A Reflection of Jehu’s Violence in his Coup d’Etat (2 Kgs 9–10) in the Jehoram–Joash Stories in Chronicles (2 Chr 21–24): An Intertextual Analysis

Introduction

One doubts it possible to find anywhere in the Bible as violent a story, in which so much blood is shed, as the account of Jehu’s coup d’etat (2 Kings 9–10).[[1]](#footnote-1) Jehu’s goal, as defined for Elijah in the concluding task of the latter’s prophecy, is one and one only: eradicating the rite of Baal and his believers (1 Kings 19:18). The massive quantities of blood that will flow in the streets of Samaria during the purge of the House of Baal in the third act are already reflected in the first act when Jehu is anointed by one of the sons of the prophets: “And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel” (2 Kings 9:7–8).[[2]](#footnote-2)

Jehu, for his part, carries out this task immediately and optimally.[[3]](#footnote-3) As expected, the stage of extirpating the House of Ahab and that of Baal abounds with words such as וישחטו*,* וישחטום(both denoting slaughter), השמידו, וישמד (denoting annihilation), ויך (smote) and others. To explain the extent and the systematic nature of the obliteration, the author uses phrases such as “until there was left him none remaining” (2 Kgs 10:11) and “until there was left him none remaining” (v 14). Thus all these expressions, along with other accounts (e.g., the beheading of the King’s seventy sons and laying them “in two heaps at the entrance of the gate”—v 8), create a single semantic field that unifies the story.[[4]](#footnote-4)

What remains of this expansive account in Chronicles? At first glance, not much. The author of Chronicles (hereinafter: the Chronicler)[[5]](#footnote-5) almost totally disregards Jehu’s ascent to power and mentions it only in the context of the killing of Ahaziah king of Judah and his nephews (2 Chr 22:7–9).[[6]](#footnote-6) With this, Jehu’s role in Chronicles is wound up. Ostensibly, this brevity is understandable since the Chronicler systematically avoids reference to the Northern kingdom unless he has a real need to mention it, as in his account of cooperation between an Israelite king and a Judahite king.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Jehu affair is mostly an internal affair involving the Northern kingdom; therefore the Chronicler, as in other cases, presents only the part of the whole that pertains to a Judahite king—in this case, the death of Ahaziah or his nephews.

Below I wish to argue that even though the story of Jehu is almost totally omitted from Chronicles, much of the violent atmosphere that it embodies permeates Chronicles in those chapters that establish a parallel between the Judahite kings and the House of Ahab. I refer mainly to the series of kings from Jehoram to Joash (2 Chr 21–24).[[8]](#footnote-8) Nowhere in the Chronicler’s historical rewrite, from the genealogy lists to Cyrus’ proclamation, can one find such a set of descriptions of death and killing as in this series.[[9]](#footnote-9) This, I wish to argue, is not by chance. The Chronicler appears to have derived this violent style from two sources: the Deuteronomist’s descriptions in the story of Jehu’s accession and the eradication of the House of Baal, and other violent accounts in the Bible. The outcome reported here is an especially violent representation. Below I review the turbulent events that were bracketed by the reigns of Jehoram and Joash. Some of them, as stated, have no parallel in Kings; the Chronicler usually reworks the synoptic segment to align it with his worldview. In these non-synoptic events, he shows a specific tendency to express himself in a style borrowed from violent texts in the story of Jehu or from elsewhere in Scripture.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Jehoram (2 Chron 21)

In its general contours, the Chronicler’s account of the reign of Jehoram is based on the Deuteronomist’s rendering. Nevertheless, the Chronicler adds several elements that do not resonate in the *Vorlage,* some of which are presumably of his invention (*Sondergut*).[[11]](#footnote-11) At issue here, however, are more than additions; the Chronicler also reworked parallel verses in the two versions, as in, for example, the results of the war with Edom and the description of Jehoram’s burial.[[12]](#footnote-12) In the result, Jehoram’s image in Kings, negative to begin with, is made even more unsavory in Chronicles. The title of Begg’s article, “Constructing a Monster: The Chronicler’s *Sondergut* in 2 Chronicles 2,” suffices to illustrate the extent of the influence of these additions on shaping Jehoram’s image.[[13]](#footnote-13) Indeed, examination of these additions leaves no room for doubt: the Chronicler considers Jehoram one of the vilest kings in the history of the Judahite kingdom. Here, too, as found in Kings, he quotes (*mutatis mutandis*) the formula of the Davidic covenant: “Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the House of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and as He promised to give a lamp to him and to his children always” (2 Chr 21:7). This creates a barrier to the Chronicler’s doctrine of retribution, by which every sinner faces summary personal punishment for his misdeeds.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Below I focus on two brief stories, both lacking a parallel account, from Jehoram’s biography. The first recounts the murder of Jehoram’s brother; the second takes up the Arabian-Philistine invasion, one of whose outcomes is the killing of all of Jehoram’s sons and wives except for young Ahaziah.

Jehoram’s accession to the throne and, in the main, his coronation take place during the lifetime of his father, Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat prefers Jehoram over his six brothers “because he [is] the first-born” (2 Chr 21:3).[[15]](#footnote-15) The precedent for choosing a successor monarch while his father lives occurs in Chronicles only in regard to Abijah, who is chosen king while his father, Rehoboam, still lives (11:22).[[16]](#footnote-16) To appease his other sons and apparently out of the desire to prevent future discord among them, Jehoshaphat acts as did his grandfather, Rehoboam (11:26), and awards them “great gifts, of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fortified cities in Judah” (v 21:3). Jehoshaphat’s hope is that such a demarche will head off friction among the brothers. It is to no avail; immediately after Jehoshaphat’s death, Jehoram murders all of his brothers: “Now when Jehoram was risen up over the kingdom of his father, and had strengthened himself, he slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel” (21:4). Accounts of murders and political assassinations abound in the Bible and the ancient Near East,[[17]](#footnote-17) but the story in our case strongly resembles none other than the first murder in Scripture—it, too, an act of fratricide:

וַיָּקָם יְהוֹרָם עַל מַמְלֶכֶת אָבִיו וַיִּתְחַזַּק וַיַּהֲרֹג אֶת כָּל אֶחָיו בֶּחָרֶב

וַיָּקָם קַיִן אֶל הֶבֶל אָחִיו וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ

Now when Jehoram was risen up over the kingdom of his father, and had strengthened himself, he slew all his brethren with the sword.

… Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him (Gen 4:8).

The similarity of these two verses of course casts Jehoram in a negative light. Just as the murder of Abel, the younger brother, by Cain, the first-born, is by no fault of the former, so one should understand the murder of Jehoram’s younger brothers. The derogatory slant in explaining these murders is stressed even more by their clash with the exposition of the story, in which it is explained that the brothers no longer pose a threat to Jehoram’s reign now that their father has appeased them with many gifts and settled them in fortified cities on the border of the kingdom, far from Jehoram’s sight.[[18]](#footnote-18) Explicit criticism of the murder appears as the story continues in the “writing” from Elijah: “and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father’s house, who were better than thyself (הטּוֹבִים מִמְּךָ)” (21:13).[[19]](#footnote-19) We do not know what makes Jehoram’s brothers better than him, but the phrase “better than thyself” may echo Samuel’s reprimand of Saul, it, too, relating to a person’s legitimacy to be king: “The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou(הַטּוֹב מִמֶּךָּ) ” (1 Sam 15:28). The Chronicler may have borrowed the phrasing that relates to David’s right to rule and projected it onto Jehoram’s brothers, thus attesting that they are fit to succeed Jehoshaphat.

Jehoram does not settle for murdering his brothers. According to the Chronicler’s account, he also eliminates “divers also of the princes of Israel” (2 Chron 21:4). The lineage of these “princes of Israel” is hard to determine; it may trace to Jehoshaphat’s father, who, according to the biblical text, is “king of Israel” (21:2). Aside from scholars who emend this expression to read “king of Judah,” some consider this swapping a deliberate revision meant to liken Jehoshaphat to the kings of Israel because he had joined them.[[20]](#footnote-20) If this is indeed correct, it is no wonder that the Chronicler sees the princes of Israel in those of Judah. By murdering his brothers, Jehoram becomes the only Judahite king who behaves in the manner of Israelite kings such as Nadav (1 Kgs 15:29), Zimri (1 Kgs 16:11–12) and, above all, Jehu (2 Kgs 10:11).

After the missive from Elijah, God strikes Jehoram with a serious illness, as Elijah prophesied: “Behold, the Lord will smite with a great plague thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy substance” (2 Chron 21:14). The word used for “smite,”(נֹגֵף) is unique; in all of Scripture it recurs only in the plague of the frogs, reported in a style strongly similar to Elijah’s comments: “…Behold, I will smite(נֹגֵף) all thy borders with frogs” (Ex 7:27). Elijah’s prophecy continues to come true. The Arabians and the Philistines overwhelm Jehoram and kill all the members of his household apart from his young son Jehoahaz, who survives.[[21]](#footnote-21) The Chronicler describes the scope of the killing as nearly total. The expression “so that no son was left to him (ולא נשאר לו בן)except Jehoahaz” (v 17) echoes the Deuteronimistic wording of the Jehu stories, in which the eradication of the worshipers of Baal and the king’s descendants is described in similar language: “neither left he any of them(ולֹא השאיר אישׁ מהם) ” (2 Kgs 10:14) or “there was not a man left that came not (ולֹא נשאר אישׁ)” (v. 21).[[22]](#footnote-22) As Amar has shown, the survival of Ahaziah squares with the Chronicler’s tendency to punish sinning kings by the killing of their sons (so with Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Ahaz) except for one survivor, as the Davidic covenant requires.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Ahaziah (2 Chron 22:1–9)

Ahaziah king of Judah, identified by the biblical account as Jehoram’s younger son, rules for only one year. During that time, he maintains the relations that his grandfather, Jehoshaphat, established with the kingdom of Israel and, also like his grandfather, he fights together with Jehoram king of Israel against Hazael king of Aram at Ramot Gilead. The outline of the account in Chronicles is based largely on the *Vorlage* in Kings apart from several conspicuous differences. The story centers on the anointment of Jehu, which is meant “to cut off the house of Ahab” (2 Chr 22:7). The phrase “whom the Lord had anointed” (ibid.) corresponds, of course, to the account in Kings, in which anointment with oil is described (2 Kgs 9:3, 6).[[24]](#footnote-24)

As stated above, Jehu’s actions are described with severe brevity and pertain only to the story of the killing of the king of Judah and his nephews. At this point, the Chronicler parts ways with the *Vorlage*. In Kings, Jehu also kills Jehoram king of Israel and afterward Ahaziah, who has fled from him.[[25]](#footnote-25) The Chronicler, in contrast, elides the killing of Jehoram and focuses on that of Ahaziah. Here, the two versions diverge. In Kings, the killing of Ahaziah is reported first and only afterward, under totally different circumstances, does Jehu slay Ahaziah’s brothers. The Chronicler describes this differently: Jehu kills the princes of Judah and Ahaziah’s nephews and only afterward seeks Ahaziah, who has fled to Samaria.[[26]](#footnote-26) The versions diverge again in identifying the person responsible for Ahaziah’s death. According to Kings, Ahaziah does not die at once. First, he is gravely wounded, apparently by Jehu’s soldiers, and only later, when he fled to Megiddo, does he succumb to his injuries: “…And he fled to Megiddo, and died there” (2 Kgs 9:27). The Chronicler, in contrast, describes an immediate death; what is more, it takes place in Jehu’s presence: “… and they brought him to Jehu, and slew him” (22:9). It is not out of the question that the Chronicler, in this case, adopts the modus operandi that Jehu invokes toward Ahaziah’s brethren in Kings. There, too, Jehu wishes to capture them alive so that his servants will slay them in his presence. The killing of Ahaziah with Jehu looking on is certainly a more humiliating and cruel death than the parallel account in Kings. Finally, the fact that Ahaziah is brought before Jehu echoes the fate of Zedekiah king of Judah after the latter has fled from Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. In both cases, the king flees, is captured, and is taken to the king (2 Kgs 25:5–8). Zedekiah’s fate is the mere loss of his eyesight at the hand of the servants of the Babylonian king; Ahaziah’s denouement is worse: he is killed by the servants of the Israelite king.

Athaliah (2 Chr 22:10–23:21)

Athaliah's accession to the monarchy is accompanied by her eradicating the entire royal line apart from Joash, who survives.[[27]](#footnote-27) The Chronicler’s description of the event resembles that in Kings with two differences: “… She arose and destroyed [וַתְּדַבֵּר] all the seed royal of the house of Judah (2 Chr 22:10), as against “… she arose and destroyed [וַתְּאַבֵּד] all the seed royal” (2 Kgs 11:1). It is not clear what the Chronicler wishes to attain by replacing וַתְּאַבֵּד with וַתְּדַבֵּר*.* Some believe that וַתְּדַבֵּר stems from the root דבר in *pi‘el* and denotes domination or defeat, as found in Psalms in *hif‘il*: “Even the God that executeth vengeance for me, and subdueth [וַיַּדְבֵּר] peoples under me” (Ps 18:48) or “He subdueth [יַדְבֵּר] peoples under us” (Ps 47:4).[[28]](#footnote-28) The context, at least in Psalms 18, shows that the issue is not a subduing but rather a hope for the utter annihilation of these peoples. The hope flows from the beginning of the verse: “Even the God that executeth vengeance for me,” that is: the vengeance hoped for is the annihilation of the enemy. If this is indeed the meaning, it would seem that the Chronicler wishes to stress by the switch to וַתְּדַבֵּר that the sole interpretation of Athaliah’s actions is the utter extirpation of the “seed royal” and not the mere discontinuation of rule, as the parallel וַתְּאַבֵּד might imply.[[29]](#footnote-29)

The extirpation of the entire royal line of the House of Judah, as the Chronicler adds, parallels the Jehu’s smiting of the entire House of Ahab:

וַתְּדַבֵּר אֶת כָּל זֶרַע הַמַּמְלָכָה לְבֵית יְהוּדָה

וַיַּךְ יֵהוּא אֵת כָּל הַנִּשְׁאָרִים לְבֵית אַחְאָב

… She arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah.

So Jehu smote all that remained of the house of Ahab ….

Both cases resonate with the annihilation of those defeated. Furthermore, the Chronicler’s addition of “of the house of Judah” parallels Jehu’s total eradication “of the House of Ahab.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

Six years into Athaliah’s reign, Jehoiada the priest gathers strength and wishes to restore Joash to the throne. This account, too, abounds with violence and is reminiscent of the story of Jehu’s coup d’etat, at least where it comes to the motif of the uprising against the king and the extirpation of the House of Ahab.[[31]](#footnote-31) Generally speaking, the Chronicler’s revisions are not numerous. Insofar as they exist, they pertain to two additions relating to the continuation of the Davidic dynasty (2 Chr 23:3) and the reinstatement of the Temple rites that David, the patriarch of the dynasty, had originally instituted (vv 18–19). In the account of the uprising against Athaliah, the changes are rather minor and the killing of Athaliah and Matan, priest of Baal, is described nearly identically in both renderings. Nevertheless, two revisions are noteworthy. The first pertains to the order to kill Athaliah. In Kings, it is expressed in passive voice: “Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord” (2 Kgs 11:15). The Chronicler, in contrast, switches the mode to active: “Slay her not in the house of the Lord” (2 Chr 23:14).[[32]](#footnote-32) Another difference is the number of people who take part in destroying the House of Baal. According to the Deuteronomist, they were “all the people of the land (עם הארץ)" whereas the Chronicler elides the word “the land” (הארץ), thus attributing the destruction of the House of Baal to the nation at large (עם) and not to a distinct group within it.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Joash (2 Chr 24)

Of all the kings mentioned thus far, only Joash is reported as having started his reign well.[[34]](#footnote-34) Even here, a painstaking reading of the text shows that this auspicious period should be credited to Jehoiada the priest. At the outset of the account, the Chronicler notes that “Joash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest” (2 Chr 24:2); after his death, he links the two again: “Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah … and they forsook the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers (v 17).”[[35]](#footnote-35)

After Jehoiada’s death, Joash radically changes his ways. The account in Chronicles from Jehoiada’s death to the end of Joash’s life is an expansion of two verses in the *Vorlage* appear in the formulaic description of the conclusion of Joash’s reign and deal with his servants’ conspiracy against him and his death (2 Kgs 11:21–22).

This expansion, written in accordance with the Chronistic doctrine of retribution, invokes violent precedents. Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest reproaches the nation for having forsaken God and is pelted with stones “at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord” The use of the rootרגם(and not סקל) to denote this lapidation ostensibly suggests that Zechariah’s death took place in accordance with Torah law.[[36]](#footnote-36) However, by comparing this with the account of the stoning of the gatherer of wood on the Sabbath (Num 15:36), we immediately see why this stoning had no solid legal grounds:

וַיִּרְגְּמוּ אֹתוֹ בָּאֲבָנִים וַיָּמֹת כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יהוה

וַיִּרְגְּמֻהוּ אֶבֶן בְּמִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

“And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses.”

“… at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord.”

The stoning of the gatherer takes place at the Lord’s behest; Zechariah’s lapidation occurs by order of the king. Another salient contrast between the sources concerns the location of the event. The gatherer of wood is sent to a place outside the camp for this purpose: “And all the congregation brought him without the camp …” (Num 15:36).[[37]](#footnote-37) In Zechariah, contrastingly, the stoning takes place in the court of the house of the Lord. The beginning of the verse, “And they conspired against him,” implies that it is a well-planned murder and not a random act. In this context, the murder of Zechariah resembles Athaliah’s death in at least one sense: both are preceded by a conspiracy. Athaliah screams קֶשֶׁר קָשֶׁר (a conspiracy did he make) and of Zechariah, it is written וַיִּקְשְׁרוּ עָלָיו (and they conspired against him). Still, a meaningful difference between the cases exists. Jehoiada the priest refrains from killing Athaliah in the house of the Lord: “…for the priest said: ‘Slay her not in the house of the Lord’” (2 Chr 23:14).[[38]](#footnote-38) The house of the Lord and its court are used as litmus tests for the loyalty of the nation and the king to God. This is why the Chronicler notes that Joash and the nation have left “the house of the Lord.” The change of wording, of course, deviates from the accepted phrasing that usually relates to forsaking the Lord and not forsaking his house.[[39]](#footnote-39) Therefore, forsaking the house of the Lord is the weapon that appears in the first act and is ultimately fired in the third act, in the form of the murder of the prophet specifically in the court of the house of the Lord.

Furthermore, the murder of Zechariah on the grounds of the Temple and the events before and afterward parallel the description of the destruction of the Temple (2 Chr 36:17–21). According to that account, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon comes upon Jerusalem, slays the young men of Israel within the Temple confines (v 18), loots the Temple implements, and then destroys Jerusalem. In both accounts, this is preceded by the dispatch of prophets to steer the king and the nation back to the straight path:

וַיִּשְׁלַח בָּהֶם נְבִאִים לַהֲשִׁיבָם אֶל יְהוָה וַיָּעִידוּ בָם וְלֹא הֶאֱזִינוּ

וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם עֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד מַלְאָכָיו הַשְׁכֵּם וְשָׁלוֹחַ

“He sent prophets to them, to bring them back unto the Lord” (2 Chr 24:19).

“And the Lord, the God of their fathers, sent to them by His messengers, sending betimes and often…” (2 Chr 36:15).

In both accounts, the demarche fails: the nation either does not heed the prophets or disdains the word of the Lord. Immediately afterward, Zechariah is stoned to death in the court of the Temple at Joash’s behest and the young men of Israel are killed in the Temple at the command of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. The next stage in both accounts is the looting of the Temple (vv 24:23; 36:18). This parallel further overshadows the persona of Joash because in its aftermath he becomes Nebuchadnezzar’s parallel: both are directly responsible for the looting of the Temple and the death within its confines.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Joash turns his back on Zechariah and does not remember the latter’s kindness toward his father, Jehoiada. The verse is phrased similarly to that in Genesis about the chief butler who forgets Joseph:

 וְלֹא זָכַר יוֹאָשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוֹיָדָע אָבִיו עִמּוֹ

 וְלֹא זָכַר שַׂר הַמַּשְׁקִים אֶת יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁכָּחֵהוּ

“Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him” (2 Chr 24:22).

“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him” (Gen 40:23).

Ingratitude stands out in both cases but is more egregious in our case. Transcending a forgetfulness that would amount to another two years in prison in the worst case, it involves conspiring to put a prophet to death. There are grounds for the claim that Zechariah does not die immediately, since he yet manages to utter a final sentence against the dastardly act: “And when he died, he said: ‘The Lord look upon it, and require it’” (2 Chr 24:22). Most likely, therefore, Zechariah is gravely injured by the lapidation and then dies of his wounds or is even given the *coup de grâce* by Joash himself (“but slew his son”).

Zechariah’s last words carry a dual meaning. The first meaning echoes Genesis 9:5: “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man’s brother, will I require the life of man.”[[41]](#footnote-41) The triple repetition of the root דרש signifies vengeance here, and Zechariah’s last request of God should also be construed as such.[[42]](#footnote-42) The second meaning squares with the Chronicler’s frequent use of this root to express the proper relationship of man with God. Man’s seeking of God is a guarantee of success and reward throughout Chronicles; doing the opposite may trigger retribution.[[43]](#footnote-43) The roles are indeed reversed here: it is not man who should be seeking God but the Deity who demands an accounting from man. Just as man is perpetually duty-bound to seek God and is punished for failing to do so (see, for sample, concerning Saul, 1 Chr 10:4–13), so does Zechariah insist that the Deity must be continually required to avenge his blood.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Another noteworthy point concerns the phrase “his father Jehoiada.” Obviously, the reference here is not to biological paternity but to guardianship. The use of the expression “his father,” followed immediately by “but slew his son,” creates the misapprehension of a murder within the family, as we found at the beginning of this series of passages with Jehoram.

The accounts of violence do not end here. The fate of Joash and the nation is immediately sealed when they dare to deviate from the path and when they murder the prophet Zechariah. An Aramean force reaches Jerusalem and before it leaves it carries out a series of killings (“and destroyed all the princes of the people”—2 Chron 24:23) that ends with שפטים (judgment) against Joash. The Chronicler’s doctrine of retribution is fully realized by identical verbs that create a sense of measure-for-measure:

כִּי עָזְבוּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם

כִּי עָזְבוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמַחֲלוּיִם רַבִּים

“… because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers” (2 Chron 24:23).

“And when they were departed from him—for they left him in great diseases…” (v 24:25).

Joash forsakes the Lord, and it is this that causes the Aramean force to forsake him in his bed, where he lies deathly ill, after having executed judgment against him.[[45]](#footnote-45) The two servants who conspire against him need only finish the job and slay him in a humiliating way as he lies bedridden and helpless.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Ultimately, Joash’s death parallels the stoning and judgment of Zechariah: both men are left gravely ill and receive the *coup de grâce*.[[47]](#footnote-47) The use of the relatively uncommon lexeme שפטים for “judgment” echoes an expression used in the account of the plagues in Egypt: “… and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments [שפטים]” (Ex 12:12).[[48]](#footnote-48) Just as the שפטים are devices with which to punish the Egyptians and their gods, so are they used to punish Joash. In a certain sense, an *inclusio* of sorts exists here: the heavy punishment meted to Jehoram in his last days is also linguistically linked to the plague of the frogs in Egypt, as noted above. The severe penalties foisted on Jehoram and Joash echo those invoked against the Egyptians. If the intensity of the punishment reflects that of the misdeed, then both monarchs met the criteria and paid for it in a way that accurately represents their just desserts. Consequently, Jehoram, the sole survivor after he has murdered all his brothers, and Joash, the sole survivor after Athaliah has murdered all his brothers, are the end-mark of the set of accounts of four Judahite kings who represent a very deep nadir in the history of the Davidic dynasty.[[49]](#footnote-49) For this reason, not only is their fate associated with similar motifs (as in the root חלי for example) but so are their death and burial, as the burial formula extracted from that appearing in the platform text is written about both[[50]](#footnote-50):

Jehoram: “And they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings” (2 Chr 21:20).

Joash: “And they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings” (2 Chr 24:25).

Mentioning the subject of Jehoram’s and Joash’s burial prompts me to discuss the relationship between the burial motif in the Jehu account and that in the case at hand. One of the recurrent motifs in the Jehu story is the way the dead are buried. This matter already appears in Jehu’s anointment in reference to Jezebel: “And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her” (2 Kgs 9:10). This motif continues to accompany the story further on. Jehoram king of Israel is said to have been killed and his corpse tossed into “the portion of the field of Naboth,” without burial (v 25). Of Ahaziah, in contrast, it is stated explicitly that he was taken to burial in the city of David (v 28). After Jezebel’s death, Jehu wishes to have her buried, “for she is a king’s daughter.” When his servants set out to inter her, however, they find “no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands” (v 35).

The burial motif recurs in the series of stories bounded by Jehoram and Joash. Of these two kings it is written, as stated, that they were buried in the City of David but not in the sepulchers of the Davidic monarchs (2 Chr 21:20, 24:25). Ahaziah, in turn, is said to have been buried only because he was Jehoshaphat's grandson, but the place of his burial appears to have been in Samaria.[[51]](#footnote-51) In all three cases, the Chronicler revises the *Vorlage*, according to which these kings were buried in the sepulchers of the Davidic line.[[52]](#footnote-52) This revision, it seems to me, may be imputed to the application of the tendency in the Jehu stories. In the Jehu account, a person’s burial is seen as a final and deserving respect, certainly when the deceased is a king or a king’s daughter. The Chronicler adopts this approach. Thus, he makes sure to bury all the kings—but not before doing a posthumous reckoning with them and noting that their burial clashes with the accepted norm of interment, in the royal sepulchres.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Discussion

To continue the discussion, I present below a table that juxtaposes all manifestations of violence that appear in Chronicles with their parallels in Kings. Wherever a parallel exists, I note whether the Chronicler revises the terminology.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chronicles | Kings | Differences |
| Jehoram murders his brothers | – |  |
| Jehoram murders the princes of Judah | – |  |
| All of Jehoram’s family other than his son, Ahaziah, are killed by the Arabians | – |  |
| Jehu kills (the sons) of Ahaziah’s brothers | + | In Kings, וישחטום (slaughtered them) is written; in Chronicles, the term used is ויהרגום(killed them)*.* |
| Jehu kills the princes of Judah | – |  |
| Jehu kills Ahaziah | + | In Chronicles, the killing is described as taking place in Jehu’s presence.  |
| Athaliah murders the royal line  | + | In Kings, the verb ותאבדis used; in Chronicles, the verb ותדבר appears. |
| Athaliah is killed. | + | In Chronicles, the active voice is used: וימיתוה; in Kings, the voice is passive: ותמת*.* |
| Matan the priest is killed | + | No difference. |
| The prophet Zechariah is stoned to death. | – |  |
| The Aramean army overwhelms Jerusalem and slays the princes of the nation.  | – |  |
| The Aramean army brings שפטים (judgment) upon Joash. | – |  |
| Joash is killed in his bed by his servants. | + | In Kings, Joash is killed but not in his bed but instead “at Beth-millo, on the way that goeth down to Silla” (2 Kgs 12:21). |

The table above shows that the historical account of the Judahite kings from Jehoram to Joash abounds with violence, death, and murder. Some of these accounts have no parallel in the *Vorlage*. Those that have parallels underwent the Chronicler’s adaptation in accordance with his doctrine and found more acute expression.[[54]](#footnote-54) The following were added or adapted in this manner: the murder of Jehoram’s brothers, the murder of the princes of Judah, the killing of Jehoram’s sons and wives by the Arabians; the murder of Ahaziah by Jehu, the murder of Ahaziah’s nephews by Jehu, the murder of the “seed royal” by Athaliah, the killing of Athaliah, the murder of Zechariah by Joash, the Arameans’ slaughter of the princes of the nation and, finally, the killing of Joash. In most of these cases, the Chronicler’s language takes a step up from that of the Deuteronomist (with the exception, as seated, of the case of Ahaziah’s brothers).

All these data converge to one conclusion: Just as one cannot find anywhere else in the Book of Kings a concentration of violence and death as appears in the Jehu chapters, so one cannot find anywhere else in Chronicles a concentration of violence and death as appears in the series of accounts of these four monarchs, from Jehoram to Joash. Above, I suggested that the Chronicler, while eliding nearly all of the story about Jehu’s ascent to the throne, was not willing to forgoe the Deuteronomist’s exceptional and violent descriptions that accompanied this coup.

The question now is: What motivated the Chronicler to produce these violent accounts precisely about this period?

As stated above, in the entire account of the Judahite kings (1 Chr 10–2 Chr 36), the interval between Jehoram and Joash is one of the lowest of nadirs.[[55]](#footnote-55) Two of these four kings—Jehoram and Ahaziah—are thoroughly vile, lacking any redeeming virtue. Athaliah wipes out the entire royal line and her power-grab is taboo.[[56]](#footnote-56) Joash is the only king whose initial reign seems to be described favorably; further reading, however, reveals that all his actions are contingent on the close guidance of Jehoiada the priest. The moment Jehoiada dies, Joash’s righteousness expires as well. This period is so grim that Steven Schweitzer defines it as “the worse alternative reality.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

To express his disgust for this period, the Chronicler imports a style and content from the dramatic account of the eradication of the Northern kingdom’s rite of Baal and other violent descriptions in Scripture. Just as Jehu employs extreme violence against the House of Ahab and the Baal rite, so is unprecedented violence brought against and by the kings of Judah. In reference to each of the four kings who reigned during this time, the Chronicler inserts extreme acts of violence that in part, as stated, are unparalleled by the Deuteronomist or are parallel but use less trenchant language.

Referring to the House of Ahab in Chronicles, Ehud Ben-Zvi notes the strong relations between that house and the coeval Judahite kings:

The House of Ahab bears a paradigmatic, ideological status in Chronicles.… this House is construed as exerting some irrational attraction for Davides, even among the best of them.… Since, within the discourse of the book, the Davidic kings were never supposed to become allies or partners of the Northern Kingdom, the very existence of the House of Ahab brought incommensurable danger to the House of David.[[58]](#footnote-58)

The “irrational attraction” of the House of Ahab for the Davidic dynasty, according to Ben-Zvi, makes the latter an imitation of the former. Indeed, walking in the path of Ahab or Baal is described in reference to each of the four monarchs (vv 21:6; 22:5, 7; 23:17). Such a reality is an utter anathema to the Chronicler, prompting him to borrow the violent style used in the account of Jehu’s seizure of the throne and in other stories in the Bible, and to apply it, sometimes inserting new events and sometimes with a tangential redaction of parallel events, to the series of stories about these four kings. Thus, these chapters become the most violent in all of Chronicles.

The Chronicler’s attempt to struggle against the House of Ahab due to its foreign characteristics appears to overlap his attempt to struggle, or at least to warn against, the possibility that the inhabitants of Yehud will adopt the customs and culture of the Persian Empire.[[59]](#footnote-59) In his struggle against outside influences, the Chronicler marshals all the tools available to him, including, as stated, the adoption of terminology and behavior patterns from violent biblical stories generally and the account of Jehu’s accession particularly, all of which deal with the eradication of foreign influences.[[60]](#footnote-60) This tendency is not new; it stands out throughout Chronicles.[[61]](#footnote-61) Here, however, it appears to find broader expression specifically in this set of stories bounded by Jehoram and Joash.

Conclusion

Given his disregard of the Northern dynasty, the Chronicler’s reference to the story of Jehu’s accession to the throne is presented with extreme brevity: only three verses as against seventy-three in Kings. This dramatic abridgment, however, does not keep him from adopting the violent terminology used in these accounts, and in other violent stories in Scripture, and from applying them to our case, the set of stories bracketed by Jehoram and Joash, which parallel the chronology of the House of Omri. The four kings who reigned during this time—Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joash—represent a nadir in the history of the Judahite kingdom. The Chronicler, true to his doctrine, finds it correct to criticize this era by intensifying his description of the violent acts that these kings carried out and were subjected to. He does so in two ways: expanding the accounts of these kings with stories peppered by acts of violence and reworking stories from the Book of Kings by taking the tenor and terminology of violence that Kings offers to a higher level. Thus Jehu’s uncompromising war on the House of Ahab and the culture of Baal recurs in Chronicles in the Chronicler’s war against the Judahite kings who adopted the culture of the House of Ahab.

1. Long expands the boundaries of the Jehu affair to 2 Kgs 8:28–29, see B.O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL), Grand Rapids, 1991, p. 114. As for the lineage of Jehu, scholars disagree about whether he descended from the royal house. In Scripture, he is identified as “the son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi,” whereas in the Shalmaneser inscriptions he appears as “Yehu Son of Omri” (m*Ia-ú-a mār* m*Ḫu-um-ri-i*). Some researchers see no contradiction between these appellations; others rule out the attribution of Jehu to the royal house on their basis. See A. Baruchi-Unna, “,” *Bet Miqra* 58 (2013), pp. 5–30 (Hebrew), and cf. N. Na’aman, “Jehu Son of Omri: Legitimizing a Loyal Vassal by his Overlord,” *IEJ* 48 (1998), pp. 236–238. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. All biblical translations are taken from *The Hebrew Bible in English according to the JPS 1917 Edition* <https://www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Scripture views Jehu’s actions ambivalently, countering criticism (as in Hos 1:4) with sympathy (2 Kgs 10:30). In this matter, see, for example, E.T. Mullen, “The Royal Dynastic Grant to Jehu and the Structure of the Books of Kings,” *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 196–198; M.S. Moore, “Jehu’s Coronation and Purge of Israel,” *VT* 53 (2003), pp. 97–100. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On the semantic field as a literary tool for the unification of the story, see P. Pollak, *,* Jerusalem 1999, pp. 93–94. Indeed, in diachronic research there is no unanimity about the unity of this affair. See, for example, literature and survey in D.T Lamb, *Righteous Jehu and His Evil Heirs: The Deuteronomist’s Negative Perspective on Dynastic Succession*, Oxford 2007, pp. 2–11; J.M. Robker*, The Jehu Revolution: A Royal Tradition of the Northern Kingdom and Its Ramifications*, Berlin 2012, pp. 35–57. For a detailed table that attributes the verses in this affair to Deuteronomistic and pre-Deuteronomistic sources in accordance with the various schools of research, see D.M. Stith, *The Coups of Hazael and Jehu: Building an Historical Narrative*, Piscataway 2008, pp. 70-81. For the view of the entire affair as flowing from one author, see R. Kittel, *Die Bücher der Könige übersetzt und erklärt* (HAT), Göttingen 1900, pp. 227–243. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The word “Chronicler” is used for purposes of brevity only; it takes no stance whatsoever on his identity or his connection, if any, with the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In terms of the number of verses: only three in Chronicles as against seventy-three (!) in Kings. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Despite this disdain, many researchers do find an inclusive approach to “all of Israel” in the Chronicle doctrine. See, in particular, S. Japhet, , pp. 228–298, and H.G.M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles*, Cambridge 1977. See also Dyck’s survey: J.E. Dyck, *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler*, Leiden 1998, pp. 37–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The reign of the Judahite kings between Jehoram and Joash reigned is disputed: Albright sets it at forty-nine years (849–800), Thiele at fifty-two (848–796), Galil at forty-nine (851–802), and Cogan at fifty-three (851–798). See W. Albright, “The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel,” *BASOR* 100 (1945), pp. 20–21; E.R Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings,* Grand Rapids 1983, p. 10; G. Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, Leiden 1996, pp. 32-45; M. Cogan, *Sefer Melakhim, Vol. 1* (Miqra le-Yisrael) Tel Aviv 2019, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Attempts have been made in research to dismiss the scriptural account of the genealogical descent of Ahaziah and Jehoram. I consider this no more than mere speculation. See D.V. Etz, “The Genealogical Relationship of Jehoram and Ahaziah, and of Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah,” *JSOT* 71 (1996), pp. 39–53; W.B. Barrick, “Another Shaking of Jehoshaphat’s Family Tree: Jehoram and Ahaziah Once Again,” *VT* 51 (2001), pp. 9–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. I assume, for this purpose, that the biblical canonization had became a fait accompli by the time of the Chronicler (fourth century BCE) in a way that allowed him to study the various books, quote from them, or derive inspiration from them in his writing. See S.J. Schweitzer, “Judging a Book by Its Citations: Sources and Authority in Chronicles,” in E. Ben Zvi & D. Edelman (eds.), *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?* Winona Lake 2011, pp. 53–54. See also D. Glatt-Gilad, “Chronicles as Consensus Literature,”in E. Ben Zvi & D. Edelman (eds.), *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?* Winona Lake 2011, p. 68. However, it is worth noting that opposing scholarly voices can also be heard, arguing that Chronicles is in fact the *Vorlage* for several episodes in Scripture. See, for example, S. Rudnig-Zelt, *Glaube im Alten Testamen:Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Jes 7,1–17; Dtn 1–3; Num 13–14 und Gen 22, 1–19*, Berlin 2017, pp. 326–331; L. Maskow, *Tora in der Chronik: Studien zur Rezeption des Pentateuchs in den Chronikbüchern* (FRLANT 274) Göttingen 2019, p. 549. Cf. collection of articles on this issue that addresses itself to the Book of Samuel: U. Becker and H. Bezzel (eds*.), Rereading the Relecture? The Question of (Post)chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel,* Tübingen 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The literature discusses the origin of these additions at great length. Some explanations attribute them in greater part to a source unknown to the Deuteronomist; others credit them to the Chronicler on theological, not historical, grounds, as part of his intent to judge gravely kings who stray from the straight path. See, for example, the discussion in Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, p. 806; R.W Klein, *2 Chronicles* (Hermeniea), Minneapolis 2012, p. 301. Either way, I do not believe that Williamson’s sweeping definition of all the extra materials here as “fully authentic” is reliably sourced. See H.G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCB) Grand Rapids 1982, p. 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. On the formula of Jehoram’s burial, see, for example, Y. Zimran, ““The Covenant Made with David,” The King and the Kingdom in 2 Chronicles 21,” *VT* 64 (2014), pp. 307–310. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See C.T. Begg, “Constructing a Monster: The Chronicler’s *Sondergut* in 2 Chronicles 21,” *ABR* 37 (1989), pp. 35–51. For further discussion of the omissions and, foremost, the additions, see L.C. Jonker, “Textual Identity in the Books of Chronicles,” G.N. Knoppers and K.A. Ristau (eds.), *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives*, Winona Lake 2009, pp. 206–217. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Notably, various researchers cite this verse as convincing proof of the extent of importance that the Chronicler attributes to the Davidic dynasty and the timelessness of the promise to David. See W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher* (HAT 21) Tübingen 1955, pp. 265–266. See, further, Hwang’s concluding remarks: “2 Chr 21:7 witnesses the Chronicler’s firm belief in the renewal of the Davidic dynasty based on the Davidic covenant. In the midst of the full-scale negative assessment of Jehoram, the Chronicler explicitly mentions that God is not willing to destroy the Davidic kingdom because he made a covenant with David.” See S. Hwang, *The Hope for the Restoration of the Davidic Kingdom in the Light of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles*, New York 2014. For another way of analyzing the relation of the doctrine of retribution to the Davidic covenant, see I. Amar, “Three Evil Kings and One Promise: Another Look at the Doctrine of Retribution and the Question of the Eternal Reign of the Davidic Dynasty in the Book of Chronicles,” *ZAW* 132 (2020), pp. 558–572. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Due to the duality of Azariah/Azaryahu, some researchers tend to assume that the six sons mentioned here were not all of Jehoshaphat’s offspring but only the firstborn to their mother. See Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, p. 807. The occurrence of a corruption here, meaning that his name is Ahaziah as found in 2 Chr 22:6 (cf. Septuagint ad loc), is not beyond the realm of possibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Abijah is the first-born of Rehoboam’s second wife. On the motif of primogeniture in Chronicles and the natural preference of the first-born over the others, see G.N. Knoppers, “The Preferential Status of the Eldest Son Revoked?” S.L. McKenzie and T. Römer (eds.), *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible Essays in Honour of John Van Seters* (BZAW 294), Berlin 2000, pp. 121–126. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See, for example, I. Abecassis, *,* Giv’at Yeshayahu 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Abecassis believes that these murders never occurred. See I. Abecassis,’”He put to the sword all his brothers” (2 Chr 21,4)?” *BN* 165 (2015), pp. 35-42. His vehement ruling pertains, again, to the question of the sources available to the Chronicler. I find it hard to nail this matter down. On the one hand, the fact that the murder appears in Elijah’s “writing” (below), along with the fact that it clashes with the presentation of the story, suggests that the Chronicler invented the matter from whole cloth in order to add yet another misdeed to Jehoram’s already-ample record. Contrastingly, it is highly likely that the Chronicler was exposed to an oral source or tradition in this matter. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Elijah’s missive raises many questions in regard to time (did Elijah lived during the time of Jehoram?), place (what has the prophet Elijah, a man of the North, have to do with Jehoram, ruler of the Southern kingdom?), and form (why did Elijah not meet with Jehoram face-to-face?). For a summary of these approaches, see Y. Levin, *The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah: 2 Chronicles 10–36*, London 2017, p. 173. I tend to accept Curtis and Madsen’s reasoning that the letter is “a pure product of the imagination.” See E.L. Curtis & A.L. Madsen, *The Books of Chronicles* (ICC), New York 1910, p. 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See discussion in Klein, *2 Chronicles*, p. 303. The prophet reprimands Jehoshaphat twice for having allied with the Israelite kings. See 2 Chr 19:2–3, 20:37. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Although the verses speak only of being taken prisoner, the Chronicler comments as he continues that Ahaziah alone has survived after this incursion, after the Arabians have murdered the rest of his family (v 22:1). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Mosis likens these accounts to those of the devastation occasioned by the demise of the kingdom of Judah. See R. Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes,* Freiburg 1973, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Amar, , at length. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The mention of Jehu’s coronation is one of the evidences for the accepted outlook in research on the Book of Kings as one of the sources available to the Chronicler, in contrast to Auld’s common-source approach. See S.L. McKenzie, “The Chronicler as Redactor,” M.P Graham and S.L. McKenzie (eds.), *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, Sheffield 1999, pp. 83–84. For the outlook of Auld (and his students), see A.G. Auld*, Kings without Privilege: David and Moses in the Story of Bible’s Kings,* Edinburgh 1994; C.Y.S. Ho, “Conjecture and Refutations: Is 1 Samuel XXXI 1–13 Really the Source of 1 Chronicles X 1–12,” *VT* 45 (1995), pp. 82–106; R. Rezetko, “Dating Biblical Hebrew: Evidence from Samuel-Kings and Chronicles,” I. Young (ed.), *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, London 2003, pp. 215–250. This view is rejected almost sweepingly in research; see Z. Talshir, “Textual and Literary Criticism of the Bible in Post-Modern Times: The Untimely Demise of Classical Biblical Philology,” *Henoch* 21 (1999), pp. 235–252; idem, “The Reign of Solomon in the Making: Pseudo-Connections between 3 Kingdoms and Chronicles,” *VT* 50 (2000), pp. 233–249. Admittedly, cf, Knoppers, who nevertheless detects in Auld’s outlook several important aspects: G.N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction* and Commentary (AB) New York 2004, pp. 66-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. In the Tel Dan Stele, the elimination of King Jehoram of Isarel and King Ahazia of Judah appears to be attributed to King Hazael of Aram and not to Jehu. See D. Pruin, “What Is in a Text?—Searching for Jezebel,” *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty,* London 2007, p. 220. See also N. Naʾaman, “The Story of Jehu’s Rebellion: Hazael’s Inscription and the Biblical Narrative,” *IEJ* 56 (2006), pp. 160–166. In Cogan’s opinion, it is not at all clear from the stele that the deaths of Jehoram and Ahaziah came at the hands of the king of Aram; furthermore, the stele almost certainly reflects the biblical account. See Cogan, , pp. 503–504. Lemaire also leans toward this view: A. Lemaire, “The Tel Dan Stele as a Piece of Royal Historiography,” *JSOT* 81 (1998), pp. 3–14. Other scholars try to harmonize the biblical source and the stele. See for example, S. Yamada, *The Construction of the Assyrian Empire: A Historical Study of the Inscriptions of Shalmaneser III* *(859–824 B.C.) Relating to His Campaigns to the West*, Leiden 2000, pp. 316–320. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Notably, the Chronicler reports that “the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah” and not “the brethren of Ahaziah,” as the Deuteronomist has it, have been killed. The change originates in the Chronicler’s account of the invasion of the Arabians, who, as stated, killed all of Ahaziah’s brothers apart from him. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Research has yet to resolve the question of Athaliah’s parentage: Was she Ahab’s daughter or Ahab’s sister? See C. Levin*, Der Sturz der Königin Atalja: Ein Kapitel zur Geschichte Judas im 9. Jahrhundert v. Chr*,Stuttgart 1982, p. 83 n. 3; H.J. Katzenstein, “Who Were the Parents of Athaliah?” *IEJ* 5 (1955), pp. 194–197. For a summary of the different views, see E.K. Solvang, *A Woman’s Place is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and their Involvement in the House of David* (JSOTSup 349), Sheffield 2003, p. 155 n. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. M. Kochman, *‘Olam ha-Tanakh,* *,* Tel Aviv 2002, p. 169 (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See Y. Levin, “,” *Mehkere Yehuda ve-Shomron* 29 (2020), n. 10 (Hebrew). Admittedly, in Williamson’s opinion, the word ותדברis a corruption of ותאבד*.* See Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles, p. 314, and cf. S. Japhet, “,” *Leshonenu* 31 (1967), p. 279 (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Scholars disagree about the factors that drove Athaliah to murder the royal line. See recent debate in Levin (ibid.), pp. 5–36. Levin credits Athaliah’s actions not to religious envy but to her wish to survive after being left isolated. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See L.M. Barre, *The Rhetoric of Political Persuasion: The Narrative Artistry and Political Intentions of Kings 9–11,* 1988, p. 99**.** In Barre’s opinion, the author drew Jehoiada’s rebellion from that of Jehu but omitted the violent descriptions in order to castJehoiada in a more favorable light. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. On the relationship of passive to active voice in the chronicler’s writings, see for example, Japhet, , p. \_\_\_. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. To this day, it seems that research has not determined the meaning of the expression עם הארץ definitively. For various possibilities, see, for example, J.T. Thames, “A New Discussion of the Meaning of the Phrase *am ha’arets* in the Hebrew Bible,” *JBL* 130 (2011), pp. 109–125. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. This partitioning into good and bad periods is very common in the Chronistic writings, as distinct from the Deuteronomist, “who knows only two kinds of kings: good and bad. The two types are distinct from each other and no crossing between types is allowed. There are no righteous kings who became villains, and there are no villains who repented.” See Y.Kaufman, *,* Vol. 4, Tel Aviv, 1956, p. 473. See also E. Ben Zvi, “A House of Treasures: The Account of Amaziah in 2 Chronicles 25—Observations and Implications,” *SJOT* 22 (2008), pp. 63–85. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. This is unlike the parallel text in Kings, in which Joash’s righteousness is not contingent on Jehoiada the priest: And Jehoash did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him” (2 Kgs 12:2). For more on the differences between the account in Kings and that discussed here, see B. Luria, “a,” *Beit Mikra* 18 (1973), pp. 11–20 (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See K.-D. Schunck, “Ragam,” *TDOT*, vol. 13, Grands Rapids, MI 2004, p. 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. So too with the lapidation of the gatherer of wood in Lev 24:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. On the connection between Zechariah’s death in Chronicles and its reflection in NT (Matt 23:35), see I. Kalimi, “The Story about the Murder of the Prophet Zechariah in the Gospels and its Relation to Chronicles,” *RB* 116 (2009), pp. 246–261. Kalimi infers that despite the changing of the name—“ben berekhia” instead of “ben Jehoiada”—and the change of venue of the murder—“between the temple and the altar” instead of “in the court of the house of the Lord”—Matthew relates to the account in Chronicles. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles, p. 324. By force of the change, Rudolph, , p. 276, emends on the basis of one of the Masoretic versions of the *berit*, i.e., \_\_\_. In the Septuagint, the word *bet,* house, is omitted. I agree in this matter with Zalewski and Japhet, who leave *bet* in place because it corresponds well with the account at large. See. S. Zalewski, “*Beit Mikra* 31 (1976), p. 279, n. 2 (Hebrew); Japhet*, I and II Chronicles*, p. 848. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Lynch draws a parallel between Zechariah’s death and that of Sennacherib, who perishes inside the house of his god (2 Chron 32:21). M.J. Lynch, *Monotheism and Institutions in the Book of Chronicles: Temple, Priesthood, and Kingship in Post-Exilic Perspective,* Tübingen 2014, p. 81 n. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See I. Kalimi, “Murder in Jerusalem Temple: The chronicler’s story of Zechariah: Literary and Theological Features, Historical Credibility and Impact,” *RB* 117 (2010), p. 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See Klein, 2 Chronicles, p. 347, n. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The root דרש appears thirty-four times in Chronicles, largely in the context of serving God and following or forsaking His ways. See, in particular, 1 Chr 28:9 and 2 Chr 12:14; 14:63; 15:2; 12–13; 17:4; 19:3; 22:9; 26:5; 31:21; 34:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Indeed, Zechariah’s demand finds vigorous expression in postbiblical literature. The Talmud recounts Zechariah’s continually boiling blood; see BT Gittin 57b, Sanhedrin 96b, and cf. I. Kalimi, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature: A Historical Journey,* Winona Lake 2009, pp. 261–263. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See I. Kalimi, (Hebrew), Jerusalem 2000, pp. 184–185; Y. Jacobs, *,* Alon Shevut 2005, pp. 137–138. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Cf. 2 Sam 4:7. It is even possible that in view of the account of Ish Boshet in Samuel, the chronicler chose the most humiliating death for Joash that he could imagine—defenseless in bed. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. It is also noteworthy that the chronicler changed the verb that describes Joash’s death. The Deuteronomist uses ויכו(smote him) wheras the Chroniclear invokes ויהרגהו (killed him), seemingly alluding again to the murder of Zechariah. See Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles, pp. 324–325; Kalimi, , pp. 185–186. To Luria’s mind, the account of the death of Joash that seemingly takes place immediately after the Arameans leave is a chronicaler’s fiction meant to settle scores with the evil king here and now, since in actuality fifteen years passed between the Arameans’ invasion and Joash’s death. See Luria, , p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The word שפטים recurs mainly in Ezekiel (nine of thirteen occurrences in the Bible). Zalewski (n. 35 above, pp. 281–285), links the meaning of *שפטים* in Ezekiel, which usually denotes a trial or justice (משפט), with the שפטים in our case. Namely, the שפטיםbrought against Joash are part of God’s judgment (משפט) and are administered to punish him for his actions. Notably, some evidence of this is found in Zechariah’s last words (‘The Lord look upon it, and require it)” and their parallel in the Israelites’ words to Moses and Aaron: “‘The Lord look upon it, and require it.” That is, Zechariah’s hopes for divine justice (משפט) come to fruition in the Arameans’ judgment (שפטים) against Joash. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. In fact, all four kings discussed here are sole survivors: Jehoram murders all of this brothers; Ahaziah survives alone after the Arab invation; only Joash emerges after Athaliah’s massacre; and Athaliah appears to be the sole survivor of Jehu’s purge, as Levin shows ) pp. 17–18). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. On the burial site as reflected in Kings, see N. Na’aman, “Death Formulae and the Burial Place of the Kings of the House of David,” *Bib* 85 (2004), pp. 245–254. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See D. Glatt-Gilad, “Regnal Formulae as a Historiographic Device in the Book of Chronicles,” *RB* 108 (2001), p. 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The outcome, then, is that none of the Judahite kings who paralleled the House of Ahab receives a proper burial. See Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, p. 824. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. On the importance of burial in family tombs in antiquity, see references in Zimran, , n. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. In only one case, the murder of Ahaziah’s brothers (nephews), does the chronicler use less pungent language than does the Deuteronomist: ויהרגםinstead of וישחטום*.* Even here, however, he broadens the homicidal cycle to include not only Ahaziah’s nephews but also the princes of Judah. His relative delicacy may trace to his sentiments for the Davidic line—in this case for Ahaziah’s nephews, of whose religious loyalties we know nothing. The chronicler, despite his tendency thus far, thus refrains from using the acidic term וישחטום to describe their death. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Only the last four Judahite kings before the destruction restore this sorrowful continuum of vile Judahite kings. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. O. Sergi, “Queenship in Judah Revisited: Athaliah and the Davidic Dynasty in Historical Perspective,” J.M Durand et al. (eds.), *Tabou et transgressions: Actes du colloque organisépar le Collège de France, Paris, les 11–12 avril* *2012*, Fribourg 2015, pp. 99–112. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See S.J. Schweitzer, *Reading Utopia in Chronicles* (LHB/OTS 442), New York 2007, p. 101. In Schweitzer’s opinion, a utopian text “does not reflect historical reality but future possibility”; therefore, these four chapters represent the worst of all because they offer nothing to look forward to. See S.J. Schweitzer, “Exile, Empire, and Prophecy: Reframing Utopian Concerns in Chronicles,” S.J. Schweitzer and F. Uhlenbruch (eds.), *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles Ezra and Nehemiah,* London 2016, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See E. Ben Zvi, “The House of Omri/Ahab in Chronicle,” L.L Grabe (ed.), *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty,* London 2007, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. See G.N. Knoppers, “Greek Historiography and the Chronicler’s History: A Reexamination,” *JBL* 122 (2003), pp. 648–650. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The Chronicler’s attempt to fight foreign influences may have succeeded, at least as seen in archaeological surveys within the boundaries of Yehud. See E. Stern, “The Religious Revolution in Persian-Period Judah,” in O. Lipshits and M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, 2006), pp. 199–205. Cf., conversely, C. Frevel et al. (eds.), *A “Religious Revolution” in Yehud? The Material Culture of the Persian Period as a Test Case,* Freiburg 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. See, for example, I. Amar, “Form and Content in the Story of Asa in 2 Chr 13:23b–16:14: A Diachronic-Synchronic Reading,” *VT* 69 (2019), pp. 359–360. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)