons as to why these communities succeeded in some places but failed in others.

5.1 Business as Usual – Those who Remained in the Land (2 Kgs 25:22–24)

5.1.1 The Loss of the Land

The governor Gedaliah attempted to motivate those who had been left in the land to get on with their lives as best as possible under these new circumstances (2 Kgs 25:24). He chose Mizpah to be his military base in order to re-establish public order. As a replacement for Jerusalem, it is also symbolic of a chosen people without a king (cf. D.3). This manoeuvre, however, was clearly foiled when he was assassinated by his commander Ishmael. The remnant then a nation then flees to Egypt. As had been announced in Deut 28:64, YHWH is scattering Israel among the nations. Because they had not listed to his voice, they are no longer permitted to dwell in the land that he had given to them.[728] This is stated in Deut 11:

> If you precisely keep this entire commandment with which I am obligating you today and you do it; if you love the LORD your God, walk in all his ways and hold on fast to him, then the LORD will wipe out all these nations from before you and you will take possession of nations that are bigger and more powerful than you. Every place that your foot touches shall belong to you, from the wilderness and onwards. Lebanon will be your territory, from the River, the Euphrates, to the sea in the West. None of them will be able to repel your attack. The LORD your God will lay the fear and dread of you on all the land that you dread, as he had has promised you […] See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: […] the curse in the event that you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God but deviate from the way to which I am obligating you today, and follow other gods whom you did not know before. (Deut 11:22–25, 28 EÜ 2016)

The loss of the land was not an unexpected event triggered by the spontaneous fear described in 2 Kgs 25:26. It was part of a process that began with the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom in 1 Kings 14.

As a result of the division of the kingdom that had been announced by YHWH, the ten northern tribes are lost for ever in 2 Kings 17. The conquest and destruction of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:1–23) was a punishment for Israel that also served as one of the final warnings for Judah not to walk in the same path.

728 See the excursus on Deut 28 in D.1.

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There are clear parallels between 2 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 25.[729] Each conquest begins in the ninth year of the king's rule (2 Kgs 17:6; 25:1) and each ends with exile (17:23; 25:21). Chapter 17 tells us explicitly what Israel had done wrong: It had established cultic high places, stone pillars, and cultic poles (17:9–12), things that the royal schema tells us were also present in Judah. This is a clear violation of the commandment against idol worship and the prohibition of images (Deut 5:7f.// Exod 20:4f.). The northern tribes did not listen to the prophets, which means that they did not listen to the voice of YHWH and did not follow the Torah (vv. 13, 15). Instead, they sinned

> against the LORD their God, who had led them up out of Egypt, out of the control of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. They honoured foreign gods, imitated the statues of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the Israelites, and they followed the example set by the kings of Israel. (17:7f. EÜ 2016).

As a result, all of the tribes except Judah are "driven away from the presence of YHWH" (17:18), a phrase that is later used in 2 Kgs 24:20 for Judah and Jerusalem. This is why the destruction of Samaria by marauding "bands of plunderers" prefigures the downfall of Jerusalem in the same manner (17:20; 24:2f.):

> Yet Judah, too, did not keep the commandments of the LORD its God but rather imitated the practices that Israel had introduced. Therefore, the LORD rejected the entire line of Israel. He humiliated them and abandoned them to robbers. Finally, he cast them (all) out from before his face (2 Kgs 17:19f. EÜ 2016).

Before this occurs, the Judean kings Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Amos each deviate from the divine law to a greater or lesser degree (2 Kgs 18–21), thereby causing great distress to Jerusalem. In 2 Kgs 22 Judah discovers how well it can live if it only walks in the ways of God, living according to his commandment. But this is no longer enough (cf. C.3.2; D.1). Josiah attempts to reunite the promised land and he fails. This leads to the beginning of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30, which narrates the final loss of the land in several small steps:

1. In 23:30–35 Judah is subjugated by Egypt, which has now established a permanent presence in the land. Bands of robbers invade the land (2 Kgs 24:2) and threaten its inhabitants. As demonstrated in D.3, these bands have their own legitimate interest in that part of the land which had been illicitly taken by the tribe of Manasseh.
2. In 2 Kgs 24:7 Egypt is replaced by Babylon, which makes clear that the old boundaries of the land "from the River of Egypt to the River Euphrates" is now

729 The lexical relationship has been demonstrated by P.Dubovsky, *Similarities* 62; G.Braulik, *Weisung* 129–136; N.Lohfink, *Orakel*; *Rückblick* 134f.; J.Granowski, *Jehoiachin* 173–188, especially 178; J.P.Leithart, *2 Kgs* 272, M.H.Patton, *Hope* 40.

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in the hands of other powers. Judah is a mere fragment of what had once been a far more extensive Promised Land.
3. The designation of the kings of Judah as "kings of/in Jerusalem" marks a further restriction upon their sphere of power. From the siege of the city under Jehoiachin in 2 Kgs 24:10–16 onwards this sphere is effectively limited to the city itself (cf. C.4.1.4).
4. Even this sphere of power is lost by King Zedekiah when he flees the city after his failed rebellion (2 Kgs 25:4). His destination was the steppes of Jericho. This place, which was once the starting point for the original conquest of the land, has now become the place where the Davidic line loses its royal estate. From this point onwards there is no more ownership of land in the Promised Land.
5. The destruction of the temple also takes place in stages: The temple, palace, houses of the great ones, and finally all the remaining houses are burned down and the breached walls are levelled (2 Kgs 25:4, 9f.). Those who have been exiled are made into bonded peasants (2 Kgs 25:12). Not a single Israelite in the entire Promised Land is in possession of a piece of that land.
6. Although Gedaliah is granted a seat in Mizpah as the local governor, this administrative centre is run by foreign soldiers, some of whom are Babylonian (2 Kgs 25:22–25). As such, it, too, cannot be counted Judean property.
7. After the murder of the occupiers Ishmael and the remainder of the population leave this place and move to Egypt (2 Kgs 25:26), thus leaving the land in a state of abandonment and devoid of inhabitant.

The narration of the loss of the land has been intentionally composed according to a particular literary structure. This structure can be interpreted as the inversion of the gift of the land as recounted in Joshua and the development of Jerusalem as recounted in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings.

5.1.2 The Gift, Conquest, and Promise of the Land

The book of Joshua is the most important source for the narration of the gift of the land to the nation. The promise of this gift in Joshua is grounded in the promise as articulated in the Torah, especially in Deuteronomy:

> When Joshua enters the stage in Josh 1:1, he is already a successful hero […] For the book of Joshua this means that its main protagonist does not need to be re-introduced, because his identity has already been construed in the prior events of the unfolding plot [i. e. in Exodus–Deuteronomy].[730]

730 E.Ballhorn, *Josua* 3–12, 10.

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As was already the case in Deuteronomy, the narratives in Joshua mention a number of criteria that Israel must fulfil in order to receive the land as a gift from YHWH as well as to remain in it. The criterion mentioned in the framework of the book (Josh 1:7; 23:6) is that the Torah must be fulfilled "without deviating to the left or to the right." This criterion was only ever fulfilled by King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:2) and its outcome was to be rest and peace in the land (Josh 21:44f.).

If the nation should deviate from the divine law, then it will be threatened by those nations that it was unable to destroy when it took the land (e.g. Josh 15:63).[731] On the one hand, the Torah makes clear that these nations serve as a terrifying example of what can befall the disobedient:

> For it is not because you [Israel] are in the right and have the right mindset that you can enter into this land and take possession of it. Rather, the LORD your God is exterminating these nations from before you because they are in the wrong and because the LORD wishes to fulfil the promise that he confirmed to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by means of an oath. (Deut 9:5 EÜ 2016)

On the other hand, within the context of the narrative they function as a threat to Israel's inner order and make manifest its apostacy from YHWH:

> For if you truly turn away from him and join these nations that have remained among you […] then you can be certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive these nations out from before your eyes. They will become a noose and a trap for you […] until you have disappeared from this beautiful land that the LORD your God has given to you. […] Just as every promise that the LORD your God has given you has been fulfilled, so in future will he fulfill every threat against you, until he has driven you out of this beautiful land that the LORD your God has given you. If you transgress the covenant […] then the wrath of the LORD will burn against you and you will quickly disappear from the land that he has given you. (Josh 23:12f., 15f. EÜ 2016, emphasis mine)

When Israel follows the nations, i.e. when it engages in idol worship and thus breaks the covenant, then it "can no longer lived in a salvific state."[732] The nation is aware of this, for at the end of the a historical synopsis (Josh 24:1–15) it commits itself to the covenant. This is commented upon critically by Joshua as follows:

> You area not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God, a jealous God; he will not forgive your wickedness and your sins. When you abandon the LORD and serve foreign gods then he will turn away from you and bring disaster upon you and make an end of you, although you had done that which is good beforehand. (Josh 24,19f. EÜ 2016)

In 1972 M.Weippert concluded on the basis of these observations that the granting of the land to Joshua and the loss of the land in 2 Kings are closely

731 See E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 229f.; C.de Vos, *Das Los Judas* 289–291.
732 M.Weippert, *Fragen* 415–442, 418f.

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related to each other: "A representation of history such as this one, a representation that begins with Israel's was abandonment of YHWH in the land of fulfilled promise and ends with the expulsion of the Israelites out of precisely this land, can interpreted as one great aetiology of the loss of the land."[733] In this context, the loss of the land is the consequence of the failure of the nation. No provision has been made for them to remain in the land.

On a closer analysis of keyword connections, 2 Kgs 24f.'s explicit references to the city-kingdom of Jerusalem (Josh 10) stand out.[734] In Josh 10:1 we read that the Jebusite king is called Adoni-Zedek ("My lord is righteousness"), whereas the last king of Judah is called Zedekiah ("YHWH is my righteousness"). The connection between the first and the last king in Jerusalem and the explicit reference to the righteousness of God which decides ever anew to whom Jerusalem should belong (Josh 10: 2 Sam 5, 2 Kgs 18f., 2 Kgs 24f. et passim) underscores the sovereignty of YHWH.[735] In addition to this, Jericho and Jerusalem are included in the list of conquered kingdoms (Josh 12:9f.), whereby the Arabah is also mentioned (Josh 12:2f.). Jerusalem belongs to the patrimony of Judah (Josh 15:47), but it is not designated a city of asylum, although it is full of Levites due to the temple.[736] Mizpah (Josh 15:38) and the Arabah (Josh 15:61) are also mentioned in the list of Judean cities.

If we draw upon the representation of the distribution of land in the book of Joshua in order to interpret the loss of Judah, we discover the following contrasting structures:

After crossing the Jordan (Josh 3–5) it is first the south that is conquered (6–10) – with the omission of Jerusalem – and then the north (Josh 11:1–14). After this, the land is divided among the tribes of Israel (Josh 14–16). In 2 Kgs 17 it is first the north that is destroyed, and only afterwards the south (2 Kgs 24f.). Jericho re-enters the drama when Zedekiah flees Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:4f.). Here it becomes the place of the downfall of the king before Jerusalem itself falls.

Here, too, Jerusalem is a special case that needs to be considered on its own. A comparison of the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 25:9 with its conquest by David (2 Samuel) and development by King Solomon (1 Kings) reveals the following parallel structures:

733 Ibid. 435.

734 On the reference to Jerusalem and its narrative function as a form of prolepsis in the book of Joshua, see my forthcoming publication Jerusalem, which will appear in a volume of the 2018 annual AGAT conference.

735 For the diachronic dimension of this text and what was probably the intentional insertion of Josh 10:1, see E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 213 fn. 504.

736 For the theological significance of this fact, see the discussion in E.Ballhorn, *Israel* 303f.

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Building	Destruction	Erection	Planning
Temple	2 Kgs 25:9a	1 Kgs 6	2 Sam 7
Palace	2 Kgs 25:9b	1 Kgs 7:1–11	2 Sam 5:11
Walls	2 Kgs 25:9c	1 Kgs 9:16	2 Sam 5:6f.

The temple, palace, and walls are destroyed in the same sequence in which they were built, though in the opposite direction. The planned laying of the foundation stone of the temple (2 Sam 7) is dated to the time of Solomon, yet a house is built for David in 2 Sam 5:11 which is developed into a palace by Solomon. The walls of Jerusalem, too, are also at least implicitly present during the period of David's conquest (2 Sam 5:6f.). By retaining the sequence in the face of Solomon's building policies this king is once again thrust in to the centre of attention. As the first Davidic king to lose land—indeed he even gave it away as a gift (1 Kgs 9:11)—he is the main intertextual reference point for the destruction of Jerusalem, both in terms of its plundering (cf. the excursus in D.2) as well as the destruction of the buildings themselves. If we also take into account the fact that the "houses of the great ones" could refer to the list of his civil servants in 1 Kgs 4, then the net that is cast around this key figure is drawn even tighter. It becomes even clearer that he functions as a contrast to David, the ideal king (cf. D.1).

Whereas the loss of the land is connected with Zedekiah, the loss of Jerusalem clearly points us towards Solomon. What we have here are different models that each need to be treated and developed on their own terms.

Although the kings are responsible for the loss of the land, the entire nation also has its share of responsibility. According to Josh 24 it is not able to follow YHWH, and for this reason it loses the land. In his habilitation, E. Ballhorn has worked out the following schema for the *promise of the land*, which I here juxtapose with a schema for the loss of the land:

Promise of the Land	Loss of the Land
Election	Removal (24:3, 20)
Salvation	No salvation (2 Kgs 23:29f.; 24:2)
Promise of land	Lost of the promise through Huldah (2 Kgs 22)
Granting of Land (Jos)	*Removal of the land (from 1 Kgs 14 onwards)*

The *loss of the land* is primarily described in 1–2 Kgs. It contrasts starkly with the promise of the land as found in the Torah and the conquest of the land under Joshua and David, under whom the kingdom continuously grows. The loss of the land is a process that progresses continuously throughout the narrative, finally reaching its conclusion in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. The removal of the land from Israel is finally completed with the flight of the last remaining Judeans to Egypt in 2 Kgs 25:26. Just as the nation had received the land and driven out its enemies when it

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listened to the voice of its God, so the nation becomes embattled, losing the land piece by piece, when it apostatizes from its God. The figure of Gedaliah represents the last attempt to escape the inescapable. In an attempt to latch on to the tradition of the judges in his choice of Mizpah, he attempts to rule the land without a monarchy and to hold on to the land by invoking Babylon. This attempt fails, however, for it is YHWH and not Babylon who grants the land.

If it is YHWH who both gives the land and takes it away, both installs kings and removes them (cf. D.1; D.4), then the possibility still remains open that he will one day give the land back to the people. The taking back of the land when contrasted with its granting in Joshua is nothing other than the reverse side of the promises of the Torah. The election *(potentia)* is not revoked, only its realization *(actus)* has been suspended. The promise itself remains intact: If you listen to the Lord your God, he will give you the land.

Up until that future point the land is no longer an option. Two other locations now come into consideration that can serve as places of reflection and self-examination, places from which the people can find their way back to YHWH or in which YHWH can find his way back to his people: (1) Egypt (2 Kgs 25:26) as the place of the assassin Ishmael and the remnant of the nation and (2) Babylon (2 Kgs 25:27–30), the place of the Davidic kings from Solomon onwards who bear responsibility for the loss of Jerusalem.

5.2 Eisodus to Egypt (2 Kgs 25:26) – Return to A Well-Known Place

The return to Egypt is the final outcome of the curse of Deuteronomy 28 (Deut 28:68). This does not throw a promising light upon Egypt as Ishmael's choice of refuge when he and the remnant of the people flee there out of fear of the Babylonians (2 Kgs 25:26). On the contrary, the books of Exodus and Numbers consider the desire to return to this place of prior slavery to be particularly objectionable. It was the desire to do just this that led YHWH to prohibit the Exodus generation from entering the promised land (Num 32:9–15). In Deuteronomy Egypt, has become a remembered entity with a distinct theological function.

This *memoria passionis* of slavery in Egypt is pushed forward in the books of Joshua and 2 Samuel, and in 1–2 Kings it functions as a threat or temptation for the kings. This is why the law of the king (cf. D.1) contains the sharp admonishment: "He (the king) may not bring the people back to Egypt […], for the LORD has said, 'You shall never again return along this path'." (Deut 17:16 EÜ 2016)[737]

737 For the interpretation, see E.Otto, *Deut 1*, 1484f.

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This commandment is contravened by Ishmael (2 Kgs 25:26), which thus disqualifies him from being a candidate for future kingship. Ishmael and his people take hope in the enmity that reigns between Babylon and Egypt and the inability of the Chaldeans to completely vanquish their foe (2 Kgs 24:7). But they put their trust in the enemies of Babylon rather than YHWH himself. As a result, the idea of the nation[738] having a legitimate leader in Egypt cannot be an option.

5.2.1 Old and New Egypt in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30

These observations alone are sufficient to exclude Egypt from being the locus of future hope for Israel. However, the Exodus motif is sufficiently well attested in early exilic literature[739] to enable us to make a number of further observations.

Egypt and its pharaoh appear several times[740] in the narrative (cf. C.3.2; C.4.1.1), and every time they do so a connection is made with the Exodus event.

In 2 Kgs 23:34 Jehoahaz is brought to Egypt in order to die there. In the Exodus narrative, too, Egypt is a place of death for Israel, whether through the murder of their newborns (Exod 1:16.22), the death penalty that is imposed upon Moses (Exod 2:15), or Pharaoh's various plans to persecute the people (Exod 14:5f.).

As was already the case in the book of Exodus, here, too, the character of Pharaoh is responsible for the suffering of the nation and the death of Jehoahaz. Pharaoh's alteration of the theophoric element in the name Eliakim to Jehoiakim indicates that he knows who the God of Judah is, and this also goes back to the Exodus. There we read that initially Pharaoh was ignorant of the identity of the God of Israel, for he asked "Who is YHWH that I should listen to him and let Israel go? I do not know YHWH and do not intend to let Israel go" (Exod 5:2). This is then changed through the plagues (Exod 9:27; 10:8, 16 et passim), which climax in his cry, "Up, get away from my people, you (two) and the Israelites! Go and worship YHWH, as you have said!" (Exod 12:31).

2 Kings 23:33 describes the compensation Egypt received in silver and gold. In the immediate context these are probably reparations that also have a reference point in Exod 12. If we ask ourselves, however, what else these payments are reparations for, then we can think not only of the miracle at the Reed Sea (Exod 15) but also and above all of the plundering of the Egyptians by the people of Israel (Exod 12:35f.). Whereas in the book of Exodus it is the Israelites who relieve the Egyptians of their possessions, here it is the people of the land who must give up their gold and silver. The claim that this connection with the book of

738 K.Bodner, *Theology*, 216, puts it this way: "Egypt is a dead end while in Babylon ther is the possibility of a remnant".

739 See R.Hendel, *Remembering* 329–345.

740 2 Kgs 23:33f.; 24:10, 12; 25:2f., 26.

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Exodus is intentional increases in plausibility when we remember that all the other payments of tribute in 2 Kings were taken from the royal and temple treasuries (1 Kgs 15:18; 2 Kgs 14:14; 16:8), whereas here it is the people-of-the-land alone who must come up with requisite sum (2 Kgs 23:36). The first reference to this group within the broader narrative context is Exod 5:5: "So many people-of-the-land and you want to hold them back from their labour service?"[741] For Pharaoh the people-of-the-land is a group that owes him a form of service.

In 2 Kgs 24 Jerusalem is first placed under siege by King Nebuchadnezzar. The consonants (מצר(ם not only mean "siege" but it reminds of "Egypt." This allusion can generate an indirect connection with the Exodus event. Two verses later King Jehoiachin capitulates and "goes out" (יצא) of the city. In my opinion, this use of the verb "to go out" in close proximity with Egypt provides strong evidence for an intertextual connection. The effect is an inversion of the Exodus motif. The people of God are led *into* the house of slavery rather than *out of* it. The exiles' destination is not Egypt but rather Babylon, which becomes a new house of slavery, a new *Egypt*. The relationship to the Exodus event is further strengthened when we observe that both King Jehoiakim as well as Zedekiah are called the עבד "servant/slave" of Nebuchadnezzar.

2 Kings 25:2 stands in parallelism with 2 Kgs 24:2, for here, too, Jerusalem "is sieged/goes to Egypt." Here Zedekiah experiences the same fate as Jehoiachin, except that Zedekiah did not voluntarily choose to go into exile. This is why the siege of the city took so long, with the result that its population had to suffer great hunger. The themes of "hunger" and "Egypt" were already connected in the Joseph narrative (Gen 37–50). The hungry sons of Jacob emigrated to Egypt in order to avoid starvation, thus establishing Israel's new life in Egypt (cf. Exod 1:1–8).

Yet this time such a deliverance is out of the question. As had already happened with Jehoiachin, so here, too, salvation is turned into its opposite and the inhabitants of the city must starve. The Manna once granted to their ancestors in the wilderness (Exod 16) no longer falls from heaven (cf. Josh 5:12), so that the famine must continue. The survivors are taken to the new Egypt, and it is only upon arrival there that they will receive bread (2 Kgs 25:29f.).

Through plundering and deportation those who are exiled lose everything they have acquired since the Exodus. Those who remain in the land lose everything in Egypt. They have squandered the opportunity to make a new beginning in the land, and because they can expect no mercy from the Chaldeans (cf. C.4.1.2) they must return to the old house of slavery, whereas the exiles are taken to a new Egypt.[742]

741 As in Exod 1:11, the word סבלות is used for the labour (German: *"Frondienst"*).
742 The root בא, which can be seen as the opposite of יצא, plays a role here.

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5.2.2 Crossing the Water

The motif of the crossing of the water is also repeated for both kinds of "Egypt." Before the fleeing remnant can enter the land of its former slavery it must make its way through the wilderness. If we take into account the fact that Babylon had driven Egypt back to its boarder-river (2 Kgs 24:7), then the only possible path that the Judeans can take is through the water, just as had been announced in Deut 28:68: "The Lord will bring you back to Egypt on ships, on a path concerning which I had told you, 'You shall never see it again'." In contrast to Exod 15, these waters do not part to let the people through, for the Israelites have no prospect of divine help (cf. D.3; D.5.1) on their (return) journey to Egypt, the land of death (2 Kgs 23:34).

The situation is similar for Zedekiah (2 Kgs 25:4f.), who must pass through walls in order to flee. This image not only evokes of the watery walls of the Exodus (Exod 14) but also the crossing of the Jordan (Josh 4) at the beginning of the Conquest.[743] Yet whereas YHWH had been present to help at these two previous locations, Zedekiah flees the promised city in order to make it to the bank of the Jordan in the Arabah of Jericho. He gets caught before he can reach these waters. Zedekiah makes it past the Jordan only as a prisoner being taken eastwards towards Babylon (2 Kgs 25:8), the new "house of slavery, Egypt."

Whereas in this pericope the two "Egypts" both have the same character that had been displayed in the book of Exodus, the promises of salvation, such as those that had been given during the Conquest (D.5.1), are transformed into their opposite. The people receive no help when in need, the salvific figure fails, and they all go into the new (Babylon) or old (Egypt) house of slavery. The Exodus has become an Eisodus, salvation has become destruction, freedom has become slavery. Just as the attempted new beginning *in* the land—the new beginning from a point *after* the conquest—had failed, so is the return to the remembered place of deliverance not enough. Put theologically, it is not enough to have to reconquer the entire land, for the promise that Israel would receive the land is not synonymous with ownership of it. Similarly, the promise of deliverance from Egypt that occurs repeatedly in the Torah is the only thing that the people still have. Simply deciding to flee to the land of slavery (old Egypt) does not obligate YHWH to deliver them once again. The election of the people of God is just as thoroughly put into question after their continuous transgression of the covenant (Judges to 2 Kings) as it was after the first transgression of the covenant (Exod 32):

743 See B.Collinet, *Verankerungen* 31–33. The intertextual connections between Exod 15 and Josh 3f. are also of great interest (see J.Krause, *Zug* 383–400).

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> The Lord also said to Moses: I have seen this people and behold, they are a stiff-necked people. Leave me now so that my wrath may burn against them and devour them! You, however, I will make into a great people. But Moses placated the LORD his God […] Oh, this people has committed a great sin. They have made gods from gold […] On the day of my visitation I will visit their sins upon them. (Exod 32:9–11; 34:31, 34 EÜ 2016)

Whereas in Exod 32 it was Aaron as the religious and political leader in the absence of the prophet Moses who failed, now it is the leaders, kings, and cultic personnel who fail while the prophets withdraw (cf. D.4).

From now on, the nation is no longer "informed" of YHWH's will by means of the words and signs of prophets but rather the deeds of the nations. They are taken to the new Egypt, which amounts to a return to the original place of the election of Israel, the place where Abraham was called.

5.3 Back to the Roots – Or: Babylon as a New Horizon? (2 Kgs 25:27–30)

Our narrative concludes with a description Jehoiachin's release from prison and life-long provision of food. These few verses have been subjected a wide range of interpretations, from those of disappointed minimalists to those of euphoric maximalists (cf. A.2.2). D. Murray and J. Granowski[744] have proven that the pericope's intertextual references point us towards the Joseph narrative (Gen 37–50) on the threshold of the Exodus.[745]

744 See especially the following analyses: D.F.Murray, *Years*; J.Granowski, *Jehoiachin*, and most recently M.J.Chan, *Joseph* 566–577. The earliest evidence for this line of interpretation can be found in A.Klostermann, *Sam* XXVIII.

745 For a contrasting position, see, e. g., W.Oswald, *Staatstheorie* 121–124. Shortly afterwards he draws the following conclusion for 2 Kgs 25 based on his late dating of Exod 1: "The conclusion of the story of the Davidic kings […] is insignificant for the DtrH. The story of the Davidides sets its hope upon Jehoiachin, the DtrH, on the other had, sets its hope upon the study of the Torah, the instruction of children, and exclusive orientation of the heart towards the God of Israel" (p. 143). T.Römer (285–294, especially 293 f.) and J.P.Leithart, 274, *2 Kgs* argue differently. Recently Patton has also spoken out against seeing a close connection with Gen 41, although he does see it (*Hope* 24–26). His counterarguments refer to the cupbearer whose head is lifted, something not said of Joseph. While this observation is syntactically correct it does not do the narrative justice, for the context makes clear that both prisoners go through the same process. The second argument refers to the mention of YHWH in Joseph's interpretation of the dream. For Jehoiachin, no mention is made of YHWH. In my opinion (see Teil C.) this is a characteristic of the silence of the prophets at the end of 2 Kings, a development that fits the broader context. Furthermore, Joseph's reference to YHWH justifies his interpretation of the dream for he could otherwise be accused of idolatry (see Deut 18). The third and final argument refers to Joseph's promotion, which is not comparable to Jehoiachin's experience. Patton requires this argument in order to substantiate his thesis of an Anti-Solomon. This thesis will be further discussed below (see M.H.Patton, *Hope* 41 f.).

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As Murry has demonstrated, there are only 20 occurrences of the phrase "lifting someone's head" in the Old Testament, two of which are connected with Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 25:27//Jer 52) and three with the release of Joseph from his Egyptian prison (Gen 40:13.19 f.). In other words, a quarter of all occurrences are found in two scenes.[746] The expression וַיְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ טוֹבוֹת is unique, though it finds a certain parallel in 2 Sam 7:28 of the Nathan Oracle: "You have spoken such goodness to your servant."[747] For Murray the clearest connection is the semantically parallel structure that pertains between 2 Kgs 25:28 f. and Gen 41:40–44.[748] As such, if one wishes to answer the question of whether the exile is a place of new beginnings or whether 2 Kings believes the people of God have been definitively rejected, one must analyse the pericope's connection with the Joseph narrative.

5.3.1 Joseph's Release from Prison (Gen 40 f.) as Interpretive Horizon

Genesis 40 f. narrates the period of Joseph's imprisonment. He meets there two men who must answer to Pharao. Both have a dream and Joseph helps them interpret each one, foreseeing salvation for one and death for the other. He says the following to the cupbearer who will be delivered: "In three days Pharao will lift your head [away from the house of chains] (אֶת־רֹאשׁ מִבֵּת כֶּלֶא) and reinstall you in your office" (Gen 40:13). In return the cupbearer promises to help him as soon as he has been acquitted, a promise he fails to keep (Gen 40:23). It is only two years later (Gen 41:1) that the cupbearer remembers Joseph, his memory being triggered by Pharaoh's search for a dream interpreter. Joseph is "lifted" out of prison and is allowed to change his clothes (שִׁנָּא אֵת בִּגְדֵי־שֵׂשׁ) before being taken to Pharaoh. As a result of his wisdom Pharaoh sets him over (מֵעַל) everyone in Egypt with the exception of his own throne (כִּסֵּא) (Gen 41:40). He rewards Joseph with new clothing, allows him to vicariously rule Egypt, and gives bread (לֶחֶם) to all who need it for as long as they need it (Gen 41:54–58). Joseph is 30 years old when he becomes the most powerful man in Egypt, which is during the period of the great famine. When he saves his family, the ancestors of the people of God, he is 37 years old (בִּשְׁלֹשִׁים וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנָה). It is during this time that two of his sons are born, whom he calls Manasseh (Gen 41:50) and Ephraim (Gen 41:51). In the book of Kings these names evoke the ultimate representatives of terror (2 Kgs 17; 2 Kgs 21;24:1–3).[749] We may thus reasonably assume that they function here as a pro-

746 D.F.Murray, *Years* 253; also R.L.Cohn, *2 Kgs* 173. The remaining occurrences are in Exod 30:12; Num 1:2, 49; 4:2, 22; 26:2; 31:26, 49; Judg 8:28; Zech 2:4, possibly 3:1–7; Ps 24:7, 9; 83:3; Job 10:15; 1 Chr 10:9.

747 Ibid. 254. Jeremiah 12:6 could also provide a reference point (p. 255). Granowski also sees a reference to 2 Sam 9,7 (*Jehoiachin* 183).

748 Ibid. 256.

749 See the discussion in part C and chapter D.1.

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lepsis of the end of the book of Kings. These figures are also the ancestors of Jehoiachin. In the book of Kings he is not portrayed as having children, which means that his time of salvation has not yet arrived. The pardon of Joseph marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of his family, which is the history of the people of God. All Israel moves to Egypt and lives a good life there until Joseph's death. It is only when a new pharaoh comes to the throne who "no longer knew Joseph" (Exod 1:1) that a new era of oppression and slavery begins that leads eventually to the Exodus. This could mean that the entire people of God must go to Babylon in order to survive. *De facto*, however, it is those who are in Babylon who are the last bearers of Israel's hope.[750]

A comparison of the story with 2 Kgs 25:27–30 reveals a number of points that require further consideration. Both texts make use of a whole series of rare[751] words, and both narratives paint a very similar picture: An Israelite is carried off to a foreign land against his will. He has done nothing that would justify a multi-year prison sentence. Joseph resists the seductions of the wife of his lord (Gen 39) while Jehoiachin is punished for his father's rebellion (2 Kgs 24:1). The king of a foreign nation frees an Israelite from prison—according to the Biblical text he even does this *personally*. The king speaks in a friendly manner with him, gives him new clothing, and grants him a seat of honour above all the other people in the land. The path goes upwards from the deepest dungeon to the throne room. From this point on the Israelite has enough bread to eat, even in periods of want. For both characters the 37th year has a positive significance, perhaps marking the beginning of a period of salvation for the people of God.

Both narratives, Gen 40 f. and 2 Kgs 25:27–30, never speak directly of YHWH; both are located within the boarders of a hostile land, a place that is necessary for survival though which does not serve as a long-term place of residence (Exod 1; 2 Kgs 25:30). With the death of Joseph and Pharaoh a new period of misery begins for Israel until the moment when God feels compassion for his people and so leads them into the Promised Land. The phrase "all the days of his life" can refer to either Jehoiachin or Evil-Merodach. This semantic openness creates a comparable situation: the death of either one or both rulers.[752] That land that had been promised to Abraham is the goal of the Exodus from Egypt (Exod 6:8). Babylon,

750 From a diachronic perspective this is a strong argument in favour of the Golah-community in Babylon and against the Golah-community in Egypt and possibly also against those groups that remained in the land. This could be the precursor to the idea of a "true Israel" from exile, as is found in Ezra, Nehemiah, and the early post-exilic period.

751 See the table in M.J.Chan, *Joseph* 571.

752 It should also be noted that at this point Jehoiachin is 55 years old, that is he no longer young and historically known, whereas Amil Marduk only reigned for 2 years (see B 5.1.2b). This may indicate that the immanent death of both protagonists has been worked into the narrative.

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the land whence Abraham originated (Gen 11), is point of departure for 2 Kgs 25:27–30 and could similarly have the Promised Land, Abraham's former destination, as its goal.

The Joseph story tells of an Israelite who can overcome obstacles in a foreign land and lead a good life there. If we compare this with Jehoiachin, then we might conclude that Israel is destined to settle down in Babylon for good.[753] A closer analysis, however, reveals two problems: On the one hand, Joseph becomes the right hand of the king of Egypt, whereas Jehoiachin is merely treated better than before.[754] His seat of honour or his throne is higher than all the other thrones in Babylon, so that he, too, may be second to the king.

King Evil-Merodach gives Jehoiachin rations of bread for each single day, which means that Jehoiachin would never be capable of fleeing or living independently of the royal court; he is not trusted.[755] On the other hand, the Joseph narrative makes clear that the good times in a foreign land have an expiration date. They are dependent upon whichever ruler happens to be in power at the time. This confronts Israel with need to decide whether it wishes to be oppressed or to find its own land.

If the Joseph story marks the dawn of a liberating exodus from Egypt, then Jehoiachin's pardon could also be a harbinger of a new Exodus.[756]

5.3.2 Evil-Merodach, Babylon, and the Nathan Prophecy

a) David and the Eternal Dynasty (2 Sam 7)

The function of the allusion to the Nathan Prophecy (2 Sam 7:9) generated by the promise of good things (2 Kgs 25:28) is to evoke the promise of eternal rule.[757] In 2 Sam 7 the promise of good things derives from YHWH and is spoken by a

753 This is the argument of Begg, among others (see A.2.2).

754 See J.Granowski, *Jehoiachin* 185.

755 This is the point of departure for the argument of Noth and others who consider 2 Kgs 25:27–30 to be a mere historical note (see A.2.2). Apart from here and in a parallel verse in Jer 40:5, ארחת is only otherwise used in Prov 15:17. It always refers to a precisely measured portion (see J.Gray, *1.2 Kgs* 773; D.F.Murray, *Years* 257f.). Murry believes that this merciful treatment by the king of Babylon is reflected in 1 Kgs 8:50 (see p. 255).

756 See M.J.Chan, *Joseph* 568; 576. The arguments of von Rad, among others, also point in this direction (see A.2.2). As has already been described in the previous chapter, here, too, Egypt and Babylon blend into one place of residence for the nation (see D.5.2).

757 Not only Murray but also von Rad, Wolff, and Jeremias consider 2 Sam 7 to be a key for the end of the books of Kings (see A.2.2). Murray considers the intertextual relation to be one of irony, so that it functions as a polemic against the Davidides (see *Jehoiachin* 262). Patton also argues along these lines. He interprets 2 Sam 7 in light of Jeremia as the inversion of the promise of a dynasty (*Hope* 185). For him, the reference to 2 Sam 7 in 2 Kgs 25 is ironic. He draws upon Murray to make his case. In contrast to Solomon's glorious throne, Jehoiachin receives a couch that can moved around at will. Solomon is the honoured king whereas

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prophet. If our scene intends to allude to this, then Jehoiachin's release from prison would be the first indication of a coming restoration. The Davidic dynasty will always reign in Israel; it will never pass away, as had been the case with the Saulides (1 Sam 15; 2 Sam 7:15) or the bulk of humanity (Gen 6–9)[758], for YHWH has promised: "I will never again curse the ground because of humanity […] I will never again strike all that is living, as I have done" (Gen 8:21; emphasis mine; also 9:11, 15); and: "Never will my steadfast love depart from him [i. e. David], as I have removed it from Saul, whom I have removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure for ever before you" (2 Sam 7:15f.; emphasis mine). This offers a glimmer of hope, for Jehoiachin is a descendent of David and his sons have the prospect of reigning.[759] On the other hand, the omission of any reference to his descendants could be due to the fact that the kingdom itself is no longer the bearer of hope. It may well be the case that the promise of a better future lies with them. But having mis-lead the nation and lead it into exile their

Jehoiachin is the vassal of a king. For Solomon the phrase "all the days of his life" (1 Kgs 4:21; 2 Kgs 25:28) expresses his reign, for Jehoiachin it expresses his servitude (see p. 37f.). In this way, Jehoiachin becomes an "anti-Solomon" (188). This is important for Patton because he considers the negative side of Solomon, his excessive fame (see pp. 45; 50f.; see also the fn. above), to be an indication of his apostacy from YHWH. In all his poverty Jehoiachin should mark a turning point and thus show that "2 Sam 7 remains in force." (43). These arguments are primarily directed against the Cross-school, as can be seen in the footnotes (43). In my opinion they thereby miss the point. I agree with the view that Solomon is not only a good king, yet his relation to Jehoiachin seems to me to be rather corroborative than contradictory: Jehoiachin receives the throne above the thrones of others, which can hardly be ironical. The "setting" of the throne in a particular location does not have to refer to a physical process, it refers to the allocation of a place of honour, as even the NT reports (Lk 14:7–11). Jojachin's dependence on the king is comparable with Joseph's dependence on the pharaoh, which certainly makes him a servant but by no means a vassal. And the phrase "all the days of his life" is less polemical-ironical in tone than it is indicative of an open future. Finally, one additional point needs to be made here. Patton's interpretation ultimately serves to create a link with the genealogy in Mt 1:13, with Jehoiachin being seen as a type of Christ (see p. 44), for his liberation marks the "turning point" (pp. 1; 187 et passim). Jehoiachin's surrender is interpreted positively in analogy to Jesus' self-surrender (p. 23). It seems to me that if one wishes to argue along these lines then one should draw upon the Joseph narrative. It is not only the parallels to Exod 1 due to the infanticide and the flight to Egypt that point to Gen 50/Exod 1. There is also an allusion to the death of Joseph as the precondition of an exodus, a salvific intervention of God. The same would then apply to Jehoiachin, after whose death a second salvific event could take place, the second Exodus. As a type of Christ, the death would be the necessary precondition for the salvation of the nation/humanity.

758 Jeremias shows that God's wrath only fully breaks out twice in the Old Testament. In all other cases God either only provides warnings or imposes punishments that are weaker than what he had threatened (see J.Jeremias, *Zorn* 9–12; 46; 56; 67–75; 186).

759 The sons are only mentioned in Chronicles (1 Chr 3:17f.) and not in 2 Kings. As such, they cannot simply be brought in to explain the end, as often happens in the commentaries. D.F.Murray argues in a similar direction in *Years* 263.

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role itself has been eliminated from the further history of Israel, just as was the case with Joseph's role after he had delivered his people.

b) Evil-Merodach, King of Babylon

The syntactic structure of 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 has shown (cf. C.4.1.5) that God not only speaks through prophets but also through the words and actions of others. For this reason it is possible to claim that he also talks through Evil-Merodach, whose predecessor had also been YHWH's instrument of punishment after the prophets had ceased to speak (2 Kgs 24f.). The singular appearance of Evil-Merodach in 2 Kgs 25:27//Jer 52:31 and the hidden polemic against his actual name (Amil Marduk)[760] has a parallel at the beginning of 2 Kings.[761] In 2 Kgs 1:2 Ahaziah of Israel is lying upon his sickbed and sends a messenger to Ekron to inquire of the god Baal-zebub. This, too, is a hidden polemic, for the actual name Baal-zebul means "the prince of Baal," whereas Baal-zebub means "Baal of the flies."[762] The second book of Kings thus begins and ends with a hidden against a name and against a divinity. At the same time these texts raise questions about the religious identity of Israel as the people of God.[763] 2 Kings 1 continues with a divine word: "Is there no God in Israel, so that you must go away to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore: […] You will no longer rise from the bed upon which you have lain down; for you must die" (2 Kgs 1:3f. EÜ 2016).

Does this mean that Jehoiachin must die the same way that Ahaziah did before him, or is the correspondence merely coincidental? In my view, the theme of 2 Kgs 1:2–4 is of a king who has forgotten his own God and so worships another; this amounts to a decision against the God of life and thus a decision for death. The downfall of Israel and Judah unfolds throughout the entire second book of Kings. In 2 Kgs 25:27 we again encounter a king who does not know (or no longer knows) YHWH. In this case, it is be possible to provide an affirmative answer to the question of whether there is no God in Israel so that he must be sought abroad. The temple has been destroyed, the cloud has departed from the sanctuary, YHWH has departed from Zion:

> There you must serve idols […] There you will seek once again the LORD your God. You will also find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in trouble, all of these words will find you. In later days you will return to the LORD

760 See C.4.1. For the use of polemic, see Y.Amit, *Polemics* 44; 56.

761 So also J.Granowski, *Jehoiachin* 177. He not only applies this to 2 Kgs 1 but also 1 Kgs 1, where the powerless King David has to be warmed. This is a counter-image to the powerless Jehoiachin, who has to eat bread from the table of another (p. 178).

762 See also A.Piquer Otero, *Flies* 81–88.

763 This connection is further strengthened if we take into account the fact that Baal and Marduk are corresponding deities and that hidden polemics primarily occur in cultic contexts and in the context of questions of Israel's identity (see Y.Amit, *Polemics* 98).

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> your God and listen to his voice. For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He does not let you fall and does not abandon you to destruction and does not forget the covenant with your fathers. (Deut 4:28–31 EÜ 2016, emphasis mine)

Rather than dying, Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, is granted a new life. This begs the question of who has granted him this life.

c) The City of Babylon and Abraham

2 Kings 25:28 narrates Jehoiachin's stay in Babylon. The name of this city is only mentioned twice before 2 Kgs 17–25, once in Gen 10:19, where it refers to the property of the hero-king Nimrod, and once in Gen 11:1–10. The reference to Babylon catapults the end of 2 Kings to the beginning of the linearly unfolding (salvation)history to which it is the conclusion.[764] The tower of Babylon is a symbol of fallen humanity and marks the transition from the Primeval History to the calling of Abraham to be the father of the nation (Gen 11:11–25:11). Abraham, himself from Chaldea (cf. D.3.1), initiates the beginning of a salvation history that finds its spatial conclusion in 2 Kgs 25:27–30. Abraham lived a righteous life without knowing YHWH; as soon as God speaks with him, he follows his voice. Jehoiachin finds himself in a similar situation. He is in Babylon and YHWH has never spoken to him, for mediated divine speech had ended with Huldah. The exclamation in 2 Kgs 24:1–3 occurs before his time as king, the observation in 24:20 occurs *after* this time. Could it be that Jehoiachin may not or cannot do anything other than wait for the voice of YHWH and to interpret the goodness that he has experienced? If so, it could also be that it is ultimately YHWH's voice that encounters him in the benevolent speech of Evil-Merodach.

5.3.3 The Pardon of Jehoiachin

If we read 2 Kgs 25:27–30 in light of these intertextual connections and our analysis of them, the resulting picture is multi-layered in nature. Joseph is an important founding figure for Israel, for he is the first one after the patriarchs. He shares Jehoiachin's experience of imprisonment and ascent. Descent and exaltation are the preconditions for the nation's survival in a foreign land, at least for a limited period of time. Though at first it appears to be the end of a story (Gen 50:26), it is the beginning of something new.[765] The protagonist experiences deliverance out of deep trouble. The interpretation Jehoiachin as a salvific figure is still not clear; for Joseph it is clear: His ability to interpret dreams is a divine gift (Gen 40:8; 41:16, 25, 28, 38 f.); his children bear names that honour YHWH (Gen 41:51 f.; 48:9). From this point on in the story the divine name appears with

764 For a similar view, see J.Granowski, *Jehoiachin* 186.
765 See ibid.

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significantly more frequency than beforehand. Joseph interprets his time in Egypt as the result of divine providence: "For it was in order to preserve life that God sent me before you" (Gen 45:5). This interpretation initiates a process of reconciliation that ends with the following significant statement:

> Now please forgive the misdeeds of the servants of the God of your father! […] [Joseph to his brothers:] Do not fear! Do I stand in place of God? You have intended evil against me, but God intended good in order to achieve that which is happening today: to keep a numerous nation alive […] God will certainly accept you, he will lead you out of this land and up into the land that he has promised by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Gen 50:17, 19f., 24; emphasis mine)[766]

Joseph's death is followed by deliverance from suffering in the book of Exodus. Key narratological moments are integrated by means back-linkage to the beginning of 2 Kings, the promise of a dynasty (2 Sam 7), and even Gen 11. Genesis 11 warns against a life in Babylon, for this city has already been rejected. 2 Kings 1 exhorts to exclusive devotion to YHWH; he is the one who is to be sought by the nation. Finally, the allusions to 2 Sam 7 and 1 Kgs 8:50 show that it is YHWH who stands by his people when they find themselves in a foreign land, and that it is his promise that stands (cf. Deut 26:16–19).

Jehoiachin, on the other hand, does not speak a single word within the entire scene in which he appears: "For the reader the Judean king exists in silence."[767] He also does not repent of his ways or ask for forgives, as D. Murray points out *contra* H.W. Wolff;[768] there is no self-driven transformation of the last king of Judah. But this is also not the case with Joseph. He neither prays for shows regret for anything. His deliverance occurs at a point in which he could not longer have expected it.

5.4 Interim Conclusion

The final verses of the narrative run through various theological approaches to a new beginning and show that they all are destined to fail if they do not take a time of penance in exile into account:

1. The people who have been left in the land are no longer able to escape the spiral of violence. Just as they had received the land from YHWH, now it is taken away from them. Just as 2 Kgs 25:21 lead to the boundaries of the kingdom and thus back to the book of Judges, so now the nation is expelled

766 The promise to bring them out and up is a repetition of Gen 48:21, where Jacob gives a blessing to his children before his death.

767 J.Granowski, *Jehoiachin* 178.

768 See D.F.Murray, *Years* 264.

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beyond the boundaries of its country. It must leave the Promised Land because of its sins, just like their primal ancestors had done in Paradise (Gen 3). In this way the narrative returns to another boundary, namely the threshold between the Biblical prologue and the history of the nation. If the nation had listened to the voice of YHWH that had spoken through the prophets and exhorted them through the law, it would have remained in the land and perhaps even ventured a new beginning from within it. Instead, Gedaliah advises it to listen to Babylon, thereby sealing its fate. All that the nation has left is the promise of the land.

2. As far as the narrative is concerned, it is hardly worth mentioning that the nation made a second attempt to seek out its own house of slavery and thus to wait once again for YHWH's redemptive intervention. It expends only a single verse on the matter (2 Kgs 25:26). The path through desert and sea and thus back into a situation of dire need cannot be freely chosen. Or at least one can no longer expect or demand help if one does decide to follow this path. The skilful use of intertextual references enables two different types of "Egypt" to be identified in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30. There is the old house of slavery, the return to which undoes the Exodus, and there is the new house of slavery, to which the nation is deported. The nation without a land does not return to Sinai. It has broken this covenant and seems to expect no more help from there, for YHWH, who had travelled with it from there, has allowed his dwelling place in Jerusalem to be destroyed. The meaning of covenant and faithfulness to the Torah have been seriously called into question with the disappearance of one of the covenant partners. This is why the nation returns to the threshold of the sea and by returning re-enters its prior state as an enslaved nation, though this time it is no longer a nation devoid of any other option to act and so it can no longer make the same claim upon God to save it. Here, too, the same applies: If the nation had trusted the words of the Law—for, with the exception of Moses who had revealed the Law, there can be no prophets outside of the land[769]—it may have been saved. Instead, it has given up its status as the people that has been led out. It has nothing left, for the promise of being led out presupposes innocent suffering and it has given up the covenant.
3. A third option for a new beginning is provided by the concept of Babylon as a house of slavery. The proximity of this scene to the Joseph story shows that it is possible to conceive of Babylon as a new Egypt, as an Egypt that brings peace for a period of time before the nation finds itself back in difficulties again. Like Joseph, the first Israelite after the patriarchs, the nation was taken from its home against its will, and so like him it can hope that YHWH will think it necessary that the exile be ended. Both nation and king have become com-

769 Ezekiel and Daniel are later compositions.

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> pletely incapable of acting, which is at least suggested by his silence *e silentio*. It is not even capable of apostatizing from YHWH; its only concern is its sheer survival. The turning point in their struggle is Jehoiachin's release from prison, but this, too, is passive. Jehoiachin is the object of an act of mercy, one granted by Evil-Merodach, a foreign king. The kingdom of Judah, indeed the entire nation, no longer exists as an autonomous entity. Rather, it receives a seat of honour in the presence of the king. If the king himself is YHWH's instrument, then the king under whom Jehoiachin is granted a privileged position is also YHWH, who chooses Israel from among the nations and grants it a seat of honour. As with the deliverance of Joseph, Jehoiachin's improved situation generates hopes of long-term home for the nation. It is the precondition for their deliverance because it guarantees their survival until the moment when YHWH will lead it out. Neither Joseph nor Jehoiachin will experience this salvation.

The end of 2 Kings may be a historical note and it may also contain pro-Babylonian tendencies. It could presage a saviour-figure who may even have Messianic traits. What is clear is that it raises questions. As with the narrative contained in 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 as a whole, these concluding verses have a *"recency effect"*.[770] This means that the entire narrative is both drawn upon for their interpretation but also that it cannot be fully understood without them.

The end, however, is rounded-off. Rather, it clearly contains a surplus of meaning.[771] 2 Kings 25:27–30 creates the conditions for a new Exodus, but it would go too far to claim that this is guaranteed by the amnesty granted to Jehoiachin.[772] J.P.Leithart correctly notes at the end of his commentary: "The book of Kings leaves Israel east of Eden, awaiting a return that is not yet come."[773]

The open end of the narrative stretching from Genesis to 2 Kings leaves open an empty space that is both painful and creative and that begs to be filled. The question of the most adequate theological concept with which to fill it is the question posed by the following canonical books, it is the question of those who up until this very day continue to read and interpret this text.

770 For a definition of the term, see J.Granowski, *Jehoiachin* 176.

771 Similar to the surplus identified by Schmitz for 1 Kgs 22, the resolution of which requires the end of 2 Kings (see *Prophetie* 374).

772 Ibid. 374 fn. 90.

773 J.P.Leithart, *2 Kgs* 279.

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E. Concluding Observations

The purpose of this study has been to determine what 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 has to say about the last kings of Judah and the downfall of Jerusalem, as well as the particular manner in which it communicates this. Our intertextual readings (part C) and analysis of the perspective provided by the broader narrative context (part D) serve to facilitate an experience with the text as well as (re-)open its semantic potential in such a way as to go beyond what scholars have identified so far. From Rashi onwards though particularly from the end of the 19th Century, many scholars have considered the end of the book of Kings to consist in a historical "factual account," one that builds upon a number of different sources and redactions and that serves to help the nation process its past experience. Another group of mostly Anglo-American interpreters adapted this idea and claimed that the text amounts to a pragmatic injunction to its readers to come to terms with their Babylonian overlords. Reading 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 in light of its final verse in particular, these interpreters argue that the text's pro-Babylonian perspective serves to help the exiles come to terms with their current fate. In contrast to this approach, another group of interpreters, standing in a tradition reaching back through Gerhard von Rad to Abrabanel, adopt a far mor theological interpretation. Some of the suggestions include the profiling of Jehoiachin as a messianic figure, the development of new temple theologies, as well as twentieth century ideologies of the state.

This study has made no contribution to the diachronic study of the text. As such it would be pure speculation to comment upon the various redaction-critical models that have been proposed. For the same reason it is not possible to say anything about the three options mentioned above. My concern has not been to identify the *intentio auctoris* but rather the manner in which the text (initially read on its own in isolation) would have been understood by its first readers (Part C) and then in its present context in the canon.

The result is clear. In its present form the narrative ends with a perspective of hope. The divine promises are intact because the covenant has been unilaterally sustained and the promises of salvation remain unchanged.

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The history of the Israelite monarchy fails because of the human weakness of its representatives. Failure and hope are literarily portrayed through the skilful deconstruction of the divine promises of salvation, a representation that can be found in the structure and content of all levels. Although use is made of the so-called "deed-wellbeing-nexus" (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*), it is embedded in the broader horizon of God's mercy. Of central significance here is the law of Deuteronomy.

The question of the silence of the prophets could also be answered from a narratological perspective, as long as we understand that the primary function of prophecy is to remind people of the Torah. In 2 Kgs 22 this Torah speaks for itself, thus rendering further prophecy superfluous. This insight is also theologically significant: Whenever the divine word becomes understandable on its own terms, it does not require any further mediation.

The characterization of YHWH in the secondary literature on 2 Kings is mostly limited to the motif of his judgement, with little being said beyond that. In these scholarly interpretations the figures of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah usually play no role at all, with the significance of Jehoiachin being limited to the final scene (2 Kgs 25:17–30).

The other nations, in particular Babylon, serve as God's instruments of punishment, though they can also have a salvific role. This latter fact highlights once again the ambivalence of God's ways in the world.

The Narrated End of the Last Kings of Judah

We have now reached the end of this study. Its primary arguments have been made. However, given that a narrative must be understood through its narration, as stated at the beginning of this study, I now provide a narrated interpretation:

The great narrative arc that begins in Gen 1:1 and continues with interruptions until its (temporary) end 2 Kgs 25:30 tells the story of God and humanity. At the end, however, this story is greatly constricted. The various relational milestones are exemplified in the prologue (Gen 1–11) and these are then repeatedly further developed in the story of the people of God.[774] The drama of a people that lives in covenant with God and is expected to follow the Torah but which for various reasons fails to do so is continually intensified. It accompanies the nation from its election (Gen 12–50) and its liberation (Exodus) up until its reception of the Torah, which establishes for it the precise rules.

The failure is seen in the Promised Land (Jos), particularly in communal life (Jdg – 2 Kgs). There are also occasional glimmers of hope, mostly connected with exceptional figures such as Abraham, Jacob, Joseph or Moses in the Torah, De-

774 See G.Steins, *Bibelauslegung* 15f., who speaks of the "central option for justice" that is laid in Genesis.

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borah, David or Josiah in the linear narrative. Those who trust in YHWH are saved and they alone are able to permanently live a good life. Yet that which is bad within the nation (cf. the royal schema) consistently gains ground until it becomes systematic, as had once been the case previously for humanity as a whole (Gen 5–9). YHWH constantly attempts to restrict it and counteract it, but in the end neither the Torah nor the prophets or the righteous kings are enough to bring about long-term insight and a change in behaviour. The heart of all evil is the worship of foreign deities, for example with gold or child sacrifice, or the false worship of God, or simply the forgetting of the God who had saved the nation. The result is that all the bases for Israel's life are continuously threatened.

It thus becomes clear that no human ruler can ever live up to the demands placed upon him, for only God is able to guarantee long-term peace and well-being in the land. Despite this, God in his mercy permanently enables the nation to carry on, seizing every positive initiative to support and protect the nation, just as he had promised in his blessing (Deut 28:1–14).

YHWH's patience comes to an end with Ahab and Manasseh. It is no longer possible for him to guarantee the continued existence of the people of God and its kings for they all contradict that for which they should in fact support: The kings should be role models for the nation concerning how to live righteously before God; the nation, in turn, is called to be a role model for the rest of humanity. As was the case during Noah's Flood and the failed first Israelite dynasty under Saul (1 Sam 15; 31), so here, YHWH decides to punish every member of the nation with the exception of a small remnant that he requires to make a new beginning.[775]

The process begins with the downfall of the Northern Kingdom and the destruction of Samaria, (2 Kgs 17) which was supposed to serve as a wake up call for the tribe of Judah (Southern Kingdom). At first, this seems to have worked, for Hezekiah began to purify the cult (2 Kgs 18–20). Instead of taking up this positive initiative and thus taking advantage of this final opportunity, Manasseh, his successor to the throne, and his grandson Amon both fail miserably. It is not until Hezekiah's great grandson Josaiah that a comprehensive reform is implemented and Judah, which has now inherited all the competencies and tasks of being the people of God, is focused on the Jerusalem temple, which is called the "house of YHWH" (2 Kgs 22f.). The cult is monopolized as cultic purity and unity are created. Idolatry is abolished. Prophecy ceases because the Torah has been rediscovered.

It could have been possible for Judah to dedicate itself to its task and to continue to exist as a role model for the nations. Instead, Josiah had dreams of

775 These motives are not only in the OT, they are also part of messianic speech in Joh 15:1–8.

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resurrecting the former glory of Solomon's unified kingdom, thus creating the final pitfall for Judah and the entire kingdom.

This is the point where our narrative begins at 2 Kgs 23:30. Josiah has died and his son Jehoahaz becomes his illegitimate successor. Judah is subjugated by Egypt and Jehoahaz's power is extinguished, along with that of the people-of-the-land who had supported him. The Promised Land itself threatens to become a kind of Egypt, the ultimate symbol of the people of God's experience of slavery. Nevertheless, the situation has not yet reached this stage. A legitimate successor to the throne is found in Jehoiakim, who now theoretically has the opportunity to act in accordance with the law of the king (Deut 17:14–20). Instead, he pursues the same kind of policies as Manasseh (2 Kgs 24:1–3), thereby condemning himself. His royal programme leads to the shedding of innocent blood. In order to bring him to his senses YHWH sends bands of robbers against the land, just as he had done during the time of the judges. This time, however, he does not raise up any judges because there is already a king. He also does not send a new prophet, for the king has access to the Torah. Babylon lays siege to Jehoiakim because Jehoiakim has broken his oath of allegiance to it. He is unable to help his land. The same chaotic circumstances that dominated Israel's life before the monarchy now dominate the kingdom of Judah. History has reverted back to the time of the judges; YHWH's protection has been removed from the land.

Jehoiakim dies and Judah's last legitimate king Jehoiachin is enthroned (2 Kgs 24:8). He is the last king of Judah to not become a vasal. During his short reign siege is laid to Jerusalem. In order to prevent its destruction he surrenders himself to the Babylonians. If he had trusted in YHWH like his predecessor Hezekiah then Jerusalem would presumably have been spared. This is why he is given a negative verdict, despite his good intentions. He overestimated his own power and did not trust in God's saving power, a behaviour that had also been Moses' undoing. Jehoiachin is deported and with him the entire spiritual elite of God's people as well as a large part of the temple treasury.

The final phase of deconstruction now begins. Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, is installed as a puppet king, although Jehoiachin is still alive and he is not his descendant. Like Jehoiakim before him, he pursues the same bad policies of his predecessors, once again breaking his oath of allegiance to Babylon, an offence that must offend YHWH himself, since this oath was sworn in his name. This is the last straw for YHWH (2 Kgs 24:20). He allows the Chaldeans to come up and wipe out the entire city, including the king's palace and the temple (2 Kgs 25:9–21). Zedekiah flees in order to save his life (2 Kgs 25:4). By abandoning Jerusalem he abandons the Davidides' claim to the throne. His arrest and punishment are harsher than those experienced by any other of Israel's kings. His sons are exterminated and he himself is blinded so that he can never rule again. All the other figures responsible for order in the land according to the laws of the Torah

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such as the officials and cult personnel are either killed or punished alongside him. The temple is destroyed and in it is burned the Ark of the Covenant along with the copy of the Law that had been place in it and the tent sanctuary. One might think that the covenant with YHWH has now been terminated, that it is inconceivable for YHWH to ever again have compassion on his people and dwell among them.[776]

Yet this is not the case, for YHWH demonstrates his mercy once again. Not everyone is killed or deported, a small remnant is allowed to remain in the land and become the root of a new beginning. But this hope is also extinguished with Gedaliah and Ishmael (2 Kgs 25:22–26). A new beginning in the land is no longer conceivable. A new beginning in Egypt is also ruled out, since the reader knows from the story of the Exodus that Egypt cannot be a place of salvation. The return to Egypt is, in fact, the conclusion of the curse that God's people had called upon themselves in Deut 28:16–63.

In 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 the great theological provisions for Israel's salvation are deconstructed; YHWH sends them back to the beginning of this history. He sticks to his promise that he will not wipe out humanity altogether and also that the Davidic line would remain, for Jehoiachin lives in exile and the people still exist in Babylon and Egypt. But instead of there being an independent kingdom, as had been attempted in 1 Samuel to 2 Kings, all that remains how is subordination to a foreign ruler. Instead of a free life in their own land, as had been envisaged in Joshua and Judges, the people are expelled from the land and live under external constant threat. The blessing of the law has been turned into its curse. And finally, the so longed-for freedom of the Exodus has been turned into renewed bondage. The nation finds itself back in Egypt when it had once begun. But this is the place where the people did not yet know their God, for he only revealed himself under Moses. Indeed, YHWH takes the people even one step further back. He sends them to Babylon, the place of confusion (Gen 11), the place that came to be the starting point of Abraham's election and thus the birthplace of the chosen people.

YHWH had promised Moses (Deut 34) that he would not reject the nation. For this reason, he starts with them anew, going right back to the beginning. Until the very end he proves that he is the faithful God of his people, that he will not abandon them, that he will never finally reject them or move on without them. YHWH chooses the nations, Babylon and its kings in particular, to be the instruments of his wrath. Yet because his covenant is the instrument of his sal-

776 The question of God's com-passion is a central element of post-Auschwitz theology. For the meaning of Israel's and God's capacity to suffer, see J.-H.Tück, *Augapfel*.

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vation, it continues in force even after it had been broken.[777] He unilaterally upholds the covenant, even if this requires him to curse the nation (Deut 28:16–63) so that the Torah is fulfilled and a relationship between God and humanity remains possible.

This is exactly where the final scene in 2 Kgs 25:27–30 comes in. The last king of Judah, the last king of the people of God, is freed after decades in prison and receives a promotion within Babylon. His story is not reminiscent of that of the patriarch Abraham because it is not the story of a trusting servant who follows YHWH without knowing him. It is reminiscent of the story of Joseph, however. YHWH no longer expects blind obedience, rather he grants salvation to the people he has already chosen.

Despite this, just like Moses before him, Jehoiachin will not be allowed to return to the Promised Land. Doubt in God makes this impossible. Nevertheless, Jehoiachin does become a ray of hope for his people. His pardon demonstrates that survival is possible, that there is hope for the future. As in the story of Joseph, YHWH remains completely in the background, and yet it can be assumed that he is preparing a way for future salvation.

Which way this will be, the manner in which the return will succeed, is still unclear.[778] Only one thing is certain: The monarchical project has failed, for even the kings in the Davidic line were unable to create and maintain a just society.[779] An immanent monarchical concept cannot secure the relationship between God and creation and especially not the relationship between YHWH and the human race, for no human is able to bear responsibility for everyone else. New ways and theological concepts are required that need to be tested in the hope that it will be possible to dwell constantly in the presence of YHWH. This cannot be achieved by the kingdom of Israel / Judah, and so it will never be re-established in this form. What had begun with Saul, David, and Solomon ends with Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Jehoiachin. A new way needs to be sought, for this story does neither end with the last kings of Judah, nor with the question who is to blame for Judah's doom.

777 My concern here is not to defend the violent acts ascribed to the figure of YHWH nor to discount their impact upon the OT's image of God. Rather, my intention is to critically locate that image within the overall context of the Biblical portrayal, as has been suggested by G.Baumann (see *Gottesbilder*).

778 I am currently working on a publication dealing with the question of the canonical texts that follow on from this end.

779 A similar view is held by Bayle, *Rois* 586; N.Lohfink, *Rückblick* 141.

ISBN Print: 9783847113447 – ISBN E-Lib: 9783737013444

Abstract

This dissertation thesis deals with the ending of 2 Kings in recent literary studies. It asks what and how 2 Kgs 23:30–25:30 narrate the Fall of Jerusalem and the reign of Judah's last kings with help of narrative analyses and intertextual references in special shape for Biblical texts. The focus is on the books of Gen to 2 Kgs.

Before these two parts a discussion of the history of interpretation from ancient exegetes until recent studies is done. Not only Christian but also Jewish writers and commentaries were read so that an overall survey on the academic reception is given.

A translation of the Hebrew text (mainly MT) combined with text critical comments on the OG version and Ant/Luc opens the interpretation on the text.

The narrative analysis begins with time and space and deals afterwards with the characters in the intratextual (isolated) chapters 23:30–25:30. Open questions are answered in part D. The context helps to understand the story better, so the whole complex of what 2 Kgs 25 might be the end is used for an intertextual study. Lexematic work, word groups, names and motives get analysed to understand the literary and theological meaning of the text.

Two very important questions are why and to what extent does the character "YHWH" judge and punish his people so hard? What is the use of the last Kings of Judah?

An important point, the study worked out, is the composed judgment and deconstruction of the kindgom in the people of YHWH. On the other hand YHWH strenghtens his salvation promises by keeping them and the Torah—even if this means a curse for the people of Israel (Deut 28). God is true to his people even if they fail, but when they fail salvation becomes curse.

The kings of Judah have to show the peoples that YHWH is the one and only God in the world, because they got this mission for the whole people of God latest after the Fall of the Northern Kingdom. They were not able to fulfill their mission, so that injustice becomes systematic and YHWH makes himself to chose the *ultima ratio* to rescue a rest of his people. He punishes in the way of his contract (Deut 28), because the people failed, esp. the kings (Deut 17 vs. reality of 1–2 Kgs). All salvation gets lost, but the promises are still intact.

In the end a new perspective for Israel in the HB/OT is looked for. Jehoiachin, so the thesis, is like Joseph (Gen 41) preparing the people for a new Exodus. He prepares, but he will never see it.

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ISBN Print: 9783847113447 – ISBN E-Lib: 9783737013444

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780 The abbreviations follow the IATG ed.3 ("Schwertner").

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ISBN Print: 9783847113447 – ISBN E-Lib: 9783737013444

Important Keywords[781]

"(Not) deviating to the right or to the left": 22 occurrences

Function	Biblical Verse(s)
Dividing (spatial)	Gen 13:9
Divided water	Exod 14:22,29
Movement (spatial)	Num 20:17; 22:16; Deut 2:27; 1 Sam 6:12; 2 Sam 2:19,21; 1 Makk 5:46
Torah observance	Deut 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14; Josh 1:7; 23:6; 2 Kgs 22:2//2 Chr 34:2; 1 Makk 2:22
Moral instruction	2 Sam 14:19; Prov 4:27
Need to go	Isa 30:21

"Garden": 70 occurrences

Meaning	Biblical Verse(s)
The garden of YHWH (paradise)	Gen 2:8–10,15 f.; 3:1–3,8,10,23 f.; 13:10; Ezek 28:13; 31:8 f.; 36:35; Joe 2:3 Ps 80:16
Improvement of land	Num 24:6; Isa 29:17
Garden of the king/ Uzzah	2 Kgs 21:18//2 Chr 33:20; 2 Kgs 21:26; 25:4//Jer 39:4// 52:7; Dan 13:4
Planted areas	Est 7:7 f.; Jer 29:5,28; Lam 2:6; Am 9:14; Qoh 2:5
Counter-image to the desert (=Zion)	Isa 1:30; 32:15 f.; 51:13; Jer 4:26; 31:12; Ezek 34:29; 36:35; Joe 2:3; Am 4:19
Place of cultic impurity	Isa 17:10; 65:3; 66:17; Jer 2:7
Place of vitality	Isa 10:18; 58:11; 61:11; Jer 31:12; Bar 6:70; Job 8:16
Garden as personification	Ezek 19:10; 31:8 f.; Ps 80:16; Song 4:12,15 f.; 5:1; 6:2; 8:13; Sir 24:30 f.

781 This table only contains those keywords that either have a number of different meanings or which occur with high frequency. Those words whose meaning is clear or which appear less then twenty five times are only analysed in the appropriate part of this study.

ISBN Print: 9783847113447 – ISBN E-Lib: 9783737013444

(Continued)

Meaning	Biblical Verse(s)
Jehoiakim's garden in exile	Dan 13:4,7,15,17f.,20,25f.,36,38

"Not (listening) to the voice of YHWH" and its consequences: ca. 90 occurrences

Context/ Function	Bible Verse(s)
Description of the voice of God (esp. as the rumble of thunder)	Num 7:89; Deut 5:24–26; 18:16; 2 Sam 22:14; Ij 37:2,4f.; Ps 18:14; 68:34; 104:7; Isa 6:8; 30:30f.; Jer 10:13; 25:30; 51:16; Ezek 1:24; 10:5; Joe 2:11; 4:16; Am 1:2
Listening to the voice of YHWH (→ blessing)	Gen 22:18; 2 Chr 15:14; Hag 1:12
When you listen to my voice … (→ announcement)	Exod 15:26; 19:5; 23:22; Deut 13:19; 15:5; 26:17; 30:2,10; 1 Sam 12:14; 15:22; Zach 6:15
Wanting to listen to the voice (→ self-commitment)	Josh 24:24
I have listened to the voice of YHWh (→ justification)	Deut 26:14; 1 Sam 15:20; Isa 42:6
Not listening to the voice of God (→ threat of punishment)	Deut 8:20; 9:23; **28:15,37,45,62**; Josh 5:6; Judg 2:2,20; 6:10; 1 Sam 12:15; 28:18; 1 Kgs 20:36; 2 Kgs 18:12; Ps 81:12; 106:25; Prov 5:13; Jer 3:13; 7:28; 9:12; 18:10; 22:21; 32:23; 40:3; 42:13,21; 43:4,7; 44:23
Listen to my voice! (→ demand)	Exod 23:21; Deut 13:5; 27:10; 18:1f.; 30:20; Ps 29:3–9; 95:7; Isa 28:23; 32:9; Jer 7:23; 11:4,7; 26:13; 38:20
Why have you not listened to the voice? (→ accusation)	Deut 4:30; 30:8
You will listen to the voice (→ in a situation of need)	1 Sam 15:19
We have not listened (→ confession of guilt)	Jer 3:25; Dan 9:10

The people-of-the-land (עם הארץ)[782]: 42 occurrences

Bible Verses	Context/Function/Meaning
Gen 23:12 (2x)	Abraham buys land from Ephron of the p-o-l (= Hittites)
Gen 42:6	Joseph sells grain to the entire p-o-l (=Egyptians?)
Exod 5:5	Pharaoh wants to reduce the p-o-l (= p-o-l) rather than their workload[783]

782 The table differentiates between *non-Jewish populations*, **political functionaries**, and occurrences that are either different or missing.

783 I thank Dr. Sumpter for his reference to Exodus in the variant of Samaritanus "they are now more numerous than the people of the land".

ISBN Print: 9783847113447 – ISBN E-Lib: 9783737013444

(Continued)

Bible Verses	Context/Function/Meaning
Lev 20:2,4	The p-o-l (= people of God) must kill all those who have sacrificed to Molech or they will be punished themselves
Num 14:9	In his capacity as spy, Joshua says that the p-o-l (= inhabitants of the Promised Land) should not be feared.
2 Kgs 11:14,18–20 // 2 Chr 23:13,20 f.	Deposition of Athaliah by the entire p-o-l and the king; subsequent destruction of the cultic sites dedicated to Baal by the entire p-o-l and the victory parade of the king and, among others, the entire p-o-l from the temple to the palace.
2 Kgs 15:5 // 2 Chr 26:21	Jotham is to judge the p-o-l in place of his leprous father.
2 Kgs 16:15	Ahaz gives instructions for sacrficie to the priests, among them being a burnt offering for the entire p-o-l.
2 Kgs 21:24 (2x) // 2 Chr 33:23 (2x)	The conspirators against Amon are conquered by the p-o-l who subsequently install Josiah as king.
2 Kgs 23:30–25:19 (//Jer 52:25; 2 Chr 36:1)	The narrative which is the subject of this study (6–7 mentions)
Isa 24:4	The height (in the sense of "greatness") of the p-o-l is gone.
Jer 34:19	The "great ones of Jerusalem and Judah," but also the p-o-l, are punished during the reign of Zedekiah because they did not liberate their slaves during the jubilee year.
Ezek 7:27	The hands of the p-o-l tremble during divine judgement.
Ezek 12:19	In Jerusalem the p-o-l will only be able to eat bread and water in fear.
Ezek 22:29	The p-o-l robs the people and is against the poor.
Ezek 33:2–4	The prophet exhorts the p-o-l to timely repentance.
Ezek 39:13	The p-o-l must bury God and Magaon and its henchmen in order to purify the land.
Ezek 45:22	The prince is to offer an atoning sacrifice at Passover for himself and for the p-o-l.
Ezek 46:3	On the Sabbath a temple gate is opened towards the East and the king and the p-o-l will stand before the gate and worship YHWH.
Ezek 46:9	Whoever (including the p-o-l) enters the temple mount through the northern / southern gate must leave it on the opposite side.
Dan 9:6	Noone (including the p-o-l) has listened to the admonition.
Ezra 4:4	The p-o-l could stand against the rebuilding of the temple.

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(Continued)

Bible Verses	Context/Function/Meaning
Hag 2:4	Everyone, including the p-o-l, are to participate in the work of rebuilding.
Zach 7:5	Exhortation to the priests and p-o-l to take fasting seriously.
Job 12:24	God can take away understanding from the heads of the p-o-l, if he wants to.

105 occurrences of priests (כהן) being connected with Levites (לוי)

Context/Function/Meaning	Bibleverses
Levites and the leadership of an Aaronide priest	Exod 38:21; Num 3:32; Josh 21:1,4
Levitical priests at court and as enforcers of the law	Deut 17:9,18
Levitical priests must remain propertyless	Deut 18:1; Josh 18:7
Levitical priests as preservers of purity	Deut 24:8 (Lev 11–15)
Levitical priests as guardians/bearers of the Ark	Josh 3:3; 8:33; 1 Kgs 8:4
A Levite as Micha's main priest	Judg 17:10–13
Texts that are clearly post-exilic in theology and content	
"Priests and Levites" as temple personnel in Chronicles (46x)	1 Chr 9:2; 13:2; 15:11,14,27; 23:2; 24:6,31; 28:13,21; 2 Chr 5:5,12; 7:6; 8:14f.; 11: 13f.; 13:9f.; 17:8; 19:8; 23:4,6,8,18; 24:5; 29:4,16,26,24; 30:15f.,21,25,27; 31:2,4,17,19; 34:30; 35:8,10f.,14,18
"Priests and Levites" in Ezra and Nehemiah resume their service in the temple (36x)	Ezra 1:5; 2:70; 3:8,10,12; 6:16,18,20; 7:7,13,24; 8:15,29f.,33; 9:1; 10:5 Neh 7:72; 8:9,13; 10:1,29,35,38–40; 11:3,20; 12:1,22,30,44; 13:5,13,29f.
Priests and Levites called from among the nations.	Isa 66:21
The Nathan oracle applies to priests and Levites.	Jer 33:18,21
Levitical priests are Zadokites.	Ezek 43:19; 44:15; 48:11,13

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