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Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 2003 28: 149
DOI: 10.1177/030908920302800202

[*JSOT* 28.2 (2003) 149-174]
ISSN 0309-0892

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Abstract

This article presents a close narrative reading of 1 Kings 1–11, interpreting the account of Solomon and his realm through the lenses of the book of Deuteronomy. On the surface, the narrator appears to be praising Solomon and his kingdom for the first ten chapters, ending with a negative assessment in 1 Kings 11. However, noting the extensive use of irony and subtlety, especially in light of specific prohibitions in Deuteronomy, the conclusion drawn from this study is that the narrator in 1 Kings 1–11 is not praising Solomon or his kingdom at all, even in the first ten chapters, but instead, is presenting a scathing critique.

The Solomon narratives (1 Kgs 1–11) present a rather curious story. For the first ten chapters Solomon and his kingdom are extolled and their glories praised. Then, abruptly, in 1 Kings 11, the narrator condemns him, underscoring his flagrant idolatry. The two portrayals appear to be quite different; indeed, they seem to describe two very different individuals.

One proposed solution to this schizophrenic narrative relationship is to view the differences as inherent to the sources that the final editor or redactor used. Proponents of this view would argue that most of the material the final (deuteronomistic) editor used in chs. 1–10 was pro-Solomonic, praising his deeds and actions. This 'final' editor, however, writing in light of the Babylonian captivity, then added his own assessment of Solomon, focusing on the disastrous idolatry of Solomon, idolatry being one of the key themes running throughout the final form of the book (1–2 Kings). The editor apparently made little effort to revise the

viewpoint of the various pro-Solomonic sources that he incorporated into the first part of his work. Thus the contrast is explained.

Another suggested solution is that the text, inconsistent as it seems, does actually reflect Solomon's life. That is, Solomon was faithful to Yahweh until his old age, when his wives led him into idolatry. The abruptness of the text thus reflects an equally drastic change in Solomon's historical life, as he turned quickly from walking faithfully with Yahweh to serving a multitude of foreign gods.

In recent years several Old Testament scholars have been re-examining the literary structure of this unit, looking for structural clues to the problem. These writers have observed that some literary units in 1 Kings 1–11 appear to be parallel to other units. Several hypotheses relating to the structure of this unit have been suggested. Parker, for example, argues that 1 Kings 1–2 and 11.14-43 frame the story, but that the main unit extends from 3.1 to 11.13. In a chiastic arrangement, chs. 3–8 are paralleled by 9.1–11.14. The first unit is favorable to Solomon while the second unit is hostile.[1] Brettler, on the other hand, proposes that there are three basic units: 'Solomon's accession to the throne' (chs. 1–2), 'Solomon serves Yahweh and is blessed' (3.3–9.23), and 'Solomon violates Deut. 17.14-17 and is punished' (9.26–11.49).[2] Both Parker and Brettler, however, structure their units around negative sections and positive sections, with the earlier sections being negative and the later sections being positive. Such analysis from a literary point of view is helpful and does point us in the right direction, but does not really answer all of the questions raised by this passage (as discussed below).

Jobling also sees the narrative as consisting of a positive section (1 Kgs 3–10) bracketed by two negative sections (the bloodbath in 2.12-46, and

1. Kim Ian Parker, 'Repetition as a Structuring Device in 1 Kings 1–11', *JSOT* 42 (1988), pp. 19-27. Parker reiterates this structural analysis, organizing it around the themes of Wisdom and Torah in tension in 'Solomon as Philosophical King? The Nexus of Law and Wisdom in 1 Kings 1–11', *JSOT* 53 (1992), pp. 75-91.

2. Marc Brettler, 'The Structure of 1 Kings 1–11', *JSOT* 49 (1991), pp. 87-97. Amos Frisch, 'The Narrative of Solomon's Reign: A Rejoinder', *JSOT* 51 (1991), pp. 3-14, suggests that the unit runs from 1.1 to 12.24. The units are arranged concentrically around the central section describing the temple (6.1–9.9). The first half is positive about Solomon, showing that loyalty to God brings blessings, while the later half is negative and critical, showing that disloyalty brings misfortune. For earlier attempts to analyze the structure of 1 Kgs 1–11, see Bezalel Porten, 'The Structure and Theme of the Solomon Narrative (1 Kings 3–11)', *HUCA* 38 (1967), pp. 93-128; and Y.T. Radday, 'Chiasm in Kings', *Linguistica Biblica* 31 (1974), pp. 52-67 (55-56).

the foreign women in ch. 11), but he disagrees with Parker, arguing instead that ch. 10 is likewise positive to Solomon. Jobling understands 1 Kings 3–10 as describing a 'mythical' ideal kingdom, a Golden Age narrative similar to this genre in other cultures. He does note some tension in the Golden Age section between the unconditional blessings of Yahweh (based on the Davidic Covenant of 2 Sam. 7) and the conditional Deuteronomic blessings, but he argues that the unconditional aspects *subvert* the conditional ones so that the Golden Age comes across as truly glorious. Jobling then tries to connect the positive picture in 1 Kings 3–10 with idealized economics while connecting the 'fall' in 1 Kings 11 to foreign, externally related sexuality, which he notes is symbolically absent from the Golden Age.[3]

Recent works from the fields of narrative criticism and feminist criticism have likewise underscored the inadequacy of traditional approaches to the Solomon narratives. They have highlighted numerous textual ambiguities and surface contradictions. For example, Gunn and Fewell draw upon the Solomon narratives to illustrate irony and ambiguity. They point out numerous events in the Solomon narratives that raise questions and doubts (and perhaps outrage)—the shadow of David's affair with Bathsheba and her role in the succession of Solomon, Solomon's questionable piety and his true attitude toward the temple, Solomon's 'walk' in the statutes of David *except* for his sacrifices at the high places, the treatment and fate of Abishag, Solomon's sin and punishment contrasted with that of Jezebel, and the implications relating to Solomon's failure to marry the Queen of Sheba.[4] However, although Gunn and Fewell help to point out

3. David Jobling, '"Forced Labor": Solomon's Golden Age and the Question of Literary Representation', *Semeia* 54 (1992), pp. 57-76. Jobling does note many of the same unusual ironies that I will underscore in this paper—the presence of Pharaoh's daughter, the treaty with Hiram and the frequent mention of Deuteronomic conditioned blessings. However, he interprets this phenomenon in the opposite direction from what I suggest. He argues that the mythical portrayal of the Golden Age subverts and marginalizes the negative aspects of Solomon to extol the ideal. I suggest that we place this material within a broader framework, first within the entire text of 1–2 Kings, and then within the entire Deuteronomic History, which primarily tracks the downward spiral of Israel due to Deuteronomic disobedience. Thus I suggest that the negative Deuteronomic critique running through 1 Kgs 3–10 *subverts* (quietly and only through irony) the positive.

4. See the following works by David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell: 'Narrative, Hebrew', in *ABD*, IV, pp. 1023-27; *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford Bible Series; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 152-55, 167-68; and *Gender,*

the tensions in the Solomon narratives, as well as the problems with reading these narratives along traditional lines, they do not really offer an overall approach to interpreting these tensions.

Lasine, on the other hand, does offer an overall approach, although it appears inadequate. First of all, he notes the wide and disparate range of conclusions that scholars propose in regard to Solomon. He then suggests that this phenomenon reflects the actual 'indeterminacy' of the text itself. Lasine moves beyond the recognition of ambiguity and gaps that Sternberg,[5] Fewell and Gunn point out, proposing that the text is intentionally indeterminate. Lasine argues that the narratives intentionally 'hide' Solomon from the reader, 'encouraging a variety of subjective responses to the texts'.[6] Yet Lasine appears to overlook the role of irony and ambiguity in the story as a whole. For example, he discusses the different ways to view Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh. He notes that from a deuteronomistic view such a marriage can be condemned, but that in light of the practices in other ancient Near Eastern monarchies such a marriage would be acceptable, even laudable. Thus, Lasine argues, the portrayal is ambiguous and indeterminate.[7] However, as I argue below, it seems much more plausible to understand this contrast in views as part of the *very point* that the narrator is making. Israel is not to be like the other nations. What is 'laudable' in other monarchies is 'detestable' to Yahweh when it violates the deuteronomistic decrees. The narrator uses irony precisely to make this point, which is indeed determinate, once the irony is noticed.

Another work that highlights the inadequacies of early treatments of Solomon, pointing out ambiguities and tensions throughout the story, yet

Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), esp. pp. 161-77.

5. Sternberg stresses the function of ambiguity and gaps. He also uses the Solomon narrative as an example of the importance for the reader to move beyond the surface to the depth. See Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 186-229, 342-47.

6. Stuart Lasine, *Knowing Kings: Knowledge, Power, and Narcissism in the Hebrew Bible* (SBL Semeia Studies, 40; Atlanta: SBL, 2001), pp. 139-40.

7. Stuart Lasine, 'The King of Desire: Indeterminacy, Audience, and the Solomon Narrative', *Semeia* 71 (1995), pp. 85-118 (89). Fox critiques Lasine in the same volume, but follows a traditional understanding of Solomon. Thus Fox argues that the so-called 'indeterminacy' is due either simply to the complexity of Solomon or the residual of redactional layers in the text. See Michael V. Fox, 'The Uses of Indeterminacy', *Semeia* 71 (1995), pp. 173-92 (182, 190).

then proposing an overall approach to the book that incorporates these tensions, is Camp's recent thought-provoking book *Wise, Strange and Holy*. Instead of interpreting Solomon through the lenses of Deuteronomy, as I suggest, she proposes to read Solomon through the lenses of Proverbs. She places the narrative in the later post-exilic time within a 'wisdom' context, noting that the central themes 'woman wisdom' and 'the strange/foreign woman' of Proverbs are likewise central themes in the Solomon narratives. Her work analyzes the intricate interaction between these two themes. In so doing, while working off of a different interpretive framework than I do, she does observe many of the same textual ironies that this study addresses.[8]

A few of the more recent commentaries on 1 Kings, especially those influenced by narrative criticism, have also noted that the negative assessment of Solomon is not restricted to ch. 11, but that there are numerous negative statements about Solomon scattered throughout 1 Kings 1–10. However, none of them actually develops the theme. Thus Fretheim, for example, writes, 'This break [between chs. 10 and 11] is not as stark as at first appears; the narrator does prepare the reader in chs. 2–10 for the "fall" in chapter 11'. Nelson alludes to a 'dark undercurrent' in these texts as a 'counter-theme'. Likewise, Brueggemann writes, 'In the judgment of this narrative, Solomon is quite a mixed bag of worldly success and Torah failure'.[9]

Indeed, narrative criticism has alerted us not only to structural features, but also to the possibility of sub-surface features such as irony and subtlety.[10] Out of this narrative reading context I propose an alternative

8. Claudia V. Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (JSOTSup, 320; Gender, Culture, Theory, 9; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Camp's argument for a Proverbs background instead of Deuteronomy loses much of its strength as one moves beyond the Solomon narrative into the rest of 1–2 Kings (and then into the rest of the Deuteronomic History). Yet, as Camp demonstrates, wisdom and foreign ('strange') women are significant and interrelated themes in the Solomon narratives, laced with deep irony and ambiguous suggestive allusions, factors that must be taken into account.

9. Terrence Fretheim, *First and Second Kings* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999), p. 20; Richard Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1987), p. 66; Walter Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings* (Smyth & Helwys Commentary; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), p. 11.

10. Younger notes that the fact of sophisticated structural unity in 1 Kings 1–11 is an indicator of the text's figurative nature. See K. Lawson Younger, Jr, 'The Figurative Aspect and the Contextual Method in the Evaluation of the Solomonic Empire

approach to interpreting the Solomonic narratives. I would like to suggest that the narrator is not really praising Solomon at all in 1 Kings 1–10.[11] On the surface of the text, especially when read out of context, the narrator does seem to heap praise after praise on Solomon and the realm that he built. However, I will argue that there are numerous clues that suggest to us that perhaps the narrator is playing literary games with his readers. He may be openly and overtly praising Solomon on the surface, but he does not tell the story with a straight face, and if we look closely, we see him winking at us. On the surface the text glorifies the spectacular reign of Solomon. The point of many details in the text is to impress the reader with the glory of Solomon and his reign. However, below the surface another theme lurks, quietly and ironically pointing out some serious inconsistencies and some serious problems that the surface story glosses over.[12]

We as readers are given a tour of a fantastic, spectacular and opulent mansion. Everywhere we look we see wealth and quality. However, without changing the inflection of his voice the tour guide points out places where the façade has cracked, revealing a very different structure. Con-

(1 Kings 1–11)', in David J.A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (JSOTSup, 87; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 157-75.

11. There is disagreement over whether 1 Kgs 1–2 should be included with the narrative of Solomon (1 Kgs 3–11) or with the so-called 'Succession Narrative' (2 Sam. 9–20). I would suggest that 1 Kgs 1–2 is transitional and does connect to both the preceding unit and the following unit. The tone and literary approach of both units is similar, however. Gunn and Fewell take a similar view. They label this phenomenon as a 'shifting boundary', where one story's end also functions as the next story's beginning. They use 1 Kgs 1–2 as a primary example. See Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 111-12. Regarding the literary strategy of the Succession Narrative, Ackerman writes, 'Beneath the cool, dispassionate voice of the omniscient narrator is a lament that Israel's brief moment of greatness was lost by the perverse actions of passionate and headstrong individuals' (James S. 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], pp. 41-60 [59]).

12. Dorsey provides a chiastic structural arrangement of 1 Kgs 3–11. He argues that the narrator's framing of the unit with negative material about Solomon's wives indicates that the overall thrust is going to be condemnatory. Dorsey's conclusions based on this framing are similar to those suggested in the present study. See David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), pp. 137-38.

tinuing with the standard speech which glorifies the building, the guide nonetheless makes frequent side comments and uses nuances that let us know that his glowing praise for the structure is not really his honest opinion of the facility, and he wants us also to see the truth. Finally, at the end of the tour, he can restrain himself no more, and he tells us plainly that the building is basically a fraud, covered with a thin veneer of glitz and hoopla, and soon will collapse under its own weight. This is the manner in which the narrator of 1 Kings leads us on a tour of the House of Solomon.

Now let us examine the evidence and see if we can substantiate such a position. First of all, in validating any interpretive position, context is a critical factor. The books of 1 and 2 Kings are books describing the history of Israel from a theological perspective. The central question driving the story in these two books is whether or not the monarchy, and thus also the people, will keep the law and follow Yahweh.[13] The answer to this question is, of course, 'no'. The initial readers stand in the exile—the monarchy is gone, the land is lost, and the temple has been destroyed. Thus 1 Kings 1–11 must be read within the context of 2 Kings 25, where the final destruction of Jerusalem and the temple are described.

The broader context, but one no less important, is formed by the books of Deuteronomy and 1–2 Samuel. Regardless of the variety of views regarding the details of the composition of 1–2 Kings, there is a fairly strong consensus that Deuteronomy (and 1–2 Samuel) forms a critical background for understanding the books. Deuteronomy is the expression of the law and covenant relationship that forms the criteria by which the kings and the nation are evaluated. Likewise the words of Samuel and the life of David add to the criteria by which the narrator judges the history of Yahweh's people in 1–2 Kings.

The methodology which I am suggesting in this study is one in which we reread 1 Kings 1–11 very carefully within the context of Deuteronomy and 1–2 Samuel. The narrator, I suggest, does not make explicit references back to these books, but he does make numerous implicit references. Thus, while on the surface he may seem to be praising Solomon, to those who hold Deuteronomy in their hands as they listen it becomes clear that he is often critical of Solomon's reign. This is narrative subtlety, or perhaps irony.[14]

13. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 3.

14. The use of irony as a tool in Hebrew narrative is well documented. Fewell and Gunn cite Solomon as an example (1 Kgs 3.3 in light of 1 Kgs 11.3, 7, 8) in their

The clearest illustration of this is in regard to Deut. 17.14-20. This text is especially pertinent because it describes the requirements that the law placed *on the king*. Besides exhorting the king to read the law carefully all the days of his life (17.18-20), this text also states the following:

> Be sure to appoint over you the king Yahweh your God chooses… The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get them, for Yahweh has told you, 'You are not to go back that way again'. He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. (Deut. 17.15-17)

So Deuteronomy stressed that Yahweh himself must select the king. Furthermore, this text prohibited three things for the king. First, the king was not to accumulate large numbers of horses, especially from Egypt. These are probably to be understood as chariot horses, for which Egypt was famous. Second, he was not to accumulate many wives, and third, he was not to accumulate large quantities of gold and silver.

Is the narrator of 1 Kings aware of these prohibitions? Note the following text in 1 Kgs 10.26-29:

discussion of irony in Hebrew narrative. See Fewell and Gunn, 'Narrative', p. 1026. Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 342-47) discusses this phenomenon in connection with character development in a story. Often the text will give an initial epithet concerning the character. However, the narrator will then engage in 'indirect characterization', moving from surface to depth. Sternberg notes that this type is the most important, but the 'most tricky'. Thus the initial epithet pronouncing Solomon's wisdom, Sternberg argues, 'serves not so much to guide as to lure and frustrate normal expectation: to drive home in retrospect the ironic distance between the character's auspicious potential under God and his miserable performance in opposition to God'. Fokkelman makes a related observation, noting that discovering the true hero in a text can be less than straightforward because a character can be a hero in a narratological sense, but a villain in a moral sense. See J.P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999), p. 82. Amit adds to the discussion by exploring 'hidden polemics' in biblical narrative. He concludes that while some polemics are explicit, lying on the surface, others are implicit, developed subtly over the course of the story. The implicit polemic, he argues, is often more powerful. Amit states that the narrator is often subtle with his polemics, especially if the topic is a controversial one such as an assessment of a king. Although the narrator's polemic is not explicit, lying on the surface, he will, nonetheless, place multiple 'signs' and 'landmarks' along the way, which, when taken *in toto*, reveal to the reader the polemical point of the narrator. See Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (trans. Jonathan Chipman; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), pp. 56-58, 93-98.

> Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue… (1 Kgs 10.26-29)

The narrator mentions that Solomon accumulated horses (12,000 of them), that he made silver to be common, and that he imported the horses from Egypt.[15] Moreover, the next several verses (11.1-3) delineate his disregard of the prohibition against accumulating many wives. So, at least four aspects of Deuteronomy 17 are mentioned in close proximity. Clearly the narrator is making allusions to the Deuteronomy 17 prohibitions.[16] Furthermore, note the literary style of the allusions. The narrator does not begin an overtly negative description of Solomon until ch. 11. At the end of ch. 10 he is still 'praising' Solomon. Indeed, in 10.23 he proclaims, 'King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth'. Within this context of proclaiming Solomon's greatness the narrator *boasts* of Solomon's numerous chariot horses, casually mentioning that he paid for these horses out of his vast silver hoards. Furthermore he seems to brag that Solomon acquired the horses from Egypt. This, I suggest, is not a praise of Solomon, but rather a subtle, yet serious, indictment. 'Look how great Solomon was', the narrator says on the surface. 'He was great in violating Yahweh's law', the narrator is really saying, right below the surface.

This observed subtlety is important because it establishes in a clear text that the narrator does indeed employ this type of subtle critique as a literary style. Therefore, we can justify the approach of going back into the first ten chapters of the Solomon narratives and looking for other subtle hints of covenant violation or of impropriety on the part of Solomon and his 'glorious' kingdom.

15. For a discussion of the international trade in chariots and horses, and of Solomon's implied involvement in this trade, see Yutaka Ikeda, 'Solomon's Trade in Horses and Chariots in Its International Setting', in Tomoo Ishida (ed.), *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays: Papers Read at the International Symposium of Biblical Studies, Tokyo, 5-7 December, 1979* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982), pp. 213-38.

16. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, p. 67, writes, 'Yet no one with a Deuteronomistic theological background could ever have missed the broad hint of the last verses about horses from Egypt (10.28-29), which point directly to Deuteronomy 17.16. This provides a transition to the breakdown of shalom in chapter 11 caused by Solomon's violation of Deuteronomy 17.17.'

From the very beginning of the Solomon narratives, things seem to be rather suspicious, at least from a theological point of view. Indeed, the entire Succession Narrative of Solomon is characterized by political intrigue and royal court power struggles.[17] The narrator gives us a substantial amount of detail describing this intrigue. Numerous characters play significant roles: David, Nathan, Zadok, Bathsheba, Benaiah, Adonijah, Joab, Abiathar and the beautiful young Abishag. However, missing from this list is *the* central character from 1–2 Samuel, Yahweh.[18] Yahweh says nothing and does nothing (at least not overtly) in Solomon's rise to power.[19] Nowhere in the story of Solomon's succession to the throne does the narrative include anything at all resembling Yahweh's direct selection of Solomon.[20] Nathan the prophet has a conversation with Bathsheba

17. Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 155, conclude: 'As we enter this story of succession we might expect that the key phrases about being king and sitting on the throne of the great King David would intimate exhilaration and celebration. Instead we find by the end of the story that something quite other has happened. These words carry ominous overtones of power struggle, duplicity, and paranoia. David's throne is no different from the thrones of a myriad other monarchs.'

18. Both Ackerman ('Knowing Good and Evil', p. 53) and Fokkelman maintain that it is significant that Nathan no longer speaks in the name of God. In fact the only one who uses God's name is Benaiah, the 'bloody hatchet man' (J.P. Fokkelman, *King David [II Sam. 9–20 & I Kings 1–2]*. I. *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* [Studia Semitica Neerlandica; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981], p. 370).

19. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, p. 22, posits that Yahweh is actually working behind the scenes, even through the devious political plots of the court, to bring his chosen king Solomon to power. However, this is far from obvious and there is no clear mention at all in this narrative that Solomon is even truly Yahweh's choice. Recall that in Deut. 17.15 Yahweh warns that the king must be one that he has chosen (בחר). In accordance with this, note that both of the two previous kings Saul and David are clearly chosen by Yahweh and anointed by Samuel as directed by Yahweh. The selection and anointing of David in 1 Sam. 16 forms a gigantic contrast with the 'selection' and anointing of Solomon. Yahweh speaks directly to Samuel, telling him to pass over David's older brothers because he has not chosen (בחר) them, but then to rise up and anoint David for he is the one. After David is anointed the spirit of Yahweh comes upon him in power (1 Sam. 16.8-13).

20. There is perhaps evidence of Yahweh's selection of Solomon back in 2 Sam. 12.24-25. This text states that, after Solomon was born, Yahweh loved him and therefore named him Jedidiah, or 'loved of Yahweh'. A.A. Anderson suggests that this naming may be an affirmation of Solomon's status as heir to the throne. Anderson (*2 Samuel* [WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989], p. 165) cites N. Wyatt, '"Jedidiah" and Cognate Forms as a Title of Royal Legitimation', *Bib* 66 (1985), pp. 112-25 (112). However, the point of stating that Yahweh loved this son may simply be in contrast to

(1.11-14) and with David (1.24-27) concerning the succession to the throne and he does not argue in either case that Solomon should be the next king because Yahweh has selected him. The argument that Nathan and Bathsheba use to persuade David is to remind him of an oath that he supposedly made to Bathsheba that her son Solomon would be the next king.[21] Whether David actually made the pledge or whether he is simply senile,[22] this argument works and David proclaims, 'I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by Yahweh, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place' (1.30). Neither David, Nathan the prophet, nor Zadok the priest inquires of Yahweh in the matter. Indeed David seems to rely solely on his own authority in the matter as he states in 1.35, 'I have appointed (צוה, literally "to command") him ruler over Israel and Judah'. In addition, David repeatedly refers to the throne as '*my* throne' (1.30, 35, also in the oath attributed to David, cited in 1.13 and 1.17).[23] Glaringly absent from David's proclamation is any reference to the fact that Yahweh chose Solomon to be the next king.

Indeed, Yahweh's voice in this part of the story emerges only as David charges Solomon with keeping the decrees, commands, laws and requirements of Yahweh. At this point David quotes Yahweh, 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel'. The only speech by Yahweh in the Succession Narrative is that of an ominous warning about being unfaithful to Yahweh, a condition that the new king Solomon will ultimately fail to keep.

the firstborn son of David and Bathsheba, which dies under an apparent curse from God, an event which occurs only a few verses earlier (2 Sam. 12.14-19).

21. Several writers note that nowhere in the narrative does it say that David made this vow. Nathan puts this vow into the mouth of Bathsheba. Furthermore, the questions of Nathan and Bathsheba to David in 1.20 and 1.27 imply that the choice of the heir to the throne had not been announced, even to them. See Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, p. 20; David M. Gunn, *The Story of King David* (JSOTSup, 6; Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), p. 105; Tomoo Ishida, 'Solomon's Succession to the Throne of David—A Political Analysis', in *idem* (ed.), *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon*, pp. 175-87 (179).

22. For a discussion on the possible deception occurring here, see Harry Hagan, 'Deception as Motif and Theme in 2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2', *Bib* 60 (1979), pp. 301-26, and David Marcus, 'David the Deceiver and David the Dupe', *Prooftexts* 6 (1986), pp. 163-71.

23. Gunn, *The Story of King David*, p. 105; Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, p. 21.

Thus we see that the opening events in 1 Kings 1–2 are somewhat questionable in regard to presenting Solomon in a positive light.[24] Fretheim notes a similar phenomenon, and he cites three additional 'subtle reservations' that the narrator introduces into this section: Benaiah's misgivings regarding the violation of the sanctuary to kill Joab (2.28-30), Bathsheba's support of Adonijah's request and Solomon's resultant anger and immediate reneging on the promise he had made to her (2.19-24), and 'Shimei's seemingly innocent violation of the agreement with Solomon' (2.39-43) which resulted in his death. 'The narrator', Fretheim continues, 'seems to have introduced enough ambiguity into the account of Solomon's actions to stop the reader from simply adopting an unquestioning stance toward what he has done… One wonders why the narrator found it necessary to be critical in relatively subtle ways.'[25]

In 1 Kings 3 Yahweh actually appears to Solomon and endows him with wisdom. This appearance would form the strongest support that Yahweh had indeed chosen Solomon and that Solomon was truly and faithfully

24. David's vengeful vendetta against Joab and Shimei is also puzzling (1.5-9), especially his command to Solomon to kill Joab. David's former colleague and military commander fled to the tabernacle and took hold of the horns of the altar. Such an action is prescribed in Exod. 21.12-14 for protecting a man who has unintentionally killed someone and is seeking protection from revengeful relatives. Solomon ordered that Joab be executed anyway and indeed Benaiah, the new commander of the army, entered the tent and slew Joab, the old commander of the army. The irony is rich and tragic. David had stated to Solomon that Joab's alleged crimes were the slaying of Abner and Amasa (1.5-6). Abner was the commander of Saul's army and he had fought against David and Joab. After David won the civil war Joab killed Abner to avenge his brother (whom Abner had killed) and to consolidate his hold as commander of the army. Amasa had been the commander of Absalom's army, the one that had driven David out of Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion. So Joab's great sin was to execute two former commanders after the war had actually been won and power consolidated. In both cases Joab replaced the man he killed as commander. Benaiah's execution of Joab forms an extremely close parallel. Solomon had become king; all significant military opposition had ended. Yet Benaiah kills the former commander anyway. The difference, of course, was that Joab's murder of Abner and Amasa had been against the will of David the king, while Benaiah's execution of Joab (also murder?) is specifically ordered by King Solomon.

25. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, p. 27. Labeling the items of reservation as 'interwoven aspects of indeterminacy', Camp (*Wise, Strange and Holy*, pp. 156-57) provides a similar list: (1) the moral evaluation of Solomon's violence in establishing the kingdom; (2) the moral evaluation of the 'wisdom' to which the violence is attributed; (3) questions regarding God and his choice of Solomon; and (4) ambiguities surrounding Abishag and Bathsheba.

worshipping Yahweh in his early years. However, as in 1 Kings 1–2 this chapter likewise contains several negative references that serve to taint the rosy picture of Solomon that might otherwise emerge.

Indeed, the statement in 3.1 should explode like a bombshell in the reader's mind, 'Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter'. Egypt almost always has negative connotations in the Old Testament. Brueggemann underscores the negative connotation of this passage, writing, 'Egypt is a term in Israelite memory and tradition that bespeaks brutality, exploitation, and bondage, the demeaning of the human spirit, and the suppression of covenantal relations. Indeed, Israelite memory concerning Yahweh is that the taproot of faith and life is emancipation from Pharaoh.'[26] Furthermore, note that the name of the pharaoh is not given. Brueggemann suggests that this anonymity connects him emotionally to the pharaoh of the exodus, who was also left unnamed. Solomon has 'allied himself with Pharaoh, the antithesis of everything Israelite…and the marriage signals Solomon's deliberate departure from what traditional Israel treasured most'.[27] Furthermore, 3.1 also informs the reader that this marriage took place early in Solomon's reign—he brought Pharaoh's daughter to Jerusalem before the temple was completed.[28] This marriage, perhaps one of Solomon's most serious mistakes, occurs at the beginning of his reign and not at the end.

Note that the main contextual subject of this part of the story revolves around the high places (במות), mentioned in 3.2, 3 and 4. It is suggestive to note the close proximity of Solomon's foreign wife to the statement that Solomon worshipped at the high places, particularly in light of this close connection in the indictment against Solomon in ch. 11. Note the similarity between 3.1-3 and 11.1-8.[29] In 3.1-3, the narrator mentions that Solomon marries the daughter of Pharaoh, that he loves Yahweh, and that he and the people offer sacrifices and incense at the high places—at this point these 'high places' are vague and not at all specific. In 11.1-8, by contrast, the narrator tells the readers that not only did Solomon marry the

26. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 45.

27. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 43, also points out that Solomon appears to construct much of his government structure and his building program on the Egyptian model. Thus while Pharaoh is mentioned in 3.1, the implications of the relationship with the Egyptians run throughout the account of Solomon's reign.

28. Does the narrator imply anything by mentioning Solomon's house first and Yahweh's house second?

29. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, p. 62.

daughter of Pharaoh, but also that he married a multitude of foreign women in direct violation of Yahweh's command. As mentioned above, now he loves his wives instead of loving Yahweh. As a result he and his wives offer sacrifices and burn incense at the במות or high places, only now the high places are clearly described as dedicated to Chemosh and Molech, and Solomon not only worshipped here—he constructed these worship sites. Can this similarity be accidental? Does it not seem likely that the narrator has so placed these references in ch. 3 so as to give an ominous foreshadowing of the terrible things to come? Solomon does not wait until ch. 11 to start his downward slide. He starts off already quite some way down the slide; ch. 11 merely describes the clear impact at the bottom.

Keep in mind that Solomon lived in Jerusalem where the tabernacle and the ark were located. This location represented the presence of Yahweh. Why would Solomon travel away from the ark to offer sacrifice to Yahweh? Ironically, the altar in the tabernacle of Yahweh has been mentioned in the near vicinity of these verses, but not in regard to Solomon's *worship*. Back in 2.28-34 Joab fled to this altar for protection. Solomon, remember, orders Benaiah to slay him anyway.

The grammar of 3.3 is perhaps the strongest indicator that the high places may be negative. The text states, 'Solomon showed his love for Yahweh by walking according to the statutes of his father David, *except* that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places'. The Hebrew adverb רק introduces a restrictive clause, presenting an exception or a clarification of the clause before it.[30] It carries a nuance in this passage of 'however', or 'on the other hand'. So, clearly the implication of this 'however' or 'except' is that, from the beginning, Solomon is following some questionable worship practices. The fact the narrator mentions this rather nonchalantly only underscores his use of irony.

So, it is possible that the narrator is being subtle and perhaps a bit sarcastic in 3.1-3. Solomon shows his 'love' for Yahweh in the context of marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. He shows his love by following in the footsteps of his father David, with all the accompanying ambiguities. And he shows his love by sacrificing at the high places, which David never did.

Yet most would argue that the following episode (3.4-15) is a very positive portrayal of Solomon. While at Gibeon Yahweh appeared to Solomon

30. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §39.3.5c.

in a dream, and was pleased to honor Solomon's request for wisdom. Yahweh likewise promised wealth and honor. Obviously Solomon had responded to Yahweh in a way that was pleasing to Yahweh and this passage does show Solomon in a positive light. However, this passage also contains a few hints of the trouble to come. In 3.9 Solomon did not specifically ask for wisdom, but he asked literally for a 'hearing heart' (לב שמע) so that he can discern between good and evil (טוב and רע). Yahweh promised him a wise (חכם) and discerning (בין) heart (לב). The focus of the term 'heart' (לב, לבב) was not only on the emotions, but also more particularly on the function of decision-making. For Yahweh the attitude of the heart was critical. When he selected David in 1 Sam. 16.7 Yahweh stated that mortals looks with the eyes but he looks at the heart. After promising Solomon a wise and discerning heart, Yahweh then repeated the Deuteronomic stipulations: '*if* you keep my statutes and commandments then I will give you long life'. Brueggemann notes that it is 'not enough that Solomon make a good choice at the outset. He must make a good choice all along the way, the choice of listening and obeying, for it is in choosing obediently that Israel and its king choose life.'[31] Fretheim notes that in this passage Solomon himself, in effect, 'sets the standard by which his own rule will be judged, finally, in negative terms'.[32] The description of the gift that Yahweh gave to Solomon in ch. 3 is focused on his heart. In ch. 11 the reader finds out that the *heart* of Solomon was precisely the main problem. Indeed, in 11.4 the word *heart* occurs three times: Solomon's wives turned his *heart* toward other gods, and his *heart* was not wholly true (שלם, a wordplay?)[33] to Yahweh as David's *heart* had been. While in 3.9 Yahweh gave Solomon the wisdom to discern between טוב and רע (good and evil), in 11.6 the narrator tells his readers that Solomon did רע (evil) in the eyes of Yahweh. In 11.9 the unfaithful heart of Solomon is mentioned again, this time resulting in Yahweh's anger, specifically due to the fact that Yahweh had appeared directly to Solomon twice. This combination in 11.9 of Solomon's unfaithful heart and the appearance of Yahweh to him is apparently a direct allusion back to Yahweh's appearance to Solomon in ch. 3, where Solomon's heart is the main

31. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 49.

32. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, p. 31.

33. Most writers recognize the wordplay between Solomon and שלום ('peace'), for Solomon brings a time of peace to the nation (except for the forced labor?). There also appears to be a wordplay here in 11.4, but this one is quite ironic, between Solomon and שלם ('full, complete, at peace'), for his heart is not שלם toward Yahweh.

subject of discussion. I would suggest that the main purpose within the broad story of Solomon for including the narrative of Yahweh's appearance and his gift of wisdom to Solomon in 3.4-15 is to underscore Solomon's great culpability for his later apostasy. This text is not ultimately praising Solomon; it is underscoring the absurdity of his turning away from Yahweh. Yahweh appeared directly to him and gave him a wise heart so that he could discern good and evil. Nonetheless, the heart of this so-called 'glorious' king will choose evil and turn away from Yahweh. The lesson of squandered potential is one that runs throughout 1–2 Kings. Those in exile could easily look back at the blessings bestowed on them and ask what could have been, if only…

After Solomon is given 'the hearing heart' or the 'wise heart', in 3.4-15, the narrator then shares an episode where Solomon's wisdom is supposedly demonstrated. In 3.16-28 two prostitutes come before Solomon with a dispute over ownership of an infant. As is well known, Solomon threatens to cut the child in half, thus revealing the true mother by her reaction to his threat. All Israel marveled at his wisdom and ability to carry out justice (משפט). This story is almost universally taken as one that simply demonstrates Solomon's great wisdom and discernment. However, let us back up a minute and ask, 'What is wrong with this picture?' Prostitution (זנה) was strictly outlawed both in Deuteronomy and in Leviticus.[34] In fact, Deut. 23.19 refers to prostitution as an 'abomination to Yahweh'.[35] Solomon doesn't even mention that their very occupation that produced this child was a violation of the law of Yahweh that he as king was bound to uphold and enforce. Can a true demonstration of justice (משפט, mentioned twice in 3.28) be demonstrated in ignorance of the law? In addition, does the presence of these two prostitutes say anything about the moral state of the kingdom? And what of the child?[36] Is the child symbolic? Are the prostitutes symbolic? It may be significant to note that the majority of usages of the term prostitute (זנה) in the Hebrew Bible are figurative references to apostasy, specifically the phenomenon of Israel

34. Elaine Adler Goodfriend, 'Prostitution (Old Testament)', in *ABD*, V, pp. 505-10 (505); Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250–587 BCE* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), p. 133.

35. Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; London: Hodder & Stoughton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 302.

36. Goodfriend, 'Prostitution (Old Testament)', p. 506, writes, 'A society which valued the patrilineal bloodline so highly would logically have a real abhorrence of children with no known paternity and of the mother who bred them'.

chasing after foreign gods.[37] In the context of the upcoming civil war between Judah and Israel, the struggle for the throne, and the immediate lapse into foreign idolatry, this story is rather suggestive.

In ch. 4 the organizational features of Solomon's great kingdom are extolled. Often this chapter is viewed as further evidence of Solomon's great wisdom—we are encouraged to look at how well organized and spectacular the government of Solomon was! However, as in the earlier chapters discussed above, this one also contains some peculiar features, especially when the chapter is read within the broader context of the whole story. First of all, the bureaucracy described in 1 Kings 4 is exactly what Yahweh told Samuel to warn Israel about back in 1 Samuel 8 when Israel asked for a king. Samuel cites the words of Yahweh, warning in 8.11, 'This is the משפט that the king who will reign over you will do'. Samuel then describes the exploitation of a royal government—the king will take your sons and daughters, your fields, vineyards, and flocks. 'You yourselves will become his slaves… You will cry out for relief from the king, but Yahweh will not hear' (1 Sam. 8.16-17). The imperial system described by Samuel was not fulfilled to any degree by either Saul or David. It is Solomon that fulfills all of the details of Samuel's prediction. Indeed 1 Kings 4 details the fulfillment explicitly! Thus the irony of the chapter. Solomon's organizational glory is the very thing that Yahweh warned the nation about in 1 Samuel.

Indeed, one of Solomon's officials was Adoniram, the one in charge of forced labor. This is an ominous reference, because the forced labor issue will be the one that precipitates the civil war between Judah and Israel, leading to the rift in the kingdom.

In addition, if the narrator is not being sarcastic or ironic in this chapter then there are several quite curious features in these verses. Taxes, warned of by Samuel in 1 Samuel 8, are described in 1 Kgs 4.7, 22-23 and 27-28. Sandwiched in between this discussion of taxes is the statement that the people 'ate, drank and were happy' (4.20), and that each man lived in safety under his own vine and fig tree (4.25). However, a few verses later in ch. 5 the narrator will add that Solomon conscripted 30,000 men from Israel to work for him. Likewise, 1 Kings 12 paints quite a different picture from the peace and prosperity in 1 Kings 4. The 'whole assembly

37. Gary Hall, 'זנה', in Willem A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), I, pp. 1122-25 (1123); S. Erlandsson, 'זנה', *TDOT*, IV, pp. 101-104; Raymond C. Ortlund, *Whoredom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

of Israel' came to Solomon's son and said, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us' (12.4). Rehoboam adds to the description in his refusal to listen to their demands, stating in 12.14, 'my father scourged you with whips'. Rehoboam's refusal to ease the burden his father had placed on the people led to the rejection of his rule, the assassination of Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, and open civil war.[38]

Chapter 5 begins the story of Solomon's construction of the temple, often viewed as the high point of Solomon's reign, indeed sometimes viewed as the high point in Israelite history. However, as in those above, this passage contains some troubling elements if placed within the context of 2 Samuel. Solomon writes to Hiram to negotiate for cedar to be used in the temple. Solomon refers back to Yahweh's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7 as part of his rationale for building the temple. However, Solomon seriously misquotes the situation and the words of Yahweh as recorded in 2 Samuel 7.

David is prevented from building a house for Yahweh, not because of external struggles as Solomon argues, but because Yahweh did not need a house nor apparently did he want a house. Brueggemann notes that such a house violates Yahweh's freedom. He says: 'Yahweh wants no temple because Yahweh is on the move, completely unfettered. And certainly Yahweh wants no cedar house, because cedar smacks of affluence and

38. Furthermore, in the midst of the description relating to Solomon's glorious kingdom of peace and prosperity, the narrator (4.26) casually mentions Solomon's chariot horses—12,000 of them, if we follow the LXX. The MT implies 40,000 stalls and 12,000 horsemen (NRSV). This statement comes right after the declaration of safety throughout the land (4.25) and the implication is that the condition of safety in the land is a direct result of Solomon's great standing army. However, as mentioned above, Deut. 17.16 strictly forbids the accumulation of horses by the king. Has the narrator introduced Solomon's great chariot army in order to impress the reader, or is he trying quietly to illustrate the departure of Solomon from walking in the way of Yahweh and trusting him for national security to following the way of typical powerful monarchs in the ancient Near East? Throughout much of the rest of the Hebrew Bible, placing faith in chariots becomes an idiom for not trusting in Yahweh (Ps. 20.7; Isa. 2.7-8; 22.18; 31.1; Mic. 5.10). Not only does Deuteronomy strictly prohibit the king from accumulating chariots and horses, but also Samuel, in his warning to the nation about the dangers of the monarchy, mentions chariots three times (1 Sam. 8.11-12). In addition, 2 Sam. 8.3-5 records that in one battle David captured a thousand chariots with horses and charioteers. What did David do with this new accumulation of military might? He hamstrung all of the chariot horses except 100 of them. If Deuteronomy and 1–2 Samuel form the contextual background through which the narrator's words are to be understood, then this text is seething with irony.

indulgence.'[39] The fact that Yahweh specifically mentions cedar in 2 Samuel 7 is very ironic, because Solomon cites this passage as part of the justification for his contract negotiations with Hiram to obtain cedar! Also note that Solomon has no trouble finding himself in 2 Sam. 7.13, 'he is the one who will build a house for my Name'. It is interesting that Solomon does not mention the next verse, 'When he does wrong (עוה, from עון) I will punish him…' Yahweh's message to David in 2 Samuel 7 speaks of Solomon's temple in v. 13 and Solomon's 'acts of iniquity' in the very next verse, definitely clouding the prophecy.

Also note that the temple is not at all central in Yahweh's discussion with David in 2 Samuel 7. There is indeed a wordplay on 'house' that runs throughout the passage. David wanted to build Yahweh a house, but Yahweh said, 'No, I will build *you* a house'. It is Yahweh's promise of building David's house that is central.

In 5.13-18 the narrator presents a detailed description of the forced labor that Solomon used to build the temple.[40] There is no mention of any wages being paid to the workers, in spite of the frequent mention of superfluous wealth floating around in the Solomonic empire. The absence of payment to the workers is in strong contrast to the repair work in the

39. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 75.

40. This issue has been discussed briefly above, but a few additional comments should be added here. In this passage Solomon conscripted 30,000 Israelites who worked in shifts, one month on and two months off. These workers are explicitly identified as Israelites. In addition Solomon also had 150,000 stonecutters and haulers, whose ethnicity is not identified in this passage. In 1 Kgs 9.22 (ET), however, the narrator states that Solomon did not conscript any Israelites as part of his slave labor, but used Israelites only as soldiers and officials, while conscripting other nationalities to be the actual slave laborers. The terms used in the two passages are slightly different (מס in 5.13 [ET] and מס עבד in 9.22 [ET]) and several scholars have suggested that there was a difference in status—the Israelites were only required to work one third of the time, thus they were forced laborers, but not permanent slaves. The Canaanites and other inhabitants of the land, however, were forced to be permanent slaves. See, e.g., I. Mendolsohn, 'On Corvée Labor in Ancient Canaan and Israel', *BASOR* 167 (1962), pp. 31-35, and Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, pp. 38-39. Soggin, however, argues against this distinction, maintaining that the terms are synonymous. See J. Alberto Soggin, 'Compulsory Labor Under David and Solomon', in Ishida (ed.), *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon*, pp. 259-67. However the tension between the texts is to be resolved, it is clear from 5.13 that a significant number of Israelites were forced to work on the temple. Furthermore, in light of the explosive reaction to the forced labor situation in ch. 12 after Solomon's death, this forced labor appears to refer to something that was neither voluntary nor pleasant.

temple that Josiah undertakes later on in the story (2 Kgs 22.3-7). In Josiah's case, the narrator goes out of his way explicitly to mention that Josiah paid the workers for their work.

Thus the opening paragraphs regarding the construction of the glorious temple contain negative undercurrents. Underscoring this is the reference in 6.1 to the exodus from Egypt. The proximity of forced building labor to the mention of the exodus is suggestive and highly ironic. Indeed, throughout these chapters there is the interesting interchange of references to Pharaoh, the exodus from Egypt, Solomon's large state building program, forced labor and chariot horses from Egypt.

Chapter 6 begins the description of the glorious temple, intended on the surface to overawe the reader. However, Yahweh intrudes into the catalog of extravagance with a stern warning in 6.11-13. 'As for this temple you are building', Yahweh warns, 'only if you keep my decrees and commandments…will I live among you'. The splendor of the temple is not the critical element leading to Yahweh's presence. He dwelt among them prior to the temple construction. He warns them in 6.11-13 that obedience is the requirement for his continued presence. The placement of this warning in the middle of the temple description is significant and in keeping with the narrator's scheme of quiet qualification and criticism that runs right below the surface 'praise and glory'.

For two chapters the spectacular nature of the temple (and Solomon's other buildings) is described. However, as in the earlier chapters, the narrator continues to undermine the surface intention of glorifying Solomon and the temple. In 6.38–7.1, for instance, the narrator states that Solomon took seven years to build the house of Yahweh, but he took thirteen years to build his own house.[41] What is the point of placing these two construction schedules side by side? Is the point that Solomon works faster on the temple, seven years being an incredibly short time for such a work? Or is there some subtle implication that the house of Yahweh is perhaps not as central to the construction scheme as it should be?[42] Chapter 7 actually refers to five royal buildings that Solomon constructed. The temple was part of a large royal complex.

41. Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, p. 168, make the same observation, writing: 'The glory of Yahweh's house, moreover, soon gives way (1 Kgs 7.1-12 and chs. 9–11) to the expanding glory of Solomon's own house… A reader might well decide that this whole elaborate narrative edifice harbors no little ironic comment on the king.'

42. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 93.

The splendor of the temple complex and its furnishings are described throughout ch. 7. Nelson notes the irony in this chapter, for all of the glorious labor of Solomon in furnishing the temple will be undone as the plot of 1–2 Kings unfolds. He writes,

> Shishak will rifle the treasury (14.26). Ahaz will strip the stands and remove the bulls under the sea (2 Kings 16.17). Hezekiah will remove the gold from the doors (2 Kings 18.16). 2 Kings 24.13 reports that Nebuchadnezzar cut up the gold vessels that Solomon had made, and in the final disaster Nebuzaradan burns the temple itself (2 Kings 25.9). The gold and silver are melted down and the great items of bronze are broken up (2 Kings 25.13-17). This final list is a hollow echo of the confident inventory of chapter 7.[43]

The narrator subtly points out to the readers that the temple is 'part of the royal complex, situated where it is to legitimize and propagandize for the monarchy'.[44] The location and centrality of the temple in Solomon's new camp is quite different than the role and centrality that the tabernacle played in Moses' camp.

In 1 Kings 8 Solomon brings the ark from the City of David to the new temple. Yahweh's presence then fills the temple. As part of the dedication service, Solomon then prays a series of three prayers. Most of this section, including the prayers of Solomon, appears to be grounded firmly in the theology of Deuteronomy.

However, there are a few incongruities and curiosities in this text that merit discussion. First of all, the timing is significant. 1 Kings 6.38 notes that the temple was completed in the eighth month, while the dedication ceremony of 1 Kings 8 takes place eleven months later, in the seventh month (8.2). Actually, as Provan points out, the delay was a *minimum* of eleven months, yet could have been longer. The specific year is not mentioned.[45] No explanation for the delay is stated.[46]

43. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, p. 47.

44. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, pp. 103-104.

45. Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), p. 75.

46. Some have suggested that the delay was to coordinate the dedication with the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles), which also took place at this time. Thus the reference to 'festival' in 8.2 would refer to the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles). Fretheim (*First and Second Kings*, pp. 48-49) points out that Deut. 31.9-13 stipulated that the written law (Deuteronomy) be read at this festival. Yet there is no mention of such a reading occurring in 1 Kgs 8. In fact, there is no mention of Solomon ever reading the law, either to himself or to the people. This omission is underscored by the contrast seen in the narrative of King Josiah, who reads all the words of the Book of the Covenant in

More significantly, the episode describing the ceremonial procession that transports the ark to the temple presents a stark contrast with that described in 2 Samuel 6. In that event David throws all decorum aside and dances with joy before the ark, wearing only a linen ephod. The focus of David's procession was on his joy and his humility before Yahweh. What a contrast with Solomon! There is no mention of Solomon dancing before Yahweh. Furthermore, in contrast to David's humility, Solomon spends much of the chapter boasting of the temple that he himself built for Yahweh. He tells Yahweh rather arrogantly, 'I have indeed [infinitive absolute plus perfect] built a magnificent temple for you' (8.13). In case anyone misses the fact that Solomon is responsible for this temple, he reiterates this fact five additional times, referring to 'this house which I have built' (8.20, 27, 43, 44, 48). Likewise in 8.21 he states, '*I* have provided a place for the ark…' There is no hint of David's humility in Solomon.

Yahweh returns to speak to Solomon a second time in ch. 9, after Solomon has completed his magnificent building program. As might be expected, Yahweh does not seem overly impressed. Has he not read the earlier chapters? Does he not know the splendor of this fantastic house that Solomon has built for him? Yahweh makes no comment whatsoever on the appearance of the temple. He does, however, perhaps pick up on Solomon's boast, 'I have built this house'. Yahweh states, 'I have consecrated this house which you have built'. Yahweh mentions this twice (9.3, 7), stressing the point that the importance of this house is not in the grandeur of its construction but in the significance of Yahweh's consecrating presence. Skipping over any accolades and speaking considerably more briefly than Solomon did, Yahweh turns to the critical issue at hand—obedience to the law. 'I have consecrated this house', Yahweh states in v. 3. 'But as for you', he continues in v. 4 and in the next several verses, 'you must keep the law and walk obediently or else I will leave this temple and it will be destroyed'. Provan notes, 'A dark cloud now looms quite visibly over the Solomonic empire, for all the glory of 1 Kings 3–8. The temple is no sooner built than we hear of its inevitable end; the empire is no sooner built than we hear of its inevitable destruction'.[47] The presence of Yahweh is of profound significance in the history of his

the hearing of all the people (2 Kgs 23.2). No doubt this is related to the positive summary of Josiah, 'he did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh' (2 Kgs 22.2), in contrast to the negative summary of Solomon, 'he did evil in the eyes of Yahweh' (1 Kgs 11.6).

47. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 83.

relationship with Israel, but the magnificent stones, cedar and gold of the temple are not. The narrator, writing after the destruction of the temple, knows this. The narrator is not boasting about the temple; he is critiquing the disastrously wrong theology behind such a boast.[48]

The remainder of ch. 9 picks up several themes from chs. 4–5 but continues to stack these themes up negatively against Solomon.[49] Solomon has a slight falling out with his ally and friend Hiram of Tyre. The narrator discusses the dispute nonchalantly. Solomon gives Hiram 20 cities in Galilee as payment for his services, but Hiram despises these cities as being worthless. The shocking feature that is mentioned only in passing is that Solomon gives away a large portion of Galilee, part of the Promised Land! Solomon sells a significant chunk of the land to Hiram for 'cedar, pine and gold!' What right does he have before Yahweh to sell off the Promised Land? This subtle criticism explodes into a scathing critique when read within the context of the rest of 1–2 Kings, particularly 1 Kings 16. In that chapter the prototypical evil king, Ahab, seeks to buy a vineyard from a peasant farmer, Naboth. With the help of Jezebel (is there an intertextual connection between Jezebel's home of Sidon and Hiram's home of Tyre?) Naboth is framed and executed, allowing Ahab to take possession of the property. This property was in Jezreel (16.1), which was within the region that the term 'Galilee' defined at the time. While the Jezreel connection may be tentative, the two incidents do appear to be related. Thus Naboth's words to Ahab likewise ring true to Solomon, 'Yahweh forbid that I should give to you the inheritance of my fathers' (16.3). What does Solomon do about the inheritance or property rights of the inhabitants of these cities? In a story that is hurtling downward toward the complete exile of the people from the land, Solomon's casual release of 20 cities is ominous.

48. Camp (*Wise, Strange and Holy*, p. 171) notes the rhetorical interweaving 'of Solomon's temple-building with his wisdom, his foreign women, other foreigners, and other buildings'. She suggests that this points to a 'flaw' or 'faultline in the lovingly described temple construction'. Camp also notes the extreme irony in Yahweh's statement to Solomon in 9.7: 'the house I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight; and Israel will become a proverb (משל) and a taunt among all peoples'. Earlier, in 1 Kgs 4.29-34, the text boasted of Solomon's proverbs (משל), noting that men of all nations would come to hear his proverbs.

49. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 84. Nelson (*First and Second Kings*, p. 66), however, states that the dark undercurrent is only hinted at in these verses.

Other red flag items appear in ch. 9, drawing attention back to the exodus and to deuteronomistic prohibitions. Pharaoh and his daughter are mentioned again twice (9.16, 24). Also mentioned are forced labor, store cities and chariots. Note also the nearby reference to the ים סוף (Red Sea or Sea of Reeds) in 9.26. Israel no longer needs Yahweh in order to deal with the ים סוף. Solomon's ships sail freely across it to bring him more gold. Thus in this section Solomon has given away part of the Promised Land, accumulated chariots in violation of Deuteronomy 17, married the daughter of the hated Pharaoh of Egypt, constructed store cities with forced labor, and then sailed back across the ים סוף. Certainly the narrator is not naïve about the exodus tradition and the numerous allusions to exodus terminology that occur in this text. The end of 2 Kings definitely reflects a literary reversal of the exodus—the people lose the land and even return to Egypt. Is the narrator giving his readers a strong hint of that reversal already?

The visit from the Queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 10 reflects the same type of literary subtlety that we have observed in the earlier chapters. On the surface the Queen's visit praises Solomon for his great wisdom and wealth. However, both Brueggemann and Fretheim note the two subtle critiques from the mouth of the visiting monarch. First, in praising Solomon's wisdom the Queen declares in 10.8, 'Happy (or blessed) are your wives [following the LXX: the Hebrew reads "men"]! Happy are these your servants who continually attend you!' She has limited the resultant blessing or happiness of Solomon's great wisdom and wealth to the palace entourage, rather than to the people at large. Second, in 10.9 she inadvertently declares that Yahweh has placed Solomon on the throne to execute 'justice and righteousness'. Fretheim suggests that this may have been the narrator's subversive way of noting that 'justice and righteousness' was absent from Solomon's reign by this time.[50] Brueggemann feels that this reference is placed here intentionally by the narrator as an ominous anticipation of the disastrous events to come in chs. 11 and 12.[51]

50. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, p. 60.

51. Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, p. 134. Fewell and Gunn (*Gender, Power, and Promise*, pp. 174-77) highlight the ambiguity of the Queen of Sheba episode, and note that there are two very different possible readings: one which praises King Solomon, and one which praises the Queen of Sheba at Solomon's expense. The fact that Solomon does not marry this woman is both interesting and suggestive. Camp (*Wise, Strange and Holy*, pp. 176-77) points out that the Queen of Sheba combines together the two themes of 'wise' and 'strange' (that is, foreign), the two themes that are central

As mentioned in the beginning of this study, the end of ch. 10 contains obvious references to Deut. 17.14-17, particularly the accumulation of silver, gold and horses. Solomon's blatant disregard of these guidelines from Yahweh is further revealed in his ridiculously excessive harem described in ch. 11. By ch. 11, however, the narrator drops his subtlety and proclaims the final verdict—Solomon did evil in the eyes of Yahweh. His heart had turned away from Yahweh, even though Yahweh had appeared to him twice (11.6, 9).

It is critical to keep in mind that throughout the Solomon narratives it is the covenant with David that drives the positive or blessing side of the story, not Solomon's piety. The narrator is not subtle about this emphasis, stressing David's faithfulness and Yahweh's promise to him. Yahweh will speak to Solomon three times. In ch. 3 he provides Solomon with wisdom, but warns him to walk as David walked (3.14). In ch. 6 the voice of Yahweh intrudes into the description of the temple construction, primarily as a warning to Solomon to follow Yahweh's laws. In addition Yahweh explicitly mentions his promise to David (6.11-13). In ch. 11 Yahweh's anger burns against Solomon because he has not kept the law or remained faithful. However, Yahweh declares that 'for the sake of David' he will not tear the kingdom away from Solomon during his lifetime. The glorious time of blessing, prosperity and peace that Israel enjoyed during Solomon's reign was not due to Solomon's faithful service to Yahweh but due to David's and due to Yahweh's promise to David.

So, in conclusion, there is strong evidence to support the view that the narrator is not schizophrenic, praising Solomon for ten chapters and then suddenly condemning him. Rather the narrator develops a fascinating but negative critique of Solomon throughout the Solomonic narratives. His critique is subtle, employing irony, word associations and implicit rather

to Camp's study. Camp suggests that the Queen of Sheba is the ideal that slipped through Solomon's fingers. Camp's insightful observation is helpful to the present study, even though my approach is different. If we read from a deuteronomistic viewpoint, we note that the Queen of Sheba is wise and is foreign, but that she also has a profound awareness of Yahweh. One of the reasons cited that prompted her visit was Solomon's relation to Yahweh (1 Kgs 10.1). Then after she sees Solomon's wealth and wisdom, she proclaims, 'Blessed be Yahweh your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because Yahweh loved Israel forever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness.' The Queen of Sheba thus stands in stark contrast to the multitude of Solomon's wives who worshipped foreign idols. Solomon marries the foreign women who worship pagan idols, but the one who seems to acknowledge Yahweh (and is wise, too) he is unable—or unwilling—to marry.

than explicit references to Deuteronomy, 1–2 Samuel and the rest of 1–2 Kings.

The clear, but implicit references to Deuteronomy 17 at the end of 1 Kings 10 provide the strongest single supporting argument for this view. Many of the other arguments may appear weak if analyzed one at a time in isolation. However, taken together, especially in light of the clear references in ch. 10, and viewed within the overall theological context of 1–2 Kings, the multitude of individual texts presented here provide an overwhelming amount of evidence that the narrator is indicting and not glorifying. The subtle narrator of 1–2 Kings has not come to praise Solomon but to bury him.