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The Functions of Invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2

Maryann Amor
Declaration

“This is to certify that this thesis has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.”

Signed: ____________________________

Maryann Amor
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Abstract

In 1 Kings 1-2 King David’s impending death divides the monarchy over which of his two sons, Adonijah or Solomon, should be the future king. At this pivotal moment one might expect YHWH to reveal who should take over after David, as YHWH had done before (1 Sam 9:1-10:1; 16:1-13); however, YHWH is silent and the human characters take the lead. Nevertheless, YHWH has not disappeared completely from 1 Kings 1-2 because, as the narrative unfolds, YHWH is invoked twenty-four times. Although this language has drawn some attention, with scholars arguing that it either adds theological validation to the characters’ actions or reflects a theological perspective that assumes that YHWH acts behind the scenes, there is more that might be said regarding its function in the narratives. In this study, I adopt narrative criticism to undertake a close reading of 1 Kings 1-2 that pays particular attention to how characters and the narrator use invocations of YHWH and the events in the plot that prompt or result from this language. I argue that invocations of YHWH have a number of functions in 1 Kings 1-2, with the function of characters’ invocations being particularly dependent on the identities of the characters, their relationships, and the narrative contexts in which they participate.
Lay Summary

In 1 Kings 1-2 the divine name (YHWH) is used twenty-four times, language that stands out because YHWH is not an active character in the plot. This study interprets 1 Kings 1-2 by engaging with its literary features to assess invocations of YHWH and to demonstrate their many functions in the chapters.
Acknowledgements

As much as this PhD journey has been filled with days alone, writing and researching, it has never been completely solitary. I am extremely grateful to those, both individuals and organisations, who have helped me to accomplish something that I never thought possible for myself.

Foremost, is my wonderful supervisor, Dr. David Reimer. These words could never adequately convey how truly grateful I am for everything that David has done for me over the past four years. There were some complications early in my PhD and David’s support helped me to keep going, even when I felt like the only thing I wanted to do was to give up. Sometimes it is difficult to recognise when people have positively impacted our lives, but I recognise that David has positively impacted mine. I feel so blessed that he has been my supervisor and I am going to miss all of our meetings and fun chats about all kinds of things, including the Bible.

I would also like to thank Professor Timothy Lim and Professor Hugh Pyper for taking time out of their busy schedules to read and examine this thesis.

A special thanks to Dr. Alison Jack, my PhD mentor; Dr. Anja Klein, my second supervisor; and Elizabeth Corsar, my friend through both the MTh and PhD. I appreciate all of their encouragement as I completed this challenging degree.

Having come on my own to Edinburgh from Vancouver (Canada), I have many people back home who have been with me through both the good days and the bad. I am grateful for the support of my family and friends, especially my friends from my time at the Vancouver School of Theology: Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Dr. Harry Maier, Chelsea Masterman, and Julie Lees. I know that without these four people in my life this PhD would not have happened. They have always been available to offer words of hope and reminders of home, being there for me no matter how far apart we are.

Finally, without receiving financial aid I would not have been able to study in Edinburgh. Thank you to New College, University of Edinburgh, for awarding me the Principal’s Career Development PhD Scholarship; the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster (Vancouver, Canada) for the yearly postulant book grant; the Anglican Foundation of Canada for the two bursaries; and both the congregation of St. Philip’s Anglican Church (Vancouver, Canada) and the Vancouver School of Theology for contributing to my “moving to Edinburgh fund.”

-Maryann Amor, Edinburgh, 2017
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABRL</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Reference Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOTC</td>
<td>Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATD</td>
<td>Das Alte Testament Deutsch</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBR</td>
<td>Bulletin for Biblical Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCOT</td>
<td>Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
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<td>BibInt</td>
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<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
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<tr>
<td>BKAT</td>
<td>Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOSHNP</td>
<td>Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSacr</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
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<tr>
<td>BWANT</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuwen Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>BZ</td>
<td>Biblische Zeitschrift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CQR</td>
<td>Church Quarterly Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Cambridge University Press</td>
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<td>ExpTim</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOTL</td>
<td>Forms of Old Testament Literature</td>
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<td>HS</td>
<td>Hebrew Studies</td>
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<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBC</td>
<td>Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>IEJ</td>
<td>Israel Exploration Journal</td>
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<td>Int</td>
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<td>ITC</td>
<td>International Theological Commentary</td>
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<td>ITL</td>
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<td>JAAR</td>
<td>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>JANES</td>
<td>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
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<td>JLT</td>
<td>Journal of Literature and Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNSL</td>
<td>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>JSOTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTI</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Interpretation</td>
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JSS  Journal of Semitic Studies
NAC  The New American Commentary
NCBC  The New Century Bible Commentary
NIBC  New International Biblical Commentary
OTL  Old Testament Library
OUP  Oxford University Press
RB  Revue Biblique
ResQ  Restoration Quarterly
SBL  Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS  Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLPress  Society of Biblical Literature Press
SBLSS  Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SewRev  Sewanee Review
SHBC  Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJOT  Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
ThTo  Theology Today
TynBul  Tyndale Bulletin
VT  Vetus Testamentum
WBC  Word Biblical Commentary
WestBC  Westminster Biblical Commentary
WJK  Westminster John Knox Press
ZAW  Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
Chapter 1
Introduction

a. Introduction

As 1 Kings begins, King David’s advanced age (1 Kgs 1:1-4) suggests that he is nearing the end of his life. With the spectre of David’s death bringing with it political uncertainty regarding who would rule Israel after him, those around him begin acting to ensure that the future they desire will become a reality — Adonijah proclaims his future on the throne (1:5); Nathan and Bathsheba work to lead David to name Solomon as his successor (1:11-31). However, with both David and his predecessor, Saul, having been chosen as king by YHWH (1 Sam 9:1-10:1; 16:1-13), readers might expect that, despite all that the human characters do and say, YHWH will ultimately be the one to choose Israel’s next monarch.

The rise of Solomon to David’s throne, narrated in 1 Kings 1-2, does not fulfil this narrative expectation. In 1 Kings 1-2, YHWH “does not make himself known in dramatic, perceptible ways,”¹ which sets these chapters apart not only from those episodes where YHWH intervenes and chooses the king, but also from the surrounding narrative where YHWH is an active character (cf. 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Kings 3).

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With YHWH withdrawn and no one attempting to seek YHWH’s advice concerning the political situation (cf. 1 Sam 30:7-9), the future of the monarchy depends on the human characters. In 1 Kgs 1:11-27, Nathan’s and Bathsheba’s words compel “David and David alone” to name Solomon as his heir (1:29-30). In fact, the humans are solely responsible for Solomon’s ascent because there is no indication, as Martin Noth observes, “daß Jahwe die Thronnachfolge Salomos bewirkt habe,” “that YHWH had brought about the succession of Solomon.” Thus, 1 Kings 1-2 might be characterised as a human story, where human words and actions play a primary role in bringing Solomon to David’s throne.

2. David M. Gunn, “David and the Gift of the Kingdom (2 Sam 2-4, 9-20, 1 Kgs 1-2),” *Semeia* 3 (1975): 30. See also Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings* (OTL; Louisville: WJK, 2007), 57. In opposition, C.F. Keil assumes, “[the] kingdom was transmitted by divine appointment to [...] Solomon” (C.F. Keil, *The Books of Kings* (BCOT; trans. James Martin; ed. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872), 15). For Keil, YHWH destined the kingdom to go to Solomon in 2 Samuel 7 when YHWH specified that the kingdom would not go to one of David’s “existing sons, but to him that would come out of his loins (i.e. to Solomon, who was not yet born)” (Keil, *Books of Kings*, 18). This scene, however, does not provide as clear an indication that Solomon is YHWH’s choice, as 1 Samuel 9 and 16 do regarding Saul and David. N. Wyatt also argues that YHWH chose Solomon and the name “Jedidiah” in 2 Sam 12:24-25 is proof of this (N. Wyatt, “Jedidiah’ and Cognate Forms as a Title of Royal Legitimation,” *Bib* 66 [1985]: 112-125). However, against Wyatt, James Ackerman contends that because Nathan intervenes to make Solomon king in 1 Kgs 1:11-27 and he does not refer to the earlier narrative when speaking with Bathsheba (1:11-14) or with David (1:22-27), it is not likely that the name Jedidiah signals that Solomon is YHWH’s choice for king (James M. Ackerman, “Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2,” *JBL* 109 [1990]: 54).


4. See also James A. Wharton, who discusses how the narratives are “unmistakably human stories” (James A. Wharton, “A Plausible Tale: Story and Theology in II Samuel 9-20, 1 Kings 1-2,” *Int* 35 [1981]: 346 (italics in original)).
Despite the “divine silence” of 1 Kings 1-2, the narrator has not omitted YHWH completely. As the narrative unfolds, YHWH is named twenty-four times. Given the lack of divine interaction in the chapters, this language stands out and prompts scholars to question its possible function.

On the one hand, scholars propose that these invocations of YHWH address the lack of divine justification for the characters’ actions. According to Simon J. DeVries, “[in 1 Kings 1-2 there is] no hint of motivating divine revelation; Yahweh is named, but only to sanction oaths and receive credit for a fait accompli [...YHWH] is not directing Israel’s destiny, but is simply being used to sanction deeds of naked power.” Gina Hens-Piazza, writing in reference to 1 Kgs 2:23-24, 27, 32, and 44, similarly contends that invocations of YHWH, “justify murder, sanction oaths, underwrite political ideology, and rubber-stamp a new sovereign and his despotic tactics [thereby adding] theological validation [to the characters’] personal and political agendas.”

On the other hand, scholars assume that this language reveals YHWH’s intervention in the plot. For Gerhard von Rad, in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-2, “the activity of God [...] is hidden, and certainly not confined to sensational events which stand out from all other occurrences.” Gene Rice

5. Gina Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 34.
reflects this position when he argues, “the real locus of God’s activity is the human heart. It is there, in the decisions men and women make as they deal with the demands of life, that God is present and his purposes are realized.”

On this basis, YHWH does not require an obvious role to be considered an active participant in 1 Kings 1-2 because YHWH works through everything that the human characters do. When the divine name appears, it is simply bringing YHWH’s covert activity to the surface.

b. Research Question and Thesis Statement

Although the above arguments offer useful explanations of the function of invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2, they are incomplete. What scholars have not taken into account when assessing this language is the fact that of the twenty-four invocations, eighteen are spoken by characters in

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10. For a discussion of the theological significance of God’s absence in the narratives see Wharton, “Plausible,” 347-349.

11. David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell speak of a “providential reading,” in which the narrator leads readers to “think of an unseen God of Israel at work ‘behind the scenes’ of the narrative” (David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible [Oxford: OUP, 1993], 81). Although the narrator might, as in the case of 2 Samuel 15:20, “connect God to the human activity [...] enough for a reader to ascribe the whole grand scheme of things to the divinity’s desire and deed” (Gunn and Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, 81), in some narratives the characters’ words are intended to reveal YHWH. In the Joseph narrative, for example, the providential reading comes through Joseph’s words — “[he] insists to Pharaoh that God is both author and interpreter of dreams (Gen 41:14-40)” (Gunn and Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, 82).
conversation and six are spoken by the narrator. Focusing on the eighteen character invocations, they are not spoken by the same character in the same context, but by different characters, speaking to different characters, in different contexts. These observations raise the question: how might the details of the narrative inform our understanding of the function of invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2?

Scholars have yet to interpret the invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2 on the basis of how the language relates to the broader narrative in which it appears. To address this gap in scholarship, I will undertake a close reading of 1 Kings 1-2 that pays particular attention to how the characters and the narrator use invocations of YHWH and the events in the plot that prompt this language or result from it. I will argue that invocations of YHWH have a number of functions in the narrative of 1 Kings 1-2, with the function of characters’ invocations being particularly dependent on the characters’ identities, their relationships, and the narrative contexts (i.e. events in the plot) in which they participate. Reading 1 Kings 1-2 in this way leads to interpretations of the invocations of YHWH that differ from those discussed above. This study will thus contribute a new understanding of this language both to studies of 1 Kings specifically and to the field of biblical studies as a whole.

12. 1 Kgs 1:17, 29, 30, 36, 37, 48; 2:3, 4, 8, 15, 24, 26, 32, 33, 42, 43, 44, 45.
13. 1 Kgs 2:23, 27 (x2), 28, 29, 30. For more on the invocation in 2:29, which some translations place in character’s speech, see chapter 8 of this study.
c. Literature Review: 1 Kings and the Succession Narrative

Because 1 Kings 1-2 describes such a pivotal moment in Israel’s political history, the chapters have garnered a large amount of scholarly attention. In fact, as C.T. Begg notes, “[t]he history of interpretation of the book(s) of Kings extends over two and a half millennia,”\(^{14}\) ranging from allegorical, to historical-literal, and, especially during the contemporary period, interpretations aimed at reconstructing “the history of the formation of the biblical books.”\(^{15}\) Due to the size of this study, it is not feasible to review the field in its entirety. Thus, it is necessary to draw from it those members that are most relevant for this discussion, which is focused on the narrative of 1 Kings 1-2.\(^{16}\)

To refine the field for the current purposes it is helpful to ask: how are scholars interpreting 1 Kings 1-2 and what evidence do they use to support their interpretations? When applying these questions to existing treatments of 1 Kings 1-2, two groups of studies emerge from the field that align with the narrative emphases here: 1) discussions of the narrative


\(^{16}\) There are also discussions of individual characters that refer to 1 Kings 1-2. For example, because 1 Kings 1-2 describes the end of David’s life, literature on King David necessarily considers both chapters (e.g. Joel Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero* [New York: Harper Collins, 2013], see 221-251 for the discussion of 1 Kings 1-2; Baruch Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], see 391-406 for the discussion of 1 Kings 1-2). Given that these kinds of studies tend to review 1 Kings 1-2 in quite a simplified way that differs little from what is found in most commentaries, they are not included in either this review or the review in chapter 2. Furthermore, they are excluded because they are interested in one character, but this study is looking at a language form that is used by multiple characters.
features of 1 Kings 1-2 as evidence in support of arguments relating to the Succession Narrative (SN, discussed below); 2) interpretations of the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2 using narrative criticism. Given that the first of these groups draws attention to the aspects of the narrative on which the second group focus, the first group will be reviewed in this chapter. In chapter 2, the second group will be reviewed to observe how scholars analyse the chapters' narrative features specifically, which will tie into a discussion of this study’s methodology.

Leonhard Rost, Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids (The Succession to the Throne of David)

Modern critical study of 1 Kings 1-2 often takes its starting point from Leonhard Rost, who interprets the chapters through a source-critical lens that examines their place in the SN. Rost refers to the texts’ narrative features to support his thesis, an aspect of his argument that was developed by scholars considering the SN’s literary character and the rhetorical aspects of its composition. Although scholars interpret the narrative features of the SN in different ways, seeing them as signs that the SN is history writing (von Rad), anti-monarchical political propaganda (Lienhard Delekat), pro-monarchical political propaganda/didactic wisdom literature (R.N. Whybray), serious entertainment (D.M. Gunn), and apologetic (P. Kyle McCarter), the features still play a significant role in each of their studies. Taking a slightly different approach, George P. Ridout argues that these same features provide evidence of the author’s rhetorical techniques. With
this study’s narrative interest, it is not the specifics of these scholars’ arguments that place them in its research context, but their engagement with the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2 as they advance their theses.

Rost outlines his theory regarding the SN in his Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids (The Succession to the Throne of David).17 One of his main arguments is that verses in 2 Samuel 6-20 and 1 Kings 1-2 are related by their interest in answering the question, “‘Who shall sit upon [David’s throne] and who shall reign after him?’”18 These verses adopt a similar narrative style,19 which leads Rost to suggest that they were written by a single author and form a self-contained source that he calls the Succession Narrative (SN), a term that he coined and that is still in use today.20 For this reason, Rost’s study is seen as a “classic”21 and a “most influential study” in the field.22

17. Leonhard Rost, Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids (BWANT 42; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926). For this study, I will work with the English translation of Rost: Leonhard Rost, The Succession to the Throne of David (trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982).

18. Rost, Succession to the Throne, 68.

19. See, for example, Rost’s discussion of 1 Kgs 2:1-12. Rost argues that the stylistic differences between 2:1-10 and the chronological account in 2:11 suggest that 2:11 is not from the same source as 2:1-10, which is part of the SN (Rost, Succession to the Throne, 71-73).


22. Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC 8; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 86 n1. For scholars who raise arguments regarding the SN that counter Rost’s see Gillian Keyes, The Wages of Sin: A Reappraisal of the ‘Succession Narrative’ (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,
With this being said, facets of Rost’s thesis were “an essential presupposition [being] a long accepted result of scholarship.”\(^{23}\) Thus, Rost’s influence was not due to the novelty of his argument, but to the power of his synthesis.

The relationship between 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-2 was first advanced by August Tholuck in 1838, ninety-one years prior to Rost. Tholuck argued that 1 Kings 1-2 was originally connected with 2 Samuel because they share words and phrases: פֶּנֶפֶסֶת is found in both 1 Kgs 1:29 and 2 Sam 4:9, and the Cherethites and Pelethites appear only in 1 Kgs 1:38, 44 and 2 Sam 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23.\(^{24}\) Five years later, Johann Jakob Stähelin assigned 1 Kings 1-2 and 2 Samuel to the same source on the basis of the same linguistic connections noted by Tholuck.\(^{25}\) In 1862, Samuel Davidson concluded, “the writer of Samuel’s books continued his history beyond David’s death into Solomon’s time [...] The hypothesis is favoured by the fact, that the first two chapters of Kings bear the impress in language and colouring of him that wrote the concluding chapters of Samuel.”\(^{26}\)

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26. Samuel Davidson, An Introduction to the Old Testament: Critical, Historical, and
Friedrich Bleek did not assert that 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-2 shared a source but noted instead, “the later author of the Books of Kings wrote his work as an appendix and continuation” of 2 Samuel. Otto Thenius argued that 1 Kings 1-2 and verses in 2 Samuel were derived from a source called, “der Specialgeschichte Davids,” “the Special History of David.” Julius Wellhausen suggested that there were two complementary works in the Hebrew Bible: 1 Sam 14:52 to 2 Sam 8:18 and 2 Samuel 9 to 2 Kings 2. While the first collection “circumstantially inform[s readers] how David rose to the throne,” the second “is the better work [...] and frequently affords us a glance into the very heart of events, showing us the natural occasions and human motivations that gave rise to the different actions.” In 1891, S.R. Driver claimed that 1 Kings 1-2 “is the continuation” of 2 Samuel 9-20. Finally, in 1912, D. Carl Steuernagel asserted, “in Kap. 1-2 ein große, breig ausgeführte Geschichte gleichen Charakters wie 2 Sam 9-20,” “in chap. 1-2 [one finds] a large, boldly executed story of the same character as 2 Sam 9-20.”

Theological, Containing a Discussion of the Most Important Questions Belonging to the Several Books (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1862), 526.


In consideration of the above, it is clear that Rost’s assumption that parts of 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-2 were related was already accepted in the field. Rost did contribute to this discussion, “[a new way of] linking parts of II Sam 6 and 7 to the succession story (understood as an originally independent work) [and an] emphatic and detailed rejection of the original setting of this narrative within a larger complex”\textsuperscript{32}; however, these positions are not what elevated his work above others. Instead, as E. Ball proposes, Rost’s success was due to the “clarity and economy” of his writing style that set his study against existing “source-critical views of Samuel.”\textsuperscript{33} In other words, the way in which Rost presented his argument gave it a broad appeal, allowing it to influence scholars working both inside and outside source-criticism. Ball’s point is particularly relevant here because Rost is included in this review not for his contributions to source-criticism, but for his discussion of the narrative features of the SN in support of his argument. This aspect of Rost’s study illustrates the importance of these features for analysis and would shape the works of later scholars interested in the SN’s literary character and rhetoric.

According to Rost, the narrative features of the passages that he includes in the SN suggest that they derive from the same source. Rost sees in 1 Kings 1, “a lively scene, an abundance of finely detailed characters.”\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} Ball, “Introduction,” xxv.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., xxvi.
\textsuperscript{34} Rost, \textit{Succession to the Throne}, 68.
These characteristics are noted throughout the SN, which he calls a “quite outstanding piece of Hebrew narrative art” because of “the complexity of its plot [...] the wealth of personalities taking part and [...] the fine organization of its structure.” As Rost observes, the characters “interact with great liveliness,” a feature noted in 1 Kings 1, where,

the characters crowd together to form a brilliant final tableau which is extended and balanced somewhat by [1 Kings 2]. They are people full of life, people who can love and hate, who rejoice and mourn, who murder in cold blood and fervently fear and pray for the life of somebody else.36

King David, as Rost describes, is driven by his moods, demonstrating “[t]rue piety and strong sensuality, weakness [...] and strength.”37 This characterisation contrasts with Bathsheba, who is “more used than using, the energetic Nathan, the blindly devoted Benaiah.”38 Rost’s discussion of these aspects of the characters signals his awareness that the SN is not a staid account of historical fact, but was shaped by the author’s “artistic skill.”39 Although Rost believes that the author was an “immediate eye-witness”40 of the events described in the SN, he argues that the author conveyed his facts through “strong stylized dress. Fact and fiction join hands in this succession

35. Rost, Succession to the Throne, 102.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., 103.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 104.
narrative as in every work of an artistically sensitive historiographer.”

Moreover, the way in which the author shaped his story reveals his affinity for Solomon; he wrote “in majorem gloriam Salomonis — to the greater glory of Solomon.” Thus, although Rost does not develop his narrative insights, using them only as an “adjunct to his source-critical study,” they are nevertheless integral to his argument regarding the SN and inform his conclusion that the SN is historiography written in support of Solomon.

Gerhard von Rad, “The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel”

Gerhard von Rad, introduced above, praises Rost for his “penetrating analysis” in his paper, “The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel.” von Rad argues that the SN is “the oldest specimen of ancient Israelite historical writing,” and is, as per Rost, shaped by the historian’s desire to answer the question of who would sit on David’s throne after his death. However, instead of a simple narrative account, von Rad contends that the historian used his “artistic technique” to create a “dramatic

41. Rost, Succession to the Throne, 104.
42. Rost, Succession to the Throne, 105. Gunn would later argue that for Rost the SN is an example of pro-Solomonic “political propaganda” (D.M. Gunn, The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation [JSOTSup 6; Sheffield: JSOT, 1978], 13).
45. Ibid., 166-221.
46. Ibid., 176.
47. Ibid., 194.
presentation”\textsuperscript{48} of the events, masterfully manipulating the narrative features to add to his work “dramatic relief [...and] tension.”\textsuperscript{49} For example, rather than revealing his interest in the succession to David’s throne during David’s dealings with Amnon and Absalom (2 Samuel 13, 15) or when Solomon is born (2 Sam 12:24-25), the narrator gradually builds to it; “[o]nly at the end of the work do we find a clear statement of the problem which has actually occupied the reader from the start.”\textsuperscript{50} Furthermore, the historian used his skill to create complex characters; “David himself, a far from simple character, whose whole life is a mass of contradictions.”\textsuperscript{51}

von Rad also develops Rost’s argument by noting how the narrative demonstrates the historian’s understanding of YHWH acting through history, but, as noted above, in a way that “is hidden to the natural eye.”\textsuperscript{52} von Rad concludes, then, that the narrative features of the SN demonstrate that it is ancient Israelite history writing that conveys “a wholly new conception of the nature of God’s activity in history.”\textsuperscript{53}

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\textsuperscript{48} von Rad, “Beginnings,” 190.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 191.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 194.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 190.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 202.
\textsuperscript{53} von Rad, “Beginnings,” 204. It must be noted that von Rad does “not attempt to attribute a theological purpose to the book. He argued that it could not be seen as a \textit{theological history} — rather it was a higher form of literature: genuine historical writing” (Keyes, \textit{Wages}, 18 (italics in original)).
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In his paper, “Tendenz und Theologie der David-Salomo-Erzählung,” Lienhard Delekat accepts Rost’s assumption that the SN (which he terms, *David-Salomo-Erzählung*) is a “literarisches Meisterwerk,” “literary masterpiece”\(^5\), however, he does not agree that the SN was written in favour of Solomon.\(^5\) Delekat supports his position by turning to the characterisation of David and Solomon, arguing, “[b]ei angesehenen Herrschern wie David und Salomo fällt es sehr stark ins Gewicht, wenn Schlechtes über sie berichtet,” “[w]ith respectable rulers such as David and Solomon, it is very important when bad things are reported about them.”\(^5\)

With “nichts Gutes, sondern ausschließlich Schlechtes über die beiden Herrscher berichtet,” “nothing good, but only bad being reported about the two rulers,” Rost’s argument regarding the purpose of the SN cannot be

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55. Delekat’s work influenced a group of European scholars called the “Tendenz critics,” who also discuss “[t]he problem of the political orientation of the SN” (Keyes, *Wages*, 27). These scholars argue that the SN was, as Delekat asserts, originally hostile to the monarchy; however, later redactors added to the SN a positive view of the monarchy. The most notable *Tendenz* critics are François Langlamet (François Langlamet, “Pour ou contre Solomon: La rédaction prosalomonienne de 1 Rois, I-II,” *RB* 83 [1976]: 481-529); Timo Veijola (Timo Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie* [Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975]); Ernst Würthwein (Ernst Würthwein, *Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids — theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung?* [Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974]). For discussions of these scholars’ works see Andrew Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 259-262; Keyes, *Wages*, 27-29. Against the *Tendenz* critics, P. Kyle McCarter comments, “[t]he alleged redactional activity was, they say, designed to impose a favorable view of David and Solomon on an older text. But much of the evidence they cite vanishes when the narrative is read as apologetic” (P. Kyle McCarter, “Plots, True or False: The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic,” *Int* 35 [1981], 360 n12).

sustained. In fact, for Delekat, the way that David and Solomon are characterised suggests that the purpose of the SN was to shake people’s loyalty in the kingship by demonstrating how detrimental it is when human beings are bestowed with inordinate power.⁵⁷ Delekat concludes that the author of the SN was despairing over the loyalty that people showed towards David’s house, which led them to overlook YHWH, the real king.⁵⁸

Turning to 1 Kings 1-2, Delekat argues that in these chapters it is clear that the narrator does not see Solomon as the choice for king because Nathan and Bathsheba lead David to place him on the throne, “ohne jeden Auftrag Jahwes,” “without any commission of YHWH.”⁵⁹ When Benaiah invokes YHWH and speaks “amen” in 1 Kgs 1:36, the narrator underscores the fact that YHWH did not choose Solomon for this role, because YHWH did not give Solomon “sein Amen,” “his Amen.”⁶⁰ Therefore, the narrative features of the SN do not demonstrate support for Solomon as king (Rost), but offer a negative portrait not only of Solomon’s but also of David’s kingship. Thus, the SN might be called anti-monarchical political propaganda.

⁵⁸. Ibid., 34.
⁵⁹. Ibid., 33.
⁶⁰. Ibid.
In *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9-20; I Kings 1 and 2*, R.N. Whybray discusses, in line with Rost, the creativity inherent in the narrative features of the SN. For Whybray, these features suggest that the SN is a “historical novel — rather than a work of history properly speaking.”

Support for this literary character is found in the portrait of King David, which Whybray argues, “[demonstrates] the very richness and variety of his literary creation [...] comparable with the great tragic heroes of literature.”

While Whybray acknowledges that the narrative qualities of the SN suggest that it is a novel, he raises a concern with this category. He argues that although “literary and artistic aims and the desire to entertain the reader” are important for novels, the SN was written “[regarding] so recent a period in history” and its author must have been driven by “some other, more practical purpose.” After considering other possible categories for the SN, including a national epic or a moral/religious tale, Whybray concludes that it is “a propagandist narrative” that, contra Rost and his pro-Solomonic emphasis and contra Delekat and his anti-monarchic emphasis,

62. Ibid., 36.
63. Ibid., 47.
64. Ibid., 47-49.
65. Ibid., 49-50.
was written to convey “a dynastic rather than a personal [praise...] the
author, no sycophant, had no interest in writing a fulsome eulogy of
Solomon, he was deeply concerned about the stability of the dynasty and
régime.”66 Furthermore, echoing von Rad, Whybray sees in the SN an
integration of theological themes; in the SN the author “combined literary
skill and great psychological insight with a new understanding of the
working of Yahweh in history and with a deep devotion to the house of
David as the principal instrument through which he guided the destinies of
his Chosen People.”67

Although Whybray accepts that the SN is pro-monarchical political
propaganda, he claims that this “is hardly sufficient to account for its
literary character or its psychological interests.”68 Because Whybray assumes
that it was not necessary for the author to adopt any creativity or to engage
with characters’ psychology if intending to justify the monarchy, he proposes
that these features reflect the tendencies of an author who was a member of
the “cultural elite” and whose training led him to integrate wisdom themes
in his work that aligned it not only with the book of Proverbs, but also with
Egyptian and Israelite political novels.69 The influence of the wisdom
tradition is seen, for example, in the SN’s “high regard for wisdom and

66. Whybray, Succession Narrative, 53-54.
67. Ibid., 55.
68. Ibid., 56.
69. Ibid., 115.
counsel,” noted when David refers to wisdom in 1 Kgs 2:6, 9 and when Nathan offers counsel to Bathsheba in 1:12. For Whybray, these themes suggest that the purpose of the SN was not only political, but also it related to the author’s desire “to illustrate specific proverbial teaching for the benefit of the pupils and ex-pupils of the schools.” In other words, for Whybray the SN might be characterised as didactic wisdom literature.

Ridout and J.L. Crenshaw, however, question the strength of the wisdom aspect of Whybray’s thesis. For Ridout, the wisdom themes in the SN are “to be regarded in an ironic frame of reference for the most part.” Ridout’s interest in interpreting the SN through a rhetorical lens (see below) shapes his criticism of Whybray; nevertheless, he does offer an important counter-argument to Whybray’s conclusion that the wisdom themes are being used for a didactic purpose.

Crenshaw argues that the “fundamental error” of Whybray’s study is his “failure to search [in the SN] for stylistic and ideological peculiarities found primarily in wisdom literature.” Crenshaw is correct that the weakness in Whybray’s thesis is that he has only looked at a few themes that relate the collections, but he has not developed their possible stylistic and/or

70. Whybray, Succession Narrative, 59.
71. Ibid., 57-58.
72. Ibid., 95.
73. Ridout, “Prose Compositional,” 127 (underline in original).
ideological connections. Thus, while Whybray raises an interesting interpretation of the purpose of the SN based on its narrative features, it is flawed.75

D.M. Gunn, The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation

D.M. Gunn questions the “notable characterizations of the [SN],”76 outlined above, in The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation. In his study, which will be referenced again in the following chapter, Gunn takes the narrative features discussed by the previous scholars and pays greater attention to them, advancing “an alternative approach to the narrative as first and foremost a story or tale in the sense of a work of art and entertainment.”77 This goal sets Gunn against Whybray, who required that the author have a purpose other than entertainment for writing the SN. For Gunn, however, there is no reason that the SN could not be a piece of entertainment; he asks,

Why not let this, or some similar characterization, stand? Why should not literary and artistic aims and a desire to entertain the reader occupy not merely ‘an important place in the author’s mind,’ but the

75. Whybray’s study influenced John Gray, who assumes both that the SN was composed by someone “versed in moral philosophy and probably in the international wisdom tradition” and that it was not written as “mere entertainment” (John Gray, I & II Kings: A Commentary [OTL; 2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 1970], 21). Gray does not develop Whybray’s thesis.

76. Gunn, Story of King David, 13. Gunn diverges from the majority of scholars by including 2 Samuel 2-4 in the SN (Gunn, Story of King David, 67-68). Furthermore, he argues that “the centrality and significance of this theme of Solomonic succession has been considerably overstated” (Gunn, Story of King David, 81).

77. Gunn, Story of King David, 13.
important place? Why not accept the narrative as first and foremost a fine piece of story-telling and not as essentially something else?78

According to Gunn, the narrative style of the SN characterises it as “serious entertainment,” a type of literature that “demands the active engagement of those being entertained, which challenges their intellect, their emotions, their understanding of people, of society and of themselves.”79 Gunn does not discuss the influence of the social setting on this entertaining narrative or the kind of audience that might receive it, information that would be useful for understanding how this type of writing might have functioned in and been influenced by its broader context.80 Instead, he supports his thesis by relying on the features of the narratives. For example, although the characters’ psychological details were a stumbling block for Whybray and prompted him to characterise the SN as didactic wisdom, Gunn sees them as integral to the art of serious entertainment — the details of David’s personal life are not necessary for a political history, but the author included them to create narrative tension “through the

78. Gunn, *Story of King David*, 37 (italics in original).
79. Ibid., 61.
80. Gunn argues that the life setting of the narratives “must remain a matter for speculation only” (Gunn, *Story of King David*, 62). He concludes, “it is better to recognize the limits of the evidence than to pursue a ‘positive’ conclusion which would be, in point of fact, merely yet another speculation” (Gunn, *Story of King David*, 62). While this position makes sense because the text does not provide direct access to the context in which it was received, Gunn’s argument that the audience who received the SN would have to engage with it in order to experience its “serious entertainment” quality necessarily opens the door for considering the kinds of people that would have composed the audience that received this text.
conflict [of David’s] interests,” as von Rad observed. Thus, when Adonijah exalts himself in 1 Kgs 1:5, it is not the political aspects of David’s character, but the personal, that shape his response: “his hands are tied by his role as father.” Overall, for Gunn, the author employed creativity when writing the SN, “recount[ing] in essence what actually happened whether or not it was precisely what happened.” The author was not, then, a “propagandist pamphleteer nor moralizing teacher: the vision is artistic, the author, above all, a fine teller of tales.”

P. Kyle McCarter, “‘Plots, True or False’ The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic”

Finally, against all of the above scholars, P. Kyle McCarter argues, “1 Kings 1-2 should be described as court apologetic.” McCarter questions Rost’s assumption that 1 Kings 1-2 and passages in 2 Samuel were derived from the same source: “[i]t is difficult to think of 1 Kings 1-2, in which the urgency of

81. Gunn, Story of King David, 110.
82. Ibid., 94.
83. Ibid., 61 (italics in original).
84. Ibid., 111.
85. McCarter, “‘Plots, True or False’,” 361. T.C.G. Thornton first argued that the SN has apologetic interests, but he counters Rost when he suggests, “the main question underlying the succession-story is not precisely ‘Who will succeed David to the throne?’ but rather ‘Why was it Solomon who succeeded David to the throne?’” (T.C.G. Thornton, “Solomonic Apologetic in Samuel and Kings,” CQR 169 [1968]: 160). While this work influenced McCarter, it “failed to receive an overabundance of attention” (Knapp, Royal Apologetic, 8). The main problem with Thronton’s work is that there is no textual support for his argument. While “who will sit on David’s throne” is repeated throughout 1 Kings 1-2, “why is Solomon king” is not (Keyes, Wages, 25). Because this article is flawed and did not have a significant impact on the field, it is not included in this review.
the succession question is obvious, as deriving from the same hand as II Samuel 9-20, where it is not.”86 For this reason, McCarter posits that 1 Kings 1-2 is an apologetic that was “composed in reference to materials in Second Samuel, which must have already existed when 1 Kings 1-2 [was] written and which may have been attached to the material as a kind of evidential preface.”87

To support this argument, McCarter turns to the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2, especially characterisation. For McCarter, David’s character was shaped by the author’s apologetic interests, which led him to make David a foil to Solomon: “[Solomon] is strong where David was weak, decisive where David was tentative [...] the legitimate successor, a man of truly regal temperament, vigorous and resolute.”88

Against McCarter, Jeffrey S. Rogers argues that it is not clear that 1 Kings 1-2 “exonerate[s] Solomon at the expense of David.”89 For example, in 1 Kings 2, “David speaks with the voice of experience in the consolidation of power,” he is neither weak nor indecisive.90 David’s character is not, then,

86. McCarter, “Plots, True or False,” 361.
87. Ibid., 362 (italics in original).
88. Ibid., 367.
89. Jeffrey S. Rogers, “Narrative Stock and Deuteronomistic Elaboration in 1 Kings 1,” CBQ 50 (1988): 412. Montgomery also questions, “[h]ut why a much later age (Deuteronomic) should have invented the story to save Solomon’s virtue by throwing the odium upon David is unintelligible in view of the latter’s canonization” (James A. Montgomery, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings [ICC; ed. Henry Snyder Gehman; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1967], 88).
90. Rogers, “Narrative Stock,” 409. See also Knapp, who argues that while McCarter’s position “is valid,” one could “also add that the model of an anti-Solomonic stratum that
consistently denigrated to elevate Solomon’s, which weakens McCarter’s thesis.

Furthermore, while McCarter argues, “[i]t is the writer’s contention, in other words, that Solomon acted out of loyalty to his father’s memory and a faithful desire to set David’s accounts in order. This was proper behavior, precisely that expected of a virtuous new king,”91 his actions are not so easily interpreted. When Solomon calls for the death of Shimei in 1 Kgs 2:46, he justifies the command not only by referring to what Shimei did to David (2:44), but also by referring to the benefit of Shimei’s death for himself (2:45). Solomon’s use of a third person self-reference (2:45) suggests that he is killing Shimei not out of loyalty to David, but in order to ensure the strength of his position as king (see chapter 8).

George P. Ridout, “Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam. 7, 9-20; 1 Kings 1-2)”

While the above scholars take Rost’s narrative observations as their starting point for discussing the literary character of the SN, Ridout refers to them as he adopts a rhetorical approach to examine the composition of the SN. Ridout also notes the author of the SN’s creativity: “[p]ersons from one story appear later. Character is strikingly portrayed, but only indirectly by means

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was later revised by a pro-Solomonic author has another significant drawback: While focusing entirely on the negative side of the tension in 1 Kgs 1-2, it overlooks some aspects of the positive side” (Knapp, Royal Apologetic, 261).

91. McCarter, “‘Plots, True or False,’” 364.
of the remarkable dialogues to which our attention is attracted.” \(^{92}\) However, Ridout focuses on how the author adds to his story by adopting other narrative techniques, such as repetition, as he attempts to formulate “certain principles of [the SN’s] composition.” \(^{93}\) For example, by turning to “rhetorically important repetitions,” those that slow the time of narration or appear at a climax, Ridout discusses how the author used repetition for the rhetorical purpose of conveying his theology. \(^{94}\) Therefore, with the theme of “who would sit on David’s throne” being repeated throughout 1 Kings 1-2 it acts as a rhetorical device. When David invokes YHWH and speaks of someone sitting on the throne in 1:48, it is a sign of the author using repetition to express “his conviction that Solomon was divinely chosen to succeed his father.” \(^{95}\)

Ridout raises an interesting argument concerning the narrative features of the SN; however, it is not without its flaws. First, repetition does not necessarily point to the author employing a rhetorical technique to convey an ideology. Repetition is common in the Hebrew Bible and in the SN the repetition of “who would sit on David’s throne” emphasises a theme around which the narrative revolves. In this case, repetition might be

\(^{92}\) Ridout, “Prose Compositional,” 15.
\(^{93}\) Ibid., 19.
\(^{94}\) Ibid., 20.
\(^{95}\) Ibid., 217.
understood on the basis of its narrative function, which might not relate to
the author’s possible rhetorical goals.

Similarly, it is not necessary to interpret David’s invocation of YHWH
in 1:48 as signaling the author’s acceptance of Solomon as the divinely
chosen heir. As I will argue below, when this verse is examined within the
context of the broader plot, David knows that YHWH did not choose
Solomon as his heir and his invocation relates to Bathsheba’s in 1:17,
suggesting that he has been persuaded by her language to swear by YHWH
that Solomon should rule (chapter 4). These observations weaken the
possibility that the narrator has David express the holy name to support
Solomon’s kingship. Therefore, Ridout raises only one possible interpretation
of the narrative features of the SN that is challenged when other interpretive
methods are applied to the texts.

Summary

Since the publication of Rost’s Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge
Davids, scholars have discussed the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2 as
evidence to support their arguments concerning either the SN’s literary
character or its rhetoric. Given that these features will be important for this
study, the works reviewed form part of its research context.
d. Outline

The above survey has drawn attention to the importance of the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2 by demonstrating how scholars have referred to them to support their arguments relating to the SN. This study, however, will engage with these same features in much greater detail, making them the focal point of the analysis.

After this introductory chapter, chapter 2 outlines narrative criticism, the method that will be adopted to examine 1 Kings 1-2. In this chapter, scholars who primarily engage with the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2 will be reviewed as part of an introduction to this study’s method. This chapter will also establish the interpretive assumptions of narrative criticism and what it offers for understanding invocations of YHWH.

In chapters 3-8, 1 Kings 1-2 will be analysed through a narrative critical lens, with specific attention paid to how and when characters or the narrator invoke YHWH. Each chapter considers a selection of verses from 1 Kings 1-2 that are thematically related and describe distinct episodes within the overall movement of the story.

Chapter 3 focuses on 1 Kgs 1:1-10. Although YHWH is not invoked in these verses, they provide information that is necessary for understanding what takes place later in the narrative.

In chapter 4, 1 Kgs 1:11-31 are discussed. These verses are united by Nathan’s oath, which he suggests to Bathsheba in 1:13, which she recounts
to David in 1:17, and which David makes in 1:30. Significantly, Bathsheba invokes YHWH in 1:17 and this language not only impacts Nathan’s interaction with the king, but also plays a role in leading David to take responsibility for the oath.

In chapter 5, 1 Kgs 1:32-53 are interpreted. Following David’s oath, the narrator details the events that lead to Solomon’s anointing as king. While David does not invoke YHWH when he describes Solomon’s coronation (1:32-35), he adds sacral nuances that are enhanced both when Solomon is anointed (1:38-40) and when Jonathan describes the anointing to Adonijah (1:43-48). Because of what Solomon and Adonijah either experience (Solomon) or are told (Adonijah), they are both led to see YHWH as having been involved in Solomon’s ascent, a perspective that they will articulate in 2:15 and 2:24 respectively. Also, in 1:36-37, Benaiah invokes YHWH, language that is integral to his characterisation and makes sense of why he hesitates and then fulfils Solomon’s command to kill Joab in 2:28-34.

Chapter 6 analyses 1 Kgs 2:1-12. As David delivers his deathbed speech to Solomon, he invokes YHWH (2:2-4) before instructing Solomon to kill Joab (2:5-6), do חסד for Barzillai’s sons (2:7), and kill Shimei (2:8-9). Although David invokes YHWH in 2:2-4 to emphasise the importance of Solomon following YHWH’s תורת during his reign, it is clear that he is interested in Solomon’s prosperity. David’s religious language also leads him to justify his violent commands in 2:5-9, obscuring the fact that he is calling
for Joab’s (2:5-6) and Shimei’s (2:8-9) deaths primarily to strengthen Solomon’s kingship.

Chapter 7 examines 1 Kgs 2:13-25. After Solomon has taken David’s throne (2:12), Adonijah goes to Bathsheba and asks that she request that Solomon give Abishag to him as a wife (2:17). Although Adonijah invokes YHWH when speaking with Bathsheba (2:15), she does not speak about YHWH when conveying his request to Solomon (2:21), which contributes towards Solomon’s anger. Support for this interpretation is noted when Solomon also names YHWH when he swears by YHWH as he calls for Adonijah’s death (2:24).

In chapter 8, 1 Kgs 2:26-46 are assessed. In these final verses of 1 Kings 2, Solomon establishes his kingdom. In 2:27, the narrator intervenes and speaks YHWH’s name to validate Solomon’s leniency towards Abiathar (2:26). In 2:31-33, Solomon invokes YHWH to convince Benaiah to violate the sacred tent by killing Joab by the altar. Finally, in 2:42-44, Solomon names YHWH as he works to convince Shimei that he deserves death for violating an oath. Given the details in the plot that inform Solomon’s invocations in both 2:31-33 and 2:42-44, his language takes on not a pious but a self-serving nuance.

Chapter 9 offers a brief summary and a conclusion.

Before turning to 1 Kings 1-2, it is necessary first to establish how these chapters will be studied. In the following chapter narrative criticism
will be examined, laying the foundation for the analyses of 1 Kings 1-2 in chapters 3-8.
Chapter 2
A Narrative Critical\textsuperscript{1} Approach to 1 Kings 1-2

a. Introduction

Chapter 1 reviewed the ways in which scholars have used the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2, within the context of the SN, as evidence to support their arguments regarding the SN's literary character or rhetoric. This study, however, is interested in the narrative of 1 Kings 1-2 for its own sake, asking how attention to some of its features explains the function of invocations of YHWH. To move forward it is necessary to understand what such a focused narrative approach to 1 Kings 1-2 might look like, which is the goal of this chapter.

As noted in chapter 1, there are scholars who interpret 1 Kings 1-2 by adopting a narrative critical lens that pays close attention to the narratives' features. Reviewing how these scholars engage with 1 Kings 1-2 will establish this study's methodological research context. However, as will become clear, scholars do not always define their interpretive assumptions, which creates ambiguity concerning the kinds of evidence to which they will or will not refer. To address this issue, the interpretive assumptions of narrative criticism, as it will be applied in this study, will be discussed. Having outlined the method, the chapter concludes by considering how

\textsuperscript{1} Although some scholars, such as Yairah Amit, refer to “narrative criticism” as “literary criticism,” “narrative criticism” will be adopted here. This is to avoid any possible confusion with \textit{Literarkritik}, discussed below. See Yairah Amit, \textit{Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible} (trans. Yael Lotan; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).
narrative critics understand the texts’ narrative features (e.g. character
dialogue, characterisation, plot), thereby, creating the framework for
engaging with these same features in 1 Kings 1-2 (chapters 3-8).

b. Literature Review: Narrative Criticism and 1 Kings

This study’s interest in the narrative of 1 Kings 1-2 places it in dialogue with
the works of other scholars who, in comparison to those reviewed in chapter
1, analyse 1 Kings 1-2 by focusing primarily on the chapters’ narrative
features. While these scholars interpret the chapters within the context of
larger textual units (e.g. the SN, 1-2 Kings, 1 Kings) or engage with them for
the purposes of exploring a single theme (e.g. private conversation), their
interest in the narrative leads them to rely not on the historical critical
methods, but narrative criticism.\(^2\) Both the scholars’ interest in the narrative
features of 1 Kings 1-2 and their use of narrative criticism are points of
contact with the current study.

_D. M. Gunn, The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation_

As already noted in chapter 1, Gunn argues that the SN is an example of
serious entertainment and he supports this thesis by turning primarily to the

\(^2\) Biblical narrative criticism is a vast field that will shape the interpretive assumptions of
this study (see below). For reviews of some of the key works in the field of biblical narrative
criticism see Keith Bodner, *The Artistic Dimension: Literary Explorations of the Hebrew Bible*
(London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 2-5; Amelia Devin Freedman, *God as an Absent
Character in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Literary-Theoretical Approach* (New York: Peter Lang,
2005), 7-28.
narrative features of the SN. In reference to his method, Gunn states that he is treating the SN as “a guide book, a conducted tour,” its “significant meanings” emerging through a close reading.\(^3\) Although Gunn does not specify that he is using narrative criticism, his close reading of the SN has more in common with that method than it does the historical critical methods. However, Gunn takes an “essentially [...] empirical”\(^4\) stance, developing his method through “test[ing...] trying it on for size’ in [the] reading,”\(^5\) which differs from this study where the parameters of the method will be explicitly defined. Therefore, while Gunn’s approach is narrative focused, it is characterised by an inherent ambiguity that sets it against not only the historical-critical methods, but also the way in which narrative criticism will be used here.

Gunn’s interest in allowing the narratives to speak for themselves leads him to describe their contents, which act as the foundation for his interpretations. For example, Gunn observes how the oath that Nathan claims David swore (1:13) is missing from the earlier story, a piece of evidence that he believes raises the possibility that Nathan “fabricated [the oath] for the occasion.”\(^6\) In line with the position taken in chapter 4 of this

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4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 105.
study, Gunn suggests that the function of Nathan’s oath is to lead Bathsheba “into taking desperate measures,”
7 thus, Nathan is the one “who puts the words of the alleged promise in Bathsheba’s mouth.”
8 As this example demonstrates, for Gunn, the details of the narrative can be analysed to determine the hidden workings of the biblical characters.

J.P. Fokkelman, King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2)

In King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2), J.P. Fokkelman echoes Gunn’s assumption that an interpretive method must be tried and tested in its application. Fokkelman, who also does not define his method as narrative criticism, terms his study “[an] intrinsic study.”
9 This phrase conveys his belief that a reader must undertake interpretation in a way that allows the narratives to “speak fully for themselves,”
10 the method “grow[ing] and be[ing] filled in as the work progresses.”
11 If a reader does not adopt this approach, then, Fokkelman suggests, he/she “limits himself eo ipso and

7. Gunn, Story of King David, 105.
8. Ibid., 106.
9. J.P. Fokkelman, King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2) (vol 1. of Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 1. It is important to note that Fokkelman rejects the SN and argues against scholars such as von Rad, Whybray, Ridout, and the Tendenz critics, asserting that their work advances “drastic and simplistic distortions” of the biblical narratives (Fokkelman, King David, 418).
10. Fokkelman, King David, 3.
11. Ibid.
simultaneously furthers the reduction of his contact to cognitive aspects alone,”¹² which will negatively impact interpretation.

   It must be noted, however, that by saying that he is going to adopt what is akin to a non-method, Fokkelman is still adopting a method — his method is to read the texts without adopting any predefined interpretive assumptions, which echoes Gunn. However, while Gunn pays close attention to the narratives and his work is generally praised for this,¹³ at times Fokkelman reads too much into the texts, which undermines the strength of his interpretation. For example, in his discussion of 1 Kgs 2:15-16, Fokkelman argues, “Adonijah gripes about the injustice of fate and asks mummy for a sweet in compensation: he will be good if he obtains Abishag.”¹⁴ Although Fokkelman has, like Gunn, taken the narratives as a starting point for interpretation, his choice of language displays an undisciplined subjectivity, which, consequently, weakens his methodological claims.

   Despite this issue, some of Fokkelman’s comments are valuable. In comparison to his questionable interpretation of 2:15-16, he accurately focuses on how the narrator parallels words, such as “Bathsheba the mother of Solomon” with “Adonijah the son of Haggith” (1:11) to support his

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¹². Fokkelman, King David, 3.


¹⁴. Fokkelman, King David, 394.
argument, “[the] chiasmus [suggests] the eruption of a fierce political struggle [between the women].”\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, Fokkelman regularly discusses how these same narrative structures inform characters’ dialogue in 1 Kings 1-2, making it a useful resource here.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Jerome T. Walsh, 1 Kings}

In 1996, Jerome T. Walsh published his commentary on 1 Kings for the Berit Olam series.\textsuperscript{17} Walsh argues that many studies of 1 Kings tend to “take a historical approach both to the text and to the events the text describes.”\textsuperscript{18} Typically, scholars’ interest in “the sources the author used in composing his work […] the historical reliability of these sources and […] the composite work produced from them”\textsuperscript{19} leads them to rely on the historical critical methods. While Walsh values these scholars’ contributions to the field, his

\textsuperscript{15} Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 352.

\textsuperscript{16} Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 402. See, for example, Fokkelman’s discussion of the structure of Solomon’s words to Benaiah in 1 Kgs 2:31-34 (Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 401-403).

\textsuperscript{17} There are other commentaries that take more of a narrative approach but they will not be included here because they are not explicitly narrative critical. See Simon J. DeVries, \textit{1 Kings} (WBC 12; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003); Richard D. Nelson, \textit{First and Second Kings} (IBC; Louisville: WJK, 1987); Burke O. Long, \textit{1 Kings With an Introduction to Historical Literature} (FOTL 9; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).


\textsuperscript{19} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 376.
intention “is to focus strictly on the literary dimension of 1 Kings.”

For this reason, Walsh calls his commentary a “‘narrative’ commentary.”

Given his emphasis on the narratives, Walsh does not consider their “referential function as historical record or interpretation,” but their plot, point of view, characterisation, etc. Thus, Walsh comments on how the characters act and use their language, noting, for example, that Nathan frames his script to Bathsheba in 1:11-14 in order to “stir up David’s anger against Adonijah without endangering Bathsheba herself.” Nathan and the other characters are understood as having agency, a characteristic of the narrative approach. Importantly, this method leads Walsh to address issues such as textual development differently than a historical-critical scholar, making his commentary a useful point of reference here.

Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*

Robert Alter, in his *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, contends that the author of the SN knew the general outline of the

20. Walsh, *1 Kings*, xii.
21. Ibid., xiii.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., xvii-xxi.
24. Ibid., 11.
25. See, for example, Walsh’s argument concerning David’s speech in 1 Kgs 2:2-9 (Walsh, *1 Kings*, 37-39).
26. Although this title only references 1 and 2 Samuel, Alter also discusses 1 Kings 1-2.
historical events and the characters involved, but he shaped his account by using “his literary art in order to imagine deeply, and critically, the concrete moral and emotional predicaments of living in history.” With this assumption informing his work, Alter, like the scholars already noted, relies not on the historical-critical methods, but on narrative criticism. As Alter asserts, he is “an unrepentant literary critic” and it is from this perspective that he interprets the SN, “highlight[ing its] literary force.”

Because Alter is writing a commentary to his translation of the SN, he makes some historical-critical comments but, in line with his literary interests, he primarily discusses the narratives as a story wherein the characters act to achieve particular ends in the plot. For example, Alter observes Nathan’s self-emphasis in 1 Kgs 1:26 (אני-עבדך עלי), which he interprets as a sign that Nathan is “taking pains, in righteous indignation as prophet to the throne, to highlight his own exclusion.” Alter has, then, taken the details of the narrative and used them to support his conclusions regarding how Nathan is acting as a biblical character.


28. Ibid., xxxiv.

29. See, for example, Alter’s redactional comments on 1 Kgs 2:3-4 (Alter, *David Story*, 374-375).

One of the most recent Kings’ commentaries to adopt a narrative approach is Hens-Piazza’s *1-2 Kings*. In this piece, Hens-Piazza offers not only a literary analysis but also historical and theological/ethical analyses because, as she notes, “the interlacing historical, literary, and theological features of these books qualify 1 and 2 Kings as a unique and eclectic accomplishment.”

Focusing on her narrative analyses, Hens-Piazza relies on the narrative features as her primary source of evidence to discuss how characters use their language (e.g. in reference to 1 Kgs 1:11-31 she notes, in line with Gunn and Alter, that Nathan “rhetorically crafts his speech”) and to explore how the narrative connections between 1-2 Kings and other parts of the Hebrew Bible inform the books’ meaning.

Scholars also adopt narrative focused approaches as they write shorter articles that consider specific topics relating to 1 Kings 1-2. While many of these pieces will be referenced throughout this study, the one that must be included here is Joyce Willis, Andrew Pleffer, and Stephen Llewelyn’s,


32. Ibid., 17.

“Conversation in the Succession Narrative of Solomon.” In comparison to the works reviewed above, Willis et al. focus on 1 Kings 1-2 specifically, adopting narrative criticism to engage with characters’ dialogue.34 These two aspects of their paper make it particularly relevant for this study.

Willis et al. observe that 1 Kings 1-2 contains “29% (narrative) and 71% (dialogue)35 and it is through the dialogue that the storyteller’s ideological perspective is conveyed. The scholars argue that the SN was originally composed by a party opposed to the Davidic monarchy and, especially, Solomon. While the narrative portrays David’s decision that Solomon become king as justified by YHWH, the characters’ private conversations point instead to an underlying anti-Davidic and anti-Solomonic voice. Therefore, although the narrative, on the surface, appears to “justify the position of Solomon as the rightful heir of David and the true king of Israel and Judah [...] the negative portrayal of the tradition still lingers close to the surface.”36

One can catch a glimpse of this negative tradition in 1:11-31, when Nathan speaks to Bathsheba of David’s alleged oath to make Solomon king.37 This series of conversations forces the reader to question whether Solomon

34. Willis et al. do not explicitly define their method but, because they refer to Alter and Bar-Efrat (see below), it is clear that they are taking a narrative approach (Joyce Willis, Andrew Pleffer, and Stephen Llewelyn, “Conversation in the Succession Narrative of Solomon,” VT 61 [2011]: 135).
36. Ibid., 147.
37. Ibid., 137.
becomes king because he was chosen by YHWH or because Nathan and Bathsheba “hoodwinked David.” The latter possibility is supported by the characters’ conversations, which add to the narrative a negative portrayal of Solomon’s rise to the throne.

Summary

While the scholars reviewed in chapter 1 turn to the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2 as they advance their arguments regarding either the character or the rhetoric of the SN as a whole, those reviewed in this chapter are particularly interested in the narrative features and adopt narrative criticism as their primary interpretive approach. These scholars set a precedent for and will be useful dialogue partners with the current work, which also has a narrative emphasis.

It must be noted that even though Gunn and Fokkelman describe their approach as developing through their interaction with the texts, Walsh, Hens-Piazza, and Alter speak of narrative criticism and assume that their readers understand the terminology. Uniformly, these scholars use narrative criticism to imply that they will not adopt the historical-critical methods and that they will focus on the narratives’ literary features; however, narrative criticism brings with it a complex set of interpretive assumptions that shape the evidence that is either excluded from or included in the discussion. To

38. Willis et al., “Conversation,” 144.
establish the parameters of the method for this study, it is useful to refer to the works of scholars writing on biblical narrative criticism and to engage critically with what they say about the method and its application.

c. Narrative Criticism: Interpretive Assumptions Shaping This Study

Narrative criticism draws from secular literary criticism to interpret the Hebrew Bible as a literary work in which its aesthetic features — plot, characterisation, point of view, language play, etc. — become the locus for meaning making.\(^{39}\) As Shimon Bar-Efrat argues, following the “trend in the study of literature today,” narrative criticism entails directing one’s attention towards the narratives’ “modes of design, types of narration and other matters connected with the shape of the narratives.”\(^{40}\) Similarly, Alter describes narrative criticism as highlighting “the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else.”\(^{41}\)

While interpreting the Bible as literature is common for biblical narrative critics, John Barton raises an important issue. Barton argues, “Old Testament literature [...] is traditional literature, often anonymous, and


making no claims to originality [which] already means that much of it is very different from what we normally call ‘literature.’”\textsuperscript{42} In this quote, Barton is rightly drawing attention to the fact that the Hebrew Bible does not contain literature that is synonymous with modern conceptions of literature. If one accepts Barton’s position, then it is also somewhat contentious to apply to the Hebrew Bible tools that have been developed to interpret contemporary literature, which is precisely what narrative critics do. Nevertheless, to understand how invocations of YHWH work in 1 Kings 1-2, narrative criticism is the most useful approach, as will be demonstrated below. Thus, while I agree with Barton that “‘literature’ is not the most suitable description of the Hebrew Bible,”\textsuperscript{43} I also recognise that the tools of narrative critics, even if they interpret the Bible through the lens of contemporary literature, are particularly well suited for answering the research questions at the heart of this study.

\textit{Narrative Criticism and History}

Narrative criticism approaches the biblical texts in a way that is distinct from historical criticism. For example, \textit{Literarkritik} (literary criticism) is a historical critical approach that considers “the \textit{history} of the biblical literature” by looking at how the stylistic and/or ideological differences

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\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
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between verses and/or passages point to the various source layers that combined to form the final text. Narrative criticism, however, “focus[es] on the finished form of the text [and] emphasizes the unity of the text as a whole.”

Even if narrative critics might not discuss the historical development of the narratives, they must still contend with the signs of redaction in them. For Alter, the contradictions in a narrative that often beckon practitioners of Literarkritik to pull it apart into its layers, for narrative critics “might usefully be conceived as the final stage in the process of artistic creation that produced biblical narratives.” According to Alter, the final historical author/redactor did not try to erase the tension between his source layers, but integrated it into his story; thereby, demonstrating his artistry.

Meir Sternberg outlines a slightly different understanding of the relationship between narrative criticism and Literarkritik in his, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading. According to Sternberg, the general trend in narrative criticism away from engagement with textual development has led to the existence of an “unhappy symmetry” between it and Literarkritik. Sternberg suggests that narrative

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45. Mark Allan Powell, What is Narrative Criticism? (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 7 (italics in original).

46. Alter, Art, 165.

47. Ibid., 182.

48. Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of
criticism’s assumption that it has “no truck with textual prehistory” likely stems from the fact that narrative critics see Literarkritik as a method that rests on “grandiose theories of organization [that scholars pit] against one another on the evidential equivalent of the head of a pin.”\(^{49}\) For this reason, narrative critics react against Literarkritik by choosing “extreme holism,”\(^{50}\) which leads them to neglect its contributions to the field.

In discussing this issue, Sternberg proposes that biblical criticism falls into two camps: source oriented and discourse oriented analyses. In source oriented analysis, which aligns with Literarkritik, scholars examine the world behind the text and the sources that went into creating the text as we have it today.\(^{51}\) Discourse oriented analysis has much in common with narrative criticism, in that it looks not at the world behind the text, but the world within the text, asking how the narratives’ features convey the author’s message to his audience.\(^{52}\)

By having an “awareness of the composite nature” of the biblical narratives, scholars might determine which aspects of the text are due to the source and how the author modified his sources for his discourse.\(^{53}\) Thus,

\(^{49}\) Sternberg, Poetics, 11.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 15.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

readers need to “maintain a balance between these two frames of reference”\(^5\) if they wish to make sense of a text. For example, Sternberg notes how “Saul’s two rejections by God [likely] originated in different sources”; however, by stringing them together the author “heighten[s] our sense of the redundancy or conflict,” an aspect of the narrative’s discourse.\(^5\) Therefore, Sternberg concludes that source oriented and discourse oriented analysis must “join forces within each and every inquiry”\(^\) by bringing information regarding sources together with narrative insights, the sources can enlighten the discourse’s meaning. Thus, “[l]iterary’ approaches have nothing to fear, and occasionally something to learn, from genetic criticism as such, that is, in its source-directed role as an inquiry into the historical processes of composition.”\(^\)\(^\)\(^\)

While there is merit in Sternberg’s argument, it is not relevant for answering the research questions shaping this study. Because this study is looking at how invocations of YHWH function in the narrative alone, it is not necessary to discuss whether they originated from different sources or how they may have fit the author’s writing strategy/discourse. This study will, then, adopt a final form reading that interprets contradictions in the narrative on the basis of how they function within the unfolding storyline.

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56. Ibid., 17.
57. Ibid., 22.
With this being said, however, it remains necessary to establish the text to which I will refer. In this study, I will read with the Leningrad Codex because it “is the oldest and most complete manuscript of the [Masoretic Text] of the [Hebrew Bible]” and because it is the text of the BHS. Textual issues will be discussed when they relate to the current argument (e.g. I will examine the textual issue in 2:29, because it contains an invocation of YHWH; see chapter 8).

Narrative critics also tend to approach the actual historical value of the biblical texts differently than some of the more historically inclined scholars. The issue of textual historicity has long been discussed and has led scholars to distinguish between those espousing to either a high (maximalist) view, which assumes that the narratives “reconstruct the life and thought of biblical times [which might be accessed] through an objective, scientific analysis,” or a low (minimalist) view, which assumes


59. For a discussion of some of the features of a historical approach see Barton, “Reading the Bible,” 138.


that the Hebrew Bible is a piece of fiction that has little to no historical value.  

While the maximalist approach is noted in Fokkelman’s *King David*, in that he “see[s] it as being highly probable that the [...] David as it is given to us [in the SN...] is an accurate portrayal of the historical David,” most narrative critics tend towards a minimalist approach. As Alter articulates, from a narrative critical perspective, “[narrative] events are concretely realized through the technical resources of prose fiction.” Thus, contra Fokkelman, narrative critics accept that,

> [w]e know nothing whatsoever about the real nature of biblical characters, and we have no way of examining how accurately they are represented in biblical narrative [...] We cannot tell, for example, if the way David is portrayed in the book of Samuel and at the beginning of the book of Kings, is a more or less faithful description of David as he really was.

On the relationship between history and the Hebrew Bible, Barton argues that the authors of the biblical narratives likely knew the difference between fact and fiction and could have been intending to convey factual


63. Fokkelman, *King David*, 424.

64. Alter, *Art*, 47.

information, but they did so while being “almost certainly aware [that they were] writing fiction.” This means that while history writing might be viewed in today’s world as “bald chronicling,” ancient writers adopted “‘novel-like’ characterization and dialogue” to convey history. Therefore, aspects of the narratives, such as its dialogue, do not need to “be read obliquely, as imitations of what characters in the story might have said [...but the] reader is meant to take them seriously as statement of theological truth, not merely to entertain them as fictive, ‘in character’ utterances.”

Following Alter, Barton, and others, this study will assume that the Hebrew Bible reflects history but does so through the lens of narrative forms. The Hebrew Bible was, then, creatively shaped by writers who “knew of the portentous historical events [and who] created this most searching story of men and women in the rapid and dangerous current of

67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., 151-152.
70. As noted in chapter 1, Rost advances a similar argument (Leonhard Rost, The Succession to the Throne of David [trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982], 104). Furthermore, many of the other scholars reviewed in chapter 1 also observed the creativity employed by the author of the SN in writing his history.
Thus, this study has more in common with minimalism than maximalism.

While aligning with minimalism might suggest that this study will avoid historical considerations, this kind of information must still be included. Amelia Devin Freedman observes, “[the narratives in the Hebrew Bible] bear the marks of the particular times and places in which they were produced. Thus, a sense of the culture out of which a certain biblical text came is important to understanding it historically.”

Although Freedman is addressing the importance of being attuned to how different textual layers contain the marks of different historical periods, she usefully emphasises that an interpreter must account for the fact that the Hebrew Bible is the product of another world which it implicitly reflects and which can only be understood by taking into account what is known of that world.

On this issue, Paula M. McNutt argues that the biblical narratives are “models or constructs of reality,” which implies that they cannot be “fully understood apart from [the socio-political realities]” that have contributed to their form. Because today’s context is so far removed from the realities

71. Alter, David Story, xxiv (italics mine). According to Maly, “we must remember that the ancient authors interpreted history as they wrote it, and their artistic methodology is a frequent clue to their interpretation” (Eugene H. Maly, The World of David and Solomon [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966], 109 (italics in original)).

72. Freedman, God as an Absent Character, 29.


74. McNutt, Reconstructing, 3.
assumed in the texts, interpreters do not have the lived experience to infer them by engaging with the narratives alone.\textsuperscript{75} Interpreters must, then, supplement analysis by referring to the results of fields such as “sociology, anthropology, geography, economics, archaeology and history,” which shed light on concepts that appear in the Hebrew Bible and which were culturally conditioned.\textsuperscript{76} Therefore, this study will look beyond 1 Kings 1-2 to discussions of the ancient world, whenever a concept appears that cannot be understood on the basis of the narratives alone.

\textit{Narrative Criticism, Authors and Readers}

A narrative critical approach to the Hebrew Bible is not only distinct from the historical approaches, but also from narrative criticism as it is often practiced by those working with the New Testament. According to Mark Allan Powell, New Testament narrative criticism can be seen as “an eclectic discipline that borrows from a number of areas, including rhetorical criticism, structuralism, and reader-response criticism,”\textsuperscript{77} often being adopted “to determine the effects of stories on their implied readers.”\textsuperscript{78} In contrast, Hebrew Bible narrative critics do not necessarily bring together

\begin{flushleft}75. Powell, \textit{What is Narrative Criticism}, 74.\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}76. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, \textit{Reading the Historical Books: A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text} (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 5.\end{flushleft}


\begin{flushleft}78. Ibid., 241.\end{flushleft}
diverse methods or engage with the interaction between the text and the reader. In this study, the analysis will be limited to the details within the texts, focusing on, as noted above, their literary features (e.g. plot, characterisation, etc.).

Narrative critics also tend to avoid interpreting the Bible as if it is a portal into the psychological motivations of the historical authors.79 While this topic occupied critics of the Romantic Movement, who assumed that knowledge of the author’s “identity, circumstance, and intentions” was necessary for understanding any piece of literature,80 New Criticism “rejected the notion that background information holds the interpretive key to a text.”81 For New Critics, a piece of literature was seen as an artefact that stood independently of the historical author and could not be interpreted as a cipher to determining the thoughts and/or emotions that informed his work.82

81. Powell, What is Narrative Criticism, 4; Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” 171.
Regarding authorial intent, Sternberg observes that the concern for biblical interpreters “is with ‘embodied’ or ‘objectified’ intention.” As noted, Sternberg assumes that the historical author intentionally shaped his narrative to communicate with his audience, which means that the narratives act as “a network of clues to the speaker’s intention.” By adopting this perspective, intent is no longer related, as it was for the Romantics, to a discussion of the author’s psychological background that is reflected through his work, but it becomes “a shorthand for a structure of meaning and effect supported by the conventions that the text appeals to or devises: for the sense that the language makes in terms of the communicative context as a whole.”

Both the audience-text dynamic, which figures in Sternberg’s discussion, and authorial intent will not be engaged here because this study is not interested in determining either what the author intended to communicate to his audience with his invocations or why the author used invocations in one way and not another. This study will assume “that all suggestions about a text’s meaning [should be] justified in terms of features

83. Sternberg, Poetics, 9.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., 9.
86. As Barton highlights, it is anachronistic to attempt to determine the meaning of a biblical text by asking about the author’s intentions or interests (Barton, “Reading the Bible,” 145).
within the text as read by a modern reader, questions of the author’s intention, even of the author’s possible intention, are irrelevant.”\textsuperscript{87}

Because authorial intent will not be discussed, a distinction must be made between the historical author, implied author, and the narrator. The historical author was the person(s) who wrote the work during a specific time period and who was influenced by both external factors, such as his context, and internal factors, such as his psychological state. The implied author is the “implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes,” who is imagined by readers as they interact with the texts.\textsuperscript{88} Finally, the narrator is the voice that tells the story, being either dramatised, if he refers to himself using ‘I’, or undramatised, if the story is told as if it is “unmediated.”\textsuperscript{89}

In biblical studies, the implied author and narrator merge but remain distinct from the historical author.\textsuperscript{90} The historical author is, by adopting a New Critical lens, not accessible through the narratives and, then, one must speak of the implied author/narrator. Throughout this study the “‘narrator’ [will] refer to the master of the tale in general.”\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{87} Barton, “Reading the Bible,” 138 (italics in original).


\textsuperscript{89} Booth, \textit{Rhetoric}, 151-152.

\textsuperscript{90} Sternberg, \textit{Poetics}, 75; Gunn, \textit{David Story}, 88.

\textsuperscript{91} Sternberg, \textit{Poetics}, 75.
d. Narrative Criticism: Dialogue, Characterisation, and Plot

As noted in chapter 1, this study will assess how invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2 are used by both the characters and the narrator and the events in the plot that prompt or result from this language. In so doing, it will demonstrate that invocations of YHWH have many functions in 1 Kings 1-2, with the function of character’s invocations being particularly dependent on their identities, their relationships, and the narrative contexts (i.e. events in the plot) in which they participate. With these specific interests, this study will engage primarily with three narrative features in 1 Kings 1-2: characters’ dialogue (where the majority of invocations are found), characterisation, and plot.92

Both Rost and Whybray address the importance of these three narrative features in their early works on the SN. According to Rost, the narrator’s style in both the Ark and Succession Narratives includes the “weav[ing of] speeches [...] as a means of enlivening his story.”93 Rost argues that characters’ language not only plays a role in relation to the characters themselves, with the narrator using their speech to allow them “to express moods”94 or “to hint occasionally at some [of their] isolated

92. This study is not an exhaustive narrative critical assessment of 1 Kings 1-2. Only those narrative features that are most useful for understanding invocations of YHWH will be examined in detail (e.g. plot, characterisation, dialogue) and those that are less useful will not (e.g. time of narration and point of view).

93. Rost, Succession to the Throne, 16.

94. Ibid., 16, 19.
characteristics,” but also the narrator intertwines their speech with the plot. Rost comments, “the importance allotted to words, to speech [...] the spoken word appears at climaxes in the narrative or at important turning points.” For Rost, speeches have “a scene-building capacity” because the narrator often focuses on characters speaking with each other, “structuring [...] the scenes around [their] dialogue.” Whybray also states that the SN is like “no other Old Testament narrative [because] the effectiveness of the stories depend so completely on dialogue,” which not only reveals “character [but also] often bears the whole weight of the action.”

Turning to the writings of narrative critics, it is clear that both Rost’s and Whybray’s assumption that character dialogue shapes both characterisation and plot is accurate. In this section, the observations of narrative critics regarding these three features will be outlined to set the

95. Rost, *Succession to the Throne*, 19.

96. Ibid., 16, 62.

97. Rost, *Succession to the Throne*, 96. Alter similarly comments that the SN reveals the biblical author’s “ear for dialogue, for the contrastive treatment of the two interlocutors in a particular dialogue” (Alter, *David Story*, xxiii). See also Ridout, who observes the “remarkable dialogues [in the SN] to which our attention is attracted” (George P. Ridout, “Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam. 7, 9-20; 1 Kings 1-2)” [PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1971], 15).


foundation for analysing 1 Kings 1-2; however, these observations will also
be developed to make them better suited for this study.100

*Dialogue and Characterisation*

In the Hebrew Bible, the narrator conveys characters by adopting what Alter
terms “the art of reticence.”101 Rather than providing lengthy descriptions of
a character’s appearance, his/her family history, or describing his/her moral
attributes, the biblical narrator uses few words to bring his characters to life.

Biblical characterisation might be achieved through either direct or
indirect means, with direct characterisation being “provided by the narrator
or by one of the persons in the story [and] indirect characterization [being]
the product of an analysis of the persona’s discourse and his/her actions and
conduct.”102 In line with Rost’s and Whybray’s comments, speech is a means
through which the narrator indirectly characterises his actors. In fact, as
Alter observes, in the Hebrew Bible narration plays a “highly subsidiary

100. It is possible to study characters’ speech by adopting sociolinguistics, conversation
analysis, or discourse analysis, as Victor H. Matthews outlines in *More Than Meets the Ear:
Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
2008). According to Matthews, these methods bring characters’ speech “off the page and
breathe life into the social world that created them” (Matthews, *More Than Meets the Ear*, 1).
While these methods are useful and can help interpreters better understand the social
nuances of characters’ conversations, they are driven by sociological questions that are not
central to this study and, for this reason, they will not be adopted here. See also Frank H.
this study Polak draws from sociolinguistics to demonstrate how characters’ dialogue
reflects their social positions.


102. Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns,
1994), 74.
role” in comparison “to direct speech by the characters,” a style of narration that he calls, “narration-through-dialogue.”

When the biblical narrator has characters speak he reveals a lot about who they are both as individuals and in relation to each other. As Alex Preminger and Edward Greenstein argue, “[when characters speak they] live [...] There is no need for the narrator to tell us what the people are like. Their own words reveal it.” Adele Berlin also suggests that conversation in the Hebrew Bible is “the most dramatic way of conveying the characters’ internal psychological and ideological points of view.” Finally, Bar-Efrat posits, “conversations serve to illuminate the human aspect, revealing such psychological features as motives and intentions, points of view and approaches, attitudes and reactions.” Thus, instead of the narrator directly providing information about his characters, he has his characters speak, their language revealing who they are.

103. Alter, Art, 81.
104. Ibid., 87.
106. Berlin, Poetics, 64. Gunn also asserts, “[w]hat characters say and how they say it tells us much about the kind of people they are” (Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” 224). For more information on the intersection between speech and characterisation see Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art, 64-86.
107. Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art, 147.
Moreover, it is through language, specifically what characters “repeat, report, or distort of the speech of others,”\textsuperscript{108} that the audience gets a glimpse into how a character interprets another character and the often unexpressed nuances of their relationships. Returning to Alter, he states that characters’ language, “register[s] the subtle interplay between them and express[es] the nature of their individual character. Speech is thus conceived as the arena of complex social, psychological, and sometimes political negotiation.”\textsuperscript{109}

It is important to note, however, that because the narrator uses speech for characterisation, he “has allowed, even compelled, readers to imagine, to speculate, to psychologize about what makes these people tick.”\textsuperscript{110}

In reference to David’s character, Hugh S. Pyper helpfully observes,

David is just a set of black marks on white paper [..a]ny questions of motivation for a literary character arises from a complex process involving the creation of a sophisticated virtual entity in front of the text of which questions of motivation and psychological state can be asked, built on tacit assumptions about the coherence of speech and action, language and mental state.\textsuperscript{111}

Although Pyper is writing specifically in reference to David’s emotions as he reacts to the death of his infant son (2 Sam 12:15-23), his

\textsuperscript{108} Alter, Art, 96.

\textsuperscript{109} Alter, Art, 90. For more on how dialogue expresses the social negotiation between characters see Polak, “The Style of the Dialogue,” 53-95.


\textsuperscript{111} Hugh S. Pyper, “Reading David’s Mind: Inference, Emotion and the Limits of Language,” in Sense and Sensibility: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll (JSOTSup 348; ed. Alastair G. Hunter and Phillip R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 75.
words are also relevant for interpreting characters and their dialogue in 1 Kings 1-2. By using characters’ language for characterisation, the narrator creates gaps in the narrative that readers fill as they attempt to understand the characters. However, as readers use a character’s speech to “infer a character’s emotions and feelings,” for example, they “need to be aware of what they may be assuming.”112 In other words, readers need to ensure that what they conclude about a character is based not on their own assumptions, but on what is actually found in the text. This is especially important because questions regarding characters’ emotions were not in the texts’ “conceptual universe”113 and were not, then, of the same importance for their original audience as they may be for contemporary readers.

It must also be noted that characters “cannot always be relied upon since characters in biblical narrative, mimicking real life, speak to specific occasions and convey only limited human viewpoints, frequently prejudiced and self-serving.”114 For this reason, interpreters must employ a “hermeneutic of suspicion” when engaging with characters’ dialogue, critically assessing what they say rather than accepting everything at face

112. Pyper, “Reading,” 77.
113. Ibid.
114. Gunn and Fewell, Narrative, 69.
value. Both of the above issues will inform every interpretation of a characters’ motivation or use of language advanced in this study.

Dialogue and Plot

The plot is integral to the narrator’s ability to tell an effective story and is composed of subunits or episodes that are ordered in a linear fashion to create “a meaningful chain of interconnected events.” Because readers go to a text and assume that the parts relate and that the story will have a clear ending, the narrator can manipulate his story to build and/or challenge a reader’s expectations, creating suspense or narrative gaps that force the reader “to chart a course [...] connecting events [...] in a way that makes the most sense.” By arranging his material to achieve any of these goals, the narrator imbuces the subunits of the plot with significance that depends on their place in the structure.

According to Bar-Efrat, “conversations are a vehicle for the development of the plot, since they do not usually convey thought and contemplation but deal rather with actions, generally focusing on the future. They are often concerned with plans and aspirations or with attempts to

115. Provan, “Why Barzillai of Gilead,” 108. It must be noted that Provan is specifically speaking of “authorial intent,” which will not be engaged here. His observations regarding the necessity of approaching the Hebrew Bible with suspicion to understand the author’s intent is also useful for interpreting characters’ language.


117. Gunn and Fewell, Narrative, 102.
persuade and influence.” Conversations are central to plot development, being used not only to move the plot forward, but also to slow narrative time, which, consequently, emphasises the conversation.

Within a narrative, the elements of the plot create a context for the conversation that necessarily informs its form and function. As Gunn asserts,

if we play close attention to the context of a character’s speech, the circumstances in which the speech takes place, we can better decide what to make of it. Biblical characters may be seen as bending their speech to their context, speaking obliquely rather than straightforwardly, or simply lying, no less than people in ‘real’ life.

Thus, the meaning of characters’ dialogue can only be determined by assessing how it relates both to what has already occurred and to what will occur in the plot.

Finally, the narrator often shapes conversations using repetition. By either repeating exactly or offering a near repetition of details from the plot in speech, the narrator connects “what otherwise seem [to be] extraneous plot elements.” These connections allow the narrator to contrast or align

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passages so that they might “provide moral and psychological commentary on each other.”

Interpreting Invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2

While dialogue contributes to both characterisation and plot, the above outline does not suggest how the function of dialogue might be extracted from these features. In other words, accepting that dialogue plays a role in characterisation and plot, how might characterisation and plot shape an analysis of dialogue, specifically invocations of YHWH?

When characters invoke YHWH it is necessary to consider their past relationship, or lack thereof, with YHWH. For example, when David invokes YHWH in his oath to Bathsheba in 1 Kgs 1:29-30, all of his previous interactions with YHWH will shape the function of this language for him, but this is not the case when Bathsheba speaks about YHWH for the first time in her story in 1:17. If YHWH has been a part of a character’s life, he/she will use and react to the divine name differently than a character for whom YHWH has not been a part of his/her life.

Furthermore, because dialogue reveals information about the social nuances between characters, when a character speaks YHWH’s name to another character its function will relate to the particularities of their specific relationship. When Adonijah, who expected to become king (1:5-10)
and no longer has a role in the court (1:53), speaks about YHWH (2:15) as he makes a request of Bathsheba (2:17), who is occupying a position of privilege due to Solomon’s ascent (2:19), his lack of power in relation to Bathsheba will inform the function of his invocation. Overall, the characters’ identities, the past events in their lives, and what other characters say/do to them, are vital for making sense of why they might be speaking YHWH’s name and, consequently, the function of the invocation.

Moreover, interpreting the function of an invocation requires noting if the same character or, perhaps, another character has used this language earlier in the story and whether he/she will use it later. Again, when Bathsheba speaks about YHWH to David (1:17), David repeats this language when he makes his oath to her (1:29-30), which suggests that he has been influenced by her invocation (chapter 4).

Regarding the plot, as Gunn’s statement above makes clear, the specifics of the plot, such as the events that take place, the time in which they occur, and the “social circumstances in which its action occurs,”124 are necessary for understanding the function of a character’s invocation of YHWH. Not only might the events in the plot prompt a character to invoke YHWH, but also the invocation might create later ripples through the narrative that could impact other events. When Bathsheba invokes YHWH when speaking with David in 1:17, she uses this language to achieve her

own goal (to get David to make Solomon king). Significantly, her decision to speak YHWH’s name is informed by her knowledge of David’s past relationship with YHWH, and it impacts the later plot (it leads David to make Solomon king, 1:29-30).

e. Conclusion

The emphasis in this study on the narrative of 1 Kings 1-2 situates it alongside other narrative analyses of the chapters. By using narrative criticism as its primary approach, this study adopts a set of interpretive assumptions that shape the kinds of evidence that will be referenced to examine invocations of YHWH. Turning to the works of narrative-critics, they offer this study the tools for engaging with character dialogue, which plays an integral role in both characterisation and plot. However, assessing the function of invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2 requires accepting that dialogue can be interpreted not only as shaping characterisation and plot, but as shaped by characterisation and plot. By noting characters’ identities, their relationships, and the events that prompt them to speak an invocation, the function of this language in 1 Kings 1-2 might be assessed. In the following chapter, narrative criticism will be applied to the first group of verses under consideration, 1 Kgs 1:1-10.
Chapter 3
David’s Health and Adonijah’s Plan for the Throne
(1 Kgs 1:1-10)

a. Introduction

Although YHWH is not named in 1 Kgs 1:1-10, these verses require analysis because in them the narrator provides important background information necessary for understanding later scenes.

In 1:1-4, King David appears as an old man, an aspect of his characterisation that not only remains until his death in 2:10, but also prompts many events in the plot. To address the chill resulting from his aged condition, David’s servants hire Abishag the Shunammite to keep him warm. The nature of David and Abishag’s relationship is key to interpreting Adonijah’s request for her (2:17) and Solomon’s response (2:22-25, chapter 7).

Moreover, as noted at the start of this study, David’s age suggests his impending death, which leads Adonijah to proclaim that he will rule (1:5). While Adonijah has the support of some members of the court (1:7, 9), others are not associated with him, including both Nathan and Solomon (1:8, 10). This divide will inform both Nathan’s conversation with Bathsheba (1:11-14, chapter 4) and Adonijah and Solomon’s relationship that shapes the events in 1:49-53; 2:13-25 (chapters 5 and 7). Additionally, one must decide whether Adonijah’s actions amount to a coup against David, a
decision that colours the discussion of Nathan’s and Bathsheba’s words in 1:11-27 (chapter 4).

b. 1 Kgs 1:1-4, King David and Abishag

David’s Old Age

When the narrator describes David in 1:1-4, after he has portrayed him building altars and sacrificing to YHWH at the conclusion of 2 Samuel 24, it is clear that time has passed and David has changed. Even though the narrator refers to David in 1 Kgs 1:1 as “King David,” using a designation that emphasises his political role, he immediately states that David is “old and advanced in years and they [David’s servants] covered him in bedding but he was not able to warm himself” (1:1, my translation). Independently, זקן (“old”) and בימים בא (lit. “he came into the days,” meaning “advanced in years”1) suggest that David is old; however, by using the terms together, the narrator emphasises David’s agedness, a point he reiterates in 1:15 when he describes David as מאד זקן, “very old.”

Even so, these descriptions of David’s age remain somewhat ambiguous. In order to qualify David’s aged condition, the narrator notes his inability to stay warm as he lies under a pile of bedding (בגדים; 1:1).2 This

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1. cf. Gen 24:1, Josh 13:1; 23:1. For more on בימים בא see Sean McDonough, “‘And David was Old, Advanced in Years’: 2 Samuel XXIV 18-25, 1 Kings I 1, and Genesis XXIII-XXIV,” VT 49 (1999): 128-131.

2. Although בגדים is often translated as “garments,” in this verse it is referring to “bed-clothes” or “bedding” (Elna K. Solvang, A Woman’s Place is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and their Involvement in the House of David [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 139). See also C.F. Keil, The Books of Kings (BCOT; ed. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; trans. 68
image suggests that it is not for want of blankets that David cannot keep warm, but his body is incapable of warming itself.

Because David is under bedding, he must be in a bed in his room. In 1:15 the narrator explicitly states that David is in his מַלְכוּת, “the king’s private room,” where he is lying down because he is in the midst of being ministered to by Abishag. Also, in 1:48 David gives thanks to his servants for their words regarding Solomon’s accession by bowing on his bed. If David is in his bed in his private room in 1:1 and he is still there in 1:48, he never changes location as the narrative progresses. David is, then, characterised as being too weak to leave his bed, which contrasts him with Adonijah, who is exalting himself and feasting (1:5-10), and Bathsheba and Nathan, who move in and out of his room as they speak with him (1:11-31).

David’s inactivity is brought into greater relief by the fact that his servants deal with his physical condition by piling the bedding on top of him and finding Abishag to warm him when the bedding fails (1:1-3). As David lies in bed, he is the passive recipient of others’ actions: “things are done to [David], not by him.”

James Martin; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872), 17.
5. Solvang, Woman’s Place, 140.
6. Walsh, 1 Kings, 5-6, 8 (italics in original). See also J.P. Fokkelman, King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2) (vol 1. of Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full
When all of these details are brought together, it is clear that in 1 Kings David is no longer the man that he was in 2 Samuel. Instead of acting in the plot, David is now old, cold, lying in bed, and others are taking care of him.

The contrast between the David of Samuel and the David of Kings is also noted when the narrator states, “but the king did not know [Abishag]” (1 Kgs 1:4). This phrase “clearly describes sexual intimacy” and some scholars assert that it points to Abishag being a test of David’s virility, which would measure his ability to rule. When David does not have intercourse with Abishag in 1:4, he fails the test and this clarifies that he cannot continue as king.8

This interpretation often depends on connections between 1:1-4 and extra-biblical documents, which Russell L. Meek convincingly challenges in his paper, “The Abishag Episode: Reexamining the Role of Virility in 1 Kings 1:1-4 in Light of the Kirta Epic and the Sumerian Tale ‘The Old Man and the


Young Woman.” In this study, Meek adopts “Hallo’s contextual method” to compare and contrast 1 Kgs 1:1-4 with both the Kirta Epic and the Sumerian narrative, “The Old Man and the Young Woman,” demonstrating that while there are similarities between the stories, they are markedly dissimilar. For example, in “The Old Man and the Young Woman,” a man who is suffering the effects of old age seeks a king’s advice, whereas, in 1 Kgs 1:1-4 David is the king who is suffering because of his old age. On the basis of this and other observations, Meek concludes that it is “unlikely that 1 Kgs 1:1-4 is truly about David’s sexual competence.” Instead, he argues that the verses are intended to underscore David’s “inability to rule his kingdom effectively, which his servants attempt to address by reenergizing David with a beautiful young virgin.”

In addition to Meek’s challenge of the sexualised reading of 1:1-4, it also fails because Abishag’s role as David’s ס￠נות is not sexually conditioned. As discussed in detail below, Abishag is hired only to care for David’s physical and emotional needs; she is not hired to have intercourse with him.

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10. Ibid., 7.

11. Ibid., 12.

12. Ibid., 1.

13. Ibid.

14. Brueggemann argues, “[Abishag’s] presence in the narrative (and in the king’s bed) is
Nevertheless, the image of David not having intercourse with Abishag reinforces that he is no longer the powerful and active monarch that he was in the earlier narrative. Whereas David acted on his desire for women in 2 Samuel (e.g. 2 Samuel 11), in 1 Kings he is lying in bed with “the most beautiful young בתולה in Israel” and not even having intercourse with her.  

Therefore, 1 Kgs 1:1-4 establish that David has changed significantly from the man whom readers met in the books of Samuel. Instead of being characterised as acting in his kingdom and playing out his desires for women, in 1 Kings David has aged, his body is failing (he is cold and cannot have intercourse), he is confined to his bed, and he is being cared for by both his servants and Abishag.

The Identity of Abishag and her Relationship with David

David’s physical weakness leads to two plot developments: the search for Abishag and the rise of Adonijah. The details provided by the narrator regarding Abishag and her relationship with David in 1:1-4 will, as

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not simply as a hot water bottle. Her role rather is to arouse the king sexually” (Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 12). Given the details outlined above and the fact that Abishag’s role as 스כתת does not require her to have intercourse with David (see below), Brueggemann’s argument does not hold.

suggested above, play an important role in understanding Adonijah’s request for her and Solomon’s response in 2:13-25 (chapter 7).

To deal with David’s chill, his servants determine that he requires: “a נערה בתולה and let her stand before the king and let her be for him a nurse and she will lie in your [David’s] bosom and my lord, the king, will be warm” (1:2). This verse not only informs the identity of Abishag the Shunammite, the girl whom the servants find to care for David (1:3), but also defines the nature of her relationship with David.

The servants assert that they need a נערה בתולה to address the king’s ailment. Given that the servants search throughout Israel (1:3) to find someone with these qualities, a נערה בתולה must be rare, difficult to locate. While Maria Häusl suggests that נערה denotes “Feminität und Jugendlichkeit,” “femininity and youthfulness,”¹⁶ which aligns with BDB,¹⁷ understanding נערה בתולה is more complicated.

According to DeVries, because נערה בתולה appears alongside נערה, נערה בתולה should be translated as “virgin,”¹⁸ which also follows BDB.¹⁹ However, Maria Häusl, Abischag und Batscheba: Frauen am Königshof und die Thronfolge Davids im Zeugnis der Texte der 1 Kön 1 und 2 (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag Erzabtei, 1993), 243.


١٩ “בנתולה,” BDB, 655. Fokkelman also assumes that בתולה means virgin (Fokkelman, King David, 347).
Gordon J. Wenham posits that בתולה refers to a “‘girl of marriageable age,’ who may or may not be a virgin, depending on her circumstances.” Häusl also adopts this position, commenting that בתולה designates, “den Lebensabschnitt der Heiratsfähigkeit eine jungen Frau,” “the life stage of a marriageable young woman.” Tom Wadsworth, however, argues that in 1:2 Abishag is sought to fulfil a specific role for the king that is due to her “sexual ripeness” and must refer to a “distinctive person (or group) who, because of her innate condition or quality, receives special attention or fulfils a particular role.”

The entry for בתולה in TDOT states, “[o]ut of the 51 times that betulah occurs in the OT, 3 times it clearly means ‘virgin’ (Lev 21:13f; Dt 22:19; Ezek 44:22), and once it certainly does not [Joel 1:8].” On this basis, בתולה does not necessarily have to be translated as “virgin” in 1 Kgs

20. Gordon J. Wenham, “Betūlāḥ, ‘A Girl of Marriageable Age,’” VT 22 (1972): 326, 328. M. Tsevat, in his article for TDOT, notes that the Mesopotamian cognate batultu “means primarily a young marriageable woman. Only now and then do the Akkadian texts emphasize that it denotes a virgo intacta. Otherwise, ‘young (marriageable) girl’ always seems to be the translation necessitated by the context” (M. Tsevat, “בתולה, בתולה,” TDOT 2:339). Solvang follows Wenham and argues that בתולה “falls in a different category than concubines, prostitutes and defiled women. She is a marriageable woman” (Solvang, Woman’s Place, 141).


23. Ibid., 171.

24. Ibid., 162.

25. Tsevat, TDOT 2: 341. Bachman similarly observes that “virgin” is not an appropriate translation for בתולה in every context in which it appears in the Hebrew Bible (Bachman, “What is in a Name,” 245).
1:2 because this verse is not included as one of those where "clearly means 'virgin.'" This detail lends support to the translation of בנות as "girl of marriageable age," or, following Wadsworth, as a reference to a girl who is sexually ripe and this condition enables her to occupy a particular role.

While some scholars attempt to define בנות in a way that suits every context in which it appears in the Hebrew Bible, the above discussion makes clear the contentious nature of this task. Furthermore, determining to what extent� refers in 1:2 specifically is complicated by the fact that the servants do not explain why they require not only a נערה but also one that is a נערה (1:3), to act as David’s סمناسبة (his nurse/caregiver, see below). While some scholars suggest that, as David’s סمناسبة, the girl would offer direct healing to his old age and impotency because she is both young (נערה) and a virgin/sexually ripe (בתולה), which would necessitate that בתולה is translated in a way that relates to the girl’s sexual condition, as noted below, סمناسبة is not a sexualised term. Without further information, then, it is not possible to tell

26. Wadsworth, “Is there a Hebrew Word,” 162. נערה is also used in Deut 22:23, 28; Judg 21:12; Esth 2:2-3. Wadsworth discusses these passages, arguing that in Deuteronomy, נערה signifies that the noun is a “virgin,” because “the virginity of the girl is in question” (Wadsworth, “Is there a Hebrew Word,” 166). In Judges, נערה refers to those who belong to “a specific group within a city or nation whose state of affairs is often indicative of the city or nation as a whole (Wadsworth, “Is there a Hebrew Word,” 163). Finally, in Esther נערה signifies that a נערה belongs to “a special social group, having been individually selected and honored by induction into the royal harem” (Wadsworth, “Is there a Hebrew Word,” 169). Overall, Wadsworth demonstrates how בתולה cannot be translated in the same way in every passage in which it appears in the Hebrew Bible.

whether נערה בתולה in 1:2 refers to a who is of marriageable age, who is a virgin, or who is sexually ripe.

Rather than attempting to determine the precise meaning of בתולה in 1:2, it is more useful to consider its function in the verse, particularly what it contributes to Abishag’s characterisation. Although Abishag is a generic young woman נערה, בתולה narrows the scope of her character, marking her as someone who has a quality that sets her apart from other נערות. As noted, the servants’ comprehensive search for Abishag also characterises her as rare (1:3). This point is enhanced when she is described as “very beautiful” (1:4) — although the servants required a “beautiful” girl (1:3), Abishag exceeds this expectation and is, then, even more special. Therefore, while it is unclear to what בתולה refers exactly, by characterising Abishag as a נערה בתולה, the narrator establishes that she is not just any young woman, but she is a “‘One-of-her-Kind’ Woman,” the only person who not only fulfils, but also exceeds, what the servants require for the king.

Once the נערה בתולה is found the servants assert that they want her to be David’s סכנה, a term that shapes how she will relate to him. The noun סכנה is related to the verb סכן, “to be of use or service,” and is regularly


29. Sweeney, I & II Kings, 52. See also “סכן,” BDB, 698; Nili Sacher Fox, In the Service of the King: Officialdom in Ancient Israel and Judah (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), 178. Alter argues that סכן means “to become accustomed,” which he uses as the foundation for his translation of סכנה as “familiar” (Robert Alter, The David Story: A Translation With Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel [New York: W.W. Norton, 1999], 363).
translated as “nurse,” “aide,” or “attendant,” any of which are appropriate here. In opposition, Martin J. Mulder argues that סכן must mean something other than ‘nurse’ or ‘attendant’ as one finds it in most translations.” In reference to extra-biblical sources and the appearance of a related term סכן in relation to Shebna’s role in Isa 22:15, Mulder asserts that סכן refers to an “agent” or “deputy,” which aligns with his proposal that Abishag will replace Bathsheba who can no longer function as queen because of her age.

Against Mulder, there is no indication that Abishag will replace Bathsheba. Because Bathsheba has been absent from the narrative since 2 Sam 12:24 and does not reappear until 1 Kgs 1:11, she is not necessary for understanding Abishag’s role in this scene. Furthermore, Bathsheba’s actions in 1:11-31 do not characterise her as being too old to participate in the court.


32. Mulder, I Kings, 34.
but, if she were to be replaced, one of her co-wives, not a girl from outside the family, would be first in line to take over after her.\textsuperscript{33}

If Abishag will not replace Bathsheba, then it is also unlikely that she will function as an “agent” or “deputy” in the court, terms which suggest that she might hold a position similar to Shebna who, as per the narrator’s description, was על־הבית, “over the house” (Isa 22:15). This point also undermines Häusl’s assumption that as סכנת Abishag will occupy “ein Verwaltungsamt,” “an administrative office.”\textsuperscript{34}

Mercedes L. García Bachman’s analysis of סכנת usefully illustrates the problem with the administrative aspect of Mulder’s and Häusl’s arguments. According to Bachman, because so much is unknown about labour in ancient Israel, interpreters must be careful not to assume that when the narrator uses related terms to describe characters’ roles he is doing so because the roles are similar. Although Abishag’s and Shebna’s roles are both described using a form of סכנת, what they do is very different — Abishag lies in the king’s bed and warms him; Shebna was in charge of the monarch’s house.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, to understand Abishag’s role as סכנת, interpreters must refer to the rest of 1 Kgs

\textsuperscript{33} Solvang, \textit{Woman’s Place}, 143.

\textsuperscript{34} Häusl, \textit{Abischag und Batscheba}, 239-242, esp. 242.

\textsuperscript{35} Bachman, “What is in a Name,” 241. Bachman also discusses the verb служение in 1:4 to examine the role of the סכנת. This verb is used in reference to many different characters, including the Levites serving in the temple (Ezek 43:19), the mighty warriors serving the king (1 Chron 27:1, 28:1), the attendants in Esther (Esth 1:10), and Joshua serving Moses (Num 11:28; Josh 1:1). In consideration of these verses, Bachman concludes that the verb служение is not very useful for understanding סכנת because it is ambiguous, being used for different people, of different social statuses, and in relation to different types of work (Bachman, “What is in a Name,” 241-243).
1:2 and not Isa 22:15. When this is done, it is clear that, although Abishag has a measure of status in the court, she does not have an administrative position as Shebna had.36

In the rest of 1 Kgs 1:2, the servants outline the duties of the סכנת: she is to: 1) “stand before the king”; 2) “lie in David’s bosom.” The idiom, "and she will stand before,” carries the sense of “being at someone’s beck and call” and is used in reference to “courtiers (1 Kgs 10:8) [and] a prophet serving YHWH (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:15; 2 Kgs 3:14; 5:16).”37 Thus, the סכנת will act as something of a “female valet,”38 being available to deal with all of David’s needs.

The סכנת must also "and she will lie in [David’s] bosom.” On the surface, this duty seems laden with sexual connotations because it echoes the phrase “to lie with,” which is used throughout the Hebrew Bible in reference to sexual intercourse.39 Possibly, this is what accounts for Volkmar Fritz’s suggestion that it functions as “a euphemistic description for sexual intercourse [that] stresses the connection of vitality and sexual act.”40 However, what Fritz has overlooked is that by saying that

36. Sacher Fox, Service, 179.
37. Cogan, 1 Kings, 156.
38. DeVries, 1 Kings, 13. Sacher Fox argues, “[b]ased on context סכנת must mean something like ‘personal attendant’” (Sacher Fox, Service, 178).
40. Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 14.
the girl will lie in David’s bosom, the narrator is evoking a completely different image that has nothing to do with sexual intercourse.

To understand the meaning of “lie in his bosom” requires turning to 2 Samuel 12, where Nathan uses the phrase to describe the relationship between the man and his ewe lamb in his parable to David: “the lamb grew up with the man’s children, ate of his food, drank from his cup, lay in his bosom (תָּשַׁכֵּב), and was to him as a daughter” (2 Sam 12:3). Although Nathan is implying that the man is Uriah and the ewe is his wife Bathsheba, he does not refer to the sexual nature of their relationship but their emotional intimacy, which he likens to that which exists between a father and daughter. If this passage is used to interpret how Abishag and David will relate, with Abishag being the ewe who lies in David’s bosom, then their relationship will also function on a personal, paternal, level. Solvang clearly articulates this interpretation of the image: “[it] is one of intimacy [...] a metaphor for a family member in Nathan’s parable (2 Sam 12.3). The servants seek a woman who can get close enough to warm David’s body, but they are also suggesting someone to get close to David’s heart.”

41. Solvang, Woman’s Place, 141-142. See also Randy McCracken, Family Portraits: Character Studies in 1 and 2 Samuel (Bloomington: Westbow Press, 2013), 244; Alter, David Story, 363; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 14. Bachman describes Abishag’s position as that of a “stewardess” in order to avoid any implication that she is hired for “sexual or bed services” (Bachman, “What is in a Name,” 252).
Therefore, as David’s סכנת, Abishag will care for all of his ailments. She will lie in his bed and, in so doing, she will address his chill by acting as his “human heater”\textsuperscript{42} or “bed-warmer”\textsuperscript{43}; however, she will also offer him emotional care. Because of the nature of these duties, it is acceptable to conclude that סכנת denotes Abishag’s role as David’s nurse/caregiver.

It is important to pause and note the gravity of this role and its impact on Abishag. As M. Heltzer points out, “[h]er direct service to the king shows that she was in a relatively privileged position at the court.”\textsuperscript{44} While Abishag’s uniqueness, due to her being a בתולה נערה and עד־מאד יפה, establishes that she is not just any nurse, she is also not taking care of “any feeble old man or woman who cannot keep her/himself warm.”\textsuperscript{45} Instead, she is coming into close contact with the king and her innate qualities have endowed her with this important responsibility. She is, then, someone who would have status in the court that would have been higher than that of the regular household servants.\textsuperscript{46}

It bears repeating that as the narrator implies in his description of Abishag’s duties (1 Kgs 1:2) and states outright in 1:4, David and Abishag do

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{42} Sara M. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba? A Study in Characterization (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 83.

\textsuperscript{43} Solvang, Woman’s Place, 140.

\textsuperscript{44} Heltzer, “The Neo-Assyrian Šakintu,” 89.

\textsuperscript{45} Bachman, “What is in a Name,” 248.

\textsuperscript{46} Sacher Fox, Service, 179; Bachman, “What is in a Name,” 248; Heltzer, “The Neo-Assyrian Šakintu,” 89.
\end{flushright}
not have intercourse and she is not, then, a member of David’s harem. Both this detail and Abishag’s uniqueness will become important in the discussion of Adonijah’s request for her (2:17) in chapter 7.

c. 1 Kgs 1:5-10, Division in the Kingdom

Adonijah, David’s Eldest Son

Even with Abishag present to warm David's body and his servants there to pile blankets on top of him, David’s physical condition does not change. With David’s frailty implying that he is “not long for the world,” the narrator raises a serious political question: who will rule after David dies? With this question hanging in the air, the narrator transitions in 1:5 from David’s private chamber to the public realm where he introduces Adonijah.

47. Bachman, “What is in a Name,” 248; Noth, König, 14. Ishida incorrectly posits, “we may contend that though no intercourse occurred between David and her because of his impotence, she was certainly included among David’s concubines since her task was ‘to lie in the king’s bosom’” (Tomoo Ishida, “Adonijah the Son of Haggith And His Supporters: An Inquiry into Problems About History and Historiography,” in The Future of Biblical Studies: The Hebrew Scriptures [ed. Richard Elliott Friedman and H.G.M. Williamson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 178).

48. Kalimi, “Rise of Solomon,” 10. It is interesting to note that Shunem, Abishag’s home, is the same village where Elisha healed the sick boy (2 Kgs 4:32-37). Although the boy’s becoming warm was a sign of Elisha restoring his life, Abishag does not bring warmth/life to David (Hess, “David and Abishag,” 433; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 13; Walsh, 1 Kings, 6).

49. Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC 8; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 87-88.


51. According to McKenzie, “[Adonijah] may even have been the one who engineered the Abishag test in the first place” (McKenzie, King David, 177). This argument finds no support in the narratives because Abishag was not a test of David’s ability to rule.
a character who will reappear at the end of 1 Kings 1 (1:41-53) and who will take an active role in 2:13-25.

Adonijah is described in 1:5 as the “son of Haggith.” He has been absent from the narrative since 2 Sam 3:4 where his name appears in a list of David’s sons and, with such a large amount of narrative space between that verse and 1 Kgs 1:5, it is noteworthy that the narrator does not associate him with David but with the obscure Haggith, who, like Adonijah, is also named in 2 Sam 3:4 and about whom the audience knows only that she is one of David’s wives. Although Haggith’s name will be important for the analysis of 1 Kgs 1:11-31 (chapter 4), at this point both it and Adonijah’s name create a narrative gap — an unfamiliar son of David with an unfamiliar mother is acting in the plot, but the narrator does not explain why.

In 1:6b the narrator adds a detail that is useful for filling this gap — וַאֲבֹלֶם אָבָּם אַחַר יַלְדוֹת וֶאֱתוֹ, “and she bore him [Adonijah] after Absalom.” According to 2 Sam 3:2-4, Absalom was David’s third son, being preceded by Amnon and Chileab. Both Absalom and Amnon have died (2 Samuel 13; 18) and Chileab is not mentioned after 3:3, which Martin Rehm takes as a sign that Chileab, “scheint früh gestorben zu sein,” “seems to have died young.”

52. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 85-86; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 90.

53. Martin Rehm, Das erste Buch der Könige: Ein Kommentar ([Würzburg]: Echter Verlag, 1979), 22. See also Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 15; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 17-18; Rice, Nations Under God, 8-9; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 90; Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 10; Eugene H. Maly, The World of David and Solomon (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966), 99; Keil, Books of Kings, 17. Cogan, however, does not assume that Chileab died as a child, noting
Therefore, all of Adonijah’s older brothers are dead, which means that he is now David’s eldest son.\footnote{Kalimi, “Rise of Solomon,” 12; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 13; DeVries, 1 Kings, 13; Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 15; Cogan, 1 Kings, 157; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 18; Walsh, 1 Kings, 6; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 24; Gray, I & II Kings, 79; Noth, Könige, 14.}

Adonijah’s position as David’s eldest is necessary for interpreting his words and actions in 1 Kgs 1:5: “Adonijah, son of Haggith, exalted himself saying ‘I, I will be king’ and he acquired for himself chariots, and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.” According to Tomoo Ishida, “[a]s for the order of succession, primogeniture was the basic principle [...] When the first-born was dead, the surviving eldest son had priority.”\footnote{Tomoo Ishida, Royal Dynasties of Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-Dynastic Ideology (BZA W 142; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 152. See also Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 15; DeVries, 1 Kings, 37; Keil, Books of Kings, 31.} On the basis of this argument, Adonijah is acting in the narrative because he is David’s eldest son and primogeniture dictates that he will rule the kingdom after David’s death.

While this argument makes sense, it fails in that there is insufficient evidence to support primogeniture as conditioning royal succession at this point in the history of the monarchy.\footnote{For a discussion of primogeniture in ancient Near Eastern societies see Frederick E. Greenspahn, When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible (Oxford: OUP, 1994), 69-74.} Given that the only king prior to David was Saul, and David is not related to him but still became king, it is not likely that the monarchy has established directives that will guarantee
that David's eldest son will automatically become king upon David's death. As many scholars assert, “[t]he dynasty in Israel was too young to have acquired a pattern of primogeniture.”

Instead, it is possible that Adonijah’s actions reflect not primogeniture, but a general cultural assumption that he, as the first born, is favoured to take the throne. As Adonijah states in 2:15, “all Israel expected [him] to reign.” Similarly, in 2:22 Solomon comments, “[a]sk for him [Adonijah] the kingdom as well! For he is my elder brother.”

Therefore, Adonijah’s actions in 1:5 do not reflect primogeniture (i.e. an established tradition), but a widespread expectation that he, as David’s eldest son, would become king. Once Solomon ascends instead of Adonijah (1:28-40), this expectation is overturned, which aligns this episode with others in the Hebrew Bible where youngest children triumph over eldest children.

57. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 90. See also McCracken, Family Portraits, 388, 394-395; Nelson, First and Second Kings, 16; Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 10; Gray, I & II Kings, 79-80; Noth, Könige, 15.

Adonijah’s Actions: A Coup or not a Coup?

In reference to Adonijah, the narrator describes that he מתרחב, “exalted” himself (1:5). While Sara M. Koenig argues that מתרחב indicates the “text’s disapproval of [Adonijah’s] actions” because it “connotes arrogance in other places where it is used,” Mulder argues, “the intended nuance of [מתנשא] definitely need not be unfavourable. Neither are we required here to immediately attach an unfavourable shade of meaning to the word.”

Deciding between whether מתרחב conveys a positive or negative appraisal of Adonijah depends on whether his actions are interpreted as a coup against David or not. When the narrative details are taken into account, there is little evidence to support the argument that Adonijah is attempting a coup, which means that מתרחב is not a negative term.

Those scholars who, like Koenig, contend that מתרחב carries negative force, base their interpretation on the connections that the narrator makes between Adonijah and Absalom. When the narrator describes Adonijah gathering chariots, horsemen, and fifty men to run before him (1:5), he recalls Absalom who also had these items (2 Sam 15:1). In 1 Kgs 1:6, the connection between the brothers is enhanced when the narrator not only

59. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 85.
60. Mulder, 1 Kings, 42.
names Absalom, but also notes that Adonijah is “of very good figure,” a quality attributed to Absalom (2 Sam 14:25). Furthermore, in this same verse, the narrator adds David’s reaction to Adonijah: "and his father had not grieved him at any time saying 'Why do you act thusly?'" When this verse is interpreted in light of David’s earlier dealings with his sons, it illustrates another connection between the brothers.

62 Alter, David Story, 364; Mulder, 1 Kings, 44; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 24; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 90; Noth, Könige, 15; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 72; Keil, Books of Kings, 18.

63. Ehrlich takes this half-verse as a sign that David had already designated Adonijah as his heir (Arnold B. Ehrlich, Josua, Richter, I. u. II. Samuelis [vol. 3 of Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914], 213), an argument also advanced by Marcus and Gray (David Marcus, “David the Deceiver and David the Dupe,” Prooftexts 6 [1986]: 166; Gray, 1 & 2 Kings, 81). However, just because David has not contested Adonijah’s actions it does not necessarily mean that he has decided that Adonijah will be king.

64. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 14; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 90.

65. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 90; Gray, 1 & 2 Kings, 81; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 72.

David is being influenced by the same emotions that he felt for Amnon and, most importantly, Absalom.

Finally, another connection between Absalom and Adonijah is found in 1:9-10 where Adonijah holds a feast. The verb זבח, which is often used in cultic contexts to refer to “slaughtering for sacrifice,”\textsuperscript{67} appears both in 1:9 and as part of the description of Absalom’s coronation feast in 2 Sam 15:11-12.\textsuperscript{68}

Overall, these parallels encourage readers to see Adonijah as “a second Absalom,” suggesting that Adonijah’s actions mirror those of his brother and he is also waging a coup.\textsuperscript{69} When Adonijah gathers horsemen, chariots, and runners, they signal him taking “a decisive step toward a rebellion by gathering a military force.”\textsuperscript{70} Furthermore, his feast might be interpreted as a “premature coronation.”\textsuperscript{71} In reference to these observations, when the narrator uses המתנשא he provides a negative assessment of Adonijah.

Despite the many connections between Adonijah and Absalom, there are more compelling reasons to argue that he is not attempting a coup and

\textsuperscript{67} Walsh, 1 Kings, 9. See also “זבח,” BDB, 256; Gray, 1 & 2 Kings, 82-83.

\textsuperscript{68} Rice, Nations Under God, 9; Gray, 1 & 2 Kings, 83; Keil, Books of Kings, 19.

\textsuperscript{69} Baruch Halpern, David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 396. See also McCracken, Family Portraits, 386-387.

\textsuperscript{70} Ishida, “Adonijah,” 173. See also Cogan, 1 Kings, 157.

\textsuperscript{71} House, 1, 2 Kings, 89. See also Alter, David Story, 365.
is not conveying the narrator’s disapproval. It is noteworthy that Adonijah speaks of his kingship using אמלך, an imperfect verb that means, “I will be king.” If Adonijah were waging a coup he would have said, “I am king,” which requires a perfect verb, as Nathan will use in 1 Kgs 1:11. Also, David is old and it makes little sense for Adonijah to risk a coup when all he has to do is wait for David to die, at which point he could more easily claim the throne. Moreover, Adonijah does not avail himself of the signs of royal investiture, such as the mule, trumpet, or the cry of the people (cf. 1:38-40), but he holds a private party with a few select men. Finally, whereas the sacrifice organised by Absalom was aimed at taking the throne (2 Sam 15:11-12), there is no reason to suspect that Adonijah has any ulterior motive because “feasts [sacrifices, זבח] were not unknown and, more importantly, there is no real evidence to show that this was an investiture procedure.” Significantly, when David outlines Solomon’s coronation in 1 Kgs 1:32-35 he does not include a sacrifice, which suggests that it was not necessary to make someone king. Adonijah’s sacrifice is likely not, then, a coronation, but “a celebration of solidarity with his followers.”

74. Whitelam, Just King, 150-151.
75. Whitelam, Just King, 151. See also David M. Gunn, “David and the Gift of the Kingdom (2 Sam 2-4, 9-20, 1 Kgs 1-2),” Semeia 3 (1975): 31.
76. Sweeney, 1 & II Kings, 54. See also Kalimi, “Solomon’s Rise,” 14; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 14; Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 13; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 17; Walsh, 1 Kings, 9; Nelson, First and Second Kings, 16; Ishida, “Adonijah,” 174; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 92; Marcus,
Extrapolating from these observations, the narrator might be contrasting, not aligning, Adonijah and Absalom to imply that Adonijah is not waging a coup against his father as his brother had. Although the people might have expected Adonijah to rule after David’s death, without primogeniture there was no guarantee that he would take up this position. With this being the first time that a monarch was dying on the throne, there would be a sense of uncertainty in the kingdom regarding who would succeed David, which fits the context of “a new dynasty and a culture with little monarchical experience and thus no accepted norms.” Adonijah’s actions would directly address this issue by showing everyone that he is prepared to replace David. Therefore, the narrator uses מַתְנָשֵׁא simply to describe what Adonijah is doing in 1:5-10 — he is in the process of elevating himself as he demonstrates his readiness to take up the position of king. When Nathan and Bathsheba interact, both with each other (1:11-14) and with David (1:16-21, 24-27), Adonijah’s actions will become the perfect fodder for their ruse: by reframing Adonijah’s actions as a coup, they increase the gravity of their words (chapter 4).
The Divided Kingdom

As Adonijah articulates his intention to address the uncertain future of Israel’s monarchy, in 1:7-10 the narrator introduces a complication by showing that not everyone supports him. In 1:7-8 Adonijah speaks with some people but not others, a divide that is reinforced in 1:9-10 when he invites only select men to his sacrifice. Significantly, these verses not only contain the first reference to Solomon in 1 Kings, but also they make sense of the political issues that divide the brothers.

To understand the political details reflected in 1:7-10 requires focusing on the identities of those either associated with or set against Adonijah. In 1:7, Adonijah confers with Joab, a military commander, and Abiathar, a member of the Israelite priesthood in Nob.80 Both of these men had been with David “since his outlaw days during the reign of King Saul, before David’s seven-year reign in Hebron and long before his conquest of Jerusalem,”81 which means that they represent the “pre-Jerusalemite tradition,”82 “the old guard,”83 being the “more conservative element”84 in

80. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 91-92; Gray, I & II Kings, 79.
81. Walsh, 1 Kings, 8. See also Sweeney, I & II Kings, 55; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 18; House, 1, 2 Kings, 89; Gwilym H. Jones, The Nathan Narratives (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 45.
82. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 91-92.
83. Walsh, 1 Kings, 8. See also Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 14.
84. Gray, I & II Kings, 79.
the monarchy. Given that Adonijah was born in Hebron (2 Sam 3:2-4) and is not an Israelite, he is associated with these men.\textsuperscript{85}

In 1 Kgs 1:9, the narrator describes how Adonijah invites his brothers (the king’s sons) and “all the men of Judah,\textsuperscript{86} the king’s servants” to his sacrifice. These servants are possibly the same servants named in 1:2 and Adonijah might be calling upon them both because they are personally close to and trusted by David and because they might “be nostalg[i]c for old ways and old loyalties in place of the broader vision needed in the new world of empire.”\textsuperscript{87}

Regarding those not siding with Adonijah, they include Zadok, the priest; Benaiah, the army commander; Nathan, the prophet; Shimei,\textsuperscript{88} Rei,\textsuperscript{89} and David’s “mighty men” (ג"ורים; 1:8).\textsuperscript{90} This group of men is associated with Jerusalem, with Benaiah, Zadok, and Nathan appearing only after

\textsuperscript{85} Sweeney, I & II Kings, 55.

\textsuperscript{86} According to Gray, the narrator is not referring to the entire population of Judah, but “to the Judean elements in David’s professional army, the striking-force of his own clansman, who under Joab had laid the foundation of the king’s power, as apart from the new professional army of heterogeneous elements under Benaiah” (Gray, I & II Kings, 84).

\textsuperscript{87} Walsh, 1 Kings, 9.

\textsuperscript{88} Shimei is the Saul ide (2 Sam 16:5) who is named by David in 1 Kgs 2:8-9 and is killed by Solomon in 2:36-46. According to Sweeney, Shimei joined David’s court during his time in Jerusalem (Sweeney, I & II Kings, 55). For more information on Shimei see chapters 6 and 8 of this study.

\textsuperscript{89} Rei’s identity is unknown (Sweeney, I & II Kings, 55; Walsh, 1 Kings, 8 n2; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 73).

David had conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital (2 Sam 5:6-12). According to G.H. Jones, the political ideologies of these men would have represented “a new pattern that was emerging in Jerusalem with the establishing of the monarchy.”

In 1 Kgs 1:10, not only does Adonijah not invite Nathan and Benaiah to his feast, but also, contrary to what the narrator has just reported in 1:9 (that he invited all of his brothers), he does not invite his brother Solomon. This is the first reference to Solomon since he was born in 2 Sam 12:24-25 and his name, coupled with the designation אחיו, “his [Adonijah’s] brother,” implies that there is a familial dimension to this politicised narrative, which will be underscored once Bathsheba enters the scene (1 Kgs 1:11). At this point, the emphasis on Solomon being Adonijah’s brother reminds the audience that he is David’s son and could also take the throne. Importantly, because Solomon was born not in Hebron but in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:14), he is associated with the Jerusalemite faction.

All of this information constructs an image of a kingdom that is politically divided — Adonijah represents Hebron and those who are in favour of adherence to the old ways; whereas, Solomon represents Jerusalem.

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91. Walsh, 1 Kings, 8; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 18; Sweeney, I & II Kings, 55.
92. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 14. See also Walsh, 1 Kings, 8; Jones, Nathan Narratives, 45; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 91-92.
93. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 14; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 91-92.
and those who are in favour of the changes associated with the new monarchy. As Hens-Piazza succinctly states, “[t]hose who long for the ‘good old days’ rally around Adonijah in opposition to those committed to the unified nation and the future it holds [siding with Solomon].”

d. Conclusion

In 1 Kgs 1:1-10 the narrator establishes the political situation in the Israelite monarchy that shapes the plot until 2:46. In 1:1-4, King David is described as an aged monarch who is unable to warm himself, which leads his servants to find Abishag. Abishag’s being a בתולה and her role as David’s הסנה elevate her position in the court, but, as the narrator emphasises, Abishag is only present to deal with David’s personal needs — she does not have an administrative role and the two never have intercourse.

With Abishag unable to restore David, the narrative signals that his death is near, which raises the issue of who will reign after him. Adonijah,

95. Ishida outlines how some scholars have argued that the people were divided because of “a conflict between Yahwism and the Jebusite-Canaanite religion, represented by Abiathar and Zadok respectively.” However, he notes that this position lacks evidence (Ishida, “Adonijah,” 176-177).

96. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 14. See also McCracken, Family Portraits, 389-390; Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 12; Jones, Nathan Narratives, 45-46; Tomoo Ishida, “Solomon’s Succession to the Throne of David — A Political Analysis,” in Studies in the Period of David and Solomon And Other Essays: Papers Read at the International Symposium for Biblical Studies, Tokyo, 5-7 December, 1979 (ed. Tomoo Ishida; Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1982), 176-178; Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 11; Noth, Könige, 17; Ishida, Royal Dynasties, 158. Against this conclusion, Keil argues that Adonijah did not invite Solomon because he had been “informed of Solomon’s election as successor to the throne, and was also aware of the feelings of Nathan and Benaiah” (Keil, Books of Kings, 19). This conclusion is not supported by the narratives because it relies on Solomon having been named as David’s successor.

David’s eldest son, asserts his desire to take over as king, in line with the expectation of others in the court. However, those who favour a new vision of the monarchy support Solomon, which necessarily places them against Adonijah and his Hebronite faction. It is at this point, with David lying on his deathbed and the monarchy divided over who will be the future king that Nathan goes to Bathsheba and 1:11-31 begins.
Chapter 4
Nathan, Bathsheba, and David Speak
(1 Kgs 1:11-31)

a. Introduction
In 1:11-31 the narrator depicts Nathan’s reaction to the political situation in the monarchy — Nathan speaks with Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother (1:11). Nathan’s language begins a series of conversations that eventually lead David to make an oath to put Solomon on the throne (1:29-30). Important for this study is 1:17 where Bathsheba invokes YHWH to increase the gravity of Nathan’s script for David. Bathsheba’s invocation draws attention to Nathan’s omission of the divine name in 1:11-14. As suggested below, because Nathan does not speak about YHWH when describing the oath (1:13), the narrator not only implies that Nathan fabricated the oath, but also provides insight into Nathan’s character.

Invocations of YHWH also appear in David’s oath to Bathsheba (1:29-30). With David’s invocations echoing Bathsheba’s, the narrator raises the possibility that Bathsheba’s language has influenced David, prompting him to name Solomon as his heir.

b. 1 Kgs 1:11-14, Nathan’s Words to Bathsheba
Up to this point, Nathan has only been a name listed as not siding with Adonijah (1:8, 10). In 1:11-14, he emerges as a full-bodied character who initiates a conversation with Bathsheba. Nathan’s language convinces
Bathsheba to question David regarding an oath that David supposedly made to put Solomon on the throne. While Nathan does not state the outcome that he intends from Bathsheba and David’s interaction, as the narrative progresses it becomes apparent that he wants Bathsheba to lead David to proclaim an oath that will ensure that Solomon becomes king instead of Adonijah, although the reason for Nathan’s interest in Solomon is unclear.

**Why Does Nathan Speak To Bathsheba?**

What is noteworthy about 1:11 is that Nathan speaks with Bathsheba and not David, the man whom he ultimately wants to appoint Solomon as king. Although the narrator does not explain why Nathan goes to Bathsheba, the reason for his decision might be inferred by looking back in his story.

Whenever Nathan went to David in the past, YHWH had always commanded him to do so (2 Sam 7:5; 12:1). In contrast, YHWH does not command Nathan to go to David in 1 Kgs 1:11 and, so, he does not go.

Nevertheless, the lack of a divine command does not necessarily prevent Nathan from speaking with David. The reason for his continued

1. It is possible that Nathan wants Solomon to ascend to guarantee his and his sons’ place in the kingdom. In 1 Kgs 4:5, two sons of Nathan are listed among Solomon’s administrative officers and these could be the sons of Nathan the prophet (Isaac Kalimi, “The Rise of Solomon in the Ancient Israelite Historiography,” in The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect [ed. Joseph Verheyden; Leiden: Brill, 2013], 19; John Gray, I & II Kings: A Commentary [2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 1970], 133). Nathan might also care about Solomon more than Adonijah and, for this reason, wants to see him succeed. As Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg asserts, because Nathan names Solomon “Jedidiah,” the narrative suggests that the characters have “a particularly close connection” (Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, I & II Samuel: A Commentary [London: SCM Press, 1964], 317).
reluctance is likely based on his knowledge of David, who, as Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis observes, “never [...] challenges the instructions given to him by the prophets [...h]e is willing to be led by them, to acknowledge the divine source of their wisdom.” As outlined below in reference to Nathan’s omission of the divine name when speaking about his oath (1:13), Nathan is characterised as being careful about associating YHWH with a lie. Thus, he does not go to David on his own in 1:11 to avoid leading David to assume that he is acting on the basis of YHWH’s command and that his words have divine support, neither of which are true.

Even if the lack of a divine command stops Nathan from going to David, it does not account for his decision to turn to Bathsheba (1:11). In 1:1-10, the narrator introduced many characters and it would make sense for Nathan to speak with any of them instead of going to Solomon’s mother/David’s wife, who last appeared in 2 Samuel 11-12. Koenig similarly comments, “there are a number of people with whom Nathan could collude — Zadok, Benaiah, Shimei, Rei, or the fighting men — but he goes to Bathsheba.”

Nathan likely speaks with Bathsheba because of what she offers to his overall goal of leading David to name Solomon as king. Because Nathan


needs to get to David, but will not go to him on his own, he chooses a member of the court whose relationship with David would guarantee entry into his presence. According to Rice, Bathsheba, as David’s wife, would have the “most immediate access to David.”

This argument is supported by 1 Kgs 1:15, where Bathsheba easily enters David’s chamber and her presence is not announced. In 1:23, Nathan, who also enters the chamber without any difficulty, is announced. Moreover, upon entering the chamber Bathsheba simply bows and does obeisance to David (1:16); whereas, Nathan does his obeisance על-אפו ארצה, “his nose/face to the earth” (1:23). Bathsheba’s and Nathan’s deferent actions can be interpreted as functioning alongside the rest of their techniques aimed at manipulating David, an argument developed below in reference to the work of Lydie Kucová. Still, the differences between their styles of approach suggest that the distance between Bathsheba and David is smaller than that between Nathan and David.

Also, in light of the events in 2 Samuel 11 that led to her joining David’s household, Bathsheba is characterised as someone whom David has valued and, as advanced below, she is possibly his prominent consort. For these reasons, any plea from her would likely carry greater weight with

David than one coming from his prophet or another member of his court, which would increase the chances of a positive response from David.

Therefore, without YHWH telling Nathan to go and speak with David, he does not risk leading David to believe that he is acting on YHWH’s command by going to him himself. This issue prompts Nathan to speak with Bathsheba, whose relationship with David provides her with ready access to him. Furthermore, as David’s prominent consort, her words would have an affective quality over David that would increase the likelihood of him complying with anything that she asked of him. As demonstrated in chapter 7, Nathan’s reliance on Bathsheba in 1 Kgs 1:11 makes sense of Adonijah’s reliance on Bathsheba in 2:13.

Nathan’s Manipulation of Bathsheba: Adonijah Son of Haggith

While Nathan’s decision to speak with Bathsheba thus appears logical, there is nothing in the narrative to suggest that she is required to listen to him. To compensate for the possibility that Bathsheba could cast him aside, Nathan shapes his language to convince her to follow his plan (1:13). As Gunn accurately observes, Nathan’s words are “obviously designed to galvanize [Bathsheba] into taking desperate measures.”

5. Nathan uses Bathsheba in a way that is similar to how Joab used the woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14 (George G. Nicol, “Bathsheba, A Clever Woman?” ExpTim 99 [1988]: 361).

In his opening statement to Bathsheba, Nathan names “Adonijah, son of Haggith,” using the same designation that the narrator used in 1:5. Because a second mention of Adonijah’s mother is not needed to inform his identity, its function cannot be “precise identification; the higher specificity is unnecessary.” The function of this seemingly superfluous reference emerges by taking into account the fact that Nathan is naming “Adonijah son of Haggith” to Bathsheba and he is shaping this language for her specifically.

Nathan’s inclusion of Haggith’s name is primarily intended to provoke Bathsheba to action by reminding her that she and Haggith are rivals and it is in her and Solomon’s best interest for her to do what he says. Although Mordechai Cogan states, “[n]or should a rivalry between [Haggith] and Bathsheba be posited on the basis of her repeated mention as mother of Adonijah,” he does not provide any convincing evidence to support why this is the case. In fact, the existence of a rivalry between the women makes sense because their sons are rivals and each time the narrator brings Bathsheba into the narrative, he not only names her as “mother of Solomon,” but he also names “Adonijah son of Haggith” (1:11; 2:13).


Therefore, Rice is correct when he claims that this language “alludes no doubt to the rivalry between the two women.”

Although the specifics of the women’s rivalry are not developed in the narrative, it might relate to each of them wanting to see her own son become king in order that she might experience some kind of benefit upon his ascent. Possibly, there was an official title at stake, in that the mother of the king would become known in the court as either אָם הַמָלֵךְ or בֵּיְרָה. While Walsh argues that the women wanted to become מִרְכָּבָה, the term is not used in 1 Kings 1-2 and is likely not informing the women’s rivalry;

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10. Carol Smith argues that ובירת should be translated as “great lady’ or ‘mighty lady,’” both of which convey how בירת was an honorific that “was applied to powerful women and served as an acknowledgement of their authority [possibly suggesting that the woman] was the most significant woman in the kingdom at the time” (Carol Smith, “‘Queenship’ in Israel? The Cases of Bathsheba, Jezebel and Athaliah,” in King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar [JSOTSup 270; ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 144).

11. Some scholars equate ובירת with “queen mother” (בֵּיְרָה), BDB, 150; DeVries, 1 Kings, 37; Zafiria Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the Gbūrā,” in A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings [ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], 170-185); however, it is not clear whether every queen mother was also known as ובירת (Hennie J. Marsman, Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social & Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 360-361; Smith, “Queenship,” 144).


13. For more on the use of ובירת in the Hebrew Bible see Athalya Brenner-Idan, The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative (2nd ed.; London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 17-33; Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the Gbūrā,” 170-185; Susan Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel,” JBL 112 (1993): 385-401. Ackerman also assumes that Bathsheba is known as ובירת (Ackerman, “Queen Mother,” 385).
however, יִשְׂרָאֵל is used of Bathsheba in 2:19. In this verse, Bathsheba enters into Solomon’s presence and speaks with him as his equal, and Solomon, who is now king, treats Bathsheba with respect (see chapter 7). What remains unclear is whether יִשְׂרָאֵל is to be understood in 2:19 as an official title or whether it is simply a generic reference to who Bathsheba is; with Solomon now king, Bathsheba is literally יִשְׂרָאֵל. 14

Given that there is no way to determine with certainty whether יִשְׂרָאֵל was an officially recognised title in the court, it will be understood here as signalling the change in Bathsheba’s role upon Solomon’s ascent — יִשְׂרָאֵל highlights that Bathsheba is no longer יִשְׂרָאֵל; “her maternal relationship with her son [...] has become intertwined with [a] more political role.” 15 That Bathsheba has attained this role upon Solomon’s ascent suggests that his rise to the throne has benefitted her. Thus, a desire to see their sons become king so that they will attain this benefit informs the rivalry between Bathsheba and Haggith before Solomon’s coronation in 2:38-40.

When Nathan names Haggith to remind Bathsheba of this rivalry in 1:11, his words would have had a significant impact on her. The details


15. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 101-102. See also Cogan, who argues that יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל reflects “the personal relationship between mother and son, not her (purported) position at court” (Cogan, 1 Kings, 176).
provided in 1:5-10 make it clear that Bathsheba has little hope of seeing her son ascend. With Adonijah being David’s eldest son and the broader culture believing that he would rule after David, he is in a prime position to take the throne. Furthermore, in 1:5-10 Adonijah is characterised as actively working for the throne and Solomon is silent, never once attempting to claim the throne for himself. Bathsheba is, then, at a disadvantage in comparison to Haggith and Adonijah.16

To illustrate what this might mean for Bathsheba, it is useful to turn to Zafrira Ben-Barak’s article “The Queen Consort and the Struggle for Succession to the Throne.” In this piece, Ben-Barak refers to both the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern sources, observing how the queen consort, as she assumes both Bathsheba and Haggith are, is someone for whom “obtaining her son’s advantage is a major concern, she is chiefly devoted to her own personal advancement.”17 Queen consorts knew that “being merely one of a number of women in the king’s harem [made their] position precarious and subject to change [...their] rank and tenure are circumscribed by the period of her husband’s rule.”18 However, if her son

16. Marvin A. Sweeney suggests, “[t]he explicit identification of Bath Sheba as ‘the mother of Solomon’ and Adonijah as ‘the son of Haggith’ likewise makes clear [Bathsheba’s] interests in overturning Adonijah’s coronation in favor of her own son” (Marvin A. Sweeney, I & II Kings [OTL; Louisville: WJK, 2007], 56).


18. Ibid.
took the throne, the women might not assume “a defined role and function [...but] her position granted her dignified station and certain very limited privileges,”\(^\text{19}\) as Bathsheba has in 2:19.

In order to help her son ascend, “it was necessary for the mother and the son — together or separately — to advocate for their own positions in the royal hierarchy and succession order.”\(^\text{20}\) According to Ben-Barak, a woman would often rely on her “own ambitions, and [...] personal skill in the struggle which she undertook on her behalf.”\(^\text{21}\) This was especially necessary for mothers, like Bathsheba, whose sons had less of a chance of ascending to the throne because they were not the eldest. As noted in some extra-biblical sources, when kings choose a younger son to ascend over an elder son, “behind each such struggle we find the figure of a queen consort who was the mother of the younger son.”\(^\text{22}\) These women, aware that “custom and practice worked to the disadvantage of their sons in the matter


22. Ben-Barak, “Queen Consort,” 35. For example, Ben-Barak refers to Y’dy-Sam’al, a narrative where King Kilamuwa, who was not the eldest, appears to have arisen to the throne because of his mother; the Assyrian account of Adad-Nirari III, whose mother likely helped him to become king; the Babylonian account of Nabonidus who, even if he was not a member of the royal family, became king because of the actions of his mother Adad-Guppi; and the Persian king Xerxes who, although not the eldest son of Darius I, became king because of his mother Atossa’s “rank and power” (Ben-Barak, “Queen Consort,” 35). See also Marsman, Women, 346-349.
of the royal succession,” compensated by using their own “energy, skill, and cunning” to help their sons become king.23

For Bathsheba, ensuring that Solomon succeeded David was an even more serious issue. In comparison to Haggith and other members of David’s harem (e.g. Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Abital, Eglah; 2 Sam 3:2-5), Bathsheba has an active role after marrying David, even being able to enter David’s chamber to speak to him (1 Kgs 1:15). As Carol Smith points out, Bathsheba “appears to have a role as the wife of David [...] she wields her influence while David is still alive. Indeed, it is difficult to see how she could have played any role at all in the succession of Solomon if she had not already been in a position of some strength.”24 Although Ishida argues, “there was no official rank of queen consort in the court [...] all the women of the king theoretically held the same rank,”25 Smith’s assessment makes better sense of Bathsheba’s character in 1 Kings 1-2. Bathsheba’s active role suggests that she is not just one of David’s many consorts, but she is, as alluded to briefly above, a prominent consort, a woman prized by David either “because of the king’s preference, [her] personal ability or charisma, or official position.”26

As David’s prominent consort, Bathsheba would have more to lose if Solomon did not take the throne — although she has power when David is alive, this might not be the case under another king. To make sure that upon David’s death she “retains at least some of the status [she] already had [even possibly] building on it,” Bathsheba would need Solomon to become king. Therefore, with Bathsheba holding a position of privilege while, at the same time, being in a position of significant disadvantage in comparison to Adonijah and Haggith, Nathan’s reference to Haggith in 1:11 would not go unnoticed by Bathsheba. By reminding Bathsheba of the woman who was poised to take everything she had away from her, Nathan would prompt her to address this issue by using her own “energy, skill, and cunning” to help Solomon ascend.28

On this basis, Ben-Barak posits that in 1 Kings 1-2 Bathsheba is the one who obtains Nathan’s support and gathers around Solomon both Zadok and Benaiah to rival both Abiathar and Joab, thereby, building for Solomon “a sophisticated power base capable of justifying and backing [her son’s] bid for power.”29 While there is not enough narrative evidence to suggest that Bathsheba takes such an active role in Solomon’s bid for the throne, in 1:15-21 she follows Nathan’s plan and leads David to make Solomon king

27. Smith, “Queenship,” 147.
29. Ibid.
In fact, Bathsheba’s creative manipulation of Nathan’s script (1:17-21) shows how she uses her own skill to address both Solomon’s lack of cultural support and his inactivity, helping herself to keep whatever privileges she might have had in the court. These details support the conclusion that Nathan’s reference to Haggith (1:11) has had an influence on Bathsheba, leading her to follow his advice (1:13).

Contra Cogan, Bathsheba and Haggith are rivals. Although it is not likely that they were each hoping to become גבירה, each woman would want to see her son take the throne so that her own status in the court would rise.30 When Nathan names “Adonijah son of Haggith” to “Bathsheba mother of Solomon” (1:11), he reminds Bathsheba that Adonijah and Haggith are in a prime position to gain status and privilege in the court, but she and her son are not. For Bathsheba, who, as David’s prominent consort, could lose a lot of privilege upon the ascent of an unrelated king, this detail compels her to do whatever she can to ensure Solomon’s future on the throne, including, following Nathan’s advice (1:13).

Nathan’s Manipulation of Bathsheba: Additional Tactics

To add to the reasons why Bathsheba should listen to him, Nathan reinforces the dire nature of her and Solomon’s position in relation to Adonijah and

Haggith by manipulating his description of what Adonijah is doing to take the throne and the impact of his actions on them.

First, although Adonijah said רָצֵּן, “I will be king” (1:5), in 1:11 Nathan tells Bathsheba that Adonijah, רָצֵּן, “has become king” (1:11). By changing the tense of the verb, Nathan modifies his presentation of Adonijah’s actions to lead Bathsheba to think that Adonijah had taken the throne and that his mother, consequently, had already benefitted.

Second, Nathan claims, “our lord David does not know” what Adonijah is doing (1:11). This statement counters 1:6 where the narrator reported that David did not grieve Adonijah for his actions, which implies that he knew exactly what Adonijah was doing but did nothing to stop him. According to Stuart Lasine, “[i]t may be that the only thing that David [does not] know is how to see and interpret Adonijah’s actions in the same way as do Nathan and Bathsheba.” Following Lasine, David is aware that Adonijah is acting as if he will rule, but Nathan wants Bathsheba to


33. Walsh, 1 Kings, 10.


35. Stuart Lasine, Knowing Kings: Knowledge, Power, and Narcissism in the Hebrew Bible (SBLSS 40; Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 116.
inform David that he does not understand the significance of Adonijah’s actions.

Third, Nathan augments the importance of Adonijah’s actions by relating them to Bathsheba on a personal level: “and now, come, let me give you advice so you will save your soul and the soul of your son, Solomon” (1:12).\(^{36}\) By speaking these words after he has outlined what Adonijah has been doing, Nathan makes them a consequence of Adonijah’s actions. In other words, Nathan is telling Bathsheba that it is the political context that has caused him to want to give her advice because that same context will threaten not only her life but also that of her son.

Mulder, however, questions the truthfulness of Nathan’s claim in 1:12, arguing that it is uncertain if “Bathsheba’s and Solomon’s life was at risk” because Adonijah never says that he will kill those who do not support him.\(^{37}\) Although Adonijah’s silence on this issue does call into question whether Bathsheba and Solomon were really in danger, the narrator includes other information that points to Nathan’s truthfulness.

In 1:49-50, after Solomon takes the throne, Adonijah fears Solomon and flees to the altar, where he requests that Solomon make an oath to spare

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36. In this verse, Nathan uses the particle נָ. Although Adonijah’s use of נָ in 2:17 is aimed at softening his request so that Bathsheba will grant it (see chapter 7), Nathan is only trying to lead Bathsheba to follow his advice and it does not appear as if the politeness aspect of this particle is necessary. Therefore, in this case, נָ might be left untranslated. For an argument in favour of not translating נָ see Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 114, 170.

his life (1:51). If Adonijah believes that Solomon’s rise to the throne is a threat, it is likely that he would have threatened Solomon had he ascended to the throne himself.  

38 Also, in 1 Kings 2 the narrator records Solomon killing those who do not align with him, which suggests that Adonijah would have acted in the same way.  

39 These observations support the conclusion that Adonijah would have threatened both Bathsheba and Solomon if he had become king and, by telling Bathsheba about this very real consequence, Nathan increases the force of his words.  

40 Pyper rightly comments, “Nathan is perhaps here putting pressure on Bathsheba.”  

41 Nathan’s language clearly demonstrates that he is trying to focus Bathsheba’s attention on the gravity of Adonijah’s actions and their impact on her and Solomon as he tries to pressure her into accepting his advice in 1:13. Nathan reminds her of her rivalry with Haggith, after which he asserts that Adonijah has already taken the throne from Solomon; thereby, portraying his actions as a coup against David to suggest that he had stolen Solomon’s chance at the throne and Bathsheba’s chance to maintain her status in the court. Finally, Nathan clarifies for Bathsheba that

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39. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 88.


Adonijah’s political actions will negatively impact both her and her son’s life.

Nathan’s Advice: The Oath

To help Bathsheba circumvent any possible threat to herself and Solomon, Nathan offers his advice: Bathsheba is to “[g]o to King David and say to him, ‘did you not swear, my lord, the king, to your handmaid saying that Solomon, your son, Solomon, will rule after me and he will sit on my throne? And, why is Adonijah king?’” (1:13). In this verse Nathan claims that David swore (made an oath), a detail that will play a significant role in the discussion of invocations of YHWH in the scenes that follow.

What is noteworthy about Nathan’s oath is that it is absent from the earlier narrative, an observation that raises the possibility that David never made it. Although one could argue that the narrator has simply not described David making the oath, it is so instrumental in the future of the

42. Mulder, I Kings, 53.


44. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 88; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 19; Nehama Aschkenasy, Woman at the Window: Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 110, 115. Aschkenasy posits that Bathsheba invented the oath and repeated it to Nathan “so many times [...] that he had no doubt about its veracity”
monarchy that it is highly unlikely that the narrator would withhold it. On this point Choon Leong Seow asserts, “nothing is said of such an oath in earlier narratives or, indeed, anywhere else in the Bible, which would be completely surprising, given the importance of such a tradition to the Davidic monarchy.”

Examining the details of the narrative provides further support for the fabricated nature of Nathan’s oath. Keith Bodner observes that David never speaks with Bathsheba in any earlier scene, which undermines Nathan’s claim that David had sworn to her that Solomon would be king.

Also, the characters do not act as if David had made the oath. Adonijah’s actions in 1:5-10, because they are not a coronation, imply that he still sees himself as having a chance to become king — if David had sworn that Solomon would be king, then Adonijah would likely have waged a definitive coup. In 1:13 Nathan tells Bathsheba about the oath and he then speaks to David without mentioning the oath (1:22-27), which suggests that he is selectively shaping his language in his interaction with the king. Although Nathan likely omits the oath when speaking with David because

(Aschkenasy, Woman, 115). Because Nathan is the first character to mention this oath, it is more likely that he invented it. Gunn comments, “it is noticeable that it is Nathan who puts the words of the alleged promise in Bathsheba’s mouth. There is nothing about Bathsheba knowing or remembering such a promise” (Gunn, “David and the Gift,” 31; see also Gunn, Story of King David, 106).

47. Jones, Nathan Narratives, 52.
Bathsheba connects it with YHWH (1:17; see below), it is also possible that this omission is a tactic to maintain his ruse. Thus, as Jones posits, “[b]oth the suggestion that Adonijah did not know of an oath and the fact that Nathan had to act as if he did not know of the purported oath to Bathsheba, indicate that the oath mentioned in vv. 13, 17, 30 is a complete fabrication.”

Because Nathan has already demonstrated a willingness to play with the truth when he modified Adonijah’s words by using יְּזֶ֥ה instead of יַלֶּ֣ה in 1:11, it is possible that he would create an oath to suit his needs.

The fabricated nature of the oath also fits a theme noted by Bodner, where, “[v]arious figures [...] ‘do things with oaths’ in 1 Kings 1-2.”

In both chapters, oaths are used by characters to achieve various ends; looking at 2:39-46, for example, Solomon manipulates an oath to justify killing Shimei, who does not deserve death (chapter 8). Accepting that Nathan has created his oath to ensure that Bathsheba’s words will lead David to place Solomon on his throne aligns well with this function of oath-language noted throughout the chapters.

Finally, Harry Hagan examines Nathan’s oath in the context of a deception motif that he sees in the SN. Hagan argues, “[t]he thrust of the counter-deception is seemingly to remind David that he had promised the

48. Jones, Nathan Narratives, 53. See also Seow, “First and Second Books,” 19; Sweeney, 1 and 2 Kings, 56.

49. Gina Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 15; Walsh, 1 Kings, 10.

throne to Solomon, but the artifice of Nathan and the condition of David must make one wonder if the old man, as well as Adonijah, is not being tricked. 51 Both in this instance and in 1 Kgs 2:13-25, 52 deceptive language figures in character’s communication, which connects with earlier uses of deception in 2 Samuel 11-12 (the David and Bathsheba incident); 13-15 (the rape of Tamar and Absalom’s rebellion); and 20 (the rebellion of Sheba and the death of Amasa).

To illustrate the deceptive nature of Nathan’s oath, Hagan examines Absalom’s words to David in 2 Sam 15:7, discussed in extended detail below. According to Hagan, because there is no earlier scene where Absalom makes the vow that is central to his plan to get to Hebron, he likely fabricated it, marking it as “a conspiracy [...] the first round of deception.” 53 Because the narrator does not describe David making the oath, one might conclude that, as Absalom created his vow for deceptive purposes, Nathan created the oath to deceive the king. 54


52. For example, when Bathsheba describes Adonijah’s request as “small,” Solomon’s response shows that he knows that the request is not small. As Hagan comments, “when Solomon hears the request, the deception is finished. Solomon is no fool” (Hagan, “Deception,” 322, see chapter 7).


54. Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 155. Randy McCracken argues that there are “several good reasons to accept the oath as factual” (Randy McCracken, Family Portraits: Character Studies in 1 and 2 Samuel [Bloomington: Westbow Press, 2013], 246). First, he claims that Adonijah would not have had to wage a coup if the oath had not been made (McCracken, Family Portraits, 246-247); however, as already noted in chapter 3, Adonijah was not waging a coup in 1:5-10. McCracken also suggests that if Nathan fabricated the oath, then both he and Bathsheba would “be guilty of blasphemy [which] would discredit both characters” (McCracken, Family Portraits, 247). There is no reason, however, to preclude the narrator
In consideration of the above, it is appropriate to conclude that Nathan constructed the oath that he includes in his script to Bathsheba. However, accepting this position raises an important question: why does Nathan want Bathsheba to tell David that he swore (שבע) that Solomon would be king, rather than simply saying that David had said (אמר) that Solomon would be king, as Nathan will tell David in 1 Kgs 1:24?

Because Nathan wants Bathsheba to lead David to make Solomon king, the oath is a useful tool to achieve this goal because the language of oath-making is a powerful linguistic form that would challenge David to contest Bathsheba’s words. While some scholars assume that David is senile and he would not realise that he never made the oath, the narrator never mentions David’s declining mind and, in 1:28-35 and 2:2-9, David’s detailed language demonstrates that his mental acuity is intact. On this basis, if

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from characterising either Nathan or Bathsheba as blaspheming — they are human beings dealing with a human situation and they are acting as they see fit, even if what they do might not be acceptable to YHWH. Overall, McCracken’s argument for the veracity of the oath is weak. Keil also assumes that David made the oath, but he does not consider any of the points raised in this study, which undermines the strength of his position (Keil, Books of Kings, 18).


56. Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC 8; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 88. David likely still has all of his mental capacity because those speaking with him rely on his ability to interpret their words in specific ways, such as when Bathsheba tells him that she and Solomon will be treated as offenders if Adonijah takes the throne (1:21). Examples of scholars who accept that David is not senile are Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 165; Aschkenasy, Woman, 111.
Bathsheba goes to him and starts speaking about his previous words/actions, he will determine that she is lying and he might not believe her. In order to address this possibility, Nathan tells Bathsheba to speak to David about an oath.

In her study *Promises to Keep: The Oath in Biblical Narrative*, Yael Ziegler argues that in the Hebrew Bible the spoken word is recognised as having a “mysterious power to produce something new or to intensify something already in existence.”57 With words having “immense gravity,” they shape the plot so that, when Isaac gives his blessing to Jacob it cannot be undone (Gen 27:35), just as Jephthah cannot rescind his vow even though it necessitates that he kill his child (Judg 11:35-36).58 Zielger continues, “the seriousness with which the Bible views language may be applied equally to all human speech: royal edict, vow, curse, blessing, or a simple utterance. Nevertheless, the oath appears to be regarded as a particularly potent form of speech and is accorded special reverence.”59

The oath is treated with a greater degree of care because of the possible negative impact on the speaker if he/she did not observe it. In the social world, the function of the oath was pragmatic because it promoted “harmonious relations within the society and between members of different

58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 28.
When one made and kept an oath, trust would be established and society would strengthen; however, if one violated an oath, then one would appear unreliable and this would create tears in the social fabric. For this reason, the oath operated on a “moral sphere [because] it maintained a sense of ethical, personal responsibility.”

Furthermore, scholars argue that the oath inherently invokes a condition of self-imprecation if violated. Etymologically, the verb שבע has a complicated history with the meaning of its niphal form being related to “Semitic-Hamitic meaning [that] has a strong and especially negative connotation, one which [...] developed into a verb of aggression meaning ‘curse, revile,’ whence the meaning ‘swear’ developed from the reflexive nature of the niphal.” Inherent in biblical oaths is an implicit sanction that accompanies their violation, so that the speaker would “detonate [a curse] upon himself if he fails to meet the terms of the oath.”

The curse aspect of the oath accounts for why many biblical oaths are made in the name of YHWH, the God of Israel, which follows standard oath

60. Ziegler, Promises, 31.
61. Ibid.
62. Ziegler, Promises, 32; I. Kottsieper, “” in TDOT 3: 313.
63. Kottsieper, TDOT 3: 313.
64. Ziegler, Promises, 33.
formulas in the ancient Near East (see below). Tony W. Carteledge argues, “Old Testament oaths basically consist of a promise that is strengthened by the addition of a curse, usually in conjunction with an appeal to the deity or king who could carry out the curse.” Ziegler also outlines how, even if YHWH is not explicitly named in the oath, YHWH is nevertheless seen as the “source of the power of the curse” because, as she notes, “a human cannot bless or curse without somehow enlisting God to his cause.” In this way, the power of an oath depends on YHWH and, even if the speaker does not name YHWH, “the oath is [nevertheless] bound up with man’s relationship with God.” Therefore, the oath “possess[es] substantial power [and v]iolation of an oath is considered to be such an unthinkable breach of piety, that even when it may be appropriate, it is avoided.”

On the connection between YHWH and biblical oaths, Pyper observes that oaths made in the Hebrew Bible by invoking YHWH are always fulfilled. Thus, when a character swears in the name of YHWH readers can expect that what is sworn will come to pass in the future (proleptic) or that

69. Ibid., 39.
70. Ziegler, Promises, 3. Fokkelman observes, “the oath, along with its counterpart, the curse, is religiously and psychologically the most weighty and severe matter of speech” (Fokkelman, King David, 364).
71. Pyper, David as Reader, 140. Exceptions to this convention are 1 Sam 14:39; 29:6. For Pyper’s analysis of these passages see Pyper, David as Reader, 143-145.
what is sworn verifies a past event (analectic). Pyper comments, “a directly stated oath in Yahweh’s name will be fulfilled. Where such a convention exists, it can then be exploited in skilful storytelling because the reader brings the expectation of fulfilment to the text.”

The oath is not a benign form of speech but it carries weight in the Hebrew Bible, impacting characters’ actions and the plot. When Nathan instructs Bathsheba to tell David that he made an oath, he is using this language because of what it will do to David; David might remember not having made the oath and he could deny it but, if he denied the oath and it turned out that he had made it, he would risk incurring the dire repercussions that accompany the breaking of an oath. Nathan has, then, used oath language because it narrows David’s responses, leading him to acceptance over denial.

*Nathan’s Invocation of YHWH?*

Although Nathan includes the oath to increase the likelihood of David accepting it, he has also given David a reason to doubt it. When Nathan’s description of the oath in 1:13 is compared with Bathsheba’s recital of the oath to David in 1:17, it is noteworthy that Bathsheba names YHWH and Nathan does not. While it is possible that Nathan does not invoke YHWH in

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72. Pyper, *David as Reader*, 137.
73. Ibid., 143.
1:13 because, as noted above, YHWH might be invoked when making an oath without being named explicitly, the omission of YHWH in this first appearance of the oath is conspicuous. Because Nathan is a prophet, who has invoked YHWH in the past (2 Sam 12:7, 9, 11, 13-14), one might expect him to speak about YHWH as he describes his oath.⁷⁴ Furthermore, of the 80 times שבע is used in the Hebrew Bible, in its niphal form with a person as the subject, in ten of these YHWH is named and of these ten, four are found in 1 Kings 1 and 2 (1 Kgs 1:17, 30; 2:8, 23).⁷⁵ That there is such a concentration of oaths associated with the name of YHWH in these two chapters makes the prophet’s omission of the divine name as he describes the oath stand out even more.

Nathan’s omission of YHWH is likely due to the fact that he has constructed the oath and he does not want to use the divine name in the context of a lie, as mentioned above. Alter also advances this interpretation, “[i]f in fact the vow is a fabrication, perhaps Nathan the prophet was leery of invoking God’s name in connection with it.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴. James M. Ackerman observes, “it is interesting that Nathan no longer speaks in the name of God” (James M. Ackerman, “Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2,” JBL 109 [1990]: 53).

⁷⁵. The other verses are Josh 2:12; 9:19; Judg 21:7; 1 Sam 24:21; 28:10; 2 Sam 19:8 (Ziegler, Promises, 44).

In ancient Israel, the name of YHWH was seen “as an interchangeable term for his person [having] a hypostatic character.”\(^{77}\) This understanding reflects how the essence of either a person or an object was tied up in its name and, for this reason, the divine name could never be used lightly.\(^{78}\)

That the divine name held importance in the biblical world is noted in Exod 20:7 where YHWH commands, “[y]ou shall not lift the name of YHWH, your God, falsely,\(^{79}\) because YHWH will not acquit whomever carries his name falsely.” Although this verse might be prohibiting incorrect pronunciation of YHWH’s name,\(^{80}\) Carol Meyers argues that the use of נָשָׁא functions as “an idiom for oathtaking.”\(^{81}\) Meyers further comments, “[o]athtaking by invoking God’s name and thus divine power in judicial contexts was a serious matter, and this prohibition guards against egregious dishonesty in such situations as well as against more general blasphemy.”\(^{82}\) A similar warning is found in Lev 19:12, a verse which reflects how “falsely


\(^{81}\) Meyers, *Exodus*, 172.

swearing in God’s name is considered a particularly heinous sin and is described as profanation of His name.”  

According to Pyper, “[t]he invocation of the name of God in an oath is a serious business.” With YHWH and YHWH’s name being intricately connected, caution was needed when invoking YHWH, especially alongside oath language. This is what leads Nathan to avoid speaking the divine name when describing his oath — because he fabricated the oath, he does not want to sin by associating YHWH with his lie.

Nathan Will Fill Up Bathsheba’s Words

The repercussion of Nathan’s omission of YHWH is that he has given David a reason to doubt Bathsheba’s words. If Nathan had included YHWH in his script and Bathsheba had spoken it exactly, the divine name would have validated the oath. However, because Nathan has not told Bathsheba to invoke YHWH, the possibility remains that, even with the oath language, David will not accept Bathsheba’s account.

With the omission of YHWH increasing the likelihood of David contesting the oath, Nathan offers a solution when he tells Bathsheba that he will come in while she is speaking with David and, יְמַלְאַת אֲדַבְּרֵיהּ, “I will fill up the words” (1:14).

83. Ziegler, Promises, 44. See also Pyper, David as Reader, 140.
84. Pyper, David as Reader, 140.
The verb מלא is often translated in this verse as “confirm,”85 which leads Paul R. House to propose that Nathan “will confirm what [Bathsheba] tells David, just in case the king does not understand or agree.”86 House’s translation does not capture the sense of מלא, which is better rendered as “fill up” or “complete.”87 Bodner argues that when מלא is translated in this way, Nathan is telling Bathsheba that he is going to “accomplish the intended effect of [her] discourse to David [...] to rhetorically finish what she begins.”88 What is interesting is that when Bathsheba speaks to David in 1:17-21, she is the one who fills up Nathan’s words, modifying them to increase their effect on David by, among other things, adding YHWH to the oath.

c. 1 Kgs 1:15-21, Bathsheba’s Words to David

Bathsheba’s words to David in 1:15-21 contain the first invocation of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2. Although Bathsheba has been silent throughout Nathan’s monologue (1:11-14) and never addresses him directly, she assumes the

85. Alter, David Story, 366; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 18; Noth, Könige, 20. The NASB, KJV, NRSV, NIV translate this phrase as “add my word to what you have said.” Lillian R. Klein argues, “Nathan’s promise to confirm Bathsheba’s words instills the idea that her words need verification: that they may not be true, that there possibly was no earlier vow” (Klein, Deborah to Esther, 65 (italics in original)).

86. House, 1, 2 Kings, 90-91. See also Noth, Könige, 20.


active role in the narrative when she responds to him by going to David in his chamber without hesitation. After Bathsheba bows and does obeisance to David (1:16), David, who is in the midst of being ministered to by Abishag (1:15), speaks for the first time since the start of 1 Kings, asking Bathsheba, מנהל, “what do you want?” (1:16). This question gives Bathsheba permission to speak, which creates the context for her to reveal whether she is going to follow Nathan’s plan or not.

As Bathsheba speaks to David, it is evident that she is creatively reworking Nathan’s script. Because Nathan had claimed that David swore to Bathsheba (1:13) and Bathsheba knows that this never occurred, she will also know that David will arrive at the same conclusion. For this reason she fills up Nathan’s words to convince David that, despite what he knows, the

89. Aschkenasy argues that Bathsheba is “reluctant to go to the king” and this is why Nathan “quickly adds that he will come in while she would be talking and ‘confirm thy words’” (Aschkenasy, Woman, 110). This argument is not supported by the text because there is no lag in narrative time between when Nathan finishes speaking in 1:14 and when Bathsheba responds in 1:15.

90. Scholars often discuss Bathsheba and Abishag’s relationship because Abishag is named in 1:15. For example, Klein argues that the presence of Abishag “and Bathsheba’s inattention to her implies some tension between the women and could imply Bathsheba’s resentment of the younger woman [...] Bathsheba’s aloofness also suggests her self-assurance and command of the situation” (Klein, Deborah to Esther, 66; Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 156; Sweeney, 1 and 2 Kings, 56). Given that the women neither speak with each other nor interact directly, it is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding their relationship (Häusl, Abishag und Batscheba, 284). Thus, when the narrator mentions Abishag ministering to David, it is likely only to remind readers of “the circumstances in general” (Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 95), reiterating David’s weakened physical condition at that moment (Mulder, 1 Kings, 56). For more on this topic see Adele Berlin, “Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David’s Wives,” JSOT 23 (1982): 74-76.

91. Mulder argues that David’s words to Bathsheba give her permission to speak because she is a woman (Mulder, 1 Kings, 60). However, there is no way to prove that David gives her permission because she is a woman.

92. As noted earlier, David is not senile and he will know that he never made the oath.
oath is real and he should listen to her. By using slightly different wording when describing the oath and adding an invocation of YHWH, Bathsheba participates with Nathan to ensure their goal is achieved.\textsuperscript{93} As Terence E. Fretheim notes, “[Bathsheba] enhances Nathan’s rhetoric in her own direct and clever way, introducing God language (v.17), playing on David’s reputation before ‘all Israel’ (v.20), and suggesting that her life and Solomon’s are in jeopardy (v.21; see v.31).”\textsuperscript{94}

\textit{Bathsheba’s Creativity with Nathan’s Words: Invocation of YHWH and the Oath}\textsuperscript{95}

In 1:17, Bathsheba immediately brings the oath to the surface in a way not possible if she had rigidly adhered to Nathan’s script. Whereas Nathan told her to ask David, “did you not swear” (1:13), Bathsheba shapes this phrase

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\textsuperscript{94} Fretheim, \textit{First and Second Kings}, 24.

\textsuperscript{95} It is interesting that Bathsheba manipulates the oath and uses it to lead David to make Solomon king, given that her name could be translated as “‘daughter of swear-an-oath’” (Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 176).
as a statement, “[m]y lord, you, you swore” (1:17). If Bathsheba had used a question as Nathan had suggested, she would have weakened her claim; as Walsh argues, “[t]he question form itself implies that David must have reasons for naming Adonijah as his successor, and thus softens the tacit accusation that David has violated an oath.” Bathsheba’s use of a statement, to which she adds the independent pronoun, אתה, to emphasise David’s role in making the oath, has the opposite effect — instead of speaking to save David’s face, she is “bluntly assert[ing] that [David] did make the oath.” In this way, Bathsheba challenges David to contest her words and risk bringing upon himself the negative repercussions that accompany the violation of an oath.

To increase her challenge, Bathsheba adds that David swore “in YHWH, your [David’s] God” (1:17). As noted above, the divine name was a


97. Walsh, 1 Kings, 11. Bodner and Gray argue that Nathan tells Bathsheba to phrase her words to David as a question to employ “[the] strategy [of] auto-suggestion […] Such a question may cause the aged father to conclude that he must have [made the oath]” (Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 155 (italics in original); see also Gray, 1 & II Kings, 88). DeVries argues, however, “such subtle psychologizing has to be beyond the naïve art of the narrator, however much of it may possibly have motivated the historical Nathan and Bathsheba” (Simon J. DeVries, 1 Kings [WBC 12; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003], 15). Bathsheba’s use of a direct statement reverses that of the serpent in Genesis 3. In Gen 3:1, the serpent asks the woman a question to lead her to eat the fruit. Here, Bathsheba uses a statement instead of a question to lead David to make the oath to put Solomon on the throne.

98. Walsh, 1 Kings, 13. See also Solvang, Woman’s Place, 146; Klein, Deborah to Esther, 67; Fokkelman, King David, 356; Nicol, “Bathsheba,” 361.

99. Walsh, 1 Kings, 13.
common feature in biblical oaths and, because Nathan fabricated the oath, he did not invoke YHWH (1:13). In this verse, Bathsheba adds the name apparently without wrestling with what it would mean for her to use it in this false context.\footnote{It is interesting that there is no explanation provided in the narratives for why Bathsheba does not hesitate to use the divine name in the context of a lie. Perhaps, she judges the immediate threat to her and Solomon as more important than any retribution she might suffer from YHWH at a later date or, as in Numbers 30, women might be under different restrictions regarding oaths than men and Bathsheba might not have to be as careful as Nathan is about using the divine name.} Significantly, by simply speaking the name Bathsheba has added to Nathan’s script a detail that would act as evidence in support of the veracity of the oath. As Koenig states, Bathsheba’s invocation “raises the stakes for David: to swear by YHWH is a serious thing.”\footnote{Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 93.} Similarly Bodner comments, “[Bathsheba] invok[es] the sacred name to add the highest degree of solemnity to the supposed oath.”\footnote{Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 157. See also Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 16; Fokkelman, King David, 356.}

Although the addition of YHWH to an oath would have increased its seriousness for any character who was familiar with YHWH, David’s unique relationship with YHWH raises the possibility that the divine name would have a greater depth of meaning for him. With YHWH’s significance for David public knowledge,\footnote{There is no indication in the narratives that David’s devotion to YHWH is a secret. In fact, when he brings the ark to Jerusalem, his public actions in 2 Sam 6:17-19 manifest his commitment to YHWH.} Bathsheba uses this information to her advantage, as other characters do when they interact with David (see below). When she states that David swore by אלהיך, “your [David’s] God”...
(1:17), Bathsheba reminds David that YHWH is his God and that they have a pre-existing relationship. In this way, Bathsheba infuses her oath with another level of meaning that is specific to David and would force him to accept the oath.

Since David entered the narrative, the narrator has portrayed him as someone for whom YHWH is a central figure. When David first approaches Saul to fight Goliath, his words characterise him someone who sees YHWH at work in his life: “YHWH, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, he will save me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam 17:37, italics mine). Here, David attributes the past events in his life to YHWH’s personal care for him, also claiming that YHWH will continue to shape all that he will endure. On this verse Walter Brueggemann notes, “[t]his reference to Yahweh [...] is the first in the narrative [...] the word is held for the only one who believes in this God who saves slaves, as the one who cares for and keeps the lambs.”

David reiterates this perspective when he states, “YHWH will deliver [Goliath] into my hand [...] YHWH does not save by sword and the spear; for the battle is YHWH’s and he will give you into our hand” (1 Sam 17:46-47, italics mine). In this case, David’s language looks into the future, characterising YHWH as being actively involved in David’s later experiences.

According to David, YHWH guides the outcome of human affairs and offers deliverance to his people.\textsuperscript{105}

Furthermore, David speaks about the awesomeness of YHWH in his prayer (2 Sam 7:18-29), recited after he hears Nathan’s prophecy (7:4-17). Throughout his prayer, David refers to himself as YHWH’s servant, a deferential form of language\textsuperscript{106} that contrasts with his description of “YHWH God” who is both “great” and unique, “there is no one like [YHWH...]
according to all that we have heard with our ears” (7:22). David further emphasises YHWH’s grandeur through his reference to YHWH as “YHWH of hosts” (7:26-27), who is “God over Israel” (7:26). As this prayer shows, David sees YHWH as a powerful being, who cares for the entire nation and for his humble human servant (7:20).\textsuperscript{107}

Finally, David’s actions also point to his knowledge of YHWH. He adheres to the cult by offering sacrifices to YHWH (2 Sam 6:17; 25:25) and, throughout 1 and 2 Samuel, David often inquires of YHWH and bases his decisions on what YHWH has said to him.\textsuperscript{108} These details, as Brueggemann

\textsuperscript{105} Brueggemann, \textit{David’s Truth}, 27.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{107} Other examples of YHWH’s involvement in David’s life include 1 Sam 22:3; 2 Sam 5:12; 6:21; 12:22.

\textsuperscript{108} See, for example, 1 Sam 23:2, 4, 9-12; 30:7-8; 2 Sam 2:1; 5:18-25; 21:1-2.
asserts, characterise “David [as] utterly faithful to the will and purpose of Yahweh.”

In light of these observations, it is likely that an invocation of YHWH would not be insignificant for David because it would cause him to recall his relationship with the divine and, depending on how the invocation were being used, it could shape his actions. Returning to 1 Kgs 1:17, I contend that Bathsheba invokes YHWH because she knows David’s history with YHWH and wants to draw on this to lead him to make the oath. Support for this argument is found when David makes the oath by invoking YHWH (1:29-30). To illustrate this argument it is useful to turn to previous moments in David’s life where the same phenomenon is at play: 1 Samuel 25, 2 Sam 14:11; 15:1-12; 19:1-8; 24:1-4.

In 1 Samuel 25, Abigail attempts to stop David from killing her husband Nabal and his household. To address the threat of David’s attack, she not only brings him food and drink (1 Sam 25:18-19), but she also speaks to him about YHWH: “as YHWH lives [...] YHWH will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of YHWH [...] the life of my lord will be bound in a bundle of the living with YHWH your God” (25:26, 28-29). In response, David tells Abigail, “[b]lessed be YHWH, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me this day! [...] as YHWH the God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from doing evil to you, unless you had

hurried and come to meet me, because in the morning there would not be to
Nabal so much as one male” (25:32, 34). After this exchange, David spares
Nabal and his household (25:35), although YHWH strikes Nabal and kills
him later in the narrative (25:38).

In this scene, not only Abigail’s actions, but also her words convince
David not to kill Nabal.110 According to David J. Reimer, “David’s blood is
running hot and he is in no mood to be gracious. He seems ready, then, to
play the role of God when he should not [...] Only the competent action and
deft words of Abigail deflect David from his purpose.”111 Abigail knows about
David’s relationship with YHWH and she determines that this information
will address the threat that he poses to her husband. Her language echoes
David’s understanding of YHWH as being actively involved in his life (see
above) and, like Bathsheba (1 Kgs 1:17), Abigail evokes the personal
connection between David and YHWH by speaking of YHWH as אֱלֹהִים,
“[David’s] God” (1 Sam 25:29). Because David does not kill Nabal and
responds to Abigail by invoking YHWH (25:32, 34), the narrative suggests
that Abigail’s invocations have reminded David about YHWH, which has
prompted him to change his behaviour.112


Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld (ed.
Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim, and W. Brian Aucker; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 371 (italics
mine).

112. See also Gardner, who argues, “Abigail’s actions and speech have countered Nabal’s
foolishness, as well as David’s rashness. Her initiative, aligned with YHWH’s plans as
The woman of Tekoa invokes YHWH as she asks for David’s guarantee that her son would be protected, also referring to YHWH as אלהיך, “[David’s] God” (2 Sam 14:11; cf. 1 Sam 25:29; 1 Kgs 1:17). David responds to her by invoking YHWH, using the construction חי־יהוה, which he will speak to Bathsheba in 1 Kgs 1:29. David’s repetition of the woman’s invocation suggests, as it did in the Abigail episode, that he has been compelled to protect the woman’s son on account of her reference to his YHWH.

In 2 Sam 15:1-12, noted briefly above, Absalom claims that he made a vow to YHWH (נדרתי אלהיך; 2 Sam 15:7) when he requests that David allow him to travel to Hebron.

In the Hebrew Bible, a vow is distinct from an oath in that an oath, begins with human action (or inaction) and moves from there to God’s potential response, a vow begins with a plea for divine action, followed by a conditional promise of the worshiper’s response. An oath consists of a promise which is then reinforced by a curse, but in a vow the promise serves to strengthen an earlier petition to the deity: the one praying asks some favor of God and promises some gift or service in return.113

The conditional nature of the vow is reflected through the petitioner’s language. In the protasis, the petitioner normally asks God to do something for him/her (“If you...” or “If God...”) and in the apodosis he/she states what he/she will do for God (“Then I will...”).114

113. Carteledge, Vows, 16-17 (italics in original).
114. Ibid., 17.
In describing his vow, Absalom invokes YHWH three times: as the one to whom he made the vow, the one who would bring him to Jerusalem, and the one whom he would worship in Hebron (15:7-8). However, because the narrator does not provide the scene where Absalom initially makes the vow, he suggests that Absalom invented it as a ploy to trick David into letting him go to Hebron. With Absalom invoking YHWH as he speaks about the false vow, the narrator characterises him as someone who is willing to take “the Lord’s name in vain” to achieve his own goals.

Because Absalom is speaking about his vow to David, he would touch on his father’s emotional connection to both him and YHWH. When Absalom tells David that he needs to repay his vow, he signals to David that YHWH had already fulfilled what Absalom had asked and Absalom is in YHWH’s debt. If David were to deny him the right of repayment, not only would he deprive YHWH of Absalom’s due, but he would also risk Absalom facing divine wrath for not holding up his end of the vow. Thus, Absalom invokes YHWH because he knows that David cares about both YHWH and him, and that David will undoubtedly do what is best for both parties, which includes letting him go to Hebron (15:9).

115. Carteledge, Vows, 194-197; John Mauchline, 1 and 2 Samuel (London: Oliphants, 1971), 270; Hertzberg, 1 and 2 Samuel, 337. Because the vow is left ambiguous, the narrator “underscores [its] specious nature” (Carteledge, Vows, 196-197).

116. Carteledge, Vows, 198. See also Pyper, David as Reader, 143.

117. Carteledge comments, “[David] is portrayed as being ruled by his emotional love for Absalom which causes him to be overly trustful” (Carteledge, Vows, 195-196).
In 2 Samuel 19, after Absalom’s death, David mourns him by weeping and wailing, which negatively impacts the morale of his troops. Joab responds by going to David and telling him that he had, “[sworn] by YHWH, if [David] did not go out at once and speak to his servants, [then] not a man will stay with [David] this night” (2 Sam 19:8; English translations, 2 Sam 19:7). After Joab speaks to him, David stops mourning his son and takes his seat at the gate (2 Sam 19:8; English translation, 2 Sam 19:9). As David’s longtime commander, Joab knows about David’s connection with YHWH and by naming YHWH, while also speaking a word of warning, he also prompts a change in David’s behaviour.

Finally, in 2 Sam 24:1-4, Joab again speaks about YHWH to David as he tries to get David to change his mind about holding the census. In this case, however, David does not listen to Joab and he holds the census (24:4). Perhaps, David’s interest in his own desires causes him to overlook Joab’s invocation and, subsequently, YHWH. Possibly, this is what causes YHWH to punish the people with pestilence (24:15) until David had atoned for his actions (24:24-25).

Bathsheba’s invocation of YHWH in 1 Kgs 1:17 aligns well with the above passages. In each of the episodes the characters know about David’s devotion to YHWH and this knowledge leads them to invoke YHWH as they try and lead David to behave in a specific way. Bathsheba also knows about David and YHWH’s relationship, which prompts her to invoke YHWH in 1:17 because she needs David to name Solomon as his heir. However, because
Bathsheba is using the divine name to lead David to take responsibility for an oath that he never made, her invocation has much in common with Absalom’s invocation, which was aimed at convincing David to accept his false vow (2 Sam 15:7-8). With David responding as his interlocutors had hoped in five of the six episodes (1 Sam 25:35; 2 Sam 14:11; 15:9; 19:9; 1 Kgs 1:29-30), even invoking YHWH himself in three (1 Sam 14:11; 25:32-35; 1 Kgs 1:29-30), the narrative characterises David as someone who is affected by invocations of YHWH. However, while the name of YHWH would likely impact any character who had knowledge of YHWH, for David it “raises the stakes” even more because of how he understands YHWH and how YHWH works in his life\textsuperscript{118} — the name has enough power over David that it leads him to rethink killing Nabal, to swear to protect the woman’s son, to let Absalom journey to Hebron, to stop mourning Absalom, and to place Solomon on the throne.

\textit{Bathsheba’s Creativity with Nathan’s Words: Adonijah’s Actions}\textsuperscript{119}

To increase the likelihood that David will accept her words, Bathsheba emphasises Adonijah’s actions (1 Kgs 1:18-19), a technique aimed at leading David to experience anger against his son. As she did earlier, Bathsheba changes Nathan’s question, "and why is Adonijah king?" (1:13), to a statement, "and now, "

\textsuperscript{118} Koenig, \textit{Isn’t This Bathsheba}, 93.

\textsuperscript{119} For a concise list of how Bathsheba changes Nathan’s script see McCracken, \textit{Family Portraits}, 249.
see, Adonijah is king and now my lord, the king, you do not know” (1:18). Like Nathan, Bathsheba speaks of Adonijah waging a coup against the throne by using the perfect tense of מָלַךְ. She also prefices her statement with הנה והנה, “and now, see,” particles that add urgency to the situation, portraying the coup as happening while she speaks with David.120

Like Nathan, Bathsheba also emphasises David’s lack of knowledge over the situation. As noted above, however, David likely knows exactly what Adonijah is doing, but Bathsheba is making it clear that he might know that Adonijah is acting for the throne, but he is not aware of the gravity of his actions.

To clarify exactly what David does not know, in 1:19 Bathsheba enhances her description of Adonijah’s role in the political events. In this verse, Bathsheba repeats information given by the narrator in 1:9-10, which is notably absent from Nathan’s speech in 1:11-14. Whereas the narrator reported that Adonijah sacrificed, גֹּזֶר וּבָשָׂל וּבָשָׂלֹת, “sheep and cattle and fatlings” (1:9), Bathsheba says that he sacrificed, לְרָב וּמֵרָגָנָה וּלֶבֶן, “an ox and fatlings and sheep, in abundance” (1:19). By adding an “ox” and “in abundance,” Bathsheba increases the quantity of Adonijah’s sacrifice, making it even more extravagant.121 Because she recounts these details after she has told David that Adonijah has proclaimed himself king, Bathsheba

120. Savran, Telling and Retelling, 65.
121. Alter, David Story, 367.
characterises the sacrifice as a coronation feast, thus, further intensifying its gravity.122

Bathsheba also manipulates the list of those attending the feast. Whereas Adonijah invited, “all his brothers, sons of the king, and all the men of Judah, servants of the king” (1:9), Bathsheba states that he invited, “all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab, leader of the army” (1:19). In 1:7, Abiathar and Joab were listed as those with whom Adonijah consulted, but they were not listed among those invited to the feast (1:9). Bathsheba’s reference to the men demonstrates that she is not ignorant of the political situation because she knows that they were supporters of Adonijah and she assumes that they would have attended his feast. Significantly, by implying that David’s trusted comrades, Joab and Abiathar, have joined a coup with his son, Bathsheba characterises them as having betrayed David, which would anger him even more.123

In comparison to Bathsheba’s prolixity naming those invited to Adonijah’s feast, she is noticeably terse regarding those not invited. In 1:10 the narrator lists Nathan, Benaiah, the warriors, and Solomon as excluded by Adonijah, but Bathsheba tells David only that Adonijah did not invite “your [David’s] servant, Solomon” (1:19). By referring to Solomon as David’s עבד, 122. Walsh, I Kings, 13.

123. Walsh, I Kings, 14. For Kalimi, the inclusion of both Joab and Abiathar is intended to “horrify the old, weak and sick David” (Kalimi, “Rise of Solomon,” 16).
“servant,” Bathsheba not only sets Solomon apart from המלך,124 noted at the start of the verse, but also she characterises Solomon on the basis of his subjugation to David rather than their kin relationship.125 When coupled with her expanded list of those invited to the feast, Bathsheba has constructed a compelling image of Adonijah as guilty of acting against David, while Solomon is David’s loyal supporter.

*Bathsheba’s Creativity with Nathan’s Words: The Threat to David’s Wife and Son*

As noted briefly above, Bathsheba adds to her emotionally charged language by describing the repercussions of Adonijah’s actions on herself and Solomon, characters who, through their kin relationship with David, would have meant something to him on a personal level. While her description of Adonijah’s actions was an attempt at angering the king, here she tugs on his heartstrings, much as Absalom did when he spoke of his vow in 2 Sam 15:1-12 (see above).

In 1 Kgs 1:20 Bathsheba tells David “and you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you to proclaim to them who will sit on the throne of my lord, the king, after him.” Bathsheba’s first words in this verse emphasise David by compounding references to him — she adopts the second person personal pronoun ( אתה), uses the deferential address for


David (דavid), and notes his political title (המלך). By using this language, Bathsheba suggests that David, despite his frailty, is still in charge because he is the only one to whom the people look to proclaim the next king.

Following this statement, Bathsheba concludes her speech, “and it will happen, when my lord, the king, lies down with his ancestors, and I will be — I and my son Solomon — sinners” (1:21). According to Bathsheba, if Solomon does not take the throne both of them will be made חטאים, a term that does not mean that they will be judged for having done something morally wrong, but that they will be, as the NIV and NEB render it, “treated as criminals.”126 This last detail adds to the emotional appeal of the entire conversation because Bathsheba is implying that she, David’s prominent consort, and Solomon, his son, will be in grave danger should David not abide by the oath. Although Bathsheba does not develop what being חטאים entails, according to Walsh she uses חטאים as “an effective ploy for, as we will see (2:5-9), David is quite capable of imagining bloody ends for those who oppose royal power.”127 Following this argument, Bathsheba is leading David to imagine what will happen to his wife and son, if Adonijah reigns — Bathsheba and Solomon will face death because they are associated with the

126. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 96. See also Mulder, 1 Kings, 59. Keil renders this phrase, “guilt of a capital crime” (Keil, Books of Kings, 21). Noth argues that the Hebrew stem conveys the meaning “miss the target,” and does not mean that they did anything morally wrong (Noth, Könige, 21).

127. Walsh, 1 Kings, 15.
opposing party, a fate outlined by Nathan in 1:12.\textsuperscript{128} Thus, Fokkelman is correct when he argues, “Bathsheba’s politics seek to work on David’s feelings, forcing a decision to be made.”\textsuperscript{129}

Bathsheba’s words to David are shaped to ensure that he puts Solomon on the throne. According to Nicol, her entire speech “exerts mounting pressure on David [because he] is invited in turn to consider his own self-respect, the expectation of all Israel, his wife’s sense of self-preservation, her mother-love and sense of protectiveness, and his own concern for justice.”\textsuperscript{130} Significantly, in 1:17, Bathsheba invokes YHWH alongside Nathan’s fabricated oath to lead David to remember his relationship with YHWH so that he would honour the oath and would make Solomon king. Bathsheba’s invocation echoes those of other characters in the earlier narrative, who also spoke of YHWH to compel David to act.

d. 1 Kgs 1:22-27, Nathan’s Words to David

With Bathsheba having already begun the conversation with David and raised the issue of the oath, in 1 Kgs 1:22-27 Nathan enters the chamber to

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128. Again, if Bathsheba is making this assumption, then David is definitely not senile.
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129. Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 356-357. Würthwein argues that Bathsheba’s speech puts David under moral pressure (Ernst Würthwein, \textit{Das erste Buch der Könige: Kapitel 1-16} [ATD 11/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977], 12).
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speak with him.131 On Nathan’s words to David, Bodner observes, “neither Nathan nor Bathsheba seem to be in the king's chamber at the same time, but their words dovetail perfectly.”132 The parallels between Nathan’s words (1:22-27) and Bathsheba’s (1:15-21) suggest that Nathan likely heard what Bathsheba had said to David and is shaping his language to ensure consistency with Bathsheba’s;133 however, Nathan’s words also feel out of place — both Bathsheba and David speak about the oath and mention YHWH (1:17; 29-30), while Nathan omits these details.134 Accepting that Nathan knows what Bathsheba had said to David, he would also know that she had named YHWH with the oath. Thus, Nathan does not refer to the oath or to YHWH as he avoids implicating himself in Bathsheba’s misuse of

131. Unlike Bathsheba, Nathan does his obeisance to David, with “his nose/face to the earth” (1:23). This deference contrasts with his previous interaction with David in 2 Sam 12:1, suggesting that this interaction is different. Given that YHWH commanded Nathan to speak with David in 2 Sam 12:1 and he was acting on YHWH’s behalf, he did not bow. However, in 1 Kgs 1:22-27 Nathan is not acting as YHWH’s messenger, but is coming to David on the basis of his own private desires and, for this reason, he is deferent (Kalimi, “Rise of Solomon,” 18). As Ziegler comments, when David is in need of reprimand, Nathan is not deferent; however, when Nathan is coming only to speak with the king, he is “a model of a deferential and respectful subject” (Ziegler, Promises, 100-101).

132. Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 160. Although the narrator does not describe Bathsheba exiting David’s room when Nathan enters in 1:22 or Nathan exiting David’s room when Bathsheba enters in 1:28, scholars generally assume that the characters did exit as soon as the other character entered (Cogan, 1 Kings, 160; Walsh, 1 Kings, 15; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 96; Noth, Könige, 23).

133. Klein notes, “Nathan enters and corroborates Bathsheba’s words, using phrases closer to those of Bathsheba than the ones he had originally proposed for her [...]” The implication is that Nathan has listened, and his adoption of Bathsheba’s words recognizes not only the merit of Bathsheba’s presentation but also the force of her personality” (Klein, Deborah to Esther, 67). Nathan also does not mention the threat to Solomon and Bathsheba in his words to David, possibly because he cannot add to its impact on the king any more than Bathsheba already has.

134. Provan argues, however, that the differences in Nathan's speech are an attempt at ensuring that David does not sense any collusion between him and Bathsheba (Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 26).
YHWH’s name. Without the oath or YHWH as conversation topics, Nathan turns to the least contentious part of Bathsheba’s speech — he speaks to David about Adonijah.

**Nathan Echoes Bathsheba but Omits the Oath**

It is immediately clear in 1:24 that Nathan knows what Bathsheba said to David. Rather than using a question as he had told Bathsheba to do (1:13), Nathan speaks a direct statement, as she did in 1:17:

אוכי מלך אתה אמרת אדניהו מלך אתה ווים עלייבאא

“My lord, the king, you, you said that Adonijah will rule after me and he, he will sit on my throne.”

This syntactic connection between the characters’ speech is lost by the majority of commentators who render this verse as an interrogative.135 Given that the Hebrew sentence lacks an interrogative particle/adverb, scholars support their translation by arguing, in line with Wilhelm Gesenius, “the natural emphasis upon the words is of itself sufficient to indicate an interrogative sentence.”136

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Even though translating Nathan’s words as a question fits his style in 1:11-14, other scholars contend that without a clear sign of an interrogative it is not necessary to translate the verse in this way. This position is advanced by Noth, who argues, “[d]er erste Satz seiner Rede ist nicht als Frage formuliert und wohl auch nicht als Frage gemeint. Mit seiner bewußt falschen Feststellung will er den König zu einer Reaktion zwingen,” “[t]he first sentence of his speech is not formulated as a question and is not meant as a question. With his deliberately false statement, he wants to force the king to react.”

Given that there is no indication of an interrogative in this verse and there is no obvious reason why it must be translated in this way, it is reasonable to assume that Nathan is speaking a statement. Thus, Nathan is following Bathsheba’s approach, demonstrating that he is adopting her syntactic style to force David to deal with the situation.

However, Nathan’s language in 1:24 also differs both from what he had told Bathsheba (1:13) and from what she had said to David (1:17). When Nathan spoke to Bathsheba he told her to tell David that he had sworn (שבע) that Solomon would succeed him and sit on his throne (1:13) and Bathsheba maintained this language when speaking with David, only using a direct statement and adding YHWH to her description (1:17); however,

137. Noth, Könige, 22. See also Bodner, “Nathan: Prophet,” 53; DeVries, 1 Kings, 15; Walsh, 1 Kings, 16; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 96.

Nathan omits the oath and tells David that he said ( אמר) that Adonijah would succeed him and sit on his throne (1:24).

While claiming that David swore that Solomon would succeed him would bind David to make Solomon king because of the significance of the oath, telling David that he said that Adonijah would become king downplays David’s requirement to abide by these words. Furthermore, by omitting the oath, Nathan does not associate his language with Bathsheba’s in 1:17, where she invoked YHWH. In this way, Nathan continues protecting himself from transgressing YHWH. Therefore, by using אמר instead of שבע, not only does Nathan imply that David can undo Adonijah’s actions without having to risk breaking an oath or angering YHWH, but also he saves himself from being implicated in Bathsheba’s invocation of YHWH.

**Nathan’s Emphasis on Adonijah**

In 1:25-26, Nathan continues to avoid the oath and YHWH by focusing on Adonijah and his feast. In this section, Nathan uses his language, which differs from Bathsheba’s on some points, to manipulate David to take action against Adonijah by building on any anger that David might have been feeling after hearing Bathsheba’s account (1:17-21).

139. Bodner mistakenly argues that Nathan “appears to invent a completely different [oath] for another son of David” (Bodner, “Nathan: Prophet,” 53). However, Nathan asserts that David “said” not that he “swore,” which does not support Bodner’s argument that Nathan “has the nerve to play dangerously with a supposed oath to Adonijah” (Bodner, “Nathan: Prophet,” 53).

140. According to Würthwein, Nathan does not mention the oath, but speaks only of
In comparison to Bathsheba’s list of those invited to the sacrifice (1:19), Nathan, for unknown reasons, omits Joab (1:25). In 1:25 Nathan emphasises, as Bathsheba did (1:18), how Adonijah’s feast is a serious and urgent political matter. However, while Bathsheba used both ונה and ונה when outlining what Adonijah was doing (1:18), Nathan tells David that Adonijah is acting, ונה, “today” (1:25). Although Bathsheba characterised Adonijah’s coronation as happening at that moment, Nathan specifies that it is happening that very day, which, according to Walsh, indicates that “[i]t is not too late to thwart the pretender’s coup.”

Nathan adds to this characterisation of the feast, “and see they [Adonijah’s guests] are eating and drinking before him and saying, ‘May king Adonijah live!’” Cogan argues that the present participles, אכלים (“eating”) and שותים (“drinking”), which appear before the imperfect with ויאמרו (lit. “and they said”), infuse the phrase with a sense of “continuing action, as if the carousing led to the cry of the assembled.” This means, then, that one could translate ויאמרו as having the present sense of the participles so that the phrase reads, “they are eating and drinking

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Adonijah, “die dem König schnelles Handeln als geboten erscheinen lassen sollen,” “which is intended to make the king act as quickly as possible” (Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 13).

141. Joab’s name is found in the Lucianic recension and in some translations (e.g. NEB and NRSV) (Cogan, 1 Kings, 160).


143. Walsh, 1 Kings, 16. See also Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 95.

144. Cogan, 1 Kings, 160.
before him and saying.” These tenses underscore Nathan’s use of הוֹם by portraying the guests as being in the midst of feasting and proclaiming Adonijah king.

Furthermore, by telling David that the assembly is calling out, “May king Adonijah live,” even using המלך, which has only been used of David since the start of 1 Kings, Nathan continues in his attempt to anger David. As will be noted again in chapter 5, the people’s proclamation of their king was common in coronations and reflected their acceptance of the new monarch. By having Adonijah’s party proclaim Adonijah as king, Nathan characterises them as having turned their support away from David completely.

After describing Adonijah’s actions, Nathan speaks of those not invited to the feast by presenting an expanded list that differs from Bathsheba’s: “but he [Adonijah] did not invite me, me, your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoida and Solomon, your servant” (1:26). Nathan names himself first using two forms of the first person pronoun, a suffix (אני) and an independent pronoun (אני), and he calls himself David’s servant (עבדך). This language draws attention to Nathan’s own

145. Cogan, 1 Kings, 160.

146. Nathan’s language would have been “insufferable” to David and “[t]olerating it, in terms of power-politics, [would] only mean abdication” (Fokkelman, King David, 362).

147. See also 1 Sam 10:24; 2 Sam 16:16; 2 Kings 11:12 (Cogan, 1 Kings, 161). This acclamation was “an important element in the accession of a king,” being proclaimed by the people to call for the king’s well-being, which was tied up in their own well-being (Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 96; see also DeVries, 1 Kings, 16).
exclusion, after which he names Zadok (cf. 1:8) and Benaiah (cf. 1:8, 10). Finally he names Solomon, whom he describes not as David’s son, but as David’s servant (עבדך), using the same deferential language that he had used in reference to himself and which Bathsheba had used in reference to Solomon (1:19). Nathan, like Bathsheba, is trying to anger David by telling him that people who are close to him are siding with Adonijah; however, instead of including only Solomon as David’s faithful servant, Nathan also includes himself, making it clear to David that both he and Solomon are the only ones who show their “true allegiance to him.”

Nathan’s final phrase in 1:27 is another attempt at manipulating David: “Has my lord, the king, done this thing and not made known to your servants who would sit on the throne of my lord, the king, after him?” 1:27 begins with אֶם, which the majority of commentators take as a sign of the interrogative. Walsh, however, translates the phrase as a conditional, arguing that Nathan is not questioning “what David has supposedly done; he [is] simply and somewhat diffidently express[ing] his surprise and disappointment that David has acted without consulting his loyal retainers.” In this case, translating the phrase as a question or a conditional does not change its function for Nathan. By telling David that he

148. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 96.

149. Cogan, 1 Kings, 160; Mulder, 1 Kings, 61; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 28; House, 1, 2 Kings, 91; Gray, I & II Kings, 89.

150. Walsh, 1 Kings, 17.
made Adonijah king and did not let his servants, which would include both Nathan and Solomon, know, Nathan adds “one more fillip of guilt to the pressure building up on David.”\textsuperscript{151} At the same time, because he has claimed that David made Adonijah king, he reminds David that he can undo Adonijah’s kingship — it is not YHWH who has appointed Adonijah king, but David did, and this means that David can revoke the kingship. Thus, Nathan ends his words with David by waging a “personal thrust”\textsuperscript{152} against him that would contribute to his anger and by making it clear that David alone can undo the current state of the political arena.

Because Nathan had heard what Bathsheba said to David he chooses the aspect of her speech to “fill up” and, since he will not speak about the oath or YHWH, he develops Bathsheba’s image of Adonijah’s political malfeasance. By adding to the gravity of Adonijah’s coup, Nathan ensures that if David had started to feel anger over what Bathsheba had told him, his anger would magnify upon hearing Nathan’s account. Additionally, he makes it clear to David that there is nothing preventing him from revoking Adonijah’s kingship. As noted in David’s response, Nathan’s language works, “rous[ing] David’s anger and stir[ring] him into action.”\textsuperscript{153}

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\textsuperscript{151} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 17.
\textsuperscript{152} Montgomery, \textit{Books of Kings}, 76.
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e. 1 Kgs 1:28-31, David’s Words to Bathsheba

Since Nathan spoke about the oath in 1:13, it has been “incrementally gather[ing] momentum as this narrative progresses,” having started “as a question by Nathan [and being] transformed into an emphatic statement by Bathsheba (with ‘the LORD your God’ added).”\(^{154}\) By 1:28-30, the oath is finally made, with “David himself further intensif[ying]”\(^{155}\) its language by, as Bathsheba did, invoking YHWH.

David’s Oath

In 1:28, David, who has been silently listening to Bathsheba and Nathan, answers Nathan by saying, “[c]all Bathsheba to me.” David, who is again referred to as “King David” (1:1), no longer appears old and fragile, but his use of an imperative shows him taking charge of the situation and Bathsheba’s immediate response shows her respecting his power as king.\(^{156}\) However, although Nathan has been speaking with David, he calls Bathsheba and his words connect with her words to him (1:17-21) — David invokes YHWH and makes the oath, two points addressed by Bathsheba, but he never mentions Adonijah and the feast, both of which figured prominently in Nathan’s words (1:24-27). These details suggest that

\(^{154}\) Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 159.

\(^{155}\) Ibid.

Bathsheba’s language and not Nathan’s is the main impetus for David’s oath, which, consequently, leads to Solomon’s accession to the throne.157

As noted, in the ancient world oaths typically contained a reference to the deity. When David makes his oath in 1:29 he invokes YHWH in the phrase חי־יהוה, which appears 43 times in the Hebrew Bible.158 According to Manfred R. Lehman, this is “undoubtedly the most universal oath form in the ancient Near East, having its closest parallels in Akkadian and Egyptian texts”159 where it carries the meaning, “[may I live forever/as long as God or King X, if I speak the truth.”160 חי־יהוה is regularly translated “as YHWH lives”161; however, Moshe Greenberg argues that חי should be translated not as a verb, but as a noun, “by the life of YHWH.”162 Despite how one chooses to render the phrase, whether verbally or nominatively, its function is to guarantee, as Noth describes, “die Unverbrüchlichkeit des Eides,” “the inviolability of the oath.”163 Thus, when David speaks חי־יהוה in 1:29, as he

157. Possibly, Nathan’s enhanced description of Adonijah and his feast impacted David by leading him to act immediately to make Solomon king.

158. Mulder, 1 Kings, 63.

159. Lehman, “Biblical Oaths,” 84.

160. Ibid., 85.

161. See, for example, the translations of 1 Kgs 1:29 in Alter, David Story, 369; Walsh, 1 Kings, 19; House, 1, 2 Kings, 92; Rice, Nations Under God, 13; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 96-97.

162. Moshe Greenberg, “The Hebrew Oath Particle Ḥay/Ḥē,” JBL 76 (1957): 37. See also Mulder, 1 Kings, 63; DeVries, 1 Kings, 16.

163. Noth, Könige, 23. See also Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 20.
did in response to the woman of Tekoa in 2 Sam 14:11, he is making it clear to Bathsheba that he will fulfil what he has spoken.164

חי־יהוה is part of David’s longer introduction to the oath, in which he expands on the nature of YHWH as the one, “who redeemed my soul from all distress.” This entire phrase is a verbatim repetition of David’s words in 2 Sam 4:9, where he made an oath to Rechab and Baanah after they presented him with the head of Ishbaal (2 Sam 4:8). That David uses the same phrase in both scenes suggests that as much as adding YHWH to an oath would increase its solemnity, for David it has reminded him of his past experiences with YHWH.165 As discussed above, this is exactly what Bathsheba was attempting to accomplish when she called YHWH, David’s God (1 Kgs 1:17).

Having articulated his personal experience with YHWH, in 1:30 David comments, “just as I swore to you by YHWH, the God of Israel.” Because David makes the oath, whether he had initially made it becomes irrelevant.166 In other words, David’s use of כי נשא shows him taking

164. David speaks חי־יהוה in 1 Sam 20:3; 26:10, 16; 2 Sam 4:9; 12:5; 14:11. Although he does not explicitly use בוש צשם indicates that what is being spoken is an oath (Yael Ziegler, “‘As the Lord Lives and as Your Soul Lives’: An Oath of Conscious Deference,” VT 58 [2008]: 117).

165. Ziegler argues, “David’s twofold employment of an identical oath formula may evoke an analogy between stories. Nevertheless, David’s repetition has generated other approaches, leading some to comment that this is simply an oath commonly taken by David” (Zeigler, Promises, 115).

166. Pyper, David as Reader, 139; Fretheim, First and Second Kings, 24.
responsibility for the oath, despite whether he had originally made it or not.\textsuperscript{167}

Although Bathsheba told David that he had sworn by YHWH, David’s God (1:17), David changes this language and tells her that he swore by YHWH, the God of Israel (1:30), which echoes his response to Abigail (1 Sam 25:32). Given that David has just spoken about his personal relationship with YHWH (1 Kgs 1:29) and he now describes YHWH as the God of Israel (1:30), his language reflects his understanding of the divine, noted earlier, as both personal and great. For Fokkelman, this language demonstrates that “[David] means to say that Solomon’s succession is not purely a private concern but a question of national interest above all else, and that it falls under the guardianship of God.”\textsuperscript{168} Whereas Bathsheba’s goal was to ensure the safety of both herself and Solomon, David implies that the future of the monarchy is most important and this means that it is YHWH, acting as the God of Israel, who is going to take charge of the situation. Thus, David has “raise[d] Bathsheba’s language to still another level of politically efficacious

\textsuperscript{167} Solvang, \textit{Woman’s Place}, 148; Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 364. Sweeney notes that because David bases his oath on having already made the oath, which he had never made, the legitimacy of the oath is undermined; he questions, “if the condition under which it is issued is false, is the oath itself valid?” (Sweeney, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 57). Perhaps, David’s lengthy description of Solomon’s coronation ritual (1:32-35) is intended to compensate for the fact that he never made the oath in the first place.

\textsuperscript{168} Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 364. See also Hens-Piazza, \textit{1-2 Kings}, 17; Alter, \textit{David Story}, 369.
resonance [...] David now encompasses the whole national realm in declaring, ‘as I swore to you by the LORD God of Israel.’”

It is only after speaking about YHWH that David makes the oath to Bathsheba, “Solomon, your son, will rule after me and he will sit on my throne instead of me. So I will do this, this day” (1:30). David seems to have picked up on the urgency in both Bathsheba’s (1:18) and Nathan’s words (1:25) because he states that he will enact his oath to Bathsheba “this day” (1:30). With David appointing Solomon as king while he is still alive, David has made Solomon co-regent.  

According to Bodner, “it is her [Bathsheba’s] syntactic construction that ends up on David’s lips.” David’s invocation of YHWH relates to Bathsheba’s invocation, which supports the argument that her language, specifically her reference to YHWH, David’s YHWH (1:17), has “thoroughly persuaded [him] that he did [make the oath].” Thus, Bathsheba’s invocation of YHWH has played a pivotal role in leading David to make Solomon king, instead of Adonijah.

169. Alter, David Story, 369. See also Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 159; Klein, Deborah to Esther, 68.


172. Alter, David Story, 369.
The Conclusion

The passage concludes with the narrator describing Bathsheba's reaction to David's oath, “Bathsheba bowed, nose to the ground, and she did obeisance to the king and she said, ‘Let my lord, the king, David, live forever’” (1:31).

In light of the duplicitous nature of Bathsheba’s interaction with David, her words and actions might be interpreted within this context — instead of jumping for joy that the king has proclaimed that her son will rule, Bathsheba maintains the façade of a petitioner so as not to arouse David’s suspicion that anything in their interaction is amiss.

This continuation of the ruse is noted in Bathsheba’s obeisance to David, which differs considerably from that which she adopted in 1:16 and has more in common with the formality displayed by Nathan in 1:23. While most scholars pay little attention to Bathsheba’s obeisance, with some only seeing it as a sign of her gratitude for David’s oath, Kucová advances a more nuanced argument that interprets it alongside her linguistic techniques aimed at emotionally manipulating David.

Kucová suggests that while David instituted the practice of doing obeisance to those in power (1 Sam 20:41; 24:9) and many characters also


use it when they encounter David during his time as king (1 Sam 25:23), it eventually transforms into “the tool of bureaucratic machinery that overpowers David at the end of his life.”\textsuperscript{175} When both Bathsheba and Nathan first enter David’s presence, they do their obeisance to him and then forcefully speak to him about their concerns regarding the succession to the throne.\textsuperscript{176} On their actions, Kucová writes:

\begin{quote}
It is enough to bow before the king, then to speak boldly, and the king soon puts into effect the oath he has never sworn! It appears as though a routine ceremony at court which David in his youth innocently initiated and which he himself enjoyed many times later as king gradually took over and became in his old age a tool of power over him.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

The characters’ obeisance reveals that they know how to use the norms of courtly life for manipulation, co-opting an act that David had instituted to lead him to do exactly what they want.\textsuperscript{178} As we will see in chapter 7, Adonijah also knows how to use obeisance for his own ends when he omits his bow in his interaction with Bathsheba (1 Kgs 2:13).

Bathsheba’s final statement that David “live forever” (1:31) fits this line of interpretation. From David’s perspective, her words would appear to

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
176. On Nathan’s obeisance, Noth observes, “Nathan aber erscheint in der Erzählung als ein Intrigant, der es sehr gut versteht, sich im Kreise des königlichen Hofes zu bewegen und alles so zu arrangieren, daß das von ihm erstrebte Ziel erreicht wird,” “Nathan, however, appears in the narrative as an intriguer, who is very well disposed to move around the royal court, and to arrange everything in such a way that the object for which he strives is attained” (Noth, \textit{Könige}, 40; see also Kalimi, “Rise of Solomon,” 18).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
178. Ibid.
\end{quote}
be a “cry of homage”\textsuperscript{179} to announce her hope that he will continue living through his offspring.\textsuperscript{180} However, because David is lying on his deathbed, this phrase “rings somewhat hollow,” which raises the possibility that she is speaking it only to match her words with her obeisant action.\textsuperscript{181} 

f. Conclusion

In response to Adonijah’s actions in 1:5-10, Nathan speaks with Bathsheba as he attempts to lead David to put Solomon on his throne (1:11). In Bathsheba’s recital of Nathan’s script to David (1:15-21) and David’s words to her (1:28-31), invocations of YHWH appear and have different functions.

Bathsheba invokes YHWH in 1:17, a sign of her skilfully reworking Nathan’s script (1:11-14). Because Nathan had created the oath that he claims David swore to Bathsheba to increase the gravity of Bathsheba’s words for David (1:13), he never invokes YHWH to avoid associating the divine name with a lie. With this omission possibly signalling the falsity of the oath to David, Bathsheba invokes YHWH when she speaks about it in 1:17. Bathsheba, like other characters before her, understands the significance of David’s relationship with YHWH and she uses the divine

\textsuperscript{179}. Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 97. Würthwein calls the phrase a “Huldigungsformel”, a “homage formula” (Würthwein, \textit{Das erste Buch}, 15; see also Brueggemann, \textit{1 & 2 Kings}, 16). Keil, however, terms the phrase a “benedictory formula [that] was only used by the Israelites on occasions of special importance” (Keil, \textit{Books of Kings}, 22).

\textsuperscript{180}. DeVries, \textit{1 Kings}, 16; Seow, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 19; Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 97; Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 366; Gray, \textit{I & II Kings}, 90.

name to shape his response to her words in an attempt to compel him to accept the oath and proclaim that Solomon should be king.

When David responds to Bathsheba’s and Nathan’s conversations, making the oath to put Solomon on the throne (1:29-30), he invokes YHWH and uses language that aligns with Bathsheba’s. In particular, he speaks of his past experience with YHWH (1:29), which suggests that he remembers that YHWH is, as Bathsheba had said, “his God” (1:17). He also refers to YHWH as “God of Israel,” language that recalls his understanding of YHWH as concerned for the welfare of individuals as well as the entire nation. Therefore, David’s response demonstrates that he has been affected by Bathsheba’s invocation.

To fulfil his oath, David describes the coronation rite that will make Solomon the king of Israel (1:32-35). David’s words prompt Benaiah to speak about YHWH (1:36-37). Furthermore, even without naming YHWH, David adds sacral qualities to the coronation that both Zadok and Jonathan enhance as they either anoint Solomon (1:38) or report on his anointing (1:45, 48).
Chapter 5
Solomon’s Coronation and Adonijah’s Response
(1 Kgs 1:32-53)

a. Introduction

After Bathsheba’s audience with David (1:31), the narrator presents a series of related episodes that culminate in the first interaction between Solomon and Adonijah (1:53). In 1:32-35, David outlines what Nathan, the prophet, Zadok, the priest, and Benaiah, the army commander, are to do to make Solomon king. While David does not invoke YHWH as he gives his commands, there are signs that he intends for the anointing to be a sacral event.

In response to David’s commands, Benaiah invokes YHWH (1:36-37). This language contributes to Benaiah’s characterisation and will make sense of his actions in 2:28-34.

The narrator describes the fulfilment of David’s commands in 1:38-40. While David had implied the sacral nature of the coronation, this aspect is enhanced by both Zadok, who anoints Solomon (1:39), and Jonathan, the son of Abiathar (1:42), who tells Adonijah and his guests about Solomon’s coronation (1:43-48). The result of both the anointing (1:38-40) and Jonathan’s report (1:43-48) is that Solomon and Adonijah are led to see...
Solomon’s ascent as legitimated by YHWH, an interpretation that both characters will articulate later in the narrative (2:15, 24).

Jonathan’s account of the coronation incites fear in Adonijah and his guests (1:49), which causes Adonijah to flee to the altar and claim sanctuary (1:49-51). This final episode sheds light on Adonijah’s and Solomon’s characterisation, information that is necessary for interpreting 2:13-25 (chapter 7).

b. 1 Kgs 1:32-35, David’s Commands for Solomon’s Anointing

As noted, David does not speak about YHWH as he describes Solomon’s coronation; however, he includes elements that characterise it as a sacred event. This initial outline of the ritual establishes its sacral nature and will be developed both when the ritual is performed (1:38-40) and when Jonathan describes it to Adonijah (1:43-48).

In 1:32, David once more embodies his role as “King David” (cf. 1:1, 28) and exerts his power by speaking the imperative קָרָאֵל to summon Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah to him. By choosing these men, whom Nathan named in 1:26, David associates himself with the party that supports the newly unified Israel and who would directly counter Adonijah and his Hebronite followers.  

1. Gina Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 17; Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC 8; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 93; G.H. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings (vol. 1; NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 98.
David begins with a mundane command, ordering the men to take his servants and “have my [David’s] son Solomon mount the mule which is mine” (1:33). For the first time in this narrative, David acknowledges Solomon as his son and, in this same clause, he emphasises his ownership of the mule by using אשר־לי instead of attaching the personal possessive pronoun to פרדה. According to Walsh, by having David use the expanded construction אשר־לי, the narrator characterises him as speaking “pompously.”

However, David’s language is not shaping his characterisation, but it is informing the nature of Solomon’s ascent. By simply placing Solomon on a mule, David connects him with a sign of royalty. According to TDOT, “[t]he mule [פרדה] first appeared in Israel during the time of David, functioning as a royal mount.” Because David has Solomon ride his mule specifically, he would provide incontrovertible, visual, proof that Solomon “was [his] choice [for king].”

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David continues by commanding that the men have Solomon brought down to Gihon, a spring less than a half a mile to the north of En-rogel where Adonijah and his guests are feasting. von Rad assumes that David chooses Gihon because it is “a sanctuary [...a] place [that] clearly had sacral associations,” a detail that fits his argument that biblical coronations have both a sacral aspect, where the future king is anointed at a sanctuary, and a civil aspect, where the king is enthroned in the palace. Noth also claims that Gihon was a sacred site due to “der allgemeinen Vorstellung von der ‘Heiligkeit’ von wasserspendenden Quellen,” “the general conception of the ‘sacredness’ of sources of springs.”

Contra both von Rad and Noth, other scholars cannot find any evidence to support this position. According to Cogan, “[t]here is nothing to suggest that the spring was endowed with a sacred character; rather, the Gihon was chosen as the site in order to give maximum publicity to the

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6. Walsh, 1 Kings, 21.

7. Gerhard von Rad, “The Royal Ritual in Judah,” in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays (trans. E.W. Trueman Dicken; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 223. See also Baruch Halpern, The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 16. Gray argues, “both Adonijah’s coronation ceremony and that of Solomon take place by a spring. Possibly this has to do with a pre-Israelite, Canaanite coronation ritual which was performed by a ‘sacred’ spring” (Gray, I & II Kings, 66). This argument is weakened because Adonijah’s sacrifice was not a coronation (see chapter 3).


10. Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 21; Cogan, 1 Kings, 161; Walsh, 1 Kings, 21.
anointing, a counter to the private gathering at En-Rogel.”11 Thus, David chooses Gihon not only to counter Adonijah’s feast, but also to ensure that everyone in the vicinity, especially Adonijah and his guests, would know that he had chosen his successor. This argument finds support in that David wants the men to blow the שופר and to proclaim Solomon as king (1:34); thereby, adding aural elements to the coronation — not only would everyone see Solomon’s anointing, but also they would hear it (1:41).

In 1:34 David adds the first sacral element, “and let Zadok, the priest, and Nathan, the prophet, anoint him there as king over Israel.” Scholars advance three interpretations of the anointing in ancient Israel: 1) “the sacral,” where the anointing created a special relationship between the king and God (e.g. Saul, 1 Sam 10:1); 2) “the secular,” where the anointing “means the authorization of the king by the people” (e.g. David, 2 Sam 2:4); 3) “the mediating,” where both aspects originally operated together but were separated at a later point in the development of the ritual.12 Given that David has called not the people (cf. 2 Sam 2:4; 5:3), but the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan to anoint Solomon, he clearly intends for the rite to have sacral significance. This is especially the case because David, although he is speaking to Nathan and Zadok, still calls them “the priest” and “the prophet”

11. Cogan, 1 Kings, 161. See also Sweeney, 1 and 2 Kings, 58; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 98 n80; Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 21.

12. Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976), 188. For a discussion of scholarship related to anointing in ancient Israel see Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 100; Mettinger, King and Messiah, 185-188.
(1 Kgs 1:34). The superfluity of these titles emphasises them, which suggests that the men’s value for the anointing is directly related to their sacral roles.

Although David calls for the priest and the prophet to anoint Solomon, he uses a singular verb, מָשַח (1:34), to describe the anointing itself. While some scholars contend that because Zadok anoints Solomon (1:39), “Nathan, the prophet” should be removed from this verse, the inconsistency between the subject and verb can be interpreted on the basis of the narrative itself. Prior to this scene, YHWH commanded prophets to anoint kings (1 Sam 9:15-16; 16:12). By not using a singular verb and specifying that Nathan is to anoint Solomon, David does not risk overstepping his place by acting as YHWH had in the past. Furthermore, David does not command Zadok alone to anoint Solomon because priests had not anointed kings in the earlier narrative and having Zadok perform the ritual could signal the anomalous nature of Solomon’s ascent. Thus, by using a singular verb with plural subject, David commands the anointing in a way that mitigates the possibility that he would either violate YHWH or highlight the dubious nature of Solomon’s kingship. David has, then, left

13. Gray, I & II Kings, 86 note a; Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 16. Jones argues that there is no textual support for removing “Nathan, the prophet” (Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 99). The manuscript tradition is unsettled on the verb in 1:34. Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Vaticanus, and the Syriac use a plural, which aligns with the use of a plural verb in 1:45.

14. This interpretation echoes the reason for Nathan’s hesitation to speak with David in 1:11 (see chapter 4).

15. While Samuel acted as both a priest and a prophet, Zadok is only a priest.
Nathan and Zadok to decide for themselves which of them would complete the ritual.

David also implies the sacral when he speaks of “Israel” in 1 Kgs 1:34, which contrasts with his reference to “Israel” and “Judah” in 1:35. According to Noth, “‘Israel’ ist hier im überlieferten sakralen Sinne gemeint,” “‘Israel’ is meant here in the traditional sacred sense.”\(^{16}\) By using “Israel,” David characterises Solomon’s kingship as being over a “formal and cultic” unit, the “people of Israel as a whole,”\(^{17}\) one sacred body.

As noted, upon anointing Solomon the men are to “blow the שופר and say, ‘Let King Solomon live!’” (1:34). While the proclamation was a common feature in biblical coronations,\(^{18}\) the שופר adds austerity to the event. A number of translations render שופר as “trumpet”\(^ {19}\); however, this word does not capture the uniqueness of the instrument. In fact, the שופר “was not an ordinary horn” because it was used in only two contexts: during war and during solemn religious observances.\(^ {20}\) Since David is clearly not describing a

\(\text{\footnotesize 16. Noth, Könige, 24. See also Walsh, 1 Kings, 22.}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize 17. Cogan, 1 Kings, 161.}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize 18. As noted in chapter 4, this acclamation was “an important element in the accession of a king,” being proclaimed by the people to call for the king’s well-being, which was tied up in their own well-being (Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 96; see also DeVries, 1 Kings, 16).}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize 19. See, for example, the NIV, ESV, NASB, KJV, ASV.}\)

\(\text{\footnotesize 20. Walsh, 1 Kings, 22. See also Cogan, 1 Kings, 161.}\)
war, the blowing of the שופר would signal “[the] divine sanctity” of Solomon’s ascent to the throne.

Finally, David commands that the men are to go up after Solomon and, “let him enter and let him sit on my throne and he, he will be king instead of me and I have commanded him to be נגיד over Israel and over Judah” (1:35). In this verse, David confirms that Solomon will be co-regent with him when he asserts that Solomon will rule, תחתי (cf. 1:30; see chapter 4). Thus, while David is alive, both he and Solomon will rule Israel together. However, David also uses slightly different language in reference to Solomon’s role: instead of מלך, as he had used in 1:34, 35a, now David speaks of Solomon as נגיד. Furthermore, David does not say that he will act as נגיד over “Israel” (1:34), but over “Israel and Judah” (1:35).

נגיד might be translated in a number of different ways, including “leader,” “ruler,” “prince,” “shepherd,” or “Highness.” While scholars do not agree on the specific meaning of the term, in general it connotes a position of authority. Prior to 1:35, the prophets speak of YHWH appointing

21. Sweeney, 1 and 2 Kings, 58.
23. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 102.
people as נגיד, a detail that underlies Wolfgang Richter’s argument that “[d]iese Propheten gehören offensichtlich untrennbar sowohl zur Tradierung als auch zum Sitz der nagid-Formel,” “[t]hese prophets are obviously inseparable both to the tradition and the situation of the nagid-formula.”

Because it is David, and neither YHWH nor a prophet, who calls Solomon to act as נגיד (1:35), it is important to question why he might be using this term. As will be advanced below, the connection between נגיד and YHWH informs David’s use of נגיד, which adds another sacral quality to the anointing.

Scholars discussing נגיד typically refer to both its secular and sacral connotations. Tryggve N.D. Mettinger adopts a secular stance and claims that David’s use of נגיד is the oldest in the Hebrew Bible, being “a case of a secular use of nagîd that offered the basis for a subsequent theologization.”

However, Mettinger’s position is contentious because it hinges on 1:35 being dated as the oldest of all the passages in the Hebrew Bible in which נגיד appears.

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29. Mettinger, King and Messiah, 160.

E. Lipiński argues that in episodes prior to 1:35, YHWH used נָגִיד for people like Saul and David because their fathers were not kings and could not appoint them to the position. From 1:35, kings use נָגִיד to appoint their heir, which means it might be translated as “Kronprinzen,” “crown prince.”

When a king appointed someone as נָגִיד, the term “rechtmaßig die Designation des künftigen Königs durch den Monarch und theologisch seine Vorherbestimmung zu diesem Amte durch Jahwe selbst voraussetzte,” “lawfully presupposed the designation of the future king by the monarch, and theologically presupposed his predestination for this office by Yahweh himself.”

Thus, by the time of David, נָגִיד had a secular function; however, it still carried its historical sacral nuance.

As quoted above, Richter observes that the prophets regularly used נָגִיד on YHWH’s behalf, which underlies his suggestion that נָגִיד was a “Titels in der vorköniglichen Zeit der Nordstämme,” “title in the pre-kingship period of the northern tribes.” When David uses נָגִיד for Solomon, while he might be contravening YHWH by using a term normally associated with YHWH, he is trying to align the traditions of the northern kingdom with his new monarchy.

34. Ibid., 77.
35. Ibid., 83.
Taking a similar approach, Walsh posits that David appoints Solomon as נגיד to clarify that he will rule not only over the new political structure (the united Israel), but also over the older traditions from whence the term נגיד originated (the northern kingdom). On this basis, Walsh contends that David uses נגיד because he is taking into consideration the older traditions that comprise the new monarchy, which are reflected through his reference to “Israel” and “Judah” in 1:35.36

Albrecht Alt calls David’s use of נגיד a “clumsy […] certainly intentional misuse of the term [because] only Yahweh could [appoint a נגיד].”37 According to Alt, because YHWH called people נגיד, David “infringes upon the divine prerogative”38 by using נגיד in reference to his son.

Following a slightly different line of reasoning, G.F. Hasel sees נגיד as sacral but does not arrive at the same conclusion regarding David’s use of the term as does Alt. For Hasel, “[i]n the title ‘king,’ the primary emphasis is on the political element, while in the [נגיד] title the religious and sacral element stands in the foreground.”39 Because נגיד is associated with the divine (1 Sam 9:1; 2 Sam 7:8) and refers to “a charismatic call and exaltation,” Hasel contends that it cannot have only a secular meaning along

36. Walsh, 1 Kings, 23.
38. Mettinger, King and Messiah, 156.
the lines of "‘king designate,’ ‘designated heir,’ or ‘crown prince.’" Instead, in 1 Kgs 1:35, “[nāgîd] is to be understood as a title of majesty, whereby David hands on to his successor the status of nāgîd to which he had been elevated by Yahweh, thus legitimizing and safeguarding the succession by an appeal to Yahweh.”

In consideration of the above arguments, when David and not YHWH appoints Solomon as נגיד, the narrator signals “eine Wandlung in Rolle und Bedeutung,” “a change in the role and significance” of נגיד. While Hasel does not provide adequate support for his argument that David uses נגיד to ask YHWH to safeguard Solomon’s kingship, it makes sense that David would choose this term not only to appeal to some of the constituents of Israel (as per Richter and Walsh), but also to do for Solomon what YHWH had done for both him and Saul — because YHWH appointed both Saul and David as נגיד, but had not done so for Solomon, נגיד allows David to align Solomon’s ascent with both his and Saul’s. Therefore, נגיד adds another sacral element to David’s description of the anointing because it introduces “Solomon as a member of the illustrious trio Saul-David-Solomon,” being the divine point of contact amongst the kings.

41. Ibid.
42. Noth, Könige, 25.
43. J.P. Fokkelman, King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2) (vol 1. of Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 368.
This conclusion suggests that there is merit in Alt’s position because David does appear to be overstepping YHWH by using נגיד; however, if one follows Lipiński, then David is using the term because he is king and it signals his choice of successor. Notwithstanding the possibility that David invokes YHWH while he creatively reshapes his description of an oath in 2:8, David is regularly characterised as acting in ways that lessen the likelihood that he might anger YHWH (e.g. making the oath to Bathsheba in 1:29-30, not specifying that Nathan should anoint Solomon in 1:34). Given this aspect of David’s characterisation, it is not likely that he would use נגיד if it were restricted to YHWH’s use alone, which supports the conclusion that David is not challenging YHWH’s prerogative when he calls Solomon נגיד, but he is simply acting in his capacity as king.

In many of the passages where נגיד appears, it is coupled with “Israel,”44 which contrasts with David appointing Solomon as נגיד over “Israel and Judah” (1:35).45 It is noteworthy that while “Israel” might be understood as a sacral term, “Israel and Judah” is a more politicised construction because it refers to the people on the basis of their identities prior to the formation of the united monarchy. Thus, Walsh’s argument that David’s reference to “Israel and Judah” suggests that he is calling Solomon נגיד to appeal to the northern tribes makes sense.46 However, David’s use of

44. See, for example, 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 25:30; 2 Sam 5:2; 6:21; 7:8.
45. Walsh, 1 Kings, 22; Mettinger, King and Messiah, 160; Gray, I & II Kings, 91-92.
46. Walsh, 1 Kings, 23.
the sacral נגיד in conjunction with the politicised “Israel and Judah” also establishes that, while Solomon will lead political parties, he will do so in a sacral capacity, occupying the position of נגיד that has its roots in YHWH. David is, then, combining both the sacral and the political when he establishes Solomon as “נגיד over Israel and Judah” (1:35).

Although David never mentions YHWH as he outlines Solomon’s coronation, he implies that the event will not be a secular affair. By having one of the religious officials anoint Solomon, calling for the blowing of the שופר, speaking of Solomon as ruling over Israel, and appointing him to the role of נגיד over Israel and Judah, David adds sacral nuances to the rite. As discussed below, some of these details will continue to play a role in the plot, eventually shaping both Solomon’s and Adonijah’s interpretation of Solomon’s kingship.

c. 1 Kgs 1:36-37, Benaih Invokes YHWH

Although David gives both Nathan and Zadok roles in the anointing, he never mentions Benaih, the commander of the Cherethites and Pelethites (2 Sam 20:23), whom he named in his initial summons in 1 Kgs 1:32. According to von Rad, Benaih is to oversee the anointing; however, there is no textual justification for this argument because David never gives him an explicit role.

47. von Rad, “Royal Ritual,” 222.
Benaiah’s role relates not to what he will do at the anointing, but to what he does as David finishes outlining the coronation — Benaiah is “the only character who uses God’s name.”\textsuperscript{48} This detail is especially significant because David includes both Nathan and Zadok in the ritual because of their sacral roles, but neither they nor David invoke YHWH. In an interesting twist, it is Benaiah, “the bloody hatchet man who carries out all of the political killings”\textsuperscript{49} and who has not demonstrated knowledge of YHWH in the narrative thus far, who speaks the divine name.

Benaiah’s language in this scene is important for what it reveals about his character. Although Walsh argues that Benaiah is a “yes man,” someone who has a “swift, even unquestioning obedience that is often prized in military personnel,”\textsuperscript{50} this position is weakened because later in the story Benaiah does not initially fulfil Solomon’s command to kill Joab in the tent (2:30). Benaiah’s language in 1:36-37 characterises him not only as someone who cares about the monarchy, but also as someone who has an acute sense of the divine. These details account for both his hesitation to follow Solomon’s command and his change in behaviour after Solomon speaks to him in 2:31-34 (chapter 8).


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} Walsh, \textit{I Kings}, 24.
After affirming David’s words with “amen,” Benaiah articulates his commitment to YHWH’s activity through David: “thus let YHWH, God of my lord, the king, say” (1:36). Like Bathsheba, Benaiah relates YHWH to David and not to all of Israel, as David did (1:30),\(^{51}\) however, he goes further in that he implies that “David’s words are God’s own.”\(^{52}\) This language characterises Benaiah as someone who understands that a close relationship exists between David and YHWH, whereby, all that David commands mirrors what YHWH wills.\(^{53}\)

Benaiah also emphasises YHWH in 1:37 when he makes YHWH the subject of all of the active verbs: “and just as YHWH was with my lord, the king, so he will be with Solomon and he will magnify his throne more than the throne of my lord, the king, David.”\(^{54}\) In this verse, Benaiah asserts his hope for the future of the monarchy, acknowledging that as YHWH had been with David, YHWH will be with Solomon.\(^{55}\)

In the second half of the verse Benaiah expresses how YHWH’s being with Solomon will result in his reign exceeding David’s. Although it seems as

\(^{51}\) Fokkelman, King David, 370.

\(^{52}\) Fokkelman, King David, 370. Walsh argues that speaking about YHWH as the one who will fulfil David’s words might be “standard court flattery, but it also reflects an aggrandizement of the intermediary role of the king that is not fully compatible with the thinking of pre-monarchic Yahwism.” (Walsh, 1 Kings, 24).

\(^{53}\) Walsh, 1 Kings, 24. Keil also comments that Benaiah’s words convey the meaning, “may the word of the king become a word of Jehovah his God, who fulfils what He promises” (Keil, Books of Kings, 23).

\(^{54}\) Fokkelman, King David, 370.

\(^{55}\) Fokkelman, King David, 370; cf. Noth, Könige, 25.
if Benaiah is denigrating David’s reign by hoping that his son’s will be greater, this interpretation does not fit Benaiah’s clear respect for David, noted when he refers to him as “my lord the king” three times.\(^{56}\) As E.J. Revell comments, “th[is] title indicates proper recognition of the king’s status. The use of ‘my lord’ expresses fealty [...] the title] is typical for deferential relationship terms.”\(^{57}\) It is more likely, then, that Benaiah is not speaking against David's throne, but he is asking YHWH to allow David’s glory to continue being expressed through Solomon, so that David would experience “ever increasing fame in the next generation.”\(^{58}\)

Benaiah’s words to David in 1:36-37 characterise him as someone who values the monarchy and conceives of YHWH as the ultimate power behind it. As noted by Fritz, for Benaiah the kingship is “an institution that is endorsed and supported by Yahweh and whose continuation depends not only on the character of the ruler but also on divine will.”\(^{59}\) Benaiah’s understanding of both the kingship and YHWH will be referenced in chapter 8 to discuss his role in 2:28-34.

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59. Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 22. See also Keil, who argues that Benaiah’s language reflects the belief that “the prosperity of the monarchy [...] was also fulfilled by God” (Keil, *Books of Kings*, 23).
After Benaiah has finished speaking, the narrator describes how Solomon’s anointing takes place. The sacral elements noted by David reappear with slight variation and, given that Solomon experiences this ritual, they inform his understanding of YHWH’s role in his ascent to the throne, which he expresses in 2:24.

As noted, David used a singular form of משח in 1:34 and left Nathan and Zadok to decide which of them would anoint Solomon; in 1:39 Zadok carries out the rite. Noth posits that in 1:39 both Zadok and Nathan anoint Solomon together; “der Priester die Salbungshandlung vornahm, während der Prophet dazu im Namen seines Gottes den Salbungsspruch sprach,” “the priest undertook the action of anointing, while the prophet spoke the word of anointing in the name of his God.”60 However, because there is no indication that Nathan actually does anything at the ceremony, Noth’s argument cannot be sustained.

Accounting for Nathan’s inactivity during the ritual requires referring to the discussion in chapter 4. In 1:11, Nathan went to Bathsheba and not to David because YHWH did not command him to act and, on this basis, it is possible that he does not take any initiative in the anointing because YHWH never told him to anoint the king. Moreover, Nathan might not participate in the anointing because he knows that everything leading to Solomon

60. Noth, Könige, 24.
becoming king is due to his fabricated oath and not to an authentic divine word. Given that all Zadok knows about Solomon’s ascent is what David had said in 1:32-35, he has no reason to question its legitimacy and, so, he takes the lead.

As Mettinger suggests, Zadok’s role marks a “pivotal point in the development” of the concept of royal anointing in the Hebrew Bible by establishing the priest as the one who anoints kings.61 The priest’s role was eventually “conceived of as [carried out in the] name of God [and] YHWH was referred to as the ultimate subject performing the rite.”62 However, while David had included Zadok in the coronation on account of his priesthood (1:34), because Zadok is the first priest to anoint a king,63 it is unclear whether his priesthood would imbue the anointing with sacral significance or signal that the anointing is unlike both Saul’s and David’s.64

Nevertheless, Zadok adds a sacral quality by anointing Solomon with “the horn of oil from the tent” (1:39). David had built the tent in Jerusalem

61. Mettinger, King and Messiah, 229-231. As noted, Mettinger argues that 1:38 is dated earlier than 1 Sam 16:1-13 and 1 Sam 9:1-10:16. Thus, Zadok is the first priest to anoint a king and “[t]he idea of a ‘divine anointing’ was developed, for David [...] and then for Saul” (Mettinger, King and Messiah, 231).

62. Mettinger, King and Messiah, 231.

63. As noted, unlike Samuel and Nathan, who had prophetic roles, Zadok is only a priest.

64. Würthwein argues that because YHWH, the prophet, and the people, who had been involved in all previous royal anointings, are not active here, Solomon’s anointing by Zadok is illegitimate. He suggests that 1 Chr 29:22 corrects the anointing so that Solomon is made king by the assembled people. Thus, in 1 Kgs 1:38, Zadok anoints Solomon solely on behalf of David, with his priestly ministry not playing a role in shaping the meaning of the rite (Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 16).
for the ark (2 Sam 6:17) and, because the oil was in this tent, it would have been “consecrated by being in the presence of Yahweh [who] will in turn consecrate Solomon king.” As Ernst Würthwein observes, “[e]s handelt sich also um geweihtes Oel,” “it is, therefore, sacred oil.” Being anointed with the holy oil, while also hearing the sound of the people blowing the שופר (1 Kgs 1:39), would signal to Solomon that his anointing was holy and it had, then, YHWH’s support.

Furthermore, the presence of the people would legitimate Solomon’s ascent. Mettinger notes, “[the] ratification by the people was sine qua non for the legitimate transference of royal power to a new man.” Although Samuel anointed David (1 Sam 16:1-13), the people played a role in his succession by anointing him at a later time (2 Sam 2:1-4; 2 Sam 5:1-3). While the people do not anoint Solomon, the narrator specifies that they are not only present, but they are also taking part in Solomon’s coronation by proclaiming him as their king (1 Kgs 1:39) and rejoicing (1:40). In fact, the narrator exaggerates the people’s acceptance of Solomon by describing how


66. Walsh, 1 Kings, 27. See also Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 19; DeVries, 1 Kings, 18; Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 22; Cogan, 1 Kings, 162; Alter, David Story, 371; Mulder, 1 Kings, 72; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 29; House, 1, 2 Kings, 93; Fokkelman, King David, 371; Gray, I & II Kings, 90-91; Noth, König, 25-26.

67. Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 18. See also Noth, König, 26; Keil, Books of Kings, 23.

68. Mettinger, King and Messiah, 118.
their sound “split the earth” (1:40). This “short but powerful hyperbole”\textsuperscript{69} characterises the people as being so supportive of their new king that their noise impacted creation itself.

Maly argues, “[the rituals were] enough to give religious sanction to David’s selection.”\textsuperscript{70} Solomon’s experience, being anointed by Zadok using the holy oil and hearing the sound of the people blowing the קִשְׁרָן, would legitimate his kingship by suggesting to him that his coronation is a sacred event in which YHWH was participating. Because Solomon does not know what took place in 1:11-31, his experience in 1:38-40 informs his understanding of his kingship, which will accompany him throughout the rest of the narrative.

e. 1 Kgs 1:41-53, Adonijah and Solomon

The sounds of Solomon’s coronation lead to the reintroduction of Adonijah and his guests. Even though the sounding of the קִשְׁרָן would point to a sacral event taking place, Adonijah’s party does not appear to know exactly what is happening. It is only when Jonathan, the son of Abiathar (1:42),\textsuperscript{71} enters the

\textsuperscript{69} Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 371.


\textsuperscript{71} Jonathan’s role as the “bearer of news from the city” aligns with his role during Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam 15:27-28, 36; 17:17-21) (Cogan, \textit{1 Kings}, 163; Gray, \textit{I & II Kings}, 95). It is unclear how Jonathan learned about the coronation because he seems to arrive at Adonijah’s party as the קִשְׁרָן sounds. It is possible that his report summarises what eyewitnesses had told him about the coronation (DeVries, \textit{1 Kings}, 18), which makes sense both of how he knows David’s response to the coronation (1:47-48) and of the differences between his account of the coronation and the narrator’s (1:45 cf. 1:39).
scene and begins describing the coronation (1:42-48) that Adonijah and his guests learn the truth.

As he speaks with Adonijah, Jonathan also includes some of the sacral details noted by David (1:33-35) and the narrator (1:38-40), but he amplifies them by modifying his description of the anointing and providing David’s response. The way in which Jonathan describes the coronation shapes Adonijah’s interpretation of Solomon’s rise to the throne, which he articulates in 2:15.\(^\text{72}\)

Regarding the anointing itself, Jonathan uses a plural verb \(\text{ימים} ו\) with Nathan and Zadok as the subjects (1:45), which contrasts with both David’s and the narrator’s use of a singular verb in 1:34, 38. This construction increases the sacral significance of the anointing because, instead of telling Adonijah that only Zadok had anointed Solomon (1:38), he suggests that both of the religious specialists participated.

After stating that “Solomon sits on the throne of the kingship” (1:46), Jonathan describes how David’s servants go to bless him, saying, “May [your] God make the name of Solomon more pleasing than your name and

\[^{72}\text{In 1:42, Adonijah refers to Jonathan as a יֵיחַ פָּלַשׁ, which scholars interpret in different ways. For some scholars this is a reference to Jonathan’s military prowess (cf. 2 Sam 11:16, 23:20, 24:9; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 30; Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 19) or an acknowledgement of Jonathan’s noble status (Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 104). However, because Adonijah is assuming that ‘good messenger → good message’ (Fokkelman, King David, 374; see also Walsh, 1 Kings, 27) it is more likely that יֵיחַ פָּלַשׁ reveals Adonijah’s assessment of Jonathan’s character: Jonathan is ‘a good/trustworthy man’ (Cogan, 1 Kings, 163), ‘a valiant fellow,’ (Alter, David Story, 371), ‘a loyal subject’ (Seow, ‘The First and Second,’ 21), ‘a worthy fellow,’ ‘a man of substance’ (Walsh, 1 Kings, 27), ‘a good chap’ (Fokkelman, King David, 372). Thus, if Adonijah sees Jonathan as a יֵיחַ פָּלַשׁ, he will likely trust what Jonathan is telling him.}\]
his throne greater than your throne” (1:47). It appears that David did not attend the coronation but, after it ends, his servants come to congratulate him.73 Although the servants do not speak the divine name, they still refer to YHWH by using the construction, אֱלֹהִים.74 This reference echoes Bathsheba’s language in 1:17 and suggests that the servants are also aware of the personal relationship between David and YHWH. Furthermore, the servants’ entire phrase resounds with Benaiah’s words in 1:37,75 because they call for David’s God to make Solomon’s reign greater and more pleasing than David’s.76

David acknowledges what the servants have said by bowing on his bed, an act also performed by the aged Jacob in Gen 47:31.77 Then, according to Jonathan, David speaks: ““[b]lessed be YHWH the God of Israel who today granted one to sit on my throne and I witnessed it” (1 Kgs 1:48). Although David’s and his servants’ language cannot be verified because the narrator does not provide the actual scene where they speak, what David

73. The verb ברך is commonly used for offering congratulations or greetings (Mulder, 1 Kings, 77; Gray, I & II Kings, 95).

74. אֱלֹהִים is found in the ketib, which is reflected in the Syriac. The qere, אלהים, is found in many Hebrew manuscripts, the LXX (not the Lucianic recension), and the Vulgate. The Lucianic has κυριος = YHWH, supported by the Targums, and some manuscripts of the Vulgate. In the Syriac, אלהים is preceded by mry’, YHWH. This study will adopt the ketib, which follows the critical apparatus in the BHS and many commentators (Cogan, 1 Kings, 163). For a discussion of the manuscript tradition see Mulder, 1 Kings, 77-78.

75. Mulder, 1 Kings, 77.

76. Ibid.

77. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 104; Keil, Books of Kings, 25.
says relates to other parts of his story and this suggests that Jonathan’s account is accurate.

In line with 1:30, David states that it is YHWH, the “God of Israel,” who has both given the throne to Solomon and allowed David to see this event take place (1:48). While David is fully aware that YHWH did not call him to make Solomon king, he nevertheless gives YHWH credit and speaks of YHWH’s power as the national deity, the “God of Israel.”78 In addition, David claims that YHWH has taken a personal interest in his life by allowing him to live long enough to see his son become king; thereby, acknowledging that YHWH “has provided what [David] himself had no more strength to do.”79 David’s words resound with his established understanding of YHWH (see chapter 4); “there is a sense of genuineness and an appeal such as we met, for example, in the king who fled from Jerusalem. Here is the humility of the man who places the gift of the kingdom in Yahweh’s hands.”80 Thus, as Brueggemann argues, “David [...] in the feebleness of his bedridden state, provides a Yahwistic endorsement”81 of Solomon’s rise to the throne.

Jonathan’s description of the priest and the prophet’s role in the anointing emphasises the sacral nature of the event (1:45), which he

78. Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 19.
79. DeVries, 1 Kings, 19. See also Gray, I & II Kings, 96.
81. Walter Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings (SHBC; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 19. See also Walsh, 1 Kings, 29; Fokkelman, King David, 375.
reinforces when he recounts David’s invocation of YHWH (1:48). Because Jonathan is reporting these details to Adonijah, he is leading him to see YHWH’s involvement in Solomon’s ascent, which not only aligns with Solomon’s own understanding of his kingship (see above and 2:24), but also makes sense of Adonijah’s later invocation of YHWH to Bathsheba (2:15, chapter 7).

**Adonijah’s Reaction to the Rise of Solomon**

Because Adonijah assumed he would be king and did not side with his brother (1:5-10), both he and his guests react with fear to the news of Solomon’s coronation. While his guests flee (1:49), Adonijah’s fear (ירא) prompts him to get up and grasp (lit. “be strong,” חזק) the horns of the altar (1:50), as Joab will do in 2:28 (chapter 8). Adonijah’s action and his request that Solomon make an oath to spare his life (1:51) suggest that he views Solomon’s kingship as a threat to himself (cf. 1:12), which, consequently, informs his decision to speak with Bathsheba in 2:13-17 (chapter 7).

In the ancient Near East, altars were constructed as raised blocks with a projection, or horn, on each of their four corners.82 These horns were

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understood to be “emblems of the gods”\textsuperscript{83} that symbolised the power, strength, and force of animals.\textsuperscript{84} In the Hebrew Bible the horns were likely the place where the blood of the sacrifices was daubed (Lev 4:7, 25), which means that they might have been the most significant part of the altar itself.\textsuperscript{85} As Noth states, the horns were seen “als Sitze der Heiligkeit, vielleicht ursprünglich der göttlichen Gegenwart,” “as sites of holiness, perhaps originally of divine presence.”\textsuperscript{86}

One of the functions of altars in the ancient world is found in Exod 21:12-14, which speaks of how those who have unintentionally mortally wounded another (21:12) might flee to an undefined place (место; 21:13) where they could find refuge. However, if one intentionally kills another, then, “you shall take him from my altar, to die” (21:14). Because the reference to one who is guilty of unintentional murder seeking refuge at a “place” is followed by a description of a murderer being removed from the “altar,” it is assumed that the altar is the place of sanctuary for those guilty of unintentional murder.\textsuperscript{87} With YHWH located at

\textsuperscript{83} Milgrom, Leviticus, 234.

\textsuperscript{84} Milgrom, Leviticus, 234, 236. See also Stanley A. Cook, The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology (London: OUP, 1930), 29; Keil, Books of Kings, 25.

\textsuperscript{85} DeVries, 1 Kings, 19; Cogan, 1 Kings, 164; Walsh, 1 Kings, 30; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 105; Gray, I & II Kings, 96; Cook, Religion, 31.

\textsuperscript{86} Noth, Könige, 28. See also Keil, Books of Kings, 25.

the altar, YHWH was seen as protecting those who fled there until their cases were judged by those in power. 88

Although the horns of the altar are not mentioned specifically in Exod 21:12-14, Adonijah’s and Joab’s decision to flee to the altar and grasp its horns (1 Kgs 1:50; 2:28) is regularly interpreted as a sign of them invoking the same sanctuary custom. 89 Complicating this argument is the fact that the one claiming sanctuary in Exodus appears to be on the run after having committed a fresh murder, which is not the case in either of the Kings’ passages; 90 focusing on 1 Kgs 1:50, 91 Adonijah goes to the altar because he fears Solomon (1:50). 92 Thus, Mulder suggests that Adonijah is still claiming asylum, but “the reference is to political asylum, not to unintentional homicide.” 93 Similarly, Bodner remarks, “[b]y ‘seizing the horns of the altar,’

88. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 20; DeVries, 1 Kings, 19; Walsh, 1 Kings, 30; Phillips, Ancient Israel’s Criminal Law, 100; Gray, I & II Kings, 96; Noth, Könige, 29; Keil, Books of Kings, 25.


91. See chapter 8 for an analysis of 1 Kgs 2:28.

92. Viberg, Symbols of Law, 122.

93. Mulder, 1 Kings, 79-80. Barmash argues, “[Adonijah] seeks sanctuary because he is a political offender […] When Adonijah flees to the sanctuary, he is seeking refuge from his political predicament, not from committing a homicide” (Barmash, Homicide, 73).
perhaps Adonijah invokes the principle of Exod. 21.12, and hopes for clemency on the grounds of his brother’s compassion.\textsuperscript{94}

On the relationship between Exod 21:12-14 and 1 Kgs 1:50 and 2:28, Jonathan Burnside raises the possibility that the Kings’ passages each present a “‘hard case’ for Solomon since both, in different ways are positions at some distance from the paradigm cases of Exod 21:12-14.”\textsuperscript{95} By adopting an imagistic and not a literal approach, Burnside contends, “[t]he question is no longer whether the dispute is ‘covered’ by the literal meaning of the words of the rule but whether the dispute is sufficiently similar to the picture evoked by the rule to justify its use in order to resolve the problem.”\textsuperscript{96} On this basis, even though Adonijah and Joab do not conform to the standard asylum seekers as per Exodus 21, this does not mean that they cannot claim asylum.\textsuperscript{97} Instead, because mortal fear drives them to the altar, they are close to the paradigm of the asylum seekers in Exodus and could also claim asylum there.\textsuperscript{98} Anthony Phillips similarly comments, “any person in fear of his life could seek asylum at the sanctuary where he might remain until he


\textsuperscript{95} Burnside, “Flight of the Fugitives,” 420.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 421.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 422-423.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 423.
could enter into a satisfactory arrangement which would allow him to leave in safety.’”

With Solomon anointed as king, Adonijah determines that he presents a threat to his life. This fear prompts Adonijah to flee to the altar and, as he grasps the altar’s horns, he waits for Solomon to judge his case.

The Characterisation of Adonijah and Solomon

When Solomon hears of Adonijah’s flight to the altar, the stage is set for the brothers’ first meeting. The narrator uses Adonijah’s words in this scene to reveal how he understands his brother, details that will become vital for the discussion of 1 Kgs 2:13-25 (chapter 8). Furthermore, as Bodner notes, “this scene features the inaugural direct speech of Solomon. According to another basic principle of Hebrew narrative, often a character’s first words can provide a defining moment of characterization.” In agreement with Bodner, these verses are necessary for understanding Solomon because hidden facets of his character emerge as he speaks.

In 1:51-52, anonymous reporters tell Solomon that Adonijah has said, “Let King Solomon swear to me first [lit. “as/like the day”] that he will not kill his servant by the sword.” Even though the narrator never described


101. Bodner notes the irony of Adonijah’s request: “[i]n light of the fact that Solomon is crowned *instead of* Adonijah by means of some dubious work with oaths, it is surely ironic that Adonijah here asks for an ‘oath,’ since it is precisely by this means that he has been
Adonijah saying these things when he was at the altar (1:50), because what the reporters have said about Adonijah’s fear and his grasping the horns of the altar align with the narrator’s words in 1:50, it is reasonable to assume that they are being truthful about Adonijah’s request for the new king.

Adonijah’s words shed light on his interpretation of Solomon. On the one hand, because he asks Solomon to swear that he will spare him, Adonijah recognises his authority. This interpretation is supported by Adonijah’s reference to Solomon as “King Solomon” (1:51). Furthermore, Adonijah casts himself as “his [Solomon’s] servant,” thereby, adopting a subordinate position in relation to his brother (cf. 1:17, 26, 27).

On the other hand, despite his brother’s authority and that it has made Adonijah fear for his life, he does not admit defeat. Instead, he uses his words to try and gain some amount of safety from his brother, asking not that Solomon simply keep him safe, but that he, שבע, “swear,” that he would be safe. As discussed in chapter 4, oath-language is serious and Adonijah’s willingness to ask for an oath from Solomon suggests that he still believes that he “holds […] the] cards to bargain with.”

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outmaneuvered for the throne!” (Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 160 (italics in original)).

102. Viberg, Symbols of Law, 122.

103. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 20; Walsh, 1 Kings, 32; Alter, David Story, 373; Viberg, Symbols of Law, 122.

104. Walsh, 1 Kings, 31. See also DeVries, 1 Kings, 20.
Additionally, while Adonijah uses deferential language in his self-references, there are signs that he is not speaking with complete deference. For example, instead of saying “[l]et King Solomon swear to me if he will,” he says “[l]et King Solomon swear to me.” Also, instead of saying “that I shall not die,” he says “that he will not kill me.” In both cases, Adonijah does not use the typical style of deferential speech, but opts for more direct language.

Overall, Adonijah appears ambivalent towards Solomon, both acknowledging his role as king while, at the same time, attempting to remain in power. This latter detail in particular raises the possibility that, although Adonijah did not try to take the throne from David in 1:5-10, he has not capitulated completely to Solomon’s kingship. As discussed in chapter 7, Adonijah’s desire for the throne will ultimately lead to his death (2:13-25).

In 1:52, Solomon responds to his messengers’ words, “if he [Adonijah] will be a son of worthiness (בן־חיל), not one of his hairs will fall to the earth but, if I find evil (רעה) in him, he will die.” This verse is important because it contributes to Solomon’s characterisation, in line with the quote from Bodner above. Since 1 Kings began, Solomon has been passive and silent; as Fokkelman observes, “[n]ever do we see him take a step or utter a word. He

105. Walsh, 1 Kings, 32.
106. Ibid.
is urged forward by his faction and appointed by the legal authority, mounted, anointed, etc. by others.”

However, when Solomon speaks in 1:52, the nuances of his character are brought into relief.

Solomon’s decision not to kill Adonijah reveals that he interprets his claim for asylum as “sufficiently proximate to the social stereotype of the legitimate asylum seeker [as in Exod 21:12-14].” Nevertheless, even if Solomon is merciful because he does not immediately slaughter Adonijah, his words are vague and not truly benevolent.

In response to Adonijah, Solomon asserts that he must be a בן-חיל, which is similar to Adonijah’s use of איש חיל in reference to Jonathan (1:42). In 1:42, איש חיל conveyed Adonijah’s characterisation of Jonathan as a worthy man that aligned with his expectation that Jonathan would bring good news. Solomon’s use of בן-חיל, however, relates to Adonijah’s proscribed behaviour; as noted in TDOT, בן-חיל carries “a peaceful sense […] it characterises a man who is faithful and reliable. If Adonijah shows himself to be such, Solomon will protect him.”

107. Fokkelman, King David, 369 (italics in original). See also Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 23; Alter, David Story, 373; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 20; Walsh, 1 Kings, 33-34; Maria Häusl, Abischag und Batscheba: Frauen am Königshof und die Thronfolge Davids im Zeugnis der Texte 1 Kön 1 und 2 (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag Erzabtei, 1993), 278; Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 13. For more on Solomon’s passive characterisation see Jerome T. Walsh, “The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5,” CBQ 57 (1995): 473-474. It is noteworthy that Solomon is as passive as David was in 1:1-4. Both characters are the recipients of others’ actions but, while David declines in health and eventually loses his position as king, Solomon increases in power and becomes king.


109. Fokkelman, King David, 374; Walsh, 1 Kings, 27.

110. H. Eising, “חיל,” TDOT 4: 350. See also DeVries, 1 Kings, 20; Mulder, 1 Kings, 81; Jones,
As implied in the quote from TDOT, Adonijah’s being a בן-חיל is the condition that must be satisfied for Solomon to ensure that “not one of his hairs will fall to the earth” (1:52). This phrase, a euphemism for death, is also found in 1 Sam 14:45 and 2 Sam 14:11 where it is included in oaths made using the formula “as YHWH lives.”

In 1 Kgs 1:52, Solomon never invokes YHWH to swear to Adonijah, as Adonijah had requested (1:51), which allows Solomon to co-opt power for himself — Solomon, alone, will decide whether Adonijah is a בן-חיל and, if he feels that Adonijah does not live up to expectations, he will be free to kill him.

Solomon similarly endows himself with power over Adonijah when he states, “if I find evil in him, he will die” (1:52). Although it is likely, given the context, that רעה refers to Adonijah acting in a way that threatens Solomon politically (e.g. “treason and disloyalty” to his crown), Solomon does not specify to what רעה refers. Therefore, not only will Solomon decide if Adonijah is a בן-חיל, but he will also decide whether Adonijah is acting in a manner that is רעה or not.

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1 and 2 Kings, 104. Alter argues that the force of בן-חיל “is obviously something like ‘a decent fellow’” (Alter, David Story, 373). Würthwein translates בן-חיל as a “Edelmann,” “nobleman,” (Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 20) and Keil translates it as “brave” (Keil, Books of Kings, 25). Both Würthwein and Keil’s translations do not work well, given that Solomon is using בן-חיל as he restricts Adonijah’s behaviour.


112. Walsh, 1 Kings, 34, 32; Gunn, “David and the Gift,” 32.

113. DeVries, 1 Kings, 20.

114. Walsh, 1 Kings, 34, 32; Gunn, “David and the Gift,” 32.
After Solomon has given his verdict, Adonijah is able to leave the altar but he does not do this of his own accord. In 1:53, Solomon further exerts his power by having Adonijah brought down from the altar, an act that reverses the brothers’ roles. Adonijah had been the active character, who exalted himself as he claimed his future as king (1:5-10) and went to the altar when he feared for his life (1:50), while Solomon was nothing more than a name. In 1:53, Solomon takes the lead and acts upon Adonijah, making it clear that he is now in charge and his brother no longer has any freedom.

This event is what finally leads the brothers to meet — Adonijah, now active, comes to Solomon and does obeisance to him without speaking a word. While it is possible that this act is a sign either of Adonijah’s “total surrender” to his brother’s will or of reconciliation between them, it is more likely that it is as manipulative as Nathan’s and Bathsheba’s obeisance to David in 1:16, 23, 31 (chapter 4). This is the case because, as will be suggested in chapter 7, Adonijah’s request for Abishag in 2:17 is politically motivated. Thus, as he comes to Solomon for the first time, Adonijah mimics

115. Walsh, *1 Kings*, 32.


deference to appear as if he has given up his political desires when, in fact, he has not.

In response to Adonijah, Solomon commands, “go to your home.” Instead of banishing him or putting him under house arrest (cf. 2 Sam 14:24, 1 Kgs 2:26), Solomon allows Adonijah to return to his home to live “as a private citizen.”118 Even though Solomon gives Adonijah some amount of freedom in this command, he has still stripped him of political power by creating distance between him and the heart of the monarchy, as he will do to Abiathar in 2:26.119

In summary, 1:50-53 are important for what they reveal about Adonijah and Solomon. Adonijah is characterised as submitting to his brother but, at the same time, he seems not to have given up his own self-interest.

Solomon appears merciful because he has not commanded Adonijah’s death, however, he has placed himself in the position of defining the parameters of the acceptability of Adonijah’s behaviour. Because Solomon never swears by YHWH that Adonijah will be safe, never explains what it means for Adonijah to be a בן־חיל, and never defines רעה, Solomon has given himself power over his brother’s life and death. As Walsh rightly states, “[b]eneath the appearance of mercy [Solomon] maintains complete control

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118. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 105-106. See also Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 23-24; Cogan, 1 Kings, 164; Würrthwein, Das erste Buch, 20; Noth, Könige, 29.

119. Alter, David Story, 373.
of Adonijah’s destiny.” It is not until 2:13-25 that these aspects of the brothers’ characterisation will become important when they interact via Bathsheba (chapter 7).

f. Conclusion

1:32-53 outline the events that make Solomon the king of Israel. As David tells Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah how to anoint Solomon (1:32-35), he does not explicitly name YHWH. Instead, David includes subtle sacral qualities in the rite that eventually lead both Solomon and Adonijah to assume that YHWH chose Solomon as David’s heir.

After David finishes describing Solomon’s coronation, Benaiah invokes YHWH (1:36-37). His words characterise him as a man who respects the monarchy and has knowledge of the divine, details that will inform his role in 2:28-34 (chapter 8).

In 1:38-40, the narrator reports Solomon’s anointing and the sacral details noted by David are enhanced when Zadok anoints Solomon using the sacred oil and the people blow the שופר. For Solomon, this experience would suggest to him that YHWH supported his rise to the throne.

Adonijah and his guests hear the sounds of the coronation, but have no idea that Solomon has become king (1:41). Jonathan enters the scene and

120. Walsh, “Characterization of Solomon,” 482. Fokkelman argues, “[a]nd who will decide what ‘good’ and ‘bad’ entail? Why, the new despot of course!” (Fokkelman, King David, 379).
explains what has taken place, amplifying the rite’s sacral qualities by
describing that both the priest and prophet anointed Solomon and that
David interpreted the anointing as originating from YHWH (1:43-48).
Jonathan’s report shapes Adonijah’s understanding of Solomon’s coronation,
leading him to see Solomon as YHWH’s choice for king (2:15).

Upon hearing about Solomon’s coronation, Adonijah fears his brother
and flees to the altar (1:49-50). This event sheds light on the nuances of
Adonijah’s and Solomon’s identities and their relationship. Adonijah’s
request in 1:51 characterises him as both resigned and active, which raises
the possibility that he has not given up his political ambitions. In response to
Adonijah, Solomon carefully shapes his language to give himself control over
his brother’s life (1:52). Significantly, these aspects of their characterisation
will be necessary for making sense of their indirect interaction in 2:13-25
(chapter 7).

With Solomon now anointed as the one who will rule Israel upon
David’s death, in 2:1 the moment of David’s death arrives. Before Solomon
can replace David (2:12), David speaks his last words to his son, invoking
YHWH (2:3-4) before he instructs Solomon to execute Joab (2:5-6) and
Shimei (2:8-9). As we will see in the following chapter, although David
appears to be speaking about YHWH to ensure that his son is a pious king,
the function of this language is shaped by his references to his son’s
prosperity and his commands aimed at ensuring the stability of his son’s kingship.
Chapter 6
King David’s Last Words
(1 Kgs 2:1-12)

a. Introduction

Following Solomon’s command that Adonijah “go home” (1:53), in 2:1 the
narrator shifts his focus away from the new king and places it on David. As
“the time of David’s death drew near” (2:1), he delivers a speech to Solomon
regarding what he is to do when he takes sole leadership of the kingdom
(2:2-9). The passage concludes with an account of the death of David
(2:10-11) and Solomon’s ascent to the throne (2:12).

David’s language in 2:2-4 evokes religious themes that sit
uncomfortably alongside his violent instructions in 2:5-9. While scholars
regularly argue that the friction between the sections is due to

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1. David’s farewell speech echoes other scenes in the Hebrew Bible where a biblical hero
lives to an old age and the narrator focuses on him speaking his last words (e.g. Genesis
48-49, where Jacob speaks his farewell speech; Deuteronomy 31-34, where Moses speaks
his farewell speech). David’s last words take on an authoritative nuance because they are
“instruction[s] for the next generation” (Martin O’Kane, “The Biblical King David and his

2. Isaac Kalimi, “The Rise of Solomon in the Ancient Israelite Historiography,” in The Figure
of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect (ed. Joseph
Verheyden; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 30; Terence E. Fretheim, First and Second Kings (WestBC;
Louisville: WJK, 1999), 25; Jerome T. Walsh, 1 Kings (BOSHNP; Minnesota: The Liturgical
CBQ 57 (1995): 475; Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC 8; Nashville: Broadman & Holman,
1995), 95; G.H. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings (vol. 1; NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 107;
J.P. Fokkelman, King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2) (vol 1. of Narrative Art and Poetry in
the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis; Assen: Van
Gorcum, 1981), 38. For a poetic analysis of 1 Kgs 2:1-10 see W.T. Koopmans, “The
deuteronomistic redaction,\(^3\) from a narrative critical perspective it will be seen as inherent to the narrative artistry of David’s speech.\(^4\)

In 2:2-4, David names YHWH as he emphasises the importance of Solomon prioritising YHWH no matter what he does during his reign. When David then calls for the deaths of Joab (2:5-6) and Shimei (2:8-9), he aligns them with his references to YHWH by demonstrating that this violence is not gratuitous but accords with YHWH’s laws.

However, underlying David’s apparent religiosity (2:2-4), there are subtle hints that his interest lies not in his son’s piety, but in his prosperity. This theme is also noted in 2:5-9, where there is sufficient evidence to suggest that David does not call for the deaths of Joab and Shimei to punish them for their past but to strengthen Solomon’s kingship.

Significantly, in 2:8-9 David invokes YHWH when describing the oath that he made to guarantee Shimei’s safety. In this verse, the possibility emerges that David could be creatively using oath-language and the divine name in order to ensure that Solomon knows that he is free to kill Shimei.

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4. Walsh, 1 Kings, 37-38.
b. 1 Kgs 2:1-4, David’s Instructions for Solomon: YHWH

In 2:1-4 David invokes YHWH twice as he describes how Solomon is to rule. As noted, this language conditions the nature of David’s violent commands (2:5-6, 8-9) because, instead of simply telling Solomon to kill Joab and Shimei because they threaten his reign, David validates their deaths by showing that they are punishment for wrongdoing and align with YHWH’s laws.

Furthermore, although David’s invocations might be interpreted as signalling his desire that Solomon will be a pious king, they are actually intended to achieve another end. Upon closer inspection, David’s invocations are aimed at leading Solomon to adhere to YHWH to ensure his prosperity as king, which would ensure David’s legacy.

David’s words to Solomon begin not with a reference to YHWH, but with a reference to the violence that shapes 2:5-9. After stating that he is “about to go in the way of all the earth” (2:2), David tells Solomon to “be strong and be a man” (2:2). According to David Clines, “[i]t is essential for a man in the David story that he be strong — which means to say, capable of violence against other men and active in killing other men.”5 This quality “manifests itself sometimes as what we might call courage,” a concept

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conveyed by the word חזק, “be strong.” In fact, David lived this attribute because, according to Clines’ calculations, he was responsible for the deaths of approximately “140,000 men, in addition to the 15 individuals whose deaths he is said to have been personally responsible for.”

While David’s words in 2:2 might imply that Solomon’s reign will be shaped by the same violence as David’s, the narrator characterises it as peaceful. Accepting that Nathan’s prophecy in 2 Samuel 7 is alluding to Solomon, the peace of his kingship is noted: “[YHWH] will appoint a place for [the] people Israel; [...] they will be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more [...] I will give you rest from your enemies” (2 Sam 7:10-11). Moreover, although David was unable to “build a house for the name of YHWH his God because of the warfare” (1 Kgs 5:3), Solomon states that for him, “YHWH my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune” (5:4).

With Solomon’s reign not being as violent as David’s, David’s initial command that Solomon “be strong and be a man” does not reflect how Solomon will have to act throughout his kingship, but how Solomon must act in the near future to reach that time of peace. David’s violent commands

7. Ibid.
8. According to Maly, Solomon arose to the position of king during the time of the pax Davidica, the only threat being “the Aramean hordes that prevented Assyria from becoming a great power at the time” (Eugene H. Maly, The World of David and Solomon [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966], 115 (italics in original)).

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(2:5-6, 8-9) describe what Solomon must do to bring about his peaceful kingdom — he must kill Joab and Shimei, men who could threaten his reign. When Solomon calls Benaiah to kill Adonijah (2:24), Joab (2:31-35), and Shimei (2:46) he is characterised as being strong and being a man, which leads him both to establish his kingdom (2:46) and to pave the way for the time of peace that he will describe in 5:3-4.

Between David’s call for Solomon to “be strong and be a man” and his commands regarding how Solomon is going to have display these qualities (2:5-9), David interjects his vision for Solomon’s rule. First, David calls Solomon to “keep charge/watch of the commands of YHWH, your God” (2:3). Up to this point, YHWH has always been David’s God, but here David refers to YHWH as Solomon’s God. This language suggests that David wants Solomon to have the same relationship with YHWH as he had, which entails keeping YHWH’s commands.

David emphasises the importance of these commands by providing an expanded list of what it means for Solomon to keep them: Solomon must “walk in [YHWH’s] ways to preserve his statutes, his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the הורדה of Moses” (2:3). While some scholars attempt to the identify the “הורדה of Moses,”

9. See, for example, 1 Sam 25:29; 2 Sam 14:11, 17; 18:28; 24:3, 23; 1 Kgs 1:17.
Walsh asserts that this detail is not “significant for the narrative’s development.”\(^{11}\) Walsh is correct because it is not the identity of the “תּוֹרָה of Moses” specifically that is important for David, but its contents, which David lists: the תּוֹרָה of Moses contains YHWH’s statues, commandments, judgments, and testimonies. With these things being what a king needs to govern, David is emphasising that Solomon must rely on YHWH as he establishes the precepts of his reign. In other words, the guide for how Solomon will rule his kingdom originates from YHWH, not Solomon or a human source, having been established since Moses’ time.

It is at this point that David shifts from piety to prosperity, as he reveals why Solomon must follow YHWH’s תּוֹרָה. According to David, by focusing on YHWH’s תּוֹרָה, Solomon will find success as king: he will “be successful in all which [he does] and everywhere [he] turns” (2:3). Benjamin Edidin Scolnic argues that David’s morality is influencing his words;\(^{12}\) however, Walsh contends that David’s language “smacks of an opportunism.”\(^{13}\) Walsh’s proposal is more convincing than Scolnic’s because David is not telling Solomon to hold to YHWH’s תּוֹרָה because this will make him a good person, but because it will ensure that he will have a prosperous

\(^{11}\) Walsh, 1 Kings, 39.


\(^{13}\) Walsh, 1 Kings, 39. See also Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 26.
future — David’s reference to prosperity undermines the morality of his words.

This theme also appears in 2:4 when David tells Solomon that he
must follow YHWH’s תֵּהֶה “in order that YHWH will establish his word
which he spoke about me saying, ‘if your sons keep their way to go before
me in truth and in all their hearts (לב) and in all their souls (נפש) saying, to
you a man will not be cut off from on the throne of Israel.’”\textsuperscript{14} Because of the
conditions David has attached to the fulfilment of YHWH’s word, scholars
question whether he is alluding either to the covenant conveyed to him by
Nathan in 2 Sam 7:11-16, which does not have conditions, or to another
covenant altogether (e.g. 2 Sam 5:1-3).\textsuperscript{15} While consensus has not been

\textsuperscript{14} According to Hays, this phrase is “[t]he only speech by Yahweh in the Succession
Narrative” (J. Daniel Hays, “Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?
Narrative Subtlety in 1 Kings 1-11,” \textit{JSOT} 28 (2003): 159). However, because these words
are spoken by David, they are not truly a “speech by Yahweh.”

\textsuperscript{15} Gina Hens-Piazza, \textit{1-2 Kings} (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 24; Keith Bodner
the Eyes of his Court} (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2005), 163; Simon J. DeVries, \textit{1 Kings} (WBC
12; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 35; Volkmar Fritz, \textit{1 & 2 Kings: A
Continental Commentary} (trans. Anselm Hagedorn; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 24;
Cogan, \textit{1 Kings}, 172; Brueggemann, \textit{1 & 2 Kings}, 26; Mulder, \textit{1 Kings}, 91; Walsh, \textit{1 Kings},
39-40; Provan, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 31-32; House, \textit{1, 2 Kings}, 96; Gene Rice, \textit{Nations Under God: A
Commentary on the Book of 1 Kings} (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 14; Jones, \textit{1 and 2
Kings}, 107; Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 386; Gray, \textit{I & II Kings}, 100; C.F. Keil, \textit{The Books of Kings}
(BCOT; trans. James Martin; ed. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872),
28; F. Burney, \textit{Notes on the Hebrew Text of Kings: Introduction and Appendix} (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1803), 14. Michael Avioz, against the majority of scholars, argues that the
covenant in 2 Samuel 7 is conditional. See Michael Avioz, “The Davidic Covenant in 2
Samuel 7: Conditional or Unconditional?” in \textit{The Ancient Near East in the 12th-10th Centuries
BCE, Culture and History, Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of
Haifa, 2-5 May, 2010} (ed. Gershon Galil, Ayelet Gilboa, Aren M. Maeir, and Dan’el Kahn;
the words of 2 Sam 7:13b-16 are quoted nor any of its circumstances recalled” (Richard D.
102). While Solomon will use language that echoes 2 Samuel 7 in 1 Kgs 2:24, which
suggests that he might have known about this covenant and is referring to it (see chapter 7),
the same cannot be said about David’s words in 2:4.
reached on the precise episode to which David is referring in 1 Kgs 2:4,\(^\text{16}\) it is important to note that he is calling for his descendants’ complete adherence to YHWH’s תורה because he wants them to keep it with both their לב and their נפש.\(^\text{17}\) According to C. Westermann, by using bothjamin and נפש together, the reference is to “a personal relationship between God and an individual,”\(^\text{18}\) which implies “the intensity of the involvement of the entire being.”\(^\text{20}\)

Furthermore, the gravity of these conditions is enhanced because David has named YHWH — he is not referring to just any word spoken about his house, but both the word and the conditions originate from YHWH. Therefore, the descendants have to devote their entire selves to YHWH because YHWH called them to do so and because YHWH will act for their benefit when they do.

\(^{16}\) According to Rice, the difficulty in identifying David’s reference in 2:4 relates to the ambiguity of the term “Israel,” which could refer either to the united monarchy or to the northern tribes. Because David made a covenant with the northern tribes in 2 Sam 5:1-3 and the monarchy is not fully united in 1 Kgs 2:4, it is possible that David is speaking specifically of this covenant and is not referring to 2 Samuel 7 (Rice, Nations Under God, 19; see also Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 24). It is not clear, however, how the covenant of 2 Sam 5:1-3 could be the covenant in 1 Kgs 2:4 when it also does not have conditions attached to it.

\(^{17}\) "לב" might be understood as the seat of human emotions (e.g. pain, joy, fear, doubt, courage), or “the capacity to evaluate a matter critically [...] and juristic equilibrium” (F. Stolz, "לב," TLOT 2:639).

\(^{18}\) "נפש" has a range of meanings including, breath, throat, longing, soul, life, living, or corpse (C. Westermann, "נפש," TLOT 2:744).

\(^{19}\) Westermann, TLOT 2:751.

However, while the level of the descendants’ commitment would require a significant amount of piety, David has spoken of the benefit to his house, as he did in 2:3. 2:4 is not, then, a call to piety for the sake of YHWH, but a call to piety for the sake of the Davidic line.

In his speech in 2:2-4, David portrays Solomon’s reign as being characterised not by the violence to which David alludes in 2:2 and that he develops in 2:5-9, or by Solomon’s own laws, statutes, and ordinances, but by his commitment to YHWH, Solomon’s God. As Rice summarises,

strength is not for the personal, arbitrary, or despotic use of the ruler. Above kingship — and leadership in general — stands God’s torah, limiting and conditioning all human exercise of power. If one would be a successful ruler or leader [...] one must live in steadfast, trustful dependence on God and be committed to God with one’s total inner being — intellect, will, and emotions.21

Nevertheless, while David’s language appears pious, it is also self-interested. As noted in the above quote, David is telling Solomon to keep YHWH’s commands as written in the תּוֹרָה of Moses because this is what one needs to do to “be a successful ruler or leader.”22 David has, then, made adherence to YHWH the prerequisite for his son’s success (2:3) and, by extension, David’s own success.

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22. Ibid.
c. 1 Kgs 2:5-9, David’s Instructions for Solomon: Other Characters

In 2:5, David shifts his speech away from the religious themes of 2:2-4 to instruct Solomon regarding how he must deal with specific people in the kingdom. As I will advance below, David wants Solomon to kill Joab (2:5-6) and Shimei (2:8-9) and to deal kindly with the sons of Barzillai (2:7), because of the benefit to Solomon. Looking back to Rogers’ quote in chapter 1 of this study, in 2:5-9, “[David], the father, skilled in the consolidation of power, gives his son calculated political advice to ensure the stability of the throne after he is gone.” However, because David has just spoken about YHWH and the importance of Solomon adhering to the ways of YHWH (2:2-4), it would not make sense for him to tell Solomon to kill Joab and Shimei because they could threaten his role as king because, if he had done this and Solomon acted on his words, Solomon would be a murderer. Even if the “תורה of Moses” is an ambiguous reference, it is likely that murder would directly contravene it (cf. Exod 20:13). Returning to Rice, he usefully states, “[a]bove kingship — and leadership in general — stands God's תורاة, limiting and conditioning all human exercise of power.” With YHWH’s תוראה as a guide, David outlines Joab’s and Shimei’s previous sins to suggest to


24. This interpretation echoes 1 Samuel 25. In this episode, David spoke with gratitude to Abigail for her role in stopping him from killing Nabal and, thus, ensuring that he would not become a murderer (1 Sam 25:32-34).

Solomon that killing them is not a violation of YHWH’s but a valid punishment.

_David’s Instructions Regarding Joab, 1 Kgs 2:5-6_

The first character to whom David refers is Joab, son of Zeruiah (1 Kgs 2:5): “you [Solomon] know what he did [to/for me] Joab son of Zeruiah, and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner son of Ner and to Amasa son of Jether.” Joab sided with Adonijah (1:7, 41) and Bathsheba told David about his allegiance (1:19); however, David suggests that it is Joab’s involvement in the murders of Abner and Amasa that requires that Solomon punish him by using his wisdom, “shrewdness, cleverness,”26 “not to let [Joab’s] gray head go down to Sheol in peace” (2:6).

According to C.F. Keil, David’s call for Joab’s death is expected because David should have killed Joab when he initially murdered the men. Due to the political circumstances at the time, however, David was unable to take action: David could not kill Joab because, “when Abner was murdered, [David] felt himself too weak to visit a man like Joab with the punishment [...] when Amasa was slain, the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba had

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26. DeVries, _1 Kings_, 36; Fretheim, _First and Second Kings_, 25. For more on David’s reference to Solomon’s wisdom see Cogan, _1 Kings_, 173; Provan, _1 and 2 Kings_, 35; Mulder, _1 Kings_, 97; Rogers, “Narrative Stock,” 410; Fokkelman, _King David_, 389.
crippled the power of David too much.” 27 Now, at the end of his life, David instructs Solomon to do what he was not in a position to do earlier — execute Joab as punishment for his crimes.

Against this position, the majority of scholars argue that David’s command is not warranted and should, as Michael A. Eschelbach asserts, raise “questions for the careful reader.” 28 Even though Keil assumes that David could not have dealt with Joab because of the precariousness of the political context around the time of Abner’s and Amasa’s deaths, there must have been some point during his reign between their deaths and his own decrepitude when he could have acted. In fact, because David waited approximately thirty-three years to call for Joab’s punishment, it appears “meaningless after so long a time.” 29 On this basis, it is possible that the death of Joab is not related to the murders specifically, but has another function. As demonstrated below, Joab’s death is primarily aimed at strengthening Solomon’s kingship, 30 with the reference to the murders of Abner and Amasa being included only to legitimate Joab’s death so that it does not counter YHWH’s תָּוֵרָה.

30. Eschelbach, Has Joab Foiled David, 64.
This interpretation of David’s command comes to light by focusing on his use of ה in 2:5. Although scholars tend to interpret ה as conveying either disadvantage (“Joab did to me”) or advantage (“Joab did for me”), it might convey both meanings simultaneously. When interpreted in this way, ה suggests both that David is using the murders to justify Joab’s death and that he wants Joab to die for Solomon’s benefit.

Examining David’s use of ה requires that the murders of Abner and Amasa be considered in detail before assessing David’s command in 2:5. Abner’s death is precipitated by a series of events, the first being the battle of Gibeon where Abner killed Asahel, Joab’s brother, who refused to stop pursuing him even after he had been given an opportunity to leave (2 Sam 2:21-24). Abner’s story continues in 2 Samuel 3 when Ishbaal accused him of having slept with one of Saul’s concubines (3:6-8). Although it was unclear whether Ishbaal’s accusation was true, Abner did not contest it but expressed his annoyance that Ishbaal had brought it up against him (3:8-9).\(^{31}\) In response, Abner turned his allegiance away from Saul’s house to David’s, saying, “what YHWH has sworn to David that will I accomplish for him” (3:9-10), after which he spoke to the elders of Israel and the other Benjaminites about making David their king (3:17-19).\(^{32}\) This led Abner, as

\(^{31}\) McKenzie, King David, 118.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
Steven L. McKenzie comments, to come “to [David at] Hebron ready to offer the kingship over Israel to [him].”

When Abner came to David, David received him by having a large feast prepared (3:20) and then sending Abner and his men away in peace (3:21-22). Joab, however, was not pleased by David’s response and, after reprimanding David (3:34-35), he approached Abner as if to speak with him, but stabbed him in the stomach and killed him (3:26-27). When David, who was not present for the murder, heard about it, he proclaimed, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before YHWH for the blood of Abner son of Ner. May the guilt fall on Joab, and on all his father’s house” (3:28-29).

Amasa first appears in 2 Sam 17:25 where he is introduced as Absalom’s general. After Absalom’s defeat and death (18:1-18), David, for unknown reasons, appointed Amasa as commander of his army (19:13) in place of Joab. In 20:4, David ordered Amasa to gather Judah’s troops and to meet him in three days with the men so that they could pursue Sheba, who was on the verge of rebellion (20:1-6). However, Amasa took longer than expected and did not meet David by the appointed time (20:5). At this point, the scene shifts to Joab, who, dressed in soldier’s clothing with a sword at his waist, went to meet Amasa at Gibeon (20:8). There, Joab feigned kindness to Amasa, giving himself the opportunity to stick his sword into

33. McKenzie, King David, 118.
Amasa’s belly “so that his entrails poured out on the ground, and he died” (20:10).

On the surface, the narrator implies that Joab killed both Abner and Amasa for personal reasons. Regarding the death of Abner, the narrator reports that he “died for shedding the blood of Asahel, Joab’s brother”\(^34\) (3:27). While A.A. Anderson, in line with Phillips, argues that Abner’s killing Asahel during battle would not constitute murder\(^35\) and the incident cannot be the reason that Joab wanted to see Abner killed, Joab might have taken Abner’s killing of Asahel as a threat to his family honour and this could have informed his actions.\(^36\)

Joab likely murdered Amasa because of “envy and pride” due to Amasa’s promotion to Joab’s rank in the army.\(^37\) As Ishida states, David’s decision to replace Joab with Amasa, “was clearly an unjust action, for Amasa had served as the commander of the rebellion army, while Joab had rendered the most distinguished service to David in suppressing the


\(^{36}\) Anderson, 2 Samuel, 61.

rebellion.” To deal with the fact that his devotion to David was ignored with the appointment of Amasa, Joab killed Amasa, took “command of the expeditionary force,” which led him to regain his position in the army (20:23).

In 1 Kgs 2:5 David speaks about the murders in reference to what they did ל, a construction that, as noted, can carry either a sense of disadvantage (“to me”) or advantage (“for me”). The majority of scholars render this ל as a ל of disadvantage — David is implying that what Joab did to Abner and Amasa, also negatively impacted him. This translation aligns with the ל used in reference to what Joab did “to” Abner and Amasa (לשני־שרי, 2:5), which clearly has a negative connotation because David is speaking of the men’s murders. By interpreting the ל of ל as conveying disadvantage, one of the reasons for David’s command for Joab’s death is


39. Ibid., 184.

40. As David Janzen comments, this ל is almost “universally rendered” as “to me” (disadvantage) (David Janzen, “What he did for me: David’s Warning About Joab in 1 Kings 2.5,” JSOT 39 [2015]: 266). Examples of scholars who render this ל as connoting disadvantage are: DeVries, 1 Kings, 35; Cogan, 1 Kings, 173; Mulder 1 Kings, 92; Walsh, 1 Kings, 41; Gray, 1 & 2 Kings, 98. On the ל of disadvantage see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Grand Rapids: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 207-208. Ernst Jenni interprets ל within the construction ל אשר־עשה, where אשר is used with a human subject andעשה (the pro-form) marks the object. He aligns this use of ל with that found in Gen 9:24, where it has a negative connotation (Ernst Jenni, Die Präposition Lamed [Die hebräischen Präpositionen Band 3; Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000], 118-119 (Rubrik 51; 5142)).

41. Janzen, “What he did for me,” 266.
revealed: Joab erred against David directly by murdering Abner and Amasa and he deserves punishment.\textsuperscript{42}

David, as “Joab’s commander-in-chief [...] was responsible for Joab’s actions.”\textsuperscript{43} Given that Joab shed the men’s blood not during battle, but “during times of peace [2:5], in the guise of friendship, when they suspected nothing,” he did not give them a fair chance and David is ultimately responsible.\textsuperscript{44} On this basis, Walsh argues that David’s use of א"ת reflects “a personal sense of injury. He perceives the murders of Abner and Amasa [...] as personal affronts [...] which] David has neither forgotten nor forgiven.”\textsuperscript{45}

Accepting that David is responsible for Joab’s actions, scholars posit that his use of א"ת points to his concern that he and his dynasty incurred bloodguilt when Joab killed the men.\textsuperscript{46} When innocent blood was shed it would stain the line of the one who shed it,\textsuperscript{47} possibly provoking “divine

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[42.] According to Eschelbach, “David includes himself, along with Abner and Amasa as a victim of what Joab had done [...] ignoring completely all that Joab had done for David” (Eschelbach, Has Joab Foiled David, 61).
\item[44.] Shimon Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art in the Bible (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), 182. Although David states that Joab killed the men during a time of peace (2:5), the times were not peaceful. As Eschelbach describes, “[t]he kingdom had been continually unsettled, full of rebellious plots inside and outside of David’s house” (Eschelbach, Has Joab Foiled David, 64). Noth also observes, “sondern ihr Blut wurde wie ‘Kriegsblut’ vergossen,” “but their blood was shed as ‘war-blood’” (Noth, Könige, 30).
\item[45.] Walsh, 1 Kings, 41. See also Fokkelman, King David, 386, 388.
\item[46.] Maly, World of David, 119.
\item[47.] Scolnic, “David’s Final Testament,” 23.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
punishment on the entire community unless proper action was taken against
the murderer.” According to Scolnic, “[b]lood’ is the dangerous moral
disease carried by people who commit unrighteous manslaughter.” Given
that Joab is David’s commander, David could incur bloodguilt because of his
subordinate’s actions, which would place his line in mortal danger that
could only be redressed if he shed the “blood, primarily that of the murderer
[i.e. Joab].”

Against this argument, in 2 Sam 3:28 David states that the guilt for
the blood of Abner fell on Joab and not on him. In 1 Kgs 2:5 David also
refers to Joab putting the blood of war “on his [Joab’s] girdle which is on his
loins and on his shoe which is on his feet” (2:5, italics mine). Here, the
person on whom Abner’s and Amasa’s blood spatters is Joab and not David,
which suggests that the bloodguilt fell only on Joab’s line. In fact, David
never speaks of bloodguilt in his words to Solomon, which weakens the

48. Yitzhaq Feder, “Contagion and Cognition: Bodily Experience and the Conceptualization
of Pollution (τύμαχα) in the Hebrew Bible,” JNES 72 (2013): 164. See also Moshe Greenberg,


50. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 25; Fritz 1 & 2 Kings, 25; Walsh, 1 Kings, 43; House, 1, 2 Kings,
97; Rice, Nations Under God, 20; Nelson, First and Second Kings, 24; James A. Montgomery, A
Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings (ICC; ed. Henry Snyder Gehman;
Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1967), 87, 89.

51. B. Kedar-Kopstein, “דם,” TDOT 3:242. See also Walsh, 1 Kings, 41; Scolnic, “David’s

52. David never addresses the death of Amasa, as he does the death of Abner.

53. Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 272.
possibility that this issue is informing his commands.\textsuperscript{54} Furthermore, as noted above, a significant amount of time has passed since the events of 2 Samuel and if addressing bloodguilt were important for David he would likely have dealt with it sooner.\textsuperscript{55} David is not, then, calling for Joab’s death because of bloodguilt, which contrasts with Solomon’s words in 1 Kgs 2:31-33 (chapter 8).

While the scholars referenced above are concerned with determining the exact impact of the murders on David that is captured by \( \textit{לי} \), another interpretation of the disadvantage aspect of this prepositional phrase is possible. By simply noting that Joab murdered Abner and Amasa and relating it to himself, David gives Solomon a reason to kill Joab. According to Phillips, “murder was prohibited by the Sinai Decalogue, on the observance of which the whole covenant relationship depended, the covenant community was under an absolute duty to execute the murderer in order to propitiate Yahweh.”\textsuperscript{56} When Joab killed the men, he violated the mandates of YHWH, to which David has just told Solomon he must adhere (2:2-4). However, by adding \( \textit{לי} \) David exaggerates the gravity of the act by claiming that the murders impacted him, the king who was chosen by YHWH (1 Samuel 16). Turning back to Phillips, he comments, “even before

\textsuperscript{54} Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 272.


\textsuperscript{56} Phillips, \textit{Ancient Israel’s Criminal Law}, 84.
the Davidic covenant was established, the person of the king as Yahweh’s anointed was peculiarly sacrosanct.” Therefore, instead of telling Solomon to kill Joab specifically because he killed Abner and Amasa, David has turned the men’s murders into a personal issue — not only did Joab violate the laws of YHWH by killing the men, but he also violated YHWH’s king and David is justified in commanding his death, just as Solomon is justified in issuing it (1 Kgs 2:28-34).

Although David references the deaths of Abner and Amasa as justification for Joab’s murder, the punishment remains arbitrary because so much time has passed since Joab killed the men, which means that David could have another reason for commanding Joab’s death. This reason emerges when ל is translated not as connoting disadvantage, but advantage — David is speaking about what Joab did “for” him, that is, for his benefit.\footnote{Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 267; Waltke and O’Connor, Introduction, 207-208.} Given that David will use a benefactive ל in 2:7 when he speaks of the positive things that he wants Solomon to do for Barzillai’s sons, the ל in 2:5 can be interpreted in the same way. When the ל of ל is seen as conveying advantage, David is suggesting that he wants Joab to die not for punishment, but because Joab killed out of loyalty to David and his loyalty to Adonijah makes him a threat to Solomon’s kingship.

\footnote{Phillips, Ancient Israel’s Criminal Law, 45.}
The murders of Abner and Amasa might be interpreted on the basis of
their benefit for David. Abner is characterised as a man of political and
military influence and power,\textsuperscript{59} being able both to place Ishbaal on the
throne and to convene a meeting with the elders of the northern tribes to
persuade them to make David their king.\textsuperscript{60} As McKenzie comments, after
Saul’s death, Abner was “the most powerful man in Israel.”\textsuperscript{61} Similarly, Niels
Peter Lemche argues that Abner was “the only person in Israel who could
possibly be a rival to David himself.”\textsuperscript{62}

Moreover, Abner is characterised as having “a lack of respect for the
authority of kings [which] suggests that he would likely be difficult to
control.”\textsuperscript{63} This aspect of Abner’s character is noted when he responded with
anger to Ishbaal’s accusation that he slept with Rizpah, immediately
proclaiming that he no longer supported the man that he had made king (2
Sam 38:10).\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{59} James C. Vanderkam, “Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal: A

\textsuperscript{60} For this reason, Janzen calls Abner “the real power in the North” (Janzen, “‘What he did
for me,’” 275). Abner might also have been a threat because he was a Benjaminite and he
could have been more “inclined to keep the kingship within that tribe rather than letting it
become the property of David and Judah” (McKenzie, \textit{King David}, 120). Provan suggests
that Joab might have believed that Abner came to Hebron to spy (2 Sam 3:25) and
murdered him to protect the kingdom (Provan, “Why Barzillai of Gilead,” 110).

\textsuperscript{61} McKenzie, \textit{King David}, 117.

Kings}, 27. Ishida also calls Joab, “the strong-man holding sway over the kingdom” (Ishida,
“Solomon’s Succession,” 184).

\textsuperscript{63} Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 274-275. See also McKenzie, \textit{King David}, 120.

\textsuperscript{64} Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 274-275; McKenzie, \textit{King David}, 120.
Joab’s loyalty to David could have prompted him to kill Abner. By killing Abner, Joab eliminated someone who, if angered, could turn his allegiance away from David without any hesitation. Furthermore, Abner’s death would remove the middleman in David’s relationship with the northern tribes, thereby, creating “the circumstances under which Israel could come over to David of itself and not out of alliance to its disloyal and unscrupulous general.”

In reference to Amasa, his tardiness bringing the troops to David could be seen either as “incompetence at best [or] a conspiracy with Sheba at worst.” While the narrator does not provide enough information to determine whether Amasa’s delay was due to him arranging or participating in a coup, Amasa had experience leading an army and he should have been able to gather the troops on time. His inability to do so characterises him as an incapable army general, whose actions could have placed the nation’s welfare in jeopardy. When Joab killed Amasa, he removed a possibly incompetent and conspiratorial general from David’s service.

68. Marvin A. Sweeney, I & II Kings (OTL; Louisville: WJK, 2007), 60; McCarter, II Samuel, 432.
Moreover, as noted, David appointed Amasa as general after Absalom’s death, which would have brought the Judahite portion of the army over to David.69 Once Joab killed Amasa, he gave David the opportunity to take solitary control over the entire army, including the Judahite soldiers who would have shown their allegiance to Amasa. As Nicol argues, “[t]he death of Amasa permits the removal of Absalom’s general without alienating the army of Judah which he had led in the recent rebellion.”70

Therefore, David’s use of יָּדוּ in 1 Kgs 2:5 signals his awareness that Joab killed Abner and Amasa for him, which characterises Joab as someone for whom “the chief motive […] was loyalty”71 for those whom he supports. With Joab having aligned with Adonijah (1:7, 19, 25, 41), David’s command that Solomon ensure Joab’s death is based on his realization that Joab’s loyalty towards Adonijah will threaten Solomon — if Joab was willing to kill for David, he would be willing to kill for Adonijah. As Nicol states, David orders that Solomon kill Joab “because he sees that for so long as Joab is permitted to live Solomon will not be truly secure on the throne.”72

71. Whybray, Succession Narrative, 41. Whybray contrasts Benaiah’s and Joab’s loyalty, arguing that Benaiah’s loyalty was “a blind unreasoning loyalty,” while “Joab’s loyalty throughout was above all a loyalty to Israel, whose security and greatness were his chief concern” (Whybray, Succession Narrative, 41).
72. Nicol, “Death of Joab,” 149. See also Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 275-276; Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 29; McKenzie, David Story, 179; Walsh, 1 Kings, 43; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 34; Provan, “Why Barzillai of Gilead,” 114; House, 1, 2 Kings, 97; Wesselinus,
In summary, David’s instructions in 2:5-6 contain two layers of meaning that are both tied up in לי. First, David uses לי to imply to Solomon that when Joab killed Abner and Amasa he did something against David and he must die as punishment, which justifies his death by characterising it as not contravening YHWH’s תורה (2:2-4). Second, David usesLEY to suggest that when Joab killed Abner and Amasa he did something for David’s benefit and he must die because his loyalty to Adonijah means that he could threaten Solomon.73

David’s Instructions Regarding The Sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, 1 Kgs 2:7

In 2:7 David tells Solomon: “and to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite you will do חסד and they will be among the ones eating at your table because thus they came near to me when I was fleeing from before Absalom, your brother.” Although this instruction does not contain any violence, it also has two layers of meaning similar to those already discussed in reference to Joab’s death and that will be discussed regarding David’s instruction for

73. Scholars suggest that David might want Joab, his loyal supporter, killed, because he is seeking retribution for Joab’s actions towards Absalom and his treatment of David following Absalom’s death (Eschelbach, Has Joab Foiled David, 53; Wesselius, “Joab’s Death,” 343; Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art, 182; Fokkelman, King David, 388; Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, “The Difficulty of Ruling Well: King David of Israel,” Semeia 8 [1977]: 25; Whybray, Succession Narrative, 42-43). While this is possible, it is important to note that the death of Absalom benefitted David and he might have been complicit in it. As Nicol comments, David could have told Joab to “deal gently” with Absalom (2 Sam 18:5) as a “coded instruction to do the reverse” (Nicol, “Death of Joab,” 144). With Absalom dead, a threat to David’s throne was removed. It is also possible that David wants Joab killed because, “with Nathan and Bathsheba satisfied, Joab remains the lone individual who knows of David’s adultery with Bathsheba and ordering of Uriah’s death” (House, 1, 2 Kings, 97).
Shimei’s death (2:8-9). By using חסד, David ensures that Solomon will honour the sons of Barzillai; however, this act is not based solely on the fact that Barzillai did חסד for David, but on the possibility that Barzillai’s sons will maintain a relationship with Solomon from which Solomon will benefit.

Barzillai is introduced in 2 Sam 19:32, as a wealthy man who helped David when he fled to Manahaim during Absalom’s revolt. He gave David food and a place to stay, which prompted David to request that he join him in Jerusalem where David could provide for him (19:33). Because Barzillai was old, he turned down David’s offer (19:35-36), but he sent his servant Chimham with David in his place (19:37-40).

In 1 Kgs 2:7 David recalls Barzillai’s actions, which informs his command that Solomon do חסד for Barzillai’s sons. The term חסד is often translated as “kindness,”74 “loyalty,”75 “fidelity,”76 or “mercy,”77 with its meaning varying across the contexts in which it is appears in the Hebrew Bible.78 Even though חסד is not used in 2 Samuel 19, David uses it in 1 Kgs

74. NIV, NASV, KJV, JPS; House, 1, 2 Kings, 97; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 109.
75. NRSV, ESV; Walsh, 1 Kings, 41; House, 1, 2 Kings, 97. Hens-Piazza renders חסד, “loyal mutuality” (Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 26).
76. Sweeney, I & II Kings, 61; Brueggemann, I & 2 Kings, 29.
77. Gray, I & II Kings, 103.
2:7 to suggest to Solomon that what Barzillai did deserves repayment, even after David has died.

Scholars discussing הָסֵד regularly observe its reciprocal nuance. According to Nelson Glueck, תָּשֵׁד describes the conduct appropriate to those in relationships, such as families, related tribes, host and guest, allies and relatives, friends, ruler and subjects, or when one party has done something for another’s benefit.79 When Barzillai helped David, he showed David תָּשֵׁד and this “act obligated David to consider him as a member of his own family.”80 For this reason, David wants Solomon to show Barzillai’s sons תָּשֵׁד, not out of mercy, but because he is obligated by what Barzillai had done for him. Glueck writes, “[תָּשֵׁד] did not depend upon the mere will or whim of David or Solomon but was a requirement.”81

While Katharine Doob Sakenfeld contests Glueck’s emphasis on there being a requirement for David to do תָּשֵׁד for Barzillai, she also assumes that Barzillai did תָּשֵׁד for David in 2 Samuel 19.82 For Sakenfeld, while תָּשֵׁד might be expressed in a variety of different relationships, it is regularly seen in those where there is a provision of need, a “deliverance from dire


80. Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, 53. That David and Solomon were obligated to repay Barzillai and his family is also noted in Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 29.


straights.” When Barzillai helped David, he did הָֽסד for David and David’s use of הָֽסד in 1 Kgs 2:7 is “explicitly based in [that] prior act.”

Finally, Gordon R. Clark takes a linguistic approach to interpret הָֽסד, comparing the different occurrences of the term across the Hebrew Bible (including exact occurrences, other terms to which it relates, synonyms, and antonyms) and considering the different characters involved “in each situation where one of the elements of the lexical field occurs.” Clark argues that when David uses הָֽסד in the construction תֹּֽ совсַּד (1 Kgs 2:7) he adopts a syntagm used in contexts where both parties are committed to each other, with הָֽסד connoting a “practical activity which is beneficial to the patient.” In 2 Sam 19:32 David expressed his commitment to Barzillai when he responded to him by requesting that Barzillai join him in Jerusalem and then agreeing to take Chimham. However, by 1 Kgs 2:7 David knows that he can no longer maintain this commitment, which is why he now

84. Sakenfeld argues, “the action of Barzillai’s family is called [חסד] by indirection only” (Sakenfeld, Meaning of Hesed, 60).
85. Clark, Hesed in the Hebrew Bible, 33.
86. Ibid., 186.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., 180.
“urges Solomon to accept the responsibility.” Clark concludes that in 2:7 refers to “making a provision for others.”

חסד is something that David wants Solomon to do for Barzillai’s sons because of what Barzillai did for him, and Solomon can do חסד by allowing Barzillai’s sons to sit and eat at his table (1 Kgs 2:7). Because David is using חסד specifically, he implies a level of commitment from Solomon to Barzillai’s sons that Solomon would likely not deny because David has made it clear that Barzillai did חסד for David.

While David instructs Solomon to do חסד for Barzillai’s sons because of what their father did for David (2:7), there is the possibility that David has another reason for issuing this instruction. As Marvin A. Sweeney suggests, if Barzillai had helped David there is the potential for his sons to help Solomon and this is a good enough reason for Solomon to provide for them. Therefore, doing חסד for the sons of Barzillai would not only ensure that their father’s חסד was repaid, but also it would keep them associated

89. Clark, Hesed in the Hebrew Bible, 180.
90. Ibid., 186.
91. According to Sakenfeld, David’s use of חסד might connote “royal patronage,” because he wants Barzillai’s sons to eat at Solomon’s table (Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 61). Furthermore, she posits that they would also receive all that was promised to Barzillai in 2 Sam 19:36, “housing, full financial support and court privileges” (Sakenfeld, Meaning of Hesed, 61). Other scholars argue that when David tells Solomon to let Barzillai’s sons eat at his table, he wants Solomon to provide them with a pension (Seow, “The First and Second Books of Kings,” 28; Walsh, 1 Kings, 41; Rice, Nations Under God, 20; Nelson, First and Second Kings, 24; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 109; Gray, I & II Kings, 102; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 87, 90).
92. Sweeney, I & II Kings, 61.
with Solomon so that they could, if necessary, help Solomon as their father had helped David.

David’s Instructions Regarding Shimei, 1 Kgs 2:8-9

In comparison to the kindness that Solomon is to show to Barzillai’s sons (2:7), in 2:8-9 David calls for violence against Shimei, using language that echoes his description of Joab’s death (2:6). Because David describes Shimei as being with Solomon in 2:8, Shimei is likely the same man named as one of Solomon’s supporters in 1:8.93

In 2:8-9 David implies that Shimei must die because he cursed David, which, in line with the reference to Joab’s role in the murders of Abner and Amasa (2:5), validates Shimei’s death. However, this curse is not a compelling reason for Shimei’s death and, in fact, David wants Shimei to die because his earlier political association with Saul makes him a potential threat to Solomon.94

The threat of Shimei is enhanced because he belongs to Solomon’s party and could weaken it from the inside. As discussed in

93. Sweeney, I & II Kings, 55. It is possible that the Shimei listed as siding with Solomon (1:8) is not the same Shimei named by David in 2:8. Walsh argues that the problem of Shimei’s identity is resolved in 4:18 where Shimei, son of Ela, is named as one of Solomon’s officials (Walsh, 1 Kings, 42 n8). Thus, he concludes that it is “reasonable to assume that this is the Shimei of 1:8,” who is not the same man whose death David orders in 2:8-9 and who is killed in 2:46 (Walsh, 1 Kings, 42 n8; see also Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 117; Rice, Nations Under God, 25; Whitelam, Just King, 154). Provan, however, argues that the Shimei named by David in 2:8 is the same Shimei identified in 1:8 (Provan, “Why Barzillai,” 115 n11). It is more likely that the Shimei named in 1:8 and 2:8 is the same man because David describes Shimei as being, עֲמֵךְ, “with you [Solomon]” (2:8), which I interpret as a sign that he was a member of Solomon’s political party (1:8).

chapter 8, Shimei’s Saulide connection also makes sense of Solomon’s command that he must not cross the Kidron (2:37).

Shimei’s support for Saul is noted when he first appears in 2 Sam 16:5 and is called, “a man of the family of the house of Saul.” Shimei saw David and reacted by throwing stones at him and yelling, “Out! Out! Man of blood and man of wickedness! YHWH has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you reigned. And YHWH gave the kingdom into the hand of Absalom, your son, and see, evil has come on you because you are a man of blood” (16:7-8).

In 2 Sam 16:10-12, David interpreted Shimei’s words as having been instigated by YHWH and, even though Abishai would have preferred otherwise (16:9), this belief stopped David from responding to Shimei (16:13-14). When Shimei came to David in 2 Samuel 19, with a thousand men and begging for forgiveness for his earlier actions, David stated that he would not die and he swore an oath (19:18-23).

In 1 Kgs 2:5, David makes Shimei’s curse the foundation of his death sentence. David describes this curse using the construction קָלָלָה קָלָלָה (2:8), recalling 2 Samuel 16 where ַָלָה appeared in its piel form four times (16:5,


96. David likely forgave Shimei for two reasons: 1) he wanted to “secure the loyalty of the ‘house of Joseph’”; 2) Shimei arrived with a thousand Benjaminites and was a threat (Simon John DeVries, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 221).
7, 9, 10). To increase the gravity of the curse, David adds to his description נמרצת, a niphal participle that might be translated “sore” or “grievous.”

Scholars debate why David focuses on the curse and uses it as the pretext for Shimei’s death, especially since David forgave him (19:18-23). For Scolnic, Shimei’s curse referenced blood and “David must destroy [...] the person who explicitly and publicly insisted that it was still there.” However, as noted above, it does not appear as if bloodguilt is important for David in 1 Kgs 2:2-9, which undermines the strength of Scolnic’s argument.

Sheldon H. Blank contends that in 2 Sam 16:7-8 Shimei’s “repeated imperative followed by a double vocative” signals that he is making a spell that the narrator has called a curse. Because of the power of words in the biblical world (see chapter 4), the spell-curse would not have required God or any other external agent to make it effective, but it was “assumed to have the power to produce the desired effect” as soon as it was spoken. This

97. “נמרצת,” BDB, 599. Cogan translates נמרצה as “harsh, bitter, and potentially harmful” (Cogan, 1 Kings, 174), Montgomery argues for “baleful” (Montgomery, Books of Kings, 87, 90), Burney posits, “made sick,’ and so, ‘a sore or severe curse’” (Burney, Notes, 16 (italics in original)).


99. The repeated imperatives are אמר כל אדוני and the vocatives are איש הדמים ואיש הד躶לו.


101. Ibid., 86.
curse would have hung over David and his line and could only be voided if Shimei was killed, hence David’s command to Solomon.\textsuperscript{102}

Blank’s argument is unconvincing. Although he refers to both Num 21:17 and Josh 10:12 as examples of imperative-vocative spells,\textsuperscript{103} he gives no reason for this interpretation, such as, comparative extra-biblical evidence that spells were formulated in this way and that the same phenomenon is at work in the Hebrew Bible.

Herbert Chanan Brichto, who is critical of Blank, reviews all of the examples of the piel of כּלַל in the Hebrew Bible, arguing, “in no instance will the verb be seen to have the force ‘curse’ = ‘imprecation.’”\textsuperscript{104} According to Brichto, because David does not have Shimei punished or arrested, which would be expected if he had cursed David (cf. Exod 22:28), כּלַל is not referring to a curse.\textsuperscript{105} Instead, because David sees all that Shimei is doing as “traceable to the will of God” (see 2 Sam 16:11-12), Shimei’s words function as part of God’s larger punishment of David for his role in the murders of members of Saul’s house and David must endure Shimei’s assaults so that “God will restore him to favor.”\textsuperscript{106} Brichto concludes, then, that Shimei’s words in 2 Samuel 16 are, “a vituperative denunciation [of David’s prior


\textsuperscript{103} Blank, “The Curse,” 86.

\textsuperscript{104} Brichto, \textit{The Problem of the ‘Curse,’} 119.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 140.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
actions and] the proper translation of qillel in this context is ‘rail at/vituperate/denounce.’ \(^{107}\)

It is possible, accepting Brichto, that by denouncing David, Shimei’s words might also have been understood as a threat to both David and his line. \(^{108}\) This assumption does not necessitate that his words be interpreted as a magical spell, but that they were grievous because David had already been anointed as king and cursing a ruler was an offense, as noted in Exod 22:28 where ‘קלל also appears.\(^{109}\)

Although Exod 22:28 condemns cursing a monarch, it does not call for the death of the one who commits the crime, which calls into question why David is commanding Shimei’s death because of the curse. Furthermore, as Noth observes, the “Fluch war […] in der Wirkung ein ‘kraftloser’ Fluch gewesen,” the “curse was […] in effect a ‘powerless’ curse.” \(^{110}\) Because the curse had no impact on David whatsoever, the legitimacy of the death sentence must be questioned.

Some scholars argue that David wants Shimei killed because he is driven by a need for “personal revenge,” \(^{111}\) he “still harbours resentment for

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108. Walsh, *1 Kings,* 43.
111. House, *1, 2 Kings,* 98.
Shimei’s bitter words”112 against him. However, Rogers counters: “David’s counsel is not that of an embittered, impotent old king seeking personal revenge, but that of a supreme political strategist.”113 Rogers’ position makes better narrative sense because the rest of David’s speech is shaped by his interest in Solomon's political prosperity and he likely wants Shimei killed so that the potential threat to Solomon from Shimei’s Saulide connections would be removed. On this basis, David references Shimei’s curse for the same reason that he referenced the deaths of Abner and Amasa (2:5) — he is legitimating his command so that Solomon could kill Shimei and benefit, but the death could be seen as punishment for his words against David and would not directly violate YHWH’s ḥ.Creator.

The one thing that could have prevented Solomon from killing Shimei was David’s oath, narrated in 2 Sam 19:23: “and the king said to Shimei, ‘you will not die’ and the king swore to him.” In this verse it is unclear whether David’s saying that Shimei would not die is the oath or whether David made another oath, the contents of which the narrator has not provided.

112. Walsh, 1 Kings, 43. See also Eschelbach, Has Joab Foiled David, 53; Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 30; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 32; Vanderkam, “Davidic Complicity,” 537; Gros Louis, “Difficulty,” 32; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 88.

113. Rogers, “Narrative Stock,” 410. Keil similarly argues, “the insult which Shimei had offered in his person to the anointed of the Lord, as king and representative of the rights of God, [David] could not forgive. The instruction given to his successor [...] did not spring from personal revenge, but was the duty of the king as judge and administrator of divine right” (Keil, Books of Kings, 30).
In 1 Kgs 2:8, David refers to his earlier oath, telling Solomon that he “swore to him [Shimei] by YHWH, saying, ‘I will not kill you by the sword.’” In comparison to 2 Sam 19:23, 1 Kgs 2:8 is, as Pyper notes, “interestingly more specific.”\textsuperscript{114} Whereas the narrator reported that David “swore” in 2 Sam 19:23, in 1 Kgs 2:8 David’s clarifies that what he had sworn had prevented him from killing Shimei using a sword, but it did not prevent Solomon or another character from killing Shimei using something other than a sword.\textsuperscript{115}

Because the first reference to the oath is so terse (2 Sam 19:23), the narrator raises the possibility that David is “sitting “lightly to [the] oath”\textsuperscript{116} in 1 Kgs 2:8. Since David is not telling Solomon everything that occurred between him and Shimei in the earlier narrative\textsuperscript{117} and he is shaping his language to increase the gravity of what Shimei did to him, using both נמרצת and קוללה to describe the curse (2:8), David is characterising Shimei as guilty “of lèse majesté in the worst possible light.”\textsuperscript{118} If David is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Hugh S. Pyper, \textit{David As Reader: 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood} (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 142.
\item \textsuperscript{115} DeVries, \textit{1 Kings}, 36. For Mulder, because David repeats ויהי three times in 2 Sam 19:22, he is emphasising that Shimei will not be killed that day, but he is “alluding to ‘a delayed execution’” (Mulder, \textit{1 Kings}, 101). Therefore, the validity of David’s oath is limited to the time at which it was uttered and this means that Shimei could have expected to be killed for his words against David at a later date (Mulder, \textit{1 Kings}, 101). Mulder’s argument does not hold because it is not clear why David does not kill Shimei himself after a sufficient amount of time had passed.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
manipulating his description of Shimei, he could also be reworking his account of the oath; as Bodner argues, “David is arguably manipulated by an oath earlier in 1 Kings; now he does the manipulating with respect to an oath!”119 Because David speaks YHWH’s name before he provides the contents of his oath to Solomon, his invocation adds credence to what he is saying — he has spoken about YHWH, therefore, his account of the oath is accurate. Thus, David “encourag[es] Solomon to adopt a ‘deconstructive’ stance toward any inconvenient oath; that is, read ‘between the lines’ and against the grain.”120 When Solomon orders Shimei’s death, he will also make use of oath language and invocations of YHWH to legitimate the murder (2:36-46).

Pyper offers an important observation that must be brought to bear on 2:8, “David’s initial oath [2 Sam 19:23] is reported rather than stated, so that the text itself does not contain a false oath in Yahweh’s name [...in 2:8] David merely reports that he swore by the Lord. At no point in the text is there a full direct quote of the oath.”121 Because the narrator does not provide David’s initial oath in 2 Sam 19:23, it is not certain that he is manipulating it in 1 Kgs 2:8. Furthermore, because David only reports that he swore by YHWH but he does not actually swear by YHWH in 2:8, it is not accurate to claim that he is misusing oath language or the divine name.

120. Ibid.
121. Pyper, David as Reader, 142.
Although the lack of a direct quote of the oath, in either in 2 Sam 19:23 or 1 Kgs 2:8, complicates how we understand David’s reference to it in 2:8, the theme of “creative and dubious use of oaths” that runs throughout in 1 Kings 1-2122 does offer compelling evidence in favour of Bodner’s position. However, accepting that David could be manipulating the oath and his invocation of YHWH (2:8) also requires accepting that his character has changed; whereas, David was swayed by YHWH’s name that he took responsibility for an oath that he never made (1:28-30, chapter 4), now he is using both the oath and YHWH for his own ends. Given that David is now at the end of his life, it is possible that he has no reason to be cautious of transgressing YHWH anymore — his peaceful death and his future through his son are all but guaranteed and it is now up to Solomon to ensure that the Davidic line continues. Thus, in 2:8 David does what he must to ensure that Shimei dies and Solomon is strengthened: he emphasises what Shimei did to him and he invokes YHWH as he outlines his oath, thereby, clarifying for Solomon both that he is justified in killing Shimei and that he can do so in whatever way he chooses, without having to fear divine retribution.

During his last moments of life, David suggests to Solomon that Shimei’s curse against him warrants his death. However, David really wants Shimei to die to eliminate a Saulide supporter who might threaten Solomon’s kingship and the curse legitimates this command. With David’s earlier oath

possibly preventing Solomon from ensuring Shimei’s death, David references YHWH and outlines the contents of his oath, making it clear that anyone is free to kill Shimei using whatever implement they choose.

It must be noted that while David implies that Shimei deserves to die for his curse, this connection is weak; as stated above, although Exod 22:28 commands that one not curse a ruler, it does not say that the one who breaks this command should die. Looking ahead to the fulfilment of David’s command, when Solomon calls for Shimei’s death he justifies it by accusing Shimei of having violated an oath and YHWH (2:42-43). As discussed in chapter 8, by portraying Shimei as having acted against YHWH, Solomon covers up the fact that both he and his father are calling for the death of man who does not truly deserve to die.

d. 1 Kgs 2:10-12, The Death of David and the Rise of Solomon

In 2:10, the narrator reports David’s death, “then David slept with his ancestors.” In comparison to the violence that characterises the deaths David intends for both Joab and Shimei, David dies in peace, having reigned for forty years, and he is buried in the city of David (2:11).

At this point, the narrator repeats the phrase that echoed throughout 1 Kings 1, “Solomon sat on the throne of David his father and his kingdom

123. cf. Lev 20:9, where one who curses mother or father is condemned to death.

was firmly established” (2:12, cf. 1:13, 20, 24, 27, 30). This verse looks forward to 2:46 where, after addressing the threats highlighted by David and those he discerns himself, Solomon establishes his kingdom by his own hand.

e. Conclusion

1 Kgs 2:2-9 might initially appear discordant, with David’s words regarding Solomon’s behaviour as king and his relationship with YHWH (2:2-4) not sitting well alongside his violent instructions regarding how Solomon should deal with Joab and Shimei (2:5-6, 8-9). However, a narrative lens lends itself to interpreting the passage as a unit, the friction between the sections being a sign of the narrative’s artistry.

In 2:2-4, David invokes YHWH to convey to Solomon the importance of following the laws and mandates of YHWH with his entire being throughout his reign. These verses lead into 2:5-9, where David instructs Solomon to kill Joab and Shimei, while doing חסד for the sons of Barzillai. By speaking about YHWH before calling for the deaths of Joab and Shimei, David clarifies that Solomon must not kill on the basis of his own whims, but he can only do so if it fits YHWH’s תורם — because Joab killed Abner and Amasa, and Shimei cursed David, the men deserve punishment by death. As Fretheim accurately states, “[Solomon’s] public acts, as messy as they might
be, must be informed by personal integrity and a right relationship with
God.”

However, beneath his final words David has another motivation. In
2:2-4, David alludes to the prosperity of the kingdom that will result from
Solomon’s commitment to YHWH. Also, in 2:5-9, David calls for the deaths
of Joab and Shimei and for Solomon to do חסד for Barzillai’s sons because
these acts will benefit Solomon’s throne. In fact, David appears to be
creatively invoking YHWH alongside an oath in 2:8 to ensure that Solomon
knows that, although he had sworn by YHWH not to kill Shimei by the
sword, Solomon is free to do so without fear of divine punishment.

Therefore, while David’s speech contains sacral themes (2:2-4) that
shape his commands in 2:5-9, and he invokes YHWH with an oath in 2:8, his
final words in the narrative are not pious. According to Sweeney, “David’s
testament to Solomon presents a warped understanding of Torah observance
insofar as David instructs his son to eliminate his opponents on questionable
grounds.” Looking ahead to Solomon’s fulfilment of David’s commands in
2:26-46, it is noteworthy that his words are similarly warped — Solomon
speaks as if his actions are shaped by his piety and devotion to his father
when, in fact, there are signs that he is acting on the basis of self-interest
alone.

125. Fretheim, First and Second Kings, 25.
126. Sweeney, I & II Kings, 60.
In the next chapter, 2:13-25 will be examined. In these verses, Solomon acts for the first time as the sole ruler of Israel when he responds to Adonijah’s request to have Abishag given to him as a wife (2:17). While Adonijah speaks the divine name to Bathsheba in 2:15, Bathsheba does not speak it to Solomon in 2:21. When Solomon responds to Bathsheba with anger, invocations of YHWH, and a call for Adonijah’s death (2:22-25), the possibility emerges that Bathsheba has withheld Adonijah’s invocation from Solomon to ensure his anger and the strength of his crown.
Chapter 7
Adonijah’s Request For Abishag
(1 Kgs 2:13-25)

a. Introduction

With David dead (2:10) and Solomon having ascended to the throne (2:12), the reader might expect that the narrative will now focus on Solomon. However, in 2:13 the narrator brings both Adonijah and Bathsheba back into the story. The mention of Adonijah in particular calls into question the narrator’s previous comment that Solomon’s kingdom is “firmly established” (2:12) — because Adonijah had desired the throne (1:5-10) that Solomon now occupies and he is still participating in the plot, Solomon’s reign cannot be secure.¹ In 2:13-24, the narrator addresses this issue by describing how Adonijah speaks with Bathsheba and asks that she request Solomon to give Abishag to him as a wife (2:13-18). When Bathsheba makes the request of Solomon (2:21), he reacts with anger and a call that Benaiah kill Adonijah (2:22-25).

In 2:15, Adonijah invokes YHWH when speaking with Bathsheba, language that relates to Jonathan’s description of Solomon’s rise to the throne (1:44-48). As advanced below, Adonijah wants Abishag in order to weaken Solomon’s image, while strengthening his own, so that he would be

well positioned to attempt to claim the throne at a later date. To achieve this goal, Adonijah turns to Bathsheba and requests that she make his request for Abishag of Solomon, using Bathsheba in a way that aligns with how Nathan used her in 1:11-14 (see chapter 4). Because Bathsheba might discern Adonijah’s political intent and end their conversation, Adonijah employs a variety of linguistic techniques to narrow this possibility, such as repeating her use of שלם (2:13) and stating his acceptance of Solomon’s kingship (2:15). Important for this study, Adonijah invokes YHWH in 2:15, language that might also be interpreted as a technique aimed at shaping Bathsheba’s perception of his request.

Despite Adonijah’s efforts, Bathsheba discerns the political gravity of the request. Bathsheba’s omission of Adonijah’s invocation (2:15) when she speaks to Solomon (2:21) is, I contend, deliberate, a point supported by her addition of an invocation when speaking with David in 1:17. By removing Adonijah’s invocation, Bathsheba leads Solomon to experience anger against his brother that culminates in his call for Adonijah’s death (2:24). Support for this interpretation is found when Solomon invokes YHWH in response to Bathsheba (2:24). This language raises the possibility that if Bathsheba had conveyed Adonijah’s invocation to Solomon, his reaction might have been different.
b. 1 Kgs 2:13-18, Adonijah and Bathsheba Speak

Adonijah, Son of Haggith, and Bathsheba, Solomon’s Mother

In 2:13-18 Adonijah goes to Bathsheba and asks her to go to Solomon and request that Abishag be given to him as a wife. Even though readers are already familiar with both Adonijah and Bathsheba because they appeared in 1 Kings 1, in 2:13 the narrator still calls them “Adonijah son of Haggith” and “Bathsheba mother of Solomon,” repeating the designations from 1:11. While the narrator might be using this language to suggest that Bathsheba will interact with Adonijah on the basis of her “maternal compassion” towards another woman’s son, its appearance in the previous narrative complicates this interpretation.

As discussed in chapter 4, when the narrator referred to “Adonijah son of Haggith” and “Bathsheba mother of Solomon” in 1:11, he was drawing attention to the rivalry between the mothers that was due to each of them wanting to see her own son become king so that she could gain status in the court. This rivalry prompted Bathsheba to follow Nathan’s plan as she worked to lead David to give the throne to Solomon (1:17-21). By using the designations from 1:11 in 2:13, the narrator establishes that,

2. Walsh and Jones assume that these designations do not have a function in the narrative but are only included because this verse begins a new unit (Jerome T. Walsh, 1 Kings [BOSHNP; Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996], 47; G.H. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings [vol. 1; NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 111). See also Cogan who argues that they are superfluous because readers are already familiar with the characters’ identities (Mordechai Cogan, 1 Kings: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary [AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 175).

despite the passage of time, Adonijah and Haggith remain opposed to Bathsheba and Solomon. As Sweeney argues, the narrator is “highlight[ing] the distinctions between Adonijah and Bath Sheba. Adonijah is ‘the son of Haggith,’ not the son of Bath Sheba. Bath Sheba is ‘the mother of Solomon,’ not the mother of Adonijah.”

With Bathsheba and Adonijah positioned at opposite ends of the political spectrum, it is surprising that he goes to her in 2:13 and not to another character with whom he has a less complicated relationship. A similar issue was noted in chapter 4 when interpreting Nathan’s decision to speak with Bathsheba instead of another member of the court. In this case, the political tension between Bathsheba and Adonijah makes Adonijah’s decision to speak with her stand out even more than Nathan’s. Nevertheless, Nathan’s interaction with Bathsheba (1:11-14) is useful for making sense of Adonijah’s decision here because, when it is brought to bear on this passage, it becomes clear that both men are turning to Bathsheba for the same reason — they want to use her to speak to the king.

Some scholars interpret Adonijah’s interaction with Bathsheba without reference to 1:11-14, suggesting that Adonijah’s request for Abishag (2:17) necessitates that he speak to Bathsheba. Beverly W. Cushman argues,


5. It is unclear to whom Adonijah could turn if he wanted to get to Solomon.
“because Abishag was a female member of the inner palace, she was under the authority of the Great Lady of the harem. No decision concerning Abishag could be made without Bat-Sheba’s acquiescence.” DeVries contends, “as גבירה ‘queen mother,’ [BatSheba] has the say-so over every woman in the royal palace.” Walsh also posits, “as ‘Great Lady’ (גֹּבֶרֶד) […] Bathsheba is in charge of the women [such as Abishag] who belong to the king’s harem.”

These scholars’ arguments rest on two shaky assumptions: 1) that Bathsheba has authority over Abishag because she is the גבירה; 2) that Abishag is a member of the harem. As discussed in chapter 4, because גבירה is not used in 1 Kings 1-2, it is not likely that Bathsheba is known as the גבירה. When Solomon responds to her with signs of respect in 2:19, he is signalling that his ascent has given her status as the המלך אם (2:19), although it is not certain whether this designation would have been officially recognised in the court. Accepting that Bathsheba has some power or status because she is the המלך אם does not necessarily mean that she has any power over Abishag; as also noted in chapter 4, the two women never interact, which means that the nature of their relationship is unclear.

8. Walsh, 1 Kings, 47.
In reference to the second assumption, Abishag cannot be in the royal harem because the narrator not only establishes that David and Abishag never have intercourse (1:4, see chapter 3), but also he never describes Solomon bringing Abishag into his harem.\footnote{DeVries suggests that Abishag was “neither [David’s] wife nor concubine, thus not a regular member of his harem, yet her former intimacy with David, together with her very special beauty, gave her a special status; one can guess that Solomon intended to take, and did in fact take her as his own wife” (DeVries, 1 Kings, 37). While DeVries is correct that Abishag was not in David’s harem but had a special status in the court due to her role as David’s נשים, there is not enough evidence to suggest that Solomon brought her into his harem. This observation also undermines Jones’ assumption that Abishag “was brought into the king’s court as an addition to his harem, a fact that was known to Adonijah and Bathsheba” (Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 111).

While the above scholars’ arguments are flawed, they correctly focus on the request of 2:17 to understand why Adonijah goes to Bathsheba but, they have overlooked a significant point — Adonijah is not asking Bathsheba to give Abishag to him, but he wants her to ask Solomon for Abishag. Thus, Adonijah has characterised Solomon, not Bathsheba, as having authority over Abishag.

Solomon’s power over Abishag is related to her role in David’s, and now Solomon’s, court. As noted in 1:2-4, Abishag was hired as David’s נשים, making her an employee of his kingdom (see chapter 3). When Solomon became king, she would have transferred to his staff; as Solvang remarks, “[Abishag] came into Solomon’s possession or care after his father’s death, not in the category of David’s wives [but] in the category of servants and...
officers of the court.”

Therefore, Solomon, as Abishag’s employer, controls her.

With Solomon in charge of Abishag, Adonijah’s decision to ask Bathsheba to make his request of Solomon raises the question: if Solomon can give Abishag to Adonijah, why does Adonijah not ask Solomon for her himself? At this point it is useful to refer to the discussion of Nathan’s interaction with Bathsheba in chapter 4 because Nathan, who ultimately wanted David to make Solomon king, also went to Bathsheba instead of interacting with the king himself.

In 1:11, Nathan spoke with Bathsheba because, as David’s wife and primary consort, her personal connection with him not only gave her access to his chamber, but also added an affective quality to Nathan’s script. Therefore, it was more useful for Nathan to have Bathsheba speak to David and try and convince him to make Solomon king (see chapter 4).

In 2:13, Bathsheba’s relationship with Solomon also makes her strategic person for Adonijah. Bathsheba has access to Solomon that Adonijah would not have because Solomon had cast him out of the court (1:53, chapter 5). Moreover, Bathsheba’s maternal relationship with


Solomon would give her “a decisive influence over him.” When Adonijah tells Bathsheba, “[Solomon] will not refuse you” (2:17), he reveals that he knows that if Bathsheba makes the request of Solomon, it is more likely that he will grant it.

It is also possible that Adonijah’s fear of Solomon (1:49-51) contributes to his decision to go to Bathsheba. If Adonijah is still wary of Solomon, it is less dangerous for him to speak with Bathsheba and to have her speak to Solomon on his behalf than for him to go to Solomon himself.

When the narrator names “Adonijah son of Haggith” and “Bathsheba mother of Solomon” at the start of 2:13, he establishes that Adonijah and Bathsheba are not politically united. Nevertheless, Adonijah goes to Bathsheba and asks her to request that Solomon give Abishag to him as a wife. With Solomon in control of Abishag, Adonijah’s motivation for speaking with Bathsheba instead of Solomon is based on both her maternal bond with Solomon and the fact that she does not pose as significant a threat to Adonijah’s life as Solomon does. Adonijah has, then, “approached


Bathsheba to use her as a backdoor to Solomon,” as Nathan did when he turned to her in 1:11-14 to get to David.15

Adonijah’s Intentions

Before analysing Adonijah’s words in 2:13-18, it is necessary to consider the issue of his motivation, which informs his request (2:17) and his invocation of YHWH (2:15). Although Adonijah goes to Bathsheba so that she might ask Solomon to give Abishag to him as a wife (2:17), neither he nor the narrator articulate why he wants to marry Abishag specifically. His request for Abishag is even more significant because Abishag is not only a unique נערה יפה (1:4), but also because she might be classified as “forbidden” due to her position in Solomon’s household — Adonijah might want to marry her, but she belongs to Solomon and is not someone to whom Adonijah has any right or someone whom he could easily attain. Abishag’s characterisation as “forbidden” and Adonijah’s desire for her connects this passage with others in the Hebrew Bible where a similar trope is noted: in Judges 14, Samson wants a Philistine woman but his parents forbid it; in 2 Samuel 11, David wants Bathsheba but she is married to Uriah; in 2 Samuel 13, Amnon wants Tamar but she is his sister.


With Adonijah’s motivation for wanting Abishag shrouded in the narrative, scholars raise various options for filling this gap. According to Provan, Adonijah’s request could be interpreted as “quite innocent, or [as] a calculated attempt to revive [his] claim to the throne.”\textsuperscript{16} While some scholars argue for the former conclusion, the majority of scholars argue for the latter, which is more compelling.

Because the narrator “makes no suggestion of ill motives on Adonijah’s part,”\textsuperscript{17} some scholars assume that Adonijah’s request is “guileless and without malice.”\textsuperscript{18} Thus, when Adonijah says that he wants Abishag for a wife, it is because he loves her and this narrative is, then, a “romance culminating in a tragedy.”\textsuperscript{19} This interpretation aligns this episode with 2 Samuel 13 where Amnon wants the forbidden Tamar because he loves her (אהב; 2 Sam 13:1).

However, while אהב is used in 2 Samuel 13, it is not used of Adonijah and Abishag and this omission calls into question whether Adonijah’s


\textsuperscript{17} Gina Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 27.

\textsuperscript{18} Joyce Willis, Andrew Pleffer, and Stephen Llewelyn, “Conversation in the Succession Narrative of Solomon,” VT 61 (2011): 142. See also Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 111.

\textsuperscript{19} Lee, “Books of Kings.” 162. See also Montgomery, Books of Kings, 91; Ernst Würthwein, Das erste Buch der Könige: Kapitel 1-16 (ATD 11/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 22.
request is shaped by love. While it is possible that Adonijah loves Abishag but the narrator has not included this information, it is also possible that he is being driven by another emotion such as lust. Abishag, like Bathsheba and Tamar, is described as “beautiful” (1 Kgs 1:4; 2 Sam 11:2; 13:1). In 2 Sam 11:2, the narrator reports that David “saw” Bathsheba, after which he speaks of her “pleasing appearance.” This construction suggests that David is aware of Bathsheba’s beauty and it informs his desire/lust for her (2 Sam 11:3-4).

Similarly, in 2 Sam 13:1, Tamar is described as beautiful before the narrator notes Amnon’s love for her. Tamar’s beauty is, then, portrayed as the cause of Amnon’s love, which means that his love could have its foundation in lust. In Judges 14 the narrator does not describe the Philistine woman as beautiful, but Samson desires her after he sees her and he tells his parents that she pleases him, possibly a sign of his positive assessment of her appearance (Judg 14:3, 7). Thus, the woman’s appearance could have caused Samson to want her specifically, his choice of marriage partner being informed by lust.

Even though the narrator does not describe Adonijah seeing Abishag, he might have been aware of her beauty (1 Kgs 1:4) and this aspect of her character could be informing his request. Echoing the stories of David,

20. אהב is also not used in Judges 14 or in 2 Sam 11:1-5.

21. While יפה is used of Abishag (1 Kgs 1:4) and Tamar (2 Sam 13:1), Bathsheba is described as, סпутת מראה מואר, “of a very pleasing appearance” (2 Sam 11:2).

22. The narrator also reports that Samson wanted this woman because he was seeking a reason to act against the Philistines (Judg 14:4).
Amnon, and Samson, Adonijah might know of the beautiful woman in Solomon’s court, he lusts over her and, even though she belongs to his brother and is forbidden, this emotion informs his desire for her that is reflected through his request (2:17).

Taking a slightly different approach, Adonijah’s request could have been prompted not by his love or lust for Abishag but because he is seeking compensation for his loss of the throne. As Noth suggests, Adonijah requests “die so begehrenswerte jugendliche Abisag zur Frau gegeben werde als eine Art ‘Trostpreis’ für die ihm entgangene Königsherrschaft,” “the youthful Abishag, so desirable, to be given to him as a wife as a kind of ‘consolation prize’ for the royal power which had escaped him.”

Because Adonijah describes the movement of the kingdom to Solomon (2:15) before he asks for Abishag (2:17), she becomes the “splendid consolation prize” that makes up for his loss.

There is nothing explicit in the narrative to discount any of the above conclusions; however, given Abishag’s unique characterisation and her important place in Solomon’s court, it is more likely that Adonijah’s request

23. Noth, Königge, 33. See also Cogan, 1 Kings, 176. Provan assumes that all of Adonijah’s language is “couched in terms of compensation for loss” (Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 38).

24. Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 31. See also Seow, “First and Second Books,” 33; J.P. Fokkelman, King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2) (vol 1 of Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 393-394. Camp suggests that Adonijah wants Abishag because he “may have been seeking a negotiated settlement: the release of Abishag from a situation of possible reprisal in return for his acquiescence to Solomon’s rule” (Claudia V. Camp, “1 and 2 Kings,” in The Women’s Bible Commentary [ed. Carol A. Newsome and Sharon H. Ringe; London: SPCK, 1992], 100; see also Marsman, Women, 364).
is a “calculated attempt to revive [his] claim to the throne.”²⁵ Even though Adonijah was not waging a coup against David in 1:5-10, the culture expected him to take the throne and he could not have been happy to have lost it to his younger brother. If Adonijah were to acquire Abishag, he could position himself in order to attempt a later claim to the throne; this is the primary reason for his request.

When scholars advance this argument, they often do so by relying on some flawed assumptions, such as, suggesting that Adonijah asks for Abishag because she is a member of David’s harem and marrying her could allow him to take the throne from Solomon directly.²⁶ Keith W. Whitelam, for example, observes how Adonijah’s request mirrors an ancient Near Eastern motif where “the possession of a former king’s concubine was an important element in any claim to the throne.”²⁷

²⁵ Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 38.


²⁷ cf. 2 Sam 3:7-10 and 2 Sam 16:20-23. Keith W. Whitelam, The Just King: Monarchical Judicial Authority in Ancient Israel (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1979), 152. See also McCracken, Family Portraits, 251; Willis et al., “Conversation,” 141; Klein, Deborah to Esther, 69; Cogan, 1 Kings, 176; Walsh, 1 Kings, 50; Gene Rice, Nations Under God: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Kings (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 23; Ishida, “Adonijah,” 179; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 92; Maly, World of David, 117; C.F. Keil, The Books of Kings (BCOT; trans. James Martin; ed. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872), 32. For extra-biblical documents referring to the role of the harem in making a claim to the throne see Mattithahu Tsevat, “Marriage and Monarchical Legitimacy in Ugarit and Israel,” JSS 3 (1958): 241. Häusl observes that in 2 Sam 16:20-23, Absalom, as David’s son, had intercourse with David’s concubines to wage a coup on the throne. However, Adonijah and Solomon have a different relationship than David and Absalom had, which complicates the argument that, on the basis of 2 Sam 16:20-23, Adonijah could sleep with one of Solomon’s concubines to claim the throne (Maria Häusl, Abischag und Batscheba: Frauen am Königshof und die Thronfolge Davids im Zeugnis der Texte der 1 Kön 1 und 2 [St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag
Against this conclusion, Würthwein states, “[d]och läßt sich diese Vorstellung weder im Alten Testament noch bei den Nachbarstaaten nachweisen,” “[b]ut this idea cannot be proved either in the Old Testament or in neighbouring countries.” Furthermore, as already noted, Abishag does not belong to the harem, which undermines one of the argument’s fundamental premises.

Although the above issues complicate the possibility that Adonijah’s request is politically motivated, this argument still has merit. By asking Solomon to give him something/one, Adonijah would want Solomon to incur a loss while he benefits. This issue is accentuated because Adonijah wants Abishag, who, as noted in the previous chapter, is described as a נערת בתוּלָּה, and as someone whom David’s servants locate only after an extensive search (1:2-3). By using these descriptions, the narrator establishes that Abishag is not just any young woman, but she is unique, the only person who fulfils and exceeds what the servants require for David and who is, then, a “‘One-of-her-kind’ woman.” Therefore, Adonijah does not want Solomon to give him just any woman for a wife, but the most unique woman in the court. If Solomon were to grant the request, his loss and Adonijah’s benefit would both be exaggerated, which could strengthen Adonijah’s

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Erzabtei, 1993], 282).

28. Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 22.

political image while weakening Solomon’s (and his mother’s). This result could give Adonijah enough of a foothold in the kingdom that he could reassert a claim to the throne at a later point. These possible outcomes lead Adonijah to attempt to obscure the political nature of his request in his conversation with Bathsheba by, among other things, invoking YHWH (see below).

However, what Adonijah has not taken into account is how Bathsheba and Solomon will perceive his request. Even though Abishag is not in Solomon’s harem, Bathsheba discerns the political gravity of the request (see below). Furthermore, Solomon’s angry response in 2:22-25 demonstrates his awareness of the political significance of the request, which prompts him not to grant it, but to turn it into the pretext for Adonijah’s death (2:25). Therefore, while Adonijah makes his request for Abishag to undermine Solomon’s kingship and he tries to hide this from Bathsheba (2:13-17), Bathsheba notes the political implications of the request (2:21) and takes it to Solomon, who also detects its political implications and uses these to justify his command that Benaiah kill Adonijah (2:22-25).

Adonijah’s words to Bathsheba, 1 Kgs 2:13-18

Even though Adonijah speaks with Bathsheba because of what she offers to his request, he has no position relative to her and he cannot expect that she will welcome him and eagerly do what he asks. This is especially the case
because Adonijah’s request, if granted, would not only weaken Solomon’s role in the court, but also her own. For these reasons, again echoing Nathan’s use of language to convince Bathsheba to follow his plan (1:11-14, chapter 4), Adonijah carefully shapes his words in 2:13-18 so that Bathsheba does not discern his intent, which might prompt her to stop their conversation before he can make his request. Importantly, alongside other linguistic techniques, Adonijah invokes YHWH (2:15) to suggest to Bathsheba that he has accepted his “turn of fate,”30 is not dwelling on his loss of the kingdom, and she does not need to question his integrity.

Before he even begins speaking, Adonijah attempts to mitigate Bathsheba’s perception of their interaction by not bowing to her (2:13). As discussed in chapter 4, Bathsheba’s and Nathan’s obeisance to David played an integral part in their ruse. When Adonijah does not bow to Bathsheba, he characterises himself as acting honestly; as Mulder observes, “[t]he act of bowing is a form of deference which in the courtly etiquette of the Jerusalem palace seems to have had nothing to do with familiarity but everything with intrigue. The craftier the questions the deeper the curtsies.”31 By omitting the bow, Adonijah characterises himself as acting without any craftiness.

Nevertheless, Bathsheba is still cautious and asks him, “do you come peaceably?” According to Solvang, “protocol makes clear the power differential between them. Adonijah comes to her, she addresses him first, he asks permission to speak [2:14], she grants that permission [2:14].”

Because Bathsheba holds more power than Adonijah, she speaks before he does, mirroring 1:15 where Bathsheba entered King David’s chamber but he was the first to speak. However, while David had asked Bathsheba what she wanted (1:16), an open question that gave her permission to determine the parameters of the conversation, Bathsheba only asks Adonijah if he comes “peaceably.” This question seeks his intention and characterises her as suspicious, demonstrating that she is not ignorant of the underlying political tension between them — she knows Adonijah is her son’s rival and she knows that she must be careful.

To allay Bathsheba’s trepidation Adonijah confirms that he has come “peaceably” (2:13). Because Adonijah repeats שalom from Bathsheba’s words to him, he takes a “dependent role” in their interaction. Still, Adonijah

32. Solvang, *Woman's Place*, 149.


36. Fokkelman, *King David*, 393.
could have said more to Bathsheba, a possibility that emerges when 2:13 is interpreted in light of 1 Sam 16:4-5 — the only other place in the Hebrew Bible where a character asks another character if he comes in peace (שלום). In this episode, Samuel’s response to the elders not only highlights Adonijah’s terseness when conversing with Bathsheba, but also reveals how Adonijah’s response might be seen as another attempt at dissuading Bathsheba from inferring his intent.

In 1 Sam 16:4-5, Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint David as king. When he arrived, the elders trembled as they came to meet him and asked whether he had come peaceably (שלום; 16:4). According to Ishida, the elders had “misgivings about the purpose of his visit,” which makes sense not only of their physical response but also the nature of their question — like Bathsheba, they were suspicious of Samuel, which caused them to question his intention.37 Samuel not only confirmed that he had come in peace, repeating the elders’ use of שלום, but he also allayed any of their persisting anxieties by explaining that he had come to make a sacrifice to YHWH (16:4).

This passage suggests that, when Bathsheba asks if Adonijah comes “peaceably,” he could respond by saying more than just that his visit is “peaceable” (1 Kgs 2:11). However, unlike 1 Sam 16:4-5, where the elders feared Samuel and his extended response was aimed at directly addressing

this fear, Adonijah fears Bathsheba discerning his political intent and ending their conversation. For this reason, providing additional information, even if he fabricated something to satisfy Bathsheba, could be detrimental to Adonijah’s goal: if Adonijah were to increase his words, he might also increase the chances of saying something that might signal his intent. Therefore, by simply answering Bathsheba’s question, Adonijah unequivocally characterises his part in the interaction as “peaceable,” even though this is not the case.

Bathsheba appears to accept Adonijah’s response because she does not end their interaction, thus, Adonijah continues speaking and disguising his political objective. After Bathsheba tells Adonijah to speak (1 Kgs 2:14, see below), Adonijah refers to the cultural assumption that he would take David’s throne, stating, “you [Bathsheba], you know that all Israel expected me to reign” (2:15). The use of the 2nd person independent pronoun את with the 2nd person verb ידעת, emphasises Bathsheba and her knowledge of what was to occur. Because there is no indication in the narrative that Adonijah knows Bathsheba’s part in his loss of the throne (1:15-21), his language here is not accusatory but reveals how widespread the assumption of his expected rule was — not only he and all Israel, but also Bathsheba herself, a woman who is politically opposed to him, knew that the throne was to be his.

Nevertheless, this future did not come to pass because, as Adonijah continues, “the kingdom turned about and has become my brother’s” (2:15).
By personifying the kingdom as turning away from him, Adonijah clarifies that, for him, the loss of the kingdom is due not to a human agent, but to the kingdom itself. For Bathsheba, these words would signal that he is ignorant about the role she played to bring her son to the throne and he is not coming to her because of that episode. Furthermore, because Adonijah is not blaming anyone for the loss, he characterises himself as having resigned his fate in recognition of Solomon’s new political position that was bestowed to him by YHWH (2:15, see below).

To downplay the political nature of his loss, Adonijah refers to Solomon not as “Solomon,” “the king,” or “your (Bathsheba’s) son,” but as his “brother” (אוחי). Although the political rivalry between him and Solomon is tied to their fraternal relationship, אוחי is not as politicised as “king” and would suggest to Bathsheba that Adonijah is not speaking to her for reasons related to Solomon’s political role.  

It is at this point that Adonijah names YHWH, stating that the kingdom turned to Solomon because “from YHWH it became his” (2:15). Adonijah’s invocation is based on what Jonathan told him about Solomon’s anointing in 1:43-48 (see chapter 5). As noted, Jonathan implied YHWH’s involvement in the event when he spoke of the presence of both the priest and the prophet (1:43-45) and when he described David articulating his

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38. Walsh, 1 Kings, 49.

39. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 99. According to Walsh, Adonijah “emphasizes the family relationship between himself and Solomon rather than the rivalry” (Walsh, 1 Kings, 49).
belief that YHWH had placed one of his offspring on the throne and allowed him to see it (1:48). With Adonijah only having this information upon which to base his understanding of Solomon’s ascent, it makes sense that he would claim that YHWH destined the kingdom to turn to Solomon (2:15). Although this invocation might reveal Adonijah’s piety, it must also be interpreted within the context of his conversation with Bathsheba, functioning as another linguistic attempt at downplaying the political gravity of their interaction.

On the one hand, 2:15 can be interpreted as a sign of Adonijah’s decisive acceptance of Solomon’s kingship — Adonijah has taken Jonathan’s description of Solomon’s coronation as pointing to YHWH’s support of Solomon’s new political role.\(^{40}\) Thus, Adonijah’s invocation characterises him as “an orthodox Yahwist,”\(^{41}\) who affirms “that Solomon’s succession was in accordance with God’s will.”\(^{42}\) On the other hand, while Adonijah might accept that YHWH brought his brother to throne, by revealing this information to Bathsheba he also “cover[s]-up [...] the real purpose of his unexpected visit to Bathsheba. Indeed, a clever captatio benevolentiae.”\(^{43}\) Adonijah is, then, characterising himself not as a threat to Solomon’s

\(^{40}\) Walsh, *1 Kings*, 49.

\(^{41}\) DeVries, *1 Kings*, 37. Adonijah’s name means “‘Yah is my lord’” (Cogan, *1 Kings*, 156). This name could, perhaps, signal Adonijah’s devotion to YHWH and his piety in this scene.


\(^{43}\) Mulder, *1 Kings*, 107.
kingship, but as having “surrendered his claim to his brother,” 44 having “accepted the course of events as a decree of YHWH.” 45 Therefore, Adonijah’s invocation, whether it is a pious revelation or not, can be interpreted as another technique aimed at leading Bathsheba to think that she does not need to question their interaction or his upcoming request because he has accepted that YHWH gave the kingdom to Solomon and “[h]e no longer posed any danger.” 46

While Adonijah could now make his request for Abishag, he asks instead, “one request I ask of you, do not refuse me” (2:16). 47 Although Adonijah began by saying that he wanted to have a word with Bathsheba (2:14), he now claims that he wants to make “one request.” This change shows Adonijah moving closer to revealing what he wants of Bathsheba.

44. Nicol, “Bathsheba,” 362. Fokkelman similarly concludes, “[i]n v.15e, Adonijah feigns a pious acceptance of the outcome of 1 Kings 1, but he is not very convincing.” (Fokkelman, King David, 394). Hagan speaks of Adonijah’s invocation as “soft talk about the LORD giving the throne to his younger brother” (Harry Hagan, “Deception as Motif and Theme in 2 Sm 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2,” Bib 60 [1979]: 322).


47. The phrase אַל־תִּשָּׁבוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל נַפְּחֵי (cf. 1 Kgs 2:16, 17, 20) is an idiomatic way of speaking of someone not refusing (Walsh, 1 Kings, 50). For a complete discussion of this phrase see DeVries, 1 Kings, 37; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 111; C.F. Burney, Notes on the Hebrew Text of Kings With an Introduction and Appendix (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 19. Although Adonijah is using an imperative here and in 2:17 (אַל־יִשָּׁבוּ), he is not speaking impolitely to Bathsheba; as noted by Bridge, “the use of imperatives by social inferiors in biblical narrative and by supplicants to God (in Psalms and prayers in narrative) is common [and...] ancient Israelites did not automatically consider imperatives to be impolite” (Edward Bridge, “Polite Language in the Lachish Letters,” VT 60 [2010]: 523). Adonijah’s request in 2:16 has much in common with Esther’s request in Esther 5. In this chapter, Esther gets a prior commitment from the king before she makes her actual request, just as Adonijah gets Bathsheba’s commitment to make his request (2:16) before he tells her what he wants her to do for him (2:17).
Significantly, he speaks of the request as קטנה, which is another minimization technique — it is only one request, she has nothing to fear.48

It is not until 2:17 that Adonijah finally makes his request: “speak, please, to Solomon, the king, because he will not refuse you, and let him give to me Abishag, the Shunammite, for a wife” (2:17). After interacting with Bathsheba for four verses, Adonijah makes the request. Delaying his request until he has firmly established his role in the conversation might also be interpreted as another attempt at preventing Bathsheba from discerning the nature of the exchange. As Ishida comments, “before disclosing the purpose of his visit, Adonijah relaxed [Bathsheba’s] tension [...] This was done to convince her that his request for Abishag had nothing to do with a claim upon the throne.”49

With the request of 2:17 being what Adonijah ultimately wants Bathsheba to do for him, he takes care in shaping it. First, he uses the particle נא, which Thomas O. Lambdin argues should be left untranslated because it “denote[s] that the command in question is a logical consequence, either of an immediately preceding statement or of the situation in which it

48. Walsh, 1 Kings, 49. A few Hebrew manuscripts and the LXXLUC include ואכן קטנה after ותרם in this verse (cf. 1 Kgs 2:20) which, as Mulder comments, underscores “[t]he modest nature of the request [...] even more intensely” (Mulder, 1 Kings, 107-108). In this case, I will favour the MT, so that Adonijah only speaks ותרם. I will understand the addition of והנה in the LXXLUC and other Hebrew MSS as an attempt to align Adonijah’s language in this verse with Bathsheba’s in 2:20, where והנה also appears.

49. Ishida, “Adonijah,” 178. Berlin also observes, “Adonijah carefully and delicately leads up to the favor he has come to ask, assuring Bathsheba that he has come to terms with the loss of the throne” (Berlin, “David’s Wives,” 75).
is uttered.” However, most scholars interpret נא as a politeness marker; as Bent Christiansen comments, “[i]n practical terms [נא nearly always marks that an utterance is a polite/personal request, because it] has a softening effect on the speech segment conveyed to the addressee, suggesting that his response or compliance to the proposal is elective.”

Because Adonijah has no political position relative to Bathsheba and he is trying to get her to do something for him, it makes narrative sense that he would use נא (“please”) to frame his request politely.

Second, Adonijah shapes the presentation of his request by referring to Solomon as “the king,” acknowledging his political power. This designation contrasts with 2:15 where Adonijah called Solomon his brother (אח) and allows Adonijah to “put himself into the role of ordinary petitioner before his monarch, requesting a royal favour.” Adonijah has, then, characterised himself as submitting to Solomon, thereby, elevating his brother as the only one who can grant his request.

Third, Adonijah adds a hint of flattery to the request by telling Bathsheba that she has influence over Solomon because, if she makes the

50. Thomas O. Lambdin, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 114, 170. In 1:12, however, it is better not to translate נא (see chapter 4).


52. Walsh, 1 Kings, 50.
request, Solomon will not refuse it.\textsuperscript{53} By including this detail, Adonijah acknowledges Bathsheba’s special connection with the king.

Finally, as noted earlier, Adonijah tells Bathsheba only that he wants Abishag for a wife, which explains why he wants Abishag on a superficial level but does not imply that he intends anything additional with the request. As he did when he used “peaceably” at the start of the interaction (2:13), Adonijah’s simple answer might be aimed at preventing Bathsheba from determining the real reason for his request — he only wants Abishag as a wife, not because he wants to weaken Solomon’s kingship.

In summary, in 2:13-18 Adonijah shapes his language as he tries to keep Bathsheba, the power-holder and one with whom he is implicated in a political rivalry, from realising the significance of his request and ending the conversation. Rather than telling her what he wants as soon as they meet, Adonijah uses his words to “induce [Bathsheba] to believe that his request for Abishag was innocent”\textsuperscript{54} — he assures her that he has come in peace (2:13), suggests that the kingdom turned of its own accord to his brother (2:15), acknowledges that YHWH destined the kingdom to go to Solomon (2:15), portrays his request as minor (2:16), respects Solomon’s role as king (2:17), flatters Bathsheba (2:17), and tells Bathsheba only that he wants Abishag for a wife (2:17).

\textsuperscript{53} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 50.

\textsuperscript{54} Ishida, “Adonijah,” 178.
Important for this study is 2:15, where Adonijah invokes YHWH. This language must be interpreted as having a similar function to the rest of his language in his interaction with Bathsheba. By invoking YHWH as he tells Bathsheba that YHWH turned the kingdom away from him and gave it to Solomon, Adonijah acknowledges both Solomon’s royal authority and YHWH’s role in bringing Solomon to the throne. Adonijah uses his invocation to imply to Bathsheba that he harbours no resentment for his loss of the kingship. Therefore, while this language might reflect Adonijah’s piety, he is also using it to deter Bathsheba from realising the political gravity of his request.

*Bathsheba’s Response to Adonijah*

Because Adonijah works so hard to downplay the request, he has also exaggerated it. According to Mulder, “[Adonijah’s] elaborate manner of [...] presenting the request as very minor [...] raises the tension to a maximum.”55 By using so many words, Adonijah signals the request’s importance because, if it were minor, he could have made it without taking so much care. Furthermore, because Bathsheba is a member of the court, her experience would likely have given her the knowledge to interpret the political ramifications of the request as soon as Adonijah made it.

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For these reasons, it is surprising that Bathsheba responds to Adonijah twice in the conversation with the imperative דַּבֵּר (2:14, 16), giving him permission to speak and to define where the conversation will go. Moreover, after Adonijah has finished speaking, Bathsheba responds, “Good, I, I will speak about you to the king” (2:18). By using the personal pronoun אני before the first person imperfect verb אדבר, Bathsheba emphasises herself and her role in making Adonijah’s request. The question is, however, why is Bathsheba reacting so positively to a man to whom she is politically opposed and who is making a request which, if granted, would benefit him alone?

To address this narrative gap scholars propose either that Bathsheba is naïve or shrewd.56 Whybray argues for Bathsheba’s naïvety, calling her “a good-natured, rather stupid woman who was a natural prey both to more passionate and to cleverer men.”57 This assessment aligns with Montgomery’s suggestion that Bathsheba fulfils Adonijah’s request because she is preoccupied by her “womanly interest in [Adonijah’s] love-affair [with Abishag], to which she finds no objection.”58 For these scholars, Bathsheba grants Adonijah’s request because she thinks his love for Abishag informs his


58. Montgomery, Books of Kings, 92. Keil takes Bathsheba’s response to Adonijah as a sign of her “womanly simplicity” (Keil, Books of Kings, 32).
desire to marry her — she is completely incapable of seeing the danger behind his words.

However, the above interpretation does not do justice to Bathsheba’s character and cannot be sustained. As noted, Adonijah does not hide the gravity of his request very well and Bathsheba has enough experience to know that it is not benign. Moreover, her question to Adonijah in 2:13 shows that she knows that he could pose a threat, an awareness that must inform her character throughout their interaction.59

Rather than accepting that Bathsheba agrees to Adonijah’s request because she is stupid, it is more likely that she is doing so because she is shrewd. Returning to 1:17-21, Bathsheba knew the kind of language that would lead David to make an oath to put Solomon on the throne. If she had sufficient knowledge of her husband to be able to use her language to shape his response, she could have similar knowledge regarding her son. Thus, it is possible that Bathsheba knows that if she were to ask Solomon to give anything to his brother, who previously wanted the throne, he would become enraged and would likely kill Adonijah.60 As Hennie J. Marsman correctly asserts, “[i]t seems unlikely that she was naive and did not consider the consequences of the request [...] she probably knew very well

59. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 101.
60. Willis et al., “Conversation,” 142; Nicol, “Bathsheba,” 362-363; Solvang, Woman’s Place, 151.
what she was doing.” Similarly, Walsh comments that by taking Adonijah’s request to Solomon, Bathsheba “may be knowingly and gleefully bringing her son what he wants most: an excuse for disposing of a dangerous rival.”

Finally, Solvang argues, “[Bathsheba] anticipated Solomon’s rejection and anger over his brother’s request and intended to provide a legitimate-sounding reason for Solomon to act against his rival by delivering the request [...] Bathsheba was in a position to put Adonijah into Solomon’s hands.” Therefore, while Kyung Sook Lee claims, “it goes too far to think of [Bathsheba] as cunning [...] she perhaps saw nothing but a servant in Abishag and did not consider Adonijah’s courting her to be a way to get to the throne,” it is more faithful to Bathsheba’s character to see her as cunning, going along with Adonijah’s request because she knows that it will


62. Walsh, 1 Kings, 54. See also Kirsten H. Gardner, “Action and Counter-Action: Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba,” in Gender Agenda Matters: Papers of the ‘Feminist Section’ of the International Meetings of The Society of Biblical Literature (ed. Irmtraud Fischer; Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 110; DeVries, 1 Kings, 37; Terence E. Fretheim, First and Second Kings (WestBC; Louisville: WJK, 1999), 26; Alter, David Story, 378; J.W. Wesselius, “Joab’s Death and the Central Theme of the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel IX - 1 Kings II),” VT 40 (1990): 348; David Marcus, “David the Deceiver and David the Dupe,” Prooftexts 6 (1986): 167. In contrast, Koenig argues, “Solomon’s decision to kill Adonijah is not necessarily something which [Bathsheba] plotted or in which she participated” (Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 104). Given Bathsheba’s characterisation in 1 Kings 1-2, particularly her ability to shape Nathan’s script to lead David to make Solomon king (1:15-21), it is appropriate to assume that she is working to ensure that Solomon kills Adonijah to secure his throne.

63. Solvang, Woman’s Place, 151.

64. Lee, “Books of Kings,” 162. In reference to 2:13, McCracken argues that it is Bathsheba’s “desire to maintain or promote peace that motivates [her]” (McCracken, Family Portraits, 252). Given what has already been discussed, McCracken’s interpretation of Bathsheba is much too simplistic and does not do justice to her character.
lead to his death and, consequently, both her and her son’s political security.\textsuperscript{65}

This interpretation of Bathsheba’s character draws attention to Adonijah, raising the question: how could he not realise that Bathsheba would discern the nature of his request? On the one hand, Adonijah might have been overly reliant on his invocation of YHWH (2:15), thinking that it was enough to signal to Bathsheba that he had no ulterior motive in their exchange. On the other hand, Adonijah might have been so desirous for the forbidden Abishag that he forgot to account for Bathsheba’s knowledge and experience. While the narrator does not provide enough information to fill this gap, it is clear that Adonijah has underestimated Bathsheba’s ability when he formed his request because it leads her to arrange not his marriage with Abishag, but his death.

c. 1 Kgs 2:19-25, Bathsheba and Solomon Speak

Bathsheba Makes Adonijah’s Request, 1 Kgs 2:19-21

In 2:19-21, the narrator establishes the expectation “that Solomon will say yes to [Bathsheba’s] uncomplicated request.”\textsuperscript{66} However, because Bathsheba is aware of the political threat of the request, she carefully shapes her


\textsuperscript{66.} McCracken, \textit{Family Portraits}, 252. See also Hens-Piazza, \textit{1-2 Kings}, 28; Richard D. Nelson, \textit{First and Second Kings} (IBC; Louisville: WJK, 1987), 27.
language to ensure not that Solomon grants it, but that he experiences anger over it that will lead to his brother’s end.

The narrator describes the first interaction between Solomon and his mother in 2:19. While Solomon is called “King Solomon” and “king” (2:19-21), designations that point to him acting in his political capacity, Bathsheba clearly has power too — she never bows to Solomon, but Solomon honours her by rising to meet her, bowing to her, and having a throne brought for her so that she could sit at his right hand (2:19). These details, along with the narrator’s reference to Bathsheba as המלך אם (2:19), confirm that she has triumphed over Haggith and obtained a place of privilege in the court due to Solomon’s ascent.

Bathsheba’s position also accounts for why she speaks to Solomon first, telling him, “one small request I, I have to ask from you, do not refuse me” (2:20). For a second time in the narrative Bathsheba is the one who initiates a conversation with another character. As noted above, when Adonijah approached Bathsheba in 2:13, Bathsheba took the lead in the conversation because she held a position in the court and Adonijah did not. In 2:20, however, Bathsheba is acting as the המלך אם and she can speak to Solomon as his equal. According to Revell, “where the child is the king, he

67. DeVries, 1 Kings, 37; Walsh, 1 Kings, 52.

68. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 101; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 27-28; Klein, Deborah to Esther, 69; DeVries, 1 Kings, 38; Cogan, 1 Kings, 176; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 112; Fokkelman, King David, 394; Keil, Books of Kings, 32.
and his parents each have a claim to superiority [...] they are seen as conversing as equals.”\(^{69}\) Thus, when Bathsheba speaks first in 2:20, she is not asserting her power over Solomon, as she exerted it over Adonijah (2:13), but she is reflecting the balanced power that exists between herself and her son.

In 2:20, Bathsheba’s words to Solomon contain evidence that she is preparing him to expect that the request will be insignificant, misleading him so that, once she makes the request, he would be angered by its gravity.

First, although the request originates from Adonijah, Bathsheba does not tell Solomon about her earlier interaction with his brother.\(^{70}\) In line with her language in 2:18, Bathsheba uses both the independent personal pronoun אני with the first person verb שאלתי; thereby, characterising herself as the petitioner to mitigate any fear that Solomon might have regarding the request — because Bathsheba, his mother, wants to make a request it will not be dangerous and he can trust it.

Second, while Adonijah described his request as אחת, “one,” to downplay its gravity, Bathsheba adds the adjective קטנה, “small.” The use of repetition with slight variation is a narrative technique that draws attention to the difference between the two descriptions of the request, which, in this


\(^{70}\) Walsh, *1 Kings*, 53.
case, is Bathsheba’s addition of קטנה.\textsuperscript{71} By combining אחת and קטנה, Bathsheba enhances Adonijah’s minimization, suggesting to Solomon that the request is truly insignificant.\textsuperscript{72} However, because “[s]he knows it is no small request [Bathsheba] incites her son the king.”\textsuperscript{73} As Alter comments, “[t]his is just a tiny request, she appears to say, full knowing that Solomon is likely to see it, on the contrary, as a huge thing.”\textsuperscript{74}

Third, Bathsheba tells Solomon not to refuse her request. In 2:16 Adonijah had also told Bathsheba not to refuse him and Bathsheba adopts the same phrase when speaking with Solomon (2:20). Whereas Adonijah’s use of this phrase can be interpreted as a sign of him flattering Bathsheba to downplay his request (see above), Bathsheba’s use of a similar phrase is redundant — she is Solomon’s mother and she has just told him that the request is “one small” request, there is nothing in Bathsheba’s description of the request that might lead Solomon to deny it. This clause, then, describes the outcome that Solomon is expecting when, in fact, Bathsheba is leading him to react in the opposite way.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Alter, \textit{David Story}, 379; Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 112.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 52; Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 395.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Willis et al., “Conversation,” 142. In opposition, McCracken contends that when Bathsheba speaks of the request as קטנה, she is doing so in the hopes that Solomon will grant it (McCracken, \textit{Family Portraits}, 252). As noted above, McCracken’s understanding of Bathsheba is weak and it has influenced his misinterpretation of her use of קטנה.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Alter, \textit{David Story}, 379. See also Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 168.
\end{itemize}
The expectation that Solomon will grant the request is established in 2:20 when Solomon, who still does not know the content of Bathsheba’s request, states, “make your request my mother, because I will not refuse you” (2:20). In line with his actions in 2:19, Solomon continues to respect Bathsheba by calling her אמי, a “polite, or honorific” construction. He also states that he will not refuse her request. Unlike previous verses where characters speak about others refusing (2:16, 17, 20), Solomon uses a first-person phrase, לא אобав את פניך and, because he referring to his own actions, there is little reason to doubt that he is not speaking truthfully. Thus, Solomon’s response to Bathsheba suggests that her language has worked, because he does not question the integrity of his mother’s audience with him.

When Bathsheba makes the request in 2:21, she does so in a way that both signals that Solomon can deny the request and adds one further attempt at angering him. Bathsheba frames the request using a third-person passive imperative: İş אשת אבישג את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישגית את אבישɡית את אבישגית א

75. Revell, Designation, 330.
76. Ibid., 285.
give), he/she adopts the form when he/she is either afraid that the request will be refused or is uncertain how it will be received. Additionally, Revell comments that the third person request, “avoids any suggestion that the speaker intends to limit the addressee’s freedom of action in any way, or to impose an obligation on him.” When the third person passive is used in a request, the speaker seems to be going “as far as is possible in this avoidance, while still using a modal request form to express the urgency of the request.” Following Revell, the form of Bathsheba’s request signals her awareness of its significance and her expectation that it will lead Solomon to respond in a volatile way. Also, it allows her to open space for Solomon to respond to it in any way that he chooses, which, in this case, includes denial.

Furthermore, Bathsheba refers to Adonijah as אחיך, “your [Solomon’s] brother.” This term echoes 2:15, where Adonijah had referred to Solomon as his brother to suggest that he viewed him on a personal and not a political level. In 2:20, אחיך could also emphasise “the familial ties between [Adonijah] and Solomon rather than the rivalry that has divided them.” However, because Bathsheba is speaking this term to Solomon, the brother to whom Adonijah is opposed, אחיך elevates their fraternal connection and its underlying tension. In this way, Bathsheba’s use of אחיך reminds

77. Revell, Designation, 285. See also Walsh, 1 Kings, 53. Mulder calls this syntactic form “impersonal” (Mulder, 1 Kings, 110).

78. Revell, Designation, 285.

79. Walsh, 1 Kings, 53. See also Fokkelman, King David, 395.
Solomon, as he will state in 2:22, that “this brother was, and apparently still is, a contender for the throne.”

In 2:19-20, Solomon’s response to Bathsheba anticipates that he will grant her request, but Bathsheba’s language is aimed at leading him to deny it. By presenting the request as her own and calling it “one small request” (2:20), Bathsheba characterises the request as harmless. However, when Bathsheba makes the request (2:21), she uses a cautious third-person passive form which both reveals that she is aware that Solomon will not react favourably towards it and suggests that he does not have to grant it. To ensure this outcome, Bathsheba refers to Adonijah as Solomon’s brother, reminding him of their political rivalry. Therefore, as Lillian R. Klein states, “although [Bathsheba] asks Solomon not to refuse her, her presentation of Adonijah’s case assures that Solomon will refuse, thus eliminating a potential rival for the throne and a potential danger to her and her son’s position.”

Solomon’s Invocation of YHWH and the Death of Adonijah, 1 Kgs 2:23-25

When Solomon speaks in 2:22 the tenor of the narrative changes, making it clear that Bathsheba’s linguistic techniques have achieved her goal. The

80. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 102.

81. Klein, Deborah to Esther, 70 (italics in original). See also Ben-Barak, who argues, “[Bathsheba plays an instrumental role] in eliminating Adonijah, who remained a threat to Solomon as long as he was alive” (Zafrira Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the gebîrâ,” in A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings [ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], 179). See also Burke O. Long, 1 Kings With an Introduction to Historical Literature (FOTL 9; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 51.
calm conversation between a mother and son suddenly shifts as Solomon’s words come quickly, “admitting of no reply” from Bathsheba. 82 In this way, the narrator characterises Solomon as reacting to his mother with “an angry outburst of outrage.” 83

Solomon’s response to Bathsheba begins with his interpretation of the request and its impact on him: “and why do you ask for Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well for he is my elder brother, ask not only for him but also for the priest Abiathar and for Joab son of Zeruiah” (2:22). According to Solomon, because Adonijah is his elder brother and has the support of a political party, his request cannot be small, as Bathsheba had claimed. Mulder captures this interpretation well, when he states, “[Solomon] latches on to the ‘small’ request — Abishag as wife for Adonijah — by asking why Bathsheba does not immediately come up with the ‘big’ request: the kingship for Adonijah!” 84

In 2:21, Bathsheba referred to Adonijah as Solomon’s brother (אחיך), which prompts Solomon to remind her that Adonijah is his “elder brother” (הגדול אחי; 2:22). 85 Although Bathsheba did not mention Adonijah’s birth

82. Long, 1 Kings, 50.

83. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 28. See also McCracken, Family Portraits, 253; Walsh, 1 Kings, 53; Fokkelman, King David, 396; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 92. Walsh argues that Solomon’s reaction is “violent [...] reduces him almost to incoherence” (Jerome T. Walsh, “The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5,” CBQ 57 [1995]: 483).

84. Mulder, 1 Kings, 110. See also Ishida, “Adonijah,” 179.

85. For Nelson, the “rough syntax” of 2:22 is a sign of “Solomon’s outburst” over Bathsheba’s request (Nelson, First and Second Kings, 27).
position in relation to Solomon, Solomon clarifies the importance of this information — as the younger of David’s two sons, Solomon’s position is weak in comparison to his older brother.86

Solomon also notes that Adonijah has the political support of both Abiathar and Joab.87 These men were, as Seow comments, “supported by the free elements in the kingdom,” because they were not “feudal retainers appointed by the authoritarian power of the king,” as both Zadok and Benaiah were.88 Because Adonijah has the support of men who could influence the common people to follow him, he remains a powerful force in the kingdom.

In 2:23 the narrator intervenes in Solomon’s speech by stating that King Solomon “swore by YHWH,” after which Solomon speaks “[t]hus let God do to me and let him do it again because in his soul Adonijah spoke this word” (2:23). The narrator’s reference to YHWH establishes the expectation that Solomon will immediately swear an oath in YHWH’s name, which he does not do (in 2:23 he swears an oath to אלהים). Instead, the fulfilment of this

86. Gray, 1 and 2 Kings, 107. See also Seow, “First and Second Books,” 32; Walsh, 1 Kings, 53; Rice, Nations Under God, 23; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 113.

87. DeVries, 1 Kings, 38; Rice, Nations, 23; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 112; Gray, 1 and 2 Kings, 107.

expectation comes in 2:24, when Solomon invokes YHWH using the oath formula חַי־יהוה.

It is interesting to note that oaths adopting a structure similar to Solomon’s oath in 2:23 are found in 1 Sam 20:13; 2 Sam 3:35, 19:13; 14:44; Ruth 1:17. Out of these occurrences, only Jonathan and Ruth invoke YHWH when making their respective oaths (1 Sam 20:13; Ruth 1:17), but all of the other characters simply speak אלהים. According to Ziegler, Jonathan and Ruth use the holy name as they attempt to convince their interlocutor “that they are committed to their pledge of loyalty [the holy name being] the most persuasive means at their disposal.”89 This interpretation, which aligns well with aspects of the argument advanced in this study, sees the holy name as a tool that Jonathan and Ruth are employing for reasons particular to their conversational contexts.

In the other verses, although the contexts in which the oaths are spoken differ, the speakers are all kings. Possibly, because these men already have established power, they do not need to invoke YHWH when using this oath form. In 1 Kgs 2:23 in particular, Solomon is not trying to persuade anyone and he already embodies a position of power, which means that he does not need to use the holy name for the same reason that Ruth and Jonathan use it.

89. Ziegler, Promises, 78.
Turning to the content of Solomon’s oath in 2:23, Ziegler argues that this oath is a self-imprecatory oath because Solomon has “called down divine curses upon himself if it shall be violated.” However, the specific content of this oath is unclear because Solomon does not explicitly state what he intends YHWH to do to Adonijah or to himself if the oath is violated. Nevertheless, Jones and others argue that in this oath “Solomon is asserting that he has no option but to kill the contender [Adonijah].” Furthermore, Solomon increases the stakes because he calls God to kill him if he does not kill Adonijah. Solomon’s words against Adonijah suggest that although Solomon began by acting with anger in response to his mother, the only one who is going to be punished is Adonijah because Solomon has discerned that the request is, in fact, “a deceptive ploy by Adonijah.”

As noted, it is in 2:24 when Solomon invokes YHWH as the narrator had said (2:23). In 2:24, Solomon swears an oath using the formula, חי יהוה, which is “followed by a subordinate descriptive clause”: “as YHWH lives who has established me and made me dwell on the throne of my father David and who made me a house just as he spoke that day” (2:24). The structure of Solomon’s oath in 2:24 is reminiscent of David’s oath in 1:29-30

90. Ziegler, Promises, 60, 92. See also Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 103. For a thorough discussion of this oath form see Ziegler, Promises, 55-77.

91. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 113. See also Ziegler, Promises, 73, 92; DeVries, 1 Kings, 38; Mulder, 1 Kings, 111; Walsh, 1 Kings, 53.

92. Long, 1 Kings, 51.

93. Ziegler, Promises, 117.
because in both cases the men speak יָרֵא and a reference to YHWH and what YHWH did for them.

In Solomon’s subordinate clause, he expresses his interpretation of his rise to the throne that relates both to his experience in 2:38-40 and to the covenant in 2 Sam 7:11-16. As discussed in chapter 5, Solomon was anointed by the priest Zadok using holy oil (1 Kgs 1:39) and the שופר sounded, implying the sacral significance of his ascent (1:39). These signs would lead Solomon to infer YHWH’s support for his kingship, as he states in 2:24.

Although it was not clear in 2:4 whether David was referring to the covenant in 2 Sam 7:11-16 or another covenant (see chapter 6), Solomon’s language in 1 Kgs 2:24 has clear parallels with 2 Sam 7:11-16 — both episodes use the verb כון and the nouns בית and כסא. The shared terms raise the possibility that Solomon knows of the promise from 2 Samuel 7 and he has equated it with what David spoke to him in 1 Kgs 2:4. While the heir to the throne in 2 Sam 7:11-6 was not explicitly named, in 1 Kgs 2:24, Solomon clearly assumes that he is that heir, דבר, “just as [YHWH] said.”

It is interesting to note that instead of making one oath for Adonijah’s death, Solomon swears two (one in 2:23 and one in 2:24), “a rare ‘double

94. כון is found in all three pericopes (2 Sam 7:11-16; 1 Kgs 2:4, 24).

95. Ziegler, Promises, 118.
The irony, as highlighted by Bodner, is that Adonijah had asked Solomon to make an oath to spare his life in 1:51, but now “he gets a ‘double oath’ when asking for Abishag. If Solomon is hesitant to swear an oath to Adonijah previously, he is suddenly very loquacious with oath language here.”

By compounding oaths, Solomon increases the gravity of Adonijah’s actions against him. In other words, Adonijah’s actions are not bad enough to deserve one oath for his death, but they are so egregious that Solomon swears two. Furthermore, using two oaths adds to the certainty that Adonijah will die. As discussed in chapter 8, Solomon will also rely on oath language to justify Shimei’s death in 2:36-43.

The culmination of Solomon’s oaths is his command that Adonijah will die “today” (2:24), echoing the same urgency that shaped much of 1 Kings 1 (cf. 1:25, 30, 48, 51)." Although Adonijah’s fate is clear, the reason Solomon has arrived at this specific judgment is not. According to Fritz, Adonijah’s request for Abishag “is too insignificant to justify the consequences; only in Solomon’s view does it represent a mortal crime.” Similarly, Fokkelman argues, “this heavily laid-on talk in the form of oath

96. Walsh, 1 Kings, 53. See also Bodner, “Swearing Issue,” 169; Yael Ziegler, Promises to Keep: The Oath in Biblical Narrative (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 92-93; DeVries, 1 Kings, 38.
98. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 103; Walsh, 1 Kings, 54; House, 1, 2 Kings, 100.
formulas is once more a type of over-reaction, indicating that for Solomon much more is involved than the request alone.”

Solomon’s decision to kill Adonijah relates to his earlier words in 1:52. As outlined in chapter 5, in 1:52 Solomon imbued himself with the power to decide Adonijah’s fate because he conditioned Adonijah’s future actions using ambiguous language, הרעה and בֶּן־חיל. Solomon’s reaction to Adonijah’s request suggests that he has interpreted it as violation of the conditions outlined in 1:52 and this justifies his command. On this verse Provan writes, “Solomon chooses to see in Adonijah’s action exactly the ‘evil’ that he had warned him against in 1:52. Interpreting his request as a revival of the conspiracy of chapter 1 [...], he orders execution.”

Solomon’s call for the death of Adonijah contrasts with the mercy that he had shown him in 1:51-53 and this demonstrates that his character has changed. This change might be attributed to the words of his father (2:2-9): after ordering Solomon to “be strong and be a man” (2:2), David told him to use his wisdom (i.e. shrewdness, cleverness) to figure out how to deal with Joab (2:6) and Shimei (2:9). Even though David did not speak of Adonijah, Solomon’s wisdom has led him to discern that Adonijah is a threat and he must face the same fate as the men whom his father had named.


100. Fokkelman, *King David*, 397.
103. Ishida argues, “Adonijah was executed by Solomon as a rebel who had plotted against
In 2:25, Benaiah, without speaking a word, “comes upon” (פגע) Adonijah and kills him, a role that he will play again in 2:34, 46.

Bathsheba’s Omission of Adonijah’s Invocation of YHWH

Even though Solomon’s words in 2:24 are the first time that he attributes his rise to the kingship to YHWH,105 Adonijah had already voiced this interpretation when speaking with Bathsheba (2:15).106 Because Bathsheba did not share this information with Solomon, he would not know that his brother had already confessed that YHWH gave the kingdom to him. This observation begs the question: did Bathsheba purposefully withhold this information from Solomon to remove this impediment to a potentially hostile response?

In 2:21, Bathsheba is not required to convey Adonijah’s invocation of YHWH to Solomon, especially since she only appears to be repeating 2:17 from Adonijah’s script; however, she has already demonstrated that she knows the power an invocation of YHWH can have on a man in her life. In 1:17, Bathsheba added an invocation of YHWH to Nathan’s oath because she

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Solomon’s regime” (Ishida, “Adonijah,” 180).

104. Walsh, 1 Kings, 54-55. For a discussion of פגע see, DeVries, 1 Kings, 38; Cogan, 1 Kings, 177; Mulder, 1 Kings, 112. Robert Hubbard suggests that פגע, given the judicial contexts in which it regularly appears, should not be translated “to fall upon, strike down’ but more specifically as ‘to execute, put to death’” (Robert L. Hubbard, “The Hebrew Root PG’ as a Legal Term,” JETS 27 [1984]: 129-133).

105. Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 34.

106. Koenig, Isn’t This Bathsheba, 103.
knew about David’s relationship with YHWH and was attempting to get him to recall this so that he would make the oath to place Solomon on his throne (chapter 4). As Solomon’s mother, it is possible that Bathsheba also knows that Solomon sees YHWH as implicated in his ascent to the throne (2:24). When Bathsheba learns that Adonijah attributes Solomon’s kingship to YHWH (2:15), it makes better sense for her not to share this information with Solomon, whom she wants to anger so that he will kill his brother. Therefore, by omitting Adonijah’s invocation, Bathsheba prevents Solomon both from realising that he and Adonijah view his ascent in the same way and from thinking that Adonijah had given up his claim to the throne. In so doing, she characterises Adonijah as not having submitted to Solomon’s kingship, which increases Solomon’s anger against him.

Bathsheba’s omission of Adonijah’s invocation could also have played a direct role in Solomon’s call for Adonijah’s death. While the majority of scholars argue that Solomon’s words in 1:52 are informing his decision to kill Adonijah in 2:25, it is also possible that Solomon has another motivation. Brueggemann suggests that Solomon wants Adonijah to die because he “not only threatened Solomon but has failed to accept Yahweh’s will.”107 Ziegler also notes that Solomon wanted to see Adonijah killed because “[a]ny attempt to subvert the Lord’s will in providing an heir to the

Davidic throne, deserves death.” For both scholars, because Solomon has interpreted Adonijah’s request as a plot to take the throne, he has determined that Adonijah has not accepted that YHWH gave the throne to him and for this he deserves to die. If Bathsheba had told Solomon what Adonijah had said to her in 2:15, then Solomon might not have arrived at this conclusion and Adonijah’s life might have been spared.

By withholding Adonijah’s invocation (2:15) from Solomon (2:21), Bathsheba prevents him from thinking that Adonijah has given up his aspirations for the throne because he believes YHWH destined the kingdom for his brother, which would connect with Solomon’s own understanding of his kingship (2:24). In this way, Bathsheba increases Solomon’s anger over Adonijah’s request. This interpretation of Bathsheba’s language in 2:21 makes for an interesting comparison with her language in 1:17 — in 1:17 Bathsheba added an invocation to play on David’s emotions so that he would swear to make Solomon king; in 2:21 Bathsheba removes an invocation to play on Solomon’s emotions and this leads him to swear to kill Adonijah.

d. Conclusion

In 2:13-25, Adonijah goes to Bathsheba and asks her to request that Solomon give Abishag to him as a wife; however, beneath this request is a threat to Solomon and Bathsheba. Although Adonijah claims that he only wants
Abishag as a wife, the fact that he wants to ask Solomon to give such a unique woman to him signals his attempt at weakening Solomon’s image; thereby, setting the stage for him to re-establish himself at a later point as a viable contender for the throne.

Bathsheba sees through Adonijah’s request and manipulates her account of it to increase Solomon’s anger and lead him to kill Adonijah. As noted in Solomon’s response to Bathsheba, he also understands the nature of Adonijah’s request and takes it as a contravention of the conditions outlined in 1:52, which leads Solomon to command that Benaiah kill Adonijah (2:25).

In 2:15 Adonijah invokes YHWH as one of his techniques to keep Bathsheba speaking with him. Although this language might reflect how he interprets his brother’s ascent, it also functions as part of his cover-up of his political aspirations. When Bathsheba does not speak Adonijah’s invocation to Solomon, she prevents her son from thinking that Adonijah has accepted that YHWH gave the throne to him and that they have this understanding in common, which might have downgraded Solomon’s anger over the request. That including Adonijah’s invocation could have impacted Solomon is noted when Solomon invokes YHWH when he swears a double oath (2:23-24), using language that echoes what Adonijah had spoken to Bathsheba in 2:15. Therefore, Adonijah uses an invocation of YHWH to compel Bathsheba to make the request to Solomon and Bathsheba also uses, through omission, an
invocation of YHWH to manipulate her son to deny the request and to kill Adonijah.

By commanding the death of Adonijah, Solomon removes from his kingdom a potential threat to his throne. In 2:26-46, Solomon continues on this murderous trajectory as he establishes himself as king of Israel (2:26-46). Not only does Solomon use the divine name for his own purposes, as he speaks to Benaiah in 2:32-33 and to Shimei in 42-45, but also the narrator uses the divine name to justify Solomon’s treatment of Abiathar (2:27).
a. Introduction

After Adonijah’s death (2:25), Solomon removes the men who remain in his kingdom and whose political associations make them a potential threat to his reign. In 2:26-27, Solomon banishes Abiathar, the priest aligned with Adonijah’s faction (1:7, 19, 25; 2:22). Later, he has Joab, who sided with Adonijah (1:7, 19, 41; 2:22) and was included in David’s speech (2:5-6), killed by Benaiah (2:34). Once Solomon has replaced both men with members of his own political party (2:35), he orders that Benaiah kill Shimei (2:46), the Saulide (2 Sam 16:5) aligned with Solomon (1 Kgs 1:8), who was also named by David (2:8). These episodes culminate in the narrator’s final statement: “the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon” (2:46, cf. 2:12).

In 2:26-46, both the narrator (2:27) and Solomon (2:32-33; 42-45) speak YHWH’s name. When Solomon banishes Abiathar instead of killing him (2:26), he differentiates himself from Saul. The narrator intervenes in 2:27 and qualifies Solomon’s action as a fulfilment of YHWH’s plan.

Most interesting are Solomon’s invocations in 2:32-33, 42-45, which relate to David’s words in 2:2-6, 8-9. As noted in chapter 6, David told Solomon to prioritise YHWH (2:2-4) and this led him to justify his commands for the deaths of Joab and Shimei by describing their prior sinful acts (2:5-6, 8-9). However, David’s commands were also shaped by his desire that Solomon’s reign would experience both prosperity, which would be achieved if Solomon followed YHWH’s תורה, and stability, which would be achieved if Solomon killed Joab and Shimei.

In 2:32-33, 42-45 Solomon’s language demonstrates how he “twists words and invents religious rationales [to] justify the killings of political enemies.” When Solomon invokes YHWH in 2:32-33, he does so to convince Benaiah that it is acceptable to kill Joab beside the altar. With Shimei having shown that he is not a threat, Solomon invokes YHWH to demonstrate for him that he deserves death because he has contravened an oath to YHWH (2:42). Although Solomon’s invocations and his references to Joab’s and Shimei’s pasts give the illusion that he is adhering to his father’s words (2:2-6, 8-9), the contexts in which he is speaking this language adds to it a dishonest nuance. Thus, instead of Solomon’s invocations reflecting


3. Marvin A. Sweeney, I & II Kings (OTL; Louisville: WJK, 2007), 60.
his piety, they reflect his manipulative use of YHWH-language as he works for his own prosperity and strength as king.

b. 1 Kgs 2:26-27, Solomon Banishes Abiathar

Although there is no indication in 2:26-27 that Abiathar is guilty of a specific crime,⁴ he is associated with Adonijah (1:7, 19, 25, 42; 2:22) and this detail informs Solomon’s decision to send him to Anathoth:\(^5\) “[g]o to Anathoth, to your fields [estate/home], because you are a man of death” (2:26). Anathoth was located “on the road to Jerusalem […] 5 km north and east of the City of David.”⁶ Similar to Solomon’s command that Adonijah “go home” (1:53) which, as argued in chapter 5, stripped Adonijah of his power by sending him away from the political centre, requiring Abiathar to go to Anathoth and implying that he “is forbidden to return” would mean that he

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would be away from Jerusalem and could no longer continue as its priest (2:27). With Abiathar gone, Zadok, with whom he shared the position and who was one of Solomon’s allies (1:8, 26), could now function as the high priest on his own (2:35).

Solomon’s command to send Abiathar to Anathoth raises the question: why does Solomon not order Benaiah to kill Abiathar, as he had ordered him to kill Adonijah (2:25) and will order him to kill Joab (2:34) and Shimei (2:46)? In 2:26, Solomon is acting as “the king” and this means that he clearly has the power to kill the priest (cf. 2:25, 29, 46). Furthermore, Solomon calls Abiathar “a man of death” (2:26), a phrase that functions not “merely as a comment on Abiathar’s guilt but is a formal death sentence.” That Solomon does not kill him in 2:26 is, I contend, a deliberate move aimed at bolstering his own royal image as he sets himself against Saul. In 2:27, the narrator intervenes and speaks YHWH’s name to transform

7. Walsh, 1 Kings, 55; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 28; DeVries, 1 Kings, 39; Alter, David Story, 380; Noth, Könige, 35.


Solomon’s act from one that serves the king alone to one that serves the larger divine plan.

Why Solomon Banishes Abiathar, 1 Kgs 2:26

Unlike other episodes where the narrator does not provide a character’s motivation (e.g. when Adonijah decides to speak with Bathsheba in 2:13, chapter 7), Solomon articulates why he does not kill Abiathar: “on this day I will not kill you [Abiathar] because you lifted up the ark of YHWH God before David my father and you were oppressed in all which my father was oppressed” (2:26). While scholars debate whether the episode in which Abiathar carries the ark can be identified in the preceding verses, the point of Solomon’s reference in 2:26 is that it clarifies exactly why he has spared Abiathar’s life — because Abiathar endured hardships with David, remaining with him through “the difficult days of his flight from the wrath of Saul,” he will not die.

Although 2:26 justifies Solomon’s command concerning Abiathar, some scholars posit that there are other factors influencing him. According

10. According to Brueggemann, by stating, “on this day I will not kill you,” Solomon might be implying that he will kill Abiathar at a later point (Walter Brueggemann, “Life and Death in Tenth Century Israel,” JAAR 40 [1972]: 107). However, Solomon never kills Abiathar at any later point in the narrative.

11. Walsh, 1 Kings, 55; Iain W. Provan, 1 and 2 Kings (NIBC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 39; Rice, Nations Under God 114. Seow argues that in 1 Kgs 2:26 Solomon is “probably” alluding to 2 Sam 15:24-29, where Abiathar carried the ark to Jerusalem (Seow, “First and Second Books,” 33). Cogan asserts, however, that 1 Kgs 2:26 it is only an “oblique reference [to 2 Sam 15:24-29 that] will hardly do” (Cogan, 1 Kings, 177).

12. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 115. See also Fritz, 1 & 2 Kings, 29; Noth, Könige, 35.
to one line of reasoning, Solomon does not kill Abiathar because Abiathar is a priest and Solomon respects this religious role.\footnote{Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 34; Mulder, 1 Kings, 113; Noth, Könige, 35. Hens-Piazza contends that Solomon spares Abiathar “more out of fear than out of respect for the religious official” (Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 28). Hens-Piazza’s argument is weak because she does not explain why Solomon would be afraid of Abiathar.} This argument fails, however, when Solomon orders that Benaiah kill Joab in YHWH’s tent (2:28-34), an act that not only violates the laws of asylum but also characterises Solomon as someone who will not allow the sanctity of a sacred institution to sway him from acting as he intends.\footnote{J.P. Fokkelman, King David (II Sam. 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2) (vol 1. of Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 398.}

Nevertheless, there is more that might be said about Solomon’s decision beyond what he states in 2:26. Because Solomon is a new monarch, what he does is integral to his developing royal image. Richard Fowler and Olivier Hekster, writing in reference to societies outside of Israel, suggest, “[b]y depicting himself or allowing himself to be depicted in certain ways, in certain contexts or with certain accoutrements, [a new] monarch shapes the expectations of his rule.”\footnote{Richard Fowler and Olivier Hekster, “Imagining Kings: From Persia to Rome,” in Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome (ed. Richard Fowler and Olivier Hekster; Orients et occidens, Bd.11; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005), 18. Similarly, Marlies Heinz argues, “[h]ow does a king, ruling against the rules, so to speak, represent himself in order to gain the acceptance and authority needed to establish and stabilize his power at a local, regional, and supra-regional level? Ideally, he must [pay attention to how he represents himself]” (Marlies Heinz, “The Ur III, Old Babylonian, and Kassite Empires,” in A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East [vol. 2 of A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East; ed. D.T. Potts; Oxford: Blackwell, 2012], 708).} Solomon could be attempting to achieve a similar end when he does not kill Abiathar — this act allows him to characterise himself and his rule as being unlike Saul and his rule. Thus,
Solomon is establishing that he will not be a king like Saul, who slaughtered priests and who demonstrated a “growing insanity” throughout his reign.\(^{16}\)

To illustrate how Solomon sets himself apart from Saul in 2:26, it is necessary to examine the scene where Saul commands the priests’ deaths. In 1 Samuel 22, Saul learned that the priests at Nob had helped David, which prompted him to order that his servants kill the priests (1 Sam 22:17). Saul’s servants were not willing to do this (22:17), so he commanded Doeg the Edomite to kill them (22:18). Doeg fulfilled the command, “turn[ing] and attack[ing] the priests; on that day he killed eighty-five priests who wore the linen ephod” (22:18). The only priest to escape was, in fact, Abiathar, who found David and told him what Saul had done (22:21). Given the sanctity of the priesthood, Saul’s command in 1 Samuel 22 characterised him as willing to engage in “legally unjustified, morally outrageous, and sacrilegious” actions.\(^{17}\)

When Solomon does not kill Abiathar in 1 Kgs 2:26, a priest who should have died under Saul’s command, he establishes that he is not like Saul. This argument is supported by the fact that Saul’s decision to kill the

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17. Roberts, “Legal Basis,” 21. Roberts argues that Saul’s actions, when examined within their legal and cultural milieu, might have been justified (Roberts, “Legal Basis,” 21-29). While this might be the case, from a narrative perspective Saul is gradually losing his mind and this means that his command in 1 Sam 22:18 could also be interpreted as a sign of this aspect of his developing characterisation.
priests of Nob was informed by their devotion to David,\textsuperscript{18} but Solomon uses this same devotion to justify saving Abiathar’s life (2:26).

Furthermore, when Saul commanded Doeg in 1 Sam 22:18, he used the verb פגע, which resulted in the priests’ deaths and Abiathar’s flight from Nob.\textsuperscript{19} Solomon also uses פגע when commanding Joab’s death (1 Kgs 2:29, 31), but he does not use it in reference to Abiathar. Because Saul used פגע for a priest but Solomon does not, Solomon differentiates himself from Saul.

Finally, in 2:26 Solomon’s command sends Abiathar to Anathoth, which was located near Nob. As Karel van der Toorn comments, “[t]he town of Nob was situated in the vicinity of Anathoth (Neh. xi 32), more precisely between Anathoth and Jerusalem ( Isa. x 32).”\textsuperscript{20} By sending Abiathar to Anathoth, Solomon sends him back to Nob, thereby, undoing Saul’s actions that removed Abiathar from Nob.

In summary, even though Solomon acknowledges that Abiathar deserves death, he does not kill him but sends him to Anathoth. In so doing, Solomon makes a clear statement that he is nothing like Saul, the king who killed priests and whose rule was marked by his gradual descent into madness.

\textsuperscript{18} Alter, \textit{David Story}, 380; Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 55; Paul R. House, \textit{1, 2 Kings} (NAC 8; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 101; Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 398; Montgomery, \textit{Books of Kings}, 93.

\textsuperscript{19} In 1 Sam 22:9, Saul used מות and not פגע in the unfulfilled command to his servants.

The Narrator’s Interpretation, 1 Kgs 2:27

In 1 Kgs 2:26 Solomon makes only a minor reference to YHWH in describing the ark, which is not enough to suggest that he sees YHWH shaping his decision to banish Abiathar. However, the narrator intervenes in 2:27 and invokes YHWH as part of his own interpretation of Solomon’s command: “and Solomon drove out Abiathar from being priest before YHWH to fulfil the word of YHWH which he spoke about the house of Eli in Shiloh.”

Since the start of 1 Kings, the narrator has intervened only to describe characters’ actions in order to move the plot forward (e.g. 2:38-40). What is significant in 2:27 is that the narrator offers an extended evaluation of the events and, with the biblical narrator being “purposefully selective”21 when it comes to intervening in the narrative, it is necessary to ask: “[w]hy at a particular juncture does the narrator break the time frame of the story to insert a piece of expository information?”22 In 2:27, the narrator’s words reframe Solomon’s treatment of Abiathar, turning it into the fulfilment of divine prophecy.

The narrative concerning the prophecy referenced in 2:27 is found in 1 Sam 2:27-36. When the man of God spoke to Eli it appeared as if all was lost for his house because he stated that YHWH would “cut off [Eli’s] strength and the strength of [his] father’s house so that no one will be old

22. Ibid.
Fritz argues that the genealogical connection between Abiathar and Eli “is not very convincing, since Abiathar is a descendant of the priests of Nob”\(^{23}\); however, Sweeney comments, “Saul ordered the slaughter of the (Elide) priests at Nob […] Abiathar was the only Elide to escape.”\(^{24}\) The majority of scholars assume, contra Fritz, that, on the basis of passages such as 1 Sam 14:3; 22:9; 30:7, Abiathar and Eli were connected and the prophecy reference in 1 Kgs 2:27 is sound.\(^{25}\) Therefore, in 2:27 the narrator is asserting that Abiathar is the descendant of Eli’s house alluded to in 1 Sam 2:33 because Solomon’s banishment means that he will live out his life in Anathoth, “wear[ing] out his eyes and griev[ing] his soul” as he grows to an old age.\(^{26}\)

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25. Scholars who assume that Abiathar is a descendant of Eli are Cogan, \textit{1 Kings}, 178; House, \textit{1, 2 Kings}, 101; Rice, \textit{Nations Under God}, 24; McCarter, \textit{II Samuel}, 91. However, Hens-Piazza argues that the connection between Abiathar and Eli “is grounded in a few fleeting references” (Hens-Piazza, \textit{1-2 Kings}, 28-29). Similarly DeVries comments, “the genealogy from Eli to Ahimelech, priest of Nob, Abiathar’s father, is not clearly drawn, but Dtr assumes, and perhaps has an independent tradition to support it” (DeVries, \textit{1 Kings}, 39).

26. McCarter, \textit{II Samuel}, 91; Ralph W. Klein, \textit{1 Samuel} (WBC 10; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 27. Brueggemann also argues, “[i]t was the destiny of Abiathar, who backed the wrong candidate, to weep and grieve forever” (Brueggemann, \textit{1 & 2 Kings}, 34).
While one could still follow Fritz and question whether Abiathar is really the man in 1 Sam 2:33, what is important is that the narrator has claimed that this relationship exists. By including this reference the narrator turns Solomon’s leniency towards Abiathar into the condition for the “inexorable working out of the divine punishment,” thereby, adding divine justification to Solomon’s decision.27

c. 1 Kgs 2:28-34, The Death of Joab

After banishing Abiathar, Solomon deals with Joab.28 Joab, like Abiathar, is associated with Adonijah’s faction (1 Kgs 1:7, 19, 41; 2:28)29 and David had called Solomon to ensure his death because his loyalty to Adonijah made him a threat to Solomon’s reign (2:5-6). In 2:29 Solomon orders Benaiah to kill Joab, but Benaiah hesitates (2:30). This leads Solomon to speak with Benaiah (2:31-33), after which Benaiah fulfils the command (2:34).

27. Walsh, 1 Kings, 56. See also Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 29; Alter, David Story, 380; Richard D. Nelson, First and Second Kings (IBC; Louisville: WJK, 1987), 27; Burke O. Long, 1 Kings: With an Introduction to the Historical Literature (FOTL 9; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 53.

28. The narrator introduces Joab in 2:28, stating that he had supported Adonijah but not Absalom. Provan suggests that the narrator mentions Absalom to remind the audience that Joab’s support for Adonijah was his “‘first offence’ in an otherwise blameless career, from the point of view of loyalty to David” (Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 39; cf. Fokkelman, King David, 400).

29. George G. Nicol, “The Death of Joab and the Accession of Solomon,” SJOT 7 (1993): 147. According to Wesselius, “[f]or Solomon, the presence of this experienced and ruthless soldier who had committed himself to another faction than his own must have seemed a constant threat” (J.W. Wesselius, “Joab’s Death and the Central Theme of the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel IX- 1 Kings II),” VT 40 [1990]: 343). Brueggemann also calls Joab, “the other primal resister to Solomon” (Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 35).
Solomon’s words to Benaiah in 2:31-33 draw on David’s farewell speech both in his reference to the murders of Abner and Amasa and in his invocations of YHWH. However, because Solomon is trying to convince Benaiah to kill Joab in the sacred tent, his language takes on both an impious and self-serving nuance. In other words, Solomon invokes YHWH and speaks about the deaths of Abner and Amasa not because he is prioritising YHWH (2:2-4) or seeking justice for David, but because he knows that these details will ensure that Benaiah kills Joab in the tent, thereby, removing a threat to his kingdom.

_Benaiah’s Hesitation, 1 Kgs 2:28-30_

It is necessary first to consider why Benaiah hesitates to kill Joab when initially commanded by Solomon (2:29-30) because these conclusions inform the function of Solomon’s words in 2:31-33. Benaiah’s hesitation is particularly noteworthy because it contrasts with other episodes in 1 Kings 1-2, where characters immediately abide by the king’s command (1:28, 32; 2:25). With neither Benaiah nor the narrator articulating why he does not follow his king, filling this gap requires looking back in the narrative to 1:36-37.

As discussed in chapter 5, in 1:36-37 Benaiah called David both “my lord” and the “king,” clarifying that he honoured David’s political position.
Furthermore, Benaiah asserted his hope that David’s line would continue forever, being magnified through Solomon’s reign.

Benaiah’s high regard for the monarchy likely informs his actions in 2:29-30. If Benaiah knows how asylum functions (Exod 21:12-14), he would have realised that Solomon’s command that he go into the tent and kill Joab is problematic. In chapter 5 it was noted that Exod 21:12-14 describe how one who is guilty of a recent, intentional murder can be denied asylum at the altar; however, Joab does not meet this criteria because he murdered Abner and Amasa many years earlier and this means that his claim to asylum should be honoured. In fact, this might be why Joab flees to the altar in 2:28: he is “counting on the fact that since no action had been taken against him in David’s lifetime, Solomon might not see him as being close to the paradigm of the recent, premeditated killer” and he will be safe.30 By not killing Joab, as per Solomon’s command, Benaiah mitigates the king’s apparent ignorance of legal protocol; thereby, protecting Solomon’s public image.

YHWH was also a prominent feature of Benaiah’s words in 1:36-37. When Benaiah stood before David with the prophet Nathan and the priest Zadok, they did not speak about YHWH but Benaiah did — even though

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Benaiah did not hold a religious role, he inferred YHWH’s activity and proclaimed it.

With 1:36-37 characterising Benaiah as a man who could see YHWH working through human events, it is possible that he will avoid acting in ways that might violate YHWH. When Solomon commands that Benaiah kill Joab, he does so with the knowledge that Joab is in YHWH’s tent (2:29). The narrator emphasises this location by repeating the phrase “tent of YHWH” three times in 2:28-30, which establishes that Joab is not in just any tent, but he is in YHWH’s tent, a sacred place.31

If Benaiah were to murder Joab in the tent, not only would the spilling of Joab’s blood as he was being murdered have contaminated it, but also his corpse would have come into contact with the area, adding to the profanation.32 According to David P. Wright, “[t]he corpse is the most powerful impurity, being the only source that can pollute persons and objects for seven days.”33 Similarly, Tikva Frymer-Kensky argues, “[t]he world must come into contact with the dead — only the Holy has to be kept

31. In the NRSV, NJB, ESV, RSV, NKJV, (2:29) is translated as containing direct speech, so that Solomon’s unnamed messengers use the phrase “tent of YHWH” as they speak to him. However, there is no indication of direct speech in this clause, which means that the narrator is the one naming YHWH. According to Samuel A. Meier, נג, “mark[s direct discourse] in approximately 16% of its occurrences in the Bible” (Samuel A. Meier, Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible [Leiden: Brill, 1992], 184). In reference to 2:29, Meier argues that does not mark direct discourse and “ינ [introduces] a subordinate clause and is not a discourse marker” (Meier, Speaking, 184 n1).


separate from it."\(^{34}\) Looking again at Exod 21:12-14, these verses reduce the likelihood of either of these violations occurring because they call for the premeditated murderer to be removed from the altar before being killed.

Benaiah’s awareness of the divine (1:36-37) suggests that he would have “some misgivings about [following Solomon’s command and] violating sanctuary decorum.”\(^{35}\) Notably, the narrator states not that Benaiah goes to the altar to find Joab, but that he goes to the “tent of YHWH” and, upon reaching it, he calls to Joab (2:30) — Benaiah does not enter the tent, but remains outside of this holy place. Therefore, while Solomon operates solely on a political level and orders that Joab is killed in the “tent of YHWH” (2:29), Benaiah will neither enter nor shed a man’s blood in such a sacrosanct space.

The importance of the sanctuary might also have informed Joab’s initial decision to flee to the altar. Although Hens-Piazza proposes that Joab’s flight is prompted by his desire to “seek protection in the only power that can save him,”\(^{36}\) there is little evidence that his belief in the divine is informing his activity. As noted in chapter 4, Joab spoke about YHWH in 2


Sam 19:7, when he tried to convince David to stop mourning over Absalom, and in 2 Sam 24:3, when he tried to stop David from holding the census. In both passages Joab invoked YHWH for the same reason that Bathsheba did in 1 Kgs 1:17 — he was trying to lead David to act in a specific way. In both of these examples Joab did not invoke YHWH because of his relationship with YHWH, but because he knew that David would be affected when he heard YHWH’s name. This interpretation is supported because the narrator never describes Joab speaking about/to YHWH or acting in ways that might suggest commitment to YHWH (e.g. sacrificing and building altars for YHWH).

37. Joab mentioned God, אלהים, in 2 Sam 2:27, during the battle of Gibeon.

38. Although, as noted in chapter 4, David was not affected by Joab’s invocation in 2 Sam 24:3-4.

39. That Joab fled to the altar because of his belief in YHWH is noted in an addition found in the LXX: πρὸς Ἰωαβ λέγων Τι γέγονεν σοι, ὅτι πέψεις εἰς τὸ θυσιαστήριον; καὶ ἔλεγεν Ἰωαβ Ἡμέρες ἡμᾶς αὐτοῖς ἔψωσεν ἀπὸ προσώπου σου, καὶ ἐμψύχαν πρὸς κύριον, καὶ ἐπέστησεν Σαλωμών (ὁ βασιλεὺς), “to Joab, saying, “what has happened to you that you have fled to the altar?” and Joab said, “because I was afraid of you, so I fled to YHWH,” and Solomon (the king) sent.” Commentators do not agree on the genuineness of this section (Cogan, 1 Kings, 178; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 94). According to Burney, “[t]he words exhibit no attempt to justify the action of Solomon, nor does there seem to be any other reason for their addition by a later hand; a consideration which favours their genuineness” (Burney, Notes, 24). Thus, the words were originally present in the MT and dropped out due to scribal error, such as haplography or homoioteleuton (Noth, Könige, 7; Cogan, 1 Kings, 178). Contra Burney, Sweeney contends that the LXX adds these verses to justify Solomon’s decision to kill Joab because the description of Joab’s fear establishes that Joab “must have done something wrong” and he deserves death (Sweeney, 1 & 2 Kings, 66; see also Noth, Könige, 7, Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 115, Montgomery, Books of Kings, 95). For Cogan, “it would have been clear to both Solomon and Joab why he fled,” which suggests that this section is not necessary and was added to the LXX by a later hand intending to establish, without a doubt, the legitimacy of Solomon’s command (Cogan, 1 Kings, 178; see also Montgomery, Books of Kings, 95). On the basis of my argument above, Joab is not portrayed as a religious man and it is out of character for him to use YHWH’s name as the one to whom he flees because of his fear. Because this section does not fit Joab’s character and it can, as Cogan suggests, be interpreted as providing the reason why Solomon killed Joab, I will accept that it is a later addition that is aimed at legitimating Solomon’s actions (Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 115-116).
House raises an alternate interpretation of Joab’s action in 2:28 that fits the narrative better: “Joab is not a particularly religious man, but he apparently hopes he will not be killed in so holy a place.” On this basis, Joab’s claim to asylum does not depend on his belief in what YHWH would do for him at the altar, but on his awareness that Solomon and Benaiah would not risk killing him as he stood in the sacred tent. As Seow correctly states, “Joab dares Solomon and his hatchet man, Benaiah, to violate the law of sanctuary: If anyone wants to kill him, it will have to be there, right by the altar in the sanctuary!”

In summary, Benaiah does not kill Joab in 2:30 for two reasons: 1) he is protecting Solomon’s image by ensuring that Solomon does not violate the laws of asylum; 2) he does not want to profane YHWH’s holy tent by killing Joab beside the altar.

Solomon’s Response to Beniah, 1 Kgs 2:31-33

When Benaiah does not fulfil Solomon’s command, Solomon does not respond to him with anger, but tells him, “[d]o as he [Joab] has said, strike

40. House, 1, 2 Kings, 101.

41. Seow, “First and Second Books,” 33. See also DeVries, 1 Kings, 39; Noth, Könige, 36; Åke Viberg, Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), 123; Keil, Books of Kings, 35. Würthwein argues that Joab remains firm at the altar for two reasons: 1) he knows that if he is there and Solomon wants him to die, then Solomon will have to violate the sanctuary; 2) he prefers to die in a holy place where he is inviolable and where he will possibly have to die of starvation and not Solomon’s violence (Würthwein, Das erste Buch, 24). Gray suggests that Joab “might have been “determined to embarrass Solomon and his henchman Beniah” by having them kill him at the altar (Gray, I & II Kings, 109).
him down and bury him” (2:31),\(^42\) after which he describes why it is necessary that Joab die (2:31-33). According to Provan, “we must take Solomon’s rhetoric in verses 31-33 with a pinch of salt. Joab is not being killed because of Solomon’s overwhelming desire to clear David’s house of [bloodguilt].”\(^43\) Provan’s statement is accurate because Solomon refers to the same events noted by David in 2:5-6 not for David’s sake, but because he is attempting “to assuage Benaiah’s scruples”\(^44\) so that he will kill Joab and “a threat to Solomon and the united kingdom” would be removed.\(^45\) Solomon’s invocations of YHWH (2:32-33) also have the same function — although Solomon names YHWH and appears to be keeping YHWH’s תור fåזרה (2:2-4), he is only using this language to convince Benaiah to kill Joab.\(^46\) Thus, Solomon shapes his words in 2:31-33 to address both of the reasons for Benaiah’s hesitation in 2:30.

In 2:31 Solomon tells Benaiah that Joab’s death will “turn aside the guilt for blood which Joab poured out on me and on my father’s house.” In

\(^42\) By adding that Joab is to be buried, Solomon might be respecting him (Mulder, 1 Kings, 119; Rice, Nations Under God, 24; Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 116; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 93) or he could be burying him to “‘cover up’ blood shed violently lest it cry out for vengeance” (Gray, I & II Kings, 110). For discussions of this topic see DeVries, 1 Kings, 34; Alter, David Story, 381; Long, 1 Kings, 55; Noth, Könige, 36; Keil, Books of Kings, 35.

\(^43\) Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 39.


\(^45\) Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 39.

\(^46\) According to Hagan, “[t]he pretext [of Joab’s death is] the blood of Abner and Amasa, but the hidden grounds are political” (Harry Hagan, “Deception as Motif and Theme in 2 Sm 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2,” Bib 60 [1979]: 322).
2:5 David spoke of the “blood of war” (דם מלחמה) that Joab put on himself, but Solomon changes this reference to “the guilt for blood” (דם חנם, “blood for nothing,” 2:31).\(^{47}\) As discussed in chapter 6, David’s use of לוי carried a sense of both advantage and disadvantage — it could be interpreted as if the murders of Abner and Amasa did something to David or for him. Although both meanings were noted in David’s words to Solomon (2:5), a concern for bloodguilt did not inform his command. Solomon, however, constrains the meaning of לוי to the disadvantage aspect of the ל by speaking of how Joab’s actions brought bloodguilt on David’s house. In this way, he clarifies for Benaiah that Joab’s past actions negatively impacted the king to spur Benaiah to action by addressing his concern for the monarchy.

Moreover, Solomon suggests that although Joab is guilty of old premeditated murders, he never paid for what he had done and the murders are continuing to stain Solomon’s reign. By referring to himself first (מעלי; 2:31), Solomon emphasises the impact of Joab’s actions on the current king. In this way, Solomon characterises Joab’s murders not as outdated, but as active and a valid reason for his death. Therefore, Solomon has portrayed Joab as being closer to the “paradigm of the illegitimate asylum seeker who is a premeditated killer” and who cannot “benefit from the altar’s

\(^{47}\) Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 272.
Benaiah would not, then, violate Exodus 21 if he were to kill Joab.

Having established the negative impact of Joab’s past actions against the present king, Solomon begins to address Benaiah’s concern for YHWH, telling him that it is YHWH who will ensure that Joab’s “bloody deeds [will be brought back] on his own head because without the knowledge of my father, David, he killed with the sword two men more righteous and good than he, Abner son of Ner, leader of the army of Israel and Amasa son of Jether, leader of the army of Judah” (2:32). While Benaiah likely knows the details surrounding the murders of Abner and Amasa, Solomon contends that Joab killed the men without David’s knowledge and the men whom he killed were exceedingly good army commanders. With the gravity of the crimes obvious, it is not a human being who will punish Joab, but YHWH will take an active role to ensure that he pays for what he did.

Solomon reinforces this statement by describing how Abner’s and Amasa’s blood will “come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there will be peace from YHWH forever” (2:33). In this clause, the bloodguilt experienced by Joab and his line is contrasted with the eternal peace of the Davidic line, brought on it by YHWH.


49. Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 278.
On 2:32-33, Rogers argues, “[these verses make] clear that the old curse pronounced by David has found its mark at last. Thus, the retribution of Yahweh, though it may for a time be delayed, will not tarry forever.” Following this argument, Solomon’s invocations place the death of Joab within a wider “theology of blessing and cursing” by suggesting that it will allow YHWH to punish Joab and bless David’s line, as YHWH had intended long ago. Solomon even emphasises David’s line by his expanded description of those who will benefit from Joab’s death: not only David, but also his descendants, his house, and his throne will experience YHWH’s blessing. Therefore, Joab’s death will act as the impetus for YHWH to transfer the blood that Joab spilled to Joab’s head, thereby, removing it from the monarchy and instituting a time of eternal peace for David, his offspring (i.e. Solomon), and his entire political house.

Solomon’s words to Benaiah in 2:31-33 are aimed at compelling him to kill Joab in the tent. To address Benaiah’s concern for the monarchy, Solomon characterises the murders of Abner and Amasa as having brought bloodguilt on the Davidic line and impacting the present, which would suggest to Benaiah that he could kill Joab and he would not be doing so in violation of Exodus 21.


51. Ibid., 402.

52. Ibid.
Benaiah’s concern for violating the sanctuary also prevented him from following Solomon’s command, an issue that Solomon addresses by invoking YHWH. Solomon tells Benaiah not that YHWH will punish him if he kills Joab in the tent, but that killing Joab will cause YHWH to remove the bloodguilt from David’s line and place it on Joab, bringing eternal peace to the monarchy. Solomon’s invocations are intended, then, “[to put Benaiah’s] mind at ease by telling him [...that he] need not worry about retaliation, human or otherwise, for the assassination he is to carry out at the altar.”

It is important to note that because Solomon is invoking YHWH to lead Benaiah to violate the sanctuary, his language is not pious — Solomon’s only desire is to see Joab killed, no matter where he is, so that his throne experiences not only stability, because Adonijah’s loyal follower would be removed, but also YHWH’s peace. Therefore, Solomon has used YHWH-language for his own purposes and not because he is following YHWH’s תורاة (2:2-4). In 2:34, Benaiah fulfils Solomon’s command and comes upon (>:</>) Joab, a sign that Solomon’s words have affected Benaiah as Solomon had intended.

53. Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 270-272. It is also important to question why Solomon never tells Benaiah to remove Joab from the tent and kill him elsewhere. Possibly, Solomon is so focused on ensuring the strength of his own kingship that his only goal is to have Joab killed no matter where he is. This leads Solomon to invoke YHWH in a way that will lead not only to Joab’s death, but also to the violation of YHWH’s tent.
d. 1 Kgs 2:36-46, The Death of Shimei

Shimei’s execution is narrated in 2:36-46. In 2:8-9, David called for Shimei’s death because he had cursed him (2 Sam 16:7-8); however, David really wanted him killed because he sided with Saul (2 Sam 16:5) and this made him a potential threat to Solomon’s kingship. The problem of Shimei was even more serious because, as noted, he was a member of Solomon’s political party (1 Kgs 1:8; 2:8). In 2:38-41 Shimei demonstrates that he is not a threat — he agrees to Solomon’s commands (2:38), abides by them for three years (2:39), leaves Jerusalem and returns without inciting a rebellion (2:39-41). With David’s command still hanging in the air and raising the possibility that Shimei might, at some point, act against Solomon, Solomon commands Benaiah to kill Shimei (2:46).

Central to this passage is Solomon’s language in 2:41-45, which justifies Shimei’s death. With David’s reference to Shimei’s curse not a compelling reason for the death sentence (see chapter 6) and with Shimei not a threat to Solomon’s throne, Solomon asserts that Shimei violated an oath and YHWH. However, the inconsistencies in Solomon’s account weaken his command and characterise him as invoking YHWH only to achieve his own ends.54

54. Hagan argues, “Solomon’s actions, if not laudable, are understandable. He is a man of the law who does what he says, as is so clear in the case of Shimei. As such, he stands in sharp contrast to the deception and intrigue which precedes him” (Hagan, “Deception,” 322). Hagan’s assessment of Solomon is flawed. In 2:36-46, Solomon will assert that Shimei contravened an oath to YHWH (2:42-43), which is not the case. Thus, Solomon’s language is deceptive, which places it within the broader deception motif that Hagan observes throughout 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-2.
In 2:36-37 Solomon commands Shimei, “build for yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there and do not go out from there to anywhere. For it will be on the day when you go out and you pass over the brook of Kidron you will surely know that you will surely die, your blood will be on your own head.” Solomon’s command restricting Shimei’s movement is “introduced abruptly” in the narrative and “without explanation,” but it is even more jarring because it does not align with David’s command and Solomon’s action in the preceding scene. David had told Solomon to kill Joab (2:5-6) and Shimei (2:8-9); Solomon has already killed Joab (2:34), but he is interacting with Shimei as he did with Abiathar (2:26), focusing not on his death but on where he resides.

Even though Solomon is not calling for Shimei’s death immediately, his command in 2:36-37 highlights his awareness of the threat posed by Shimei’s political association. The Kidron lay to the east of Jerusalem and across from it was Bahurim, Shimei’s home (2 Sam 16:5). Bahurim was in the territory of Benjamin, being a place that likely contained a large concentration of Saul supporters. By specifically telling Shimei not to cross the Kidron, Solomon lessens the possibility of him returning home and either

55. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings, 118. See also Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 30; Rice, Nations Under God, 25; Whitelam, Just King, 154.

56. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 30; DeVries, 1 Kings, 40; Walsh, 1 Kings, 61; Provan, 1 and 2 Kings, 40; Rice, Nations Under God, 25; Nelson, First and Second Kings, 28; Whitelam, Just King, 154; Noth, Könige, 37.
inciting or being involved in any possible reinvigoration of the Saulide faction.\footnote{57}

Furthermore, by confining him to Jerusalem, which at that time was a small city,\footnote{58} Solomon restricts his freedom.\footnote{59} Thus, not only is Solomon preventing Shimei from joining the Saulides, but also he is keeping him under constant surveillance.\footnote{60}

Solomon increases the gravity of this command by asserting that if Shimei crosses the Kidron, then “he will surely know that he will surely die” (1 Kgs 2:37). Solomon emphasises the death sentence by using two qal infinitive absolute with imperfect constructions (תדע ידע and תموت מות).\footnote{61} In addition, Solomon makes Shimei responsible for his blood being placed on his own head if he should die for violating the command, thereby, freeing himself from any responsibility.\footnote{62}


\footnote{58. Montgomery, \textit{Books of Kings}, 96.}

\footnote{59. House, \textit{1, 2 Kings}, 102; Rice, \textit{Nations Under God}, 25; Montgomery, \textit{Books of Kings}, 96. As Walsh describes, the punishment would “chafe as time went by” (Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 60).}

\footnote{60. Sweeney, \textit{I & II Kings}, 70; Fritz, \textit{I & 2 Kings}, 30; Brueggemann, \textit{I & 2 Kings}, 36; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 34; Mulder, \textit{1 Kings}, 122; Walsh, “Characterization of Solomon,” 477; House, \textit{1, 2 Kings}, 103; Noth, \textit{Könige}, 37; Maly, \textit{World of David}, 119. According to Walsh, Shimei’s association with the Saulides “marks him as a prominent dissident. It is understandable that Solomon wants to keep Shimei under observation and his movements under control” (Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 60).}

\footnote{61. Sweeney, \textit{I & II Kings}, 71; Mulder, \textit{1 Kings}, 123; Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 61.}

\footnote{62. Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 61.}
Shimei answers Solomon by calling what he has said, טוב, “good,” (2:38), echoing Bathsheba’s response to Adonijah in 2:18. In that scene, Bathsheba’s use of טוב was followed by her acting on Adonijah’s request, which suggests that Shimei will also do what Solomon has said.63 Furthermore, in 2:38 Shimei uses deferential language, acknowledging Solomon’s powerful role by calling him “lord” and “king” and placing himself in the submissive role of the “servant.”64 These details indicate that Shimei recognises his position relative to Solomon and he will, then, follow Solomon’s command.65

In fact, Shimei abides by the command for three years (2:39), after which the narrator introduces a complication: “two of Shimei’s slaves66 fled to Achish son of Maacah king of Gath67 and it was told to Shimei” (2:39). In the ancient world, the loss of slaves was “a serious economic blow to a household,”68 with many societies having legislation in place to prevent people from harbouring runaway slaves.69 Because of the gravity of having

63. Burney calls this use of טוב, a “formula of assent” that would convey his willingness to comply (Burney, Notes, 26).
64. Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 30-31; Walsh, 1 Kings, 61.
66. By stating that two slaves run away, the narrator increases the gravity of the issue (DeVries, 1 Kings, 41).
67. In 1 Sam 27:2 David fled to “Achish, son of Maoch, king of Gath.” It is possible that Shimei’s slaves are fleeing to the same man or they are fleeing to his grandson. For more on this issue see DeVries, 1 Kings, 41; Cogan, 1 Kings, 179; Gray, I & II Kings, 112; Montgomery, Books of Kings, 97.
68. Walsh, 1 Kings, 62. See also Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 31; Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 36.
69. Cogan, 1 Kings, 179; Gray, I & II Kings, 113; Noth, Könige, 38; Montgomery, Books of

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lost not one, but two, slaves, Shimei leaves Jerusalem and journeys to Gath to reclaim them (2:40).\footnote{70}

After Solomon’s unnamed messengers tell him about Shimei going to Gath (2:41), Solomon asks Shimei, “Did I not cause you to swear by YHWH and warn you saying ‘in the day you go out and go anywhere you will surely know that you will surely die' and you said to me ‘the word that I heard is good?’ And why have you not kept the oath to YHWH, the commandment which I commanded you?” (2:42-43). David Janzen, writing on Solomon’s account of his command to Shimei, argues that Solomon “misrepresent[s it so that he is] able to eliminate another potential opponent to his rule.”\footnote{71} The accuracy of this statement is immediately clear because Solomon omits any reference to the Kidron in 2:42-43, a detail he included in 2:36-37. Although Bahurim was across the Kidron to the east of Jerusalem, Gath was on the west and to get there Shimei would not have had to cross the Kidron at all.\footnote{72} While Cogan argues, “the point of Solomon’s order was that Shimei was

\textit{Kings}, 97. An exception is noted in Deut 23:15-16 where slaves are to be given asylum (Cogan, \textit{1 Kings}, 179; Noth, \textit{Könige}, 38). For a discussion of extra-biblical texts that address this issue see Noth, \textit{Könige}, 38.

\footnote{70} Jones argues, “the strained relations between the kingdom of David and Solomon and the Philistines made a personal appeal by the owner more imperative on this occasion” (Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 118-119; see also Noth, \textit{Könige}, 38); however, Whitelam argues, “[i]t seems rather odd that Shimei should personally have gone to Gath to retrieve his slaves thus presenting Solomon with the golden opportunity to carry out his earlier threat” (Whitelam, \textit{Just King}, 154). There is no way to determine from the narrative why Shimei goes to Gath to reclaim his slaves instead of sending someone else.

\footnote{71} Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 278.

\footnote{72} Janzen, “‘What he did for me,’” 278; Sweeney, \textit{I & II Kings}, 71; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 34; Provan, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 40; House, \textit{1, 2 Kings}, 103; Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 118; Noth, \textit{Könige}, 38.
under house arrest within Jerusalem and all exits were closed to him, east as well as west (to Gath),” Solomon’s specific emphasis on the Kidron in 2:36-37 and his omission of this detail in 2:42-43 is suspicious. It is more likely, then, that Shimei is guilty of violating only the first part of Solomon’s command, leaving Jerusalem, but not the second, crossing the Kidron. Because the death sentence was only a punishment for crossing the Kidron, Solomon omits the Kidron as he begins to command Shimei’s death to remove all vestiges of the original command to which the death sentence was attached. In this way, Solomon obscures the fact that he does not have a valid reason to kill Shimei.74

Furthermore, even though Shimei goes to Gath, the narrator does not characterise this journey as a threat to Solomon. Shimei has a legitimate economic reason for making the journey and, when he goes, he does not rebel against Solomon. Moreover, his situation is the same before and after he goes to Gath, which suggests that as he followed Solomon’s command before the journey, he will continue to do so upon his return.75

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73. Cogan, 1 Kings, 179. According to House, the command and death sentence prevent Shimei from going anywhere and the crossing of the Kidron is not a vital detail (House, 1, 2 Kings, 103). See also Keil, who assumes that Solomon’s punishment of Shimei is just because “Solomon had put Shimei’s life in his own hand by imposing upon him confinement in Jerusalem, and Shimei had promised on oath to obey the king’s command, the breach of his oath was a crime for which he had no excuse” (Keil, Books of Kings, 37).


75. Sweeney, I & II Kings, 71; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 31; Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings, 36; Walsh, 1 Kings, 62; Nelson, First and Second Kings, 28.
With Shimei’s journey to Gath being insufficient to justify his death, Solomon accuses Shimei of having violated an oath that he made to YHWH; however, this oath was not present in Solomon’s initial interaction with Shimei in 2:36-37.\textsuperscript{76} While C.F. Burney argues, “[t]he swearing of the oath to Yahweh may well be implied in the account of vv. 37, 38a,”\textsuperscript{77} Solomon could easily have made an explicit oath in YHWH’s name when he first spoke with Shimei (cf. 2:23-24). Instead, Solomon adds this language in 2:42-43 so that, as Bathsheba did in 1:17-21, he might increase the gravity of his claims against Shimei.\textsuperscript{78}

As argued in chapter 4, oath-making was serious in the ancient world and Nathan and Bathsheba adopted this language in 1:11-21 to convince David that he swore that Solomon would be king. To lessen the chance of David contesting the oath, Bathsheba added an invocation of YHWH in 1:17. Although there is not enough textual evidence to determine the extent of Shimei’s commitment to YHWH and whether Solomon’s invocation would have meant more to him than if Solomon had only spoken of him breaking an oath, by telling Shimei that he violated an oath made to YHWH, Solomon

\begin{footnotes}
\item[76] DeVries, \textit{1 Kings}, 41; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 34; Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 63; Würthwein, \textit{Das erste Buch}, 25.
\item[77] Burney, \textit{Notes}, 26 (italics in original). See also Fritz, \textit{1 & 2 Kings}, 30; Mulder, \textit{1 Kings}, 124.
\item[78] If Shimei had sworn by YHWH, then he would be guilty of “violating a sacred oath [...] a serious crime in itself” (Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 62).
\end{footnotes}
challenges him to deny the charge and risk committing “a serious crime” along the lines of perjury.\textsuperscript{79}

Because Solomon is reworking his words from 2:36-37 as he speaks to Shimei in 2:42-44, Shimei could attempt to defend himself.\textsuperscript{80} While it is possible that after three years Shimei had forgotten the details of what was said between him and Solomon and he might have believed that he did swear by YHWH and was at fault, the narrative leaves no space for him to articulate what he is thinking in the moment. Rather than following the structure of 2:36-38, where Solomon speaks and Shimei responds,\textsuperscript{81} Solomon continues in 2:44: “You, you know in your לב (heart/mind) all the רעה (evil) which you did to David my father and YHWH will return your evil on your head.” Given that Solomon is presenting “false evidence” to Shimei, he does “not give Shimei a chance to reply to his accusations.”\textsuperscript{82}

In 2:44, Solomon refers to Shimei’s prior sins against David (cf. 2:8). Because the narrator intervenes in 2:44, stating, “the king also said to Shimei,” Shimei’s actions against YHWH (2:42-43) are set apart from his actions against David (2:44). By placing Shimei’s violation of the oath and YHWH first, they become the primary reason for Shimei’s death, with what he did to David having a secondary function — Solomon is claiming that

\textsuperscript{79} Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 119.
\textsuperscript{80} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 63.
\textsuperscript{81} Fokkelman, \textit{King David}, 406-407; Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 63.
\textsuperscript{82} Walsh, “Characterization of Solomon,” 485.
Shimei must die because he violated an oath to YHWH, but he is also guilty of a past crime against David and his death will pay for this too.

While David spoke of the “curse” (קלל) in 2:8-9, Solomon omits it and notes only that Shimei did “evil” (רעה). It is possible that because David understood that YHWH was behind the curse (2 Sam 16:11-12), he did not call it רעה; however, he never shared this belief with Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 2:8-9). By using רעה, Solomon reveals how he interprets what Shimei did to his father, using language that relates to 1:52 where he told Adonijah that if he found רעה in him he would die. By using the same term here, Solomon suggests that he has judged that Shimei, like Adonijah, did רעה and this means that Shimei will face the same fate as Adonijah (2:23-25).

Solomon also refers to Shimei using the second person personal pronoun, אתה, with the verb ידעת, emphasizing that Shimei knows about the רעה that he did in his own לב (his heart/mind/intellect; see chapter 6). Because Solomon has not explicitly defined to what רעה refers, his reference to Shimei knowing about it in his לב forces Shimei to remember the past and allows Solomon to avoid describing it and revealing that Shimei is being killed for an act that did not warrant death. As DeVries comments, Solomon is implying that what Shimei did to David “is the real reason why Shimei must die; there being no other witnesses ready to hand, Solomon calls on

83. Walsh, 1 Kings, 63.
84. Walsh, 1 Kings, 64; Mulder, 1 Kings, 127.
Shimei to verify the charge.\textsuperscript{85} Therefore, although Solomon has asserted that Shimei has violated an oath, 2:44 suggests that both he and Shimei know that he is also “being punished for his offense against David many years before.”\textsuperscript{86}

To increase the seriousness of the evil and add further justification for the death sentence, Solomon names YHWH at the end of 2:44, using the divine name in a way that aligns with his invocation in 2:32. According to Solomon, it is not a human being who will ensure that Shimei is punished for his evil against David, but YHWH will bring Shimei’s evil onto his own head.\textsuperscript{87} As Walsh notes, “Solomon makes Yahweh responsible for Shimei’s punishment,”\textsuperscript{88} just as he made YHWH responsible for bringing the blood of Abner and Amasa on the head of Joab (2:32).

Shimei’s death will not only act as a catalyst for his own divine punishment, but also it will lead Solomon to experience YHWH’s blessing; as Solomon describes, “King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before YHWH forever” (2:45). By placing himself first and referring to himself in the third person, Solomon elevates himself and

\textsuperscript{85} DeVries, \textit{1 Kings}, 41.

\textsuperscript{86} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 64. See also DeVries, \textit{1 Kings}, 41; Seow, “First and Second Books,” 34.


\textsuperscript{88} Walsh, \textit{1 Kings}, 64.
the benefit that he is going to receive. Solomon’s language, much like his self-reference in 2:31 (מעלי), signals his self-interest in this verse.

In 2:46, Benaiah comes upon (venge) and kills Shimei, according to Solomon’s command (2:46), an act that prefaces the narrator’s statement, “the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon” (2:46). In comparison to 2:12, in 2:46 Solomon is identified for his role in establishing the kingdom — because he has eliminated both the pro-Adonijah party and those whom David highlighted as threats (2:5-6, 8-9), his kingdom is now secure.

With Shimei’s curse not punishable by death and without any evidence that Shimei is a threat, Solomon has no legitimate reason to kill him, as David had ordered him to do (2:8-9). When Shimei journeys to Gath (2:39), Solomon reworks his previous words (2:36-37) to turn his journey into the reason for his death. Solomon supports this punishment by speaking about an oath that Shimei broke that violated YHWH (2:42-43); however, this oath was never made. Therefore, although Solomon invokes YHWH, giving the illusion that he is following David’s words and is keeping YHWH’s תורה (2:2-4), he is really using this language to justify the death of a man who does not deserve to die. Solomon’s actions in this scene make clear that

89. Walsh, 1 Kings, 65.
he “is not above twisting evidence, if need be, falsifying it in order to gain what he wants.”

**e. Conclusion**

In 1 Kgs 2:26-46 Solomon establishes his hold on the kingdom by removing Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei. When the narrator intervenes and names YHWH in 2:27, he validates the king’s lenient treatment of Abiathar (2:26) by demonstrating how it fits a larger divine plan. In 2:32-33, Solomon invokes the deity as part of a linguistic strategy aimed at convincing Benaiah to kill Joab in the tent. Finally, in 2:42-45 Solomon names YHWH to make it clear to Shimei that he deserves to die because he broke a divine oath.

With Solomon invoking YHWH to lead a pious man to violate the tent (2:31-33) and to cover-up the fact that he is commanding Shimei’s death for invalid reasons (2:42-44), his language does not demonstrate that he is abiding by David’s call that he keep YHWH’s תורה (2:2-4). In fact, Solomon’s reference to himself in 2:31, 45 suggests that he is more interested in his own political strength, a theme only hinted at by David in 2:2-9. Therefore, in 2:28-46, Solomon’s invocations are not signs of piety and an adherence to his father’s words, but of his willingness to coopt the divine name to suit his own purposes.

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90. Walsh, *1 Kings*, 38.
The irony of 2:46 is that, with Solomon’s kingdom now established, the narrator has simultaneously sown the seeds of its disestablishment. With Solomon characterised as willing to do what he must for his own benefit, even misusing the divine name, the narrator has set “the stage for […] Solomon’s disobedience” and his loss of the kingdom in 1 Kings 11.91

Chapter 9
Conclusion

a. Introduction

In 1 Kings 1-2 the monarchy is divided over whether Adonijah or Solomon should rule Israel once the aged King David dies (1:1-10). Although YHWH chose Saul and David to act as king (1 Sam 9:1-10:1; 16:1-13), in 1 Kings 1-2 YHWH does not choose David’s successor. In fact, YHWH never acts in these chapters, in marked contrast to the surrounding narrative, and the characters never ask YHWH what YHWH wants for the future monarchy. Thus, 1 Kings 1-2 is characterised by “divine silence” and it is because of the activities of the human characters that Solomon ascends to the throne.

Despite the silence of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2, YHWH is named twenty-four times. While some scholars suggest that these invocations add theological validation to the characters’ actions, others assert that they reveal the narratives’ underlying theological perspective. However, these arguments are insufficient. Not only does the narrator invoke YHWH, but also the characters invoke YHWH as they react to different situations and interact with different characters. Thus, it is necessary to question how the details of the narrative inform our understanding of the function of invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2.

b. Summary of Findings

In this study I undertook a close reading of 1 Kings 1-2 to assess the function of invocations of YHWH, focusing specifically on how this language was being used by both the characters and the narrator, and the events in the plot that prompted or resulted from this language. What has emerged from this analysis are six functions of invocations of YHWH.

Functions of Invocations of YHWH in Characters’ Speech

1. Characters invoke YHWH to influence their interlocutors’ actions and/or perceptions.

In 1:17, Bathsheba invokes YHWH to lead David to accept that he swore to put Solomon on the throne, even though Nathan had fabricated this oath. Adonijah invokes YHWH in 2:15 because he wants Bathsheba to believe that his request for Abishag lacks political significance so that she will take it to Solomon. Solomon invokes YHWH in 2:32-33, as he works to lead Benaiah to think that killing Joab in the tent is acceptable. In 2:42-44, Solomon’s invocations are aimed at shaping Shimei’s perception of his death by implying that he deserves this punishment both because his journey to Gath transgressed an oath that he made to YHWH and because his death would prompt YHWH to punish him for the evil that he did against David. Jonathan’s report of David’s invocation in 1:48 might also be included in this group because his words shape Adonijah’s perception of Solomon’s rise to the throne (2:15); however, it does not appear as if Jonathan includes this
information because he is attempting to accomplish another goal that would depend on Adonijah understanding Solomon’s rise as having divine support.

Conversely, omitted invocations might also influence characters. Bathsheba omits Adonijah’s invocation (2:15) when conveying his request to Solomon (2:21), in order to add to Solomon’s anger by preventing him from thinking both that he and Adonijah share a theological interpretation of his ascent to the throne and that Adonijah had given up his political aspirations.

2. Characters invoke YHWH as they react to events that have happened in the plot.

In 1:29-30, David invokes YHWH after hearing Bathsheba’s and Nathan’s words to him (1:11-27), which suggests that he is taking responsibility for the oath because of Bathsheba’s invocation. Benaiah invokes YHWH in 1:36-37 as he responds to David’s words regarding Solomon’s ascent to the throne. David’s reported invocation in 1:48 results from Solomon’s coronation, being an acknowledgment that YHWH had allowed him to live long enough to see this event occur. Finally, in 2:24 Solomon invokes YHWH as he reacts with anger against Bathsheba after she makes Adonijah’s politically ambitious request.

3. Characters invoke YHWH to add a sacral nuance to their words.

When David speaks his farewell speech to Solomon, he invokes YHWH to signal to Solomon the importance of prioritising YHWH during his reign.
This language not only adds a sacral nuance to David’s speech, but also leads him to shape his commands for the deaths of Joab (2:5-6) and Shimei (2:8-9) so that they fit within this framework — by describing how the men’s actions negatively impacted him, he characterises their deaths as legitimate and not gratuitous.

4. Characters invoke YHWH to add divine legitimation to their actions.

Following some of the scholars discussed at the start of chapter 1, characters invoke YHWH to justify their actions. When Solomon invokes YHWH in 2:31-33, 42-43, his language implies that YHWH will work through the deaths of both Joab and Shimei. Thus, Solomon’s invocations suggest that the deaths are acceptable to YHWH, because YHWH takes them as the impetus to redress what the men did against David.

Functions of Invocations of YHWH in the Narrator’s Speech

5. The narrator invokes YHWH for description/emphasis.

In 1 Kings 1-2 the narrator’s invocations are primarily descriptive, but the way in which he uses this language emphasises certain elements in his story. When the narrator intervenes in Solomon’s angry response to Bathsheba, stating that Solomon “swore by YHWH” (2:23), he draws attention to

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Solomon making an oath in 2:24 and doing so in YHWH’s name. Furthermore, when the narrator repeats “tent of YHWH” three times in 2:28-30, he emphasises the location where Joab has fled to shed light on the reason for Benaiah’s hesitation to fulfil Solomon’s command.

6. The narrator invokes YHWH to reframe a character’s action.

When the narrator invokes YHWH in 2:27, this language turns Solomon’s leniency towards Abiathar into a fulfilment of YHWH’s plan. In this way, the narrator justifies Solomon’s leniency, which also aligns with one of the functions of invocations of YHWH noted by the scholars at the start of chapter 1.³

Many of the invocations of YHWH are closely tied to characterisation and plot. To take but one example, Bathsheba’s invocation in 1:17 is informed by her knowledge of David’s relationship with YHWH and characterises her as an active participant in Nathan’s plan. When Bathsheba re-enters the narrative in 2:13-25, she embodies this characterisation when she omits Adonijah’s invocation to increase Solomon’s anger, a use of language that is also based on what she knows about Solomon. In both cases, Bathsheba’s invocations prompt events in the plot: when she invokes YHWH when speaking with David, she convinces him to make an oath that puts

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³ DeVries, 1 Kings, 43; Hens-Piazza, 1-2 Kings, 34.
Solomon on the throne (1:29-30); when she omits Adonijah’s invocation when speaking with Solomon, she increases Solomon’s anger over Adonijah that results in Adonijah’s death (2:24-25).

Therefore, invocations of YHWH, although they might validate the characters’ actions and might reflect the theological perspective of the narratives, also have a number of other functions in 1 Kings 1-2. While the narrator uses this language to emphasise a narrative feature or to reframe a character’s action, characters use this language for a variety of reasons, which are informed by their identities, their relationships, and the narrative contexts (i.e. events in the plot) in which they participate.

c. This Study’s Contributions to the Field

As noted in chapter 1, the goal of this study was to address a gap in scholarship relating to how scholars interpret invocations of YHWH in 1 Kings 1-2. By engaging with the narrative features of both chapters to analyse invocations of YHWH, this study has contributed a new way of understanding this language both to treatments of 1 Kings 1-2 specifically and to the field of biblical studies as whole.

The six functions of invocations of YHWH, outlined above, are part of this study’s contribution to the field. This study has shown that invocations of YHWH are not simple linguistic forms, but they fulfil a multitude of narrative functions. Invocations of YHWH are exegetically important and,
when made the focus of analysis, can shed new light on chapters that have been studied for “two and a half millennia.”

In fact, this study’s interest in invocations of YHWH has generated a new interpretation of 1 Kings 1-2 that also makes a contribution to the field. Although scholars have turned to the narrative features of 1 Kings 1-2 to support arguments relating to the SN (see chapter 1), as they complete narrative analyses of the chapters alongside other passages (e.g. as part of a commentary on the SN or 1-2 Kings, see chapter 2), or as they write shorter papers that engage with specific themes in the chapters (e.g. private conversation, see chapter 2), scholars have not completed a monograph-length narrative analysis of only 1 Kings 1-2. Because this study was interested in invocations of YHWH as they related to characterisation and plot, it was necessary to examine every episode in the chapters, including those in which YHWH was not invoked. For example, understanding the function of Adonijah’s invocation in 2:15 required the discussion of his actions in 1:5-10 and his interaction with Solomon in 1:49-50, scenes where YHWH was not named. Furthermore, at times, this focused analysis generated new interpretations of some episodes (e.g. the relationship between 1:36-37 and 2:28-34 for understanding Benaiah’s character).

Finally, this study has illustrated the difference between YHWH as an invoked presence and YHWH as an actual presence. In 1 Kings 1-2, YHWH

was not an actual presence, participating overtly in the plot of 1 Kings 1-2 (cf. 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Kings 3), but YHWH’s invoked presence shaped the plot in quite significant ways: even if YHWH did not call Solomon to act as king, as YHWH called Saul and David (1 Sam 9:1-10:1; 16:1-13), Bathsheba’s invocation of YHWH was instrumental in bringing Solomon to the throne (1 Kgs 1:17). Thus, this study contributes to the field the notion of the invoked presence of YHWH, demonstrating that it plays a role in the plot as much as the actual presence of YHWH does.

d. Avenues for Future Research

This study not only contributes to the field itself, but also opens the doors for future research that could have a similar benefit.

As noted above, this study demonstrates the interpretive value of invocations of YHWH; however, it has only looked at those in 1 Kings 1-2. Because invocations of YHWH appear throughout the Hebrew Bible, one could adopt the approach taken here for their interpretation: how do invocations of YHWH function for the characters and the narrator in passages such as Joshua 2:1-14; 9:1-15; Numbers 20:14-21?

One might also consider how the function of invocations of YHWH changes when different interpretive methods are adopted for their analysis. In chapter 6, the redactional complexity of 1 Kgs 2:1-10 was observed; however, it was not thoroughly investigated because this study adopted
narrative criticism as its primary approach. Because David’s invocations of YHWH appear in deuteronomistic layers, they were likely added to his speech and this detail can impact their function. According to Kalimi, “the Deuteronomistic historian [...] attempted to soften the harsh ‘testament’ [...] by adding to David’s words a religious value.” From a redactional perspective, invocations of YHWH reshape David’s character, an interpretation that differs from that raised in chapter 6. This observation suggests that other methods might illustrate different functions of invocations of YHWH that could contrast or challenge those advanced here.

Furthermore, invocations of YHWH might be discussed by paying attention to the author and audience. As noted in the literature review in chapter 1, scholars have debated the literary character of 1 Kings 1-2 (in the context of the SN) and one’s decision regarding its character will impact the function of invocations of YHWH not in the narrative, but for the author as he used his text to effect something in his own world. If one were to follow Whybray and argue that 1 Kings 1-2 represents didactic wisdom literature, then the author might have added characters’ invocations to teach the audience something about using the divine name. However, if the chapters are viewed as serious entertainment, à la Gunn, then characters’ invocations might only be included to entertain the audience. The question of why the

author of 1 Kings 1-2 was using invocations of YHWH was beyond the scope of this study, but asking it of the narratives could highlight features not yet considered.

Although sociolinguistic lenses were discounted in chapter 2, it would be worthwhile to adopt one or more of them to analyse invocations of YHWH. In 2:13-25, Adonijah, a man who is also a former member of the court, makes a request of Bathsheba, a woman who is also the king’s mother. It is possible that a sociolinguistic lens could bring into relief the gender and political issues shaping the characters’ interaction and could provide the vocabulary and theoretical framework necessary to examine a request made between these types of social actors. These lines of inquiry are very different than those pursued here, but could lead to some interesting conclusions concerning how characters use and respond to invocations.

Because this study discussed passages that contain the divine name, its conclusions could be nuanced by adding a consideration of their theological ramifications. According to Fretheim, because God works through people, “force and violence are associated with God’s acts in the world at least in part because they are characteristic of those in and through whom the work is carried out.” Working off of this assumption, it is possible

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6. As noted in chapter 2, a useful discussion of the sociolinguistic lenses that might be adopted to interpret embedded dialogue in the Hebrew Bible is Victor H. Matthews, More Than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

that YHWH uses less than pious invocations (e.g. Solomon’s invocations in 2:32-33 to convince Benaiah to violate the tent) for YHWH’s own purposes, but what does this reveal about the character of YHWH and how YHWH works in the world? As much as this study has shed light on how characters use YHWH-language, there is more that might be said regarding how this language shapes the character of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible.

Finally, this study could be used as the starting point to examine possible conventional uses of the divine name in the Hebrew Bible. This study has drawn attention to different functions of the holy name, but the limited size of the corpus does not provide enough evidence to establish whether there are any conventions at work. The closest convention appears to be the use of YHWH in the phrase חיויה in oath formulas (1:29; 2:24). Outside of these two verses, there is great variation in the contexts in which the divine name appears. Furthermore, how the name appears differs: David is the only character who speaks the divine name with אלהי ישראל, “God of Israel” (1:30, 48); Benaiah refers to YHWH as יהוה אלהי אדני המלך, “YHWH, the God of my lord, the king” (1:36); Bathsheba, when speaking with David (1:17), and David, when speaking with Solomon (2:3), refer to YHWH as the LORD, אלהי, David’s and Solomon’s God respectively. Comparing these appearances of the divine name with others in the Hebrew Bible, while also paying attention to the speakers and their contexts, could help determine whether conventions exist relating to the name.
e. Conclusion

Even though YHWH does not act in 1 Kings 1-2 and the characters do not speak to YHWH, the YHWH’s name is a significant feature in the chapters. Both the characters and the narrator invoke YHWH for a variety of reasons, their language having multiple functions in the plot. Therefore, whenever an invocation of YHWH appears in a passage of the Hebrew Bible, especially one in which YHWH is not clearly active, interpreters must ask: what is this language doing? By turning our attention to invocations of YHWH, the inherent complexities of this language will continue to emerge and new interpretations of the biblical narratives generated.
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