

Journal for the Study of the Old Testament

<http://jot.sagepub.com>

An Ambiguous Ending: Dynastic Punishment in Kings and the Fate of the Davidides in 2 Kings 25.27-30

David Janzen

Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 2008; 33; 39

DOI: 10.1177/0309089208094459

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://jot.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/1/39>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jot.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jot.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav>



An Ambiguous Ending: Dynastic Punishment in Kings and the Fate of the Davidides in 2 Kings 25.27-30

DAVID JANZEN

Religious Studies Department, North Central College, 30 N. Brainard St, Naperville,
IL 60540, USA

Abstract

The portrayal of the fates of the dynasties of the North in Kings shows that, in Deuteronomistic theology, only one king in a royal house need cause the people to sin to mandate the destruction of the entire house. Since Manasseh also causes the people to sin, we might assume that the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr) intends the same fate for the Davidides. However, Dtr is deliberately ambiguous in regard to the future of the Davidides following the exile—besides the specific reference to Manasseh's sin, it also includes (but does not explicitly annul) the unconditional covenant with David, and includes a conclusion that permits readers to interpret the narrative as forecasting either hope for Davidic restoration or annulment of the Davidic covenant. This ambiguity suits the exilic period of composition of Dtr, when the fate of the Davidides was unknown, and so should not be taken as evidence for redaction.

Keywords: Deuteronomistic History, monarchy, high places, Solomon, Manasseh, Josiah, Davidic covenant, sin, punishment.

1. Introduction

What future do the final four verses of Kings project for the Davidides? That scholars have differed widely in their answers to this question points directly to the ambiguity that the Deuteronomistic History leaves for readers in 2 Kgs 25.27-30. It is well known that the poles of the debate were established by Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad. The former believed that this passage's report of the release of Jehoiachin from prison was notable for the lack of hope that it foresaw in the future, a pessimistic contrast to the prophetic view of the future, while von Rad saw the History communicating a glimmer of hope for Israel's future return to the land.¹ A third and mediating position was that of Hans Walter Wolff, who argued that the Deuteronomistic History is clear in its insistence that repentance must precede return from exile. Solomon states this in his prayer at the establishment of the temple (1 Kgs 8.46-53), and the same idea can be found elsewhere in the History (e.g. Deut. 4; 30).² For Wolff, there is no specific hope at the end of the History, and the concluding story of Jehoiachin merely indicates that 'God is still acting for his people'.³

I will have opportunity below to refer to some of the supporters of these positions,⁴ but here I would also like to identify a fourth stance that has so far received little attention, one which concludes that the author has been deliberately ambiguous in 25.27-30 as to the fate of the Davidides.⁵ This article makes a detailed argument for how the author

1. Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (trans. Jane S. Doull; JSOTSup, 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2nd edn, 1991), pp. 142-44, and Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (trans. David Stalker; SBT, 9; London: SCM Press, 1953), pp. 90-91.

2. Hans Walter Wolff, 'The Kerygma of the Deuteronomic Historical Work' (trans. Frederick C. Prussner), in Walter Brueggemann (ed.), *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 83-100.

3. Wolff, 'The Kerygma of the Deuteronomic Historical Work', p. 99.

4. For an initial list of supporters of each of these positions, see Donald F. Murray, 'Of All the Years the Hopes—or Fears? Jehoiachin in Babylon (2 Kings 25.27-30)', *JBL* 120 (2001), pp. 245-65 (246-47 nn. 4-8).

5. Walter Brueggemann (*1 & 2 Kings* [Smyth & Helwys Commentary; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000], p. 606) calls 25.27-30 'intentionally enigmatic'. Marvin Sweeney argues that the History has created a theological tension at the end of Kings that asks readers to reflect upon the question of whether God has upheld the covenant with David or not, without attempting to resolve the issue; see Sweeney's 'King Manasseh of Judah and the Problem of Theodicy in the Deuteronomistic History', in Lester L. Grabbe (ed.), *Good Kings and Bad Kings* [LHBOTS, 393; ESHM, 5; London: T&T Clark International, 2005], pp. 264-78 (275).

has created this ambiguous ending to the book of Kings. Specifically, I want to examine the situation of Jehoiachin in these verses in light of the ideology of punishment of dynasties that the book of Kings as a whole presents in order to discover what 25.27-30 has to say about the fate of the Davidides. Just as Donald Murray found it helpful to analyze these four verses in the context of the larger chapter in which they appear,⁶ I want to examine them in the context of the way in which the Deuteronomistic History treats the sin and punishment of dynasties in Kings. As scholars understand it, 25.27-30 makes some comment about the punishment of the Davidides, either that it will terminate in the restoration of the house or that it has no foreseeable end. It stands to reason, then, that we will have a better understanding of the meaning that the author of these verses expects readers to derive when we have a better grasp of his or her ideology of dynastic punishment. Specifically, I want to ask two questions of the text: first, for what reason are the Northern dynasties punished in Kings according to the author, and what does this punishment normally look like? Second, does the author believe that the unconditional covenant with David affects the punishment of the house?

I will begin with a focus on the fate of the dynasties in the North, rather than the fate of the non-dynastic kings, because the subject of 25.27-30 is Jehoiachin and because of what the History signals there about the fate of David's dynasty. And I will begin with the dynasties in the North rather than with the Davidides because we find in the Deuteronomistic History's (or Dtr's) accounts of the Northern dynasties the deuteronomistic justification for their punishments, without any potential amelioration from an unconditional covenant. Only once we see in section 2 why and how Dtr believes the Northern houses are punished will we move to the more specific case of the sins and punishments of the Davidides in section 3, and be able to ask there whether the Historian believes that the unconditional covenant affects their fate.

Part of my case for the intentional ambiguity of 25.27-30 in regard to the fate of the Davidides derives from an argument that the History sends complex messages about the future of this dynasty, especially when these messages are seen within the context of the punishment of royal houses as a whole in Kings. This means that a word about redactional issues is in order before I begin this study, since some scholars, notably those who follow the theory of deuteronomistic redaction introduced by Frank Cross, argue that variant views of the future of the Davidides point to

6. Murray, 'Of All the Years'.

different authorial and editorial hands. The unconditional covenant with David is one of the main themes of Cross's Josianic Dtr¹, but his exilic Dtr² must explain the end of Davidic rule and so rejects this unconditionality.⁷ My reading presupposes rather than attempts to prove the minority position that the History is a construct of a single hand;⁸ and so while it is not my main goal to argue for unified authorship of the History here, the article will show that it is possible to ascribe complexity and even ambiguity of thought about the fate of the Davidides to a single author.⁹ It is not necessary to explain such ambiguity through appeal to

7. Frank Moore Cross, 'The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History', in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 274-89 (281-89). While this argument is a basic one for those who follow Cross's double redaction, scholars who do not accept Cross's redactional model can explain this ambiguity and complexity in a like manner. Timo Veijola, an example of a scholar who follows Rudolf Smend's theory of redaction, sees DtrG as strongly pro-Davidide and thus as the source that emphasized the unconditional covenant. DtrN also views the house (if not the institution of the monarchy as a whole) positively, and links its continued existence with adherence to the law, but DtrP sees no future for the Davidides and never refers to this eternal covenant (see *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* [STTAASF, B/193; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedakatemia, 1975], pp. 127-42, and *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie* [STTAASF, B/198; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedakatemia, 1977], pp. 115-22). Erik Eynikel is an example of a scholar who uses a model of redaction that follows neither Cross nor Smend, but who also explains such complexity of thought through appeal to redaction (*The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* [OTS, 33; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996], pp. 357-62).

8. Arguments for this position can be found in Hans-Detlef Hoffmann, *Reform und Reformen: Untersuchung zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung* (ATANT, 66; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), pp. 316-18; Burke O. Long, *1 Kings with an Introduction to Historical Literature* (FOTL, 9; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 13-30; T.R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC, 13; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), pp. xxii-xxv; J.G. McConville, 'Narrative and Meaning in the Books of Kings', *Bib 70* (1989), pp. 31-49; Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 1-17.

9. So, in a secondary manner, this article functions as a critique of redactional theories that mistake complexity of thought regarding the fate Davidides for contradictions in the text. The critique applies, of course, mainly (although as n. 7 shows, not solely) to those theorists who adhere closely to Cross; as Richard Nelson—one such adherent—put it in a critique of the Göttingen school, the strata identified by Smend and Walter Dietrich do not rely on 'genuinely contradictory themes or tendencies' in the text in the way that Cross's theory does (*The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* [JSOTSup, 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981], pp. 21-22, my emphasis).

redaction. For the sake of simplicity, then, I will refer to the author of the History simply as the Historian or as Dtr.

One issue that follows on the discussion of redactions of the History is that of the date of 25.27-30 (and of course, from my position, the date of the History as a whole). There is no scholarly unanimity as to whether these verses are exilic or post-exilic,¹⁰ although the followers of Cross naturally see 25.27-30 as part of Dtr²'s exilic completion of the History.¹¹ Outside of this school of redaction, however, we find arguments for both exilic and post-exilic dating.¹² While I agree with Rainer Albertz that there is little evidence that the History knows of any events following the exile,¹³ I do not rule out the possibility that it was composed during the early post-exilic period, when it was still unclear whether or not the Davidides would regain the throne.

10. Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury do, however, describe the exilic dating of these verses as the majority, if not the unanimous, opinion; see their 'Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues', in Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Maachi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOTSup, 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 24-141 (97).

11. See Cross, 'The Themes of the Book of Kings', pp. 285-89. This does not universally hold true for Cross's followers, however; Richard E. Friedman dates the verses to the exile, but from a different hand than Dtr² (*The Exile and Biblical Narrative* [HSM, 22; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981], pp. 35-36).

12. While certainly not an exclusive list, readers may consult the following for different arguments advanced for exilic and post-exilic dating of the verses. For exilic dating: Ernst Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17-2. Kön. 25* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), p. 484; Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT, 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), pp. 140-43; Bob Becking, 'Jehojachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Notes on 2 Kings 25,27-30', in C. Brekelmans and J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989* (BETL, 94; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), pp. 283-93 (291-93); Rainer Albertz, 'Why a Reform like Josiah's Must Have Happened', in Grabbe (ed.), *Good Kings and Bad Kings*, pp. 27-46 (36-39). For post-exilic dating: Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), p. 177; Raymond Person, *The Deuteronomic School: History, Social Setting, and Literature* (SBL SBL, 2; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), pp. 119-20; *idem*, *The Kings-Isaiah and Kings-Jeremiah Recensions* (BZAW, 252; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 100-13.

13. Albertz, 'Why a Reform', pp. 36-40. See also Römer and de Pury, 'Deuteronomistic Historiography', p. 97. Römer and de Pury's admission that the History contains 'scarcely any allusions to the Achaemenid period' is striking, given Römer's position on the date of 25.27-30 (see the above note).

2. Sin and Punishment in the North

To begin with the sin of the Northern dynasties—the focus of the first part of the first question that the introduction posed—it has long been clear that ‘the sin(s) of Jeroboam’, which Cross identified as one of the major themes of Kings, is the justification Dtr uses to explain the doom of each dynasty and non-dynastic king of the North. God promises Jeroboam a ‘sure house’ (1 Kgs 11.38)—that is, an enduring dynasty—just as God had promised David one (2 Sam. 7.16), so long as Jeroboam acts like David (11.29-39). However, the History concludes that Jeroboam’s construction of ‘two calves of gold’, along with their new sanctuaries, festivals, and priests, ‘was a sin, and the people went before the one at Bethel and before the one as far as Dan’ (12.30).¹⁴ The History interprets Jeroboam’s actions as amounting to making ‘other gods’ (14.9), and notes that he did this specifically to stop the people of the North from worshiping in Jerusalem (12.26-27). And because no Northern king ever removes Jeroboam’s shrines and calves, ‘the sin that Jeroboam sinned and that he caused Israel to sin’ [וַאֲשֶׁר הַחֲמִיץ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל] (14.16) becomes the *Leitmotif* of the History’s evaluations of the Northern monarchs. Technically, Dtr distinguishes between the sins of the monarchs and the sins of the people, but believes that the kings of the North have compelled the people to sin—hence the causative use of נָחַם—something that goes far beyond a merely personal transgression.¹⁵

14. This mainly follows the reading of LXX^L, which can be preferred due to homoeoteleuton in MT. For interpretations based on the shorter reading in MT, see Martin Noth, *Könige* (BKAT, 9/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), pp. 268, 284-85, and Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 10; New York: Doubleday, 2000), p. 359.

15. A clear example of the way in which Dtr emphasizes the distinction between the power of the monarch to affect the cultic lives of his subjects and the guilt that the people bear for actually committing the sins that the Northern kings have forced upon them is 2 Kgs 17.7-23. Verses 7-18 explain why YHWH found it necessary to punish the North with exile, and these verses find cause in the wrongful cultic actions in which the Northerners had been engaged for the past 200 years. Verses 21-23 provide a deuteronomistic summary of the Northern kingdom, and explain its collapse this way: ‘Jeroboam son of Nebat drove Israel from after YHWH, and he caused them to sin a great sin. And the Israelites walked in all the sins of Jeroboam, which he did; they did not turn aside from it until YHWH turned them aside from before him.’ In the History, it is the people who demand a king, a demand that YHWH interprets as a rejection of divine kingship (1 Sam. 8.7). The people want a king so that they can be ‘like all the nations’ (1 Sam. 8.5, 20) and, by the time of the exile of the North, they have become precisely that. In their

The verb שׁוּט appears in the Hiphil in the evaluation of every king in the North, with only two exceptions.¹⁶ The History refers to ‘the sin(s) of Jeroboam’ in the evaluations of fourteen of the nineteen Northern kings.¹⁷ Clearly, when it comes to describing the sin of the kings of Israel, the History is intent on letting readers know that the sin of Jeroboam, which every succeeding king committed, had the effect of causing the people to sin. This is true even of Zimri (1 Kgs 16.19), who reigned only seven days and who founded no dynasty. It may seem an oddity of the Deuteronomistic History that a king who was busy fighting for his life and who ruled for only a week should be condemned for not removing cultic apparatuses,¹⁸ and yet the appearance of this evaluation even for Zimri’s reign speaks to its importance in the Historian’s understanding of the sin and punishment of the Northern monarchs.

In regard to the first part of our first question, then, when the History points to the sin of the Northern dynasties and kings, it emphasizes not only the apostate shrines that Jeroboam built, but also the fact that this sin is causative: it had an effect on the people. In every case but two where the Historian specifically gives the reason for the destruction of a Northern dynasty or the overthrow of a non-dynastic king, he or she makes reference to the monarch’s culpability in causing the people to sin. Jeroboam’s house is annihilated specifically because Jeroboam caused Israel to sin (1 Kgs 15.29-30), just as Baasha’s is destroyed

apostasy, ‘they sacrificed on every high place *like the nations* whom YHWH exiled from before them’ (2 Kgs 17.11), ‘they walked in the statutes of the nations’ (v. 8), and ‘they rejected his [YHWH’s] statutes and his covenant...and they went...after the nations who were around them’ (v. 15). By demanding a king, Israel wished to be like the nations; the kings, ironically, have made them so.

16. It appears for the evaluations of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14.16); Nadab (15.30); Baasha (15.34; 16.2); Elah (16.13); Zimri (16.19); Omri (16.26); Ahab (21.22); Ahaziah (22.52); Jehoram (2 Kgs 3.3); Jehu (10.29, 31); Jehoahaz (13.2); Jehoash (13.11); Jeroboam II (14.24); Zechariah (15.9); Menahem (15.18); Pekahiah (15.24); and Pekah (15.28). The only two Northern kings for whom the History does not use שׁוּט in the Hiphil are Shallum, who reigns only one month, and Hoshea, the last king in the North.

17. Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14.16); Nadab (15.30); Baasha (15.34); Omri (16.26); Ahab (16.31); Jehoram (2 Kgs 3.3); Jehu (10.29, 31); Jehoahaz (13.2); Jehoash (13.11); Jeroboam II (14.24); Zechariah (15.9); Menahem (15.18); Pekahiah (15.24); and Pekah (15.28).

18. This, at least, is the conclusion of Mordechai Cogan, ‘A Slip of the Pen? On Josiah’s Actions in Samaria (2 Kings 23.15-20)’, in Chaim Cohen *et al.* (eds.), *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), pp. 3-8 (7).

because he caused Israel to sin (16.1-4, 12-13) and Ahab's is destroyed because he caused Israel to sin (21.21-22). In fact, the only two times Dtr gives reasons for the destruction of a Northern dynasty that do not involve the verb **סמך** in the Hiphil are the censuring of Jeroboam for making 'other gods' (14.9-10) and creating an illegitimate priesthood for the new cult (13.33-34). Yet, since these two things are the object and facilitators of the North's coerced sin (12.28-31), they really are not exceptions at all.

In regard to the second part of the first question—what does the punishment for this sin look like?—Dtr expresses the first occasion of punishment this way: YHWH 'will cut off for Jeroboam every male, bond and free,¹⁹ in Israel, and I will burn after the house of Jeroboam even as one burns dung until it is consumed. The dead of Jeroboam in the city the dogs will eat, and the dead in the country the birds of the heavens will eat' (14.10-11). Much of the same language that is used in the oracle of the annihilation of Jeroboam's house in 14.10-11 is repeated in the prophecies of the ends of the houses of Baasha (16.3-4) and Ahab (1 Kgs 21.21-22; and cf. 2 Kgs 9.8-9), and Steven McKenzie has amply demonstrated that this formula is originally deuteronomistic, rather than prophetic, in nature.²⁰ And besides the annihilation of every male in the house of Jeroboam, YHWH also promises exile for the people of the North 'on account of the sins of Jeroboam that he sinned and that he caused Israel to sin' (14.16). Of the five Northern dynasties, the first three are specifically said to have been completely destroyed in the manner of Jeroboam's house—that is, all of their male descendants are killed.²¹ In the cases of Baasha and Ahab, YHWH promises that 'I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat', which, given Dtr's narration of their ends, has the specific sense of a promise to kill every male who belongs to the house. One conclusion that we can draw

19. It is difficult to know precisely how to translate the words **עֶבֶד וְחֵרֵת**; 'bond and free' follows the NRSV. Whatever the exact sense, I believe that Martin Rehm's interpretation of these two words as representing two opposites (he translates the phrase as 'Unmündige und Mündige'), thereby suggesting that all of Jeroboam's house will be affected, is correct (*Das erste Buch der Könige* [Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1979], pp. 148-49).

20. Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VTSup, 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), pp. 61-80.

21. Besides the narrative of the complete destruction of Jeroboam's house in 1 Kgs 15.29, see 1 Kgs 16.11-12 and 2 Kgs 9.24; 10.1-11 for the complete annihilations of the houses of Baasha and Ahab.

about Dtr's presentation of dynastic punishment, then, is that dynasties that cause the people to sin should expect the annihilation of all of their male descendants in the manner of Jeroboam's house.

Yet it would seem incorrect to conclude that the answer to the question of the punishment of the Northern dynasties is annihilation, since the cases of the houses of Jehu and Menahem, the two dynasties we have yet to consider, appear to contradict this. For neither house does Dtr record a complete destruction; additionally, the house of Jehu rules for five generations. Since the dynasties of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Menahem survive their founders by only two years (1 Kgs 15.25; 16.3; 2 Kgs 15.23), the mere length of Jehu's rule seems odd. Yet Dtr's accounting of the fate of the Jehu's seems to be an exception that proves the rule. The explanation for both the length and ultimate escape from annihilation of the house after it loses power lies in the story of Jehu's elimination of the Baalism that Ahab had introduced (2 Kgs 10.18-27). YHWH actually tells Jehu that 'you did what is good, to do what is just in my eyes; according to all that is in my heart you did to the house of Ahab' (10.30). This kind of praise is unique to the Northern kings, and it reflects Jehu's actions in wiping out Baalism, as well as wiping out the house of Ahab.²² Yet Jehu and each of his successors cause Israel to sin (2 Kgs 10.31; 13.2, 11; 14.24; 15.9). As a reward for Jehu's actions, YHWH allows the house to survive for five generations (10.30; 15.12), but its final removal from power—yet not annihilation—is inevitable, given its culpability in the sin of Jeroboam that he caused Israel to sin. Only for the final Northern dynasty, the twelve-year house of Menahem, does the History include no mention of a complete destruction or an explanation as to why there is no such notice, even though it explicitly states that both members caused Israel to sin (2 Kgs 15.18, 24). It may be that the pattern of destruction has been so well established that the Historian sees no need to repeat it; or, in the best case scenario for the house, since the exile followed the end of the dynasty's rule by only 29 years, perhaps the Historian concluded that all of its members were taken into exile, constituting a permanent removal from power.²³ To find an initial answer to our first question, then, we can say that no dynasty that causes the people to sin is permitted to return to power.

22. For a detailed study of Dtr's unique treatment of the house of Jehu, see E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., 'The Royal Dynastic Grant to Jehu and the Structure of the Book of Kings', *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 193-206.

23. Dtr believes that all of the inhabitants of the North were taken into exile (2 Kgs 15.29; 17.6).

It is worthwhile pointing out here that although the History explicitly links the fate of the dynasties to their coercion of the people's apostasy, it nowhere states that this is a punishment. While it certainly makes sense to read these annihilations—or, at least, removals from power—as punishments, these acts also have, for Dtr, the salubrious effect of removing dynasties that have caused the people to sin, thereby potentially opening the door to a house that will undo the sin of Jeroboam. One imagines that the Deuteronomistic Historian's ideology would have been better served if its historical records included no dynasties at all, merely failed king after failed king, each removed from power by YHWH for perpetuating the sin of Jeroboam.²⁴ Dynasties that cause the people to sin represent a particular problem for Dtr, since the continuation of the line beyond a single king could suggest divine favor toward the house. Not all of the dynastic kings die violently, and therefore the History must focus on the violent ends of their houses. Explanations for the longer reigns of the Jehuïdes and the house of Omri/Ahab must be provided. We have already discussed Dtr's rationale for the length of Jehu's dynasty: because of Jehu's action, YHWH does not annihilate the house, but only preemptively limits the damage that it can do. The rationale for the duration of Ahab's house, which survives him by 14 years (1 Kgs 22.51; 2 Kgs 3.1), is likewise located in a pious act of the founder (1 Kgs 21.27-29).

We would appear to have answered the first question posed in the introduction. The Northern dynasties are punished specifically for the sin of causing the people to commit apostasy, and the punishment for this sin is the elimination of all male descendants of the house or, at best, a permanent removal from power due to the exile. The Jehuïdes, because of Jehu's elimination of Baalism from Israel, are not completely destroyed, but are removed from power. We can add one more point to our picture of Dtr's presentation of the punishment of Northern dynasties: with one exception, God promises the punishment of each of the first four Northern dynasties in the reign of the first king who causes the people to sin.²⁵ The crime of causing the people to commit apostasy is so grievous in the Historian's eyes that only one king must sin in this manner to doom the entire house. The exception in this regard is made for the Omrides, where the annihilation of the house is not announced

24. For obvious reasons, each of the four non-dynastic kings dies in a coup attempt, except for Hoshea, whom the Assyrians imprisoned (2 Kgs 17.3). See 1 Kgs 16.18; 2 Kgs 15.13, 30.

25. For the house of Jeroboam, see 1 Kgs 14.9-10; for that of Baasha, 16.1-4; for that of Ahab, 21.21-22, and for that of Jehu, 2 Kgs 10.30-31.

until the reign of Ahab, the second king (1 Kgs 21.21-22), but this is due to the fact that Ahab represents a special case of sin for the Deuteronomistic History, which sees his introduction of Baalism as an addition to the sin of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 16.30). Notably, the History never uses the term ‘house of Omri’; it consistently refers to the dynasty as ‘the house of Ahab’, an expression that we assume is the Historian’s invention, since the Assyrian sources always use the former appellation.²⁶ Ahab becomes a paradigm of evil that exceeds even that of Jeroboam, and so the History treats him as the father of this evil that pervades his house. It makes sense, then, that Dtr would wait until the judgment of Ahab to condemn the dynasty.²⁷

3. The Punishment of the Davidides

It is the second question raised in the introduction of this article—does Dtr believe that the unconditional covenant with David makes his house a special case, exempt from the normal strictures of dynastic punishment?—that we must now examine. Having used the Northern houses as test cases, we know that if we are going to search for a reason that the Historian provides for the punishment of the Davidides, then we must find at least one member of the house who causes the people to sin. We need not, for example, appeal to the Deuteronomistic History’s received tradition of an unconditional covenant with David to explain why the Davidides are not annihilated for the sin of Solomon the way the Northern houses are for the sin of Jeroboam.²⁸ The History sees a qualitative difference between their wrongful cultic actions and that of Solomon. While Solomon builds **במזב** specifically and solely for the use of his foreign wives (1 Kgs 11.7-8), Jeroboam constructs his apostate sanctuaries so that ‘this people’ would not go to Jerusalem to worship YHWH (12.27-28). Jeroboam and the Northern kings cause Israel to sin, but Solomon does not, and so Dtr sees no need to condemn the Davidides for his sin.

26. See Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 11; New York: Doubleday, 1988), pp. 99, 106, 334-35.

27. The lack of an oracle of punishment for the Menahemides during either the reign of their first or second king corresponds to a lack of specificity of the fate of the house in the History. Again, Dtr may simply have assumed that the pattern was so well established that the destruction of the house did not need to be repeated.

28. *Contra* Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC, 7; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), p. 118.

In fact, the first and only Davidide who is the subject of the verb מָשַׁח in the Hiphil in the History is Manasseh (2 Kgs 21.11, 16). And while the History concludes that the Northern kings had caused Israel to commit cultic sins as evil as those of the nations (2 Kgs 17.8, 15), it states that Manasseh actually ‘misled them [Judah] to do *more* evil than the nations YHWH destroyed’ (21.9). There is not even a precedent in the North for the sins that Manasseh caused the people to sin.²⁹ The History links this sin under Manasseh’s leadership to the destruction of Judah (2 Kgs 21.11-15; 23.26-27; 24.2-4), but says nothing explicitly about its connection to the fate of the Davidides. So, does Dtr believe that the unconditional covenant with David affects the standard deuteronomistic ideology of dynastic punishment, making the house, like the Jehuïdes, a special case?³⁰ The answer to this question will clearly influence our interpretation of 25.27-30.

Even given the fact of the exile, Dtr has not altered the unconditional nature of the covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7 or announced that YHWH has annulled it. In this covenant, YHWH promises to establish the throne of Solomon’s kingdom, as well as David’s house and kingdom,

29. The History goes to some lengths to emphasize the severity of Manasseh’s sin. Each one of his crimes is specifically forbidden in Deuteronomy (see Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 441). The text uses language for Manasseh that it also uses for Ahab (see Percy van Keulen, *Manasseh through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists: The Manasseh Account [2 Kings 21.1-18] and the Final Chapters of the Deuteronomistic History* [OTS, 38; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996], pp. 146-47). No other king in the History is said to worship the host of heaven (although 1 Kgs 17.16 says that the Israelites did so), and Manasseh even builds altars to them in the temple (see Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Reality* [BZAW, 338; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004], pp. 28-29).

30. While not phrasing his approach to 25.27-30 in precisely this way, von Rad believed that the promise to David held out hope for the future (see n. 1 above), and others agree with his more optimistic interpretation of these verses. Besides the citations in Murray, ‘Of all the Years’, p. 245 n. 5, see also Christof Hardmeier, ‘King Josiah in the Climax of the Deuteronomistic History (2 Kings 22–23) and the Pre-Deuteronomistic Document of a Cult Reform at the Place of Residence (23.4-15): Criticism of Sources, Reconstruction of Literary Pre-Stages and the Theology of History in 2 Kings 22–23’, in Grabbe (ed.), *Good Kings and Bad Kings*, pp. 123-63 (141-42); Terrence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999), pp. 224-25; Rainer Albertz, ‘Wer waren die Deuteronomisten? Das historische Rätsel einer literarischen Hypothese’ *ET* 57 (1997), pp. 319-38 (325); Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 158; John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2nd edn, 1970), p. 773.

עַד עוֹלָם ('forever', 7.13, 16). YHWH does reserve the right to rebuke Solomon (v. 14), but says that divine חֶסֶד will not be removed from Solomon as it was from Saul (v. 15). The History apparently has no difficulty in believing that God can make and then break eternal covenants, for God responds to the sins of the Elides by declaring, 'Indeed I said, "Your house and the house of your father will go about before me forever (עַד עוֹלָם)", but now—an oracle of YHWH—far be it from me' (1 Sam. 2.30).³¹ Yet we find no such explicit negation of the eternal covenant with David.³² In response to Manasseh's sin, YHWH does

31. This is indeed what happens. Eli and his sons die almost immediately (4.11-18), and the prophecy is completely and explicitly fulfilled when Abiathar is banished by Solomon (1 Kgs 2.26-27). YHWH does not break an eternal covenant with Saul, although this is almost the case; Samuel says to him, 'YHWH would have established your kingdom over Israel forever [עַד עוֹלָם], but now your kingdom will not stand' (1 Sam. 13.13-14). For the irreal force of כִּי עֲתָה הֵכֵן in 13.13, see GKC, §159dd and Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §39.4.3f.

32. Some scholars point to what appear to be conditional restatements of this covenant in 1 Kgs 2.4; 8.25; and 9.4-5 as evidence of an exilic hand conditionalizing the covenant (e.g. Cross, 'The Themes of the Book of Kings', p. 287; Iain W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* [BZAW, 172; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988], pp. 106-11; Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies* [HSM, 52-53; 2 vols.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993-94], I, pp. 101-102). This conclusion is unnecessary, however; we do not need to appeal to redaction in order to explain these three passages from Kings. As Halpern and Nelson have argued, 2.4; 8.25, and 9.4-5 apply only to Solomon and are used to explain the Davidides' loss of the kingdom rather than the exile (see Nelson, *The Double Redaction*, pp. 99-105, and Halpern, *The First Historians*, pp. 158-73). 1 Kgs 2.4 and 8.25 state that 'a man will not be cut off to you from the throne of Israel' so long as the Davidides keep the law, and 9.4-5 restates this as 'I will raise up the throne of your kingdom forever' so long as the same condition is fulfilled. And although Solomon does indeed sit upon 'the throne of Israel' (8.20; 10.9), no other Davidide is said to do so. Solomon's sin instead leaves the Davidides only with a small part of the kingdom, a נִיר ('fief'). (For this translation of נִיר, see Ehud Ben Zvi, 'Once the Lamp Has Been Kindled...: A Reconsideration of the MT *Nir* in 1 Kgs 11.36; 15.4; 2 Kgs 8.19 and 2 Chr 21.7', *ABR* 39 [1991], pp. 19-30. Since the word means 'cultivated land' in Mishnaic Hebrew, and since this meaning fits the appearance of the word in non-deuteronomistic passages, the sense of 'fief' would seem the most likely translation.) Northern kings now are said to sit upon 'the throne of Israel' (2 Kgs 10.30; 15.12), since YHWH tore Israel from the Davidides (1 Kgs 11.11, 31; 2 Kgs 17.21). The throne and the kingdom have indeed been established, but YHWH has punished the Davidides with their loss. It is because Josiah undoes Solomon's sin—he removes Solomon's בְּמוֹת (2 Kgs 23.13-14)—that he retakes

condemn Judah and the Davidides by stating that 'I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line for Samaria and the plummet for the house of Ahab' (21.13). This appears to be a double condemnation: what happened to Samaria will happen to Jerusalem; and what happened to the house of Ahab will happen to the house of David. Because a Davidide caused the people to sin, both dynasty and people will be punished. This is precisely in keeping with the deuteronomistic ideology of dynastic punishment as manifested in the story of the North, and one could interpret 21.13 as God's rejection of the unconditional covenant. On the other hand, however, the Davidides are not completely wiped out as the house of Ahab was, since Jehoiachin remains alive in exile. Isaiah's prophecy of 20.12-19 prepares readers for that difference, for in this story the prophet informs Hezekiah that one day his descendants will serve as eunuchs in the Babylonian court. Moreover, Dtr informs us at critical junctures—when Solomon first sins (1 Kgs 11.36), when three consecutive Davidides do evil (15.4-5), and in the midst of the reigns of two Davidides who act like the house of Ahab (2 Kgs 8.19)—that YHWH, 'because of David', had given the Davidides a נֶרֶךְ ('fief') forever.³³

This inclusion of the נֶרֶךְ statements and 20.12-19 along with 21.13 is confusing as regards the interpretation of 25.27-30. Manasseh has caused the people to sin and so, on the basis of the pattern of the Northern dynasties, we expect the complete destruction of the house, which is precisely what 21.13 alludes to. Yet the Davidides still have an unconditional covenant, and 20.12-19 and the נֶרֶךְ passages appear to reflect this, contradicting 21.13. Perhaps, however, the Historian means us simply to read the pattern of dynastic destruction of the North in the widest sense, which is that dynasties that cause the people to sin will be removed from power. That is, based on the pattern of Jehu and his dynasty, it may be that the acts of David can save his house from annihilation, even if they cannot guarantee its return to power.³⁴ Given what we know of how Dtr treats the Northern dynasties and of what he or she says (and does not

the North and continues his reforms there (23.15-20). He has regained for the Davidides what Solomon lost (so Halpern, *The First Historians*, pp. 154-55, and Knoppers, *Two Nations under God*, II, pp. 68-69, 195).

33. The reference to a נֶרֶךְ appears in all three of these passages; for the translation of נֶרֶךְ as 'fief', see the above note. Only 1 Kgs 11.36 and 2 Kgs 8.19 specifically state that YHWH had told David that his descendants would be given this fief בְּלִי חַיִּים ('forever').

34. Dtr explicitly refers to David's regard for the law as the rationale for continued divine support for the house in 1 Kgs 11.34 and 15.4-5.

say) about the Davidic covenant, we could conclude that Dtr expects that Jehoiachin is the last of the Davidides and the end of the house (an interpretation that privileges the general pattern of the Northern dynasties); or that the Davidides will be returned to power (prioritizing 2 Sam. 7 and the fact that the covenant is never explicitly abrogated); or that the line will survive but not rule again (privileging the fate of the Jehuides and one of the possible fates of the Menahemides). So what else can be said about the sins and punishments of the Davidides in Kings in order to clarify this issue?

We have already noted the case of the sin and punishment of Solomon, and, as Theodore Mullen has demonstrated, even good Davidic kings such as Asa who carry out reforms are punished for not removing the *במות* of Solomon.³⁵ The punishments that Mullen refers to are not the disasters that befall the Northern houses, but Dtr does allow that the punishment of the Davidides could approach that of the Northern dynasties, as a brief review of the Historian's evaluations of Jehoram and Ahaziah indicates. With the exception of Manasseh, the two Davidides who receive the worst evaluations in Kings are Jehoram, who marries a daughter of Ahab, and his son Ahaziah, whose mother was the Omride Athaliah. Jehoram 'walked in the way of the kings of Israel, even as the house of Ahab did, because he took the daughter of Ahab as a wife' (2 Kgs 8.18). Ahaziah 'walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the eyes of YHWH like the house of Ahab' (8.27). The phrase 'walked in the way of the kings of Israel' is quite similar to 'walked in the way of Jeroboam', an evaluation applied to six of the eight kings of Israel between Jeroboam and the Davidide Jehoram, and it is a phrase that is almost always closely linked in the evaluation with the charge of causing the people to sin.³⁶ Yet the Historian does not use *אָמַד* in the

35. E. Theodore Mullen, 'Crime and Punishment: The Sins of the Kings and the Despoliation of the Treasuries', *CBQ* 54 (1992), pp. 231-48 (233-36).

36. 'He walked in the way of Jeroboam' (or, in the case of Nadab, 'in the way of his father') is found in the evaluations of Nadab (1 Kgs 15.26), Baasha (15.34; and cf. 16.2), Zimri (16.19), Omri (16.26), Ahab (16.31, which actually says 'sins of Jeroboam' rather than 'way of Jeroboam'), and Ahaziah (22.53). These evaluations are normally accompanied by a statement that the king 'did evil in the eyes of YHWH' (see 15.26, 34; 16.19, 25, 30; 22.53) and by a reference to *אָמַד* in the Hiphil (15.30, 34; 16.19, 26; 22.53), although this evaluation of Ahab appears in 21.22. The reference to the house of Ahab in both of the evaluations, especially that of Ahaziah, who 'walked in the way of the house of Ahab', suggests also the crime of introducing Baalism to Judah (a conclusion bolstered by the fact that in 11.18-19 the people remove the Baal cult from Judah following the installation of Joash).

Hiphil in the evaluation of either king, and so their transgressions remain, for Dtr, like those of Solomon rather than Jeroboam. At this point, the History records a punishment of the Davidides that approaches that of the Northern houses: all of the male Davidides, save for Joash, are murdered in a coup, and the house is removed from power for six years as Athaliah takes the throne.

As Elna Solvang points out, Athaliah attempts to exterminate זרע הממלכה ('the seed of the kingdom', 2 Kgs 11.1), an odd expression that occurs elsewhere in the Bible only in the parallel passage in Chronicles. This unusual phrase may remind readers of YHWH's promise to David in 2 Sam. 7.12 that 'I will raise up your seed (זרעך)...and I will establish his kingdom (ממלכתו)'.³⁷ The History is drawing readers' attention back to the Davidic covenant, and for a moment in the story it appears to have been all but annulled. The Davidides have acted, to some degree, like the Northern kings, even like the house of Ahab, although Dtr does not actually use חטא in the Hiphil for either king. Nonetheless, given the judgment formula used for the two kings that referred to the cultic sins of the Northern dynasties, it would not be surprising had Dtr announced the annihilation of the Davidides here. Yet one male Davidide survives the pogrom, and the removal from power is only temporary. Moreover, it is in this story that we find the final נִר statement. For Iain Provan, this story forms the pattern that 25.27-30 follows: what happened to the Davidides in the time of Joash will happen to them after the exile.³⁸ The Historian, in short, has no compunction in claiming that the Davidides can be punished to at least some degree like the Northern dynasties, but the story of Joash is hardly devoid of hope. Just as the story of Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah appears to prepare us for the fate of the Davidides in exile, the story of Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joash can be read in the same manner. If one privileges 2 Kings 11 in the interpretation of 2 Kings 25, then Dtr's final verses point to restoration.

37. Elna K. Solvang, *A Woman's Place is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and their Involvement in the House of David* (JSOTSup, 349; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp. 159-60.

38. Iain Provan, 'The Messiah in the Book of Kings', in Philip Satterthwaite *et al.* (eds.), *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), pp. 67-85 (74-76); *idem*, *1 & 2 Kings*, pp. 279-81. See also Steven L. McKenzie, 'The Divided Kingdom in the Deuteronomistic History and in Scholarship on It', in T. Römer (ed.), *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (BETL, 147; Leuven: University Press, 2000), pp. 135-45 (141).

However, this is not the only story in Dtr's history of the monarchy with which one can draw a comparison with 25.27-30. Some scholars see here a parallel to the story of David's treatment of Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9. Like Mephibosheth, Jehoiachin is the surviving male scion of a dethroned house; like David, Evil-Merodach takes pity on his defeated enemy, and seats him at his table and provides him with food.³⁹ If this is in fact the parallel that the author of 25.27-30 wants readers to see, then clearly his or her view of the future of the house of David is not an optimistic one, for the Davidides would thus appear like the Saulides: a defeated house that will not rule again.

So we appear no closer to a resolution of the ambiguity with which the Historian leaves us than before. To summarize, Dtr has provided us with the following information as regards the punishment of the Northern dynasties and the Davidides:

1. In the North, dynasties that cause the people to sin will be punished and likely destroyed. Even though provision can be made for dynasties like the house of Jehu, which Dtr sees as a special case, readers still are shown a pattern of permanent removal from power. Whether the house is completely destroyed like the first three Northern dynasties (and possibly the house of Menahem), or removed from power by divine fiat like the house of Jehu, or taken into exile (another possible fate of the Menahemides), by having even one member who causes the people to sin, it waives its right to rule.
2. The Davidide Manasseh causes the people to sin.
3. Yet the unconditional covenant with David makes the Davidides a special case beyond even that of the Jehuides. Jehu is promised a dynasty of only five generations, but YHWH established

39. E.g. Jeremy Schipper, "Significant Resonances" with Mephibosheth in 2 Kings 25.27-30: A Response to Donald F. Murray', *JBL* 124 (2005), pp. 521-29; Sweeney, 'King Manasseh of Judah', p. 273; Robert Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 103-106; Jan Jaynes Granowski, 'Jehoiachin at the King's Table: A Reading of the Ending of the Second Book of Kings', in Danna Nolan Fewell (ed.), *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Bible* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 173-88 (183-84). Anthony R. Ceresko, 'The Identity of "the Blind and the Lame" ('*iw wēr ūpissēah*) in 2 Samuel 5.8b', *CBQ* 63 (2001), pp. 23-30 (24), suggests a parallel between Mephibosheth (who was lame) and the uncle of Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (who was blinded by the Babylonians).

- David's kingdom forever. God can annul eternal covenants according to the Historian, but there is no explicit indication that God has done so in the case of the Davidides.
4. On the other hand, after Manasseh causes the people to sin, YHWH seems to promise the Davidides the same fate as the house of Ahab (21.13).
 5. Yet this is not exactly what happens, as 25.27-30 shows us. The survival of at least one male Davidide in captivity points toward the (at least somewhat) hopeful prophecy of Isaiah to Hezekiah in 20.12-19, to a parallel with the restoration of Joash, and to the נָח passages.
 6. However, the story of Mephibosheth also presents a compelling parallel to 25.27-30, and Dtr may mean to draw comparisons with the Saulides (and with the house of Menahem, if one believes that it was taken into exile rather than annihilated), who were not completely wiped out, but who did not rule again.

Based on the ideology of punishment of the Northern dynasties and on what Dtr has and has not said about the unconditional covenant with David, readers are left with the following options as real possibilities for the interpretation of 25.27-30:

1. A Davidide caused the people to sin. The History has clearly shown in its evaluations of the Northern dynasties that royal houses that so act will, at the very least, be removed from power, if not completely destroyed. Notably, Dtr says nothing about the survival of Jehoiachin's sons.⁴⁰ Dtr believes that Yhwh can annul eternal covenants, and that appears to be the case here. Perhaps the line will survive, but it will not rule again. The punishment that was temporary during the reign of Athaliah will be permanent now. The prophecy of 2 Kgs 21.13 and the parallel with Mephibosheth take precedence in this interpretation.⁴¹

40. Yair Hoffman, 'The Deuteronomist and the Exile', in David P. Wright *et al.* (eds.), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), pp. 659-75 (667-68). As Hoffman notes, however, they are mentioned in the Babylonian document that refers to Jehoiachin's rations (p. 668 n. 22).

41. One could also add here a parallel with the fate of the house of Menahem, if one interprets the fate of the Menahemides as being exiled and removed from power forever. As we have seen, Dtr is not entirely clear as to their fate, and this would be a best case scenario reading of what happens to them.

2. The Davidides, like the house of Jehu, are a special case for Dtr. True, Manasseh caused the people to sin, but nowhere does Yhwh explicitly annul the unconditional covenant. Dtr expects their restoration to power, just as occurred after the punishment in the reign of Athaliah. The prophecy of 2 Kgs 20.12-19 and the parallel with Joash take precedence in this interpretation.

Note that I say nothing here about the fate of the people. Wolff was quite right: Dtr is sanguine about return from exile, but believes that repentance must precede it. These verses have absolutely nothing to say about Judah—they concern only the Davidide.

Yet can we choose one of the above two options as that which Dtr intends readers to follow? I do not believe that we can. The Historian is clear enough in explaining why the Northern dynasties are destroyed or removed from power, carefully repeating the justification for dynastic punishment when he or she thinks it is necessary. It is the clarity of this deuteronomistic ideology of dynastic punishment in Kings, at least as regards the Northern houses, that makes the vagueness at the end of the book so maddening. Dtr clearly believes that YHWH can abrogate eternal covenants, yet does not say explicitly that this has occurred in the case of the Davidides; yet neither does the Historian go out of his or her way to make a reference to the covenant with David, as is done in 1 Kgs 11.36; 15.4-5, and 2 Kgs 8.19, where in each case Davidic sin might seem to threaten the future of the house. There is, in fact, no fulfillment passage in 25.27-30 at all, either in reference to the covenant or to an earlier prophecy of punishment, although Dtr could have cited 2 Samuel 7; 2 Kgs 21.13, or 20.12-19. Unsurprisingly, a number of scholars have pointed out that what is omitted in the final four verses of Kings seems as important as what is included. There is no reference to repentance or to the lack of it; no reference to any action on the part of YHWH, either for or against Jehoiachin; no reference to the covenant with David, either upholding or breaking it; and not even any indication as to whether or not Jehoiachin's children survived in exile to carry on the line.⁴² This is

42. Respectively, these are the observations made by Murray, 'Of All the Years', pp. 264-65; Christopher T. Begg, 'The Significance of Jehoiachin's Release: A New Proposal', *JSOT* 36 (1986), pp. 49-56 (50); Martin Rose, 'Deuteronomistic Ideology and Theology of the Old Testament', in de Pury, Römer, and Maachi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History*, pp. 424-55 (431); and Hoffman, 'The Deuteronomist and the Exile', pp. 667-68.

also why I do not see any reference here to the fate of Judah, for Dtr says nothing at all about the people.⁴³

In the light of the earlier specificity of dynastic punishment, Dtr seems intentionally to create ambiguity at the end of Kings in regard to the future of the Davidides. Writing in the exile—or possibly in the early post-exilic period—Dtr simply wishes to hedge his or her bets. The ambiguous fate of the Davidides suits a time frame when it was impossible to tell what the fate of the Davidide would be. This intentional ambiguity does not commit Dtr to any one outcome for the Davidides, and provides the Historian with flexibility to cover various possible eventualities. Should the Davidides not regain the throne, then it would be easy enough for the Historian to point to 2 Kgs 21.13 as indicating YHWH's *de facto* annulment of the Davidic covenant; should they return to power, Dtr can always claim that he or she had never explicitly stated that YHWH had abrogated it. The intentionality of the ambiguity seems clear given the precision with which Dtr has portrayed its ideology of dynastic punishment earlier in Kings, and can be explained without hypothesizing the existence of different redactions.

43. It is true, of course, that if one interprets those verses as foreshadowing a restoration of Davidic power, then that would imply the restoration of the people, since a king needs subjects to rule. On the other hand, the pessimistic interpretation does not rule out the possibility that the people could repent and be restored to the land independently of the Davidides. Murray ('Of All the Years') and Begg ('The Significance of Jehoiachin's Release') refer to Wolff's description of the kerygma of the History and argue that, at best, 25.27-30 suggests that the people can hope for a good life in exile. For other arguments that 25.27-30 converts exile into diaspora, see, e.g., Hoffman, 'The Deuteronomist and the Exile', pp. 667-68; Schipper, 'Significant Resonances'; Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, p. 177; Meik Gerhards, 'Die Begnadigung Jojachins—Überlegungen zu 2 Kön. 25,27-30 (mit einem Anhang zu den Nennungen Jojachins auf Zuteilungslisten aus Babylon)', *BN* 94 (1998), pp. 52-67. Walter Dietrich, like Gerhards, sees the final form of the History as directing Israel's future to Torah rather than to the monarchy ('Niedergang und Neuanfang: Die Haltung der Schlussredaktion des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk zu den wichtigsten Fragen ihre Zeit', in Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel [eds.], *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* [OTS, 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999], pp. 45-70 [66-70]), although he believes the final redactor (DtrN, according to Dietrich) did not compose 25.27-30. I would again caution, however, that attempts to discern Dtr's beliefs concerning the fate of all of the exiles read too much into these verses, which concern Jehoiachin and which do not mention the people at all. Dtr alludes to possibilities for the fate of the Davidides in these verses, but not for the people.